

FUN FACTS:

- The Native Americans believed that a woman's ability to have strong children was connected with the lodge
- The four posts were painted in the sacred colors: red, white, black and yellow
- Honoring the memory of deceased loved ones, hair and finger nail clippings were placed on the altar
- Well built earth lodges could last up to two generations
- Earth lodges were passed down to the eldest daughter from the mother
- If two families occupied the same earth lodge the earth lodge was divide in half and the responsibilities were shared equally between the families
- The most common type of tree used in the construction of earth lodges in Eastern Nebraska was the cottonwood
- Sacred songs were sung during the construction of the earth lodge to ensure its stability and safety

Spiritual Meaning of the Earth Lodge:
The earth lodge not only supplied its occupants with shelter and safety but it was also central in promoting and maintaining ceremonies and traditions. The four central posts had specific meanings. The posts represented the Morning and Evening stars. Additional beliefs include that the four world pillars supported the sky. The Mandan tradition believed the earth lodge was alive and its spirit dwelt in the four posts.

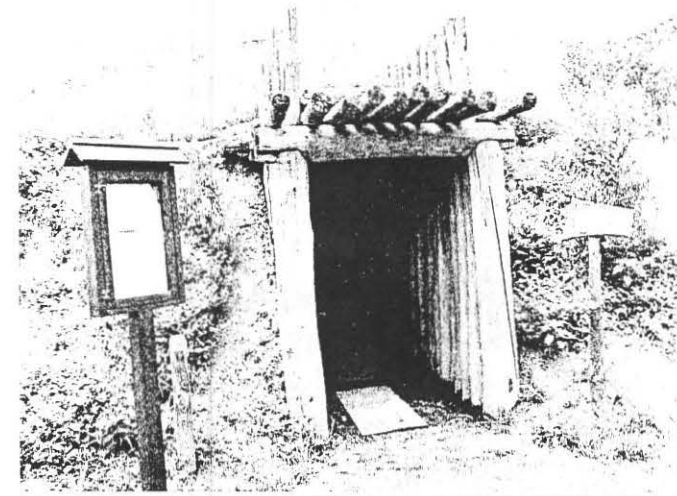
Common representations
of the earth lodge:

The Roof = The Sky
The Walls = The Horizon
Central Posts = North Star or Milky Way
Central Opening = The Great Mystery
Lodge Fire = Spark from the Sun

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BROCHURE CREATED IN CONJUNCTION WITH
OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS NATIVE AMERICAN
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

NATIVE AMERICAN EARTH LODGE



**LOCATED ON THE
NORTHEAST SIDE
OF THE
VISITORS CENTER**

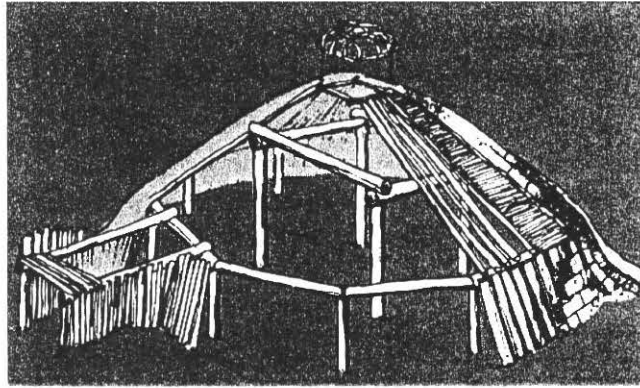
INTRODUCTION: This earth lodge is a re-creation of a traditional communal dwelling primarily inhabited by numerous tribes of the Great Plains.

HISTORY: Earth lodges were used as permanent housing and first appeared in farming and trading tribes in 700 AD. They were built on bluffs so invaders could be seen.

TRIBES: Earth lodges were mostly used by the tribes of the Great Plains with similar structures used all over The United States and Alaska. The following tribes built earth lodges along the Missouri River: Omaha, Pawnee, Ponca, Sioux, Mandan, Osage, Otoe, Arikara, and Hidatsa

CONSTRUCTION: An earth lodge was a large, permanent structure shaped as a circle. It was made of local resources including trees, prairie grass, sod, buffalo hides and willow rods. The construction of the earth lodge was a collaborative effort under taken by both the men and women of the tribe. The men were responsible for cutting, hauling and setting the posts and beams. The women were responsible for the binding, thatching and sodding of the exterior as well as maintaining the integrity of their earth lodge.

EARTH LODGE DIAGRAM



- The entrance always faces east due to the sunrise
- Wood and weapons were kept near the door where the young men slept
- Dogs slept near the door for security while the horses were corralled a short distance away
- The fire pit is located in the center so the smoke can escape through the opening in the dome shaped roof. The elder man slept nearest to the fire
- An altar is built to the west representing the evening star. Placed on the altar are sacred plants that include sage, sweet grass, tobacco and cedar
- Women and children slept on the west side of the lodge for protection
- A cache pit was dug into the floor where dried fruits and vegetables were stored
- The ground was tamped down and hardened by the use of water and fire

EXTERIOR:

- Smaller sticks, brush and grass combined with loose earth created a plaster shell that assisted in keeping the interior dry
- Organic shingles were created by overlapping sod
- Flowers were planted on the top of the earth lodge
- Children used the roof of the earth lodge as a playground
- Pits were dug to keep food cool
- Seasonal crops such as corn and squash were planted nearby

