

Eastern Woodland Indian Cultures of Maryland

Unit: Primary Sources
Lesson: Examining Father
Andrew White's Journal

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Excerpts from the journal of Father Andrew White.

“The natives are of tall and fine stature, with naturally dark skin, which they generally make more shocking by painting it with a specially prepared red oil in order to keep away the gnats; thus they are more intent on comfort than on appearance. They also disfigure their faces with other colors, blue from the nose upwards, red downwards, or the reverse, in various and really horrible ways. And, since they lack a beard nearly to extreme old age, they paint on a beard with lines of variable color, drawn from the outermost lips to the ears.”

“They tie their hair, which is commonly pulled around with a band into a knot at the left ear, and also add some ornament which is of value with them. Some wear the shape of a fish in copper on the forehead. They surround their necks with glass beads connected by a thread in the manner of a necklace, although these beads are beginning to be of little worth to them and [are] less and less useful for trade.”

“ . . . they are with us and near us every day and take pleasure in our company. They hasten toward us of their own accord with a cheerful expression and offer us what they have obtained by hunting or fishing, sometimes also cakes and boiled or roasted oysters, and this they do when they have been invited with a few words of their language, which we have so far learned through signs.”

“They sustain a generous spirit toward everyone; whatever kindness you may confer on them they return. They decide nothing rashly or seized by a sudden passion, but by reason. When therefore, anything of importance is proposed at any time, they are silent for a while and think it over; then they either briefly agree or refuse, and they are very tenacious of their resolution. Truly, if once they should be instructed in Christian precepts (and indeed nothing seems to stand in the way besides our ignorance of the language used in these parts), they will become outstanding observers of virtue and humanity.”

“Their weapons are a bow and arrows, which are two cubits long and equipped with [a tip made of] an antler, or a very sharp white flintstone. They shoot these arrows with such great skill that they pierce a sparrow through the middle from a distance. . . By means of these weapons they live, and daily they hunt squirrels, partridges, turkeys, and other animals throughout the fields and forests. There is a vast abundance of all these animals, although we, from fear of an ambush, do not yet dare to provide food for us ourselves by hunting.”