Mystery at the Indian Mound

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Marci, Derek & Cody go to school together. Today they are going on a field trip! Wow, what an adventure, come on!
“Where are we going?” Derek asked their teacher. “We are going to visit a part of the Newark Earthworks!” Mr. Edwards said.
“What are those?” asked Cody

Their teacher answered, “They are in Newark, Ohio and they are mounds of earth built by ancestors of American Indians at least 1500 years ago!” The Newark Earthworks were built in the shapes of circles, squares, and other geometric forms, their teacher added. “There is even an octagon shaped earthwork we are going to see today. It is called the Octagon Earthworks and it is an earthwork in the shape of an octagon connected to a circle by a wide avenue,” Mr. Edwards excitedly told them.

“What’s an octagon?” asked Marci.

Derek raised his hand. “I know! It is an eight-sided shape, Like a stop sign.”

Cody said, “Really Mr. Edwards, there is an octagon?”

“Yes there is,” answered their teacher. “And we will get to see it today.”

“Wow,” the three students exclaimed in unison.
What are the earthworks for?” asked Derek

Mr. Edwards said, “Nobody knows for sure, but they are very pretty, and are all kinds of shapes, so we can see that long ago, the American Indians that lived here knew a lot about math, science and astronomy. We also know they were important places because it took a lot of work by many people to build them. They knew how to work together to create a place where they could all come together to visit with each other. Why, the circle and octagon earthwork and the connecting avenue are almost 3,000 feet in length!” exclaimed Mr. Edwards.

“Wow,” Derek said, “That is like ten football fields put end to end.”

“Very good Derek,” said his teacher.

“How did you know that?” asked Marci.
Derek beamed. “Well, like Mr. Edwards taught us. A football field is about 100 yards long. So to find out how many football fields would fit in the Octagon Earthworks, lined up end to end, you multiply 100 yards by 3 because there are 3 feet in a yard. That equals 300. And then you divide 3000 feet which is the length of the earthworks by 300 feet which is the length of a football field and you get ten. So you could line up ten football fields in a row inside the earthworks!”

“I wished I know a lot about math and science and astronomy!” Cody looked down at his feet.

Marci laughed and said, “We will know even more about that stuff and a lot more after today, right Mr. Edwards!”

“You bet!”
Cody spoke up. “I wonder if we will find any old Indians there?”

Marci giggled. “Cody, we won’t find any old Indians there. But my Mom says I am American Indian and that some of my relatives might have helped build the earthworks a longtime ago!”

“But you don’t look Indian.” said Derek.

“Mom says American Indians look like all sorts of people, and we do all sorts of things! We have dark skin and light skin, black, blonde, and red hair. American Indians are teachers, and doctors, and lawyers, and construction workers, and astronauts, and hockey players, and all sorts of things.”

“What kind of Indian are you?” asked Derek.

“I am Potawatomi Indian.” Marci happily answered.

“Pow - whah - what?” Derek laughed.

“You say it like pot – ah – watt- toe – me! That is my tribe!” Marci answered proudly.

They all smiled until the ride ended, and all the children and Mr. Edwards got off the bus.
A tour guide met the children as they got off the bus. She explained that American Indians created the earthworks and mounds long ago and their descendants still live in America today. She told Mr. Edwards and his students that the earthworks they are visiting were just a part of much larger earthen enclosures that are now underneath buildings, factories, and homes. She went on to tell them how the Great Circle and the Octagon Earthworks are mostly what remain in Newark and that people from around the world come to visit them each year.

The tour guide also told the children that there are thousands of earthworks and mounds, built by American Indians from long ago, all over our Nation.
“We can all be proud of that!” Derek said.

“Yes.” Their teacher replied, “They are monuments that we should always appreciate and preserve.”

“Wow, this is really cool!” Cody and Derek both said, as all the children explored the earthworks with their teacher.

Mr. Edwards said that the mounds helped the American Indians from ancient times keep track of the moon and stars. “It was like a giant telescope and they were star and moon gazers,” their teacher said. He went on to say that the Newark Earthworks had been built in the shapes of circles, squares, and other geometric shapes, and told the children that they line up with the positions of the moon as it travels through the night sky every year.
“It was very important to keep track of the movement of the moon.” Mr. Edwards said, “Although we don’t know for sure why it was so important to them. In fact, there is a mound that they built inside these earthworks that we call ‘observatory mound’ that has a great view of the earthworks and the moon-rise.”

The children quickly followed Mr. Edwards as he climbed atop the mound.
Marci spoke up. “Mr. Edwards, my mom says that our elders teach us that the earthworks were both a calendar and a telescope. The Ancestors who built them used the earth walls to tell time. So they would know when it was time to do stuff. Certain things were done during certain times of each year, and some things were only done during certain years. That is what the elders have taught my mom. It has been passed down from long ago.”

“That is very interesting Marci. What other kind of stuff do you think they did?” asked the teacher.

“Yeah, tell us what you think they did!” chimed in Derek and Cody.
Marci stopped for a moment and thought about all the stuff she knows that American Indians do today. “Well I bet they did a lot of stuff we still do!”

“Like what?” asked Cody

“Like what?” asked Derek

“Hmmmmmmmm...” Marci thought about all the things she has seen American Indian people do. “Well...that’s a mystery!”

“But they might have...”
“Played Lacrosse!”
“Had Pow Wows!”
“Held ceremonies to celebrate life and their Creator.”
“Had community events and gatherings!”
“Performed weddings & funerals.”
“Hunted, fished, gathered plants, traded items with neighbors, and planted and harvested their gardens.”
And went to school!
Derek spoke up “hey we are in school now!”

“And we are having fun!” Cody added.

“And we learned about the mystery of the mounds today.” said Mr. Edwards

“Yes,” said Marci. “And the Octagon Earthworks are really cool. But I also think we solved *the mystery at the Indian Mound.*”

“How's that?” asked Cody.

“How’s that?” asked Derek.

Mr. Edwards smiled and watched Marci.

Marci answered. “Well, we solved the mystery at the mound because we learned about how they were built by the Ancestors of American Indians 1500 years ago or more and we learned that the people that built them may have been a lot like us. And they may have used them just like we would; to play and pray and have fun!”
Iwkshe’ (The End)

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