

LIFE OF NATIVES DURING THE FRENCH-INDIAN WAR OF 1754

WENDAKE

A WORKER PLACEMENT GAME WITH SOME DIFFERENCES

It was the year 1754 and the French colonists in the North America succeeded in ally with the local natives against the British, to try to take full control of the area that today includes the territories from East Canada to Louisiana. But the British reacted quickly sending regular troops; thus, the French-Indian War started and was carried on until the French lost it and a peace treaty was signed in Paris in 1763. This was also the first known biological conflict as the British gave to the natives a lot of blankets infected with smallpox that caused more death than the battles.

But in the meantime, how was life in the natives' camps? *Wendake* try to give an answer to that question and bring us inside the Hurons territory around 1754.

The game was financed through Kickstarter and therefore its components are particularly well done and of good quality. The main board is made with FOUR smaller boards, that are selected in dependence of the number of players and assembled together. Player boards are using two layers of carton glued together; the top one has gaps to create the place for the "action tiles", the reserve units and the action markers.

17 advanced tiles of level 1 and 17 of level 2); rectangular "progress tiles"; special "turtle tiles"; a deck of "mask cards"; etc.



The rules are also very clear with many pictures and examples: even if the game is not very easy, after playing it once or twice everything will be clear.

6 advanced tiles (all the others remains on the table in two stacks, ready to refill the reserve), adding the mask cards and turning on the first one, etc.

Each player randomly selects a tribe card and becomes its Great Chief (each card has a special bonus for that tribe): then he places one canoe on a lake and five warriors on his camp, together with five hunters and five squaws (represented by small square tiles). The main board now should appear like in Picture 2.



All the other components are "classic" for this kind of games: a set of coloured wooden markers in player colours as warriors and canoes, another set for resources (beans, corn, pumpkins, fishes and skins); square "action tiles" (9 in the colours of the player,

Set-up is a little longer that in other games as you have to prepare the board, adding the four stripes for the Victory Points (VP), the "turtle tiles" properly divided in 9 stacks, three rows of "progress tiles" (all must be visible to the players), a face up reserve of

Finally, randomly place the 9 initial action tiles in three rows inside the personal boards: the central tile must be the "sacred fire". On the left of the personal board there are 4 "holes" where the action markers are stored at the beginning of each turn, while on the right there is the picture of a large wooden hut where everything else is taken in reserve (two warriors, two hunters, two squaws and four canoes).

Your board should now appear as in Picture 3.

On his turn each player has two possibilities: (1) select the next turn order position with one of his action markers; or (2) select an action tile with one of his remaining markers and perform it.

Each tile has one or more icons (separated by a coloured bar) and each icon shows the action to perform. Looking at Picture 3, from top left to bottom right, we have: (a) all captured beavers are transformed in skins AND 1 warrior may move one area (this is what the foot print means); (b) each hunter in a hunting area gives you one beaver AND one warrior may move; (c) you may move one warrior up to 3 areas or 3 warriors one area or another combination for a total of 3 moves; (d) place a new canoe on a lake; (e) with the "Sacred Fire" you place a marker



here but you may perform any one action still available; (f) commercial action (we will examine it in detail later); (g) each squaw in a field produce 1 vegetable (pumpkin); (h) you make a Mask action (again we will see it later); (i) each canoe on the lakes gives you 1 fish AND you may perform a military action.

Note that the first action marker may be placed anywhere in the 3x3 grid, but the other two must be placed in line with the first to form an alignment of three, horizontally, vertically or diagonally (as it happens in a TRIS game).

In Wendake it is very important to have the opportunity to move one or more warriors at the right moment, therefore when you acquire a new tile try to get one that gives you ALSO a movement action, if possible. Initially the different tribes may live without pressure if they found an agreement and if they peacefully share some territories, but as the game progresses you need more resources (to purchase Progress tiles) and you need to control more areas (to get turtle tiles).

Therefore, you will need to use your warriors as often as possible and this is possible only if you have "move" actions: when one of your Indians arrive in an area he may be declared a "sentry" (to protect your hunters and squaws already in that area) and therefore it will remain "standing" in that place. Alternatively, and if you need more resources, he will be placed as an "explorer" ("lying in the case that you want to acquire): at the end of your turn you will decide if the explorer will come back home and a Hunter (or a Squaw) will take his place. This is the only way to place new production cases under your control.

If some warriors enter an area already populated by units of an opponent a con-

flict arise. To eliminate sentries, the invader needs an identic number of warriors: both types of units are sent back to their tribes "wounded", so they must be placed in the long hut, waiting to be cured. Then if the invader still has warriors, he may attack the productive cases: if these are occupied by "explorers" the procedure is the same and both units are sent back home wounded: but if there are only Squaws and/or Hunters they are sent back without fighting and the player decides if his warriors become sentries or explorers, as before.



When you decide to select a "Military action" you will gain turtle tiles: this kind of action simulates a possible battle of the war, not a local conflict, and therefore you have to verify how consistent this may be. In game terms you simply count how many units you already have in play: with 3-4-5 Squaws, 3-4-5 Hunters and 3-4-5 canoes you may get turtle tiles. Each of them, on the back, has a bonus that allows 1-2 markers to advance in the VP stripes at the end of the game: so only the owner knows what he has in reserve and he may act accordingly. At the end of this action you also check how many different areas you control with

your warriors and you mark the same number of "Military VP" on the related track.

When a "Mask" action is selected the player should take one Mask card from the deck (or the last one on the discarded pile): than he may play one of the combinations printed on the board (a couple, double couple, tris, poker, etc.) in order to gain one to five VP on the related track.

Finally, if you make a "Commerce" action you may select between:

- *Make an exchange:* you may discard "X" resources (where X is the number of canoes that you already have on the board) and get the same number of different ones. But after this operation you must take a risk, discovering the first Mask card of the deck and losing one unit (Warrior, Hunter or Squaw, at your choice) if the smallpox symbol appears on that card.
- *Purchase a Progress Tile:* you pay the requested number and type of resources and you get a tile that will give you a bonus and a certain number of VP on the related track
- *Purchase VP:* you pay from 1 to 5 different resources and you get the same number of VP on the economic track

When the Action phase is finished there is an "administrative" phase. You push down the tiles of your personal board until the lower row is expulsed and you have one empty row on top. In turn order the players may select one of the available Action tiles in the reserve and discard one of the three expulsed tiles. Then these 3 tiles are mixed and randomly placed on the empty row on top of the personal board. (A

home rules that we used in our play test will allow you to decide how to place the 3 tiles instead of going randomly).

All used tiles are turned on the back side that shows the "ritual" face. If you use one of these "rituals" in the following turns you may cure TWO of your units (bringing them back in your camp) and also gain a certain number of VP on the "Ritual" track.

The game ends after the seventh year (turn): the players reveal all their turtle tiles and move their markers accordingly on the VP stripes: for each couple of tracks you take

in consideration the LOWER total. Then everybody adds together the two numbers and the higher total wins the game and will surely become the new Grand Chef

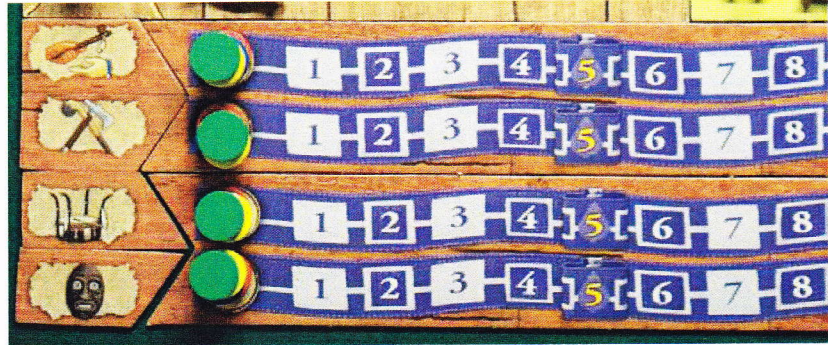
Pietro Cremona

An interesting game on a new subject: life in American native tribes. It is also the first time that the classic mechanism of the TRIS has been selected to decide the actions of a turn. Not an easy game, Wendake demands concentration and good programming.

I must confess that after the first game we looked each other and wondered how it was possible to have performed so badly after two hours of play: in effect you should be prepared that the first game must be used ONLY to learn the rules and to understand what to do on the field. On the following games you may start competitive play and, believe me, there is a lot to do. To help the readers new to this game let me try to fix a few points:

- (1) – As you have to consider the lower value on each couple of tracks to calculate the final points, you should always play trying to keep them on an even level. This seems a “stupid” suggestion, but during the game is not so easy to follow a programmed path, because sometimes new opportunities arise, and you are happy to profit, but then you discover that one of your markers is really very far back on his track and you will not be able to win.
- (2) – To advance on the MILITARY track you should have the majority on as many territories as possible but remember to attack only when you are certain that the opponent will not be able to retaliate immediately. Once you marked your points you even do not have to care anymore to lose one or more areas. So, do not waste time to defend them
- (3) – To advance on the ECONOMY track you need to make Commerce actions and, possibly, have the most different resources to spend (in order to advance of 1 to 5 cases)
- (4) – To advance on the RITUAL track you should prepare the action in time, trying to place an even number of warriors, squaws and hunters in your village as you will gain VP based on the lower total of the three. This move is strongly suggested in the first turns, when you still have a lot of units in your camp: then you may forget it for a while.
- (5) – To advance on the MASK track you have to accumulate Mask cards: they

are never discarded after the use, but you cannot use them twice per turn. After a few turns you will have enough cards in your hand to claim for the best combinations (and the connected higher number of VP).



Never forget the TURTLE tiles: on their back there are bonuses to advance in one or two of the VP tracks. You may collect up to 9 of them in a game and usually the players that do it have the better opportunities to win the game because they know which bonuses they may use at the end and they may select different actions to push the other tracks. This also means that when the game arrives in the last two turns the players should constantly check their turtle bonuses and select actions that will rise the markers in their lower VP tracks.

Finally, there are the PROGRESS tiles: as we have already written they are taken with the commerce action, but you do not have to collect them ... casually or because their bonus seems interesting. Instead look carefully at the top icons as they will tell you in which TWO tracks you will gain VP: one is always the commerce track, of course, but the second one is different from tile to tile and you may carefully select the best for your strategy.

Now you probably understand that WENDAKE is not a game for everybody, because there are always many choices to select: deciding which action you want to perform on your personal board is not a question of just placing a marker on a tile because you must always have a “goal” and therefore you have to evaluate which will be the best combination of tiles. This of course may be a problem for players that do not like to spend much time in thinking and prefer instead easier games: Wendake is not their game.

You may have a final question: which is the role of France and Great Britain?

In effect the French/Indian War is not treated at all on the game, but there are TWO

FLAGS that may be acquired selecting specific Progress tiles: one is French and the other is British. On the board there are a few territories with one of those flags printed on: if you own a flag and you fight in an area with that flag you gain one attack or

defence point (as if you had an extra Sentry there).

WENDAKE may also be played “solo” against a “ghost” player and with different levels of difficulty. Your opponent will use the mask cards to make his actions. Please note that this “ghost” is quite good, and it is difficult to beat also at the second “intermediate” level. ☑

Pietro Cremona

INFORMATION

Designer: Danilo Sabia

Artist: Alan D'Amico

Price: ca. 55 Euro

Publisher: Placentia Games

www.placentiagames.it/en

PLAYERS:
1-4

AGE:
14+

TIME:
120+

EVALUATION

Set collecting, history, worker placement
Users: For experts
Version: multi
Rules: de en fr it cn
In-game text: yes

Comments:

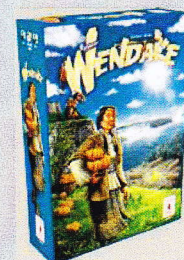
Planning ahead is necessary * Playing time is a little longer than average * Good interaction among players * Good rules with a lot of examples

Compares to:

Action selection, worker placement

Other editions:

Enjoy Games (cn), Placentia/Renegade (en), Placentia/Post Scriptum (de en fr it, deluxe)



My rating: