

NATION PROFILE: THE ALGONQUIN (1)

The Algonquin nations consisted of many tribes that lived in the Hudson Valley region. Their territory reached north into Canada, west to Wisconsin, and as far south as Virginia. They were known as the Algonquin-speaking nations. There were three major tribes: the **Delaware, Mohican, and Wappinger.**

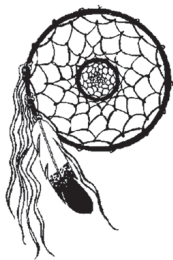
The forests in the northern and western nations provided a plentiful supply of birch trees. The birch bark was used for making their homes, canoes, and utensils. The people built cone-shaped



homes called **wigwams.** They also built longhouses. The homes were built around a central area

called the “**plaza.**” The canoes were very light and easy to maneuver in the waters. They used spears made from the bark to catch fish and eels. The women wove fishnets, mats, and bark containers.

The Algonquin also carved birch bark to write about their dreams, memories, and ceremonies. The men used symbols for sacred stories to create **memory scrolls.** Perhaps the best known is the **dreamcatchers.** These were hung from cradleboards to protect their



babies. The Algonquin believed that the dreamcatcher would catch bad dreams and let good dreams pass through the web.

The Algonquin were mostly forest hunters and fishermen. They caught many types of fish

including shellfish using spear and nets. Clubs and traps caught wild game such as moose, bear, and rabbits



for food and others such as mink and beavers for fur. They gathered many types of wild berries and fruits from the forests. There was some farming. **Corn, beans, and squash** were planted. Fish was used to fertilize their cornfields. They made maple syrup from the groves of maple trees. This time

also became a celebration of the end to the cold winters. Many of the Algonquin grew wild rice and tobacco. Rice is a seed-bearing grass. The Algonquin grew it along the muddy shores of marshes and streams around the Great Lakes. They used tobacco during ceremonies and for social gatherings.



NATION PROFILE: THE ALGONQUIN (2)

Spiritually, the Algonquin believed in the “**Great Spirit of Manitou.**” They believed that the Great Spirit was the supreme being who gave them everything



that was available to them— water, bushes, trees, animal life, the moon, and the stars. The tribes held special ceremonies to give thanks and worship the Great Spirit. One special custom was a solitary one. It was when a boy was ready

to reach manhood. His father took him into the forest and left him for 4–5 days until he met his Manitou. The Manitou or guardian spirit guided him through the days and gave him a special message from the spirit world. This message nourished him spiritually through the rest of his life.

The Algonquin saved many new European settlers from starvation. They



believed in peace and wanted to be friendly with early settlers. They even **signed peace treaties** with

other tribes to establish peace and trade. However, the different ideas about how the

land was created and used caused conflicts between the Native Americans and the settlers. The Native Americans did not understand the idea of private ownership of land. They soon learned that they had to give up their land to the Europeans or be killed.