

OLD TOWN TORONTO

Heritage Landscape and Resources Guide

First Nations History

The earliest First Nations presence in the Toronto area has been traced to the recession of Lake Iroquois, approximately 10,000 years ago. A brief overview of the periods of First Nations' activities is provided in the table below (key source: Special Places: *The Changing Ecosystems Of the Toronto Region*, p. 63-75).

Period	First Nations Presence
Palace-Indian c. 9000-7000 BC	These people were likely hunters with spears, who migrated through the Toronto area between their winter and summer ranges. Large mammals such as mastodon and mammoth were present during this period.
Archaic c. 8000-1000 BC	Heavy woodworking tools were used after 7000 BC, and people manufactured dugout canoes. Fishing appears to have been a greater source of food during this period. Copper tools appear 4000 BC.
Early and Middle Woodland c. 1000 BC — AD 700	Pottery making makes its appearance after 1000 BC and the introduction of cultivated plants indicates a transition toward a more sedentary way of life.
Late Woodland 0. AD 600-1650	Society became much more agricultural during this time, and the cultivation of corn, beans and squash was common practice. The Toronto area, however, continued to be occupied by hunting and fishing peoples until about AD 1100. The spread of cultivated plants led to more permanent settlement. Clusters of villages could be found after AD 900.
The Historic Period AD 1650-1800	Contact with European explorers and settlers led to new activities such as the fur trade.

It is known that several First Nations including various Iroquoian peoples made use of the Toronto area for hunting and food gathering. A few First Nations encampments were found near the mouth of the Don River and some evidence has been found of small seasonal activities in the lower and middle Don Valley area. Various archaeological finds have provided evidence of First Nations activity, a most important one being the Withrow site. It was discovered in 1886 on Withrow Avenue near Broadview and East Riverdale Park, and contained both Archaic (pre-3000 BC) and more recent artifacts

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By about 1660, the Five Nations Iroquois from New York had largely destroyed the indigenous societies of southern Ontario and had begun to colonize the region. One such village was Teiaiagon near the junction of Lake Ontario and the Humber River. The Humber trail was called the “Carrying Place” because it served as a portage for those travelling between Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe. Teiaiagon was eventually abandoned and the Mississauga people began making use of the area for hunting, fishing, and food gathering.

Source:

Nelson, Gordon, Heritage Landscape Guide , for the Citizens for the Old Town, Waterloo, Canada, , 2001