

The Early Chicago Environment and People

CCSSR2. Figure out ideas when you read.

The city you know is only about 150 years old. Long ago, before it was a city, people lived in this area. They were Native Americans, and they learned how to live in Chicago before it had this name.

They were the ones who actually gave it its name. They called the city Checagou, which means wild onions. Every year, it was difficult to live here in the wintertime because it was snowy and extremely cold. There were not even any plants to pick. Then, the first plant that grew was the wild onion. In early spring, the Native Americans would eat it. Therefore, this became the place of the wild onion. No one actually planted it; the onion grew naturally.

There were grasslands and forests, and there were also many animals. The residents survived by hunting and fishing. In the summer, they grew food, including planting vegetables. While it was still summer, they began to prepare for the winter. They knew it would be freezing and snowy. They would be able to track rabbits in the winter, and there would also be deer. However, they would not have as much food because there would be no plants growing in winter.

In summer, the families would relocate to a village and build homes there. They would build the homes together. The homes were very large, so that a family could have several people living in one home. The families would fish and grow food. People in the village helped each other out.

Then in winter, they would leave the village and build homes in the woods. Each family would build its own home, and would take animal skins with them to help construct their homes. They would use branches to make a kind of tent, and then cover the walls with those skins to keep them warm. They were particularly skilled at building those types of homes.

They would continue to hunt for food, and sometimes they would move their home in winter to a place where they could find more animals to hunt. It was difficult to acquire the food they needed. So, when they found the wild onions they knew it soon would be better weather and they would have more food. They would be able to join their friends and family at the summer village.

CHART WHAT YOU LEARN

Make a chart. Show what the people did in summer in one column. Show what they did in winter in another column.

Write a summary of your chart. What does it show about how people lived here in the past?