



**Wigwams are Native American houses used by Algonquian Indians in the woodland regions. *Wigwam* is the word for "house" in the Abenaki tribe, and *wetu* is the word for "house" in the Wampanoag tribe. Sometimes they are also known as birchbark houses. Wigwams are small houses, usually 8-10 feet tall. Wigwams are made of wooden frames which are covered with woven**

**mats and sheets of birchbark. The frame can be shaped like a dome, like a cone, or like a rectangle with an arched roof. Once the birchbark is in place, ropes or strips of wood are wrapped around the wigwam to hold the bark in place.**

**Wigwams are good houses for people who stay in the same place for months at a time. Most Algonquian Indians lived together in settled villages during the farming season, but during the winter, each family group would move to their own hunting camp. Wigwams are not portable, but they are small and easy to build. Woodland Indian families could build new wigwams every year when they set up their winter camps.**



**Longhouses are Native American homes used by the Iroquois tribes and some of their Algonquian neighbors. They are built similarly to wigwams, with pole frames and elm bark covering. The main difference is that longhouses are much, much larger than wigwams. Longhouses could be 200 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet high. Inside the longhouse, raised platforms created a**

**second story, which was used for sleeping space. Mats and wood screens divided the longhouse into separate rooms. Each longhouse housed an entire clan-- as many as 60 people!**

**Longhouses are good homes for people who intend to stay in the same place for a long time. A longhouse is large and takes a lot of time to build and decorate. The Iroquois were farming people who lived in permanent villages. Iroquois men sometimes built wigwams for themselves when they were going on hunting trips, but women might live in the same longhouse their whole life.**



**Tepees are tent-like American Indian houses used by Plains tribes. A tepee is made of a cone-shaped wooden frame with a covering of buffalo hide. Like modern tents, tepees are carefully designed to set up and break down quickly. As a tribe moved from place to place, each family would bring their tipi poles and hide tent along with them.**

**Originally, tepees were about 12 feet high, but once the Plains Indian tribes acquired horses, they began building them twice as high.**

**Tepees are good houses for people who are always on the move. Plains Indians migrated frequently to follow the movements of the buffalo herds. An entire Plains Indian village could have their tepees packed up and ready to move within an hour. There were fewer trees on the Great Plains than in the Woodlands, so it was important for Plains tribes to carry their long poles with them whenever they traveled instead of trying to find new ones each time they moved.**



**Grass houses are good homes for people in a warm climate. In the northern plains, winters are too cold to make homes out of prairie grass. But in the southern plains of Texas, houses like these were comfortable for the people who used them.**

**Grass houses are American Indian homes used in the Southern Plains by tribes such as the Caddos. They resemble large wigwams but are made with different materials. Grass houses are made with a wooden frame bent into a beehive shape and thatched with long prairie grass. These were large buildings, sometimes more than 40 feet tall.**



**Wattle and daub houses are permanent structures that take a lot of effort to build. Like longhouses, they are good homes for agricultural people who intended to stay in one place, like the Cherokees and Creeks. Making wattle and daub houses requires a fairly warm climate to dry the plaster.**

**Wattle and daub houses, also known as asi, the Cherokee word for them are Native American houses used by southeastern tribes. Wattle and daub houses are made by weaving river cane, wood, and vines into a frame, then coating the frame with plaster. The roof was either thatched with grass or shingled with bark.**



**Chickees are Native American homes used primarily in Florida by tribes like the Seminole Indians. Chickee houses consisted of thick posts supporting a thatched roof and a flat wooden platform raised several feet off the ground. They did not have any walls. During rainstorms, Florida Indians would lash tarps made of hide or cloth to the chickee frame to keep themselves dry, but most of the time, the sides of the structure were left open.**

**Chickees are good homes for people living in a hot, swampy climate. The long posts keep the house from sinking into marshy earth, and raising the floor of the hut off the ground keeps swamp animals like snakes out of the house. Walls or permanent house coverings are not necessary in a tropical climate where it never gets cold.**



**Adobe houses are good homes to build in a warm, dry climate where adobe can be easily mixed and dried. These are homes for farming people who have no need to move their village to a new location. In fact, some Pueblo people have been living in the same adobe house complex, such as Sky City, for dozens of generations.**

**Adobe houses, also known as pueblos, are Native American house complexes used by the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest. Adobe pueblos are modular, multi-story houses made of adobe, clay and straw baked into hard bricks, or of large stones cemented together with adobe. Each adobe unit is home to one family, like a modern apartment. The whole structure, which can contain dozens of units, is often home to an entire extended clan.**



Earthen house is a general term referring to several types of Native American homes including Navajo hogans, Sioux earth lodges, subarctic sod houses, and Native American pit houses of the West Coast and Plateau. Earthen houses made by different tribes had different designs, but all were *semi-subterranean* dwellings -- basement-like living spaces dug from the earth, with a domed mound built over the top, usually a wooden frame covered with earth or reeds.

Earthen houses are good for people who want permanent homes and live in an area that is not forested. It's difficult work to excavate underground homes in areas with many tree roots! Living partially underground has several benefits; especially in harsh climates-- the earth offers natural protection from wind and strong weather.



Plankhouses are Native American homes used by tribes of the Northwest Coast from northern California all the way up to Alaska. Plank houses are made of long, flat planks of cedar wood lashed to a wooden frame. Native American plank houses look rather similar to old European houses but the Indians didn't learn to build them from Europeans-- this style of house was used on the Northwest Coast long before Europeans arrived.

Plank houses are good houses for people in cold climates with lots of tall trees. However, only people who don't need to migrate spend the time and effort to build these large permanent homes. Most Native Americans who live in the far northern forests must migrate regularly to follow caribou herds and other game, so plank houses aren't a good choice for them. Only coastal tribes, who make their living by fishing, made houses like these.



**Igloos are good houses for the polar region, where the earth is frozen, the snow cover is deep, and there are few trees. Snow is a good insulator, and dense blocks of ice offer good protection against the arctic winds.**

**Igloos are snow houses used by the Inuit (Eskimos) of northern Canada. Not all Inuit people used igloos -- some built sod houses instead, using whale bones instead of wooden poles for a frame. Like a sod house, the igloo is dome-shaped and slightly excavated but it is built from the snow, with large blocks of ice set in a spiral pattern and packed with snow to form the dome.**

Most Native Americans do not live in old-fashioned Indian houses like the ones on this page, any more than other Americans live in log cabins. The only Native American housing style on this page that is still in regular use as a home is Indian adobe houses. Some Pueblo families are still living in the same adobe house complexes their ancestors used to live in. There are also a few elders on the Navajo reservation who still prefer to live in hogans. But otherwise, traditional Native American houses like these are usually only built for ritual or ceremonial purposes, such as a sweat lodge or tribal meeting hall. Most American Indians today live in modern houses and apartments, just like North Americans from other ethnic groups.



# Native Americans Homes



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