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3: Change and Continuity at Fort St. Joseph

Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project

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Change and Continuity at Fort St. Joseph

Fort St. Joseph was a multi-ethnic community.

At Fort St. Joseph, evidence points to many instances of cross-cultural exchange between the French fort inhabitants and neighboring Native American groups such as the Potawatomi, Miami and Sauk. In the process of interaction, Europeans and Native Americans often modified their cultural practices and redefined their identities for social, political and economic reasons. Both artifacts and written documents can be used to examine these changes. For instance, guns were used by both Europeans and Native Americans; however, projectile points for arrows recovered archaeologically from the fort may indicate that bows and arrows were also used for hunting during damp weather. Studies of the animal bones recovered

from the fort have shown that its domestic animals, but that their diet deer. Past excavations have fort used for tanning hides in the were adopted by French inhabitants alternative to European-style shoes. reflect cultural interaction through for face painting, and tinkling cones within the fort. Conversely, Native imported cloth and clothing and clothing, bags, headbands, belts and also used various types of metal kettles, and muskets. Yet the



French *habitants* and Native groups interacted daily at Fort St. Joseph.

inhabitants were occasionally eating mostly consisted of wild white-tailed uncovered a smudge pit feature at the Native American fashion. Moccasins throughout New France, as a practical Adopted adornment practices also the recovery of pigment stones used which were being made and worn American peoples were adopting glass trade beads to adorn their bodies, moccasins. Native American groups tools such as knives, axes, hoes, brass material evidence suggests that both

French and Native American groups were still maintaining traditional practices despite the adoption of new forms of material culture. Excavations have recovered buckles, finger rings, and inlaid cufflinks, denoting the French use of tailored shirts and expensive leather shoes. Recovered religious items display a strong link to practices performed in France. Native Americans also retained aspects of their ideologies, traditional lifestyles and cultural practices. This process of creating new identities in the context of social interaction is called **ethnogenesis** and characterizes many cross-cultural exchanges in colonial America, especially in New France. Researchers have concluded that ethnogenesis took place at Fort St Joseph and that this process can be seen in the archaeological record.