

ABENAKI SHELTERS

The Abenaki built their homes out of the natural resources in the world around them. Some of their buildings were meant to be permanent and others moved around when the Abenaki did. Abenaki homes showed how important community was to them.



Most Abenaki lived in dome-shaped buildings called **wigwams**. The frame was made of thin tree trunks bent over and tied down. The frame was covered with big sheets of birch bark. Birch bark is waterproof. Wigwams were about eight to ten feet tall and 14 to 20 feet across. The Abenaki used animal skins inside for warmth and for bedding. The top of the wigwam had a flap that lifted up so that the Abenaki could have a fire inside. Usually, one or two families would live in each wigwam. Wigwams were mostly used for sleeping and shelter in bad weather, because the Abenaki spent most of their time outside.



The Abenaki also sometimes used smaller buildings called **conical wigwams**. These were covered in birch bark or animal hides, but they were much smaller and were designed to be portable. When Abenaki traveled to hunt or go fishing, they would bring these for shelter. About four to six people could sleep in each conical wigwam. They were about the same size as a tent that you might use to go camping with your family today!



Each Abenaki village had a few large, long buildings called **longhouses**. Like a wigwam, a longhouse had a wooden frame and was covered with bark. But it was a whole lot bigger! Each one could be about 200 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 20 feet tall. They usually had benches built into the sides for sitting or sleeping. There were several fire pits in the middle of the building for warmth and cooking.

Longhouses had many uses. They were used for community events like meetings, ceremonies, and celebrations. Guests who traveled to an Abenaki village could stay in them. Sometimes, unmarried men lived together in the longhouse when they weren't traveling to hunt or fish. In cold weather, the entire village could live in longhouses for warmth.



1. Complete a triple Venn diagram for Abenaki shelters. Compare what they looked like, what they were made out of, and how they were used.
2. How are Abenaki shelters the same and different from the shelters we use, like apartment buildings and houses?
3. How did Abenaki homes show how important community was to them?
4. Which shelter would you have enjoyed using the most?