A Paleo-Indian display at the Michigan Historical Museum shows how these early inhabitants dressed. Their clothing is made of caribou skins.

Photo David Woods
People have lived on the land we call Michigan for more than 10,000 years. The time before the arrival of European explorers and missionaries in the 1600s is called prehistory by archaeologists.

When the first people came into Michigan, glaciers covered much of it. Even the land where glaciers did not exist was cold and windy. Archaeologists call Michigan’s first inhabitants Paleo-Indians.

Archaeologists study the places (called sites) where Paleo-Indian artifacts are found. They have discovered that Paleo-Indians hunted barren-ground caribou, a deer-like animal that travels in large herds. The Indians used all parts of the caribou: the meat for food, the skin for clothing, the antlers, and bones and tendons for making tools and weapons.

The Indians used chert to make into stone tools or to trade with other groups in the Great Lakes region.

**PREHISTORY**

- 12,000-9,000 years ago
  - Paleo-Indians in the Great Lakes region hunt caribou, mammoths, and mastodon.

**ARCHAIC**

- 9,000-3,000 years ago
  - Indians learn new hunting and gathering skills in the forests that replace the retreating glaciers.

**WOODLAND**

- 3,000 years ago - early 1600s
  - Indians use nets to fish. They also begin farming and building burial mounds.

**EUROPEAN**

- 1600s to present
  - With the arrival of the Europeans, Native Americans see their way of life greatly changed.
After the glaciers retreated to the north, the Archaic period began. The Great Lakes settled into their present basins. Animals, such as deer, elk, and bear, populated the forests that covered much of the land. Many kinds of fish filled the lakes and streams.

The people of the Archaic period invented new tools such as the atlatl (or throwing stick). They used stone axes to cut down trees. They used the logs to make dugout canoes and a wide variety of wooden artifacts, such as bowls, handles for tools, and shafts for spears.

Indians living in the western Lake Superior region also discovered copper on Isle Royale and the Keweenaw Peninsula. They used the copper to make many useful tools and weapons. The forests also provided food sources such as nuts and herbs for medicines.

About 2,500 years ago, the Woodland period began. People learned how to make pottery for cooking and food storage. They also began growing plants like sunflowers, corn, beans, and squash. They became expert hunters using the bow and arrow.

Indians of the Woodland period also began building mounds over the burial sites of important people in the society. In the southern part of Michigan, some groups lived in farming villages.

When Europeans began arriving in the Great Lakes in the 1620s, the Woodland period ended. European settlers and manufactured goods greatly changed the way Native Americans lived.
Today, Fayette Historic Townsite (left) is one of Michigan's most unique museums. Twenty years ago, archaeologists excavated the site of a common worker's cabin (below). The artifacts and information they gathered helped historians rebuild a cabin where Fayette's workers once lived (below, left).

lots of fresh fruit or jams. The medicine bottles they discovered showed the different types of medicines available at the time.

Archaeologists also helped in reconstructing the buildings at Fayette. Fayette's common workers lived in log cabins. A century after the town had been abandoned, these cabins had disappeared. During one of their digs, archaeologists unearthed a log cabin foundation. From the artifacts they found, they learned more about how these workers lived. For example, the bones they discovered showed that these workers only ate the cheapest cuts of meat. What archaeologists learned from this dig helped rebuild one of these cabins, which can be visited today.

This GRINDSTONE was used to sharpen the many iron and steel tools used at Fayette.

The metal frame is practically all that survives of a WOODSTOVE BASKET used to carry charcoal to dump into the furnaces at Fayette.

This GAS CAN was probably used after the iron smelting company closed.

The people of Fayette worked and played. Someone used these SKATES when the harbor froze during the wintertime.

This small WOODEN BARREL once contained some kind of liquid, like beer. After the barrel was emptied, it was filled with small stones and used as an anchor.