

Did you know that the word “Ohio” comes from the Seneca name for the Ohio River, Ohiyo, which means “it is beautiful”?

Native inhabitants of the Ohio River Valley (Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana) included the Lenape, Erie, Shawnee, Munsee, Susquehannock, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Yuchi, Tutelo/Saponi, Illini, Miami, Kickapoo, Wyndot, Wea, Eel River, and the Seneca of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy.

The story of Native peoples along the Ohio River is unfortunately filled with sadness, loss and devastation. Smallpox and other European diseases decimated many of the Native peoples of the Ohio River – some nations experienced massive illness before Europeans had even met them. During the Indian Removals of the 1800s, many nations were forcibly uprooted and forced to leave their homeland. They were marched to Oklahoma and other “Indian” territories. Many of the original tribes of the Ohio River live in Oklahoma today. Today, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians the only federally recognized tribe in the 6 state region of the Ohio River.

Indigenous people who inhabited Ohio land often lived near waterways for their valuable resources, and used rivers, like the Ohio, for transportation. The watercrafts that the indigenous people used were called canoes, a term only partly originating from native languages. The word dates from the mid-1500s, obtained from the Spanish word "canoa". The Spanish acquired it from the word "kanawa", used by the Arawakan natives of the Caribbean islands to describe their boats.

The forest provided many varieties of trees that could be used to make canoes, but some constraints limited their choices. For quick transportation, small trees and brush could be lashed together as rafts or floats for navigating broader rivers and streams. Bark canoes could be made from parts of trees – primarily birch bark or elm bark. For more substantial vessels like dugouts, whole trees were needed; trees that could be easily worked, located close to the water, and recently damaged by natural causes such as lightning, windstorms or beavers that only needed to be taken down. Dugout canoes were primarily made from pine, cedar, and occasionally sycamore.

Cincinnati's Indigenous Lands

The land which Cincinnati is situated on, in Southwest Ohio is traditional territory of the following tribes:

[Shawandasse Tula \(Shawanwaki/Shawnee\) - Shawnee Tribe](#)

[Osage - Osage Nation](#)

[Kaskaskia - Kaskaskia Tribe](#)

[Myaamia - Miami Tribe of Oklahoma](#)

This land is also traditional territory of the [Hopewell Culture](#) and the [Adena Culture](#)

Visit [native-land.ca/](#) for an interactive map of native lands.