

## TRADITIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION

BY

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Charles Eastman, a Santee Sioux, was born in a buffalo hide tipi in 1858 and raised in a traditional way of life that existed before Europeans came to America. He was then catapulted into the industrialized world of the time, where he went on to become the preeminent spokesman for all American Indians during the first decades of the twentieth century. This article, containing 34 illustrations, is a compilation of excerpts from *Living in Two Worlds: The American Indian Experience* focusing on pre-reservation education of American Indian youth.

### THE GRANDPARENTS TEACH THE YOUNG CHILDREN

It is commonly supposed that there is no systematic education of their children among the aborigines of this country.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. All the customs of this primitive people were held to be divinely instituted,



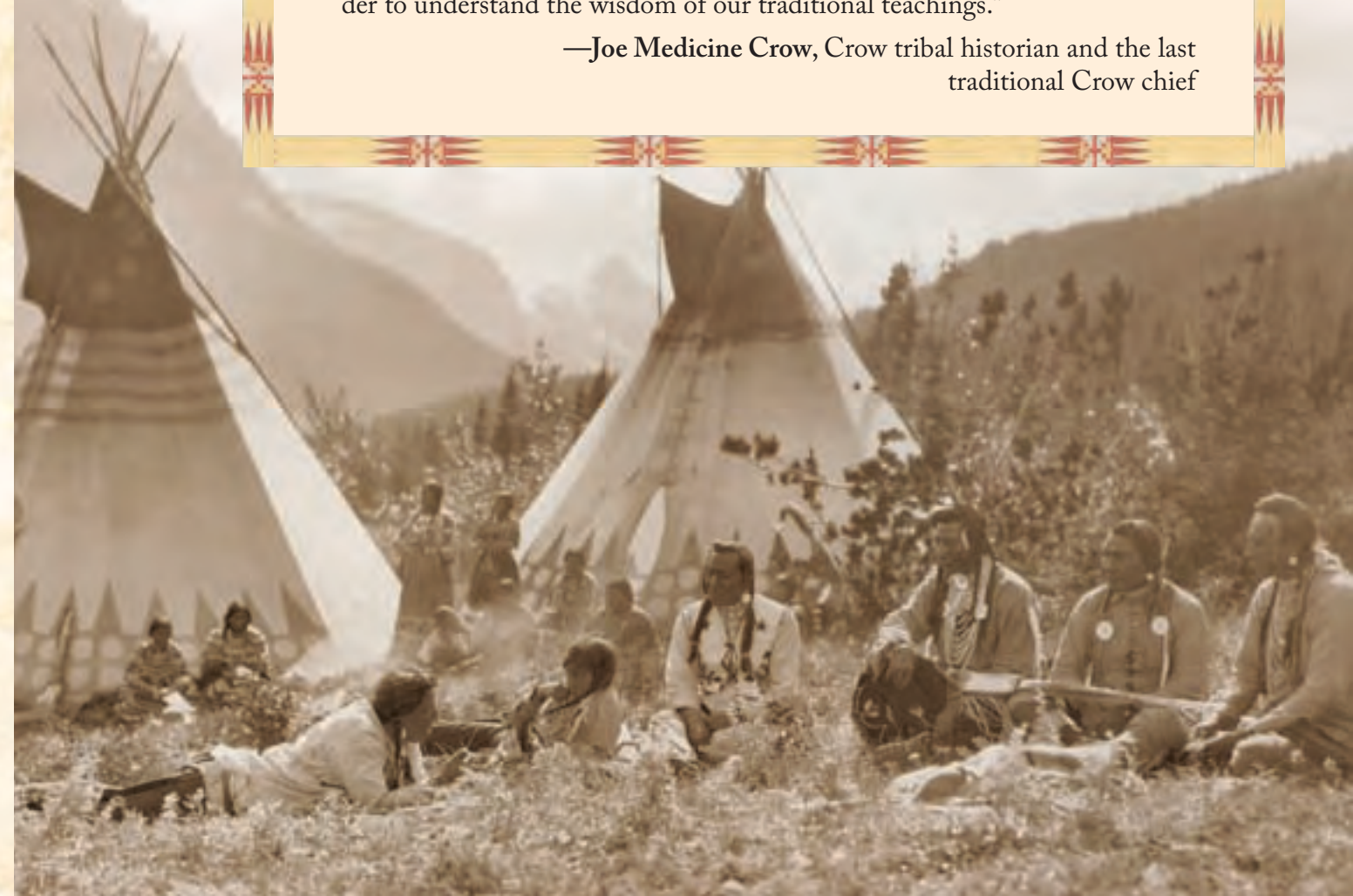
A Tale of the Tribe, c.1909, Taos Pueblo

### STORYTELLING

“Storytelling was the traditional way of passing on our tribal history and educating the young children—the grandfathers and grandmothers were our teachers. In my youth, the storytellers who educated me were my immediate family members. I remember that my grandfather, my mother’s father, whose name was Yellowtail, was my main teacher. I followed him around wherever he went. When he went to go take a sweat bath, I would follow him. While the rocks were heating he told stories like the ones in this book. I was fortunate as a boy because so many storytellers were ready to educate the young. Now the television is on all the time and the children no longer follow the elders—they don’t take the time to listen to their grandparents. In today’s world it is difficult to learn about the olden-day stories, so books that preserve this wisdom have great value.

“There are different variations of the same story that are told among the many tribes; even the Crow people have different variations of the legend about creation. The storytellers can go on with their account for hours when they add the many details and variations. The best way to learn about tribal history and culture is to read several different accounts of these stories in order to understand the wisdom of our traditional teachings.”

—Joe Medicine Crow, Crow tribal historian and the last traditional Crow chief



and those in connection with the training of children were scrupulously adhered to and transmitted from one generation to another.

Very early, the Indian boy assumed the task of preserving and transmitting the legends of his ancestors and his race. Almost every evening a myth, or a true story of some deed done in the past, was narrated by one of the parents or grandparents, while the boy listened with parted lips and glistening eyes. On the following evening, he was usually required to repeat it. As a rule, the Indian boy is a good listener and has a good memory, so that the stories were tolerably well mastered. The household became his audience, by which he was alternately criticized and applauded.

This sort of teaching at once enlightens the boy's mind and stimulates his ambition. His conception of his own future ca-

reer becomes a vivid and irresistible force. Whatever there is for him to learn must be learned; whatever qualifications are necessary to a truly great man he must seek at any expense of danger and hardship. Such was the feeling of the imaginative and brave young Indian. It became apparent to him in early life that he must accustom himself to rove alone and not to fear or dislike the impression of solitude.

Indeed, the distinctive work of both grand parents is that of acquainting the youth with the national traditions and beliefs. It is reserved for them to repeat the time-hallowed tales with dignity and authority, so as to lead him into his inheritance in the stored-up wisdom and experience the race. The old are dedicated to the service of the young, as their teachers and advisers, and the young in turn regard them with love and reverence.



*Opposite:* A Brule Sioux medicine man is adding the symbol for the year just past onto a 'winter count' hide that preserves the main event for each year in the tribes history over a period of more than a century. This type of record allowed the elders to accurately recite generations of history to their grandchildren.



## AN INDIAN BOY'S TRAINING

It seems to be a popular idea that all the characteristic skill of the Indian is instinctive and hereditary. This is a mistake. All the stoicism and patience of the Indian are acquired traits, and continual practice alone makes him master of the art of wood-craft. Physical training and dieting were not neglected. I remember that I was not allowed to have beef soup or any warm drink. The soup was for the old men. General rules for the young were never to take their food very hot, nor to drink much water.

At the age of about eight years, if the child is a boy, his mother turns him over to his father for more Spartan training.

My uncle, who educated me up to the age of fifteen years, was a strict disciplinarian and a good teacher. When I left the teepee in the morning, he would say: "Hakadah, look closely to everything you see"; and at evening, on my return, he used often to catechize me for an hour or so.

"On which side of the trees is the lighter-colored bark? On which side do they have most regular branches?"

It was his custom to let me name all the new birds that I had seen during the day. I would name them according to the color or the shape of the bill or their song or the ap-

pearance and locality of the nest—in fact, anything about the bird that impressed me as characteristic. I made many ridiculous errors, I must admit. He then usually informed me of the correct name. Occasionally I made a hit and this he would warmly commend.

He went much deeper into this science when I was a little older, that is, about the age of eight or nine years. He would say, for instance:

"How do you know that there are fish in yonder lake?"

"Because they jump out of the water for flies at mid-day."

He would smile at my prompt but superficial reply.

"What do you think of the little pebbles grouped together under the shallow water? and what made the pretty curved marks in the sandy bottom and the little sand-banks? Where do you find the fish-eating birds? Have the inlet and the outlet of a lake anything to do with the question?"

He did not expect a correct reply at once to all the voluminous questions that he put to me on these occasions, but he meant to make me observant and a good student of nature.

"Hakadah," he would say to me, "you ought to follow the example of the *shunktokecha* (wolf). Even when he is surprised and runs for his life, he will pause to take one more look at you before he enters his final retreat. So you must take a second look at everything you see.

"In hunting," he would resume, "you will be guided by the habits of the animal you seek. Remember that a moose stays in swampy or low land or between high mountains near a spring or lake, for thirty

to sixty days at a time. Most large game moves about continually, except the doe in the spring; it is then a very easy matter to find her with the fawn. Conceal yourself in a convenient place as soon as you observe any signs of the presence of either, and then call with your birchen doe-caller.

"When you have any difficulty with a bear or a wild-cat—that is, if the creature shows signs of attacking you—you must make him fully understand that you have seen him and are aware of his intentions. If you are not well equipped for a pitched battle, the only way to make him retreat is to take a long sharp-pointed pole for a spear and rush toward him. No wild beast will face this unless he is cornered and already wounded. These fierce beasts are gen-

erally afraid of the common weapon of the larger animals—the horns, and if these are very long and sharp, they dare not risk an open fight.

All boys were expected to endure hardship without complaint. In savage warfare, a young man must, of course, be an athlete and used to undergoing all sorts of privations. He must be able to go without food and water for two or three days without displaying any weakness, or to run for a day and a night without any rest. He must be able to traverse a pathless and wild country without losing his way either in the day or night time. He cannot refuse to do any of these things if he aspires to be a warrior.

Sometimes my uncle would wake me very early in the morning and challenge



Unknown Cheyenne boy

me to fast with him all day. I had to accept the challenge. We blackened our faces with charcoal, so that every boy in the village would know that I was fasting for the day. Then the little tempters would make my life a misery until the merciful sun hid behind the western hills.

I can scarcely recall the time when my stern teacher began to give sudden war-whoops over my head in the morning while I was sound asleep. He expected me to leap up with perfect presence of mind, always ready to grasp a weapon of some sort and to give a shrill whoop in reply. If I was sleepy or startled and hardly knew what I was about, he would ridicule me and say that I need never expect to sell my scalp dear. Often he would vary these tactics by shooting off his gun just outside of the lodge while I was yet asleep, at the same time giving blood-curdling yells. After a time I became used to this.

When Indians went upon the war-path, it was their custom to try the new warriors thoroughly before coming to an engagement. For instance, when they were near a

hostile camp, they would select the novices to go after the water and make them do all sorts of things to prove their courage. In accordance with this idea, my uncle used to send me off after water when we camped after dark in a strange place. Perhaps the country was full of wild beasts, and, for aught I knew, there might be scouts from hostile bands of Indians lurking in that very neighborhood.

Yet I never objected, for that would show cowardice. I picked my way through the woods, dipped my pail in the water and hurried back, always careful to make as little noise as a cat. Being only a boy, my heart would leap at every crackling of a dry twig or distant hooting of an owl, until, at last, I reached our teepee. Then my uncle would perhaps say: "Ah, Hakadah, you are a thorough warrior," empty out the precious contents of the pail, and order me to go a second time.

With all this, our manners and morals were not neglected. I was made to respect the adults and especially the aged. I was not allowed to join in their discussions, nor

even to speak in their presence, unless requested to do so. Indian etiquette was very strict, and among the requirements was that of avoiding the direct address. A term of relationship or some title of courtesy was commonly used instead of the personal name by those who wished to show respect. We were taught generosity to the poor and reverence for the "Great Mystery." Religion was the basis of all Indian training.

I recall to the present day some of the kind warnings and reproofs that my good grandmother was wont to give me. "Be strong of heart—be patient!" she used to say. She told me of a young chief who was noted for his uncontrollable temper. While in one of his rages he attempted to kill a woman, for which he was slain by his own band and left unburied as a mark of disgrace—his body was simply covered with green grass. If I ever lost my temper, she would say:

"Hakadah, control yourself, or you will be like that young man I told you of, and lie under a green blanket!"

In the old days, if a youth should seek

a wife before he had reached the age of twenty-two or twenty-three, and been recognized as a brave man, he was sneered at and considered an ill-bred Indian. He must also be a skillful hunter. An Indian cannot be a good husband unless he brings home plenty of game.

These precepts were in the line of our training for the wild life.

## GAMES AND SPORTS

The Indian boy was a prince of the wilderness. He had but very little work to do during the period of his boyhood. His principal occupation was the practice of a few simple arts in warfare and the chase. Aside from this, he was master of his time.

Whatever was required of us boys was quickly performed: then the field was clear for our games and plays. There was always keen competition among us. We felt very much as our fathers did in hunting and warfare, one strove to excel all the others.

It is true that our savage life was a pre-

## INDIAN ETIQUETTE

No one who is at all acquainted with the Indian in his home can deny that we are a polite people. As a rule, the warrior who inspired the greatest terror in the hearts of his enemies was a man of the most exemplary gentleness, and almost feminine refinement, among his family and friends. A soft, low voice was considered an excellent thing in man, as well as in woman! Indeed, the enforced intimacy of tent life would soon become intolerable, were it not for these instinctive reserves and delicacies, this unfailing respect for the established place and possessions of every other member of the family circle, this habitual quiet, order, and decorum.

Our people, though capable of strong and durable feeling, were not demonstrative in their affection at any time, least of all in the presence of guests or strangers. Only to the aged, who have journeyed far, and are in a manner exempt from ordinary rules, are permitted some playful familiarities with children and grandchildren. Grandparents are the only ones allowed to speak harshly in their criticism. Our old age was in some respects the happiest period of life. Advancing years brought with them much freedom, not only from the burden of laborious and dangerous tasks, but from those restrictions of custom and etiquette which were religiously observed by all others.



Hermon Atkins MacNeil, *The Sun Vow*, 1913

carious one, and full of dreadful catastrophes; however, this never prevented us from enjoying our sports to the fullest extent. As we left our teepees in the morning, we were never sure that our scalps would not dangle from a pole in the afternoon!

Our sports were molded by the life and customs of our people; indeed, we practiced only what we expected to do when grown. Our games were feats with the bow and arrow, foot and pony races, wrestling, swimming and imitation of the customs and habits of our fathers. We had sham fights with mud balls and willow wands; we played lacrosse, made war upon bees,

shot winter arrows (which were used only in that season), and coasted upon the ribs of animals and buffalo robes.

It was considered out of place to shoot by first sighting the object aimed at. This was usually impracticable in actual life, because the object was almost always in motion, while the hunter himself was often upon the back of a pony at full gallop. Therefore, it was the off-hand shot that the Indian boy sought to master.



The young boys spent hours practicing to shoot with the bow and arrows

Races were an everyday occurrence. At noon the boys were usually gathered by some pleasant sheet of water and as soon as the ponies were watered, they were allowed to graze for an hour or two, while the boys stripped for their noonday sports.

As soon as the foot race was ended, the

pony races followed. All the speedy ponies were picked out and riders chosen. If a boy declined to ride, there would be shouts of derision.

Last of all came the swimming. We loved to play in the water. When we had no ponies, we often had swimming match-



Dakota father teaching a child to shoot with an arrow



Children playing, Unknown Cheyenne

es of our own and sometimes made rafts with which we crossed lakes and rivers. It was a common thing to “duck” a young or timid boy or to carry him into deep water to struggle as best he might.

I remember a perilous ride with a companion on an unmanageable log, when we were both less than seven years old. The older boys had put us on this uncertain bark and pushed us out into the swift current of the river. I cannot speak for my comrade in distress, but I can say now that I would rather ride on a swift bronco any day than try to stay on and steady a short log in a river. I never knew how we managed to prevent a shipwreck on that voyage and to reach the shore.

Wrestling was largely indulged in by us all. It may seem odd, but wrestling was done

by a great many boys at once—from ten to any number on a side. It was really a battle, in which each one chose his opponent. The rule was that if a boy sat down, he was let alone, but as long as he remained standing within the field, he was open to an attack. No one struck with the hand, but all manner of tripping with legs and feet and butting with the knees was allowed. Altogether it was an exhausting pastime—fully equal to the American game of football and only the young athlete could really enjoy it.

One of our most curious sports was a war upon the nests of wild bees. We imagined ourselves about to make an attack upon the Ojibways or some tribal foe. We all painted and stole cautiously upon the nest; then, with a rush and war whoop, sprang upon the object of our attack and endeavored to destroy it. But it seemed that the bees were always on the alert and never entirely surprised, for they always raised quite as many scalps as did their bold assailants! After the onslaught upon the nest was ended, we usually followed it by a pretended scalp dance.

We had some quiet plays which we alternated with the more severe and warlike ones. Among them were throwing wands and snow-arrows. In the winter we coasted much. We had no “double-rippers” or toboggans, but six or seven of the long ribs of a buffalo, fastened together at the larger end, answered all practical purposes. Sometimes a strip of bass-wood bark, four feet long and about six inches wide, was used with considerable skill. We stood on one end and held the other, using the slippery inside of the bark for the outside, and thus coasting down long hills with remarkable speed.



Children in the North woods needed snow shoes during the winter



Buffalo rib sled, Hidatsa

## THE BOY HUNTER

It will be no exaggeration to say that the life of the Indian hunter was a life of fascination. From the moment that he lost sight of his rude home in the midst of the forest, his untutored mind lost itself in the myriad beauties and forces of nature. Yet he never forgot his personal danger from some lurking foe or savage beast, however absorbing was his passion for the chase.

The Indian youth was a born hunter. Every motion, every step expressed an in-born dignity and, at the same time, a depth of native caution. His moccasined foot fell like the velvet paw of a cat—noiselessly; his glittering black eyes scanned every object that appeared within their view. Not a bird, not even a chipmunk, escaped their piercing glance.

I was scarcely over three years old when I stood one morning just outside our buffalo-skin teepee, with my little bow and arrows in my hand, and gazed up among the trees. Suddenly the instinct to chase and hunt seized me powerfully. Just then a bird flew over my head and then another caught my eye, as it balanced itself upon a swaying bough. Everything else was forgotten and in that moment I had taken my first step as a hunter.

Our hunting varied with the season of the year, and the nature of the country which was for the time our home. Our chief weapon was the bow and arrows, and perhaps, if we were lucky, a knife was possessed by someone in the crowd. In the olden times, knives and hatchets were made from bone and sharp stones.

For fire we used a flint with a spongy piece of dry wood and a stone to strike



George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase, Upper Missouri*



Snowshoe of wood and rawhide.  
Probably Ojibwe c. 1830s



George Catlin, *Buffalo Chase in Snowdrifts, Indians Pursuing on Snowshoes*



John Lone Bull, Dakota

with. Another way of starting fire was for several of the boys to sit down in a circle and rub two pieces of dry, spongy wood together, one after another, until the wood took fire.

We hunted in company a great deal, though it was a common thing for a boy to set out for the woods quite alone, and he usually enjoyed himself fully as much. Our game consisted mainly of small birds, rab-

bits, squirrels and grouse. Fishing, too, occupied much of our time. We hardly ever passed a creek or a pond without searching for some signs of fish. When fish were present, we always managed to get some. Fish-lines were made of wild hemp, sinew or horse-hair. We either caught fish with lines, snared or speared them, or shot them with bow and arrows. In the fall we charmed them up to the surface

by gently tickling them with a stick and quickly threw them out. We have sometimes dammed the brooks and driven the larger fish into a willow basket made for that purpose.

It was part of our hunting to find new and strange things in the woods. We examined the slightest sign of life; and if a bird had scratched the leaves off the ground, or a bear dragged up a root for his morning

meal, we stopped to speculate on the time it was done. If we saw a large old tree with some scratches on its bark, we concluded that a bear or some raccoons must be living there. In that case we did not go any nearer than was necessary, but later reported the incident at home. An old deer-track would at once bring on a warm discussion as to whether it was the track of a buck or a doe.



Charles Russell, *Crow Indians Hunting Elk* (detail), c.1887  
Opposite: Roland W. Reed, *The Landmark*, 1912



Whenever, in the course of the daily hunt, the red hunter comes upon a scene that is strikingly beautiful and sublime—a black thunder-cloud with the rainbow's glowing arch above the mountain; a white waterfall in the heart of a green gorge; a vast prairie tinged with the blood-red of sunset—he pauses for an instant in the attitude of worship. He sees no need for setting apart one day in seven as a holy day, since to him all days are God's.



### WILDERNESS COOKING

It became a necessary part of our education to learn to prepare a meal while out hunting. It is a fact that most Indians will eat the liver and some other portions of large animals raw, but they do not eat fish or birds uncooked. Neither will they eat a frog, or an eel. On our boyish hunts, we often went on until we found ourselves a long way from our camp, when we would kindle a fire and roast a part of our game.

Generally we broiled our meat over the coals on a stick. We roasted some of it over the open fire. But the best way to cook fish and birds is in the ashes, under a big fire. We take the fish fresh from the

creek or lake, have a good fire on the sand, dig in the sandy ashes and bury it deep. The same thing is done in case of a bird, only we wet the feathers first. When it is done, the scales or feathers and skin are stripped off whole, and the delicious meat retains all its juices and flavor. We pulled it off as we ate, leaving the bones undisturbed.

Our people had also a method of boiling without pots or kettles. A large piece of tripe was thoroughly washed and the ends tied, then suspended between four stakes driven into the ground and filled with cold water. The meat was then placed in this novel receptacle and boiled by means of the addition of red-hot stones.



Sioux man cooking meat by throwing heated stones into a buffalo-stomach container



Above: Blackfoot cookery and smoking meat  
Right: Sioux man cooking meat in buffalo-stomach



ONE BULL, ASPHAWER SITTIN  
COOKING BEEF MONTANA 1870

### AN INDIAN GIRL'S TRAINING

The Indian mother was the spiritual teacher of the child, as well as its tender nurse, and she brought its developing soul before the "Great Mystery" as soon as she was aware of its coming. At the age of five to eight years, she turned her boy over to his father for manly training, and to the grandparents for traditional instruction, but the girl child remained under her close and thoughtful supervision. She preserved man from soul-killing materialism by herself owning what few possessions they had, and thus brand-



The young girls assisted their mothers in all things in order to become the owner of their own homes at the time of their marriages

ing possession as feminine. The movable home was hers, with all its belongings, and she ruled there unquestioned. She was, in fact, the moral salvation of the race; all virtue was entrusted to her, and her position was recognized by all. It was held in all gentleness and discretion, under the rule that no woman could talk much or loudly until she became a grandmother.

The young maiden has not only the experience of her mother and grandmother, and the accepted rules of her people for a guide, but she humbly seeks to learn a lesson from ants, bees, spiders, beavers, and badgers. She studies the family life of the birds, so exquisite in its emotional intensity and its patient devotion, until she seems to feel the universal mother-heart beating in her own breast. In due time the child takes of his own accord the attitude of prayer, and speaks reverently of the Powers. He thinks that he is a blood brother to all living creatures, and the storm wind is to him a messenger of the "Great Mystery."

Orphans and the aged are invariably cared for, not only by their next of kin, but by the whole clan. It is the loving parent's pride to have his daughters visit the unfortunate and the helpless, carry them food, comb their hair, and mend their garments. A girl who failed in her charitable duties was held to be unworthy of the name.

Oesedah was my beautiful younger cousin. Perhaps none of my early playmates are more vividly remembered than is this little maiden. The name given her by a noted medicine-man was Makah-oesetopah-win. It means The-four-corners-of-the-earth. As she was rather small, the abbreviation was considered more appropriate, hence Oesedah became her common name.



The way that young girls play with dolls to imitate their mothers has never changed

Piegan play tipi



Sioux doll



Katie Blue Thunder, Brule Dakota



Crow girl with doll in cradle board



Girls with toy tipis and dolls, Unknown Cheyenne

teacher and chaperon. Such knowledge as my grandmother deemed suitable to a maiden was duly impressed upon her susceptible mind. Oesedah was my companion at home; and when I returned from my play at evening, she would have a hundred questions ready for me to answer. Some of these were questions concerning our everyday life, and others were more difficult problems which had suddenly dawned upon her active mind. Whatever had occurred to interest her during the day was immediately repeated for my benefit.

There were certain questions upon which Oesedah held me to be authority, and asked with the hope of increasing her little store of knowledge. I occasionally referred to little Oesedah in the same manner, and I always accepted her explanation of any matter upon which I had been advised to consult her, because I knew the



This young maiden carries a spoon made from a buffalo horn in her hand

source of her wisdom. In this simple way we were made to be teachers of one another.

We also had many curious wild pets. There were young foxes, bears, wolves, raccoons, fawns, buffalo calves and birds of all kinds, tamed by various boys. My pets were different at different times.

We were once very short of provisions in the winter time. My uncle, our only means of support, was sick; and besides, we were separated from the rest of the tribe and in a region where there was little game of any kind. Oesedah had a pet squirrel, and as soon as we began to economize our food she gave portions of her allowance to her pet.

At last we were reduced very much, and the prospect of obtaining anything soon being gloomy, my grandmother reluctantly suggested that the squirrel should be killed



Sioux woman plucks quills from a porcupine skin. Women softened and dyed the quills before they used them to decorate clothing.

for food. Thereupon my little cousin cried, and said: "Why cannot we all die alike wanting? The squirrel's life is as dear to him as ours to us," and clung to it. Fortunately, relief came in time to save her pet.



A woman preparing a buffalo hide

### THE MAIDEN'S FEAST

It was a custom of the Plains Indians to hold peaceful meetings in summer, at which times they would vie with one another in friendliness and generosity. Each family would single out a family of another tribe as special guests of honor. Valuable horses and richly adorned garments were freely given at the feasts and

dances. During these intertribal reunions the contests between the tribes were recalled and their events rehearsed, the dead heroes on both sides receiving special tributes of honor.

There were many peculiar customs among the Indians of an earlier period, some of which tended to strengthen the character of the people and preserve their purity. Perhaps the most unique of these

was the annual "feast of maidens." The casual observer would scarcely understand the full force and meaning of this ceremony.

The last one that I ever witnessed was given at Fort Ellis, Manitoba, about the year 1871. In this spot there was a reunion of all the renegade Sioux on the one hand and of the Assiniboines and Crees, the Canadian tribes, on the other. They were friendly. The matter was not formally arranged, but it

was usual for all the tribes to meet here in the month of July.

When circumstances are favorable, the Indians are the happiest people in the world. There were entertainments every single day, which everybody had the fullest opportunity to see and enjoy. If anything, the poorest profited the most by these occasions, because a feature in each case was the giving away of wealth to the needy in



Blood, Piegan, and Sarsi encampment, c.1900

honor of the event. At any public affair, involving the pride and honor of a prominent family, there must always be a distribution of valuable presents.

One bright summer morning, while we were still at our meal of jerked buffalo meat, we heard the herald of the *Wahpeton* band upon his calico pony as he rode around our circle.

“White Eagle’s daughter, the maiden Red Star, invites all the maidens of all the tribes to come and partake of her feast. All pure maidens are invited. Red Star also invites the young men to be present, to see that no unworthy maiden should join in the feast.”

The herald soon completed the rounds of the different camps, and it was not long before the girls began to gather in great numbers. This particular feast was looked upon as a semi-sacred affair. It would be



Two Crow girls

desecration for any to attend who was not perfectly virtuous. Hence it was regarded as an opportune time for the young men to satisfy themselves as to who were the virtuous maids of the tribe.

There were apt to be surprises before the end of the day. Any young man was permitted to challenge any maiden whom he knew to be unworthy. But woe to him who could not prove his case. It meant little short of death to the man who endeavored to disgrace a woman without cause.

The young boys had a similar feast of their own, in which the eligibles were those who had never spoken to a girl in the way of courtship. It was considered ridiculous so to do before attaining some honor as a warrior, and the novices prided themselves greatly upon their self control.

From the various camps the girls came singly or in groups, dressed in bright-colored calicoes or in heavily fringed and beaded buckskin. Their smooth cheeks and the central part of their glossy hair was touched with vermilion.

The maidens’ circle was formed about a cone shaped rock which stood upon its base. This was painted red. Beside it two new arrows were lightly stuck into the ground. This is a sort of altar, to which each maiden comes before taking her assigned place in the circle, and lightly touches first the stone and then the arrows. By this oath she declares her purity.

There was never a more gorgeous assembly of the kind than this one. The day was perfect.

The whole population of the region had assembled, and the maidens came shyly into the circle. The simple ceremonies observed prior to the serving of the food were in



Lizzie Bear Foot, Dakota

progress, when among a group of *Wahpeton* Sioux young men there was a stir of excitement. All the maidens glanced nervously toward the scene of the disturbance. Soon a tall youth emerged from the throng of spectators and advanced toward the circle. Every one of the chaperons glared at him as if to deter him from his purpose. But with a steady step he passed them by and approached the maidens’ circle.

At last he stopped behind a pretty Assiniboine maiden of good family and said:

“I am sorry, but, according to custom, you should not be here.”

The girl arose in confusion, but she soon recovered her self-control.

“What do you mean?” she demanded, indignantly. “Three times you have come to court me, but each time I have refused to listen to you. I turned my back upon you. Twice I was with my friend Mashtinna. She can tell the people that this is true. The third time I had gone for water when you intercepted me and begged me to stop and listen. I refused because I did not know you. My chaperon, Makatopawee, knows that I was gone but a few minutes. I never saw you anywhere else.”

The young man was unable to answer this unmistakable statement of facts, and it became apparent that he had sought to revenge himself for her repulse.

“Woo! woo! Carry him out!” was the order of the chief of the Indian police, and the audacious youth was hurried away into the nearest ravine to be chastised.

The young woman who had thus established her good name returned to the circle, and the feast was served. The “maidens’ song” was sung, and four times they danced in a ring around the altar. Each maid as she departed once more took her oath to remain pure until she should meet her husband.



Red Fish's daughter, Sioux