

Native American Life—Potawatomi Profile

The name Potawatomi means People of the Place of the Fire or Keepers of the Fire. Long ago, they got this name because they were responsible for the fire for a group of tribes. They moved into this area a few hundred years ago. They lived here for many decades. As the seasons changed, the Potawatomi changed their ways of living. In summer they moved to one big village. In winter, they set up small camps. Imagine their homes as you read about their lives in the different seasons. The following paragraphs describe a year that might have been usual for a Potawatomi family in this area a couple hundred years ago.

Summer We're moving to the big village. We will set up a big house. We will use long poles to make it. It will have a big floor and bigger roof. The roof will hang over the cooking area. I will help my mother plant. First we will dig in the ground with a big shoulder bone from a deer. It's hard work to do that digging. But then we'll have a lot of food. It will be a great time for everyone when we get together with our friends and big family. My sister says summer is her favorite time because there are so many things to see and do. My mother likes it, too. She likes to be with our big family in summer. There is much work to do, but everyone helps.

Autumn. We have a lot of food. The squash and pumpkins are big. We have lots of corn, too. Every day, I pick more beans. We're drying the big pumpkins to save for the winter. My father got salt from a salt spring that we're using to save the meat. Soon we will be moving to our winter camp. I go to get nuts and berries. I eat some when I find them, but I bring most of them home.

Winter We have set up a wigwam in a place near the trees. We saw deer and raccoons and knew this would be a good place for hunting. We made the wigwam from branches of trees. We stuck one end in the ground. Then we tied them together in the middle. We left a hole for the smoke from the fire to get out. We covered the outside of the wigwam with bark..

It's a cold winter day, and it just snowed. My father says it's a good day to hunt the elk. He will be able to see the tracks in the snow. He will go soon to hunt. My mother says that means lots of food and work. If we don't have enough food in this place, we may move our camp. We will look for a place where we will find more animal tracks.

Spring We are getting my favorite food. We get it by making a hole in a tree. Out comes the sweet juice of the tree. My father is going fishing. He has a net he made from deer sinew. He throws it in the stream and then it sinks down. He tied shells to the bottom of the net. They fill with water and then go to the bottom of the stream. This summer, my brother will get to fish, too. He has a line and hook he will use to catch the fish in the lake. We sometimes get fish in winter, but that means we have to cut through the ice to get them. So fishing is a spring and summer job. My father likes the spring best. He says it is a time of hope. He hears the birds sing and sees the plants start to grow again. I like spring, too. Soon we will see the flowers.