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YOU
KNOW.**



INDIANS OF ONTARIO

The Indians who inhabited Ontario in pre-European times belonged to two cultural groups, the Algonkian and Iroquoian. According to archaeological experts, the Iroquoian culture evolved over a period of at least two thousand years in the eastern Great Lakes region including the Ontario peninsula. The Iroquoian tribes were the Huron, Tobacco and Neutral nations of South-eastern Ontario, and the five nations of the Iroquois, who occupied the country from Lake Champlain to Lake Ontario were the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas.

The Iroquoian territory consisted largely of well-watered and fertile land, heavily forested with oak, maple, elm and other deciduous trees. The Iroquoians had originally obtained corn, beans and squash from the south and the summers of southern Ontario were long and warm enough to ripen their crops. They converted much of their land into a rich farm belt and raised enough food to last throughout the winter. Since they did not have to move from place to place in search of food, they were able to main-

tain permanent homes and settle in villages.

Seventy percent of the Iroquoian food supply was derived from the soil and the rest consisted of fish and game which was abundant. The men cleared the ground with stone-bladed axes, and the women dug the soil between stumps into mounds with shell-bladed hoes and digging sticks.

The men went on hunting and trading expeditions in the summer, leaving the women at home to tend and harvest the crops. Corn was stored in large bark chests inside the houses and squash in bark-lined pits outside. Many of the varieties of corn and beans in use today were developed by the Indians, and ancient Indian recipes are still used for cooking corn. Every Iroquoian community was surrounded by several hundred acres of cornfields and the larger villages raised as much as 150,000 bushels of corn in a single season.

When not cultivating the cornfields the women and children gathered acorns, butternuts, chestnuts and hickory nuts, also raspberries, blueberries, cranberries and wild plums. They collected small quantities of sugar maple sap but did not make enough sugar to store away for the winter months.

Deer, bear and other animals provided meat. The deer were driven into pounds and killed with bows and arrows. A blow-gun was sometimes used in hunting small birds. Fish were caught with spears and hooks of bone, and nets made from nettle fibre. Weirs were built across small streams and basket-traps set to catch the fish.

Iroquoian ornaments were made from shell, bone and stone, but after the arrival of the Europeans, silver ornaments were valued, especially brooches and buckles made by professional silversmiths in Quebec and Philadelphia. European clothing was also adopted at an early date.