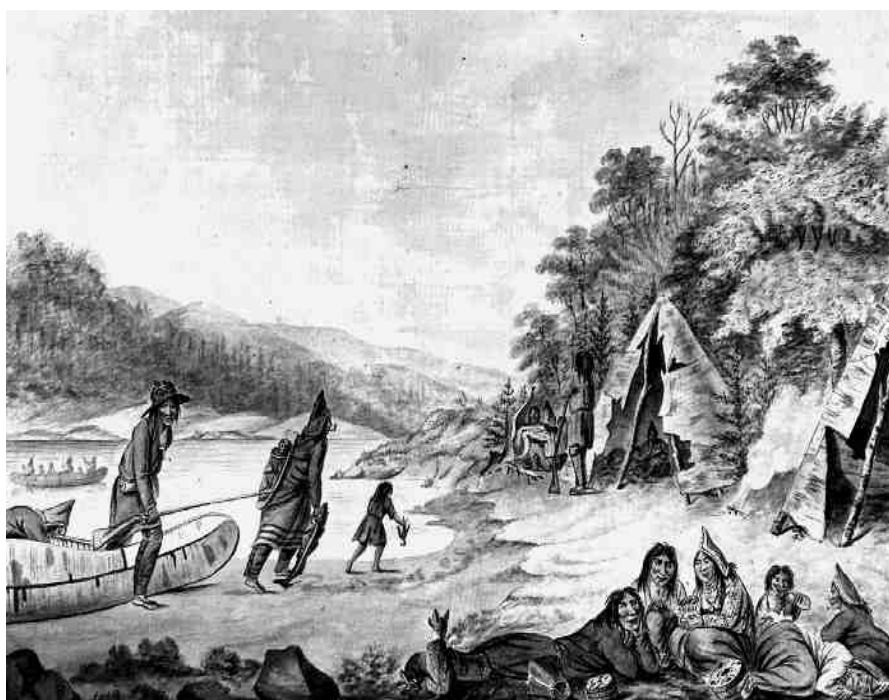


PEOPLE OF THE DAWN
Maine Micmac



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Spring 2002

PEOPLE OF THE DAWN Maine Mic Macs

I. Description of Culture

A. Demographics, Population and Territory

- Estimated to be 25,000 registered Micmacs.
- 700 in the Aroostook Band of Northern Maine, and over 2,000 in Boston and New York.

B. History:

- Since 1500 Micmacs have occupied most of SE Canada and N. Maine.
- Jay Treaty of 1794: granted free border crossing rights
- Residential schools (early 1900s) established by white government with Catholic Church involvement to erase Native culture and language by placing them in white run institutions. Children were removed without consent of parents and given little contact with family. They were punished for speaking own language and taught to be “white.”

C. Food:

- Lots of cold water fish, wild game
- Dandelion greens, fiddleheads, and other native greens, wild berries & fruit.

D. Language/ Communications

- Verb (action) based rather than noun (object) based.
- Words are ‘powerful’ so they are not wasted. Patient may only communicate what *they feel is important*.
- Impolite/undesirable to directly tell a person what to do. Advice is often given through use of a ‘story’ of a similar situation.
- Circle in Language: balance between speaker-listener
- Words can affect the natural world. Verbalizing negatives may cause them to manifest.
- Micmacs have similar greetings and body space as western culture.

E. Holidays & other Celebrations

- During many of their celebrations they utilize Sweat Lodges: After the sunrise ceremony is the purification of one’s self (the inner & outer). Many of those participating and entering the sweat lodges have fasted 4-6 days (no water or food). Hot water vapor inside the lodges cleans an individual inside and out. Applying water to hot stones forms the vapor. They breathe in the vapors plus it enters the body through the pores. Medicines are sometimes placed on the hot stones and enters the body through the vapor.
- Types of lodges: Cleansing lodge, Healing lodge (very powerful), spiritual lodge, sick/medicine lodge

F. Religion:

- Religion & Spirituality are 2 separate things. They do not contradict each other

- Catholic: they follow most Catholic traditions. The majority do not believe in abortion or birth control.
- Spirituality: Cycle of Life
 - We are born – we eat and nourish ourselves along our journey both spiritually and physically – until we are ready to hibernate or transform to different dimension. Life does not end here on earth. Our body is just a vessel we need to care for on earth. Death is actually a new beginning in a better world. If we have led a rich, healthy and wise life our spirit's journey is smooth.
 - Death: Do not mourn for a long time. Taught not to cry, traditionally almost happy, yet sad. Those buried are in the fetal position like they entered the world. Death is just another part of the adventure.
- Medicine Wheel : Represents wholeness and a desire for balance
 - All things are interrelated and can be understood through their connection with other things
 - Med. Wheel should be held horizontally to recognize world above and below.
 - ✓ Natural World Medicine Wheel: Represents 4 elements: Earth, Air, Water, Fire with the center being People.
 - ✓ Ways of Knowing Wheel: science (mental/physical) vs. oral history (balanced) 4 areas: Mind/Mental, Spirit/Spiritual, Heart/Emotional, Body/Physical, with the center being oral tradition. The world must contain all 4 to be in balance.
 - ✓ Four races of the world Medicine Wheel:
 - 4 areas are people of white, red, black, and yellow color with the center being the spirit world that all 4 races share. All 4 need to work in balance to take care of the earth. No racism in Micmac culture. Everyone equally important.
 - ✓ Seasons Medicine Wheel: 4 areas: East (Youth/Spring), South (Adolescence/Summer), West (Adulthood/Autumn), and North (Old Age/Winter)

II. Family/Relationships/Roles

- Gender Roles: Women and Men are equal but have different roles.
- Genders are part of the circle: to have all 'male' traits and no 'female' traits and vice versa is to be out of balance.
- Women are the caretakers & makers of life. Their job is to educate and teach the children. If they are brought up right then society will run accordingly.
- Equality in decision making is observed. Men and women discuss and reach mutual decision. In health care ask the woman first, if it is ok to talk to her mate.
- Children: Taught to respect older members of family. Learning occurs through example.
- Elders are respected for their wisdom. The family always takes them care of. Micmacs do not consider sending them to a nursing home to live out their lives. They take care of their own.

III. Work/Leisure: Migratory adaptation is key to their survival

- Work: it is important to take in consideration their work. For many of the Micmac going to the blueberry or potato harvest is more cultural than actual work. Some have been going to the same places ever since they can remember.
 - Migrant work is still important to the tribes. Many follow the harvests and travel between Maine and New Brunswick for potato, blueberry, strawberry and apple harvest.
 - Basket making, crafts & Quillwork are still being done by large number of aborigines. It is important for them to be able to use their hands.
 - Domestic Help: Many of the women are employed in homes helping with children and household duties
 - High Steel Construction: A number of the male Micmac population follow the steel industry working on high steel beams. They migrate from job to job.
 - Lumber Industry: They may spend long lengths of time in the woods and only return to their village/home on occasion.
- Leisure: They are great storytellers, as much of their history is passed down this way. Dancing/songs, drumming is all a big part of leisure time. Woodcarving is passed down through the generations from father to son. Gatherings with friends and family are frequent. Tribes from the northeast all know each other.

IV. Health/Wellness

- Majority follow traditional Western Medicine: They have a new Micmac Health Center in Presque Isle
- Ancestral Medicines: Believed that because ate only foods from the local area that all sickness came from the area so the treatment for the illness was also found there. Now with food coming from all over the world, not so easy to treat with local herbs and medicines. The tribe slowly returning to more traditional ways with diet and health.
- Shamans: Some of the elders practice healing. They do not have an actual 'shaman' in the tribe, but have elders very knowledgeable about local medicines and ceremonies.
- Breast Cancer: Almost non-existent in this culture. Many doctors do not even recommend that they have Mammograms. Genetics studies are being conducted on this topic.

V. Barriers to Practice

- Modesty
 - Women are very modest. During their 'moon' (menstrual period) they cannot participate in the sweat lodges or touch ceremonial tobacco. They are not comfortable disrobing for medical treatment.
- Women are taught not to show discomfort or pain. During childbirth aborigine women do not cry out in pain or even show that they are uncomfortable. Doctors and nurses must rely on the monitors to determine contractions.
- Men also do not show pain. It is important to be aware of this when treating.
- Traditional/Herbal Medicines are becoming more common. Be aware when treating and ask if they are drinking any special teas or applying any herbs.
- Transportation: In PI, no public transportation, so many of the Micmacs may have a difficult time getting to their appointments especially if they do not have a vehicle.

VI. Suggestions & Tips

1. Make sure to ask clients at regular intervals if they are uncomfortable with a procedure. They may not let you know through verbal cues or body language. They are taught at a young age not to cry or show pain.
2. When working with a child/adolescent, recognize that they will not look at you. Children are taught to respect elders and to look down when spoken to by an elder.
3. Be specific and ask if they are drinking any special teas or being treated with herbs or other natural remedies.
4. Always respect the woman's modesty. Ask if they are comfortable disrobing, and how you can make it more comfortable for them. They may wish to have another female in the room with them.
5. Micmacs have a strong sense of their spirituality. Recognize their desire to be in balance in all areas of their life.
6. Feasts and Celebrations are very important to Micmacs. Try to work with them on their schedule. They may be unable to come for treatment if the appointment coincides with a tribal feast in Quebec or New Brunswick.
7. If possible, arrange for physical adaptations, so they can still attend celebrations and feasts. This may be as simple as showing them how to travel comfortably in a vehicle or as complex as providing braces.
8. Work for the Micmac takes on many different forms as other societies do, but a great number of them are still involved in basket making, quillwork, agriculture, and other physical labors. Ceremonies are often based on elders making pipes, axes, and carving. To be able to create with their hands is very important as they feel that what is created by them also contains part of their spirit. Keep this in mind when working with them. They will want to get the use of their hands back as quickly as possible.

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