

Fifth Graders Learn about history and culture of Native American life on the Great Plains

By Craig Hansen, Education Specialist, Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site

The temperature was zero on February 22 at Knife River Indian Villages NHS, but that did not stop fifty 5th graders from visiting. These Louisville, Kentucky students were not fazed by the near sub-zero weather-they were in the warmth of a school library. Rangers from Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site in Stanton, North Dakota broadcast a successful LIVE program from a very cold earthlodge. Students learned about what life would have been like for Native Americans living in earthlodges on the Great Plains hundreds of years ago. The instructor had this to say about the earthlodge, “We read about them but it wasn’t until we saw them with Maureen-that they seemed real. Seeing the white of her breath certainly helped us realize how primitive they are.”

Prior to the student’s visit, they had been studying Native Americans. Curious students asked and answered questions on life in an earthlodge. The program enhanced student understanding of Hidatsa, Mandan & Arikara culture, thus helping achieve Kentucky state curriculum standards in Culture, Societies and Historical Perspective. According to their instructor, “We learned history, art appreciation, architecture, gender roles, spirituality, customs, empathy, geography and···how amazing technology is!”

