

This was *their* place

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We call this land Myaamionki, the place of the Miami. But there were, and are, many other people here—so, we also call it Mihtohseenionki (The People's Place).

– Daryl Baldwin (Miami Tribe of Oklahoma)

Today, it is called “Indiana.” The first settlers, Native Americans, called it by many names, including *myaamionki* and *mihtohseenionki*, which mean roughly the same thing: “Land of the Indians.” This was their place, long before it was Indiana. They lived here in harmony with themselves, with the ways of Mother Earth and with the unseen spiritual powers of the Creator. They relied on their families, and they relied on the land. Many believed they had sprang from the earth, because it, she, was the source of everything. Traditional Native Americans today, in Indiana and elsewhere, maintain these relationships, even though they live in a modern world.

Specifically, this land we call Indiana was The Miami's Place, The Wea's Place, and The Piankashaw's Place. The southeastern tip was The Shawnee's Place, and the parts farthest north were The Potawatomi's Place.

No doubt when visitors come to “Indian”-a and its capitol, “Indian”-apolis, they expect to find lots of Native Americans. And they are here, but not in the numbers that once existed. When the *waapikilookiaki* (a Miami term meaning “those with white skin,” pronounced wah-pay-kay-LOO-kee-AH-kee) appeared on the eastern coast of the continent, the country was already full—in Native terms. But the Native Americans welcomed the newcomers and made a place for them to sit on their buffalo robe, because there was plenty of room.

Soon, though, there were more white people. And more. And more. The newcomers needed more and more space, pushing the tribes onto a small corner of their buffalo robe.

And as more kept coming from across the waters, there was no room left.

The white people demanded that the Native Americans move, and move, and move. Like a dark, roiling storm, they had overcome the tribes in the east, and were looking westward over the mountains that they called the Appalachians. In this region, the newcomers pushed out the Native Americans who called the Ohio land home and those who had made a new home there after being pushed out of the east. The Miami here made space for them.

But the space ran out. The newcomers took Miami land first from the south, so the Indians moved north; everyone there made room for them. Eventually, the newcomers wanted more land, and many of them said they didn't want to even be *near* Indians. So the newcomers told—and often forced—the Indians to keep moving.

And many did, taking with them handfuls of the soil so dear to them, that held the centuries past and their ancestors before them and, they had thought, the promise of their futures. From 1805 to 1846, the majority of the Miami Nation, the Potawatomi Nation and the Delaware Nation made their way to foreign lands in present-day Kansas and Missouri*. And once again they were forced to move, with many settling in Oklahoma. Through special acts of Congress or the President, a handful of extended families, totaling about 300 people, were allowed to stay in the Indiana region.

*The Indiana Miami have questioned the accuracy of the historical record concerning the number of Miami relocated in 1846.

INTRODUCTION

But all these tribes still call the Indiana region home. Many stayed in the Indiana region, and many returned. They formed the core of the Miami Indians of Indiana and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. And many others, whose ancestors moved into this region during the upheaval, live here, too—the Shawnee, the Winnebago, the Ojibwa. Even other Native Americans, who come from much farther away, live in Indiana now. They still maintain ties to their rich tribal heritage. But they live and work in the modern world, just like everyone else.

First People, First Pioneers

Native Americans were the first pioneers, exploring and occupying every corner of this continent for thousands of years before the Europeans came. Almost everyone came to Indiana from someplace else, even most of the Native Americans who lived here. All Indian nations living in the Midwest are part of the Woodlands Culture Area, comprised of tribes whose cultures were based on the resources of the vast forests in the eastern United States. Aboriginal Indiana was unique because it had both forests and prairie grasslands.

Woodlands tribes lived in framed houses covered with large sheets of bark that they peeled from trees. The Potawatomi and the Miami preferred dome-shaped houses, called a *wiikiaami* by the Miami; these were seasonally covered with bark or cattail mats. Other nations, such as the Delaware, lived in long houses with domed or peaked roofs.

Most Woodland household utensils, like bowls and spoons, were made from wood or bark. Baskets were woven from thin wood splints. Soft bags, woven of inner bark, were all-purpose storage containers. Their mode of water transportation was the dugout canoe, hollowed from a tree.

The foods they ate included corn, beans and squash. Women tended gardens, and also gathered wild fruits, nuts and other edible plants. Men supplemented this diet by hunting and fishing. Buffalo, fairly common in Indiana, were a source of food, materials and clothing; buffalo skins were tanned and made into clothing, sewn with animal sinew and decorated with porcupine quill embroidery or paintings. Beads for necklaces and bracelets were made from shell, bone or stone.



A Miami Indian called Kentuck

George Winter, watercolor and ink on paper, ca 1838

Image courtesy of Tippecanoe County Historical Association

Making a Living at Kekionga

Native Americans have always been practical, selecting and adapting new materials and ideas to create something uniquely their own. This model of cultural survival continues today.

For centuries, extensive trade routes connected the farthest corners of the continent, bringing foodstuffs and raw materials from the eastern seaboard to the Rocky Mountains. The tribes of the Indiana region, with territories astride three of the primary waterways in the Midwest (the Ohio river, Wabash River and Great Lakes region), had major centers of trade such as Kekionga (now Fort Wayne, Indiana) on the Maumee River, and Cahokia in Illinois. These functioned as free trade zones, where friends and enemy tribes mingled to exchange goods.

For centuries, Kekionga, a Miami trade center, was a key point. Located at the portage between the Maumee and Wabash rivers, it connected trade routes extending east to the Atlantic Ocean and south to the Gulf of Mexico. As at other key business crossroads throughout the world, community members probably had to be able to speak several languages, to have keen negotiating skills and a great ability to work with people from different backgrounds.

The Miami produced a trade item that was in very high demand—Miami corn. Dried corn had to be pounded to turn it into flour—normally a difficult task—but Miami corn is easily turned into fine flour. Consequently, it was in high demand and traded widely at Kekionga.

Fur Trade Wars and Treaties

Native Americans from the Midwest region, like Native people throughout the United States, have struggled to survive a very long period of sanctioned effort to relieve them of their land and their cultures. The founding of the United States of America in 1776 is often heralded as the coming of freedom and the rights of the common man. In reality, it was achieved at the expense of the indigenous peoples who formerly lived in and owned the land along the eastern seaboard of North America.

The fur trade, established in the 17th and 18th centuries by Europeans and Euro-Americans, relied on the trade routes that indigenous peoples had established long ago. This exchange of animal pelts for manufactured goods brought many new and beneficial products to Native Americans, including textiles, firearms and metal implements and containers. As eastern forests became over-hunted and fur supplies dwindled, trade moved westward. Tribes fought for control of the market for furs and trade goods. During the 1600s, conflicts with the Iroquois caused many tribes in the Indiana region to move west of Lake Michigan, near present-day Wisconsin.

After peace was established in the early 1700s, the Miami, Wea and Piankashaw gradually returned to their traditional homelands on the Wabash and St. Joseph rivers along the current Indiana/Michigan border. The Potawatomi, Illinois, Kickapoo, Mascouten and others followed.



Topash couple
(Pokagon
Band of
Potawatomi)
Image courtesy
of Rae Daugherty
(Pokagon Band
of Potawatomi)

Prior to the American Revolution, official business with Native Americans, like everything else in colonial America, was handled by the King of England's bureaucracy from the other side of the Atlantic. The land claim rights of Native peoples were largely considered a nuisance and were dispensed of as quickly, conveniently, and cheaply as possible. A little more than a decade before the revolution, the British established "The Proclamation Line of 1763," a boundary along the peaks of the Appalachian Mountains, to prevent conflict between the tribes and intruding colonists. It was against the law for white settlers to pass beyond that line.

The Americans had learned to deal with indigenous nations a little better than the English, probably because they were nearer to and dependent upon Native knowledge for survival in the New World. Americans clearly recognized Native tribes as independent nations. After 1776, the U.S. Government had first right of purchase should Native Americans decide to sell their lands. But once the British were defeated, hordes of settlers moved westward over the mountains, crossing the proclamation line. This pattern of expansionism would repeat itself throughout the history of the frontier.

Indiana tribes recognized and responded to this threat by forming alliances with other tribes, even with former enemies. Tribes opposing American expansion included the Shawnee, Canadian Iroquois, Wyandot, Mingo, Ottawa, Miami, Kickapoo, Delaware, Ottawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Fox and Sauk. In 1790, after efforts at a peaceful settlement failed, Miami war chief Little Turtle and an estimated 800 warriors defeated the invading army of Colonel Josiah Harmar near present-day Fort Wayne. A year later, General Arthur St. Clair's battalion was also soundly defeated in western Ohio, suffering the most losses of any U.S. Army in battles with Native peoples.

In 1794, General Anthony Wayne recruited and rigorously trained a new legion; he defeated the tribal alliance at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, on Miami land. The resulting Greenville Treaty of 1795 required the Miami and other tribes to surrender most of the present state of Ohio and western Pennsylvania.

INTRODUCTION

After the Treaty of Greenville, the main groups of Delaware and Shawnee moved into the present state of Indiana with the consent of the Miami, whose traditional territory included all of what is now Indiana and western Ohio. With this action, the Miami both helped their allies and astutely established a buffer between themselves and the ever-expanding colonies.

The loss of Native territories helped lead to the War of 1812. Shawnee chief Tecumseh and his brother, the Prophet, tried to organize a new alliance of tribes who occupied lands extending from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. Aware that war was coming, General William Henry Harrison delivered a preemptive strike in 1811 on the Prophet at Prophetstown, and the intertribal alliance was broken. Tecumseh was later killed at the Battle of the Thames in Canada, which ended the war.

According to oral tradition, nearly every treaty the U.S. government made with Native Americans was delivered with these words: "As long as the grass will grow and the waters flow, the remaining lands will be yours."

This promise was made so often that it is ingrained in the hearts of Native Americans. But it was broken over and over again, throughout a long period as Indians were removed westward. (See the maps on pages 16 and 17 for more information.) Some tribes moved of their own accord. Then, in 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, mandating the relocation of tribes to lands west of the Mississippi.

On Being a Native American

For Native Americans, identity is a complex issue. Sometimes, it seems that the general public forces us to prove our identity or to "measure up" to their expectations of what a Native American is supposed to be. "Indian reservations" are also misunderstood. Many people envision all manner of poverty and suffering when they hear the word "reservation." While there is some truth to that perception, the strength and resilience of our communities have allowed unique tribal cultures to survive. For many Native Americans, the reservation always has been and will always be our home.

Having a space, or land base, where a group

can perpetuate its cultural heritage is critical for its survival as a distinct population. Think of Chinatown or Little Russia in New York City, or the Polish community in Chicago. Reservations provide that same connectedness for tribal Native Americans. Importantly, many reservations are located within the original lands the tribes held before the European invasion.

Tribal cultures, languages, and religious beliefs have also survived in reservation communities across this country. Unfortunately, this knowledge has had to be maintained by a dwindling number of elders. It's important to remember that Native Americans today are recovering from a long period of aggressive official attempts to eliminate our traditional knowledge and to make us part of the American mainstream. We have experienced tremendous cultural loss. Since the 1960s, however, a healthy sense of individual and tribal identity and interest in indigenous cultural traditions has been rekindled among Indian people nationwide.

Land of My Blood

Native Americans have much to teach their fellow Americans. In many traditional Woodlands cultures, for example, women play significant roles in tribal government, besides caring for their families and other tribal members. Elders help pass along knowledge about cultural ways, and look after and educate the younger generation about the responsibilities they will assume. Art, which is based on the environment and its natural resources, is everywhere in Native American cultures. A common everyday object might be carved or painted with an image intended as a silent prayer, for protection or guidance when the object is used. Traditional Native American art was not realistic, but symbolic of the internal essence of an object, because only the Creator could create life.

And traditional Native Americans have always been tolerant of one another's beliefs. They respect that everyone is free to find his or her own sense of place and balance in life. Historically, every Native person had a right to speak during council meetings—men, women, the elderly, children, crying babies. Everybody got up and spoke their minds on an issue!

Decisions were and still are generally made by group consensus.

Wherever they live, Woodland tribes still select their own leaders, but it is through a “democratic” American process mandated by the federal government, complete with Americanized symbols of office. Today, however, Americans, and even some Native Americans, seem to think that America invented democracy, forgetting how our ancestors lived when Europeans first met these free men and women.

But perhaps the greatest “gift” of Native Americans to this nation has been their land.

Most Native American cultures refer to the earth as Mother Earth because she gives birth to living things, to plants and vegetation. She feeds all living things with the many fruits of her body, just as a mother feeds her children. Our cultures were formed from the resources she provides to us.

For many Native people, Earth was the Mother, the Sun, the Father, and Morning Star, their son. Many indigenous nations have origin stories describing how they originally came from the sky, so they see the stars and constellations as their relatives. One can never feel alone because relatives are literally everywhere. Death is the return of our physical body to the womb of the mother, the Earth, from which we all came, providing her the ingredients to make new life. So when Native Americans in the Indiana Woodlands were pressured to give up their lands and move, it must have been difficult, because, truly, the land was of their flesh and blood.

The influence of Native Americans is visible throughout this state. Probably the majority of the names of Indiana’s rivers and streams are of Native origin, or associated in some way with the history and culture of Native Americans. Usually, a Native name is associated with a prominent natural feature; the name for the “Wabash” River, for example, was “*Waapaahšiiki*,” which refers to a riverbed of white limestone found on the upper part of the river.

So it is ironic that the United States government continues to chip away at the sovereignty of the Indian tribes that had shown such respect for the ways that white people conducted their affairs. Even after all the land was taken away

from Native Americans, the newcomers weren’t satisfied. They began to take back even their recognition of the tribes. An 1854 treaty formally recognized the Miami Tribe of Indians of Indiana, but in 1897, a department of the government rescinded that recognition—even though only Congress has the right to do so. The Miami were only the first of many tribes the federal government said no longer existed. In the Midwest, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi of northern Indiana and southern Michigan, formally recognized in several treaties, saw their recognition withdrawn in 1939.

These tribes weren’t considered Indian because they no longer had any land to call their own.

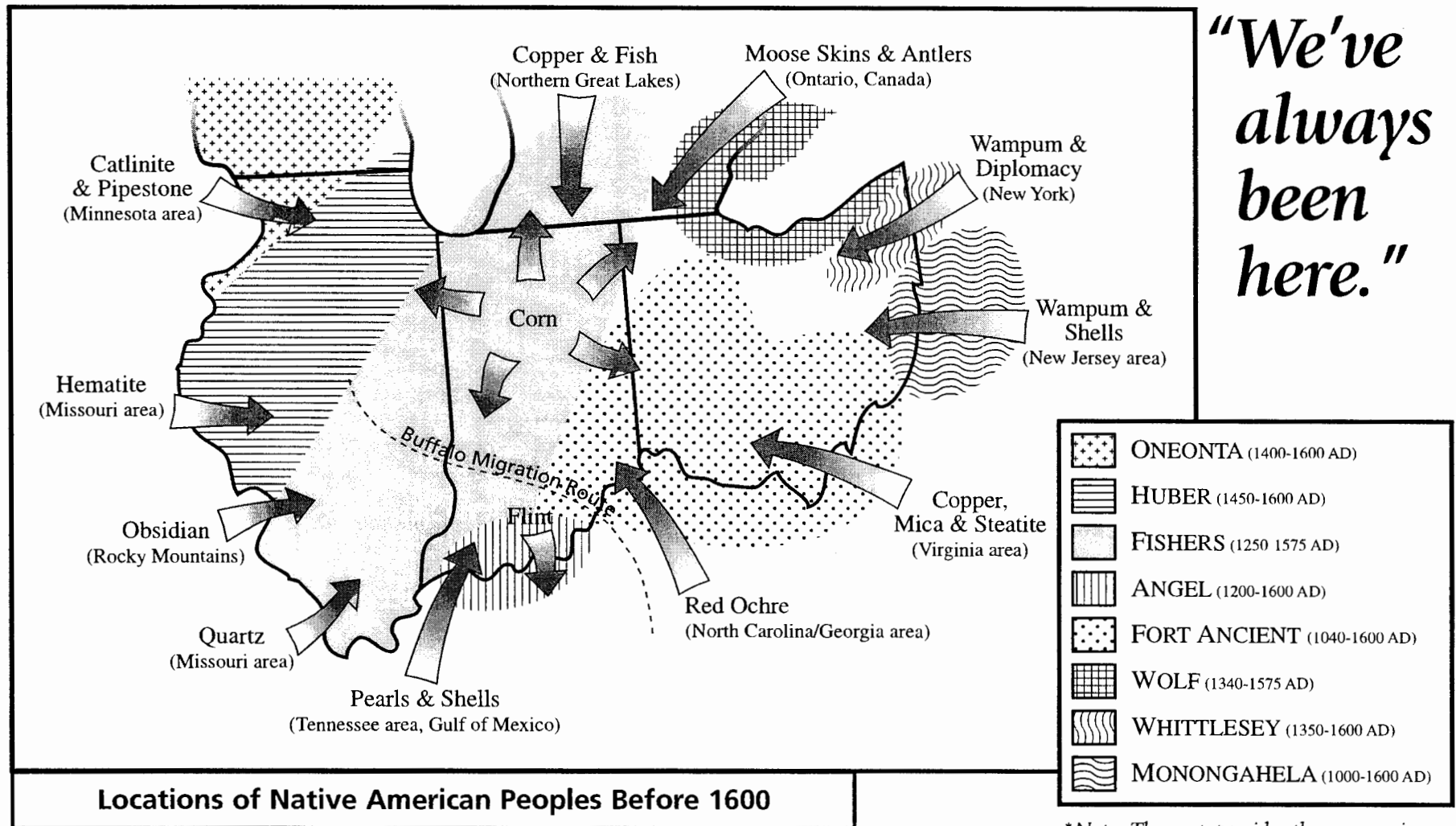
The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi’s federal recognition was restored in 1994 by President Bill Clinton. The Indiana Miami haven’t been so lucky. The government didn’t set guidelines for acknowledging Indian tribes until 1978. In 1984, the Miami submitted a petition to the U.S. Interior Department to restore federal recognition of their tribe, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs denied it in 1992. And on February 19, 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a ruling by the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the Indiana Miami were no longer a tribe as defined by the U.S. government.

It is critical that Native Americans be awarded the respect they deserve as members of sovereign nations; it is critical that we all understand that we are inextricably connected to one another. If the earth is the mother of all living things, then we are all related!



Mildred Walker
(Miami Tribe of
Oklahoma),
2001
Photo: Julie Olds
(Miami Tribe of
Oklahoma)

Peoples of the Indiana Region	
Myaamiaki (The Miami People): Miami	Once known as <i>tweehtwee</i> (the People of the Crane), the Miami are a central Algonquian tribe who originally lived in present-day Indiana and western Ohio region. Today, the Miami Nation of Indians of Indiana has offices in Peru, Indiana. The Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, federally-recognized, has offices in Miami, Okla.
Bodewadmi (Keepers of the Fire): Potawatomi	Also known as <i>nishnabe'h</i> (True Humans), the Potawatomi lived throughout the Great Lakes regions. Today, there are several bands of Potawatomi living in Indiana, Michigan, Kansas and Oklahoma.
Lenape (The Original People): Delaware	The Delaware originally lived in the east along the Delaware River and were among the first tribes to encounter the newcomers. They moved farther west several times. Today, there are five main tribes of Delaware, two in Oklahoma and three in Canada.
Sawanwa (People of the South): Shawnee	The original homelands of the Shawnee were probably in southern Ohio, but during the Fur Trade, they moved east to live with the Delaware. By 1760, they had returned to Ohio. Today, there are two federally-recognized tribes of Shawnee—one in Oklahoma, one in Missouri. Many Shawnee also live in Indiana and Ohio.
Waayahtanwa (Place of the Curved Channel): Wea	The Wea, along with the Piankashaw, were originally one tribe with the Miami. After separating (before contact with Europeans), they still maintained common language, kinship, culture and territory. During the Removal period, the Wea and Piankashaw moved West several times, eventually joining with Peoria Tribe in Oklahoma. Some Wea still live in the Indiana region.
Peeyankiŋia (Those Who Separate): Piankashaw	The Piankashaw, along with the Wea, were originally one tribe with the Miami. After separating (before contact with Europeans), they still maintained common language, kinship, culture and territory. During the Removal period, the Piankashaw and the Wea moved farther West several times, eventually joining with the Peoria in Oklahoma.
Kiwigapaw (He Stands About): Kickapoo	After the fur trade wars, the Kickapoo moved into western Illinois and Indiana region. They moved West several times, with tribes located today in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Mexico.
Muskuta (Little Prairie People): Mascouten	After the Fur Trade wars, some Mascouten returned to their homeland in southern Michigan and some moved to the Illinois/Indiana region. A decline in population in the late 1700s forced them to join the Kickapoo. They do not survive today as a tribal entity.
Inoca (Uncertain): Illinois Confederacy	Illinois refers to several related tribes including the Illini, Kaskaskia and Cahokia, who were united by a common language. After 1830, they were pushed out of Illinois. In the 1850s, they merged with the Peoria in Kansas and relocated with them to Oklahoma.
Hocagra or Ho-Chunk (Big Fish/Great Voice): Winnebago	Their original homelands are west of Lake Michigan in present-day Wisconsin. After they sold their homelands for lands in Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska, some moved there and some were able to use the 1862 Homestead Act to purchase back some of their land in Wisconsin.
Odawa (Traders): Ottawa	The Ottawa are a member of the Anishnabe, which includes the Potawatomi and Chippewa. Their original homelands were in northern Michigan. Today they have several tribal communities in western Michigan.
Asakiwaki (Yellow Earths): Sauk Meskwahkihaki (Red Earths): Fox	Originally two independent tribes, the Sauk & Fox lived west of Lake Michigan. In 1733, the Fox (defeated by the French) sought shelter with the Sauk. Both were eventually removed to Kansas. In the 1840s, the Fox went to Iowa and took their name for themselves, Mesquakie. The others were removed to Oklahoma and became known as the Sac & Fox.
Wendat (One Language): Wyandot	The Wyandot are comprised of survivors of the Huron and Petun tribes destroyed by the Iroquois around 1650 during the Fur Trade wars. Coalescing in northwest Ohio as the Wyandot, they were relocated to Kansas in 1832, then to northeast Oklahoma in 1856. They presently reside in Wyandotte, Okla.



This map shows several cultures that lived here before the Europeans arrived in the 1600-1700s. Archaeologists can't definitely tie these cultures to the Miami, Kickapoo, Shawnee and others. But the tribes can. They say they've always been here.

**Note: The map provides the names given to these cultures by archaeologists, not the names of the people for themselves.*

