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SASKATCHEWAN
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Gives three versions of how the Indians acquired horses.
- Discusses the making of various weapons and utensils.

You don't seem to believe me when I say that there were very many Indians in the old days. My mother used to tell me of a time when many tribes gathered somewhere west of Saskatoon. An old Stony, Minagos, used to tell of this also. There were so many people there that they had to have four different Sundances going on at the same time. The tipis stretched as

far as the eye could see. There must have been five or six miles of camp.

I then asked Fine Day for some details of the horse culture. He swung into the following mythological accounts.

The only thing I can tell you about that is what I heard from the old people about how we first got horses.

In the beginning there were just a few Indians and to them the dogs were given for use. These dogs looked like timber wolves and if the people were hungry they could eat one of the dogs. In those days there was someone watching and caring for the Indians all the time and that was manito. Once he told them that since they were increasing in number, he would give them bigger dogs. That was the last time he was to appear to the people -- everything was finished and the people were now able to work for themselves. He also told them that they must die sometime else they would have no knowledge.

After the manito left, the people had someone who was like a chief to them. After a few years had passed this chief remembered what the manito had told them. They then were living far in the east and manito had pointed to the west as the direction whence the big dogs were to come. The chief gathered all his men and set out to find the big dogs.

At last they came to a camp and saw the big dogs feeding all around. But the people there spoke a different language and they could not understand each other. Since the big dogs had been promised them, the travellers began to round them up. The ayahtaiyiniwuk resented this and began to shoot their arrows. In those days they never saw or knew of iron and used stone for their arrow heads. Many Cree were killed but the others got away with the horses and had them from then on. I am trying to tell you what I have heard and no more.

After we made peace with the Blackfeet we used to visit them and have feasts and ask each other questions. Just as you are doing so did I try to find out all kinds of things. One of the questions I asked was where they got their horses. There was only one answer. An old Blackfoot chief called Sipu-wahki-aigau, "Big Crowfoot," used to tell this story. Some of the Cree could understand Blackfoot -- "Wolf Skin" and Niuimiska:n, "Corporal(?)". This is what they said.

Long ago, so far back that we don't know these people at all, a chief had four sons. The youngest was a light complected [complexioned], fine looking young man. His brothers were married and he used to sleep in his brothers' tipis as well as in his father's.

It happened that one of his brothers had gone out looking for a lost dog when the young man came up to his tipi. He asked his sister-in-law, "Where is my brother?" "He is looking for a lost dog," she answered, "sit down and have your dinner." "No, it doesn't matter," he said and turned to go away. She caught

hold of him and tried to drag him in but he got away.

He was ashamed of what she had done and didn't go back to the tipi for a long time. Meanwhile the woman had told her husband that the young fellow had made advances on her. Weeks later the boy came into his brother's tipi. His brother was fixing arrows and when he saw the boy he threw an arrow at him, hit him in the chest, and made him bleed.

The young fellow didn't say anything to anybody but headed south. Soon he was hungry and finally came to an old tipi. In it there was an old woman who said, "You have been a long time coming. Now stay a while." She took out a tanned hide made into a food cloth. She just spread it out and there was food on it. After he had eaten she gave him the cloth and told him to spread it whenever he was hungry and he would have enough food. She said, "Now you must go to your other grandmother. You will reach her tipi between noon and sunset. No matter if you run or walk, you will get there at the same time."

When the young man left the old lady, he made up his mind that he would get there sooner. He ran and ran. He got hungry and spread the cloth and ate. He ran again and when the sun was midway between noon and sunset he saw a tipi. He went in and the old lady there said, "It took you quite a while to get here. Quite a while ago it is that I heard that your brother and your sister-in-law made you ashamed." After he had eaten the old lady said, "You will have to stay here two nights. You are going to a difficult place and I want to teach you something." Two nights passed. Before the boy left she told him that he was on his way to his grandfather but the way was hard and before he got there he would come to another grandmother. She told him that it didn't matter if he went fast or slow he would get to the other grandmother's place at just the same time that he had arrived before.

The next morning the boy left and this time he went very slowly, lingering all along the way, just to see what would happen. And at the time he should arrive he went over a hill and saw the tipi. The old woman then told him the same thing about his brother and sister-in-law and his being late.

(But I forgot to tell you about the cloth). The first grandmother told him to hide the cloth when he came to the second grandmother. The second grandmother gave him a cane and told him that the third grandmother would show him how to use it.

The third grandmother told him to stay three nights and she would teach him how to save himself for [from?] his grandfather. She told him, "When you reach your grandfather he will ask if you have seen me. You must deny it and he will believe you." She gave him a little owl skin and a strip of leather women wear during menstruation. She told him to hide the owl [skin] and to wear the leather next to his skin. If he lived to reach his house again, "A young girl will come out to meet you. After that you will not have to go after women; they will come to you. I am giving you this because you are very much

ashamed of what your sister-in-law did. So when you go home, a woman will go to bed with you." She also told him that he would have to go to yet another grandmother. "She will tell you how to go after your grandfather. If you go fast or slow you will get to her tipi just between noon and sunset."

This time he believed it and just jogged along. When the time came he saw the tipi. The first grandmother's tipi had been small, the next larger, the next still larger, and this one was biggest of all. This fourth grandmother too, told the boy that he had been a long time in coming. She told him to stay four nights. "I am going to tell you how to save yourself for no one has ever got there and come back alive." She told him what the cane was for and to place the owl's hide on his chest with the head up. She said, "You will reach your grandfather at noon -- no sooner and no later. Near his tipi there is a little hill. Sit down there. He will call to you but don't come. At his fourth call he will come up and invite you in. Then you can go. He will ask you if you saw us -- deny it. When he invites you in the tipi let him take the lead and as he bends over to enter, lift his shirt with your cane and you will see what kind of a man he is. He will keep you in his tipi for four nights. If you fall asleep he will kill you. When he thinks that you are asleep he will ask you if you are sleeping. Then the owl head will answer, "I love to hear your stories." Inside the tipi there will be all kinds of saddles and saganapi ready to be used. There will be a new saddle and rope and a red pipe near the door and he will try to make you sit there. But don't. Sit next to the oldest saddle and rope.

(Note here how disconnected Fine Day's account is -- perhaps due in part to Pooyak's slow and inaccurate interpreting.)

The grandfather told him that he would have to spend four days and nights with him and he would teach him how to get along in the future. "But you must not fall asleep." Sometimes the old man would smoke and tell him that he will be one of the head chiefs if he lives to get home.

He did not sleep the first two nights but on the third he would doze off all the time and wake to hear the old man still talking. Toward morning on the third night he fell fast asleep but the owl's head talked for him. When the old man would ask, "Are you sleeping?" it would answer, "No, I am enjoying your story," and at the same time scratch the young man and wake him up.

At last the four nights were over and the old man did not know that the boy had been sleeping for two nights. The fourth grandmother had told him that the old man would urge him to take the best saddle and saganapi but that he should instead choose the oldest one. So it was. The old man said to him, "Pick a saddle for yourself. Take a good one because a good saddle means a fine horse." And the boy refused it. The old man went around showing the different saddles. But before he came to the last one the boy chose the oldest. "Why," said the

old man, "it's the oldest saddle?" "I like that one," the boy answered.

Then the grandfather gave the boy an eagle bone whistle and told him to blow three blasts and a quick short blast. He did it and then the old man yelled four times. The tipi was near the sea and the boy saw something white flashing in the water and coming up on the shore. Then a horse with a long tail and a long mane came out of the water. The fourth grandmother had warned the boy not to catch and saddle the horse himself. When the horse came up the old man told the boy to catch the horse. "I don't know how," he replied. "I have never seen a horse before." The old man caught the horse. Then he told the boy to put the saddle on. "I don't know how, I've never seen a saddle before." The old man put the saddle on.

Then the old man said, "Now my grandson, you will camp four times before you get home. Do not tie the horse, just let her loose." But when the young man camped he didn't believe it and held the horse's thong. On the fourth night he heard his grandfather yelling, "My boy, your horses are coming." He heard hooves and there were a lot of mares. He turned the horses loose. The old man had told him not to bring the horses right into the camp. "Tell your father to bring out red sashes

and pheasant's feathers and have everybody burn sweetgrass." He did this and when he brought the horses up to the camp, they smelled the sweetgrass. Only then did they begin to eat for all the time they were on the journey they hadn't eaten. The feathers were put in their tails and the red sashes around their necks. After he was finished decorating the horses he distributed them to the people. He gave two each to his father and brothers. But to the brother who had hit him he gave none.

After the horses were all given out even to the old men and women, he invited everybody in to tell them why he had gone off. When they all were gathered he said, "When I came to look for my brother, my sister-in-law was there. She asked me to stay. I didn't because I was ashamed. When I did come to see my brother he was peeling saskatoon sticks to make arrows. He struck me. I was ashamed and went off."

After he told his story he gave two mares to that brother. The brother stood up before the crowd and said, "My wife told me a different story. She said that my brother had come into the tipi for her. I am very glad to hear that it was all a lie and I am sorry for what I did. Now there will be no enmity between brothers. This is what we will do to women like that." And he took her out and killed her.

Big Crowfoot said that was why the Blackfeet and Crow always killed adulterous women.

These first horses they didn't have very long. They ran away. The people tracked them to a lake but the tracks seemed to go right into the water and they never saw those horses again. The lake is called Katonuhau:saga:higun. It is in the Peigan

country but is called after some people who live near there -- Katonuhewuk (Kutenai?).

It happened that a young man and his wife were out trapping beaver. When he came back at night once he found his wife with her hair combed and her face painted. He thought that there was some young man around. The next day he watched his camp. His wife came out and looked around and then went in. She came out all dressed up and painted. She went to the lake and sat on a log that extended two arm lengths into the water. All at once he saw a man coming out of the water and took his wife and the two went back into the water. The man waited and waited to see if she would come out but she didn't and he concluded that she had been drowned. But when he came home at night she was there.

The next day he watched again. She came out again, looked around, went in, and came out all dressed and painted up. She went down to the lake, the young man came up out of the water and the two went in.

The husband went to look after his traps. At sundown he came home and asked who the man was. His wife told him, "It is a beaver. He has been my sweetheart ever since we came to the lake. I have gone in three times already -- tomorrow will be the last. I will come out with a big pipe stem. You will be a big chief and we will go across the mountains. We will find a lot of horses there that the beaver has given us."

The winter came on and in the spring the young man told the people. They travelled with dogs. Across a river they came upon many horses. They got them and since then we have always had horses.

This story comes from the Blackfeet. I was there when the Blackfeet told the story.

We got our horses by stealing them from the Blackfeet. When the horses were run hard, we would take them to the lake, splash water over them and turn them loose. In the winter when we chased the buffalo we used a fast running horse. After the hunt we would dismount and lead them home. We would select a place for camp that afforded shelter for horses and men. In the summer we were never at peace and we were always afraid of the raids of the Blackfeet. We would picket the best horses to a stake driven close to the tipi.

When we were short of rawhide rope, we would make a rope from the mane of a buffalo. First we would spread the hair out and twist a bit of it into a strand. We would have a little stick with a notch or peg on it and to this we would attach the first strand (see original for diagram) here. Rotating the stick with the right hand, we hold the strand between the fingers of the left. After a sizeable strand was completed we would double it over and twist the two into one. This would then be twisted with another 2-strand string into a rope composed of four strands.

Rawhide rope is made in this way. First take the hair off of the hide. Stretch it and then smear it with animal fat (skunk or badger best). Then a fire is built and a tripod placed over it (this tripod is a little larger than the ordinary fire tripods). Two hides are placed over the fire and smoked. Buffalo brains are boiled in water and the mixture, still warm, is spread over the hide, on one side only. Then fresh liver is chopped up fine and spread over the brains. Fold the hide and

leave over night. In the morning unfold it, scrape off the liver and brains. The hide is soft and moist. Work the hide over twisted sinew -- on the prairie a birch or tamarack stake was used. Before the hide dries out the hide in one continuous strip. On the flank and shoulder the hide is thin so cut extra wide there. The ordinary width is half a thumb's length. Tie one end to a stake -- stretch as hard as possible and peg it down. Go over the strip and pare down the wide places. When still damp they are plaited into three or four strand ropes called apihkatewsapi "Braided Rope." At the end it is tied twice. The women made the thongs but the men plaited them.

Rope like this is also made of the bark of the "White Berry Stick" or Buffalo Willow. The bark would be cut off in strips and folded so that it could gradually be unfolded as the rope was being made. This kind of rope had to be wetted every day or else it became brittle and broke easily. All rope is called pi:saganapi. A single thong is sihkpiteiganiapi -- Stretched Rope.

I have never seen basketry made but I often watched my grandmother making boxes of birch bark (of the usual truncated pyramid kind as demonstrated by Fine Day). These were used for all kinds of things -- to carry water in -- berries -- light things of all kinds. They were sewn with certain kinds of roots split fine. Some were made like a baking pan to serve as plates. Bone awls were used to make the holes through which the roots were drawn. Sometimes they were ornamented with porcupine quills colored blue or red. The water boxes were higher than the others. Hot water was not put in them because it softened the bark. Only the women made them. All the Cree women used to make and use these boxes. The women used to get the bark. There is a certain way of cutting the bark down where the grain comes together and stripping it off in one piece.

Once I remember that my grandmother asked my grandfather to get some bark for her. When he brought some home it was full of holes and torn in places. She simply threw it in the fire and went to get some herself. The plate was called waskwaiyagiu, Birch Bark Plate. The pail is called kagwai. Ever since I can remember we used these things. But to boil meat we used copper kettles from the Hudson's Bay Company.

Plates were also made of birch and maple wood. Down in the east there was yet another kind of wood used. The biggest logs were used. A section of log would be cut out and split longitudinally. The outer area on the two halves would be flattened

and the inner plane carved hollow with a knife.

Spoons were made out of the horns of yearling buffalo. The horn is cut out of the carcass with the bone attached. It is boiled until the horn gets soft and the bone can be worked out. A cut is made in the edge of the horn and a stone wedged in, then warmed again and the stone wedged in farther. When it is opened wide enough, the rough edges are trimmed smooth and the horn is ground with a stone and polished with the dull edge of a knife, and rubbed down with the hand. The tip is bent over for a handle.

Half shells of the clam (oyster?) were also used for spoons, called o:sahimagun.

There were also spoons made of wood in the shape of a ladle, called mistikemahguau.

Before the white man came they would boil their meat in this way. They would dig a hole and line it with a fresh hide. Four stones would be needed to boil meat. When the whites came they got copper kettles, knives, and axes. Then they could make wooden dishes and bowls.

We never made canvas [canoes?]. But we did have rafts and bull boats with which to travel in the river.

The raft, mihtua, was made thus. Select two long, dry logs. Lash a crosspiece at each end and two in the middle, about ten feet long. Over this frame, place lighter poles and load cargo. These rafts were loaded with pemmican in the old days and poled down the river to Carlton.

The bull boat, ahpinoai, was made of a number of hides sewn together and stretched over two carved sticks.

According to the story I heard, it was manito who showed us how to make a pipe and stem and what to smoke. In the old days they had no tools but bone and it took a long time to make a pipe. The stems weren't hard to make. A saskatoon stick would be dried, pointed at the end, and used to (?) through maple and high bush cranberry stick.

The stone for the bowls is found under the water. There is some near Battleford and some near here at Eagle Hills. It is soft and may be cut out with a knife. This black stone is called espwa:gona:pisk, "Pipe Stone," and was given to the Cree. There is also a red pipe stone that comes from the ayahtaiyiniwuk.

The sacred pipe stem had no hole through the centre. If a man wanted to kill himself all you had to do was to unwrap the stem

and insert it into the bowl. He would act as though he were smoking it and desist from his former intentions. Unwrapping this stem is one of the hardest things a man can do. There is

much tobacco wrapped around the stem and if a man is short of tobacco he may borrow as much as he can grasp in one hand (i.e. along the strand of twist).

In my day the Cree never planted tobacco but got it from the Hudson's Bay Company. I heard that long ago the Cree planted tobacco for the Sundance. Among the Blackfeet there is a big ceremony when they plant tobacco for a Sundance. They put bird manure on the seeds and have a big feast.

The ayahtaiyiniwuk used the parfleche but the Cree packed their food in draw string bags, mitcimawus.

In my young days, I didn't see very much beadwork. It was mostly porcupine quills that were used. We never used floral designs then -- all patterns were geometric. The floral design came from the halfbreed.

I never have heard of one Indian trading with other tribes or of trade between tribes.

Bows were made of the chokecherry tree. On the outside of the bow, sinew was glued on. This glue was made of the head of a buffalo. First the hair is burnt off and the head is scraped. Then it is boiled until it becomes a glue. The bow was whittled flat on both sides. It was three or four feet in length and two or three inches wide. At each end notches were cut, around which the bow string was tied. The string was made of sinew. The backing of the bow was put on by simply smearing the bow with glue and sticking the sinew on. After it is dry the sinew is trimmed off nicely.

INDEX

INDEX TERM	IH NUMBER	DOC NAME	DISC #	PAGE #
CONTAINERS AND UTENSILS				
-birch bark	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	8
CONTAINERS AND UTENSILS				
-horn	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	9
CONTAINERS AND UTENSILS				
-wood	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	8,9
FOOD				
-preparation of	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	9
HORSES				
-theft of	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	7
PIPES AND SMOKING				
-pipe-making	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	9,10
PIPES AND SMOKING				
-tobacco	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	10
ROPES AND THONGS				
-making of	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	7,8
STORIES AND STORYTELLING (SPECIFIC)				
-how the Blackfoot got horses	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	2-7
STORIES AND STORYTELLING (SPECIFIC)				
-how the Cree got				

horses	IH-MS.43	FINE DAY #4	137	2
WEAPONS				
-bow and arrow	IH-DM.43	FINE DAY #4	137	10