Living With The Indians

Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
LIVING WITH THE INDIANS

Introduction

The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation is the agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia that operates the Jamestown Settlement and the Yorktown Victory Center. Through these two museums, the Foundation accomplishes its educational mission of commemorating the first permanent English settlement in the New World and the American Revolution.

This booklet is designed to provide teachers with information and activities that will help students participating in the Foundation's educational program, "Living with the Indians", gain the most from their experience. This booklet is divided into three sections: Background Information, Pre-Visit Activities, and Post-Visit Activities. The Background Information section provides students with a short essay on the Powhatan Indians. The Pre-Visit Activities section contains suggested activities, a vocabulary list, crossword puzzles, and materials designed to reinforce information contained in the essay. The final section, Post-Visit Activities, consists of suggested activities which can be used as culminating experiences.

The program "Living With the Indians" is designed to provide students with an overview of Powhatan Indian culture as it existed in the early 17th century. Through a combination of experiences including a guided tour and hands-on activities using reproduction artifacts that allow students to gain knowledge of the lifestyle and technology of the Powhatans, students will be able to:

1. Describe three ways the Powhatan Indians obtained food.

2. Describe male / female role in Powhatan society.

3. Compare and contrast Powhatan Indian society with today's society.
Living With The Indians

Background Information
The English colonists did not come to an unsettled area when they reached the shore of the James River in 1607. In fact, the area along the Chesapeake Bay between Washington, D.C., Richmond, and the North Carolina border had been a permanent home to Indians for over ten thousand years. By the late sixteenth century, these Native Americans had been formed into the Powhatan Chiefdom. The members of the Powhatan Chiefdom spoke a form of Algonquian, a family of languages common to many Eastern Woodland Indians. There were thirty-two tribes ruled by a paramount chief whose throne name was Powhatan which he took from the name of his birthplace. His given name was Wahunsunacock.

Although their predecessors had primarily been hunters and gatherers, the Virginia Indians had developed into a farming society around 1000 A.D. Their descendants, the Powhatans, grew corn, squash, beans, pumpkins, and other vegetables indigenous to the Americas. These crops made up over half of their diet. The main responsibility of farming fell upon the women who worked at planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting in the fields. Women also prepared meals from the farm's produce. From corn, the staple crop, foods such as corn meal flat cakes and hominy were made.

Food was also obtained through fishing, hunting, and gathering of nuts and berries. Generally, women gathered the nuts and berries while men traditionally hunted and fished. Oysters, crabs, and sturgeon were all common food items. Powhatan men used nets and spears to catch their seafood. Every winter, men would form large hunting expeditions in search of deer.

Adult life started at an early age for Powhatan youths. Girls married at about the age of twelve and boys around fourteen. Indian girls watched their mothers in the field in order to learn how to farm and helped with household chores as well. Young boys also learned their tasks from an older relative. Much of children's time was spent in the scarecrow hut (a small structure near the fields) where an older member of the tribe, a mother or possibly a grandfather, would teach them how to protect the crops from animals by shooting arrows and throwing rocks. In addition, children might possibly have learned about the tribe's customs so that they would be ready to take their places as adults when the time came.

Since they were farmers, the Powhatan Indians were not nomadic like the Native Americans in the western part of North America. They remained in the same area for a long period of time, moving small distances occasionally for fresh soil and more wood. As a result, they built permanent
houses which were oblong (shaped like a loaf of bread). Called in their language, "yehakin," these "longhouses" were framed with saplings (young, small trees) and covered with woven or matted reeds and bark. About twenty feet in length, these longhouses were one-room, single family dwellings, with approximately six family members living in them. They provided good protection from bad weather. Powhatan Indian villages ranged in size from thirty to six hundred people, but the average was probably close to one hundred.

Before the colonists arrived, the Powhatans had almost no metal, and thus they had to make their tools from the resources readily available to them. From stone and wood, the Powhatans made hatchets, knives, drills, and arrows. Containers were made from bark, animal skin, clay, and tortoise shells. Deer and other local game were a good source of materials for tools. Large bones and antlers were made into needles, fish hooks, and punches, and other useful items. Animal skin worked well as clothing and sleeping mats.

The Powhatans' days were divided into time for work and time for social activities. Some of their time was probably spent in religious activity. Their spiritual beliefs and customs were quite different from the ones brought to Virginia by the English. The Powhatans believed in a primary god, Oke, (or combination of gods -- historians aren't certain). The Powhatans respected Oke and tried to appease him. They believed he kept a close watch on their actions, so they tried to please him in order to get a favorable response. According to English accounts, the Powhatans believed that if they displeased Oke, they would receive punishments such as illness, crop loss, etc. Ahdon, was the antithesis of Oke, representing the good and pleasant things in life. The Powhatans also worshipped several lesser gods. Religious practices were divided in Powhatan society between upper and lower classes. Only priests and chiefs were taught their religion's secrets, and they held special services just for themselves in the temple, called a "Quioccasen." Priests reigned over all religious aspects of life and served as spiritual guides for their villages. Dancing may have been a part of the Powhatans' religious ceremonies as well as their social activities such as harvest festivals. It is not known how the Powhatans used the Dancing Face Circle. The sweat lodge may have also been used for spiritual as well as physical reasons.

As with religion, Powhatan political structure was highly developed. Powhatan reigned like a king over what was an intricate association of thirty-two tribes. Called "'tsenacomacah" by the Powhatans, the chiefdom was formed by Wahunsunacock who brought the tribes under his control through threats, warfare, and inheritance. The tribes
fought for him in times of war and were forced to pay a tax to him from their produce. In return, Powhatan saw to it that tribes within his control were aided in times of need.

Although ultimately every tribe was ruled by Powhatan, each tribe had its own leader or chief. The majority of the leaders within Powhatan society were men but there are accounts of female tribal chiefs. A man would be known as a "werowance" and a woman as a "werowansqua." The werowance or werowansqua had a council of advisors made up of men from the upper class. Priests also had some of the responsibility for ruling the tribe. Powhatan society was matrilineal, that is, the female line was the one through which wealth and status were inherited. Social class within the society was determined by descent and by wealth which was obtained through warfare and the collection of corn, metal, and skins.

Warfare was a constant part of life for the Powhatan Indians. Their most common enemies were the Monacans and Monahoacs, Siouian-speaking tribes in western Virginia. The Powhatans fought for land and politics just as did many Europeans, as well as for status, women, and the chance to trade with other Indian groups.

A well-established, warring culture was not likely to welcome change. As a result, English and Indian cultures clashed throughout the seventeenth century. The Powhatans fought two great wars, the first in 1622 and the second in 1644, in an attempt to rid Virginia of the English. However, the English did not respond as expected and continued to occupy the land and expand. As the English colony grew, Powhatan Indian culture suffered. The English colonists' need for land forced the Powhatans westward. Many Powhatans died in the conflicts resulting from English expansion, as well as from European diseases such as smallpox. Some of the remaining Powhatans were adopted into English culture. Of the original thirty-two tribes, the Commonwealth of Virginia today recognizes seven: the Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Upper Mattaponi, Rappahannock, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, and Nansemond. Several reservations were established in 1648 in Virginia, and Pamunkey and Mattaponi descendants still live on the two remaining ones. Powhatan Indians of today have adapted to American culture, yet still wish to remember the history of their ancestors.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Living With The Indians

Pre-Visit Information
Pre-Visit Activities

1. Explain that the Native Americans who lived in Virginia before the English came had adapted to their environment over many years.

Discuss ways in which the students might survive if they lived in the woods without stores, restaurants, or electricity.

Have students list ways they THINK Indians might have lived in the wilderness. Put the following headings on the board: Food, Clothing, Shelter, Tools. Have the class list their ideas of how Indians obtained these items and what types they used. Review these ideas before your program.

2. Have students collect pictures of things they like or that remind them of themselves and make a collage. Have them include pets, toys, chores, and recreational activities. Compare the collages in class. Have them draw collages of comparable items and activities for Powhatan children. Discuss differences and similarities between the two collages.

3. Using the enclosed copies of John White's sixteenth century drawings of Indians near the Roanoke Settlement, have students make hypotheses about the Powhatan lifestyle.

Explain to students that these drawings were made by an English colonist at Roanoke Island, the site of England's first attempt at settling Virginia. (Explain that the Indians near Roanoke were not Powhatans, but historians believe they were living very similar to the way the Powhatans were living). Discuss with students the importance of these drawings (i.e., they are the only visual accounts of Indian lifestyle before influence of the English, they give us an image of how the Powhatans lived).

Break the class into groups, giving each group 2 or 3 of the drawings. Give each group a "Picture Analysis" sheet and choose a secretary to record ideas. In the first column, "What I See," students should write one word descriptions of what they see. Examples are "tree", "deer", etc. In the second column, "What This Tells Me", students should write 5 sentences or phrases that indicate conclusions they have made from the pictures; for example, "the Indians lived in houses", "the Indians cooked fish", etc. Discuss answers together as a class. Explain that students will be able to test these conclusions or hypotheses when they have their program.
4. Discuss the terms in the vocabulary list, many of which can be found in the background information. Use the crossword puzzle and word search game to help students familiarize themselves with the terms.

5. Using a map of Virginia, have children locate the area in which the Powhatans lived at the time the English arrived (roughly, the area between Washington, D.C., Richmond, the North Carolina border, and the Atlantic Ocean).

Using John Smith's 1612 map of Virginia, and a magnifying glass, have students locate five Indian Villages. Have students list these five villages as well as the five cities nearest their location today. Discuss the geographical features of these five locations that might have been advantageous to the Indians in 1607 and ones that are advantageous to the people living there today. Are the advantages similar, different?

6. Read with students the enclosed account about ornaments worn by the Powhatan Indians. Have students write five descriptive statements about the Powhatans that they learned from reading this account. Have students make five conclusions about the lifestyle and culture of the Powhatans on the basis of this account.
PICTURE ANALYSIS

WHAT I SEE

WHAT THIS TELLS ME
Vocabulary List

Ahone - Powhatan god representing the good things in life.

Algonquian -- The language spoken by the Powhatan Indians.

apron -- Clothing worn by Powhatan Indians. More than a breechcloth, both men and women wore the same basic clothing described by English observers as an "apron".

buckskin -- Animal skin with the hair removed that could be worked into clothing by Powhatan Indians.

chief -- Leader of a tribe.

copper -- Soft metal that was a highly valued trade item for the Powhatans. It was the metal available to them before the arrival of the English.

corn -- The most important vegetable grown by the Powhatans. Also, a valuable trade item with the English settlers.

culture -- Customs, traditions, and way of life that are passed down through the generations of a particular group of people.

Dancing Face Circle -- Ring of carved posts used by the Indians as a place for conducting various types of ceremonies.

deer -- Primary animal which provided the Powhatans with food, clothing, tools, and other useful articles.

flintknapping -- The art of working stone into tools such as arrowheads, knife blades, and spear points.

hominy -- A common Indian food prepared by grinding corn, soaking it, and cooking it over the fire all day.

indigenous -- Being from a particular area.

longhouse -- Name for the oblong or rectangular structures that served as houses for Powhatan Indians.

matrilineal -- Refers to a society in which status and possessions are handed down through the female line rather than the male line.

nomadic -- Refers to groups of people that have no permanent home, but move from place to place in search of food.

Oke -- Powhatan Indians' primary god who had to be respected, pleased and appeased to prevent bad things from happening.
**Pocahontas** — One of Wahunsunacock's daughters. She married John Rolfe, the English colonist who was responsible for the raising of tobacco at Jamestown.

**Powhatan** — Throne name of the leader (Wahunsunacock) of the Powhatan Chiefdom. Also, name used by English for Indians in Southeastern Virginia.

**primitive** — Refers to a lifestyle that has a simple technology compared to ours today. A stone-age technology is considered primitive compared to today's technology.

**Quioccasan** — Powhatan word for the village temple used to house priests and for the burial of tribal chiefs.

**reeds** — Marsh grass that was cut and woven into mats to cover the outside of houses. Reeds were also used to make arrows.

**scarecrow hut** — Raised structure built at the fields where children would watch to protect the crops from animals. While guarding the fields, they may have been taught tribal customs.

**sinew** — A string made from the ligaments and tendons of a deer. This was used for sewing, tying, and lashing.

**stone-age** — Time period when tools were made from stone and bone.

**technology** — Tools and methods a society uses to perform daily tasks.

**tribe** — A tribe is a group of families living and working together.

**Wahunsunacock** — "Powhatan's" birth name.

**werowance** — Powhatan word for chief of a tribe (male).

**werowansqua** — Powhatan word for chief of a tribe (female).

**yehakin** — Powhatan word for house.
Crossword Puzzle Clues

Down:
1. An Indian trade item very much needed by the English.
2. Famous Indian girl whose marriage to John Rolfe helped relations between the Powhatans and the colonists.
3. Name of the Bay along which the Powhatans lived.
4. Animals which provided the Indians with food, clothing, tools and other useful items.
5. Soft metal that was a highly valued trade item.
6. Common Indian food made from corn.
7. Food gathered by Powhatans.

Across:
3. Customs, traditions, and way of life of a group of people.
8. Powhatan Indian god who punished people for wrongdoing.
9. A structure where Indian boys sat to guard the corn fields.
10. A string made from the tendons and ligaments of deer.
11. The way Powhatan Indians obtained most of their food.
12. These were woven into mats for longhouses.
13. Article of clothing worn by Powhatan Indians.
14. Title of the ruler of the Powhatan Indians.
15. Material used to make many tools including arrowheads.
16. Powhatan Indian word for house.
Word Search
Living With The Indians

In this puzzle, there are 23 hidden words relating to the Powhatan Indians. The words can be found across, down, forward, backward, and diagonally. Cross off each word below as you find it in the puzzle.

Algonquian, apron, beans, berries, Chesapeake, chief, copper, corn, deer, farming, fishing, flintknapping, hominy, nuts, oke, Pocahontas, Powhatan, pumpkin, scarecrow hut, sinew, stone, technology, yehakin.
DESCRIPTION OF POWHATAN INDIANS

The following is an account written in 1612 by William Strachey, a member of the English Settlement at Jamestown. Strachey notes that the Powhatan men wore ornaments such as:

chaynes of stayned perle, bracelette[s] of white bone[i.e. shell], or shredds of Copper, beaten thin and bright, and wound up hollow, and with a great pride [on the part of the wearer] certayne Powles legs, Eagles[,] Hawks, Turkeys, etc., with Beasts Clawes, Beares, Arrahacounes[raccoons], Squirrels, etc., the clawes thrust through, they lett hang upon the cheeke to the full view; and some of their men there be, who will weare in these holes, a smale green and yellow couloured live Snake neere half a yard in length, which Crawling and lapping himself about his neck oftentimes familiarly he suffers to kisse his lipps, and others weare a dead ratt tyed by the Taile, and such like Conundrums.

NOTE: Women also wore many ornaments. Mostly consisting of shells and shell and bone beads (and occasionally copper), they adorned themselves with bracelets, necklaces, and earrings. Both women and men drew on their bodies. Women tattooed their upper chests and shoulders, while men painted the same area with paints made from berries and roots.
Living With The Indians

Post-Visit Information
Post-Visit Activities

1. Pass out the "Seasonal Activities" sheet to all students. Discuss food in relation to environment as to types, seasons, and methods of obtaining it. Discuss the time factor involved in acquiring food.

2. Show students the enclosed picture of the "Virginia Purse". Along with this picture is a description of it written by Helen Rountree in her book, The Powhatan Indians of Virginia. It is possible that the purse may have belonged to Powhatan himself.

   Explain to students that the Powhatans (both men and women) carried pouches, generally made of animal skin, in order to keep near them items they might need at a moment's notice. Such items would include various shells, rock flakers (for making stone points), bone tools (neddles, fish hooks), rock sharpeners, and sinew (string made from deer ligaments).

   Some of these bags had intricate designs on them as is seen in the Virginia purse. These designs were often made of whole shells as well as beads made from shell, bone, stone, and sometimes even copper. Animal parts were occasionally added.

   Have students draw an outline of a pouch and use shells and/or plastic beads to design it. If you are extremely adventurous, supply leather for the students and help them make a pouch they can actually carry.

3. Stories and storytelling were undoubtedly very important to Powhatan society as they did not have a written language. Although we know several tales that come from Algonquian-speaking, eastern woodland Indians, we have only one complete tale that we know was told around the Powhatan fires. Like many Native American folktales, Powhatan stories are often centered around nature and happenings in the natural environment. Enclosed in the booklet is the primary source documentation for the story of "The Great Hare". Following is a retelling of the legend which may be easier to understand. An important point for the children to remember is that often when a story is retold, the story-teller adds individual interpretations and embellishments. Discuss with your students the following questions:

   a. Do they know of any folktales? What exactly is a folktale?

   b. Why did the Powhatan Indians create such tales? (entertainment, explanation of natural phenomena)

4. Have students do one of the following activities:

   a. Write their own short "tales" about something they find interesting in nature.

   b. Illustrate the tale of "The Great Hare".
SEASONAL POWHATAN ACTIVITIES

WINTER (Popanous)

Inland-deer, turkey, fresh water fish, nuts, starchy grain substitute
Transition-migratory fowl, turkey, nuts, starchy grain substitutes
Coast-bear, starchy grain substitutes

Men-hunting, working on tools, cordage, cut wood, hide tanning, process arrow heads & shafts, make sinew

Women-collect firewood, process bone tools, sew, flint knap, weave mats for the houses, make baskets, cut cordage, cut raw hide, & pack bundles for the hunt

Children-gather nuts & firewood, help bundle gear for the hunt, boys would hunt small game with bow and arrow, girls learn about nuts & bark

YEAR-ROUND

Hunting and gathering, house repairing, flint knapping, making bone tools, getting cordage, weaving mats, attending church, dancing, gathering firewood, cooking, tending to children, and recreational activities

FALL (corn Nepinough) and (Leafa Taquitock)

Inland-deer, turkey, fresh water fish, fresh water shell fish, nuts, fruits, starchy grain substitutes

Men-hunt, make bow & arrows, quiver, flint knapping, make knives & tools for weapons, late fall war & raid

Women-harvest corn, 3 types for popcorn, hominy & corn flour; dry & shell corn; thatching for winter, cut reeds

SPRING (Cattapeuk)

Time to plant Powhatan's Corn Crop
Inland-fresh water fish, shell fish, fruits & grain
Transition-fruits & grain, berries
Coast-marine fish & marine shellfish fruits & vegetables

Men-get bark, make fishing nets, fish, prepare farm land, kill trees by burning & bruising them, make farm tools, make canoe & paddles, get cordage

Women-get bark, retie farm tools, plant and weed garden, turn matting around on house, get cordage, store winter clothes and tools, make baskets

Children-boys hunt small game, girls help plant and weed, both gather firewood, nuts & berries, oats, rice, plums, grapes, cherries, tuckahoe

SUMMER (Cahattayough)

Inland-freshwater fish, freshwater shell fish, fruits & grain
Transition-fruits & grain
Coast-marine fish, shell fish, fruits & vegetables

Men-fish, marine, especially in April & July, shellfish, hide tanning, make garden tools, hunt small game

Women-prepare grain and vegetables, gather fruits, weed garden, process plants for cordage, make pottery, gather clay & process it, food process

Children-boys in scarecrow hut, race, swim, canoe race, gather, fish & girls gather berries

This purse was made by folding a long piece of buckskin lengthwise and sewing the edges together in the middle section. Each end was then cut in strips, resulting in a tube with long fringes at each end. A piece of skin was stitched into one end of the tube to form the bottom of the purse. The fringes were then divided into two groups at each end of the purse. Each group was then made into an arrow-shaped, shell decorated flap by weaving disk-shaped shell beads into the fringes with sinew thread. The finished purse is a leather bag with four heavy, arrow-shaped flaps, two at each end. The most likely way to wear this purse would be to drape the top flaps over the wearer's belt. Its overall dimensions are 77 cm. long by 11 cm. wide at the middle (30 1/2 inches by 4 1/3 inches).
The following is the primary source documentation for the story of "The Great Hare". It is taken from a book entitled *Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* by William Strachey.

Strachey (1572-1621) was in Virginia from 1610 to 1611. This story was told to him by Captain Argall. Captain Argall heard this story on board his ship at Matchipongo in 1610 from Iopassus, brother of the chief of the Patawomecks. The story was translated for Captain Argall by an English boy named Henry Spelman who was living with the Indians for a year and learning their Algonquian language.

'We haue (said he) 5. godes in all our chief god appeares often vnto vs in the likewise of a mightie great Hare, the other 4. haue no visible shape, but are (indeed) the 4. wyndes, which keepe the 4. Corners of the earth (and then with his hand he seemed to quarter out the scytuation of the world) our god who takes vpon this shape of a Hare conceaved with himself how to people this great world, and with what kynd of Creatures, and yt is true (said he) that at length he divised and made divers men and women and made provision for them to be kept vp yet for a while in a great bag, now there were certayne spirritts, which he described to be like great Giants, which came to the Hares dwelling place (being towards the rising of the Sun and hadd perseveraunce of the men and women, which he had put into that great bag, and they would haue had them to eate, but the godlike Hare reprov'd those Caniball Spirritts and droue them awaie. Nowe yf the boy had asked him of what he made those men and women and what those spirritts more particularlie had bene and so had proceeded in some order, they should haue made yt hand together the better, but the boy was vnwillinge to question him so many things lest he should offend him, only the old man went on, and said, how that godlike hare made the water and the fish therein and the land a great deare, which should feed vpon the land, at which assembled the other 4. gods envious hereat, from the east the west from the north and sowth and with hunting poles kild this deare drest him, and after they had feasted with him departed againe east west north and sowth, at which the other god in despight of this their mallice to him, tooke all the haires of the slayne deare and spredd them vpon the earth with many powerfull wordes and charmes whereby every haire became a deare and then he opened the great bag, wherein the men and the women were, and placed them vpon the earth, a man and a woman in one Country and a man and a woman in another country, and so the world tooke his first beginnyng of mankynd.'

* Have the children notice the unusual spellings of some words as compared with today's spellings. At the time that Strachey wrote there were no dictionaries so spelling was not standardized.
THE GREAT HARE

The chief of all the gods was a Great Hare, and he dwelt in a place toward the rising sun.

The Great Hare thought how he wanted to people the earth. He made many different kinds of men and women, but he put them all into a very large bag.

Some giants came to visit the Great Hare. When they discovered what was in the bag, they wanted to eat all the people for a fine feast. The Great Hare was so angry at these cannibals, that he drove the giants away from his house.

The godlike Hare went about making the water and filling it with fish. He made the land and placed upon the land a great deer to feed from the land.

Now, there were four lesser gods who were the four winds seated at each corner of the world. They were jealous of the deer sharing their land. They fashioned hunting poles which they used to kill the great deer. After they dressed the meat and had a delicious feast, they departed to their four corners.

When the Great Hare saw what jealousy had caused, he took up the hairs of the slain deer and scattered them over the earth, chanting many powerful words and charms. Every tiny hair became a new deer.

Then the Great Hare opened the bag which held the men and the women. He placed a man and a woman upon the earth in one country and a man and a woman in another country. And so the world became filled with many different kinds of people.
For Further Information
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