- Discusses marriage customs.
We fought with the Sarcee until we nearly wiped them out. Our enemies were the Blackfeet, Blood, Peigan, Crow, Cree Talkers. These last would have some words the same as in Cree but they would mean different things. They lived southwest of the Crow (Arapaho?). The first time I knew of a fight was when I was very young. I was riding in a travois and heard the young men yelling.

In my vision I saw all kinds of people, white, Blackfeet, gambling with lead shot. That's why I wore two of these shot around my neck for a long time. They wore out and broke off but I am going to make a new necklace.

There is only one Cree reserve in the States. The chief there was a Soto, asin waun sis, "Rocky Boy" (really Stone Child). He has died. On that reserve there are Stonies, Sotos, and
Cree. My brothers went down there after the Rebellion. I was the only one who stayed up here.

Marriage:

I didn't get married for a long, long time. Then the young girls did not wish to get married soon. In my young days, the Indian way of life was this.

Suppose two men had a boy and girl. The girl's father would see that the boy was worthy and would also judge the young man by the character of his father. He would bring some good horses over to the boy's father and they would arrange the match. It also happened the other way around. The boy's father would bring horses to the father of the girl. But it was very seldom that a man had to ask for a wife. Young men were not anxious to marry in the old days.

When a young couple were about to be married, the girl's parents would give her some mares and make a new tipi which they would pitch near the camp of the boy's people. A man was never finished with giving horses to his parents-in-law. Whenever he would bring horses back from a raid, he would give some to his brother-in-law or to his parents-in-law.

In the old days we never saw a young boy or a young girl get mixed up (i.e. sexually) the way they do now. We never let a woman out of sight. If the women had to go into the bush for wood or something, the Worthy Men would ride out to escort them. They would not talk to the girls at all but if they should happen to like one of the girls, they would ride a little behind her. The girl would come home and tell her parents about it. If her parents liked the boy, they would move the girl and a new tipi over to where the boy was camping. That is how I came to be married to a Soto girl. I never talked to her but once I rode behind her and that is how I showed her my choice.

Before I was married I refused four different girls. I had no father and so I would have to live with the girl's parents. There I would have had to be a servant. It often happened that Worthy Men would want to marry their daughters off to boys who had no home of their own for this reason. My grandfather warned me several times that the girls were offered to me just so that I would be a servant and that is why I refused.

Sometimes a young man and a young woman would be stuck on each other and the parents would not consent. They would run off and settle down among some other tribe. When they came back with a family and the parents saw that they had really settled down and were making a home, everything would be O.K.

When a girl would be offered, she would come and sit beside the boy while her parents were putting up the new tipi. She would give the boy a pair of specially made, very handsome, new moccasins. If the boy refused to take the moccasins that meant
that he didn't want the girl. Then the parents of the girl would take down the tipi and go off. Sometimes the girl would leave the moccasins behind.

When I took my wife I was already a kihtco-ckinigiu. I was living with my future brother-in-law.

If the boy took the moccasins, his father would give him a little talk on how to carry himself in matrimony, i.e. to be good and kind to all the girl's relatives. The old man would say, "Now you are married," and the boy would go into the new tipi with his wife. No pipe would be offered nor any further ceremony undergone.

At first the young couple would follow the man's father. After a while the old man would tell the young fellow to go with his wife's people for a few years.

Between those who were related by marriage, there was a special kind of politeness, (illegible Indian word).

A man could never talk to his mother-in-law. Nor could he talk to his father-in-law except in one case. If a man presented his father-in-law with a scalp after a raid, he could talk to him from then on. A woman was very friendly and close to her mother-in-law but she might never talk with her father-in-law.

If there were an emergency, say the Blackfeet were coming and there was no one around to interpret for her, she might turn her back and tell the old man the news. It was a very serious thing for a man to speak to his daughter-in-law. Even if he did it accidentally and it became known, everyone would laugh at him and he would be very much ashamed.

These restrictions extended to a man's brothers and a woman's sisters. A man's sisters may speak to his mother-in-law but not to his father-in-law. A woman's brothers may not speak to her mother-in-law or her father-in-law. Between a man's brothers and his wife's sisters there was a joking relationship, and if one of these sisters were offered to one of the brothers, he could not refuse her.

A girl must never speak to her own brothers, and a man must never talk to his sisters. When your sisters are very young you could kiss and fondle them, but when they are about ten you must quit. Your sisters look after your moccasins and clothes but they never talk to you. If necessary you might say one or two words to her but she would never reply. Thus if you come home hungry and no one is there but your sister, you could let her know that you wanted to eat. She would prepare the food and go out of the tipi. If there was another girl there she could stay until you finished eating. The first time I ever talked with my sisters was when I visited the States and they were very old.

Wives:
If a man was a kihtco-ckiniaiu and had a wife and two children he would have people eating in his tipi all the time and his wife could not serve them all and take care of the children and do all the other work. Then the man would say, "How would you like to have a helper?" If she said yes, they then both would pick out some likely girl. He would ask her again, "Would you be kind to her?" She would say, "Yes, that's why I want her." Then he would go and get the other woman.

But the first wife was always the boss. With two women at work, they could prepare many hides and furs. When the man went to the Hudson's Bay store, he would buy equally for two women and tie it all up together. When he brought the goods home, his first wife would divide the stuff in half.

Sometimes a man would marry his wife's sister but this never turned out as well as when he married someone not related to his first wife. An old man died recently -- Yellow Head, esa-wiskigwau, who married seven sisters. His mother-in-law liked him and kept giving her daughters to him. She was a widow and wanted her daughters all together in one camp so that she wouldn't have to travel about. He could have refused her but she told her daughters to urge him to accept. Whenever he went to the Hudson's Bay stores he would bring back a lot of clothing for his wives. He did not even have a shirt for himself trying to keep all his women. He had only seven children out of his seven wives. He couldn't impregnate them fast enough. In the old days only the ogihtcitau would have more than two wives.

It was a not a man's abilities as a hunter that determined the number of wives he had, but upon the arrangements he made with his wife. Both a man and his wife paid for the second wife. Young girls would not want to be married to a man that was of no account. They wanted to marry a Worthy Man because they know that there would be no quarrelling -- he would stop it.

If a man wanted to take a third wife, his first would usually agree but his second would often say no. That usually would settle it. Sometimes a man would marry a third wife without the permission of his first two but they would never be friendly towards her. The third and fourth wives would be friendly.

My mother's brother had three wives. The last was a girl who had been adopted when a child. His first two wives didn't like her and made her work very hard. But later the first two died and she was left as the only wife.

My father had two wives, my mother being the second wife. They got along well and came from different places. When my father died they separated to their original homes. My stepmother was of the nutimiiyiniwi. My mother came from the east, from this side of Moose Mt. Her people were called by three different names: Nahknowimiupwatuk -- Soto Stony; Kewaskasimiuk -- Claw people; Atimctukayuk -- Dog Penis
people.

These people are now scattered. They sold their original reserve and moved into the Moose Mt. Reserve. Their chief was White Bear. After my father died, I was taken down there. I settled here three years before the Rebellion (1881). The people in the east used both the Soto and the Stony languages. Sometimes they would speak the one, sometimes the other. That is how it is that I understand the Stony language.

I also knew Blackfoot. The Cree and Blackfeet made peace the summer after Sitting Bull had a big fight in the States. An old priest, Father Lacombe, travelled from the Cree to the Blackfeet and told them not to fight any more. On account of him and the Hudson's Bay company, they made peace. Once some Cree attacked a Blackfoot camp when the priest was staying and he ran out naked.

After the peace was made the tribes beyond the Blackfeet would still fight with the Cree. Then the Blackfoot and Cree together would go over the mountains to fight. Later also the Rapids people became well acquainted with the Cree and always camped with them.

N-tc-teu only means good friend among the Cree. It is especially used by the Buck Cree. Whenever they come to see me they say, "N-tc-teu you are still alive."

Names:

The only way names are passed on among us is when an old man or woman gives his name to his child or grandchild. Then the giver is called by his other name.

When a child is born its parents prepare food, get some cloth, fill a pipe, and call in an old man. Many people come in to watch. They tell the old man what they want and give him the cloth and pipe. The old man lights the pipe then puts it down and talks to God and to the Spirit that taught him to give names. After he has talked he sings one song. Then he says, "Bring the baby here." He takes the child in his arms and gives it the name and begs God to give it good luck so that it may grow up and become old. He asks the Spirit that gave him the power to give that name to be the guardian of that child. Then the child is passed around the people until it reaches its mother. The men and women, as they hold the child, express a wish for the baby.

If a child gets sick and is about to die, the parents get another old man to give a name to the child. This may happen twice so that a man may have three names. When a child gets a new name, it does not abandon the other names, and may be called by any of the names. Old women may give names to children as well as old men. Girls' names have a distinctive feminine ending.
A grown man cannot change his name when he is sick. The best thing to do then is to give him a dose of salts. I know of only one case where a man changed his name. One who was the leader of a war party gave his name to his grandson before he left, iskahacis, "Water Bailer." He took the name kiaikesake-weu, "Always Shouting." He gave his first name to his grandson because he had had good luck with that name and wanted to pass the good fortune on to the child. The second name he gave himself.

These names were given in dream visions. There was no particular honor attached to giving a name. They were awed that it was up to them to beg a good life for the child. They were awful scared then. The name of a dead man could not be given to a child. It was all right to ask a man for his name.

Sometimes children would give each other nicknames in play and they would stick. I had a very good friend -- Bad Thunder. When we were small we used to call each other Nikowat. We'd say, "Nikowat, let's go somewhere." This is not a Cree word at all and means nothing. But it stuck to my friend and that is what he was always called. He was killed by the Peigan and the battle is known as "The time Nikowat was killed." Also nicknames characteristic of a person when a child would stick -- so the name "Bed Wetter," for a big chief.

Sometimes when a woman is pregnant, an old man or an old woman would predict the baby's sex. If it turned out to be right, the old one would be sent for to name the child as soon as it is born.

You call your wife by her name. Relatives are addressed either by their names or by relationship terms, mostly the latter.

Friends:

Little boys get to know each other and play with each other when the people are together in a big encampment. They become close friends and when the camp breaks up and the various bands separate, one of the boys takes the other with him. After a while they change to the other boy's family. This good friendship is called niwitoo-wa-guu. In Blackfoot it is nigweme.

In this kind of friendship you always go around with your friend. You take your partner's parents as your own and you do not talk to his sisters. If one friend admires something that his partner owns, he gives it to him right away. When they grew up and went off on war trips, if one was killed the other usually was killed also. The same thing exists between women.

If one boy dies, his friend's parents send the surviving boy to the parents of the dead youngster, and he lives there for a time. From then on, that boy has these two homes which are equally his own. My grandfather told me of this custom but today it is very little followed.
War Parties For Vengeance:

When a big chief sends tobacco around to recruit a war party he does not intend to fight -- only to steal horses, and fight if necessary. So it is with smaller raiding parties, they fight only if they have to. But sometimes war parties are made up to avenge a death. If a relative of mine has been killed by some tribe and my heart is sore at those people, I go around and cry that the men should help me, they should go out and get scalps from that tribe. This is called "making a big cry." When a party like that was made the women would go along to cook for the men. I know of three men who raised the cry, my grandfather was one of them. My grandmother often told me the story. This is my grandmother's story.

Southeast of Saskatoon there is a place called Pimitaumahtan -- Sand Hill. My grandmother's oldest and youngest sons were hunting there once and were killed by the Rapids people. The leaves were just beginning to turn color. She was very sad and told her husband to cry for help all over. The old man said, "I'll go." He gathered all the chiefs in a tipi and told them about it.

One of the chiefs lent a big pipe stem to the old man. These were decorated very nicely, were about a yard long. They were carried about just like the priests carry Bibles around. As soon as he got it he began to cry aloud. That was at a place called Stony Hill, just this side of Carlton. The chiefs told him to go to the east and to the west. He went west first. They went three together. The old lady had to go along and they took another man to pray for them. She carried the stem across her back and whenever they would come to a camp they would go all around crying the news and finally would go into the chief's tipi. She would go right up to the chief, put her hands on his head, and cry her story. If the chief were going to go, if he was going to take the pipe, he would curse my grandmother, saying, "What the hell do you mean coming around like this to take all our best young men and get them killed? You are only a lousy old squaw and not worth having our men shot."

They would say this as they were cutting tobacco on a board. Then she would know that they were going and would hang the pipe stem on the chief's back rest.

From the west she went east as far as Indian Head. All the chiefs took the pipe. In the east she got the man who was the very most powerful in his dreams to lead the party. His name was kinikas, "Pointed." When she came back with the East people, the West people were already waiting. There was a whole big bunch of them.

The old lady had an adopted daughter that she had raised -- a good, hard-working girl. She gave the girl to kinikas. The girl led the expedition. On her back offering cloths were
tied. She walked ahead and kinikas told her where to go. When they camped, she slept alone ahead of the camp. On the fourth night out, kinikas sang and he said that they would have very good luck if the people would not be rash and raise the enemy alarm.

The ogihtcitau headed the bunch and kept them together. On the eighth night kinikas sang again. Then the scouts came back and reported that the Rapids people were just ahead. Kinikas sang again and said that the Cree would ambush the Rapids people as they were pursuing our scouts.

So it was. But the expedition had to slap the horses' faces so that they would not dash forward and reveal the ambush. It was the most successful battle the Cree had every had. Some were wounded but none were killed.

Before the party had left, the old lady had asked her full brother, who was a chief, to go. He refused and pulled out with ten tipis. But his men stayed with the war party. The other chiefs told her to unwrap the stem and to lay it before her brother. She did but he only went around it. This chief wouldn't support all the women so he had to come back to the camp. When the victorious war party returned they all laughed at and mocked this chief who was so ashamed that he kept within his tipi. The other chiefs told my grandmother to sing her song and she sang before him:

"When I asked you to go you refused me,  
When I told you that I was poor  
But I tried to go  
I got to the Sweet Grass Hills when it was good. 
When I told you this you were sitting here at home.  
You are still sitting here.  
At last I got to the Sweet Grass Hills,  
And you are still sitting here at home."

Afterwards that song was sung by the women on the return of a successful war party.

I myself never saw a big Cree battle like that. It happened only four times that I know of. The old lady was my father's mother.

This was called (illegible Indian word), "Crying to a Person."

In this same fight, my grandmother's nephew was trying to get a horse and was lying on his belly. A Rapid jumped up, ran up to him, and tried to shoot him with a bow. But he couldn't manage to string his arrow and so he hit the boy across the back with the bow. The boy spit blood and the Rapid jumped into a trench. From then he was called "Strike-Him-on-the-Back." He had two other names, "Rotted Scalp," and nisake-gipwemetas, "Loose Leggings on Thigh." He evidently had no dream name.

Some men would have no dream name because there would be no old
man around when they were born. This happened when a group of young people went into the forest for furs.

I got my name — Fine Day — from Strike-Him-on-the-Back. My other name was o-mikis, "Has Little Sores."

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