

# Building a Native American (Leni-Lenape) Shelter

Subjects: History, Geography, Mathematics, Environmental Studies

Suggested Grade Levels: 3

Time Frame: 1 semester

*Sudha Gutti,  
Kimberton Waldorf School*

## Overview

Teach students about Native American Culture through hands on activity of building traditional structures. Use the technique of building to incorporate math lesson related to measurement.

## Connection to Philadelphia World Heritage Tool Kit's Goal

This lesson brings different cultures into the classroom and facilitates an understanding of present day problems through a study of these cultures.

## Core Curriculum Standards

- Identified personal strengths and weaknesses; and cultivated and implemented strategies for working with these attributes as vehicles for lifelong learning
- Demonstrated fluency in the methods of science, mathematics, history, language, literature, and the social sciences; and demonstrated awareness and understanding of the contemporary issues and historic changes related to these disciplines
- Developed skills in several artistic disciplines and, through in-depth work, gained proficiency in the fundamental aspects of the visual, performing, and practical arts
- Developed the ability to communicate in a foreign language and an understanding of other cultures
- Demonstrated the ability to express in writing and speech his or her independent and creative thoughts and judgments
- Developed a healthy, loving relationship to nature as well as an understanding of ecology and the processes of nature through actively farming and gardening, observing, and living in the natural world
- Developed fundamental capacities and confidence in movement by experiencing a variety of movement activities
- Grappled with core issues of the human experience, including the nature of life, death, friendship, spirituality, and vocation
- Developed compassion, empathy, responsibility, and gratitude towards others through a sense of global citizenship, an awareness of contemporary societal issues, and social responsibility
- Acquired life skills in the areas of child development, health, interpersonal communication and conflict resolution, collaboration and decision-making, time management, and the art of leisure

## Objectives

Students will put lessons about measurements into practical use by using weight measures, linear measures and volume. Students will also practice conversions in measurement

## Essential Question

How can we “get to know” the culture of a people by studying their shelters and how they lived with nature?

## Materials Needed

Bark, saplings, dried grasses to be braided and used as string to strengthen the saplings; axe, saw, scissors, hammers, shovels and any other digging implements

## Procedure

The building of this project will happen in the spring semester. The fall and winter months will be spent on collecting bark for the walls of the Wigwam. In early spring young saplings will be collected for the frame of the Wigwam. Once the material has been gathered, we would dig up holes for a 10 by 10 feet wide circular Wigwam with a gap of a foot between each. The young saplings will be put in these holes and as they are flexible the other end will be put into the hole across. This way a crisscrossing of the saplings will be done and the frame for the Wigwam will be ready. The saplings will be reinforced by braided grass strings. The holes will be covered with dirt and the ground around the sapling hardened. The gaps in between the saplings throughout will be covered with bark. A small gap will be left for the doorway on one side. All this work will be done with the active involvement of the children and their parents.

## Outcome/Assessment

The shelter built by the children can serve as a place to stop and rest when taking walks in the woods, a sheltered place in the woods to listen to stories during the cold winter months, a house for the children to use for play. Building the shelter is a practical application of the measurement lessons in building the shelter, a lesson about how the Leni-Lenape lived long ago as well as a history of the Leni-Lenape people in story form. The building experience can also serve as a geography lesson about the four directions, wind patterns, sunlight, warmth, different kinds of soils, etc. and an environmental lesson about taking care of our resources by using natural, locally available and recyclable materials. Students can write an essay of this experience in their own words. The project is a learning process and a sense of accomplishment in building a project together

## Special Education and English Language Learners Accommodations

This lesson can be used for many levels and multi-age classrooms.

## Additional Resources

Web:

Youtube videos show clips of Wigwam building: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqMLbcKk2bA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=923PkFv2Mwk>

The Long House at the HansHerr House Museum, Lancaster PA: <http://www.hansherr.org/longhouse/>

Website article about making wigwams: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mosmd/dwellings.htm>