Life at Early Florida Missions and Indian Villages

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Grade Level: Elementary

Objectives:
1. Recognize how transportation and communication link cultures.
2. Recognize the political and cultural characteristics of a region.
3. Identify the effects of climate, physical features and resources on people.
4. Identify cultural regions of the world.

Materials:
- Paper
- Pencil
- Crayons
- Prepared information cards.

Background Information:
In the 1600’s, Jefferson County was the site of two Spanish missions run by Franciscan Friars. Both missions were in or near villages of the Apalachee or Timucuan Indians. In 1674-1675 the Bishop Caldron of Cuba visited all the missions in Florida. Starting in St. Augustine, he traveled westward describing the missions and the Indian lifestyle of the inhabitants. In addition, he described the distances from mission to mission in leagues (one league is about 2-1/2 miles.) Unfortunately, all of the missions were destroyed by Creek Indians led by English soldiers from the north. This occurred between 1703-1707. Archaeologists and historians have been able to locate many of the sites in Florida. The two sites in Jefferson County are San Miquel De Asile and San Juan De Aspalaga.

Procedures:
1. Initiating activity: The teacher will provide a general overview as explained in Part IV. Then have various students read prepared information cards about different areas of mission life or Indian life. Have discussion and a question and answer time. (See the next page for cards.)
2. Strategies: After a thorough discussion, give students copies of all information cards. They are to write a story about “The Day Bishop Caldron Came to Our Mission Village.” This can be written from the perspective of an Indian child, an elder, a friar, a member of the Bishop’s group or even an animal watching from afar. The students are to use factual materials derived from the information presented. They are to be creative in their presentation of the material. Based on the class composite, the teacher should decide if this is a cooperative learning or individual activity. Illustrations are also required.
3. Culminating Activity: Students can share their stories with the class and discuss them under the teacher’s direction.
Information Cards for Life at Early Florida Missions and Indian Villages

Card One: Bishop Caldon’s Visit
The Bishop sailed to St. Augustine from Cuba. After visiting the city, he traveled north about a league (about 2-1/2 miles) to Mission Nombre de Dios. Heading North he visited every mission in a chain of Florida missions from St. Augustine to Tallahassee. He described the missions and villages in leagues. There were 24 Christian Indian Villages in the Apalachee and Timucuan Provinces which covered Leon, Jefferson and Madison counties. The two in Jefferson County are San Juan de Aspalaga and San Miquel de Asile. As the Bishop went, he baptized and instructed the Indians.

Card Two: Indian Mission Schools
The friars or priests held school for all children both male and female. The children were taught to read and write. Adults were also taught. The Indians leaned enough writing to send letters from one village to another. Church music was also taught.

Card Three: Indians in Apalachee and Timucuan Provinces
The Bishop described the Indians as clever and quick to learn arts, carpentry, music, reading and writing. Their weapons were bows and arrows. They had a long knife called a macana. The men wore animal skins from the waist down and blankets in winter. The women wore tunics made of tree moss.

Card Four: Foods
The main food was corn with ashes. Pumpkins and beans were also grown. Fish and small game were caught. Water was their beverage. A luxury drink called cazina was made from reeds grown in the sea.

Card Five: Houses
Their houses were rounded huts made from straw. In summer they slept outside on the ground. In winter they slept indoors on beds made from reeds covered with bear skin. The houses had no windows and only a small door. There was a hole in the roof for smoke. Even in winter, only a small fire was needed. In the house was a granary where wheat and corn was stored.

Card Six: The Missions and the Friars
The Friars lived in or very near the people to which they sought to minister. Missions were run by Franciscan friars and Christian Indians came to worship. The women sat on the Epistle (left) side and the men sat on the Gospel (right) side. They came to worship and were “joyous” in their celebrations. The Christian Indians were buried in the church as were the friars. The friars built a long chain of missions in Florida. They had to win the friendship of Indians whose ancestors may have suffered at the hands of Spanish explorers. The friars learned about new foods and customs. On numerous occasions they protested the poor treatment of Indians by the soldiers. Far from home they endured conditions in great contrast to the monasteries of Europe. There is evidence of cultural tolerance.

Card Seven: The Indian Council House
They were made of wood covered with straw. This was the center of Indian government for the village. Ceremonies were held here. A large hole in the ceiling acted as a chimney. There were seats on the perimeter of the house.