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A Paleo-Indian display at the Michigan Historical Museum shows how these early inhabitants dressed. Their clothing is made of caribou skins.

Photo David Woods

MICHIGAN'S FIRST SIDEDENTS

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people have lived on the land we call Michigan for more than 10,000 years. The time before the arrival of European explorers and missionaries in the 1600s is called *prehistory* by archaeologists.

When the first people came into Michigan, **glaciers** covered much of it. Even the land where glaciers did not exist was cold and windy. Archaeologists call Michigan's first inhabitants Paleo-Indians.

Archaeologists study the places (called *sites*) where Paleo-Indian artifacts are found. They have discovered that Paleo-Indians hunted barren-ground caribou, a deer-like animal that travels in large herds. The Indians used all parts of the caribou: the meat for food, the skin for clothing, the antlers, and bones and tendons for making tools and weapons.

chert

a stone that can be worked to a sharp edge

The Indians used **chert** to make into stone tools or to trade with other groups in the Great Lakes region.

glacier

a huge mass of ice moving slowly over the land

12,000-9,000 years ago

PREHISTORY

Paleo-Indians in the Great Lakes region hunt caribou, mammoths, and mastodon.

9,000-3,000 years ago

ARCHAIC

Indians learn new hunting and gathering skills in the forests that replace the retreating glaciers.

3,000 years ago - early 1600s

WOODLAND

Indians use nets to fish. They also begin farming and building burial mounds.

1600s to present

EUROPEAN

With the arrival of the Europeans, Native Americans see their way of life greatly changed.

After the glaciers retreated to the north, the Archaic period began. The Great Lakes settled into their present basins. Animals, such as deer, elk, and bear, populated the forests that covered much of the land. Many kinds of fish filled the lakes and streams.

The people of the Archaic period invented new tools such as the atlatl (or throwing stick). They used stone axes to cut down trees. They used the logs to make dugout canoes and a wide variety of wooden artifacts, such as bowls, handles for tools, and shafts for spears.

Indians living in the western Lake Superior region also discovered copper on Isle Royale

and the Keweenaw Peninsula. They used the copper to make many useful tools and weapons. The forests also provided food sources such as nuts and herbs for medicines.

About 2,500 years ago, the Woodland period began. People learned how to make pottery for cooking and food storage. They also began growing plants like sunflowers, corn, beans, and squash. They became expert hunters using the bow and arrow.

Indians of the Woodland period also began building mounds over the burial sites of important people in the society. In the southern part of Michigan, some groups lived in farming villages.

When Europeans began arriving in the Great Lakes in the 1620s, the Woodland period ended. European settlers and manufactured goods greatly changed the way Native Americans lived. 🇺🇸

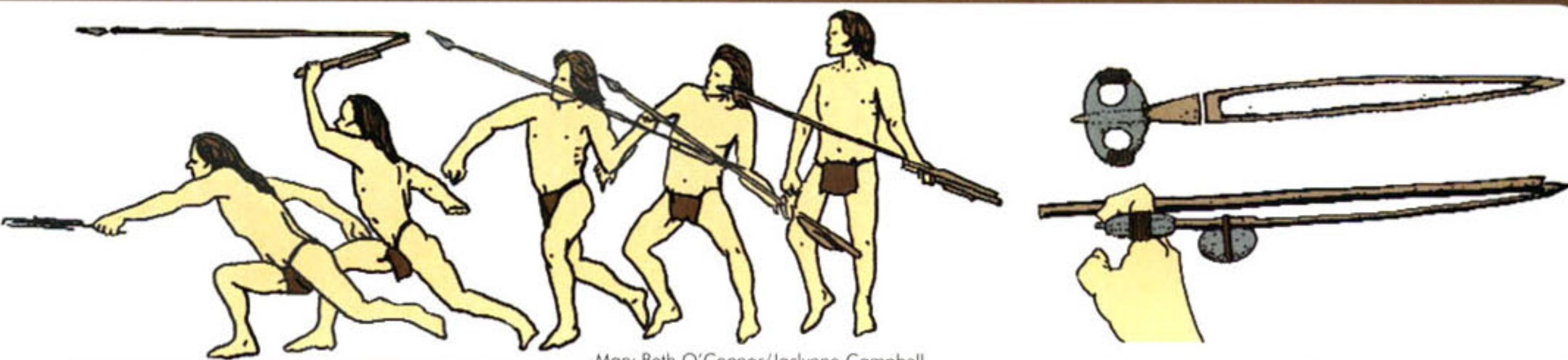


Johnny Quirin

Native Americans used projectile points (also called arrowheads or spear points).

WHAT'S AN ATLATL?

Before the bow and arrow, Native American hunters depended on muscle power to propel spears. The atlatl, sometimes called a *throwing stick*, allowed a hunter to throw a spear faster and with more power. The atlatl is about two feet long with a groove in it. The shaft of the spear sits in the groove. At the back of the atlatl is a hook that fits into the end of the spear and holds it in place. The hunter grips the atlatl, using his fingers to hold the spear shaft lightly to keep it in the atlatl groove. As the hunter launches the spear with a sweeping arm and wrist motion, the atlatl is like an extension of his arm. It greatly increases the power of the throw. In the hands of a skilled user, an atlatl can throw a spear more than 100 yards. That is the length of an entire football field.



Mary Beth O'Connor/Jaclyne Campbell