

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Potawatomi,

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): POT

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Latitude: 45.4499656 - Longitude: -88.5834433

1.4 Brief history: The Potawatomi are among the wave of Algonquian-speaking people who occupied the Great Lakes region from prehistoric times through the early 1800's. Oral traditions explain that the ancient Potawatomi people were once part of an immense group that had traveled down the eastern shores of North America along the Atlantic Ocean. This large group, the Chippewa (Ojibwa), Ottawa (Odawa), and the Potawatomi all constituted a single tribe where they later split at Georgian Bay, Ontario, Canada and went their separate ways. Through early historic records, it has been confirmed that the Potawatomi were living in Michigan and had established an autonomous tribal identity at least 500 years ago. Scholars have debated the origin and translation of the word "Potawatomi" for many years. Nevertheless, the Potawatomi people firmly believe that the Chippewa applied the term to them, meaning "people of the place of the fire" since they retained the original council fire once shared by all three tribes. Today, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation refers to themselves as the Nishnabec or the "True People." By 1800, tribal villages were displaced by white settlements and pushed farther and farther to the outskirts of the Potawatomi tribal estate. It was during the Removal Period of the 1830's that the Mission Band (today known as the Citizen Band) of Potawatomi was forced to leave their homelands in the Wabash River Valley of Indiana. From Indiana, the Mission Band was forced to march across four states (over 660 miles) to a new reserve in Kansas. Of the 850 Potawatomi people forced to move, more than 40 died along the way. The event is known in Potawatomi history as the "Potawatomi Trail of Death (September-November 1838.)"¹

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: During the late 1600s and the early 1700s, the Potawatomi Indians struggled with the Iroquois Indians over the Ohio Country. They also fought for territory with the Sioux Indians in modern-day Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. By the mid 1700s, the Potawatomi had established villages in Illinois and in Indiana. The Potawatomi Indians were closely related to the Chippewa Indians and the Ottawa Indians. ³ As white settlement rapidly pressed upon them, the Potawatomi sold their land piecemeal and removed west beyond the Mississippi. A part of the Potawatomi tribe remained in Indiana until forced out by the military. Some escaped into Canada and are now settled on Walpole Island in Lake St. Clair. Those Potawatomi who went west were settled partly in West Iowa and partly in Kansas. In 1846 they were all united on a reservation in Kansas. In 1861 a large part of the Potawatomi Tribe took land in severalty and became known as the Citizen Potawatomi. The others known as the Prairie Band remained in Kansas except for a few in Wisconsin and the small Huron band in Michigan. ⁴

1.6 Ecology: No information available

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density The original reservation in Kansas acquired under the Treaty of June 5 and 17, 1846, consisted of 576,000 acres but this treaty was modified by subsequent treaties and legislation which provided for allotment and for sale of surplus lands. The present reservation is located in Jackson County approximately 20 miles north of Topeka. The population of the Potawatomi never exceeded 3,000. In 1812 it was estimated at 2,500 and in 1843 at 1,800, but the latter does not include the number who fled to Canada.⁴

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): The Potawatomi exercised horticulture, gathering, hunting, and fishing. From the gardens surrounding the villages, the Potawatomi women cultivated such crops as beans, squash, pumpkin, onions, and tobacco. They also raised an abundance of corn, which was traded to the French, the Chippewa, and other northern tribes. Wild rice was harvested along shores in addition to nuts, roots, and berries. ¹

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Potawatomi hunted deer, bears, buffalo, and smaller game ¹

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Men also used wooden war clubs for hand to hand combat. When hunting, they relied on bows and arrows, fish nets, and fish spears. ¹

2.4 Food storage: Potawatomi women made baskets and bags from the bark of such trees as the white cedar. Other storage containers were made of elm and hickory bark or of animal skins. Prior to French contact, Potawatomi women used mussel shells and wood spoons and ladles. By the end of the 1700's, the Potawatomi used common trade items such as iron kettles and metal utensils for cooking. ¹

2.5 Sexual division of production: The women do all the work. The men belonging to the nation are well clothed. Their entire occupation is hunting and dress. ⁵

2.6 Land tenure: The Indian Removal Act of 1830, which called for the removal of all Tribes east of the Mississippi to reservations west of the Mississippi, caused the breakup of the Potawatomi Tribes. Some members fled to Canada, some managed to stay in the east in hiding or on small reservations, and the other 7,000 to 8,000 persons moved to reservations in Missouri and Iowa. A treaty in 1846 forced the ceding of 5,000,000 acres in these two states for 576,000 acres of land in Kansas. Tribal population had been reduced to about 3,200 people due to the effects of migration, epidemics, and forced marches. ⁴

2.7 Ceramics: No information available.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: No information available.

2.9 Food taboos: No information available.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Canoes were made from birch-bark and hollowed out logs and could range in length from family-size up to 50 feet to carry several warriors. The lakes and streams around the southern tip of Lake Michigan were full of fish. Much of the fishing was done from pine dugouts or birch-bark canoes. ¹

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): No information available

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): No information available

4. Life History, mating, marriage While some polygamy occurred with men marrying two or more sisters, the Potawatomi were generally more strict about chastity than other tribes. Kinship was determined by patrilineal descent, although marriage was matrilineal (husband moved in with his wife's family). 2

4.1 Age at menarche (f): No information available

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): No information available

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): No information available

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): No information available

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Fluctuates from tribe to tribe. Female was always younger than male, however. 6

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: not available

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygamy was very common, however a certain percentage was never given. 7

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Marriages were usually arranged between the parents of a boy and girl, but the boy's and girl's consent was usually obtained. If all parties agreed, then the boy came to his bride's lodge that night, and the marriage was concluded. Sometimes a youth would pick out the girl he wanted for himself and tell her his desire. If she was agreeable, she had her family invite all his relatives to a feast. 6

4.9 Inheritance patterns: not available

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: No information available

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: No information available

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Marriages were usually arranged between the parents of a boy and girl, but the boy's and girl's consent was usually obtained. If all parties agreed, then the boy came to his bride's lodge that night, and the marriage was concluded. Sometimes a youth would pick out the girl he wanted for himself and tell her his desire. If she was agreeable, she had her family invite all his relatives to a feast. 6

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? No information available

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") No information available

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? Not available

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape? Never came across any instance of rape in our references so one would not believe this to be very common.

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): No information available

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: No information available

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: No information available

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? In the case of a mother dying, the grandmother would assume the positions the mother would usually hold. 4

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females No information available

4.22 Evidence for couvades No information available

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) No information available

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? No information available

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations No information available

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: No information available

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?: Sometimes a youth would pick out the girl he wanted for himself and tell her his desire. If she was agreeable, she had her family invite all his relatives to a feast. Then, well mounted, the groom rode to the bride's house and dismounted, going into the wigwam where the girl sat beside the rawhide trunks that held all her possessions. Standing there, the boy took off all his clothes and presented them to her; and she, opening her trunks, gave him an entire new outfit of clothing which he donned immediately. Then the feast began, the two families exchanging food. At the close of the feast an old man lectured the young couple on their mutual duties, and other relatives of both of them followed in turn. The horse was brought out, and the girl rode over to the boy's lodge: here his relatives dressed her in new clothes, and she returned, bringing all the groom's possessions. Thus the marriage was concluded.

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) All evidence points to marriages done strictly within the community.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?: Marriages were usually arranged between the parents of a boy and girl, but the boy's and girl's consent was usually obtained 5

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Homicide appeared to be the largest occurrence.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: No information available.

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

4.18 Cannibalism? There is no evidence of cannibalism through the Potawatomi tribes.

5. **Socio-Political organization and interaction** Potawatomi lived in birch bark wigwams that were dome-shaped. In the summer they would cover them in woven reed mats. Cedar was used to cover the floor and to provide a fresh scent. The mats were easily detached

so they could carry them when moving. Inside the wigwam was sleeping mats, extra clothing, storage containers, vessels, and cooking utensils.¹

- 5.1** Mean local residential (village) group size: Villages were shifted annually from summer to winter quarters and varied greatly in size, from fifty inhabitants to over a thousand. ⁸
- 5.2** Mobility pattern: (seasonality): In the winter they dispersed to smaller camps where they continued to hunt. Winter camps combined in the spring for communal hunting drives and fishing expeditions. ⁸
- 5.3** Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The chieftainship of the Prairie Potawatomi was usually hereditary in the fish clan, and the chief was largely a civil and military authority. He appointed each year a ceremonial chief who conducted all the ceremonies and activities of the people. ⁵
- 5.4** Post marital residence: Often times the male would invite the female to their residence after an informal marriage.
- 5.5** Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 5.6** Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): No information available.
- 5.7** Special friendships/joking relationships: No information available.
- 5.8** Village and house organization: see 5.10
- 5.9** Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Housing was not split between gender; it did, though, alter its form based on time of year. See 5.10
- 5.10** Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? A round birch bark and mat house was used in winter, and the larger, rectangular, mat-covered house in summer. Occasionally buffalo hide tipis were used. ⁶
- 5.12** Trade: At the height of the Fur Trading Era that spanned an entire century, the Potawatomi controlled a tribal estate that encompassed Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and a small portion of Ohio or over 5 million acres. This was accomplished through long standing leadership and savvy business skills. The Potawatomi were simply not satisfied with trapping furs. Instead, they entered into a rivalry with the Ottawa for a share in the role as middleman for trade into the Green Bay area. Using their entrepreneurial skills, they began to hire other local tribesmen to collect and trap the furs that they once procured. In turn, they would sell or trade the furs to the French, thus expanding their tribal control and estate over a vast area. ¹
- 5.13** Indications of social hierarchies? Besides the noticeable split between chieftain and the regular tribesmen, no social order influenced decisions or status.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6** Time allocation to RCR: All sources pointed to a high importance put on ceremonial activity on a daily basis, though no legitament times were given.
- 6.1** Specialization (shamans and medicine): No information available.
- 6.2** Stimulants: Like most plains tribes, tobacco was a commodity and largely influenced major decisions through the tribe.
- 6.3** Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Special names in honor of their exploits were given to warriors who were brave in battle, and war honors were awarded to the first four men who touched a dead foe, in order of precedence. This was a much more noteworthy feat in the eyes of the Potawatomi than merely killing an enemy. A single tuft of hair from the crown of the head was taken as a scalp; prisoners were often tortured and scalped by the boys and young men. ⁵
- 6.4** Other rituals: Young children were given names at a ceremony for the clan bundles, and these names usually referred to the name of their clan. In former times when children reached the age of about ten years, the parents would urge them to fast all day and seek a vision. By the time children were fifteen or sixteen years of age, they were made to go from four to eight days without eating or drinking. All this was to enable the children to have a vision which would give them a guardian spirit through life, and would bring them success. Only when he had obtained such a dream was a boy considered to be a man. ⁵
- 6.5** Myths (Creation): "Earthmaker made the world with trees and fields, with rivers, lakes, and springs, and with hills and valleys. It was beautiful. However, there weren't any humans, and so one day he decided to make some. He scooped out a hole in a stream bank and lined the hole with stones to make a hearth, and he built a fire there. Then he took some clay and made a small figure that he put in the hearth. While it baked, he took some twigs and made tongs. When he pulled the figure out of the fire and had let it cool, he moved its limbs and breathed life into it, and it walked away. Earthmaker nonetheless realized that it was only half-baked. That figure became the white people. Earthmaker decided to try again, and so he made another figure and put it on the hearth. This time he took a nap under a tree while the figure baked, and he slept longer than he intended. When he pulled the second figure out of the fire and had let it cool, he moved its limbs and breathed life into it, and it walked away. Earthmaker realized that this figure was overbaked, and it became the black people. Earthmaker decided to try one more time. He cleaned the ashes out of the hearth and built a new fire. Then he scooped up some clay and cleaned it of any twigs or leaves, so that it was pure. He made a little figure and put it on the hearth, and this time he sat by the hearth and watched carefully as the figure baked. When this figure was done, he pulled it out of the fire and let it cool. Then he moved its limbs and breathed life into it, and it walked away. This figure was baked just right, and it became the red people." ⁶
- 6.6** Cultural material (art, music, games):
- 6.7** Sex differences in RCR: Women dance to the sound of the drum and si-si-quoi [pronounced shi-shi-gwan] which is a sort of gourd containing some grains of shot. Four or five young men sing and beat time with the drum and rattle, and the women keep time, and do not lose a step. It is very interesting, and lasts almost the entire night. ⁵
- 6.8** Missionary effect: The tribes were largely influenced by the French and English cultures spreading through the states.
- 6.9** RCR revival: No information available.
- 6.10** Death and afterlife beliefs: They believed that the human body had but one soul or spirit, and that this spirit eventually followed a trail over the Milky Way into the western heavens to a land ruled over by Tcibia'bos, the brother of Wisaka, the great culture hero. ⁵ For three nights after a death the clan members of the deceased sing, pray, and go through ceremonies to propitiate and scare away the

ghost. A coffin is then made from a hollow tree, members of another clan dig the grave, and the body is buried in the cemetery of the clan to which the person formerly belonged. It is interesting to note that dead members of the man, or human clan, were interred sitting up against a back rest, with a framework of logs around them. With the dead are placed a few weapons or utensils, and formerly a favorite horse was sacrificed at the man's grave to serve his master in the journey to the other world. 5

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: No information available

6.12 Is there teknonymy? There is no indication that teknonymy was practiced in the Potawatomi tribes.

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): The religion of the Potawatomi, like that of most of the Central Algonkian people, is hard to reduce to a formula, largely because it does not seem to have been formally conceptualized in the minds of the Indians. Schoolcraft states that the Potawatomi believed in a good spirit and a bad spirit who governed the world between them, but this is a reflection of the Christian doctrine. They did, however, conceive of a "Great Spirit" which originally may have been the sun; and besides this vaguely personified deity, their pantheon contained the archaic deities of fire, sun, and the sea, as well as gods of the four directions.5

7. Adornment Many of the animals that the Potawatomi killed for food also furnished skins for clothing.

7.1 Body paint: Women paint their faces with vermilion 5 When going to war, warriors adorned themselves with red and black paint. Men painted their faces and bodies for these occasions. 1

7.2 Piercings: No information available.

7.3 Haircut: Other than 'Roach' style, during times of war, men wore their hair long. A scalplock hung in back. A single feather hung down from the back. 1

7.4 Scarification: No information available.

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Deerskin was fashioned into shirts, leggings, and moccasins for men and into loose dresses and moccasins for women. In the winter, both deerskin and buffalo clothing was worn and decorated with dyed porcupine quills or shells and glass beads. As the Potawatomi traded with the French, they replaced their traditional deerskin clothing with cotton shirts and leggings and with dresses of brightly colored materials. Potawatomi women wore distinctive large collars or shawls lined in silver brooches over their dresses. They also wore long skirts covered in ribbonwork. Men wore fur turbans made from animal fur rather than long headdresses of feathers. 1

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Women adorn themselves considerably; grease their hair, paint their faces with vermilion, put on a white chemise, wear whatever wampum they possess, and are very tidy in their way. They dance to the sound of the drum and si-si-quoi [pronounced shi-shi-gwan] which is a sort of gourd containing some grains of shot. Four or five young men sing and beat time with the drum and rattle, and the women keep time, and do not lose a step. It is very interesting, and lasts almost the entire night. 5 On special occasions men would wear feathers in a turban and bearclaw necklaces around their necks. 1

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: See 7.5

7.8 Missionary effect: No information available.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: Both men and women wore moccasins with large flaps over the shoe. The flap would always be beaded with flower designs. Potawatomi men usually shaved their heads except for a scalp lock. 1

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: No information available.

8.2 Sororate, levirate: No information available

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): No information available.

1. Citizen Potawatomi Nation. "Potawatomi History." *Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN)*. 2011. Web. 28 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.potawatomi.org>>.
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4. "Potawatomi Indians", *Ohio History Central*, July 1, 2005, <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=619><http://www.aaanativearts.com/article311.html>
5. Dorothy Moulding Brown, 1947, *Indian Fireside Tales*: Madison, Wisconsin Folklore Society, 7 p.
6. Harry H. Anderson, ed., 1992, Myths and Legends of Wisconsin Indians, *Milwaukee History*, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 2-36. (as available at <http://192.206.48.3/wirp/ICW-137.html>)