

Native Americans

Sioux Nation

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The Sioux Nation is a large group of Native American tribes that traditionally lived in the Great Plains. There are three major divisions of Sioux: Eastern Dakota, Western Dakota, and the Lakota.

Many Sioux tribes were nomadic people who moved from place to place following [bison](#) ([buffalo](#)) herds. Much of their lifestyle was based around hunting bison.

Where did the Sioux live?

The Sioux lived in the northern Great Plains in lands that are today the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Tribes travelled all over the plains, however, and sometimes ended up in other states for periods of time.

What were their homes like?

The Sioux lived in teepees made from long wooden poles and covered with bison hides. The poles would be tied together at the top and spread wide at the bottom to make the shape of an upside down cone. Teepees could be taken down and set up quickly. This enabled entire villages to move on a regular basis.



A Sioux Teepee

What did the Native American Sioux eat?

Some Sioux grew crops like corn, squash, and beans, however the majority of the Sioux gained most of their food from hunting. Their primary food source was meat from bison, but they also hunted deer and elk. They would dry the bison meat into a tough jerky that could be stored and lasted for over a year.

What did they wear?

The women wore dresses made from deerskin. They would decorate them with rabbit fur. The men wore leggings and buckskin shirts when it was cool. When it was really cold they would wear warm cloaks made from buffalo hides. Like most Native Americans they wore soft leather shoes called moccasins.



A Sioux Woman

Bison

One of the most important aspects of the Sioux Indian life was the bison. They used all of the bison, not just its meat for food. They used the skin and fur for blankets and cloths. They tanned the hides to make the coverings for their teepees. Bones were used as tools. The bison hair was used to make ropes and the tendons could be used for sewing thread and bow strings.

Hunting Bison

Bison are huge and dangerous animals. The Sioux had to be brave and clever to hunt them. Sometimes a brave would run the bison down with his horse and use a spear or an arrow to take down the bison. This was difficult and dangerous, but could be done with practice and skill. Before they had horses, the Sioux would cause a large herd of bison to stampede toward a cliff. The bison in the back would push the bison in the front off the cliff and hunters would be waiting at the bottom with spears and arrows to finish them off.

Horses Changed Their Life

Prior to Europeans arriving and bringing horses with them, there weren't any horses in America. The Sioux Indians would walk everywhere and hunting would take a long time. When they moved their village they couldn't carry too much and the teepees needed to be small enough so that their dogs could drag them along. When [horses](#) arrived, everything changed. The Sioux could now make much larger teepees to live in and could move a lot more stuff with them when the village relocated. Horses also made it much easier to travel and hunt buffalo. Both food and buffalo skins became much more abundant.

Interesting Facts about the Sioux

- The Sioux were fierce warriors. They rode on horses and used spears and bows and arrows as weapons.
- Only men who had earned the right through an act of bravery could wear a grizzly bear claw necklace.
- Sitting Bull was a famous Lakota chief and medicine man.
- Sioux artwork includes buffalo hide paintings and detailed beadwork.
- Red Cloud was a famous Sioux War Chief who led them to victory over the US Troops in the Red Cloud War.

Take a ten question quiz at the [Sioux Nation questions](#) page.

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