

# THE INDIAN T tipi



**N**ODWELLING in all the world stirs the imagination like the tipi of the Plains Indian. It is without doubt one of the most picturesque of all shelters and one of the most practical movable dwellings ever invented. Comfortable, roomy, and well ventilated, it was ideal for the roving life these people led in following the buffalo herds up and down the country. It also proved to be just as ideal in a more permanent camp during the long winters on the prairies.

One need not be an artist to appreciate its beauty of form and line, and no camper who has ever used a tipi would credit any other tent with such comfort and utility. Warm in winter, cool in summer, easy to pitch, and, because of its conical shape, able to withstand terrific winds or driving rain, the tipi is a shelter that should appeal to every outdoorsman. It is not only an all-weather tent but a home as well.

Often the tipi is confused with the wigwam. Actually both words mean the same thing—a dwelling—but "tipi" is a Sioux word, referring to the conical skin tent common to the prairie tribes, and "wigwam" is a word from a tribe far to the East, in Massachusetts, and refers to the dome-shaped round or oval shelter, thatched with bark or reed mats, used by the people of the Woodland area. Consequently, we prefer to use the term "tipi" to designate the Plains type of shelter and "wigwam" to designate the bark- or mat-covered Woodland dwelling even though both types are now covered with canvas. Indians, wherever they lived, made their dwellings of the best material at hand and to suit their conditions of life.

The word "tipi" has often been spelled "teepee" or "tepee," but since learning to write in their own language, the Sioux themselves spell it "tipi," which is simple and is accepted by students everywhere.

To one familiar with the charm and comfort of a real Indian tipi, it is little wonder that Kit Carson refused to accompany Lieutenant John Charles Fremont on his first expedition of exploration unless a tipi was taken along. The famous scout did not mind roughing it

when necessary, but when the time came for rest and relaxation, he wanted the most comfort a traveling existence could afford. Now Kit had lived for years in tipis pitched by his Indian wives, but there were no women in Fremont's party, and Kit did not know how to erect his tipi. Fortunately a trader happened along with his Indian wife. She taught Kit how to do it. He found it quite a simple trick after all.

For all that, very few white men ever acquired the skill; and today hardly any Indians remember or understand the technique. Differences in the outward appearance of various tribal styles of tipis are due primarily to the arrangement of the poles, since this determines the cut of the hide or canvas cover. Generally speaking, all the tribes about whom we have reliable information used tipis employing one of two possible types of pole arrangement. One of these types has a foundation of three poles, a tripod; the other has a foundation of four poles. This structural difference determines certain features that distinguish the two types.

The open fire in the center of the tipi is its principal attribute, and, of course, the smoke vent should be above this central fire. If the tipi were a true cone, this vent or smoke hole would center around the crossing of the poles at the apex. Such a vent, to be practical, would have to be so large that it could never be closed in wet weather. The Indians solved this problem by tilting the cone and extending the smoke hole down the long side, the front of the tent. The crossing of the poles is thus at the top end of the smoke hole instead of in the middle, so that it is possible to close the hole entirely by means of the projecting flaps or ears. But this also means that the poles must be arranged neatly and compactly. A haphazard arrangement would result in such a bulky mass of poles that they would choke the smoke hole and make it impossible to fit the cover smoothly or close the hole.

In a small tipi, using few poles, this is a minor problem, but in a large one it is of the utmost importance. Indians solved the difficulty by developing a definite pattern or order of placing the poles, that order depending upon the type of tipi.

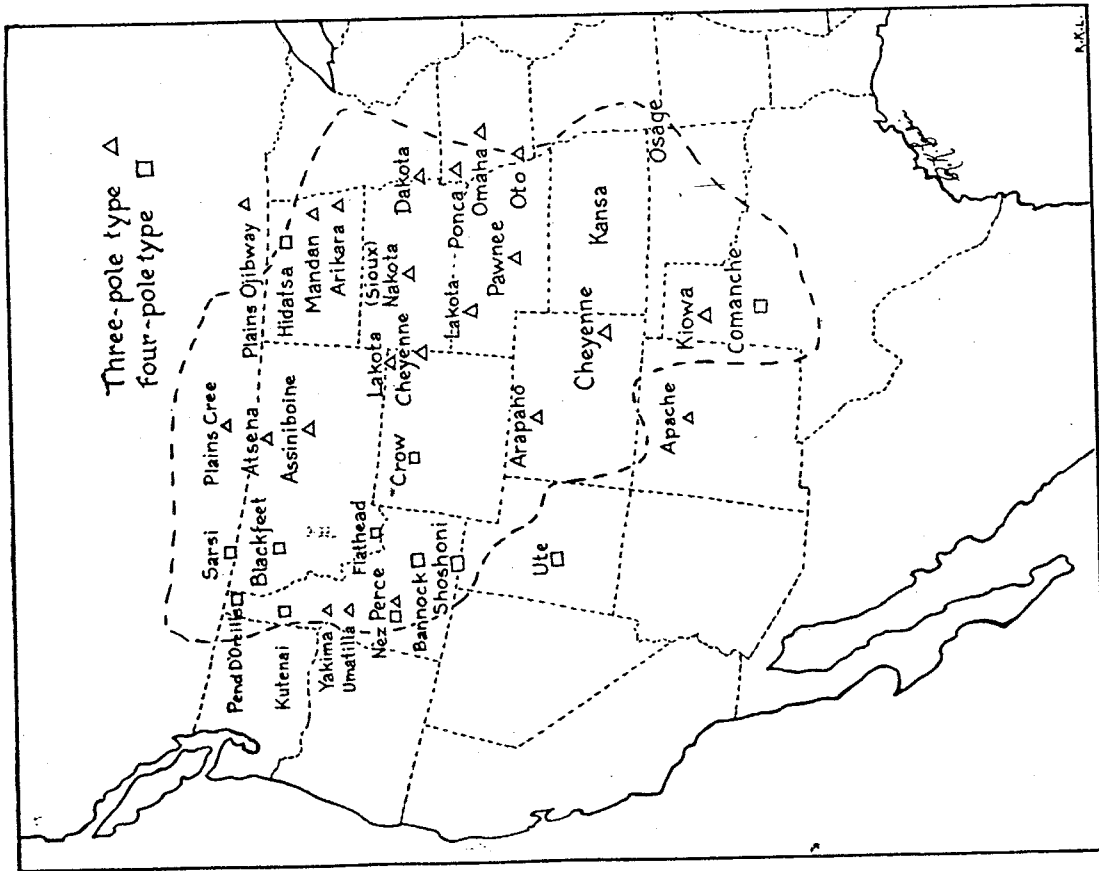


Fig. 27. Distribution of the Tipi.

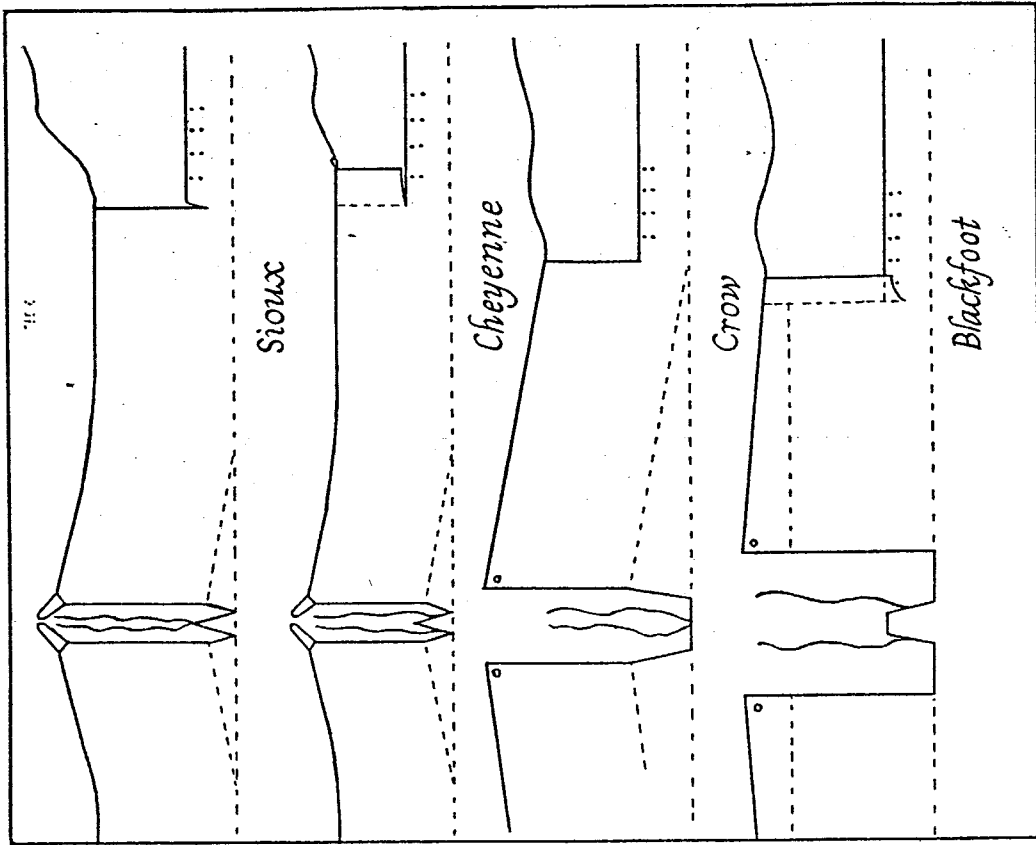


Fig. 31. Comparison of Tribal Smoke-flap Styles.

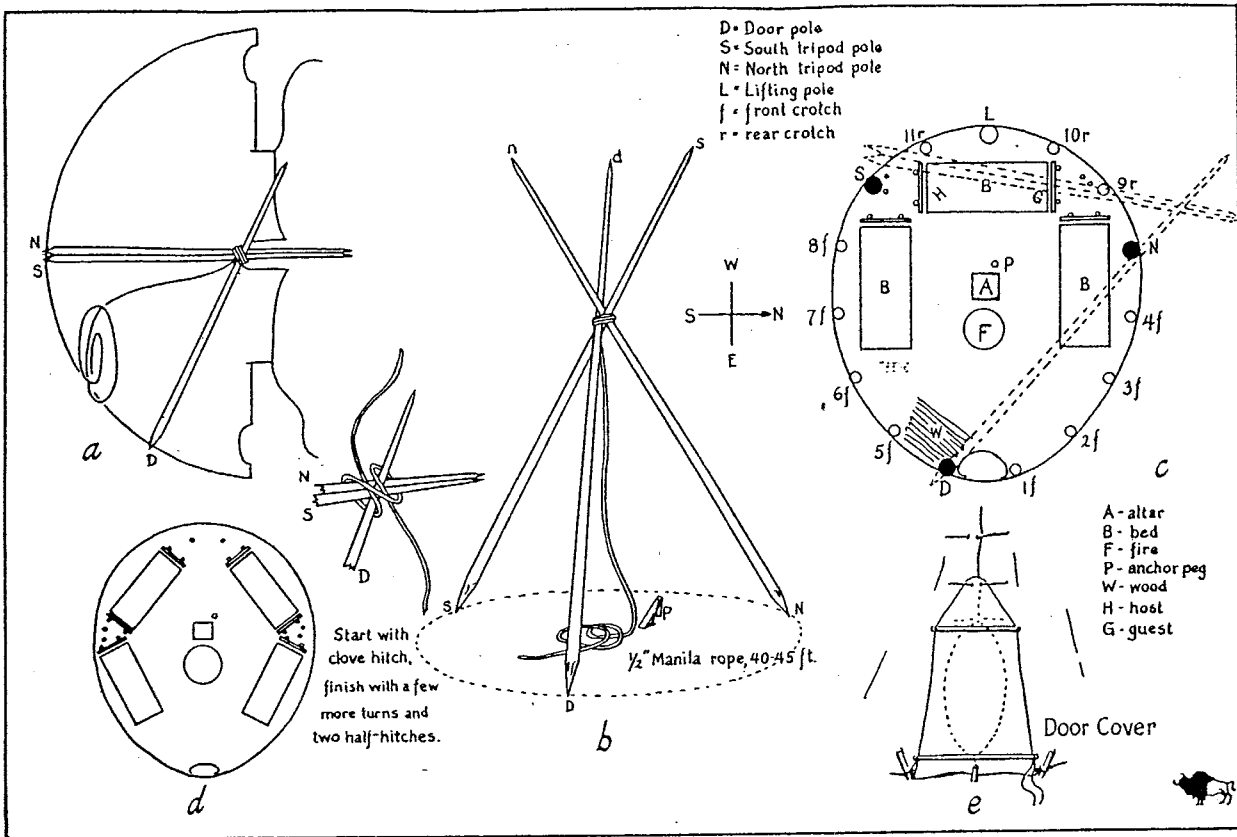


Fig. 3a, b, c, d, and e. Erecting the Sioux Tipi.

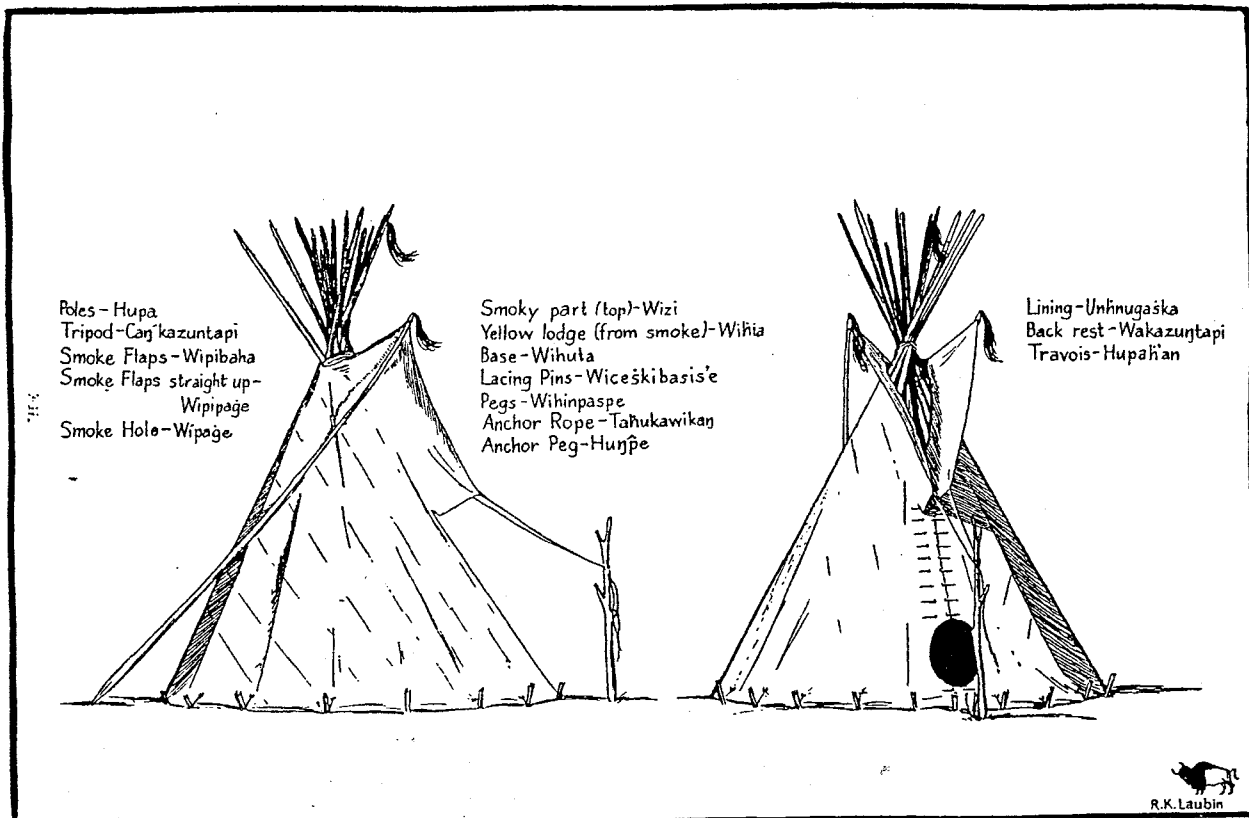


Fig. 4. Parts of the Sioux Tipi.

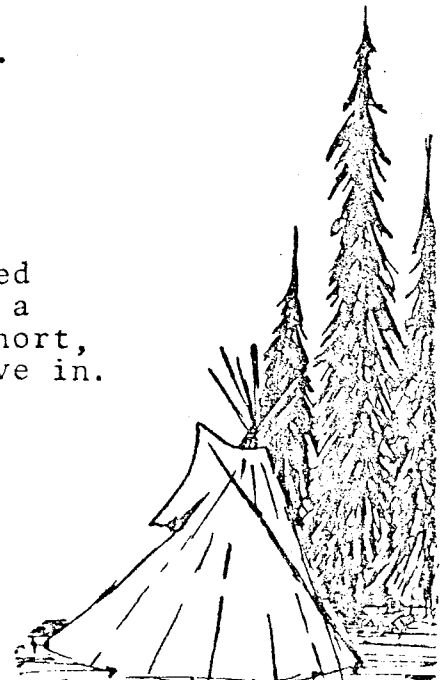
**TIPI ETIQUETTE**  
(UNWRITTEN LAWS OF THE LODGE)

- Be hospitable.
- Always assume your guest is tired, cold and hungry.
- Always give your guest the place of honor in the lodge and at the feast, and serve him in reasonable ways.
- Never sit while your guest stands.
- If your guest refuses certain foods, say nothing; he may be under vow.
- Protect your guest as one of the family; feed his horse and beat your dogs if they harm his dogs.
- Do not trouble your guest with many questions about himself; he will tell you what he wants you to know.
- In another man's lodge, follow his customs, not your own.
- Never worry your host with your troubles.
- Always repay calls of courtesy; Do not delay.
- Give your host a little upon leaving; little presents are little courtesies and never offend.
- Say "Thank You" for every gift, however small.
- Compliment, even if you strain the facts to do so.
- Never walk between persons talking.
- Never interrupt persons talking.
- Let not the young speak among those much older, unless asked.
- Always give place to your seniors in entering or leaving the lodge or anywhere.
- Never sit while your seniors stand.
- Never force your conversations on anyone.
- Speak softly, especially before your elders, or in the presence of strangers.
- Never come between anyone and the fire.
- Do not touch live coals with a steel knife or any sharp steel.
- Do not stare at strangers; Drop your eyes if they stare hard at you; Above all, for women.
- The women of the lodge are the keepers of the fire, but the men should help with the heavier sticks.
- Always give a word or sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, or even a stranger, if in a lonely place.
- Do not talk to your Mother-in-law at any time or let her talk to you.
- Be kind.
- Show respect to all men, but grovel to none.
- Let silence be your motto until duty bids you to speak.
- Thank the Great Spirit for each meal.

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TI means "to dwell, or live"; PI means "used for"  
TIPI means "used to live in"

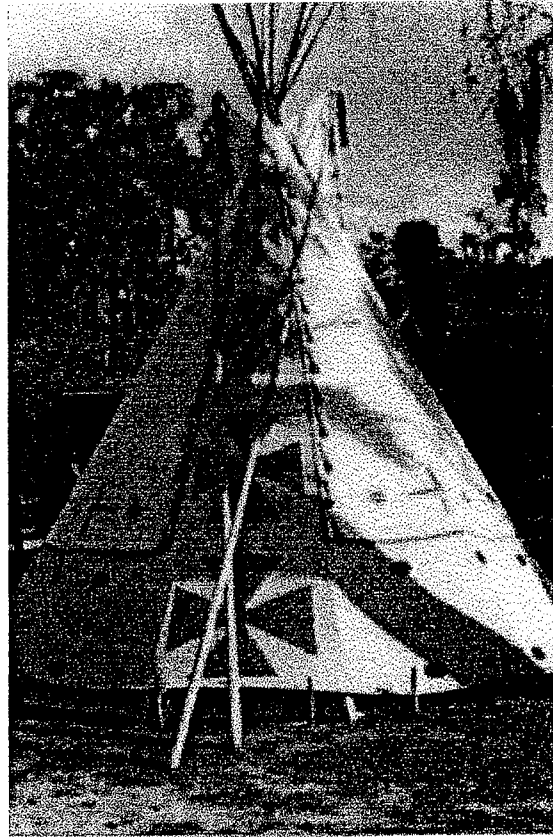
The Indian TIPI, if properly made, pitched and furnished in the true Indian way, offers all the requirements of a good home; safety, comfort, privacy, even luxury. In short, other tents were made to sell. The TIPI was made to live in.



**WWW.TIPIS.ORG**

**www.tipis-tepees-teepees.com**

The site is now up and running. It is new site with information on all types of tipis, covers, linings, doors, decorations and history.



## **Tipi Makers**

The list of tipis makers is an on going and changing page. If you know of others, please send the page or address. Most of the makers are located in the United States with a few in Australia, Canada, France, England, Switzerland, South Africa and Scotland. This list is for your convenience and we are not responsible for any problems that may occur between a tipi buyer and seller.

### **USA**

- <http://www.reasetipis.com/>...Reese tipis...Great site with good pictures on tipis. We guarantee to manufacture the best tipi that can be made.
- Tentsmiths Home Page
- Nomadics Tipi Makers...probably the largest of the tipi makers and did all the tipis for "Dances with Wolves".
- Spring Valley Lodges Tents and Canvas Products
- R K Lodges - Tipis, tents, lean-tos, teepees, camping
- Don Strinz Tipi...Great video on setting up tipis called "Pointy Side Up"
- Panther Primitives - The Best Tents in History - Historical Reproduction Tents
- Tipis Earthworks Tipis
- Darry Wood...Wood Lodges.....Best custom tipis in the country.
- Braintanned Buffalo Robes, Tipis, Rawhide & Par fleche\_ by Wes Housler...Brain tan tipis and products
- Custom Canvas Design-8002 Timberline Drive #2. Bozeman Mt. 59718 800-704-7362 1.00\$ cat.

- <http://www.buffalorobe.com/BUFFALO-PRODUCTS.htm>...Larry Benz...Brain tips and products
- <http://www.main.nc.us/openstudio/sweetwater/canvas.htm>.....Sweetwater Tipis
- Redhawk Trading Home.. Maker of the worlds largest tipi.
- Reliable Tents & Tipis. The first choice of hunters and outfitters.
- Thunder Mountain\_ Tent & Canvas - Tents, Tipis, Teepees, Float Tubes, Fishing, Hunting, Cam
- Authentic Teepees (Tipis) by Trapline Lodges
- White Buffalo Lodges & Anvil Wagon Works: Custom Tipis, Sheepwagons and Chuckwagons from Livingston, Montana.
- Kinney's Teepees....1407 N. Custer Ave., Hardin, Mt. 59034...1-888-523-3422
- Four Seasons Tentmasters defining quality for historically correct period tents...4221 Livesay Road, Dept. B, Sand Creek, Mi. 49279 or call 517-436-6245
- Conneautville Canvas in Conneautville, Penna 814-587-2755 Weekdays..9 to 5.
- Dreaming Buffalo Tipi Co,
- <http://2horse.hypermart.net/index.html>.... Two Horse Trading Co. in New York...sell Tentsmiths tipis and offer other items.
- MOCCASIN TRAILS
- M BAR M-tipis-tepees-teepees
- Western Canvas Handmade Tipis
- St. Louis Tipi Co. 33905 RCR43A, Steamboat Springs Co., 80477 (970)879-0314
- WYOMING TENT & AWNING
- <http://showcase.netins.net/web/tipis/>.....Tarkio Valley Manufacturing, Iowa
- Wrights Canvas 241 Independence Way, Cashmere WA., 98814 (509)782-3932
- <http://www.bozemantrail.com./frame3.htm>.....Bozeman Trail Tipi and other things
- <http://www.tipisbyfullmoon.com/tipi.html>.... Full moon tipis
- <http://www.webcom.com/dbtipi/>..... Dead Bird Tipis
- <http://www.trapline.com/>..... Trapline Lodges..... Montana
- <http://www.barkles.com/trailsend/tents.html>... Trails' End Tipi Makers
- [http://fabricon.com/about\\_fabricon.htm](http://fabricon.com/about_fabricon.htm)... FabriCon tents. California
- <http://members.home.net/finkleman/tipi.htm>... Heritage Tipis
- .Kinneys Tipis....<http://www.forevermontana.com/kinneyshomepage.htm>
- [http://www.greyowlcrafts.com/indian\\_tipis.htm](http://www.greyowlcrafts.com/indian_tipis.htm).... Grey Owl tipis from the craft company... New Jersey
- Tipis.... They sell Panther lodges, but have some good photos on site. Wondering Bull
- <http://www.foxrivertraders.com/tipi.htm>.... Fox River Tipi Co. Wisconsin
- <http://hometown.aol.com/redpath/earth.html>... Ah'Ki tipis by Little Joe
- <http://showcase.netins.net/web/tipis/>..... Tarkio Valley Tipi Makers in Iowa
- Old West Enterprises
- Sky Lodge Tipis...they use the Vinal plastic for window effects.
- Manataka tipis
- <http://www.sundancelodges.com/tipis.html>... Sundance Lodges
- Tipis / Teepees.. Nuttin but tents n tipis
- [http://www.jademountain.com/Shelter/yurts\\_tipi.html](http://www.jademountain.com/Shelter/yurts_tipi.html)
- Running Strong for American Indian Youth - Redcloud
- Rainier Industries - Tents, Wall Tents, Portable Shelters, Camping Tents
- Home Page... Angel Fire, kids tipis
- 19th Century Military and Civilian Tents
- Mountain Light Tipi Co. - Photos
- [http://www.tipited.com/tipi\\_thumbs.htm](http://www.tipited.com/tipi_thumbs.htm)..... Tipi Ted's Trading Co.
- Willow Winds - Village Construction... makes Bark Construction Villages and other items .. Jim Willow Winds
- TipisandHousehold
- Access to Alternative Homes, ancient building methods, Shelter, Straw Bale Building, yurts, tip
- Alternative Links..... other tent, tipi, type of companies

**www.tipis.org**

**www.tipis-tepees-teepees.com**



**Tipi Talk..**

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**<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LodgeOwners/join> interactive group of people who want to ask, answer or put impute into tipis. There are many knowledgeable people there who can help you.**

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**Yahoo! Groups : PlainsIndianSeminar... Material culture of the Plains, etc. This is a meeting place for all those who have participated in the**

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**Material Culture of the Plains, Prairie and Plateau Conference....and anyone else who has an advanced interest**