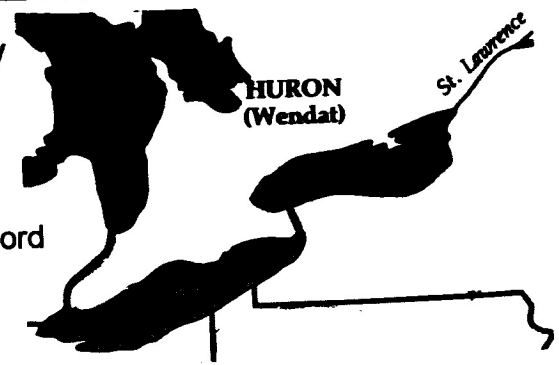


## Wyandotte

The Huron were a confederacy of four tribes who traditionally lived in southern Ontario, Canada. The name Huron came from French traders in the 17th century. These people called themselves the Wendat, meaning "islanders" or "dwellers on a peninsula", reflecting their belief that they inhabited the center of the great island earth. The name Wendat was later corrupted in the mid-1700's by English to Wyandotte.

Prior to the 17th century, the tribes of the Wendat Confederacy lived in southern Ontario, Canada, an environment rich with wild game, fish and fertile land. Their homeland occupied an area 35 miles wide by 20 miles long and was populated by some 20,000 people in the 1500s. The four tribes of the Wendat Confederacy were the Attigna-wantan (Bear People), the Attigneenongnahac (Cord People), the Tahontaehrat (Deer People) and the Anendahronon (Rock People). United, these four tribes were a formidable front against their traditional enemies and rivals, the Iroquois.



## Life among the Wendat



*From an engraving by the Jesuit priest Francois-Joseph Bressani, who worked with the Huron in 1643.*

The Wendat lived in longhouses, rectangular dwellings built of cedar bark fastened to wooden frames. A series of ten to twelve hearths ran through the center of the long house, with the families on either side sharing the hearth. The homes were set in palisaded villages surrounded by fields in which the Wendat cultivated corn, beans and squash. Beyond these fields were the hunting territories of each village.

While men cleared the fields, it was women who tended them. The harvest and its distribution belonged to the women. Men hunted and fished and were responsible for the extensive trading carried on by the Wendat.

Longhouses were usually inhabited by groups of sisters, their husbands and children, and their adult daughters' families. This made up the clan. Within the four tribes of Wendat, there were eight clans. The sisters along with the clan matriarch, or older sister of the clan, were in control of the long houses. Women held authority and family lineage and property was passed through the women. The matriarchs of the long houses chose the chiefs for the village.

The Wendat believed strongly in personal freedom, believing no one had the right to force behavior on others. Individuals were free to make their own choices. Children learned not by punishment, but by example. Men and women were considered equals and couples were free to marry and divorce.

This strong belief in personal freedom was evident even in the political sphere. When chiefs met together in council decisions were discussed and argued at length, until consensus was reached.

The spiritual realm permeated everyday life. Everything to the Wendat had a spirit. At one time, feasts were held throughout the year to gain aid from these spirits and to thank them for past favors.