

What is the Plateau and Great Basin Regions?

The **Plateau** area covered eastern Washington, northern Idaho, western Montana, northeast and central Oregon, and southeast British Columbia. The Plateau Indians lived in small villages alongside rivers.

The **Great Basin** includes the regions between the Sierra Nevada and the Rocky Mountains. It includes all of Nevada and Utah, the southern regions of Oregon and Idaho, a small area of southwestern Montana, western Wyoming, eastern California, a portion of northern Arizona, and the majority of western Colorado.

What are the Land and Climate Like Here?

The area where Native Americans settled east of the Northwest Coast Area and west of the Plains is considered the cultural area of the Plateau and Great Basin. The Plateau section had more water available. The Great Basin portion had huge stretches of barren desert.



What Native American Tribes Lived Here?

Many tribes lived in the Plateau and Great Basin regions. The **Yakima**, **Salish**, and **Nez Perce** were the three largest tribes in this Plateau region. These tribes were well known for their acorn bread, basket making skills, cornhusk bags, and rabbit and duck hunting skills.

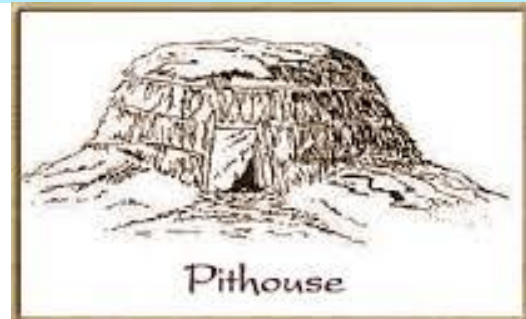
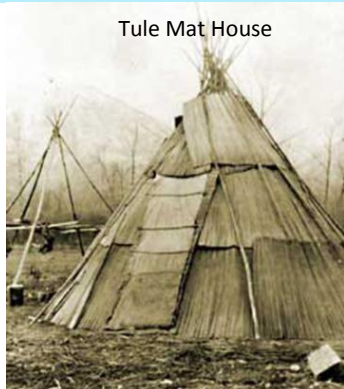
The **Ute**, **Paiute**, and **Shoshone** were the three largest tribes in the Great Basin region. These tribes were well known to use primitive tools and weapons such as bows and arrows, stone knives, rabbit sticks, and digging sticks. Drills were used for making holes in bone, wood, and other natural materials. Scrapers were used for cutting and removing the flesh of animals.

Where Did Plateau and Great Basin Native Americans Live?

Native American tribes in the **Plateau** region lived in two different types of homes.

Tule Mat Lodges: These tent like homes were shaped like a cone with buffalo hide covered a wooden frame. Tepees were designed to break down quickly because Plateau and Great Basin Native Americans did not live in permanent settlements. They were very small and only fit one family.

Pit Houses: These houses were built by Native Americans in the southern Plateau and Great Basin. They were made with a wooden frame covered with prairie grass. Grass houses were good for living in warm climates because they had thin walls.



Since most **Great Basin** Indians were nomadic, permanent shelters were rare. In spring, summer, and fall, simple sunshades and windbreaks were made with available materials, such as sagebrush and willow. Conical huts framed with willow boughs and covered with reeds, branches, and grass provided more solid summer shelter. Winter houses were similar, with bark added to the cover and rocks placed along the bottom to prevent wind damage and provide some insulation. A hole was left at the top of the frame to allow smoke from fires to escape. Sometimes a two to three foot foundation was dug with the framed structure placed over it. For additional insulation, the framed structure could be covered with dirt.

What Did Plateau and Great Basin Native Americans Eat?

Plateau Native American tribes hunted and gathered. The uses of the animals were varied and included food, clothing, shelter, and decorations. Plateau animals included the bear, mountain goat, coyote, fox, raccoon, porcupine, weasel, beaver, and hare. The most important food to the survival of the Plateau people was the Pacific salmon. The Plateau Indians also gathered berries, roots, and bulbs to eat.



The people of the **Great Basin** utilized a wide variety of plants and animals for food. Harvesting patterns were seasonal. In the spring, greens, bulbs, roots, and tender plant shoots were gathered. Hunting was important for supplementing plant foods. People of the Great Basin hunted large and small game such as deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, jackrabbits, pocket gophers, squirrels, and waterfowl. Group hunting techniques were used for events such as rabbit drives, where men, women, and children would herd rabbits into gullies lined with nets. This provided an important food source as well as skins for clothing and blankets.

What Clothes Did Plateau and Great Basin Native Americans Wear?

The men of the **Plateau** area wore robes and the women wore dresses. Leggings, moccasins, shirts, dresses, and skirts were made of buckskin. The clothing that Plateau women became famous for was their basket hats. They wove these out of dried leaves. Plateau mothers had to diaper their child, so how did they do it? They used cattail fluff inside the buckskin pants. When mothers needed a cradle, they used drift-wood that was the right size and shape. Cattail fluff was used to absorb moisture between the buckskin on board that was used to support the baby.



Although clothing varied throughout the **Great Basin**, there were basic items that were common. Men often wore poncho-like shirts made of skins (usually buckskin) or twined sagebrush bark. Breechcloths were worn with the shirts, or alone in warmer weather. Skin or twined bark leggings were also worn. Women wore woven fiber aprons from the waist to knees that were either single (front only) or double (covering front and back).

