

Vocabulary for the Native American Unit

Words organized by region, with a definition and an example sentence

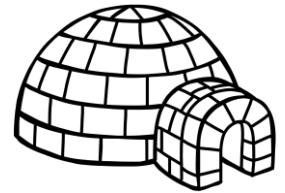
Teacher note: Words for homes, foods, and tools match the student report pages and the unit test. Introduce the “Words for Every Region” first; they come up all through the unit.

Words for Every Region

Word	Meaning and example
nation	A group of people with its own land, government, language, and culture. Many Native tribes call themselves nations. <i>The Cherokee Nation has its own government and laws.</i>
sovereignty	The right of a nation to govern itself. <i>Because of sovereignty, the Navajo Nation makes its own laws and runs its own schools.</i>
reservation	Land set aside for a Native nation by treaty or law. Many Native people live on reservations; many others live in towns and cities. <i>The Seminole Tribe of Florida has several reservations.</i>
traditional story	A story passed down by telling it aloud, from older generations to younger ones. Some traditional stories are told only at certain times of the year. <i>The hare and the fox are characters in a traditional Inuit story.</i>
regalia	Special clothing made and worn for dances and ceremonies. Regalia is not a costume. <i>She helped her grandmother sew her dance regalia.</i>

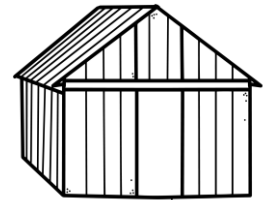
Arctic

Word	Meaning and example
Inuit	The Native people of the Arctic in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. Inuit means "the people." One person is an Inuk. <i>Inuit families today live in towns across the Arctic.</i>
igloo	A dome-shaped shelter built from blocks of snow. Some Inuit groups lived in igloos in winter or built them while traveling to hunt. In summer, families lived in tents made of animal skins. <i>The hunters built an igloo for the night.</i>
kayak	A narrow, covered boat for one person. Inuit kayaks were made of a wood or bone frame covered with sealskin. <i>He paddled his kayak quietly toward the seals.</i>
ulu	A knife with a curved blade, traditionally used by Inuit women for cutting food, skins, and other materials. <i>She used her ulu to cut the fish.</i>



Northwest Coast

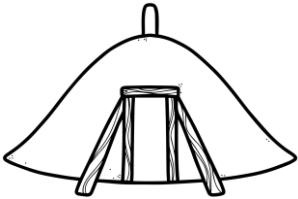
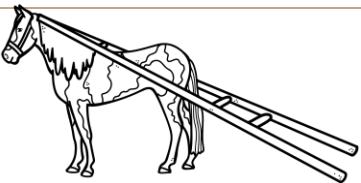
Word	Meaning and example
plank house	A large, rectangular home made of cedar planks on a frame of posts and beams. Several related families lived inside, each with its own space and fire. <i>Thirty people lived in the plank house.</i>
cedar	A tall evergreen tree. Northwest Coast nations used cedar to make houses, canoes, boxes, and clothing woven from the bark. <i>The canoe was carved from a single cedar log.</i>
crest	A design showing an animal or being, such as Raven, Eagle, Wolf, or Bear, that stands for a family or clan. Crests belong to the families that own them. <i>The family's crest was painted on the front of the house.</i>



California and Intermountain

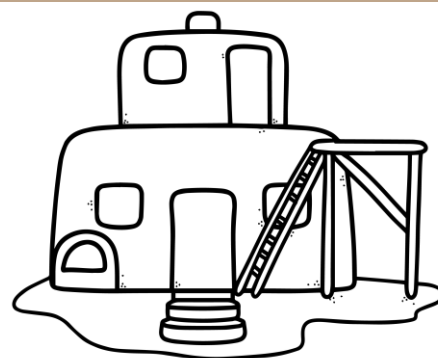
Word	Meaning and example
acorn	The nut of the oak tree. Acorns were a main food for many California nations. They were ground into flour and rinsed with water to remove the bitter taste. <i>The family gathered acorns in the fall.</i>
basketry	The art of weaving baskets. Pomo weavers are famous for their baskets. Some baskets were woven so tightly they could hold water. <i>Her grandmother taught her basketry.</i>

Plains

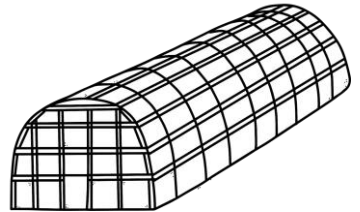
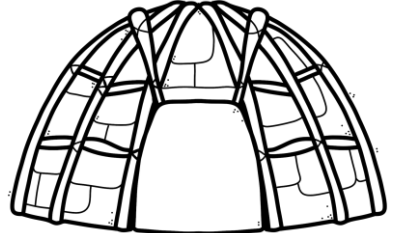
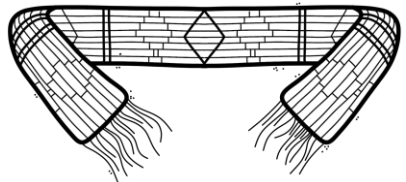
Word	Meaning and example	
tipi	A cone-shaped home of wooden poles covered with bison hides (later canvas), used by many Plains nations. A tipi could be taken down and moved quickly. The door usually faced east. Also spelled tepee or teepee. <i>The women set up the tipi in less than an hour.</i>	
earth lodge	A large, round home built of wood and covered with earth. Farming nations along the Missouri River, such as the Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara, lived in earth lodges. <i>Many family members shared one earth lodge.</i>	
bison	A large, shaggy animal also called a buffalo. Plains nations used the bison for food, clothing, shelter, and tools. <i>A herd of bison moved across the grassland.</i>	
travois	A frame of two poles tied together and pulled by a dog, and later a horse, to carry heavy loads. <i>The dog pulled the travois to the new camp.</i>	
parfleche	A container made of rawhide, folded like an envelope and painted with geometric designs. It was used to store and carry food and belongings. <i>She packed dried meat in the parfleche.</i>	
buckskin	Soft, strong leather made from deer hide. <i>His shirt was made of buckskin.</i>	
quillwork	Decoration made of dyed, flattened porcupine quills sewn onto hide or birchbark. <i>The quillwork on the bag was red, yellow, and white.</i>	

Southwest

Word	Meaning and example
pueblo	A village of connected, flat-roofed buildings made of adobe or stone, sometimes several stories high. Pueblo is also the name for the nations who live in these villages, such as the Hopi, Zuni, and Taos Pueblo. <i>People have lived in Taos Pueblo for more than 1,000 years.</i>
adobe	Brick made of mud and straw and dried in the sun. <i>Thick adobe walls keep the rooms cool in summer.</i>
mesa	A hill with a flat top and steep sides. <i>Some Hopi villages are built on top of mesas.</i>
Diné	The name the Navajo people use for themselves. It means "the People." <i>Many Diné children learn the Navajo language in school.</i>
hogan	A traditional Navajo home, round or many-sided, built of logs and earth, with a door that faces east toward the rising sun. Many families still use hogans, often for ceremonies. <i>The family gathered in the hogan.</i>
loom	A frame used to weave yarn into cloth or rugs. Navajo weavers use an upright loom. <i>The rug grew a little each day on the loom.</i>



Eastern Woodlands

Word	Meaning and example
Haudenosaunee	The "People of the Longhouse," a confederacy of six nations: Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora. They are also called the Iroquois. <i>The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is one of the oldest governments in North America.</i>
longhouse	A long, bark-covered home shared by several related families of the same clan. A wide path ran down the middle, with family spaces on each side. <i>Each family had its own space in the longhouse.</i> 
Three Sisters	Corn, beans, and squash planted together. Each plant helps the others grow. <i>The bean vines climbed the corn stalks in the Three Sisters garden.</i> 
wigwam	A dome-shaped home made of bent young trees covered with birchbark or woven mats. Ojibwe and other Great Lakes nations built wigwams. <i>Birchbark covered the outside of the wigwam.</i> 
wetu	The Wampanoag word for a dome-shaped home covered with bark or woven mats. <i>In summer, the family's wetu was covered with cattail mats.</i>
birchbark	The bark of the paper birch tree, used for canoes, containers, and covering homes. <i>The berries were stored in a birchbark basket.</i> 
wild rice	The grain of a tall water grass, harvested by canoe in late summer by the Ojibwe and other Great Lakes nations. <i>They knocked the wild rice into the bottom of the canoe.</i>
wampum	Beads made from white and purple shells. Wampum belts recorded agreements and important events. <i>The wampum belt showed the agreement between two nations.</i> 
sachem	A leader of a Wampanoag or other Algonquian community. <i>Ousamequin was the Wampanoag sachem when the Pilgrims arrived.</i>

Word	Meaning and example
chickee	A Seminole home with cypress log posts, a roof of palmetto leaves, a raised floor, and open sides. Chickees are still built today. <i>The open sides of the chickee let in the breeze.</i> 
patchwork	The Seminole art of sewing strips of colored cloth into bright designs, which became popular after sewing machines arrived in the early 1900s. <i>Her skirt had three rows of patchwork.</i>
syllabary	A writing system in which each symbol stands for a syllable. Sequoyah created the Cherokee syllabary, finished around 1821. <i>Students at the school learn to read the Cherokee syllabary.</i>
stickball	A fast ball game played with two sticks, played by the Cherokee and other Southeastern nations. It is related to lacrosse. <i>The whole town came to watch the stickball game.</i>