DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 068 264 RC 006 560

TITLE	The Indian in Michigan: Ottawa; Chippewa; Potawatomi. John E. Munson Michigan History Fund Kit Number 1.
INSTITUTION	Michigan State Commission on Indian Affairs, Lansing.
PUB DATE	[70]
NOTE	17p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Agriculture; *American Indians; Clothing; *Economic Factors; Handicrafts; *History; Religion; *Reservations (Indian); *Tribes
IDENTIFIERS	Chippewa; Ottawa; Potawatomi

ABSTRACT

A brief history of the American Indians of Michigan is presented in this booklet. Separate sections are devoted to each of the 3 tribes: The Chippewa, the Ottawa, and the Potawatomi. Each tribe is described in terms of its economic life, clothing and handicrafts, political system, and religious ideas. Also described are the 4 Indian reservations in Michigan: The Bay Mills Indian Community, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, the Hannahville Indian Community, and the Saginaw Chippewa Community. Information on the land area and population is given for each reservation. (PS)

THE INDIAN IN MICHIGAN

OTTAWA

CHIPPEWA

POTAWATOMI

A CHIPPEWA FAMILY

Chief Shoppenagon (Little Needle) and his family were for many years among the best-known Chippewa Indians of the Grayling and central Michigan area. NOTE the genuine Chippewa headdress, the beads, and the other features of the costumes.

Indian History of Michigan

Present-day Michigan Indians are descendents of the Algonquian stock (meaning a family of people who speak an original language or any of the languages and dialects that were derived from it). The name Algonquian is derived from the word Algomequin, an Algonkin word meaning "people across the river." At one time the Algonquian land holdings were considered to be the largest of all areas occupied by a North American stock. Their territory extended from the Rocky Mountains east to Labrador and from the uppermost part of Manitoba to North Carolina.

Early records indicate that the Indian inhabitants of Michigan are descendents of the Ojibwa tribe of Canada. Traditional accounts record the Ojibwa tribe as dwelling on the Atlantic coast north of the St. Lawrence River about six hundred years ago. They began a westward movement with stops for a considerable period on the St. Lawrence near present-day Montreal in Canada, again on Lake Huron, then at Sault Ste. Marie and finally at La Pointe, Wisconsin. Stops and settlements at Fon Du Lac and on Lake Superior have also been noted. Upon reaching Michilimackinac, the Ojibwa split into three great groups. One group remained near Michilimackinac—these are the Ottawas or "traders." The second, the Potawatomi, or "those-who-make-or-keep-a-fire" moved along Lake Michigan. The third division, the Ojibwa (Chippewa) or "to-roast-till-puckered-up" stopped at Sault Ste. Marie for a long period after the split. They were so closely related in their basic aspects of living that they banded together to form "The Three Fires" for mutual protection.

First outside contact with a Michigan tribe, between the Ottawas and Champlain, was on the eastern or northern shore of Georgian Bay in the early 1600's. The number of contacts between Michigan tribes and Europeans was minimal until after 1660. Residents of Michigan, at one time or another, included the Huron, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Chippewa, Miami, and Menominee. Tribes recorded as having visited Michigan include the Sioux, Cree, Kickapoo, Fox, and Sauk. The three major groups inhabiting Michigan today are the Ottawa, Chippewa (Ojibwa), and the Potawatomi.

In early times all tribes of Michigan lived in a type of house that was usually oval, dome-shaped or rectangular which was made of bark or matting or the skins of animals laid over bent poles. The cone-shaped type was favored by most tribes in winter since it could be transported with ease and erected in a very short time. In the summer many of the tribes constructed rectangular lodges or longhouses. These were much larger and allowed more space per individual. The majority of tribes used birch bark for the covering and would strip it from the trees in large pieces; however, other types of bark were used as covering, such as, ash, elm, spruce, and cedar.

Economic life consisted mainly of hunting, trapping, fishing, and agriculture. Chippewa had little dependence on agriculture. They centered their economic life on hunting, trapping, and fishing activities with large summer villages and small winter hunting camps occupied by

extended family units. The Ottawa in contrast, occupied areas in agricultural villages which they often relocated. Men left villages to hunt and trade in summer and mainly to hunt for food in winter. Perishable goods were exchanged. The Potawatomi were mainly dependent on agriculture, hunting in both summer and winter. They hunted near the village, returning at night in the summer. The winter hunt was most important where the removal of the entire village to hunt in a new territory, as a unit, was practiced.

Villages and campsites were usually located on terrain near a river, stream, or lake; water being the main mode of transportation as well as providing a good source of food.

Each tribe was usually divided into smaller units—clans. The clans were usually named after some animal, plant, or bird. Ottawas, however, used such names as star, water, thunder, and mountain. Clothing was not elaborate; main articles being moccasins, leggings, breechcloth, and robe. Most household utensils were of bark and wood.

With the invasion of the Europeans, cultural changes by the French were first to hit the Indians. Stone, wood and bone weapons, tools, and utensils were soon replaced by items of iron and brass. Guns supplemented bows and arrows. By mid-18th century with greater contact with the Europeans, the Indians increasingly abandoned the old ways for those of the Europeans.

The Three Tribes of Michigan

Chippewa

The Chippewa were hospitable, proud and brave. They were nomadic and tended to live and hunt in small groups and were not readily approached by white missionaries. They called themselves Anishinabe, which means "first man" or "original man." They were called Ojibwa by the neighboring tribes. Ojibwa was later corrupted into Chippewa by the French and British, the name by which they are presently known. The French name for them was Saulters.

The Chippewa were spread over an area which included Lake Huron, Lake Superior, the upper part of Lake Michigan, all the way across the southern part of Canada and the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota. In Michigan, the St. Mary's River is the earliest permanent location for the Chippewa. Around 1650, fear of the Iroquois drove them westward. They returned to the Sault region in the latter part of the 1660's. From this point their occupancy of the Sault region was continuous. Increased numbers of the tribe resulted in settlements at Chaquamegon, Keweenaw, and other places along the southern shore of Lake Superior. The 1700's saw the Chippewa moving south. They were reported at Mackinac, Detroit, L'Arbre Croche (Cross Village), and Saginaw. The Chippewa were participants in all frontier wars up to the close of the War of 1812. In 1815 they joined with neighboring tribes in signing a treaty of peace with the U.S. government. The Chippewa,

though brave and courageous warriors, fought only when they believed war was necessary. They lived in peace with the white settlers and were a peaceful people with themselves and their neighbors.

Economic life among the Chippewa north of Lake Superior consisted of hunting, trapping, and fishing. Their diet was supplemented by agricultural products traded from the south. The groups in upper and lower Michigan usually spent the summer months in a few key areas where the abundance of fish was able to support large populations. They practiced limited agriculture (mosly corn and squash). Hunting, trapping, fishing, and wild food gathering contributed to their subsistence during the summer. During the winter, due to the limited resources which could not support large populations, extended family units left the main group to hunt fur-bearing animals, i.e., deer, beaver, and bear. Their dependence upon hunting, trapping, and fishing resulted in their having a loose social organization and enabled small groups to function alone for long periods of time. Their skill with the bow and arrow, snares, and traps was exceptional. In the spring, groups reunited to begin fishing activities. Maple sugar and wild rice were harvested seasonally. Each season the work was divided into allotments to be harvested by an individual family.

Chippewa Indians were divided into several bands with each band observing hunting, fishing, trapping and food gathering rights over a certain large area.

The Chippewa, one of the bravest tribes of the eastern Algonquians, were strictly disciplined while on the trail. They were usually armed with wooden war clubs, bows and arrows, knives, and hide-covered shields.

Chippewa craftsmanship was demonstrated by their birchbark canoes. For long voyages, the Chippewa traveled by canoe. Otherwise they journeyed on foot in the summer and on snowshoes in the winter.

The dwellings of the Chippewa were of three types: the dome-shaped, cone-shaped, and rectangular. They were usually covered with bark, although animal skins, mats and boughs were also used. These dwellings usually housed a single family. Heating and cooking was done by the use of a central fire with "smoke holes" in the roof directly above the fire.

The clothing of the Chippewa was made from cured and tanned hides and woven fiber. The women's clothing consisted of a long dress, leggings, and moccasins made from deer hide. Underclothes were made of woven nettle fiber. For the colder months, blankets and skin coats made from rabbit and other fur were worn. Men wore breechcloths, long leggings, and moccasins, skin coats and blankets. Both men and women wore some sort of ornamentation which included nose and ear rings, bracelets, necklaces, and various types of beaded articles.

Religious life of the Chippewa was centered around the Midewewin, or Grand Medicine Society. Tribesmen who had experienced supernatural visions were initiated into the society at an annual ceremony,

the aim of which was to bring new and old members into direct contact with the spiritual world. Sick people were sometimes initiated into the society and if cured, they would become life members. A mysterious power or manitou was believed to live in all objects both animate and inanimate. Most dreams were regarded as revelations. Religion was primarily an individual affair with the Chippewa.

With the coming of the white missionary, it can be said that the Chippewa were the least affected by the white invasion. But by the 19th century after having ceded most of their land to the U.S., the Chippewa signed treaties in 1854, 1855, and 1864 to set up the three present-day Michigan Chippewa reservations.

Ottawa

The name Ottawa which comes from "adawa," an Algonquian term meaning "to trade" was bestowed upon this tribe because of their practice of trading with neighboring tribes and the French. They dealt mainly with furs, skins, corn, tobacco, and roots and herbs of medicinal value.

It was in the year of 1615 that Samuel de Champlain encountered the Ottawa. They were then dwelling along the shores of Lake Huron in Canada and the islands in northern Lake Huron. It was during the mid-1600's that the Iroquois began their attack upon the Huron and Ottawa. Upon attack by the Iroquois, the Ottawa began their westward journey which was to take them to Manitoulin Island as well as to Green Bay, Saginaw, Thunder Bay, and the Mackinac area. Around 1650 the tribe consisted of four bands—the Kiskakon, Sinago, Sable, and Nassawaketon. The Kiskakon were considered the most important and numerous group at St. Ignace. In the late 1600's the Sable and Sinago were reported in Detroit. In 1701 Cadillac built Fort Ponchartrain at Detroit and soon Ottawa began living there in increasing numbers. In 1763 Pontiac, a noted chief of the Ottawas, devised a plan for the destruction of British forts and settlements, including the post at Detroit. The uprising was bloody, but successful and eventually ended in peace at Detroit on August 17, 1765.

In the mid 1700's the Ottawa at Mackinac were forced to relocate due to the exhaustion of the soil. They chose L'Arbre Croche (Cross Village) which was to become the principal Ottawa settlement. It was from this area that the Ottawa began to spread in many directions with the main body settling on the east shore of Lake Michigan as far south as the St. Joseph River. Some went to Wisconsin and Illinois while others returned to Manitoulin Island. The Ottawas moved regularly year-round to escape hostile tribes and to secure more productive, fertile soil. They were active in all Indian wars of that region until the end of the War of 1812.

Economic life of the Ottawa consisted of agriculture, hunting, and fishing. The principal agriculture crops being corn, peas, beans, and squash. Each family had its own fields to tend. The women and old men cultivated and harvested the fields. Hunting parties went out from

the village for long periods of time both in the summer and winter. In the summer men usually left the greater part of their families at the village and did not travel as far as the winter hunts. Hunts in the summer were primarily for food while winter hunts were for food as well as pelts for trading.

The Ottawas usually lived in large villages for several seasons. If the location became known, a new location was sought. Since women and the older men were the only ones left in the village, an attack by a hostile tribe could wipe out the entire village. Houses consisted of dome-shaped structures and were usually located near a waterway. Clothing was similar to that of the Potawatomi as was their political and social structure.

Ottawa craftsmanship was illustrated by their excellent woven mats made of reeds and corn husks into which colored designs were also woven. Their use of articles such as earthen vessels, stone knives, and bows and arrows was gradually discontinued when European articles were obtained to replace them.

Religious life observed numerous spirits called "manitous." Good spirits were the sun, lakes, rivers, etc., while bad spirits included cold, storms, and the dragon.

By 1836 the Michigan Ottawas had ceded all their land except reservations. Descendents today are now living in Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Canada as well as in Michigan in scattered settlements and villages.

Potawatomi

The name Potawatomi is derived from the Chippewa language and is interpreted as meaning "People of the place of fire." It is believed that the Potawatomi lived at a very early date in the upper part of the lower peninsula of Michigan but were driven north and west by hostile tribes into the upper peninsula of Michigan and parts of Wisconsin. As of 1640 they were reported at Winnebago on the shores of Green Bay. By 1655 the Potawatomi had migrated south in Michigan to the area of the St. Joseph River. Upon the founding of Detroit in 1701, a large number of Potawatomi settled there. Around 1765 they took possession of part of the state of Illinois. They extended their territory eastward over southern Michigan and gradually spread south to the Wabash River. The Potawatomi were allied with the French until the peace of 1763. They engaged in fighting with Pontiac at Detroit in 1763. By 1800 they dominated the entire region around Lake Michigan from Milwaukee River, Wisconsin to Grand River, Michigan with much of northern Indiana and Illinois. On August 29, 1821, the Ottawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi chiefs signed a treaty in which they gave up their claims to all land in Michigan south of the north bank of the Grand River, but kept five reservations and certain grants of land to individual Indians. Later on September 26, 1833 they signed a treaty in Chicago that ceded most of their reservation lands south of the Grand River.

Between 1815 and 1841 the Potawatomi sold their lands by successive

treaties to the U.S. government, and most of them moved to the Indian Territory in Oklahoma and Kansas. Many of the Indiana Potawatomis refused to leave their homes until driven out by military force. In 1838 an attempt was made to remove the Indians of the lower peninsula to the west. The group hit hardest was the Potawatomi who had sided with the British since 1794 and about 300 of them were assembled and moved to Kansas by the military. Some of them were able to escape and they formed a village located near Athens, Michigan. Other Potawatomi fled to Walpole Island in Lake St. Clair. In this period the Potawatomi in Wisconsin moved northward as the white settlers came in. In 1833 a Methodist missionary found land near Harris, Michigan in Menominee County for some of these Indians. This settlement, now a reservation, was named Hannahville after the wife of the missionary. Potawatomis today live in Wisconsin, Oklahoma, Kansas, as well as on the Potawatomi reservation in Michigan's upper peninsula. The settlement near Athens, (120 acres of land is a State Reservation) other scattered settlements throughout Michigan, and in the province of Ontario in Canada are also areas of significant Potawatomi populations.

Economic life of the Potawatomi consisted mainly of agriculture, hunting, trapping and fishing. They were largely dependent upon agriculture for food. They hunted both in summer and in winter. During the summer the men hunted near the village and returned at night. The winter hunt saw the removal of the entire village to hunt in a new territory as a unit. The shelters of the Potawatomi were similar to those of both the Ottawa and Chippewa. They tended to favor the dome-shaped wigwams and large bark houses. They farmed in the area in which they were residing, raising corn, tobacco, melons, peas, and potatoes.

Clothing of the Potawatomi was made of animal skins and furs. Men wore moccasins, leggings, breechcloths, garters, all usually made of deer skin. In the winter cloth and fur robes were worn for protection against the cold. The dresses of the women reached almost to the knee. Some wore little bonnets and others wore a sort of cowl attached to their dresses. The clothing of both the men and women was decorated with dyed moose hair or porcupine quill embroidery. Bead work on their clothes came into use after the white man introduced beads as a trade item.

The political system of the Potawatomi was similar to that of the other Michigan Indians except that the Chief, who was also the spokesman for the tribe, seemed to possess more power. Like the Chippewa, the tribe was divided into clans each having a name after an animal, fish or bird.

The Potawatomi believed in the Great Spirit as well as other numerous spirits including the Spirit of Fire; of the Water; and spirits of the East, North, West, and South. These latter spirits acted as personal guardian spirits. Like the Chippewa, the Potawatomi religious life was organized around the Midewewin or Grand Medicine Society whose medicine men performed rituals to heal the sick, and to bring general prosperity to the band.

Michigan's Four Indian Reservations

There are no reservations in Michigan in the sense that anyone is compelled to live there. The four tracts of land that are so termed are loosely controlled by the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs through the Great Lakes Agency in Ashland, Wisconsin which itself is under the Minneapolis Area Office.

All of the reservations for Indians in Michigan were organized under the Act of June 18, 1934 (48 Stat. L. 984), known as the Indian Reorganization Act. The reservations are as follows:

Chippewa—The Bay Mills Indian Community—Brimley (Upper Peninsula)

Chippewa—The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community—L'Anse (Upper Peninsula)

Potawatomi—The Hannahville Indian Community—Wilson (Upper Peninsula)

Chippewa—The Saginaw Chippewa Tribe (Isabella)—Mt. Pleasant (Lower Peninsula)

The activities of the Great Lakes Agency, which serves Michigan Indians, radiate to all Field offices and reservations in the States of Michigan and Wisconsin. This work includes not only technical advice and assistance to individual Indians and Indian organizations but functions as a liaison with local, state and Federal individuals and organizations involved in services to Indians. Some of the activities include the administration of land and its resources. This includes the supervised sale of timber, sales and acquisitions of land and the leasing programs of the various tribes.

Education and welfare programs are carried out in cooperation with the States, counties, and private groups and individuals. Other activities include forestry, roads, employment assistance, housing and credit programs.

BAY MILLS INDIAN COMMUNITY: Brimley

The Bay Mills Indian Community is located on the extreme northeastern side of the Upper Peninsula in Michigan and may be reached by traveling on State Highway 221. The village of Bay Mills is five miles west and north of Brimley, Michigan and 20 miles west of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Under the Act of Congress of June 19, 1960, this property was purchased by the U.S. Government to be held in trust for the Bay Mills Indians.

There remains today a total of 2,189 acres of tribal land[1] and the forest cover of this community consists of 1,600 acres. There is considerable amount of lake frontage within this community. The population is estimated at 249. The general standard of living of most families is considerably below the average of the surrounding communities and

1. Reservation or Tribal lands—Tribal controlled.

many families are receiving general assistance. Income for Bay Mills is fishing and woods work and off-reservation employment is in the urban area of Sault Ste. Marie on the Great Lakes ship lines.

HANNAHVILLE INDIAN COMMUNITY: Wilson

The Hannahville Indian Community is located just off U.S. Highway 2, 17 miles west of Escanaba, Michigan. These lands were purchased in 1913 by an Act of Congress, except 39 acres purchased in 1942. There is today a total of 3,408 acres of tribal land and 2,846 acres of forest land. The area is generally comprised of creeks and second growth timber. It is estimated that the population of the Hannahville Indian Community is 134. This community is located in a depressed area and the rate of unemployment is high. Many of the families, therefore, receive assistance from the State or county. Preferring woods work as their source of employment they sometimes travel as far as 100 miles to obtain it.

KEWEENAW BAY INDIAN COMMUNITY: L'Anse

The L'Anse Reservation is located in northern Michigan, 70 miles west of Marquette. It was established in 1854 by a treaty between the Lake Superior Chippewas and the United States. The reservation is made up of two districts, Baraga and L'Anse. The Baraga and the L'Anse Communities are located on U.S. Highway 41 on the shores of Keweenaw Bay. The Keweenaw Bay Community also has a small amount of land located in Ontonagon, Michigan.

There remains today a total of 13,749 acres under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Of this total 1,609 acres are tribal land, 8,124 acres are allotted land,[2] and 4,016 acres are U.S. Title land. Forest cover is approximately 11,440 acres. The village of Baraga is located on the west side of Keweenaw Bay and the village of L'Anse is located on the east side. There are two rivers that flow through the reservation and these rivers are nationally known for trout fishing.

At the present time, there are 281 Indians living on the reservation. The standard of living is low due to poor or inadequate housing on restricted acreage and lack of personal funds to build homes, therefore, many have moved to the villages of the Keweenaw Bay area.

SAGINAW CHIPPEWA TRIBE (ISABELLA): Mt. Pleasant

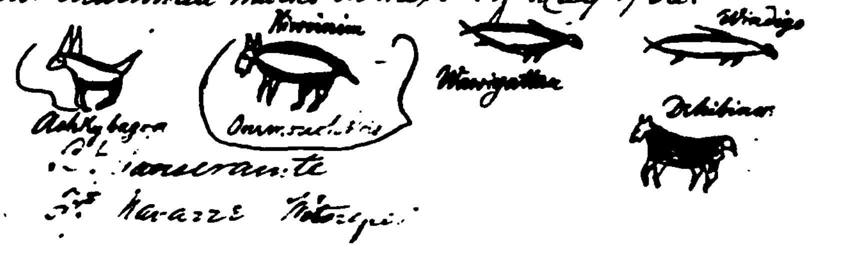
The Saginaw Chippewa Community is located at Mt. Pleasant on U.S. Highway 27. The Isabella Reservation is located in Isabella County in the north central part of the lower peninsula of the State of Michigan and approximately three miles east of the city of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. The Isabella Reservation was established by the Treaties of 1885 and 1864. Today there is a total of 1,223 acres of Indian land of which 506 acres are tribal land and 717 acres are allotted land. 373 acres are classified as woodland. The locale is predominantly a flat plain area

2. Allotted land–Privately owned, tax free, under government trust, formerly reservation land.

Deed by Pottawattamie Chiefs to Pierre Labady.

Translated by Rudolph Worch & D. J. Kruely, Editors — Michigan Folks[?] Francais[?]

We the chiefs of the Pouthiwatamis Nation of the Detroit after having deliberated upon the ~~State~~ actual state of the lands which we leave uncultivated since long with the advice and consent of and in the name of the entire nation have determined to give a portion thereof to our friend Pierre Labady, containing three arpents front on the River Raisin at the right in ascending the said river and maintaining the same depth as the other lands heretofore given away up to a hundred arpents adjacent to the said land on one side down the river is that of Mr Jean Baptiste Lasseraute and on the other side up the river, that of the widow lady of Alexis Lamereau and for the good friendship which we bear him we light for him a fire of peace and tranquillity warranting to him from now and forever the said piece of land herein described that he may enjoy it without any hindrance whatever. For this purpose we have made our accustomed marks on the 15th of May 1786.



J. B. Lasseraute
Jn. Navarre Notary

best suited for agricultural uses. It is estimated that the current Indian population is 345.

The majority of the Chippewa population is employed in neighboring industrial communities, but seasonal agricultural work seems to be the main source of income of semi-skilled and unskilled Indian workers. The skilled workers find little difficulty in obtaining adequate employment throughout the year. Compared to other Indian reservations in the State of Michigan, the general condition of Indian housing is considered good. However, when compared to non-Indian communities, the homes are in poor condition—repairs to most homes are needed immediately.

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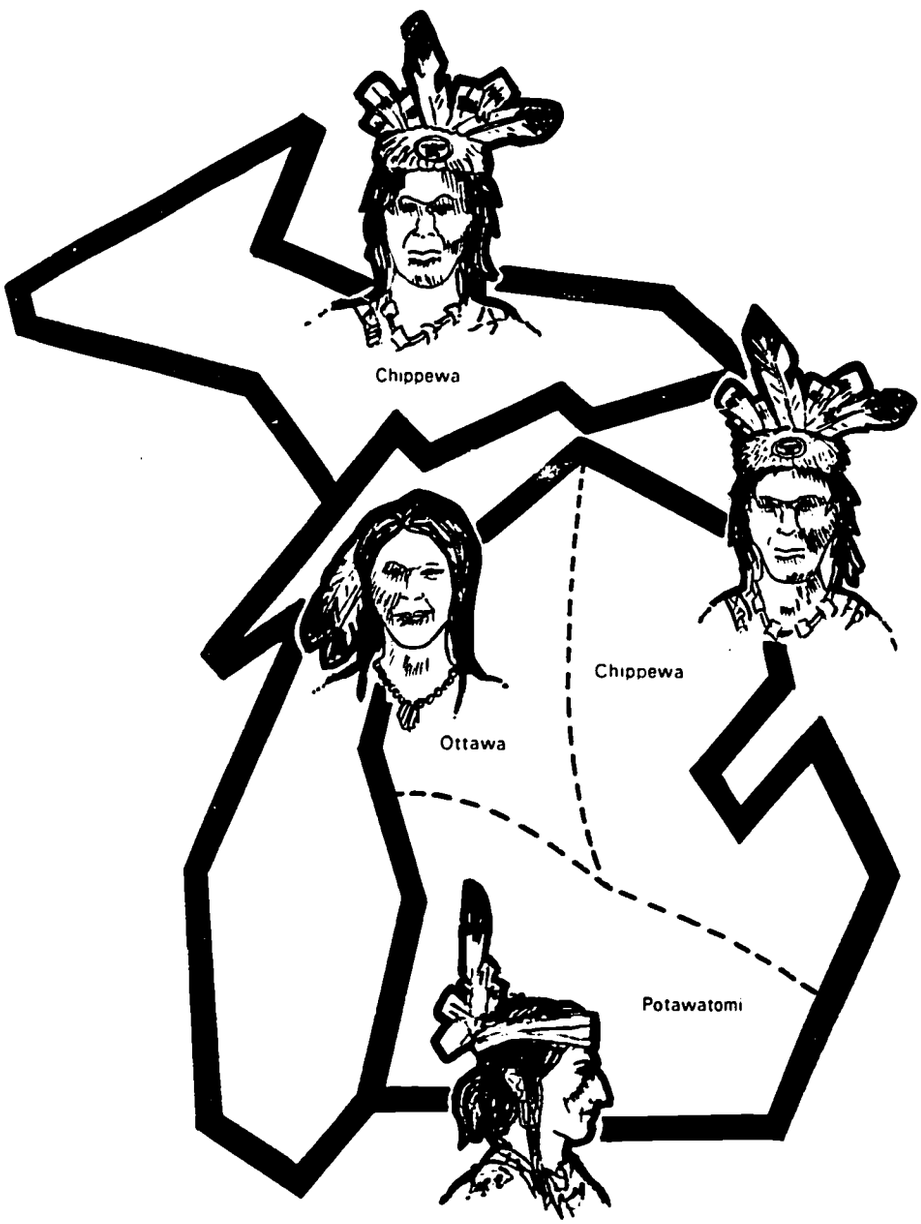
Chippewa
Chippewa
Ottawa
Potawatomi

AN INDIAN CHILD

An Ojibway (Chippewa) baby in a Western-type Indian cradle. NOTE the embroidered animal hide cover on the wood frame.

Courtesy Marquette County Historical Society.

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