



# REEEC

Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign

## Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum

### **Building your own Kazakh Yurt**

*20 minutes prep, 30 minutes of class time*

This unit is designed to allow students to learn more about Kazakhstan and the culture and traditions found there. Students will be introduced to nomadic lifestyles and the importance of portable houses (called yurts), which have been around since 1,000 B.C.E, with earlier versions dating even earlier. Students will learn about the construction of yurts and why they were the ideal housing for nomads in the steppes of Central Asia. They will then get to build their own Kazakh yurt!



#### **Required Materials:**

1. Pipe cleaners
2. Felt sheets
3. Construction paper
4. Craft glue/glue sticks
5. Any decorations you might want to put on your yurt!

**Preparation:** Place a pile of pipe cleaners, several sheets of felt and construction paper at each table, along with craft glue or glue sticks. Be sure there are plenty of pipe cleaners available, as students will be using them to create the frame for their miniature yurts.

#### **Lesson Plan:**

1. Begin by asking the children what country we live in, and then help them locate that country on a map or globe. Then show them where Kazakhstan is on a map/globe. (2 mins)
2. Use the printed images to introduce the class to Kazakhstan, showing pictures of the capital city, Nur-Sultan and the interesting and modern architecture that is found throughout the city. (5 mins)
3. Explain to students that there is another type of building that is well known throughout Kazakhstan called a yurt. The yurt is what is known as a nomadic dwelling, because it is easy to take it apart, move it to a new location, and set it up again. Yurts have a strong frame made from wood, which would be covered by felt and other raw materials to make sure the inside of the yurt stayed nice and warm. Today, students will be able to build their own yurts out of similar materials used in traditional Kazakh yurts!
4. Explain the activity to the class (10 mins):
  - a. First, they are going to create a lattice from pipe cleaners, to create the framework for their yurts. This could be a little tricky, so be sure to demonstrate to students how to twist the pipe cleaners together to create the structure.
  - b. They will use a small sheet of construction paper to create the cone for the top of the yurt, and they will need to attach the cone to the top of their pipe cleaner lattice.
  - c. Finally, each student will use a piece of felt to wrap around their lattice to complete their yurt structure! When the glue is dry, students are free to take their yurts home.