

Week 2

Shelter
Refuge



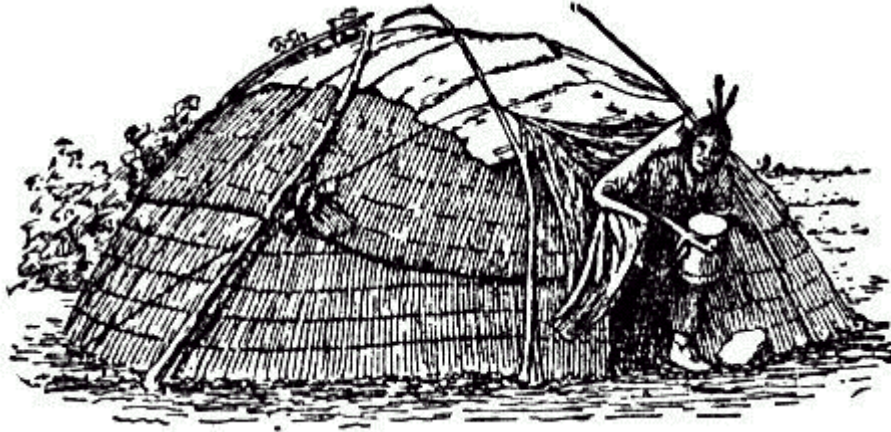
Forts and Wigwams, Burrows and nests, log cabins and skyscrapers,
everyone needs a little shelter

The Webster dictionary defines shelter as something that gives protection. Huskies have a thick layer of fur to keep them warm, unicellular organisms have a tough cell wall, humans have clothing, sunscreen, bug repellent, airbags, houses, and a wide range of other forms of shelter. All living organisms need some sort of shelter, and that is what this unit is all about.

The voyageurs did not have tents. They slept under an over turned canoe. They often didn't carry bowls or plates with them and often ate their food out of their hats, or a depression in a rock!

Eric and Dave use all sorts of shelter. Sleeping bags, sleeping pads, a cotton tent and wood stove, rain gear, wet suits, boots, hats and gloves, long underwear, sunscreen, bug repellent, and a variety of other forms of shelter to protect themselves and stay comfortable. They have to carry all of these things with them wherever they go. They also carry food, pots and pans, computers, cameras, and a long list of other things. All of these items are not light, and take up every inch of their canoe. The voyageurs were not allowed to fill up their canoes with these luxuries! They had to leave room for the furs and trade goods that the company owned. Each voyageur was allowed to carry a small personal pack weighing no more than 40 pounds. A typical voyageur's pack might include a fancy change of clothes (for special occasions, such as arriving at a major fort), a wool blanket or two for staying warm at night, a tin cup, a pipe and some tobacco, a small canvas tarp, and possibly a few other small items. The voyageurs did not have tents. They slept under an over-turned canoe. They often didn't carry bowls or plates with them and sometimes ate their food out of their hats, or a depression in a rock! Can you imagine eating out of your hat and then wearing it day after day! However at the forts, the clerks, partners, and the voyageurs who lived there during the winter all had cabins to sleep in. The partners were allowed to bring 800 pounds of personal supplies. Of course they would never carry their own supplies. The voyageurs, or engages, would carry the partners' goods, and sometimes would even give the partners a piggyback ride to shore and across portages! The partners and clerks of the company had fancy clothes, sugar for their tea, china cups and bowls, books and journals, and many other luxuries. Their forts were built out of logs from the surrounding forests, but nails, windows, door hinges, saws, axes, and other tools were all brought in from Montreal. Meanwhile the Ojibwe people were living in the boreal forest.

Ojibwe Shelter



During the heyday of the fur trade the Ojibwe were living in Wigwams. Their wigwams were round pointed structures that look a lot like a tipi used by the plains Indians. Long sticks were used to form the supports for the wigwam, and then large pieces of birch bark were used to form the outer shell. A fire was built in the middle of the wigwam for heat and cooking. The Ojibwe people would move several times per year to different locations. During the summer, they would move to places like Lake Superior to escape the bugs. During the fall they might move to a place near wild rice beds. And in the winter, they might move to another location where there was good trapping. Today most Ojibwe people live on reservations, or in towns like Winnipeg, or Duluth. Most have cars, houses, TV's, and all of the things that come with our modern society. There are still a handful of native people that hunt and fish for their food, and live off the land, but their numbers are dwindling.

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Where do the critters live?

As human populations grow, we harvest more trees to build more houses, and build roads to get to the houses and to transport the logs used to build the houses, and factories to produce the cars that we use to drive to the houses, and the list continues.... Many plants and animals are losing the habitat, food, and shelter that they need to survive. Many animals like snails and turtles carry their shelters on their backs, but they also depend on water to provide food and shelter. If a wetland is drained so that houses can be built, the snails, turtles, and other creatures that depend on that wetland for food and shelter will not be able to survive there anymore. On the other hand beavers build dams out of wood. The dams often form new wetlands where snails, turtles, and other plants and animals can find food and shelter. Wolves, lynx, and many other large predators need large areas without roads or other development. Other animals, such as raccoons and squirrels, have adapted to living in cities and find shelter in peoples' attics and under porches, places that a lynx would never go! It is important that we think about how our lives effect the lives of others. Ask yourself, "What plants and animals were living where my house is before it was built? Do they still live here? Where did the materials that were used to build my house come from?"

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Food for thought

Classroom discussion topics that relate to shelter

Ask students what their houses are made of, and where they think the materials came from. How does this differ from the forms of shelter used by the voyageurs and Ojibwe people of the 1700s and 1800s? Which shelters have had a greater impact on the environment?

Have students pretend they are an animal. What kind of animal would they be? Where does that animal live? Why does that animal live where it does? I like to sleep late, so I would be a bat because they live in caves where it is always dark. Go around the room and have students choose an animal and explain why they would be that animal.

As a class, make a list of the things that we have in our homes to make our lives more comfortable, like lights, electricity, heating and air conditioning, running water, etc. Then make a list of the comforts that the voyageurs had a list for Ojibwa people of the 1700's. Compare some of the similarities and differences between the lists.

Cultures across the globe have many different forms of shelters. As a class come up with as many different kinds of shelters as you can. Then come up with reasons why different shelters would be good for different parts of the world. Would you want to live in a wigwam in the jungle? Why or why not?

List 10 to 15 animals that live in the boreal forest and have students come up with different types of shelter that the animals use. Do some of the animals use the same forms of shelter?

If you had to get into a canoe tomorrow and spend a year in the boreal forest, with only the things that you could fit in your canoe. What would you bring, and what kind of a shelter would you use. Have the class break up into groups and make a list of the things they would take.

If an archeologist were to stumble across your school 500 years from now, what do you think they would find? How would this differ from what archeologists are finding from sites in the boreal forest which are 500 years old now?

A Fort must be built!

The year is 1805 and you are a new partner in the Northwest Company. You have spent the last 44 days traveling from Montreal to Fort William. In ten days you will be leaving the fort with 8 voyageurs and a clerk to build a new trading post approximately 34 days travel from Fort William to the Northwest. After building the fort you and your men will winter there and trade for furs with the Ojibwa people of the area. Your job is to gather the supplies that you and your men will need to build the fort. Make a detailed drawing of the fort, including all of the buildings that you will construct. Then make a list of all of the supplies that you will need to build the fort, x number of nails, door hinges, windows, axes, etc. Finally on a separate piece of paper write a one-page description of the fort including your reasoning for building each part of the fort, the outer wall, garden, storehouse, etc.

Fort Plans



Supply List

Busy as a Beaver!

Turn your classroom into a beaver pond.

Objectives: Students will understand how and why beavers change their environment, the size of a beaver lodge, and the materials that beavers use to build their homes.

Materials: One tape measure, string, several movable desks, 2 or 3 sheets or blankets, a long broomstick or pole (about 5 feet long), duct tape, beaver chewed log (optional), pictures of a beaver lodge (optional).

Time: Students should spend approximately 50 minutes gathering background information about beavers and beaver lodges. Another 50 minutes will be used to build the lodge and have a classroom discussion about beavers and beaver lodges.



Procedure:

1. Introduce students to the activity and find out what they know, or think they know about beavers, and where they live.
2. Have students get into groups of 2 to 4 students and use Internet resources, books, and other media to learn about Beavers and their homes.
3. If appropriate have students find the average size beaver lodge from the data provided on the attached table, or find the average size and tell the students the average dimensions of a beaver lodge.
4. Clear out a space in the room to build the lodge.
5. Have students work together to figure out the best way to build a replica lodge, or follow the directions below.
6. Use a string and tape measure to lay out the outline of the lodge on the floor.
7. Use desks or other items to form the perimeter of the lodge, remember to leave an underwater doorway that the beavers, and your students can use to enter the lodge.
8. Secure your center pole in the middle of the lodge, duct tape can be used to tape to pole to a desk for added support.
9. Use sheets, the larger the better, or other material to cover the lodge.
10. You can also build a dam out of desks or other objects and pretend that the beavers have dammed a stream turning your classroom into a beaver pond. You can also make a pile of branches in front of the lodge. Beavers store branches in the mud in front of their lodges. They swim out from their lodges under the ice and grab food from the pile during the winter months.
11. Bring another class into your room and have your students tell them about beavers, and the lodge that they have built.
12. Tear down the lodge and return your classroom to its natural state!

Additional Web Resources:

The Beavers section of the Boreal Forest Library, which is found in the school house section of www.wildernessclassroom.org, has a wide variety of photos and information about beavers.

http://www.wildernessclassroom.org/www/schoolhouse/boreal_library/animals/beaver.htm

The Encarta website has a very nice section on beavers, including the best beaver lodge illustration we have been able to find, and an audio recording of beavers.

<http://encarta.msn.com/find/MediaList.asp?pg=6&mod=2&ti=761575721>

The Beavers: Wetlands and Wildlife Organization is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating people about beavers. Their web site has a lot of useful information about how beavers effect their environment.

<http://www.beaversww.org/>

Other resources

Stensaas, M. 1993. *Canoe country wildlife: A field guide to the North Woods and Boundary Waters*. Pfeifer-Hamilton, Duluth.

Whitaker, J.O. 1998. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Week 2 Chat Room Session

When/Where: September 25, 2002 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM Gunflint Lodge

Topic: From big city high rise apartments to crawling under your canoe in the middle of the wilderness, what does shelter mean to you, and what do the animals of the boreal forest use for shelter?

Questions for Students to Ask:

What kind of shelter do you live in?

Have you lived in the same place your whole life?

What is the weather like where you live?

Do you have air conditioning in your house?

Do you live in a big city, small town, or a rural area?

What is it like living where you live?

Do you share a room with your brothers and sisters?

Have you ever been camping before?

What is your shelter made of?

How big is your school?

Where do beavers live?

What is a beaver lodge?

How do beaver dams work?

What animals like to live in the habitat created by beaver ponds?

* Teachers have all of your students answer and then report your results to everyone in the chatroom.

Example Questions: What is your shelter made of?

Answer: Mrs. Smith's 4th grade class from Springfield Illinois has 4 students that live in brick houses, 8 live in log cabins, 14 live in houses made of lumber, and 1 lives in a metal house.