

## First Encounters of the Ho-Chunk Nation and the French

*This primary source is provided courtesy of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.*

Account of the first contact of the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) with explorer Jean Nicolet in Green Bay in 1634.

...Then the French landed their boats and came ashore and extended their hands to the Winnebago, and the Indians put tobacco in their hands. The French, of course, wanted to shake hands with the Indians. They did not know what tobacco was, and therefore did not know what to do with it. Some of the Winnebago poured tobacco on their heads, asking them for victory in war. The French tried to speak to them, but they could not, of course, make themselves understood. After a while they discovered that they were without tools, so they taught the Indians how to use an ax and chop a tree down. The Indians, however, were afraid of it, because they thought that the ax was holy. Then the French taught the Indians how to use guns, but they held aloof for a long time through fear, thinking that all these things were holy. Suddenly a Frenchman saw an old man smoking and poured water on him. They knew nothing about smoking or tobacco. After a while they got more accustomed to one another. The Indians learned how to shoot the guns and began trading objects for axes. They would give furs and things of that nature for the guns, knives, and axes of the whites. They still considered them holy, however. Finally they learned how to handle guns quite well and they liked them very much. They would even build fires at night so that they might try their guns, for they could not wait for the day, they were so impatient. When they were out of ammunition they would go to the traders and tell their people that they would soon return. By this time they had learned to make themselves understood by various signs.

Source: Kellogg, Louise P. (editor). *Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634-1699*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917). Pages 11-16; online facsimile edition at [www.americanjourneys.org](http://www.americanjourneys.org).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did the Winnebago put in the hands of the French when the French came ashore?

- A corn
- B sugarcane
- C potatoes
- D tobacco

2. At first axes and guns had the effect of making the Winnebago afraid. What was the cause of their fear of axes and guns?

- A a belief that axes and guns were holy
- B a belief that axes and guns would harm them
- C a belief that axes and guns would harm the environment
- D a belief that axes and guns were living things

3. Read these sentences from the text.

"Suddenly a Frenchman saw an old man smoking and poured water on him. They [the French] knew nothing about smoking or tobacco."

Based on the information in the text, why might the Frenchman have poured water on the old man?

- A The Frenchman thought the old man was smoking too much tobacco.
- B The Frenchman thought the old man was on fire.
- C The Frenchman thought the old man was unable to bathe himself.
- D The Frenchman was worried about the dangers of secondhand smoke.

4. After a while the Winnebago got more accustomed to the French. What evidence in the text supports this statement?

- A When the French landed, the Winnebago placed tobacco in their hands.
- B Some of the Winnebago poured tobacco on the heads of the French, asking them for victory in war.
- C The French discovered that the Winnebago had no tools.
- D The Winnebago learned how to shoot the guns of the French and began trading objects for axes.

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A When the French landed their boats and came ashore, they wanted to shake hands with the Winnebago, but the Winnebago put tobacco in their hands.
- B After the French discovered that the Winnebago did not have tools, they taught the Winnebago how to use an ax to chop a tree down.
- C At first there was a lot of confusion when the Winnebago and the French interacted, but they got accustomed to each other and communication improved.
- D After a while the Winnebago learned how to handle guns and would build fires at night so that they could use their guns even in the darkness.

6. Read this sentence from the text.

"Then the French taught the Indians how to use guns, but they held aloof for a long time through fear, thinking that all these things were holy."

What is probably the meaning of "held aloof" here?

- A paid attention
- B kept back
- C asked questions
- D raised their hands

7. Read these sentences from the text.

"The French tried to speak to them, but they could not, of course, make themselves understood. After a while they discovered that they were without tools, so they taught the Indians how to use an ax and chop a tree down."

How could the second sentence be rewritten without changing its meaning?

- A After a while the French discovered that the Indians were without tools, so they taught the Indians how to use an ax and chop a tree down.
- B After a while the Indians discovered that the French were without tools, so they taught the Indians how to use an ax and chop a tree down.
- C After a while the Indians discovered that they were without tools, so the French taught the Indians how to use an ax and chop a tree down.
- D After a while they discovered that the French were without tools, so the French taught the Indians how to use an ax and chop a tree down.

**8.** Describe the communication between the Winnebago and the French at the beginning of this account. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**9.** Describe the communication between the Winnebago and the French at the end of this account.

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**10.** Explain how communication between the Winnebago and the French changed over time. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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