

Living in an Algonkian Village

Vocabulary

Note: Most of these words are also defined within the text.

Algonkian (al-GON-kee-in): The Algonkian people are a language and cultural group that included Native American tribes across much of North America in the 1600s. Most tribes around the Chesapeake Bay were Algonkian-speaking.

Cockarouse (COCK-a-rouse): Cockarouse is the Renape dialect word, spoken primarily by the Powhatan Confederacy of Virginia, for an advisor to the werowance. Cockarouses helped make decisions about war. We don't know the word for a war advisor among the Maryland Algonkian tribes.

Canoe: A canoe is a narrow open boat. Algonkian people used one large log and hollowed it out by burning and scraping it. With canoes, they could travel much faster than on foot.

Cattail: Cattail is a tall green plant that grows at the edges of ponds, lakes, and marshes. It has long, flat leaves and a brown fuzzy spike on top of a stiff stem. Cattail leaves were woven into mats to use for a variety of purposes around the Algonkian home, like walls, sleeping mats, and shade.

Chieftdom: A chieftdom is a group of clans led by a higher-level chief.

Deer sinews: Deer sinews are the tendons, or tough tissues, that connect the muscles to the bones of a deer. Eastern Algonkian people dried the sinews and used them to sew and attach arrowheads and fletching (fins) to arrowshafts.

Dogbane: Dogbane is a wild plant with tough stems. Fibers from this plant were woven into objects like bags, pouches, and, most importantly, fishing nets.

Elders: Elders are the oldest and wisest people in a community. They are highly respected in Algonkian cultures.

Girdling: Girdling is a method Algonkian people used to clear land for planting. They would burn through the bark and the tree's outer layer, making it impossible for nutrients and water to travel up the tree. The upper parts of the tree would die. Eventually, it would be easy to chop the tree down. Sometimes it even fell over by itself.

Hominy: Hominy is a food made from dried corn kernels soaked in a bath of lye or lime.

Matchacomico (match-a-COM-i-co): Matchacomico is the Renape dialect word, spoken primarily by the Powhatan Confederacy of Virginia, for a village council meeting. Elders, advisors, and the werowance attended the town council. We don't know the word for a town council among the Maryland Algonkian tribes.

Palisade: A palisade is a type of high fence created by driving small felled trees into the ground. Chesapeake Algonkian people sometimes built palisades around their most important villages.

Piscataway (pis-CAT-a-way): The Piscataway people are the largest tribal group living on the Western shore of Maryland. The Yaocomico were a subtribe of the Piscataway, and Piscataway clans and subtribes still live in southern Maryland.

Saplings: Saplings are young trees, anywhere from 2 to 15 feet tall and 1 to 4 inches in diameter.

Tanning: Tanning is the process of making leather from animal skins.

Tayac (TIE-ack): The tayac is the most powerful chief in the area; the chief of all village and clan chiefs.

Three Sisters: The Three Sisters are corn, beans, and squash, planted together in an interdependent planting system that was used by Native Americans across North America.

Tomahawk: Tomahawk is a word in the Renape dialect of the Algonkian language which means "to cut or strike." A tomahawk is a small axe, used mostly for utilitarian tasks like cutting or carving green wood, and sometimes for combat.

Werowance (male), **Weowancesqua** (female): A werowance or weowancesqua is the chief of a village or clan.

Wiso (WEE-so): A wiso is an advisor to the werowance. Wisos helped make decisions about village life like planting and harvesting.

Witchott: A witchott is a one-room home used by one or more Algonkian families.

Witchott frame: A witchott frame is the sapling framework of a traditional Algonkian dwelling.

Yaocomico (ya-KOM-i-CO): The Yaocomico were the Indigenous subtribe related to the Piscataway who first welcomed the English colonists to the area. They resided on the north bank of the Potomac River and were absorbed by the Piscataway in the 17th century.