

# [Although between the huron women and native](https://assignbuster.com/although-between-the-huron-women-and-native/)

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AlthoughNative Americans are characterized as both civilized and uncivilized in moduleone readings, their lifestyles and culture are observed to be civilized moreoften than not. The separate and distinct duties of men and women (Sigard, 1632) reveal a society that has defined roles and expectations based on gender. There are customs related to courtship (LeClercq, 1691) that are similar to European cultures. Marriage was a recognizedunion amongst Native Americans, although not necessarily viewed as a serious, lifelong commitment like the Europeans (Heckewelder, 1819).   Relatedto gender roles in Native American culture, Sigard writes of the Huron people that” Just as the men have their special occupation and understand wherein a man’sduty consists, so also the women and girls keep their place and perform quietlytheir little tasks and functions of service”.

He also observed that “ Theyusually do more work than the men, although they are not forced or compelled todo so” (1632).  Gender roles in Europeansociety were also well defined in this era. Women handled household chores andcared for the children while men hunted to provide for their families, foughtin wars, and had more rights and freedom than women.

It is difficult todetermine if Native American men had more rights than women, although itappears from the documents that they did have more free time. A noticeable differencebetween the Huron women and Native Americans in colonial Pennsylvania, however, was documented by Heckewelder when he stated that women were to “…cut and fetchthe fire wood, till the ground, sow and reap the grain, and pound the corn inmortars for their pottage…” (1819). These tasks are more physically demandingthan those normally performed by Huron women.

This observation demonstrates thatthere were differing expectations in various Native American cultures, which isalso similar to Europeans.  Expectationsof men and women varied based on their location, position in society andaccepted cultural traditions.   NativeAmerican courtship and marriage processes also shared similarities with thoseof Europeans.  In the Micmac society, ayoung man had to obtain approval from the father of the girl he wished to marry. If the father consented, the boy would talk to the girl he was interested in tosee if she felt the same, and if so, would present her with a gift (Le Clercq, 1691).  This is a familiar process inmany European societies wherein a young man would seek approval from a girl’sfather prior to proposing marriage, or in some instances, prior to seriouscourtship. The Micmac people had a long courtship period, during which time theyoung man would live for a year with his future father-in-law “…whom, accordingto the laws of the country, he is to serve, and to whom he is to give all thefurs which he secures in hunting…” (Le Clercq, 1691). The process described hereseems to be more complex and with higher expectations than those of Europeancourtships.

Interestingly, marriage in Native American culture was not always considered a lifelong commitment. Women seemed to have equal authority to dissolve a relationship if they wereunhappy or found the partnership disagreeable. Heckewelder wrote that “…it is understood on both sides that the partiesare not to live together any longer than they shall be pleased with each other. The husband may put away his wife whenever he pleases, and the woman may inlike manner abandon her husband” (1819). In this sense, Native American womenhad more rights in a marriage than European women, who would find it almostimpossible to divorce and still be considered an upstanding and accepted memberof the community. NativeAmericans were just as civilized as the Europeans that migrated to America, andmay have even been more civilized in some of their cultural practices.

They hadclear expectations of the men and women in their societies, and rules andexpectations related to courtship and marriage. Native American women held morepower than European women when it came to ending an unhappy marriage, havingthe ability to make that decision themselves and take action to dissolve the union. Men have similar roles in both cultures as being the hunters and warriors. Tobe civilized means “ having an advanced or humane culture, society, etc.”(Dictionary. com) and both Native Americans and Europeans met this definition inmany similar ways.