

The Four Main Groups of the Ojibwe

I. Curricular Areas

Social Studies/History
Geography

II. Learner Goals

Students will identify the four main groups of the Ojibwe and the large land mass they covered. They will understand that each group lived in a different geographical location and their culture was dictated by their environment.

III. Learner Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

1. describe that although the Ojibwe are one people, the wide expanse and great differences in the area in which they lived determined what resources were available to them and how they lived.
2. explain how the Ojibwe people came to inhabit such a large geographical area.

IV. Teacher Background

Using Map#2

This map shows the Ojibwe homeland. It is important to remember that much of it was shared with other tribes. The lines only serve to show where fairly large numbers of Ojibwe lived at one time or another. Within this wide expanse there are great differences in country and climate, and the Ojibwe people adapted their ways of living to their surroundings. In modern times four main groups have been distinguished by location and adaptation to varying conditions. They are the plains Ojibwe, the Northern Ojibwe, the southeastern Ojibwe, and the southwestern Ojibwe or Chippewa.

The Plains Ojibwe -

The plains Ojibwe live in Saskatchewan, western Manitoba, North Dakota, and Montana. Although they were originally a forest people, they changed their way of life when they moved into the open lands and borrowed many customs of other plains people. Today most of them work at farming and ranching. Many live in reservation communities, known in Canada as reserves, and some have moved to the city of Winnipeg.

The Northern Ojibwe -

The northern Ojibwe live in the remote forest country between the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay. This part of the rugged Laurentian Plateau or Canadian Shield- an area from which ancient glaciers scraped away the soil and left bare granite rocks and thousands of lakes. There from earliest times the Ojibwe have had to depend upon hunting for a living and have separated into small family communities because the land could not support large groups living together. A few still make income by hunting and fur trapping. Some are now guides or work in the timber industry, and a number of northern Ontario reserves now have provincially chartered business corporations.

The Southeastern Ojibwe -

The southeastern Ojibwe often mingled with related peoples like the Ottawa and the Potawatomi, whose way of life they adopted when they moved southward from the upper Great Lakes many years ago. Some of these Ojibwe along with other Michigan and Ohio Indian people were removed by the United States government to Kansas. A few still live in the central part of Lower Michigan, but there are no organized Ojibwe communities in Ohio. Today, the majority of the southeastern Ojibwe are in southern Ontario. There are reserves at Sarnia and around some of the shores and islands of Georgian Bay in Lake Huron.

The Southwestern Ojibwe or Chippewa -

In Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Upper Michigan, where the Southwestern Ojibwe have referred to as Chippewa. They traditionally lived by hunting, trapping, and fishing and by gathering wild rice and making maple sugar. Some still earn a part of their livelihood from these activities. The United States Ojibwe (Chippewa) form the largest group among the Ojibwe, and they have the most highly organized community and tribal life. Most of them live on reservations in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin or in cities of Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth.

Material taken from: The Land of the Ojibwe curriculum by The Minnesota Historical Society

V. Student Activities:

Have students compare Map 1- The Ojibwe Migration with Map 2 - The four divisions of the Ojibwe Nation. Discuss how the Ojibwe people could have ended up with such a large land base.

Guided Questions:

1. What do you notice about Map 1?
2. What do you notice about Map 2?
3. What are some likely explanations for the large land base of the Ojibwe?
4. With what you know about the four groups of Ojibwe, how might the geographical location contributed to each group's way of life?

