

## The Pawnee of the Great Plains

The Pawnee Native American tribe inhabited the Great Plains, a vast grassland area that spans the middle of North America. They occupied the territory that we now know as the states of Nebraska and Kansas. The Pawnee can be broken down into four bands, or groups, all of which were known to be peaceful. The Great Plains, where the Pawnee originally migrated, is mostly flat and without forests. Rivers and streams can also be found there. The grasses are taller in the eastern Plains compared to the western Plains where there is less rainfall. The climate varies throughout the year. The winters are cold with snow, and there are sometimes blizzards. The summers are extremely hot and humid. Winds can be very strong in both winter and summer, occasionally creating dust storms.

The Pawnee were primarily a farming tribe, with most of the farm work being done by the women. They would grow corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, sunflowers, plus other crops. They also collected wild foods like plums, hazelnuts, and walnuts. In order to tend to the land, they would often construct tools using animal bones and antlers. The Pawnee would roam the lands of the Great Plains several times a year to hunt buffalo. They also hunted elk and antelope. Because they only traveled part of the year, they were considered semi-nomadic. The Pawnee relied very heavily on the buffalo they hunted, and they used every part. For example, they would eat the meat from the buffalo, and then dry the skin to make clothing, bedding, and teepees. They would use the bones for tools and weapons. The hair was used for sewing. They even cleaned the stomach and intestines, so that they could use them as containers. The buffalo is documented as having over 80 uses; therefore, it was seen as the most important animal to the Pawnee.

The Pawnee's permanent village homes were round grass earth-lodges. They were constructed using logs, along with branches and then covered in a layer of grass. When the Pawnee went on hunts, they would set up buffalo-hide teepees as a temporary home. The hides were

wrapped around a wooden frame. Teepees were easy to take down and set back up in a new location. It was common for tribes to decorate their teepees using colors and symbols that represented their family.

The Pawnee mostly traveled by foot. If they had loads to carry, they used a 'travois'. A travois was made by attaching two poles to a sled that dogs would then pull. After the Europeans brought horses to North America, it changed the Pawnee's way of life. They were able to travel farther and faster. They were also able to carry larger loads in one trip. Horses helped also the Native American tribes of the Great Plains become more efficient in their hunting of buffalo.

Clothing for the Pawnee was very simple. In the summer, men would wear a 'loincloth', which is a one piece garment that hung around the hips to cover their front and back. The name loincloth came from the word 'loins', which is the part of the body between the two hips. When the weather got colder, they would add other clothing pieces. For example, animal skin leggings might be worn or fur robes. Women would wear skirts and a blouse. Women would usually add beads, feathers, and fringe to their shirts. Both men and women wore moccasins on their feet. Elaborate feathered headdresses were worn by the men and were a symbol of honor. For every act of bravery, they received a black feather for their headdress. 'War shirts', which were earned through battle, were also worn for special occasions. They were highly decorative, and they symbolized strength, honor, and tradition.

Sketch the Pawnee on the Great Plains. Include details mentioned in the passage.