

Winnebago

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Winnebago, Ho-Chunk, Siouan [s1]

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): 639-3 [s1]

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 44.152652, -88.679306 “Central Wisconsin scattered; eastern Nebraska” [s1]

“The Winnebago do not remember a time when they did not live at Red Banks on the south shore of Green Bay...

For as long as anyone can remember, the Winnebago lived in the vicinity of Green Bay in northeastern Wisconsin. The most powerful tribe in the region, they dominated the western shore of Lake Michigan from Upper Michigan to southern Wisconsin.” [s2]

1.4 Brief history: “As part of major climatic change in North America sometime around 1400, three closely related tribes - Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Ottawa - began moving west along the shore of Lake Huron towards the point where Lakes Superior, Huron, and Michigan meet... The Winnebago were obviously powerful enough for the moment to prevent the Ojibwe from moving further south, but the loss of territory and a growing population must have stressed the resources available to them. From subsequent events, it appears that the Winnebago tried to solve this by moving into southern Wisconsin creating confrontations with the tribes of the Illinois Confederation. With no place to expand, the Winnebago began to separate. Sometime around 1570, the Iowa, Missouri, and Otoe left the Winnebago near Green Bay and moved west. Passing down the Wisconsin River, they crossed the Mississippi and settled in Iowa before separating into individual tribes. Weakened by this defection, the remaining Winnebago concentrated into large villages near Green Bay to defend their homeland against the Ojibwe from the north or Illinois in the south.” [s2]

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: The French taught them how to use an ax to chop down trees, and how to shoot guns. [s5 p19]

1.6 Ecology:

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:

Pop. Size: “11 (2004), decreasing. 230 reported in 1997... Ethnic population: 6,000” [s1]

“Estimates of the Winnebago's pre-contact population are usually about 8,000, but it probably was much higher... in 1639, [it was] estimated they had 5,000 warriors suggesting a population of 20,000.” [s2]

“The population was estimated by Pike at 1,750 in 1806; by Morse at 5,800 in 1820; in 1837 and again in 1843 their number was given at 4,500. In 1867 there were 1,750 on the Nebraska reservation and 700 in Wisconsin. In 1876 there were 1,463 on the Nebraska reservation and 860 in Wisconsin; but 204 of the latter removed in 1877 to Nebraska. In 1886 there were 1,222 in Nebraska and 930 in Wisconsin, and in 1910 there were 1,063 in Nebraska and 1,270 in Wisconsin.” [s3]

Home Range Size: “Their homeland lay between Green Bay and Lake Winnebago in northeast Wisconsin but they dominated the area from Upper Michigan south to present-day Milwaukee extending west to the Mississippi... others fled down the Missouri to the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska.” [s2]

Village Size: “ the Winnebago lived in large semi-permanent villages.” [s2]

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): “The Winnebago were one of the northernmost agricultural tribes. In spite of a limited growing season, the Winnebago successfully grew three types of corn together with beans, squash, and tobacco... they also gathered wild rice from the nearby lakes during the fall.” [s2]

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: “fishing and hunting, including buffalo from the prairies of southern Wisconsin.” [s2]

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Traded for guns and knives with the French. [s5]

2.4 Food storage: “The Winnebago used pottery for cooking and food storage, and copper implements were fairly common since it was easily available from the south shore of Lake Superior.” [s2]

2.5 Sexual division of production:

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics: “The Winnebago used pottery for cooking and food storage” [s2]

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Dugout canoes [s2]

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): “Like other Siouan-speaking peoples, the Winnebago were taller than other natives (for that matter, taller than most Europeans).” [s2]

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.9 Inheritance patterns: “The Winnebago also resembled the Algonquin in that they were patrilineal with descent and clan membership determined by the father... Winnebago clans served both ceremonial and social functions, but in distinctive Siouan characteristic, were grouped into two major divisions, or moieties: an Upper (Sky) with four clans; and a Lower (Earth) having eight. Of these, the Thunderbird and Bear clans were the most important with the hereditary head chief of the Winnebago almost always chosen from the Thunderbird clan.” [s2]

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: “...her two brothers had the right to give her away in marriage.” [s5 p19]

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?**
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)**
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?**
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape**
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)**
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?**
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring**
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?**
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females**
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades**
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)**
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?**
- 4.24 Joking relationships?**
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations**
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules**
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?**
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?**
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)** “In the process of rebuilding their population after 1670, the Winnebago frequently intermarried with Algonquin... Intermarriage certainly happened, and as a result, the purest Winnebago bloodline may actually be the Iowa and Otoe-Missouri. However, prior to contact the Winnebago resembled the Algonquin in so many ways, there was not that much to change.” [s2]
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?**
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:**

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:**
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:**
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:**
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):** “They were always allies of the Menominee, but throughout their long history, the Winnebago remained enemies of the Illinois.” [s2]

Enemies of the Ojibwe [s2]

“ Trying to break the impasse, the Ottawa finally sent envoys to the Winnebago to arrange trade. Revealing a talent for treachery, the Winnebago killed and ate the Ottawa representatives. While the Ottawa and Huron prepared for war, the French in 1634 sent Jean Nicolet west to the Winnebago on what appeared to be a suicide mission. When Nicollet landed at Red Banks on the south shore of Green Bay, he was the first European the Winnebago had ever seen which probably saved his life. Nicollet ultimately succeeded

in arranging a truce between the Winnebago, Huron, and Ottawa which allowed trade.”
[s2]

“The Beaver Wars started in 1628 when the [Iroquois](#), having defeated the Mahican for control of the Dutch fur trade, began a war to reclaim their territory on the upper St. Lawrence River from the Algonkin. [Montagnais](#), and Huron. The fighting quickly spread west to other tribes. Having exhausted the beaver in their homelands, Ottawa, [Neutral](#), and [Tionontati](#) warriors equipped with firearms and steel weapons invaded lower Michigan to seize hunting territory from the Algonquin living there. The first refugees from these wars to arrive in Wisconsin were a group of Potawatomi who attempted to settle near Green Bay in 1641. Showing no mercy, the Winnebago immediately attacked and by 1642 had driven them north into upper Michigan... Unfortunately, this was only the beginning. The remaining Potawatomi soon joined the early arrivals followed by other tribes from lower Michigan. As all of these refugee tribes united against them, disagreements arose among the Winnebago over how to deal with the situation resulting in fighting among themselves. In the end most Winnebago decided on war and to concentrate on the Fox. Disaster was immediate. Crossing Lake Winnebago in canoes to attack the Fox, the Winnebago were caught in a storm and 500 warriors were drowned” [s2]

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: “ the Winnebago lived in large semi-permanent villages.” [s2]

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): “ Unlike the Algonquin, they followed the Siouan pattern and did not usually separate to small, scattered hunting camps during winter” [s2]

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): “Winnebago chief governed with the help of a council composed of the principal members of each clan.” [s2]

5.4 Post marital residence:

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: “The Algonquin influence... revealed itself in the eight types of lodge (round or oval) the Winnebago are known to have used during the historic period. This included the tepee for temporary shelter on buffalo hunts.” [s2]

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): Had menstrual lodges to separate the menstruating women from the men. [s5 p90]

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: “...in distinctive Siouan characteristic, were grouped into two major divisions, or moieties: an Upper (Sky) with four clans; and a Lower (Earth) having eight. Of these, the Thunderbird and Bear clans were the most important with the hereditary head chief of the Winnebago almost always chosen from the Thunderbird clan. Clan membership was more important among the Winnebago than band affiliation” [s2]

“The social organization contained two structural patterns characteristic of many North American Indian tribes: first, the division of the tribe into two phratries, among the Winnebago called Upper and Lower, and second, the clan, with descent in the male line.

The chief was selected from the Upper phratry, from the clan generally regarded as the most important, the Thunderbird. He, in contradistinction to all other Winnebago, could not go on the warpath. One of his most important functions was to succor the needy and plead for clemency in all cases of infractions of tribal law and custom, even in case of murder. His lodge was a sacred asylum and absolutely inviolable. If a murder had been committed he not only interceded for the life of the murderer but actually, if need be, offered to take the place of the malefactor.

In contrast to the role and functions of the chief of the Upper phratry were those of the chief of the Lower, who belonged to the Bear clan. In him were centered pre-eminently the police, the disciplinary and the war powers. He and his associates policed and guarded the village, inflicted punishment for transgressions of law and custom, took charge of the whole tribe when it was on a warpath or when engaged in hunting or other communal activities. It was in the official lodge of the chief of the Lower phratry that prisoners were confined before being killed, and it was in his lodge where the sacred warbundles of the tribe were stored and guarded against contamination.” [s6]

5.12 Trade: “...the French stopped at the Huron villages on the south end of Lake Huron and allowed native traders to conduct the fur trade beyond that point. The Ottawa and Huron soon linked with the Ojibwe in upper Michigan and then made attempts to open trade with the Winnebago to south. The French first learned about the Winnebago from the Ottawa in 1620, and what they heard was not especially good. Knowing that the Ottawa were closely related to and trading with their Ojibwe enemies, the Winnebago were suspicious and refused to allow Ottawa and Huron traders to proceed further west... Trying to break the impasse, the Ottawa finally sent envoys to the Winnebago to arrange trade. Revealing a talent for treachery, the Winnebago killed and ate the Ottawa representatives. While the Ottawa and Huron prepared for war, the French in 1634 sent Jean Nicolet west to the Winnebago on what appeared to be a suicide mission. When Nicollet landed at Red Banks on the south shore of Green Bay, he was the first European the Winnebago had ever seen which probably saved his life. Nicollet ultimately succeeded in arranging a truce between the Winnebago, Huron, and Ottawa which allowed trade.” [s2]

Traded steel weapons with the French. [s2]

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Had a “Medicine Rite” ceremony. [s6]

6.2 Stimulants: Smoked tobacco [s2]

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Death: “Burials varied according to clan with the dead either buried or placed on a platform.” [s2]

6.4 Other rituals: “...every individual attempted, by the proper offerings and propitiations, to obtain protection and specific powers from a large variety of spirits and deities. A man could not, for example, go on the warpath unless he had prayed to one of the deities controlling success in war, and had bestowed upon him by such a spirit certain gifts and had been promised success. These gifts were symbolized by material objects, paint, feathers, flutes, bones and so forth.” [s6]

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Build Effigy Mounds. [s4]

“The stories and legends of the Native Americans whose ancestors built the mounds describe the effigy mounds as ceremonial and sacred sites. Archeologists believe the effigy mounds delineated territories of choice gathering and hunting grounds.

Unfortunately, much of the data is inconclusive...

Near Lakes Michigan and Winnebago, water spirit earthworks—historically called turtle and panther mounds—are more common...

Mounds of earth in the shapes of birds, bear, deer, bison, lynx, turtle, panther or water spirit are the most common images. Like earlier groups, the Effigy Moundbuilders continued to build conical mounds for burial purposes, but their burial sites lacked the trade goods of the preceding Middle Woodland Culture. The Effigy Moundbuilders also built linear or long rectangular mounds that were used for ceremonial purposes that remain a mystery. Some archeologists believe they were built to mark celestial events or seasonal observances. Others speculate they were constructed as territorial markers or as boundaries between groups.” [s4]

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there tekonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.):

Animism-

“The Winnebago believed in a large number of spirits, some defined vaguely, others sharply. The vast majority were depicted as animals or animal-like beings. The main trait of these spirits was their ability to take on any form they wished, animal or human, animate or inanimate. To these supernatural beings man made offerings of various kinds which were always accompanied by tobacco. In a class by himself was the supreme deity, Earthmaker. While the conception of earthmaker had probably been influenced by the Christian concept of God, there is little question but that it antedated the coming of the Europeans and belongs to the oldest stratum of Winnebago beliefs.

The relationship between the spirits and deities and man was a very personal one. Every child, male and female, fasted between the ages of nine and eleven, and tried to acquire what was to all intents and purposes a guardian spirit upon whom he could call in any critical situation throughout life. This acquisition of a guardian and protective spirit at puberty was one of the fundamental traits of Winnebago culture as it was that of numerous other American Indian tribes. According to Winnebago ideas, without it a man was completely unanchored and at the mercy of events, natural and societal, in their crudest and most cruel forms. When they lost their belief in the efficacy of fasting and the spirits no longer vouchsafed them visions, Winnebago culture rapidly disintegrated.” [s6]

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: “Body tattooing was common to both sexes.” [s2]

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

“Men originally wore their hair in two long braids, but in time this changed to the scalplock and roach headdress favored by the Algonquin.” [s2]

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

“Although the Winnebago spoke a Siouan language, they were very much a woodland tribe whose lifestyle and dress closely resembled their Algonquin neighbors in the upper Great Lakes...

Their clothing was fringed buckskin, which the Winnebago frequently decorated with beautiful designs created from porcupine quills, feathers and beads - a skill for which they are still renown.” [s2]

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

“[Winnebago] comes from a Fox word "Ouinipegouek" meaning "people of the stinking water." No insult was intended. Instead, the name referred to algae-rich waters of the Fox River and Lake Winnebago where the Winnebago originally lived.” [s2]

Numbered references

1. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=win
2. <http://www.dickshovel.com/win.html>
3. <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/winnebago/winnebagohist.htm>
4. <http://www.nps.gov/efmo/historyculture/effigy-moundbuilders.htm>
5. Radin, Paul. *The Winnebago Tribe*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1970. Print.
6. <http://www.nanations.com/winnebago-history-culture.htm>