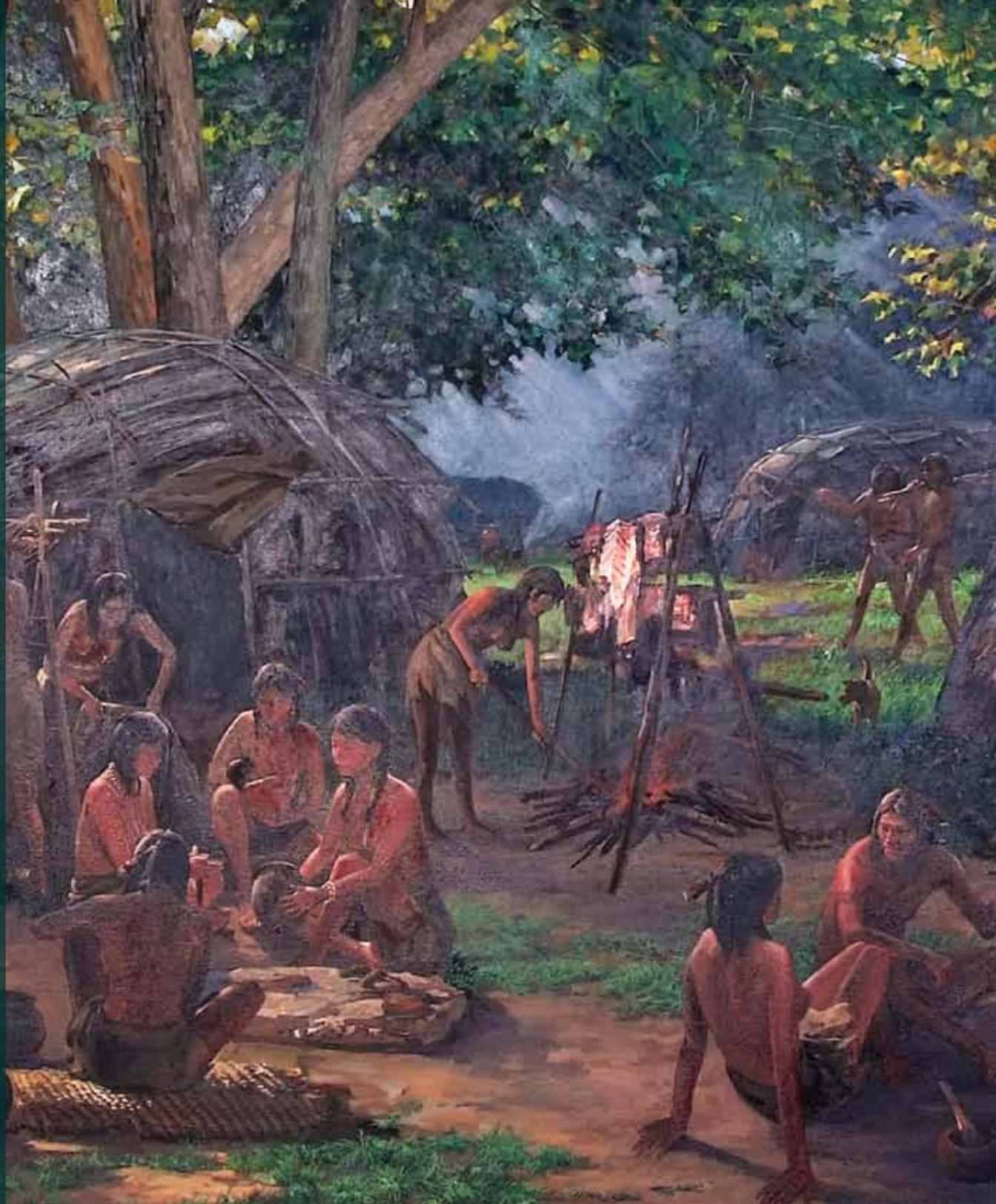


KentuckyHistoricalSociety  
**MUSEUM THEATRE**

Exploring Perspectives  
in Frontier Kentucky

[www.history.ky.gov](http://www.history.ky.gov)







KentuckyHistoricalSociety

# MUSEUM THEATRE

## KENTUCKY'S NATIVE AMERICANS

---

Native Americans were the first Kentuckians. They arrived more than 12,000 years ago. By examining the archaeological record in almost every county, historians know Kentucky was the home to many native groups. They have been hunters and gatherers, mound and earthwork builders, part-time gardeners, long-distance traders and full-time farmers who lived in permanent villages of 1,000 people or more. Kentucky is still home to thousands of Native Americans.

Early native peoples living here had access to European products (like metal trade items and glass beads) long before Europeans ever set foot over the mountains. Items found at archaeological sites dating to the mid-1500s show trade routes extended far outside the boundaries of present-day Kentucky. Native farming peoples lived in large villages in the summer but moved to smaller hunting camps in the winter. The native practice of establishing winter hunting camps could have led to the modern day interpretation that indigenous groups only hunted in Kentucky.

In the mid-1700s, the principal village of the Shawnee was located in Greenup County. While there is no record that Europeans visited this area before the early 1700s, by the mid-1700s, infectious diseases spread by Europeans had reduced native populations by over half and disrupted their way of life. It is likely that some native groups completely disappeared due to these diseases. In other cases, survivors from many different groups may have formed new societies. By the time of major European settlement in central Kentucky, there were few or no permanent Native American villages in Kentucky. The lack of written evidence has added to the myth that Native Americans never lived in Kentucky.

In addition to this myth, stereotyping is also a problem. Many people still do not recognize degrading images, language, and concepts focused on Native Americans. Stereotypes of Native Americans as the "savage redskin," the "noble savage" and the "child of nature" still persist and can be found in advertising, on television and in children's literature.

### CORE CONTENT FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

#### SS-04-2.1.1

Students will identify early cultures (Native American, Appalachian, pioneers) in Kentucky and explain their similarities and differences.

#### SS-04-2.3.1

Students will describe various forms of interactions (compromise, cooperation, conflict) that occurred during the early settlement of Kentucky between diverse groups (Native Americans, early settlers).

#### SS-04-5.1.1

Students will use a variety of primary and secondary sources (e.g., artifacts, diaries, timelines) to describe significant events in the history of Kentucky and to interpret different perspectives.

#### SS-04-5.2.2

Students will identify and compare the cultures of diverse groups and explain why people explored and settled in Kentucky.

### A FEW OF KENTUCKY'S NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

**Cherokee:** The Cherokee claimed some land in southeastern Kentucky and traces of culture are said to be found in archeological remains along the upper course of the Cumberland River, but no permanent Cherokee settlement has been found within Kentucky.

**Chickasaw:** The westernmost end of Kentucky was claimed by the Chickasaw, and at a very early period they had a settlement on the lower course of the Tennessee River.

**Mosopelea:** This tribe may have lived within the boundaries of Kentucky for a brief time, perhaps at the mouth of the Cumberland River.

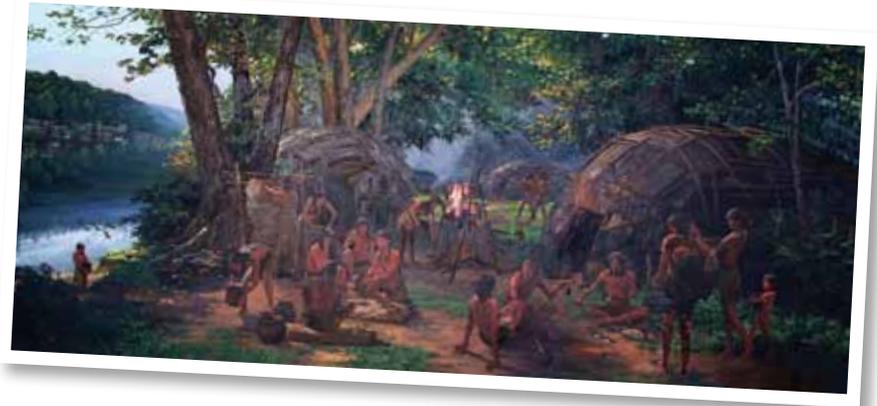
**Shawnee:** The Shawnee had more to do with Kentucky in early times than any other tribe, but maintained few villages in the state for a long period. Their more permanent settlements were farther south, near Nashville. The noted Shawnee chief, Blackhoof, was born near Lexington. The tribe crisscrossed the state several times and used it as a hunting ground.

**Yuchi:** According to early maps, the Yuchi had a town in Kentucky on what appears to be the Green River.

**Source:** "The Indian Tribes of North America" by John R. Swanton, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 145—1953, [726 pages—Smithsonian Institution], (pp. 229-230)



KentuckyHistoricalSociety  
**MUSEUM THEATRE**



**VOCABULARY**

- Brave:** A warrior, especially among Native American tribes.
- Chief:** The head or ruler of a tribe or clan.
- Culture:** Inherited ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge, which forms the shared bases of social action.
- Frontier:** The land or territory that forms the furthest extent of a country's settled or inhabited regions.
- Indian:** A member of the earliest known people of the Americas.
- Nomads:** A group of people with no fixed home, who move from place to place with the season in search of food, water and other necessities.
- Settler:** A person who establishes a new region.
- Squaw:** Offensive term describing a Native American woman or wife.
- Stereotype:** Simplified conceptions and opinions of groups based on prior assumptions.
- Tribe:** Any group of people united by ties of descent from a common ancestor, community of customs and traditions, loyalty to the same leaders, etc.

**IN-CLASS OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

The "Kentuckians Before Boone" mural is housed at the Salato Wildlife Education Center in Frankfort and is a depiction of a Fort Ancient winter camp in the late 1500s (about 150 years before Daniel Boone or Simon Kenton were born). The Fort Ancient culture lasted about 700 years.

Take a look at the picture of the Native Americans and note what kind of activities they are engaging in.

- Describe:**  
 What's going on in this picture? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- What evidence do you see of work? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- What evidence do you see of leisure and play? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- What evidence do you see of hunting and gathering? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Do you see any evidence of European or colonial frontier life? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you identify if this is a nomadic tribe or a permanent settlement? \_\_\_\_\_

**Analyze:**  
 What of those kinds of things might be missing from this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of people lived in Kentucky before the settlers arrived? \_\_\_\_\_

Were they hunters or gatherers? \_\_\_\_\_

**Interpret:**  
 Does this look like a "group of savages," like many of the frontiersmen believed? \_\_\_\_\_

Does this scene give you a better understanding of what life was like for the Native Americans? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the things that surprised you when looking at the picture? \_\_\_\_\_