

Unit 1 – The First People of Clinton County

Objectives:

1. Students will describe the daily life of the Ojibwe before European contact.
2. Students will describe changes in Ojibwe lifestyle due to contact with Europeans.

Essential Questions:

1. Who were the first people in Clinton County?
2. What was their life like?
3. How did their life change with the arrival of Europeans?

Michigan Standards

3-H3.01 Identify questions historians ask in examining the past in Michigan

3-H3.02 Explain how historians use primary and secondary sources to answer questions about the past.

3-H3.04 Draw upon traditional stories and/or teachings of Indigenous Peoples who lived and continue to live in Michigan in order to better understand their beliefs and histories.

3-H3.06 Use a variety of sources to describe interactions that occurred between American Indians and the first European explorers and settlers in Michigan.

3-H3.07 Use a variety of primary and secondary sources to construct a historical narrative about daily life in the early settlements of Michigan.

E.ES.03.51 Describe ways humans are dependent on the natural environment and constructed environments.

R.NT.03.01 Explain how characters express attitudes about one another in familiar classic, multicultural, and contemporary literature recognized for quality and literary merit.

R.NT.03.03 Identify and describe characters' thoughts and motivations, story level themes, main idea, and lesson/moral.

4-G4.02 Describe the impact of immigration to the United States on the cultural development of different places or regions of the United States.

4-G5.01 Assess the positive and negative effects of human activities on the physical environment of the United States.

The First People of Clinton County – Teacher Guide

Notes give additional information. Optional are extra activities you may choose to use.

Note: The First People of Clinton County is a pdf which may be projected for the whole class to read together or a copy given to each student.

Be a Historian

How do we know what life was like in the past? Historians use primary and secondary sources. A primary source is one that was made at the time like a journal, map, or old photo. A secondary source was made later like a town or county history book.

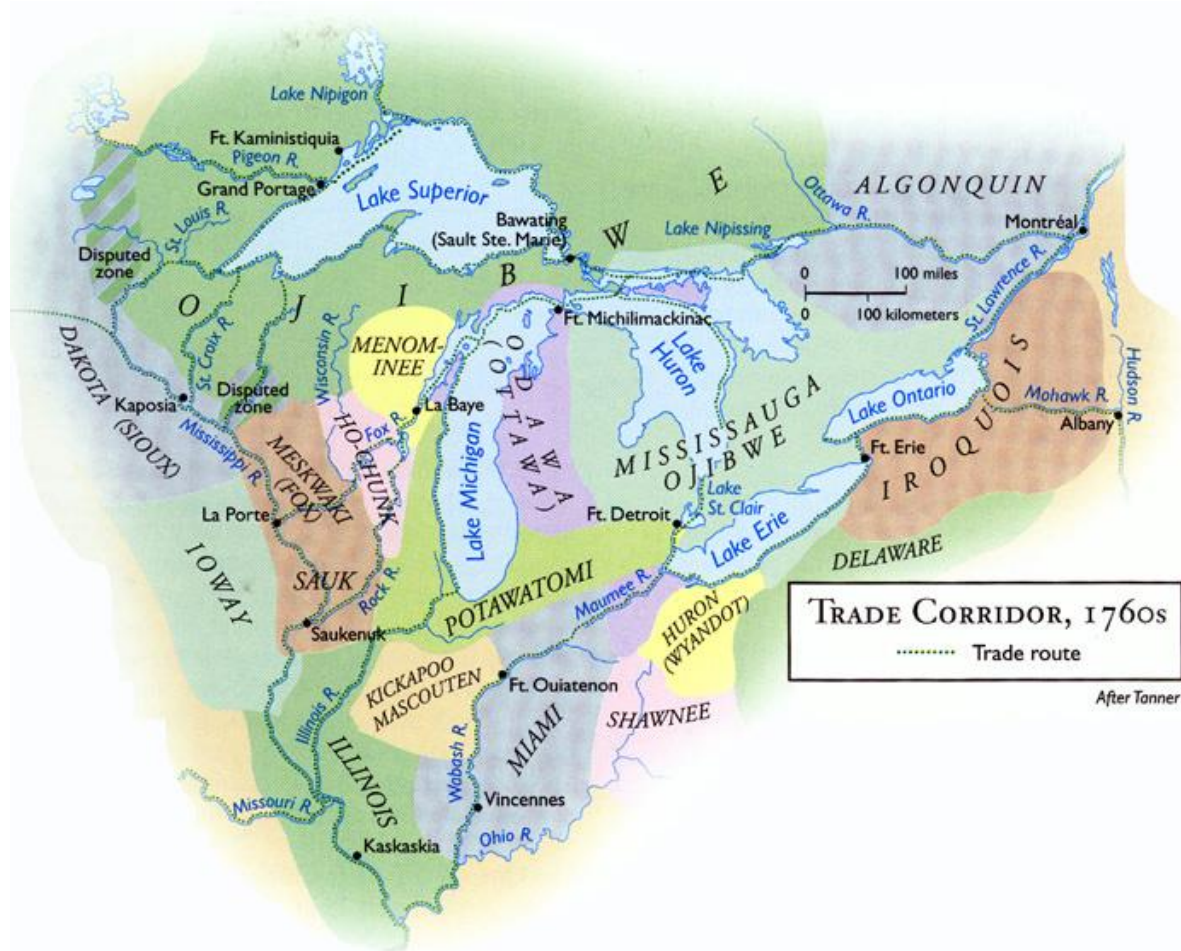
Optional: Be a Historian lesson can be downloaded from our website.

First People

People have lived in Michigan for longer than anyone can remember. Before the French and British came here in the late 1600s and 1700s, Michigan was home to several tribes.

Michigan's three largest tribes are the Ojibwe (also called Chippewa), the Odawa (also called Ottawa) and the Potawatomi (also called the Bode'wadmi). They share similar languages, customs and beliefs. Together, they are called the Anishinaabe, or "original people." Hundreds of years ago, they created a partnership called the Three Fires.

Note: Ojibwe and Chippewa are variations of the same word "otchipwa" which means "to pucker" and referred to the type of moccasins they wore. This lesson uses Ojibwe.



Note: While Clinton County was never heavily populated, there were Native Americans here for thousands of years. The first known Native Americans were the Hopewells who traveled up the Maple and Looking Glass rivers. The Ojibwe didn't arrive here until the early 1600's when they pushed the Sauk Tribe out of Michigan killing many of them. When the first Europeans arrived, there were small villages on the Looking Glass and Maple Rivers. The Ojibwe had trade routes by river and trail connecting with other tribal groups.

When the first Europeans arrived in Clinton County, the people living here were the Ojibwe (Chippewa). The Ottawa were living just to the west and Potawatomi to the south. The Ojibwe lived here in small numbers mostly along the Looking Glass and Maple rivers. They traveled on the rivers by canoe and on land by foot along narrow trails. The main trail was the Northern Grand River Trail which crossed the center of Clinton County from Round Lake to Muskrat Lake and then Stony Creek. It continued on in both directions connecting Detroit to Lake Michigan.

The Ojibwe lived in wigwams. Wigwams were dome-shaped and covered with bark.

Note: Information on birchbark can be found here: [Ziibiwing Birchbark](#)



Everyone that lived in the village worked together. In warmer months, people hunted and fished, built canoes, wove fishing nets, and planted and harvested crops. In colder months, people moved around to find the food they needed. They hunted, fished and trapped animals. In the spring they harvested maple syrup and began planting crops.

Note: Information on maple sugar can be found here: [Ziibiwing Sugar Bush](#)

Optional: Seasons of the Ojibwe – Read, project, or handout [The Four Seasons of the Ojibwe](#). List activities in each season. Students can fill in main activities for each season on [worksheet](#). They can compare this to [their own activities](#) during the four seasons.

Beaver, muskrat, raccoon, deer, and bear were hunted for meat and hides. Ojibwe gathered nuts, berries, wild rice and fruits. In the spring they planted corn, beans, squash, and pumpkin in open spaces.

Note: Information on gathering wild rice can be found here: [Ziibiwing Ricing](#)

Optional: Make Succotash. Mix corn, lima beans, and water in a large pot and cook until beans and corn are softening. When we have done with students they enjoy the corn, but most don't like the lima beans.

Women and girls took care of the gardens, cooking, and child care. Men and boys made tools, fished, and hunted.



Men wore leggings and breechcloths, and in winter shirts made of animal skins. Women wore skirts and jackets made of animal skins. Both wore moccasins. In cold weather they would use animal skins as blankets or robes.

Optional: Video [Native People of the Forest \(YouTube\)](#) - Beginning at about the 5 minute mark until the 21 minute mark there is a story told by a young girl about Ojibwe life in the past. The section before this gives an introduction of Native American Tribes. The last section shows Native American life today.

The Ojibwe didn't speak English. They spoke Ojibwe which the other Three Brother tribes could also understand. Try saying *hello* in Ojibwe. Say Boozhoo (boo zheew).

Optional: Introduce yourself in Ojibwe. See short video [How to Introduce Yourself in Ojibwe \(YouTube\)](#)

Optional: Animal Tracks Game – Match the Ojibwe name and tracks to the animal. [Worksheet](#). [Answer Sheet](#). [Ojibwe Dictionary](#). [Michigan Animal Tracks](#)

They played games, sang songs, and told stories.

Optional: Read an Ojibwe story. Discuss what the stories tell about the Ojibwe's beliefs. See Ojibwe Stories below for two examples. Play a [song sung in Ojibwe \(Ojibwe.net\)](#)

Family was important to the Ojibwe. Along with their parents, grandparents, and brothers and sisters, they also belonged to clans. The clan your father belonged to was your clan. People of the same clan only married people from other clans. Each clan was named for an animal that lived in their area.

We don't know which clans lived here, but they might have been:

Bear Clan – Makwa (mawk wah)

Beaver Clan – Amik (ah mick)

Wolf Clan – Mayiingan (mah ee guhn)

Note: Information about clans can be found here: [Ziibiwing Center Clans](#)

With the arrival of Europeans, the life of the Ojibwe changed. The first to arrive were French traders who traded furs for guns and iron goods like knives and pots. However, soon settlers arrived wanting to own and farm the land. The government made treaties with the Ojibwe forcing them to move from Clinton County to reservations. This caused many hardships for the Ojibwe and their way of life.

Optional: Early Pioneer Stories – Read/project/distribute stories of Clinton County pioneer encounters with Native Americans. What does that say about their attitudes towards each other? See Pioneer Stories below.

Optional: How life changed for the Ojibwe. Brainstorm a list of ways their life changed with the arrival of Europeans. Which were positive and which were negative? How did it change with arrival of traders? (better weapons and tools; need to trap more animals for trade causing some animals to be overhunted). How did it change with the arrival of settlers? (Diseases brought by Europeans for which they had no resistance killed many; They could no longer move around freely and use any land in the area for hunting, fishing, gathering food, sugar bushing, and gardening as it now belonged to Europeans; They could no longer practice their traditional ways of getting food resulted in starvation for some; They were forced by U.S. government to move from their traditional home lands and given a small land allotment in a new place.)

Note: The Ojibwe in Clinton County were scheduled to be removed from Michigan to the headwaters of the Osage River in Missouri, however, most died from a cholera outbreak in 1834 followed by smallpox in 1837. The survivors were not removed, but allowed to move to Isabella County in Michigan.

Note: Information on Treaties can be found here: [Ojibwe Treaty Rights](#)

Note: Information on the history of the Saginaw Tribe and their hardships can be found here: [Saginaw Tribe](#)

[sources: Ziibiwing Center, Geography of Michigan and the Great Lakes Region Project, Michigan History for Kids (Summer 2008), The Ojibwe People's Dictionary]

Pioneer Stories

Early Maple Rapids Days by Helen M. Parr

Well, I must tell you about the Indians. They youst to camp along the creek where A. D. Bancroft lives, both sides of the road there would be eight or ten tents. They covered them over with bark. They built the fire in the middle of the tent, and there was a hole in the top of the tent for the smoke to go out of. They have stakes drove in the ground with crotched ends and a pole laid on to hang their big kettles on when they make their soups of dried venison bones, corn, and beans. They didn't have any beds or chairs, just rolled up in a blanket and lay down anywhere around the fire.

One day there was an Indian boy came to the house and said he wanted a "sitpenigun". Of course we didn't know what he wanted, and he went looking around the house and he found the shears and he wanted to borrow them so we learned what they called shears.

[Clinton County Trails Volume 4 page 4]

Wolves

In the winter of 1842-3 the snow fell to a depth of three feet on the level and remained on the ground until April. The wolves caused considerable trouble to the settlers and the Indians would not kill them, calling them brother hunters, but when Clinton county was organized the board of supervisors passed a resolution to pay eighty dollars for the skin of every wolf killed in the county and the red men then began killing off their "brothers".

[Past and Present of Clinton County page 241]

Thomas L. Swarthout

Many settlers came to the county in 1838, 1839, and 1840, which years constituted a period of rapid pioneer growth. All kinds of wild game was to be had in abundance, the fish were plentiful in the rivers and there were wild berries, all of which proved useful to the pioneer settlers, many of whom were in limited financial circumstances. Mr. Swarthout well remembers the Chippewa Indians and their chief, who would visit at the Swarthout home and dine with the family. He was a tall, well formed Indian and lived to the advanced age of one hundred and five years.

[Past and Present of Clinton County page 123]

Westphalia

There were Indians in this vicinity in the pioneer days and even later, but they proved to be quite friendly and liked to barter with the white man. Now and then, with many signs and gestures they would ask for a loaf of bread just freshly baked in an out door oven. The housewife

could hardly afford to give away loaves of bread when flour was so hard to obtain, but she usually did so in order not to incite the anger of the Red Man. At one time an encampment of Indians pitched their tents on the banks of Stoney Creek, north and east of Westphalia...there they lived their simple out door life; hunted and fished. They also made woven baskets and tried to sell them or barter them whenever they had the opportunity. This Indian Colony was a permanent one and they remained in this vicinity until about 1878 or 1879.

[St. Mary's Centennial, Westphalia, Michigan 1836-1936 pages 54-55]

Gunnisonville

These early settlers found roving bands of Indians, most of them belonging to the Chippewa tribe, or Saginaw-Chippewas as they were sometimes called...I have heard my father, Warren Gunnison, say that he saw Chief Okemos many times and that the Indians stopped at Grandfather's frequently and at other settlers, especially if they thought they could get "firewater"...He died December 4, 1858 about 70 years of age, at his camp on the Looking Glass River above the village of DeWitt. His remains, dressed in the blanket-coat and Indian leggings which he wore in life, were laid in a rough board coffin, in which was placed his pipe-hatched, buckhorn handled knife, tobacco and some provisions and thus equipped for the journey to the happy hunting ground, he was carried to the old village of Pe-shim-ne-con near Portland and there interred in an ancient Indian burial ground near the banks of the Grand River.

[History of Gunnisonville by Alta Gunnison Pierce; Clinton County Trails Vol 3 No 1 page 8]

Ken Coin's Comments on Clinton County Ojibwe

The whites thought it amusing when the Indians suddenly, for no apparent reason, would abandon a village or camp and flee in terror. They did not know the extreme importance the Indians placed on the spirits of the dead – and many of those spirits had a score to settle. The Chippewa had not come to inhabit this area very honorably. Generations earlier, after a well-laid plan, they had swooped down from the far north and massacred the Sauks who lived here. Their booty, this game abundant region, was now theirs, but it would be many generations before they felt it was safe enough to enter this area. Even then, the wrong turn of a leaf could start a panic that would see the ghosts of slain Sauk warriors lurking behind every bush.

The whites had mixed emotions about Indian honesty and loyalty. The Indian practice of walking into the settler's cabins unannounced, uninvited and asking for food, warmth or shelter was tolerated as an unavoidable nuisance of uncouth heathens. What most whites did not realize was that the Indians were accustomed to obtaining their sustenance whenever and wherever it was needed and taking only that which was actually needed. In a reverse situation their longhouse, hearth or food would have been available without reservation to any white in need of the same. For nothing "belonged" to the Indian – they were merely the custodian, the user and the sharer of the earth's bounty.

Many settlers related how they were often surprised at finding a dressed-out deer, a mess of cleaned fish or other game laid out at their doorstep as a repayment for recent or distant hospitality. But this was not done intending to win favor with the whites; it was simply a necessity in their culture to repay kind for kind. And it could go either way – a favor for a favor, a mistreat for a mistreat. It was law and it was fair, honest and just.

The Indian's God was in everything; rocks, trees, seeds, earth. God had made everything – God was in everything and everything was in God. It was God who was pushing the streams and the wind. God told the game when to appear and when to hide. A tree was filled with reverent necessity for they were tampering with God. A stone was chipped into a spear point with respect, for that was an alteration of God. Each animal was an individual – some with a purpose of becoming food, others might be a messenger of God and one had to be mindful not to kill the messenger... The Indian culture, more so than ours, recognized the necessity of death for the possibility of birth. And each death, whether animal, vegetable or mineral, was praised as a spiritual transformation.

[DeWitt Remembered *DeWitt-Bath Review* November 16, 1992]

Ojibwe Stories

Ojibwe Creation Story

from “The Mishomis Book” by Edward Benton-Banai (Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission)

In the beginning of time, the Creator, Gichi-manidoo, created the earth, the moon and the sun. The earth (Aki) was called Mother Earth because all living things came from her. Gichi-manidoo sent birds to Mother Earth to carry the seeds of life across the earth in all four directions. The water creatures, insects, plants, crawling things and the four-legged animals lived in harmony with each other.

Gichi-manidoo blew four sacred parts of Mother Earth into a sacred shell called the Megis Shell. When those four parts of Mother Earth were combined, man was created. Gichi-manidoo then put man onto the earth. The original man lived in peace with all living things. From this first man came all tribes. All tribes are brothers for they are all a part of Mother Earth.

Original man walked the earth and gave names to all of the living creatures. He learned the way of the seasons and how each season was important. He learned about the plants and discovered which ones could be eaten or used for medicines. Original man learned all the wonders and mysteries of the earth that had been created by Gichi-manidoo.

The earth was filling with people and for a long while everyone lived in harmony with the earth as had the original man. However, men began to quarrel among themselves. They began fighting for hunting grounds and began killing each other.

Gichi-manidoo was very saddened to see his people turning to these ways. He decided the earth had but one hope, and that was to purify it with a great flood. Most living creatures died as a result of the great flood, but a few were able to continue swimming to stay alive or fly above the flood.

Original man, who is also called Wenabozho (Wen'-ah-boo'-zhoo), was able to save himself from the flood by floating on a huge log. Wenabozho took turns with the swimming and flying creatures for a spot to rest on the log. Because of sharing this way, the creatures Wenabozho helped were able to keep from drowning.

After a long while, Wenabozho and the creatures had not yet seen any land. So Wenabozho decided to dive down deep under the water in search of some earth. He believed he could create a new earth with this piece of land and the help of Gichi-manidoo.

Wenabozho dove deep into the water. He was gone a long while. When he finally returned, he had failed to bring a piece of land with him as the water was too deep. Many of the animals on the log also tried to dive and return with a piece of earth. All were unsuccessful.

Finally, the small wazhash (muskrat) offered to try. The other animals laughed at him at first. How could such a tiny animal make it far down in the deep water? Wenabozho said they should let this brave little animal do his best. After some time, the muskrat was seen floating to the top of the water. Wenabozho picked up the tiny, lifeless body and saw that clutched in his paw was a small piece of earth. The animals cheered. This small brave animal had given his life so others could live.

Wenabozho took the piece of earth and placed it on the back of a turtle (mikinaak). At once the winds from all four directions began to blow. The piece of earth began to grow bigger and bigger until it formed an island—the new earth

Father of Indian Corn

from Indians.com

In the long, long ago, a poor Ojibwa Indian lived with his wife and children in a remote part of the present state of Wisconsin. Because he was such a poor hunter, he was not very expert in providing food and supplies for his family.

His children were too young to give him much help. But he was a good man with a kind and contented disposition. He always was thankful to Chief of the Sky Spirits for everything he received to share with his family.

His good disposition was inherited by his eldest son, who had just reached the age when he wanted to pursue his Guardian Spirit Quest. Each young Indian boy looked forward to the time of finding the secret Spirit that would be his guide through his life. Each boy sought to learn his spirit name and what special power would be given him by his Guardian Spirit.

Eldest son had been obedient since early childhood. He seemed pensive, thoughtful of others, mild in manner, and always a joy to his family and to his tribe. At the first indication of spring, tradition told him to build a hut somewhere in an isolated place. There, he would not be disturbed during his dream quest. He prepared his hut and himself and went immediately to begin his fast for seven days.

For the first few days, he amused himself walking in the woods and over the mountain trails. He examined trees, plants, and flowers. This kind of physical effort in the outdoors prepared him for a night of sound sleep. His observations of the day filled his mind with pleasant ideas and dreams.

More and more he desired to know how the trees, plants, flowers, and berries grew. Seemingly they grew wild without much help from the Indians. He wondered why some species were good to eat, while others contained poisonous juices. These thoughts came back to him many times as he retreated to his lodge at night. He secretly wished for a dream that would reveal what he could do to benefit his family and his tribe.

"I believe the Chief of Sky Spirits guides all things and it is to him I owe all things," he thought to himself. "I wonder if Chief Sky Spirit can make it easier for all Indians to acquire enough food without hunting animals every day to eat."

"I must try to find a way in my dreams," he pondered. He stayed on his bed the third day of fasting, because he felt weak and faint. Sometimes he thought that he was going to die. He dreamed that he saw a strong, handsome young man coming down from the sky, advancing toward him. He was richly dressed in green and yellow colors. He wore a plume of waving feathers on his head. His every movement was graceful.

"I have been sent to you," said the sky-visitor. "The Sky Chief who made all things in the sky and upon the earth intends for me to be your Guardian Spirit and I have come to test you.

"Sky Chief has observed all that you have done to prepare yourself for your Quest. He understands the kind and worthy secret wish of your heart. He knows that you desire a way to benefit your family and your tribe. He is pleased that you do not seek strength to make war. I have come to show you how to obtain your greatest wish. First, your spirit name shall be Wunzh."

The stranger then told Wunzh to arise and wrestle with him. This was the only way for him to achieve his sacred wish. As weak as he was from fasting, Wunzh wondered how he could ever wrestle the stranger.

He rose to the challenge--determined in his heart to die in the effort if he must. The two wrestled. After some time when Wunzh felt nearly exhausted, the Sky Stranger said, "It is enough for today. I will come in tomorrow to test you some more." Smiling, the visitor ascended in the same direction from which he came.

Next day at the same time, the stranger appeared. Again the two wrestled. While Wunzh felt weaker than the day before, he set his mind and heart to his task. His courage seemed to increase, however, in reverse proportion to his waning physical strength. The stranger stopped just in time before Wunzh dropped to the ground.

"Tomorrow will be your last chance. I urge you to be strong, my friend, as this is the only way for you to achieve your heart's sacred wish," said the sky-visitor.

Wunzh took to his bed with his last ounce of energy. He prayed to the Sky Chief for wisdom and enough strength to endure to the end of his Quest.

The third time they wrestled, Wunzh was so weak that his arms_and_legs felt like rubber. But his inner determination drove him forward with the kind of endurance necessary to win. The same length of time passed as in the first two wrestling bouts. Suddenly the stranger stopped and declared himself conquered by Wunzh!

Then the sky-visitor entered the lodge for the first time. He sat down beside Wunzh to instruct him in the way he should now proceed to achieve his secret wish.

"Great Sky Chief has granted your desire. You have wrestled manfully. Tomorrow will be your seventh day of fasting. Your father will come to see you and bring you food. As it is the last day of your fast, you will be able to succeed.

"Now I will tell you what you must do to achieve your final victory. Tomorrow we will wrestle once more. When you have prevailed over me for the last time, then throw me down and strip off my clothes. You must clean the earth of roots and weeds and make the ground soft. Then bury me in that very spot, covering me with my yellow and green clothes and then with earth.

"When you have done this, leave my body in the earth. Do not disturb it. Come occasionally to see if I have come to life. Be careful to see that no grass or weeds cover my grave. Once a month, cover me with fresh earth. If you follow what I have told you, you will succeed in your Guardian Spirit Quest. You will help your family and all the Indians by teaching them what I have now taught you," the Sky Stranger concluded as they shook hands and the visitor left.

On the seventh morning, Wunzh's father came with some food.

"My son, how do you feel? You have fasted long enough. It is seven days since you have eaten food. You must not sacrifice your life. The Great Spirit does not require that of you."

"My father, thank you for coming and for the food. Let me stay here alone until the sun goes down. I have my own special reasons."

"Very well. I shall wait for you at home until the hour of the setting sun," replied the father as he departed.

The Sky Stranger returned at the same hour as before. The final wrestling match began. Wunzh had not eaten the food his father brought. But already he felt a new inner power that had somehow been given to him. Was it Spirit Power from his Guardian Spirit?

Wunzh grasped his opponent with supernatural strength and threw him to the ground. Wunzh removed the beautiful clothes and the plume. Then he discovered his friend was dead.

He remembered the instructions in every detail and buried his Guardian Spirit on the very spot where he had fallen. Wunzh followed every direction minutely, believing his friend would come to life again,

Wunzh returned to his father's lodge at sundown. He ate sparingly of the meal his mother prepared for him. Never for a moment could he forget the grave of his friend. Throughout the spring and into summer he visited the grave regularly. He carefully kept the area clean of grass and weeds. He carefully kept the ground soft and pliable. Soon he saw the tops of green plumes emerging through the earth. He noticed that the more care he gave the plants, the faster the green plumes seemed to grow.

Wunzh concealed his activity from his father. Days and weeks passed. Summer was drawing to a close. Then one day, Wunzh invited his father to follow him to the site of his Quest. He showed his father the graceful-looking plants growing there. They were topped with yellow silken hair and waving green plumes. Gold and green clusters of fruit adorned each side of the stalks.

"Father, these plants are from my dream friend," explained Wunzh. "He is my Guardian Spirit, a friend to all mankind, named Mon-daw-min, meaning 'corn for all Indians.' This is the answer to my Quest, my secret heart's wish. No longer will we need to hunt animals every day for our food. As long as we take care of our corn gift, the earth will give us good food for our living."

Wunzh pulled off the first ear of corn and give it to his father.

"See, my father. This corn is what I fasted for. The Chief of Sky Spirits has granted my Quest. He has sent us this wonderful new food of corn. From now on our people need not depend entirely upon hunting and fishing to survive."

Wunzh talked with his father, giving him all of the instructions he had received from his Guardian Spirit. He showed his father how the corn husks should be pulled off the stalks, and how the first seed must be saved for future plantings. He explained how the ears of corn should be held before the fire only long enough for the outer leaves to turn brown, so that the inside kernels remained sweet and juicy.

The entire family gathered for Wunzh's feast of corn. The father led a prayer of thanksgiving for the bountiful and good gift from the Chief of Sky Spirits. Wunzh felt happy that his Guardian Spirit Quest was successfully completed.

This is how Wunzh became known as the father of Indian corn.