

Wigwam Script

I. Welcome (talk about the Wabash R.)

Welcome: to the Forks of the Wabash. Where is the Wabash R.? (they should point) Can you tell me something important that you know about the Wabash River. (elicit that it is Indiana's longest river - 475 mi. long, and that it is now our state river. Other answer acceptable as long as they are true)

What does it mean when we say the river forks? (two rivers come together or split) Tell that the Forks of the Wabash was an important landmark for the Indians as they canoed this river. That just beyond the bridge is where the Wabash continues on to its source in Ohio to the right and to the left it becomes what is known as the Little River and it continues on almost to Fort Wayne. You would have to carry you canoe a distance of 8 or more miles to the Maumee where you could then to on to Lake Erie. What is it called when you have to carry your canoe? (Portage) This is known as the Long Poratage, but it is the shortest route from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River so many were willing to carry their canoes over this portage. Where Ft. Wayne is today used to be the Miami Indian capital. What was it called? (Kekionga) It had 3000 wigwams and was the home of our famous chief - Little Turtle. Later the capital of our nation was moved here to the Forks because Chief Richardville wanted us to be further away from the influence of the white man.

II. Miami Indians

A. Home:

What Woodland Indian Tribe lived in this area 300 years ago? (Miami) Imagine what the land must have been like when they lived here before any white man had come. What sounds might you have heard in the forest? (wind, water, birds, animals etc.) If you had been here you would have lived in at dense forest of large trees. They say that if you and I would have tried to join hands around one of these trees that our hands may not have even touched. Look at these two large trees here. Aren't they beautiful? This forest contained even larger trees that had never been cut and were many years old. Everything we needed would come from the forest. What might we need from the forest? (food, clothing, homes, etc.) Come let me show you our home. (Walk towards the uncovered wigwam) as you ask if they knew what name the Miami used for their home - wigwam. Tell the girls that it would be their job as women to build the wigwam. What would they need from the forest to build their wigwam? (Saplings) notice that this wigwam needs rebuilt and that it would be their job to do so. Notice that it is shaped like an upside-down bowl. That the saplings are joined at the top and tied at each joint. Boys it would be your job to hunt the deer and use a tendon or sinew to tie each joint. The tendon is pounded and long, tough, stringy substance is then used to tie each joint and as it dries it tightens like leather. They may have experienced this when their shoes get wet.

Now look at the finished wigwam. What do you see that you would not get from the forest?

(Canvas - it is sailcloth taken from sailing ship which brought the first white traders to this part of the country) Before the white man came, skins of large animals were used. You men would have had to hunt for these. Why do you girls think that the women would like to have a sailcloth to cover you wigwam? (keeps out the rain) Why would you boys be glad to have it? (you would not have to hunt it) Point out the cattail mats. Can they guess what they were made from? (cattails - give hints if necessary) the women would have to sew these together with their bone needles. The needles often broke. These mats were used in the winter like insulation. I often wonder what it would have been like for the Indians to live in zero degree weather. Sometimes they might use 2 or 3 layers of mats around the wigwam. However in the summer they could be removed to let the breezes in. Can you remember how hot Indiana can get in the summer? I would like to invite you to come into my wigwam. You may sit Indian style on the blankets that are on the floor. Please remember to look around, but not to touch anything.

B. Clothing, Tools, and French Traders:

This is a small wigwam. A larger one would be built for a larger family. Sometimes longhouses would be build for gatherings. A firepit would be in the center with a opening for the smoke. When the fire was built the heat wouldelicit rise and circulate around making it very cozy.

You notice that our life began to change when the white men came in the 1700 and 1800. Before they came all our tools were made of stone. (Show the ax and hammerstone and arrowheads) Indians often came to this area because there was a large deposit of flint near where Memorial Park is and they came to get flint to make their points. Show flint piece and pass it around. How many of you have been lucky enough to find an arrowhead? The men of the tribe were the hunters and had to knap their points out of flint. Flint breaks in horizontal flakes and can be brought to a sharp edge by pressing the edges with a deer antler or struck with a stone. It was very difficult to do. Before the first traders came all tools were made of stone, wood, or bones. When the traders came, they brought with them an easier way of hunting. What was it? (gun) Now our life was easier. Also look at what I am wearing. Before the traders came, my clothing would be made of skins. Now I could buy calico material. Also, girls, I now can buy steel needles that won't break so easily. (show) I can buy ribbon to decorate my blouse and skirt, and beads. (Show) Where were most of the 1st traders from? France because the French first claimed this land. (Robert de LaSalle) Others followed and what riches did they find in this land? (the furs) So when they came they wanted the furs that the Indians hunted. What was the most valuable fur that they wanted? (the beaver) Coats, hats, and muffs were made from them. They could take them back to France and get rich. We could also get things we needed from them: Guns, calico, things made of steel etc. This made our life easier but, it also made us more dependent on the white men and changed our way of life. Some of this was good and some was bad.

II. The Americans:

Many Indian wars took place defending our Indian lands. Can you name some. (Fr. & In.

War, Battle of Fallen Timbers, Little Turtle defeated the Indians 3 times) One major war was fought in 1776 which gave the Americans this land. Can you name it? (Rev. War) Now the Indians had to deal with the Americans. As a result of the war, Great Britain had to give up land they had claimed to the Americans as far west as the Mississippi R. That is the land that you are sitting on. The Americans thought that they had a right to this land because they had fought for it. They forgot that the Indians had lived on the land before they had come. So the Indians and the United States government made a total of 33 treaties with the Indians. The Americans gave a "treaty medal" each time to promise the Indians that they would keep their word. Guess how many times that they broke their word? (33) - show treaty medal - notice the president's picture on one side and the shaking of hands on the other, meaning that they will keep their word. Do you remember the Treaty of Greenville? Where the Indians were given the Indian lands of Indiana if the Americans could settle on the lands of Ohio. They broke that treaty and we later became the State of Indiana. (Remember, Indiana means "Land of the Indians".)

Removal:

The last 3 treaties were made here at the Forks of the Wabash. Chief Richardville and LaFontaine signed them. The treaty marker stone in back of this wigwam show the dates of 1834, 1838, and 1841. They sold the land to the U.S. government for silver. It also said the the Miami must move to Kansas. So in 1846 Chief LaFontaine went with his tribe to Kansas. Only half of the tribe had to go. (Divide group in half and tell half they had to go, but the other half got to stay. Why do you think they got to stay? They were related to Chief Richardville. He and his relatives were granted a piece of land for them to stay on. How would the rest of you feel?) Later half of those who went to Kansas had to move again and they were moved to Oklahoma. So today we have many descendants of the Miami living in this area. There is a recognized tribe in Oklahoma. They have a Chief - Chief Leonard. He comes in visit us on special occasions. There is also a chief of the Indiana Miami. Their council often meets here at the Forks of the Wabash.

As you leave here to go to the home of Chief Richardville, notice how differently they live. You were good listeners. Thank you for coming.