

THE GREAT MISSISSAUGA

Mississauga holds so much history for our people so as to reflect back in time and to mirrorize how the values and ways had been in those days.

WAYS OF LIFE

Between 1650-1850 it is somewhat sceptic, records are not accurate but there certainly was habitation of man through the archeological research and findings.

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

1870-1915 daily life in this community was somewhat a continued of traditional customs. Certain social and economic changes modified the behavior or role of a family, but the family remained the basic element in any activity. Life was generally a sharing and by certain equality between a man, woman and child. Mutual aid and community spirit extended, also to neighbours who were always a helping hand.

Family homes were generally small, consisting usually of a ground floor, fur mats for warmth. These were log homes covered with split logs and bark shingles for roofing.

Later made larger homes, sometime two story, walls daubed with clay mortar and plastered over with lime. The furniture in that time for all types of dwellings were simple and homemade, and a few other personal possessions, like guns, tools etc, other inventories when Christianity was introduced by the Jesuit missionaries you would see crucifixes and pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary, rosaries and other prayer items in their homes.

CLOTHES

Prior to 1870 clothing was made from animal furs, hides, skins made into wraps capes and sashes, hand made moccasins. But when the Hudson Bay Trading Posts were set up they were able to purchase goods material for the making of clothing. Women wore same kind of shoes as men. Dress trousers were now usually seen on men. Various changes of dress were more noticed and it got more and more common.

FOOD

Food was consisted of wild animals as well as roots for vegetables, wild rice, berries they gathered while in season, But that changed when it was easier to purchase or trade. They would buy salt pork, flour lard and baking powder for making scond. Uther essentials were beans, tea, etc.

Meat preservation was a priority as there was no electricity, no refrigeration so you would see drying, smuking, and freezing in the wintertime. This was done moose, venison, and any game and fish. When salt became available the salting of meat was done. wells were used for cooling too. But that too changed when the Hudson Bay Trading Posts were set up.

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Gardening became the important factor in their lives. They grew potatoes, carrots, turnips, beans, onions, pumpkins, cucumbers, peas and corn. Corn was their first foods to grow.

These vegetables kept well in root houses, cellars for quite some time.

They would buy the seed from Hudson Bay Trading Posts.

EDUCATION or adaptation

Though with their high esteem of knowledge, there was a big set back in their lifestyle now. Not being able to read, write or speak the english language. They needed this new whole aspect of knowledge to count monies and necessities in their new life now.

Educators began to emerge to teach the young, residential schools were set up in areas by the Jesuit missionaries and nuns.

And our children were taken from their homes as young as three years old to go these schools. With this in mind not being allowed to speak the anishinabe language was a traumatic impact to their young lives. The english language was now a formal language. This new system was in two divisions, Catholic and Prostant were run by the Missionaries under the directions of the Indian Affairs.

Indian Affairs came in effect after the signing of the Huron Robinson Treaty on September 9, 1850.

EARNING A LIVING

Now that they had to earn a living to up keep this new way of life to buy necessities in their everyday needs. Trapping and hunting became one of the sources, Mississauga and other inland lakes and rivers were plenty with animals, such as beaver, muskrat, otter, lynx, weasel, and marten. Market for these animals were so much in demand now. So they would trap these animals, skin them, stretch and dry. Then they would take the pelts to a buyer and would get top prices in those days, or so they were told. This became seasonal income for our people.

Picking and gathering berries were another source of income. The whole family would do this and berries were plentiful so they would pick blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and cranberries etc. Crafts became another, they would make baskets from black ash. They would go into the mountain sides to cut and make the ribbon strips or splints for the weaving. They would dye the wood for colour and sweetgrass for trim. These would be done year round if enough ash was gathered.

Sweetgrass was also picked and sweetgrass crafts were also made.

Fire wood was cut for stoves and that became quite profitable.

Woodworking became popular also so much was made from wood sleds, axe handles, furniture, etc.

Snowshoes were made too, now for our new neighbours.

Birch Bark Canoes were made of cedar strip ribbing, root threading

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wood gum for reinforcement and waterproofing.

Maple syrup harvest was a necessity and a need. It was hard work. Another well known item was the copper pot making, they would get copper from Lake Huron somewhere. These rocks had huge mass of this copper and they would pick lumps of it and would make a fire, melt it and spreading it in sheets, moulding it into pots using stones. My great-grandfather use to tell me this.

And I also remember when my grandfather use to go somewhere for days and he would come back with this lime and some men would pick up their order I guess. He would use this for whitewash.

Fishing and guiding were another became the in thing when tourists started coming into our areas. There were plenty jobs for our people because they knew the areas very well.

HEALTH CARE OF THE PAST

Local herbs, roots, trees, and barks were used for ailments, these herbs were brewed into teas, pulped and boiled. Different trees, barks and roots were used or combined. Animal fats or oils were also used. A medicine man or woman usually lived nearby but then there was always someone knowledgeable within the community. but that too went out of use whe the Europeans came, then their modern medicine was used.

At the same time we were being faced with another set back, it was the diseases that was sweeping our community. Around 1870-1880 there were number of deaths within our people, there was the flu (influenza) diptheria, whooping cough, appendicitis, tumors (cancer) and consumption (tuberculosis). Women began dying from childbirth, men were dying from work related, overwork, and heart attacks and other stress lifestyle.

Smallpox was another widespread epeidemic quickly wiping our people. Flu epeidemic occured 1889-1892 and another 1900-1903.

Babies, young children became victims as well as adults.

Life was falling apart, this was due to the new lifestyle, new foods, new people, my great-grandmother use to say that.

The diseases had a social and economic influences, such as anxiety, tension, stress, fatigue. overwork, bad diet, and lack of clean-leaness. Life was too easy, they did not know how to live this new lifestyle.

Yet to only mention the poor housing conditions which were on the increase due to the new adjustment in their lives.

Population teetered, tottered for some time.

CULTURE SHOCK

Difficulties seemed to be on the rise among our people, financially too as well other set backs. Conflicts arose caused by theis intense social, economic, even religious differences within our people. With this sort of new lifestyle, their own lifestyle was somewhat deminishing. They were loosing pace with their lives.

The troubles gave rise to more agitation, discord and resentment

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among our people. They were faced with a lifestyle that was not meant to be.

Lacking the education to meet the requirements to this new world, it became impossible to know the true costs of their needs. It became harder to live in harmony as they did before.

With this sort of tension, more and more persistent habitual and abusive drinking became. Therefore that also created abusing their lifestyles and families.

Alcohol continued to ravage within our community. It seemed that drinking provided that escape from the reality of the current difficulties that they were now facing.

Criminal offences for their were causes of difficulties or certain social conflicts or problems.

Crimes committed in the area were known about and by that time the Justice system was in force so they were penalized for what they did and fined.

There were cases of broken families, deserting, families, drunkenness irresponsibility, vagrancy, assault, theft, perjury, and so on even killing and murder.

Since our people were faced with problems and conflicts due largely to an unfavourable social and economic situation, their attitude and behavior under the circumstances too became a problem.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community planning is still in progress and self sufficient and the reserve is becoming a prosperous and a proud community.

T A S E W O N G
Feast of the Dead

Each year the Ojibway gathered to remember their departed loved ones. In the weeks before the ceremonies, time was spent hunting, fishing, gathering of food to be used in the feast.

On the day of the feast, the family went to the burial site where the grave was cleaned, layed a wreath, maybe changed or repaired a cross. items of food were placed on the graves.

Then the food was cooked and a feast was held. Sometimes people stayed up all night, sharing stories of the deceased, their brave deeds, the pranks they may have done, funny or favourite sayings they had. In general they talked of the good times they had with them while they were living. Sometimes they spoke of hard times they went through together.

Some things have changed slightly in the coming of the European people. It looks like the feasts and ceremonies for the dead were in other cultures too. When the Church saw these pagan customs being done. The Church in Christianizing their custom called their feast...All Saints Day. We got the word "TASEWUNG" from the french word for...All Saints.

The celebration may be done in following manner. After the grave has been cleaned and beautified. The people gather in the center of the cemetery. A fire is built, and prayers are said. The wreaths are placed at the main cross by children or they may take them to the grave of a loved one. A prayer leader will go around the whole cemetery, pray for all who are buried there, instead of using holy water, an insence of cedar, sage, sweetgrass, and tobacco is used.

Then returning to the center where the fire is located, food or other items are burned. A drum group may sing an Honour song to close the ceremony.

The family returns home to prepare a feast . Wild animal meat, fish partridge are some of the foods, vegetables and beverages.

Then before sitting to the meal, a small bit of food is taken from all the foods that is set out on the table, A prayer is said to bless the food, and addressing the departed they are invited to take part in the feast. Tobacco is added to the food along with the beverage, this is taken to the fire. The family gathers in a circle and silently pray for their loved who have gone on. The prayer leader of the family then offers the food into the fire.

The family then sits down to eat. A place open is for a visitor to take the place of those missing from the family. All during the evening the table is re-set feeding all those who come by.