**The People of the Three Fires**



Source: “The Three Fires.” *The Mitten.* September 2001.

**The Ojibwa**

The Ojibwa was the largest group of the “Three Fires.” They lived along the southern shores of Lake Superior and the western shores of Lake Huron. They moved at times and usually settled near rivers and lakes. They were admired for being excellent hunters, fishers, and trappers. They were also well-known for their birch bark canoes. When they lived in areas with good soil, they farmed and raised crops such as corn and squash. They also gathered nuts and fruits. They made maple syrup from the sap of maple trees and gathered wild rice. They lived in villages made of small round buildings called wigwams. These were houses made from a frame of bent poles which was covered with bark, animal skins or mats. They made items like moccasins and bags from deerskin which was decorated with porcupine quills. They were known for their beautiful beadwork which often had flower designs. They also made birch bark baskets and boxes.

Data Collection Sheet: Group: **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Where did they live in Michigan?** |  |
| **What were their houses like?** |  |
| **What did they eat?** |  |
| **What was special about them?** |  |
| **What did they make?** |  |

**The Potawatomi**

The Potawatomi lived at one time in the southwest section of Michigan. Then, they spread out and moved to other areas such as the land around what is now the city of Saginaw. Of the three groups, the Potawatomi were known as the best farmers. They grew more of their own food than the other two groups. Crops included squash, corn, melons, and beans. They also used maple sap to make syrup and sugar. They lived in villages, but moved their villages with the seasons. In the warm months they lived near rivers and lakes in round wigwams or rectangular lodges. In the winter, the villages often broke up into small groups of families that moved into the forests where the hunting was good. The Potawatomi used canoes for fishing and going short distances, but they did not travel by water as much as the other two groups. Like the other two groups, the Potawatomi used sleds and snowshoes in winter. They were well known for their quill embroidery, basketry, and beadwork.

**The Odawa**

The Odawa, or Ottawa, lived along the eastern shores of Lake Michigan. They were known for being excellent traders. They used bark canoes to travel hundreds of miles in order to trade goods. The Odawa lived in villages. Their houses were small oval buildings called wigwams or longhouses which were like apartment buildings in which several families lived. They often built log walls around their villages for protection. They hunted and fished and sometimes farmed. They made sugar from maple sap. They were known for being very good weavers and wove beautiful mats, bags, and baskets. One of their most famous leaders was Chief Pontiac.