

# Daily Life in British North America

## READING HINT

As you read this section, look for information on differences between urban and rural life.

Historians often talk about the “daily life” of a particular time period. This section gives you some general information on daily life in BNA.

Of course, there is never only one kind of daily life. People lead different lives depending on such things as their culture, their material wealth, and other opportunities they have in society. You can see that this is true if you look around your own community. It was the same case in British North America. You can probably imagine that the home of a Black colonist would have been quite different from the home of a member of the British elite.

## Homes

In BNA, there was variety in the size of homes and the kind of furniture, depending on what people could afford and whether they lived in the town or the country. Wealthy people in towns could build large, elegant homes. A farmer’s first home might be a one-room cabin built of rough logs, with a dirt floor. Many Aboriginal people still built traditional homes.

No matter how wealthy you were, there were certain things that would be similar in all homes, urban or rural. Light would come from candles or oil lamps, and heat would come from a fireplace or a wood stove. There was no indoor plumbing, so homes would have an “outhouse” toilet a little way from the main house. Water had to be drawn by hand from a well, a nearby spring, or streams and lakes. In fancier homes, there would be a hand pump in the kitchen. If you wanted hot water, you had to heat it over a fire.



This photograph of an Innu family was taken c. 1881–1885, but it shows a kind of shelter that would have also been built in the mid-1800s. This kind of wigwam was common in many First Nations communities all over BNA, except for the west coast.