**Traditional Housing Styles of Native Americans in Oregon**

**Overview:**

This lesson introduces students to the traditional housing styles of Native American tribes in Oregon, while also giving them the opportunity to practice using the Pythagorean Theorem to solve a real-world problem. Students will learn about the diverse materials and building styles tribes used and how their choices were shaped by the natural environments in which they lived and the traditional lifeways they followed. Studying traditional Native American housing styles will help students begin to grasp the diversity of tribal cultures in Oregon. Too often, Indigenous people in Oregon and across the country are represented as a single, homogeneous group. This does not do justice to the rich diversity of tribal cultures, nor does it honor their individual identities, histories, traditions, and cultural contributions.

**Background for teachers:**

From the rain-drenched coastlands and lush inland valleys to the semi-arid plateau and basin regions east of the Cascades, Native people in Oregon had many different housing needs and many different materials with which to meet those needs. Nearly all tribes in Oregon practiced some form of seasonal rounds—moving from one location to another based on the availability of natural resources—but their degree of mobility varied widely and influenced the type of housing they needed. Native people in the Columbia Plateau region of Eastern Oregon, for example, such as the Umatilla Tribe, assembled some of their shelters from large woven tule mats secured over a simple wooden frame. Tule—a type of sedge or reed that grows along rivers and streams throughout Eastern Oregon—was an abundant, lightweight, easily transportable material that suited a mobile lifestyle in a generally arid climate. Meanwhile, coastal tribes built a variety of structures, also based on their seasonal round traditions, but their winter housing structures were often made from more permanent cedar or redwood planks, which suited a more stationary lifestyle and a wet climate. A few tribes in the far eastern part of the state even used the familiar tipi structure, covered with buffalo hides, which is more common to tribes of the Great Plains. Before beginning this lesson, teachers should take some time to review basic information on traditional tribal housing:

[• https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/2016/12/31/ houses-of-the-oregon-tribes/](https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/2016/12/31/houses-of-the-oregon-tribes/)

• <http://www.native-languages.org/houses.htm>

Teachers should also consider students’ prior knowledge of the Pythagorean Theorem and determine whether extra instruction will be required for Activity 2.

**Learning Outcomes:**

• Describe the traditional housing styles of Native Americans in Oregon

• Use the Pythagorean Theorem to solve a problem

• Design a problem that can be solved using the Pythagorean Theorem

**Standards:**

**Oregon math standards**

8.G.6 – Explain a proof of the Pythagorean Theorem and its converse.

8.G.7 – Apply the Pythagorean Theorem to determine unknown side lengths in right triangles

in real-world and mathematical problems in two and three dimensions.

8.G.8 – Apply the Pythagorean Theorem to find the distance between two points in a coordinate system.