

THE NIMIPU

Nez Perce Origins, Culture

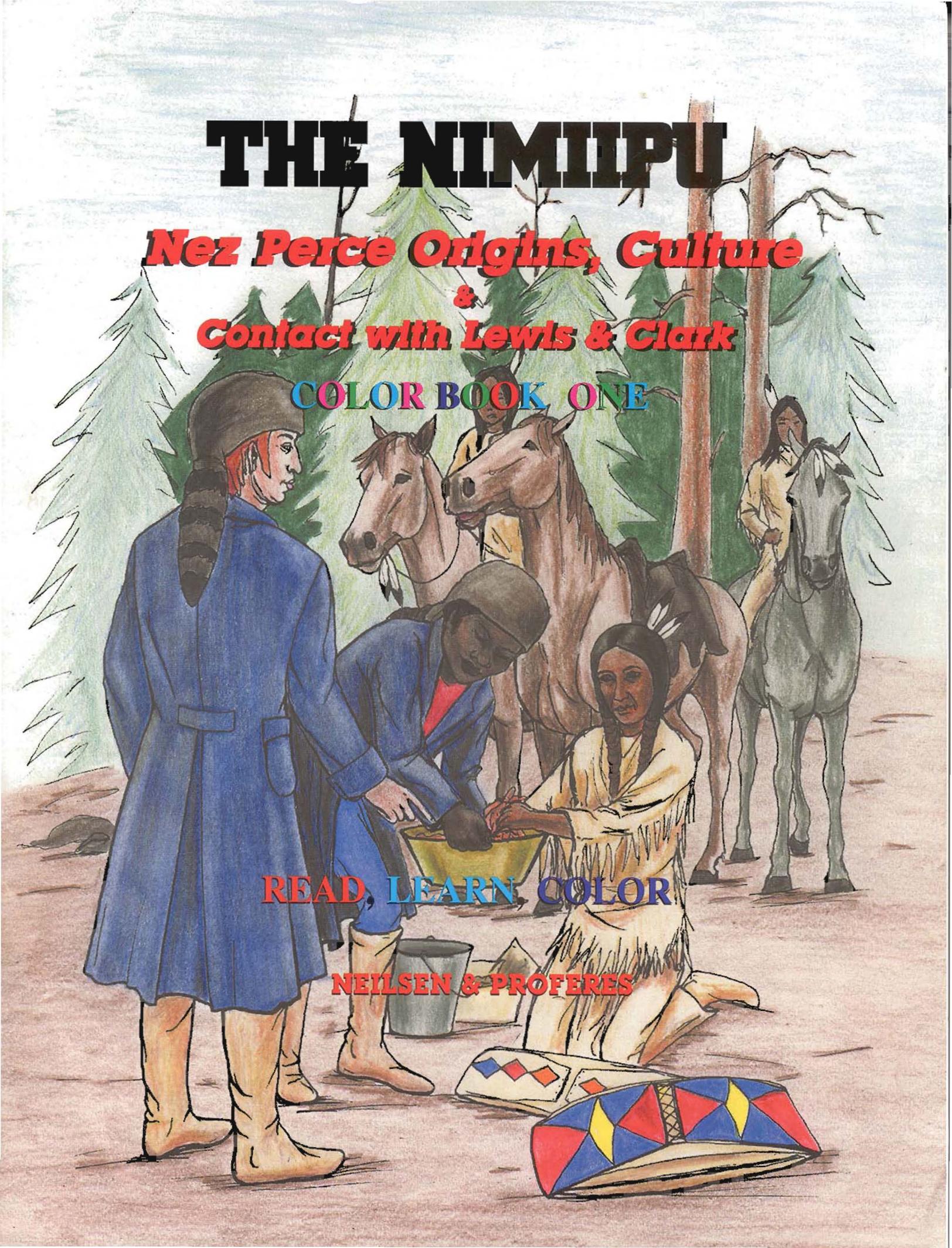
&

Contact with Lewis & Clark

COLOR BOOK ONE

READ, LEARN COLOR

NEILSEN & PROFERES



THE NIMIIPU

*Nez Perce Origins, Culture
&
Contact with Lewis & Clark*

COLOR BOOK ONE

by

NEILSEN & PROFERES



BIRCH HILL BOOKS

Lewiston, Idaho

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Dedication:

To the *NIMIIPU* -- (Nee-mee-poo), the people, past, present, and future, of the Nez Perce Tribe. Especially to all the elders, now gone, who gave Jo Proferes such generous advice and help.

The Nimiipu of today preserve their culture and heritage, but they are as modern as any other Americans -- they also communicate via E-mail, and surf the internet.

Sacred things are just that, sacred, even though they are part of custom and culture. Out of respect for sacred things we did not include any illustrations of sacred places or sacred rituals.

Beliefs that are touched upon in the Nimiipu Color Books are part of Nez Perce culture and are not being promoted in a religious way.

In the early 1970's Allen Slickpoo gave Nez Perce names to a series of 20 museum size oil paintings that told the story of the Nez Perce War of 1877 from the Native American viewpoint. These were the paintings that were to become *The Nez Perce Bicentennial Exhibit*. At that time there was no standardized spelling of the Nez Perce language, spelling was phonetic. The titles which Mr. Slickpoo gave these paintings went on each painting along with my title and signature, in oil, with a small brush. It is much too late to change that.

Except for the title "*Nimiipu*" (Nee-mee-poo), most of the Nez Perce words in this book are spelled the old way. It has been only just recently that there has been a standardized spelling of Nez Perce words, adopted from a dictionary written by a Japanese linguist. Nimiipu is actually spelled "Nimiipuu", but so many Nez Perce, including Horace Axtel, have published works with "Nimiipu" with just one "u" that I decided to do the same at this point in time.

I would like to thank Horace Axtell for his input, "Scottie" Wilfred Scott, and Mrs. Scott, Ann McCormack, and others from the Nez Perce Cultural Committee for their help and suggestions. These people reviewed this book for it's cultural and historic content, and to insure that there was nothing here that is offensive to the Nez Perce.

I would also like to thank Keith Thurkill, U.S. Forest Service, Missouli, Montana and Sandi McFarland, U.S. Forest Service, Orofino, Idaho for their suggestions.

A special thanks to Paul Wapato for his efforts in 2002 to help us get the Nimiipu coloring books into print. Mr. Wapato is President of NPNHTF, Nez Perce National Historical Trail Foundation.

And last, but certainly not least, a special thanks to Its-ee'-ya-ya ye'-yow'-its' and his mate.

Jo Proferes.

The Nimiipu

At Kamiah, Idaho is an ordinary looking pile of rock known as the heart of the monster, Ilts-wau-tsik*,

Ilts-wau-rsik, a great monster, lived here before people were on the earth. He ate smaller animals for food. One day Its-ee-ya-ya (Coyote) thought it was time to stop the monster before he ate all the animals, including himself, so he went to the Wallowa Mountains and tied himself to the three taller peaks with a rawhide rope, then he challenged the monster, "Oh Monster, let us inhale each other!"

Monster raised his head and saw Coyote in the grass. "Oh, it's only you, Coyote. You inhale first, you swallow me."

Coyote tried. He made a great sucking noise in his throat, but Monster didn't move much. "Now you inhale me," he told Monster. But Monster had no idea that Coyote was carrying five flint knives (very sharp ones), a fire starter, and pitch, on his back.

Monster inhaled with a mighty roar. Coyote cut himself loose from the rawhide rope and went flying into Monster's mouth.

As Coyote started down Monster's throat he met Ho-hots (Grizzly Bear), who tried to frighten Coyote by roaring. "You can't scare me!" Coyote told him, and kicked Ho-hots on the nose. That is why bear has a short nose.

Coyote was looking for Monster's heart. Some of the small animals were leading him there when he met Rattlesnake. Rattlesnake coiled and rattled as if to strike. Coyote quickly stomped on his head. That is why Wexpas has a flat head. Finally Coyote found Monster's heart. He took out one of his flint knives and began hacking away at it. First he cut loose a lot of fat, put some pitch on it, then set it on fire. Monster wanted him out, but Coyote just kept hacking at his heart.

Coyote broke four knives before he succeeded in killing Monster. All of the animals managed to get out before Monster died.

"Now I will make human beings," said Coyote. He used his last knife to cut Monster in pieces, and flung each piece far away, and in a different direction. As he threw each piece, he named the tribe it was to become.

When he had finished, Fox said, "You made no tribe here."

Coyote was sorry he had used up all of Monster. Then he noticed there was blood on his paws from Monster's heart. He went to the river to wash, and sprinkling drops of the bloody water over the land, he said, "Here, on this ground, I make the Nimiipu, the Nez Perce."

The Nez Perce call themselves the *Nimiipu (the People)*. Who are the *Nee-mee-poo*? There is of course this legend. What else is there?

The Nimiipu first appeared in the distant past on the western flanks of the Rocky Mountains in what is now Idaho. Their history was passed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next, and was finally written in the latter part of the nineteenth, and the early part of the twentieth, centuries.

What did the *Nimiipu* who were born in the nineteenth Century have to say about their *own*, *origin*?

Camille Williams (*War Singer*), who was a survivor of the Nez Perce War of 1877 and an interpreter for L.V. McWhorter in the 1930's said: "There is no oral or confirmed story as to how or when the Nez Perces came into the region of Idaho and western Montana, their home when Lewis and Clark first found them....."

“There are a few remote mountain places where the long-ago Nez Perces lived the year around. Kakayohneme Creek, at the head of Clearwater River, the region known by whites as Three Forks is one of them. It is in Idaho, west of Hamilton, Montana.

“Another place is known as Nekeulaketh, up the south fork of the Three Forks, known now as Pettibone Ranch. These long-ago Nez Perces used to come to Kamiah or Clearwater every year to trade for Camas and kouse roots. Nearly all of them had blond hair and eyes of lighter color than black....”

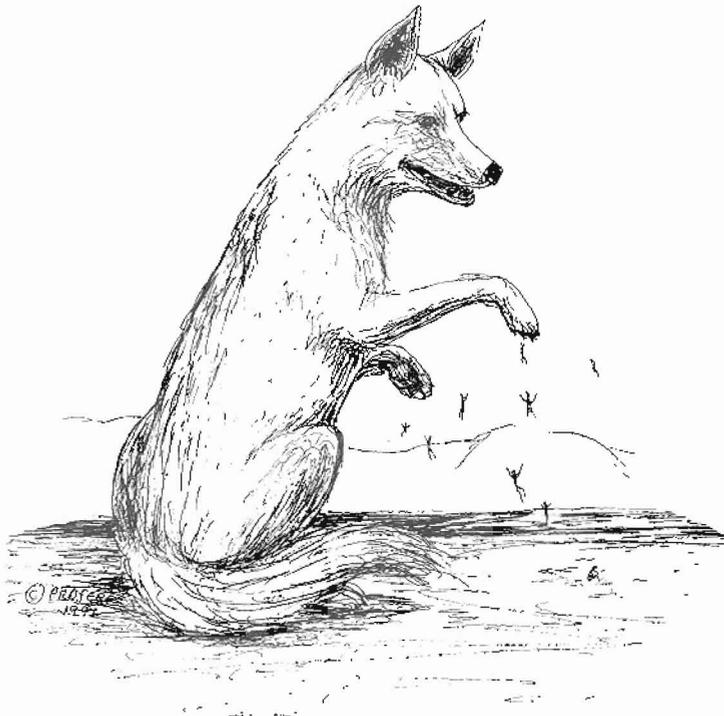
Wottolen, another survivor of the Nez Perce War of 1877 and a Nez Perce historian, said: “There are two places up Salmon River. Only two spots where the people lived. None were here on the Clearwater; none on Lapwai or Snake rivers; Kakayohneme Creek is one place. The other is about fifteen miles above the mouth of the Little Salmon River. It is called Tannish [Cut-out Trail]....

“The first generations of Nez Perces grew up at those two places I have named. I do not know how many snows back of that time. The buffalo was hunted on the head of the Salmon. The people would go there for meat and hides during the summer moons. Next few snows they go a little farther east. Following snows they go still farther east, and to the north. After a time they reach the Yellowstone River. There they hunt, for the buffaloes are many. Finally they come to [now] Helena, Montana. There they find many people. This tribe proves an enemy to the Nez Perces. After this, they fight. The Bannocks, the Blackfeet, the Crows, the Cheyennes, the Sioux [Assiniboins]. All these tribes living in that country became enemies of the Nez Perces...

“After many, many snows fighting, peace was made with Crows and Blackfeet. The Nez Perces in meantime had grown numerous. They had spread over lower Salmon, parts of Snake River, its water, and all of Clearwater River country. Had many horses, good horses. These were traded to their late foes for buffalo robes and untanned hides. Nez Perce horses were noted runners.”

Wottolen’s memory reached back to the time before Henry Spalding arrived to convert the Nez Perces to Christianity. Other tribal elders agreed with him and Camille Williams on tribal origins and early habitats.

*NOTE: All spelling of Nez Perce words in these narratives are phonetic and may be different from the new dictionary. EXAMPLE: *Nee-mee-poo* was used before “*Nimiipu*”, the people. Originally without an accent mark.



Wottolen, a grandson of Hohots Ilppilp (Red Grizzly Bear), whom Lewis and Clark referred to as *Hoh-hast-ill-pilp* had this to say about Lewis and Clark:

“Chief Red Bear (Red Grizzly Bear) first learned of white people through a girl of his band living on Tamonmo. When small she was stolen by the Blacklegs in the buffalo country, who sold her to some tribe farther toward the sunrise. In time she was bought by white people, probably in Canada, where she was well treated. It is a long story; how in time, carrying her little baby, she ran away and after several moons reached the friendly Selish, who cared for her and brought her in a dying condition to her own people at White Bird. Her baby had died on the way. She was called Watkuweis [Returning from a Faraway Country].

“She told of the white people, how good they had been to her, and how well she liked them. When the first two white men, Lewis and Clark with their followers, came, Watkuweis said to her people, ‘These are the people who helped me! Do them no hurt!’

“This was why the strange people had been received in friendship. There had been a prophecy about Red Bear and a new people, which was thus fulfilled in 1805. He met the strangers. They first have a smoke. If no smoke, then they must fight. Red Bear made presents of dressed buckskins, and they gave him beads and a few other articles. They afterwards found the white man’s gifts to be cheap.”

The Nez Perce chief whom Lewis and Clark referred to as “*Twisted Hair*”, who aided them, guided them, and with whom they left thirty-eight head of horses before embarking on a journey by water to the Pacific, was actually Chief Walammottinin, and according to Wottolen:

“The canoes made by Lewis and Clark to descend the Snake and Columbia rivers were made from five yellow pine trees given them for the purpose by Chief Walammottinin [Hair or Forelock Bunched and tied]. The explorers first met him when fishing in the Kooskooskie Smaller River, now the Clearwater. It was in this chieftain’s care that they left their horses and cached goods, all of which they found in the best of condition upon their return the following year.

“After visiting the explorers, Red Bear returned to his home near the mouth of White Bird Creek, Salmon River. When he died, he left good council, good instructions for his people. The whites owe honor to his memory. My father, Chief Black Eagle, was the son of Chief Red Bear, Sr., who met Lewis and Clark. I am his grandson. I have seen one hundred and four snows [1926].”

The Lewis and Clark Expedition (a party of 36 people), financed by a Congressional appropriation of \$2500 in January, 1803, set out to explore the upper Missouri on May 14, 1804 from St. Charles (near St. Louis), supposedly to open and establish trade with the native peoples along the Missouri. It was later, the spring of 1805, when Sacajawea and her husband, Charbonneau, joined them. Sacajawea was Shoshone (Snake).

This “*trade*” and “*scientific exploration for knowledge*” had been the reasons given the Spanish, long before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Meriwether Lewis was an old friend of President Jefferson, who had long hoped for and finally gotten the chance, to acquire what was to become known as the Louisiana Purchase. Lewis, born in Virginia, had spent his childhood on the Georgia frontier. He knew how to live in the wilderness, and he shared the president’s dream of a United States that extended coast to coast. This concept became known as *Manifest Destiny*.

William Clark was Lewis’ old Army buddy, and he thought along the same lines. It was his elder brother, the famous General George Rodgers Clark of the Revolution who had, with army of backwoods guerrillas, helped secure what are now Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio for the United States.

The other major actor in this “coup” was General Anthony Wayne, known as “Mad Anthony”, a former general of the Revolution.

The British did not give up after the Revolution, they set out to grab as much of North America as possible through alliances with Indian tribes. The French also had their fingers in this pie, but they sided with the United States. Spain had a foothold in the Southwest. Looking back now it appears that all Indians were doomed to live with European invaders, no matter which invader came out on top.

William Clark was the son of a wealthy Virginia planter, used to servants, and took York, a black slave, with him on the expedition, but he was in no way a sissy. (Lewis took his Newfoundland dog, *Scammond*, with him on the journey.) Clark and Lewis were seasoned army men. They were also self-disciplined men with a talent for organization. For the Corp of Discovery they chose self-reliant men of solid character who would not go to pieces under stress: hunters, boatsmen, blacksmiths and carpenters. Hunters, because they could not take all of their food with them. They would have to be self supporting, live off the land and trade items they had brought along just for trade, for what they needed.

Manifest Destiny turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy that would ultimately deny native peoples title to their own lands, and tie the western portion of North America to the eastern portion, there by shutting out all other invaders who might wish to make inroads from the west.

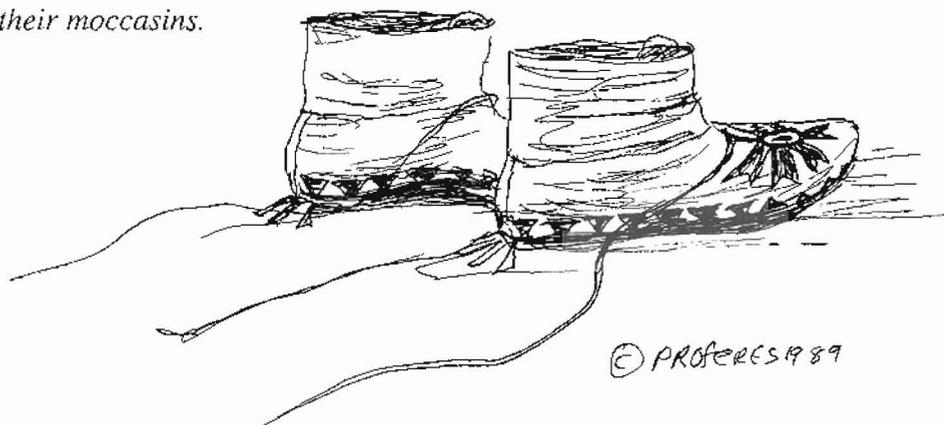
The Nez Perce recognized that invasion from the west was imminent, but that as a Sovereign Nation they had the power to deal. This was why they signed the first treaty. *They were never conquered.*

The Louisiana Purchase doubled the area of the United States. The U.S. acquired California and a good share of the Southwest in the 1846-48 Mexican War, and settlers swarmed over what is now Oregon and Washington, colonizing Oregon territory, and laying claim to it for the United States of America.

Without the aid that the Nez Perce gave to the starving members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, all of this might not have happened. But these Nimiipu were good people, and they did help, not realizing that they were playing a vital part in the destiny of the United States, and ultimately, their own destiny.

Lewis & Clark passed through Nez Perce Land on the way to the Pacific in 1805, they returned in 1806, on their way home. *They followed trails that were already in existence, trails long used by the Nez Perce on their way east, to the buffalo country, and other Indian trails farther east, and also west, to the Pacific.*

Now let us walk in their moccasins.



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Meriwether Lewis



William Clark

Food

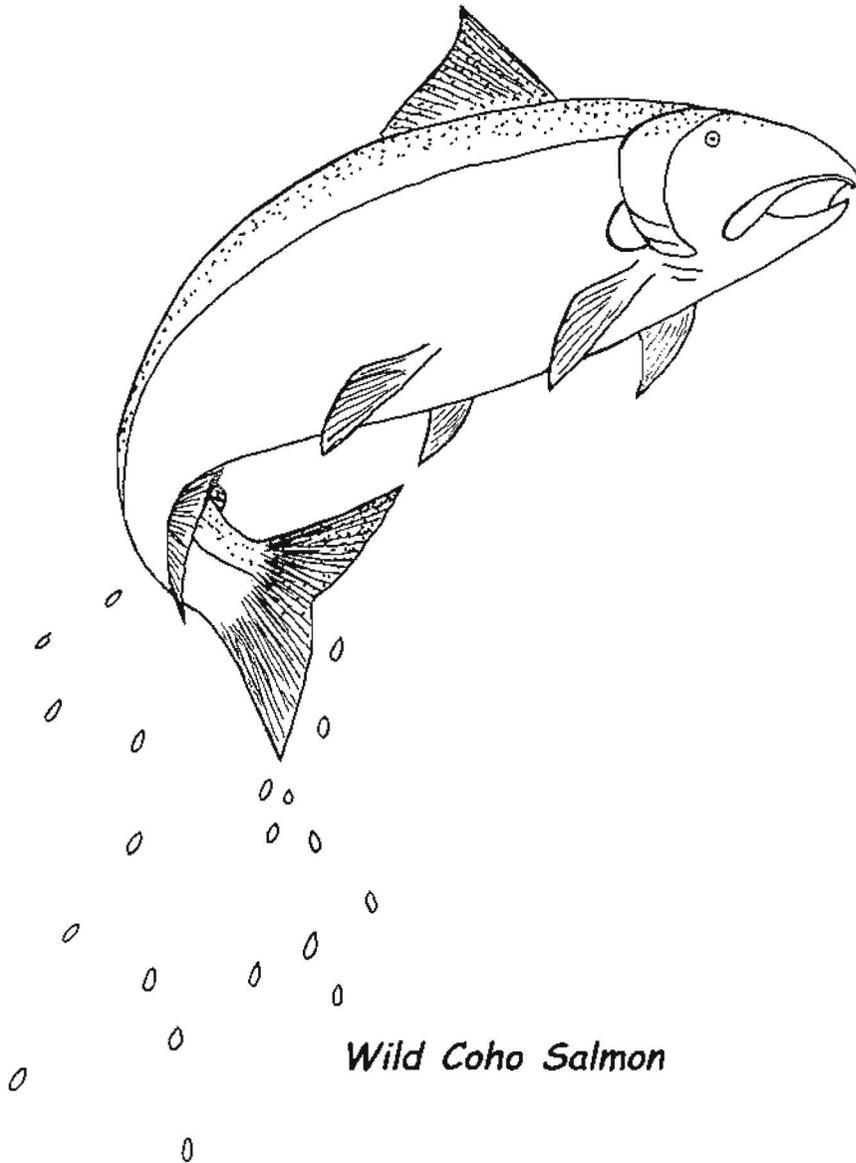
By the time Lewis and Clark had reached the lands of the Nez Perce they were starving. It took a lot of food for thirty some people. It was very cold, with snow on the ground and more coming down. (By this time they had given up their three cornered hats, and Clark stated that his "mockirsons" had been soaked.)*

Sept. 16, 1805 Clark took six hunters and struck out ahead of the main party. On the morning of the 19th they came upon a horse, killed it, ate, hung the rest in a tree for the main group coming behind them, and went on.

The next day they met the first Nez Perce, who gave them dried salmon and camas flour. Clark "bought" dried salmon and camas flour and sent one of his men back to Lewis with these staples.

In the meantime the condition of Lewis' group had become desperate, they had eaten only a few grouse, coyote, and a crow. By the time Lewis caught up with Clark at "Twisted Hair's" village, down along the Clearwater River, almost the entire group was ill with dysentery.

*Note: This was only a few years after the Declaration of Independence and the Revolution. Men still wore three cornered hats, tight knee pants, hose, and "buckle shoes" for dress. They also wore soft leather knee boots.



Wild Coho Salmon



Sick

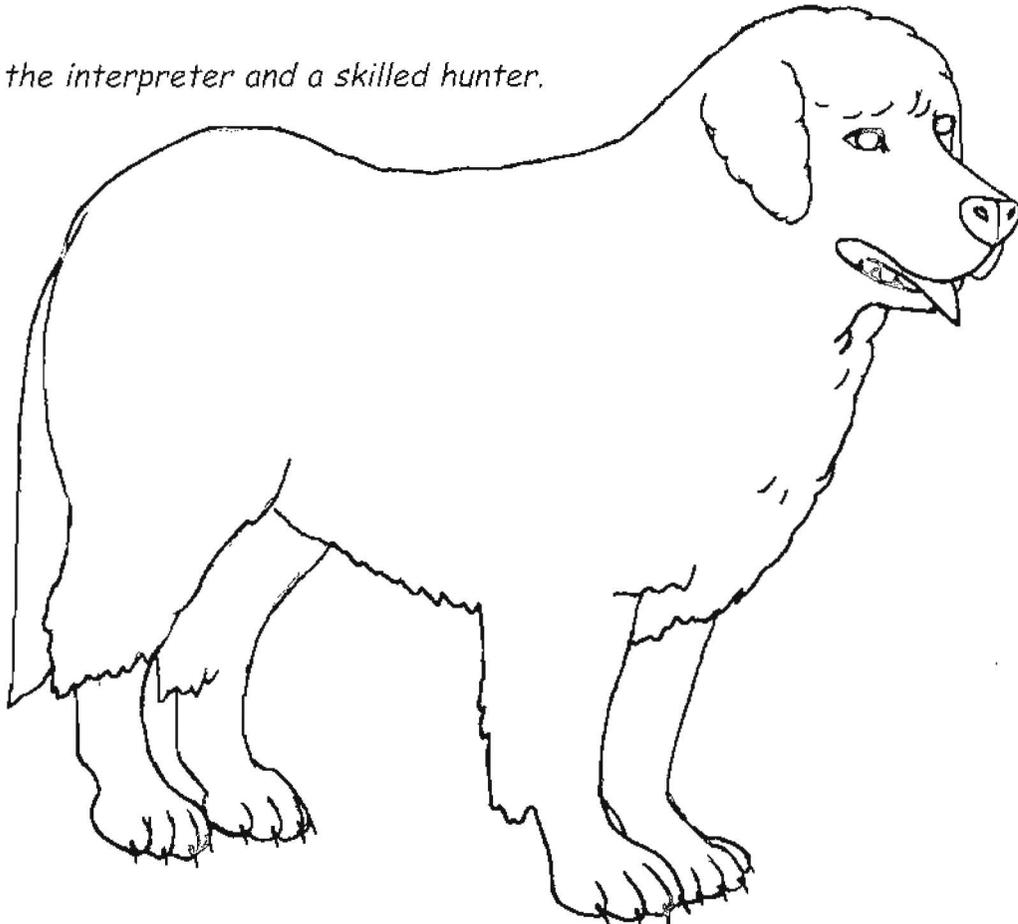
Even Lewis was stricken: "Capt. Lewis scercely * able to ride on a gentle horse which was furnished by the chief... Several men So unwell that they were Compelled to lie on the Side of the road for Some time others obliged to be put on horses.... 3 parts of Party sick Capt. Lewis verry sick. ... most of the Party complaining. ... I am a little unwell ... Several taken sick at work ... **Drewyer sick ... Our men nearly all complaining of their bowels."

Lewis took his Newfoundland dog, Scammond, with him on this journey. Newfoundlands are 26 to 28 inches tall (about as tall as your dining room table) and weigh up to 150 lbs. They have black, oily coats and webbed feet, and can withstand extremely cold water. They are powerful swimmers that were used as rescue dogs for shipwreck victims in cold seas. They are gentle, patient dogs with good dispositions who make good companions. How much food do you think Scammond ate? Do you suppose he gathered his own, or shared Captain Lewis' food?

* Note: Clark's spelling was atrocious, and though Lewis was President Jefferson's secretary his spelling would not have won him any points in a modern spelling bee. A lot of old writing is similar. It appears that English had not yet been polished into any national standard at that time.

The "Chief" was Chief Walammottinin (hair of forelock bunched and tied), Twisted Hair, in whose village they were staying. He was the Nez Perce who gave Lewis and Clark the pine logs for their canoes, and saw that their horses were cared for while they went to the Pacific. He and another Nez Perce accompanied them to the Columbia River.

**Drewyer was the interpreter and a skilled hunter.





Gift from Chief Walammottinin

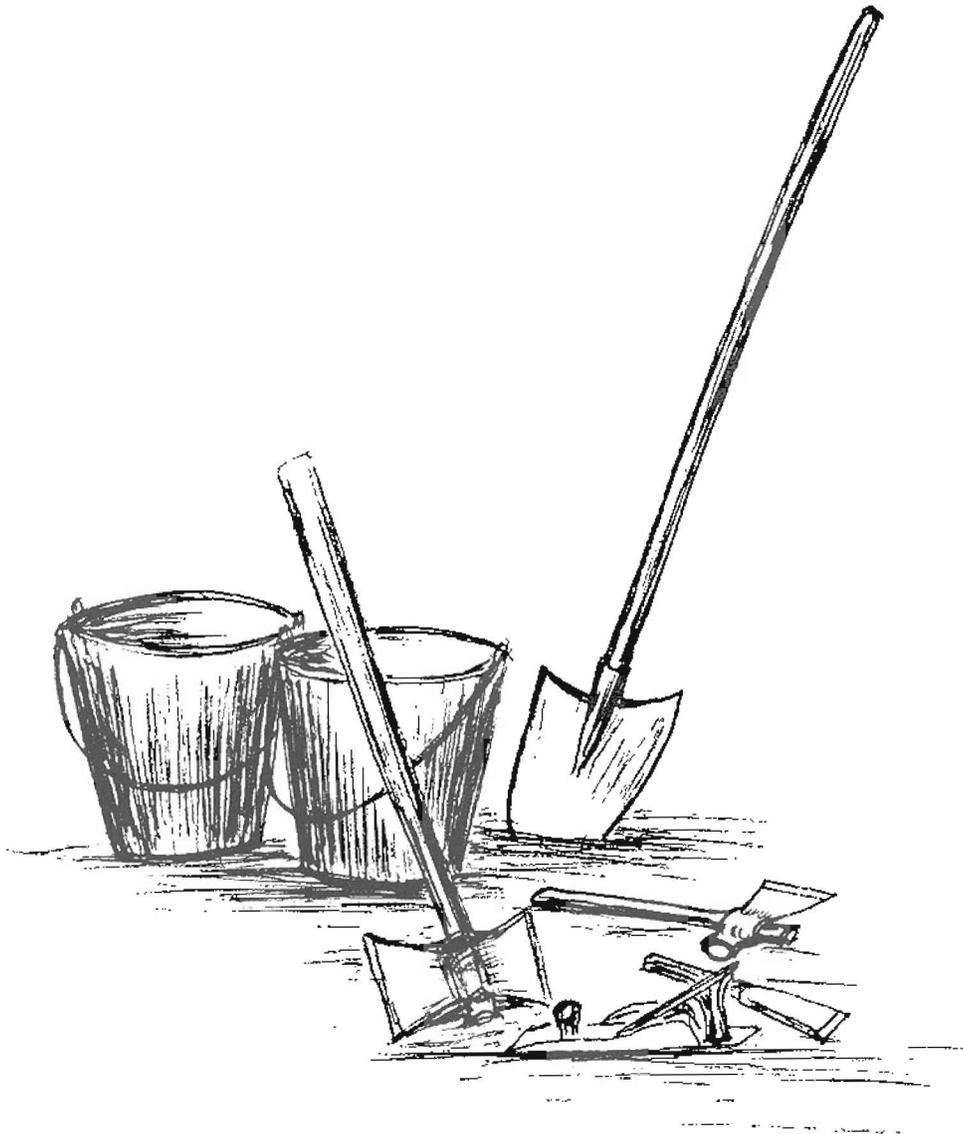
Dugouts

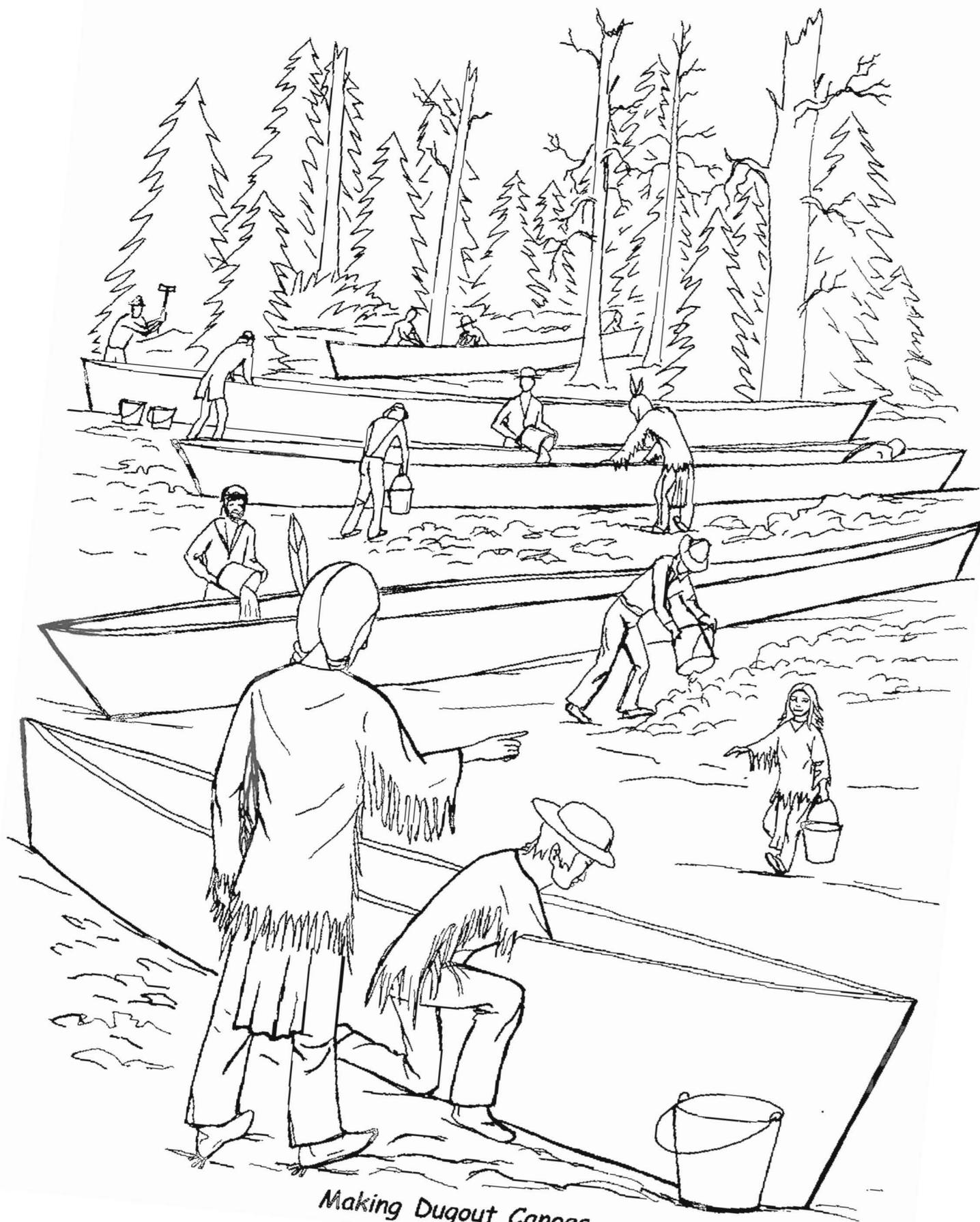
The Nez Perce not only furnished the logs for the four approximately 40 foot canoes, and one smaller one which the Corp of Discovery would use to go the rest of the way to the Pacific Ocean, they also helped make them by demonstrating, showing them how the Nez Perce made canoes by "burning out the holler of our canoes."

A lot of the men were still very ill so it took ten days to make the dugout canoes. These were made of pine, flattened on top, shaped on the sides and hollowed by burning and chopping until the walls were about 6 inches in the bottom and $4\frac{1}{2}$ on the side walls. These canoes were a minimum of 3 feet in diameter and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, top to bottom, measured outside. They were not shaped like birch bark canoes, with their gracefully curved prows and sterns, but they did come to a point on both ends so that if they switched ends in rapids they could be controlled. Nez Perce dugout fishing canoes were usually square across the back, like a modern rowboat.

There were 35 people who went to the Pacific Ocean in these canoes. Sacajawea and her baby also went. The smaller boat carried 3 men, who went ahead to see what obstacles they might encounter.

These canoes were not portaged around falls and cataracts, their clothes and supplies were. The canoes were tied to long ropes and controlled by the men on shore.





Making Dugout Canoes

Fish and Fishing, Vital to Nez Perce Culture

There were many places along the Snake River where the Nez Perce once lived year around in long houses. This was before horses. The town of Asotin (eel, in Nez Perce) is one of these, another was In-nan-toe-e-in, where the Imnaha empties into the Snake, near, but opposite, the junction of the Salmon and the Snake.

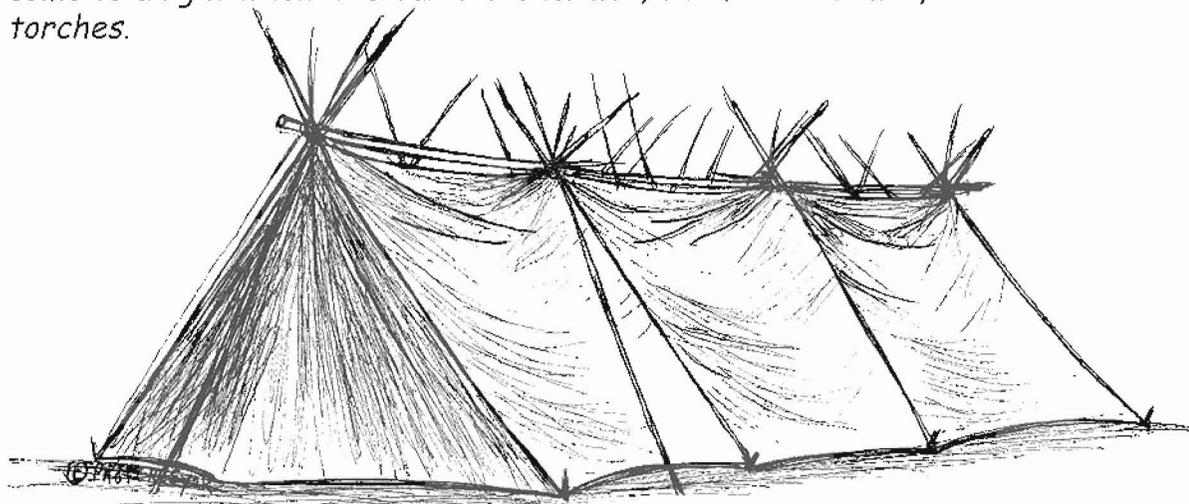
Latter day long houses looked like stretched out tipis and were made with heavy pole frames, roofed and sided with cat-tail and reed mats, which also covered the floors. The mats were sewn together with kamo, a native hemp, from which ropes were also made (these ropes looked very much like modern hemp ropes). Every year the women and girls got together to repair the old, or make new mats from cat-tails and reeds. It was a time to visit, and they enjoyed their work and the companionship it offered. They always worked together, time passes more quickly when people work together, and is more enjoyable.

These villages were near the Nez Perce's favorite fishing places. Here, they fished from flat rocks as well as built platforms hanging from high rocks. They speared or netted fish from these platforms. They also suspended fish traps from high rocks. Over centuries of use the ropes that supported these platforms and fish traps gradually polished the stone.

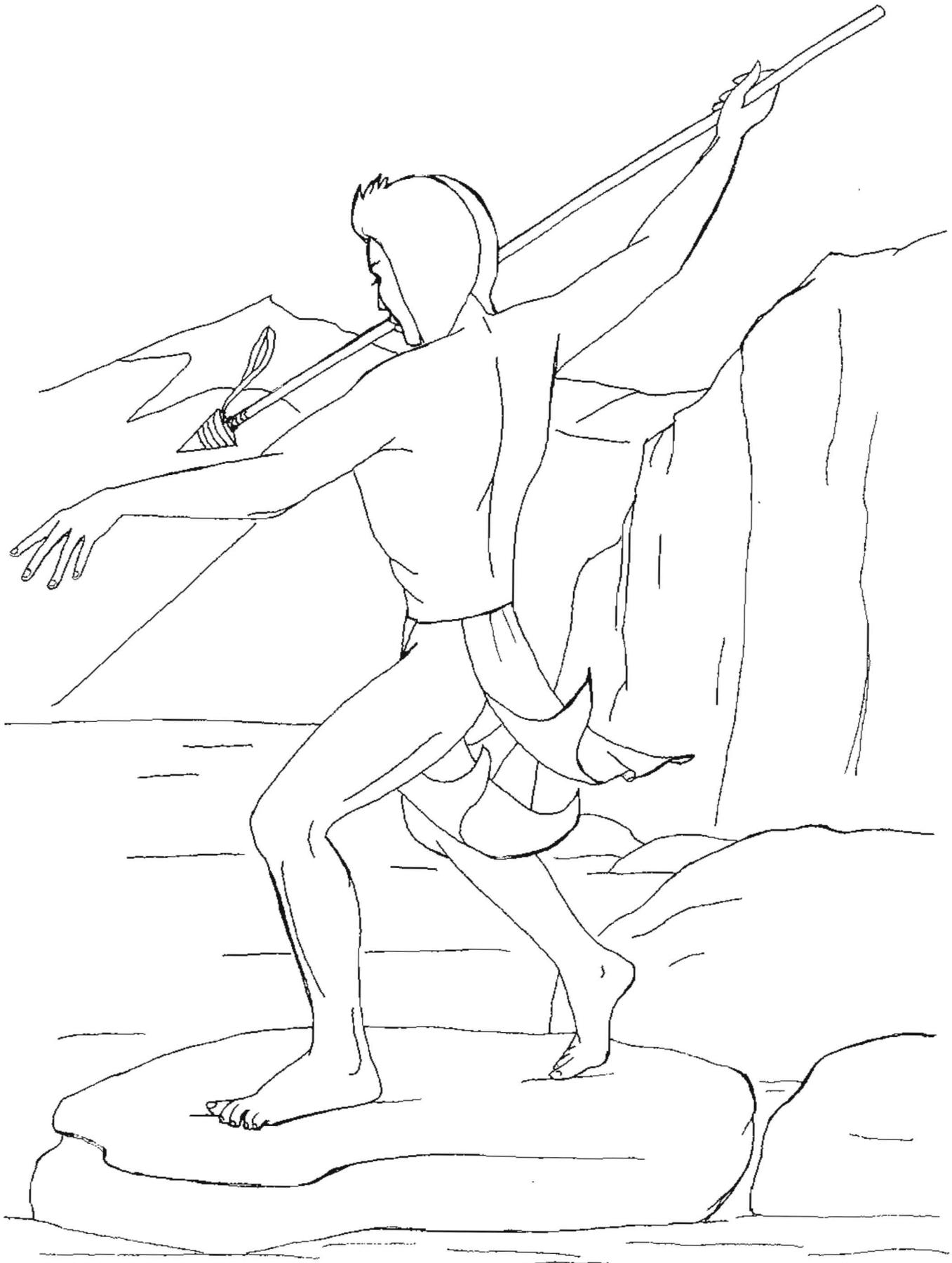
In addition to fish traps along the deep waters of the Snake the Nez Perce built fish traps in streams at places where there were low waterfalls. These were triangular in shape, like a rowboat cut in half at its widest point. The three sides of these were made from saplings and fastened to a tripod of poles, two at the top of the fall, the third in the center of the stream below the fall, anchored in the stones of the stream floor. The pointed end of the trap, the bow end, was fastened to the single pole below the fall, the stern end was butted up against the fall with the corners fastened to the two poles above the waterfall.

The Nez Perce also fished at night, from huge, wooden canoes, which were made from one giant pine log. These were dug-out canoes, made by burning out and chopping out the center of the log to a suitable depth.

Several people could fish from one of these canoes. Fagots made from pine with knot and pitch (torches) were placed at the ends of these boats to attract fish, who come to a light when it is dark. Fishermen, and fisher women, also held individual torches.



Temporary Long House



Spear Fishing

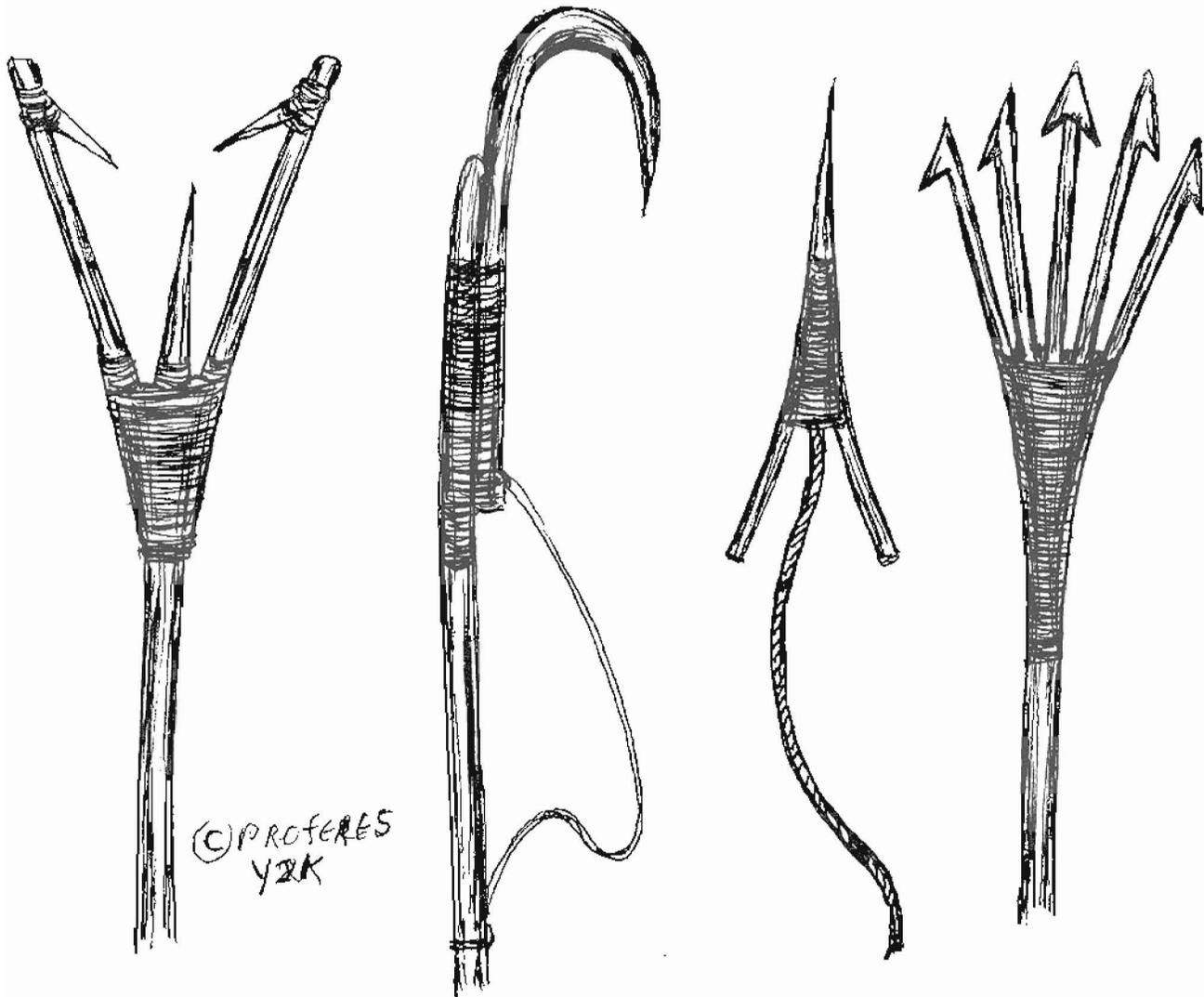
The Big One that Didn't Get Away

The Nez Perce were great fishermen, and caught lots of salmon, steelhead, and many other species of fish, but they delighted in snagging the great sturgeon, kee-lax.

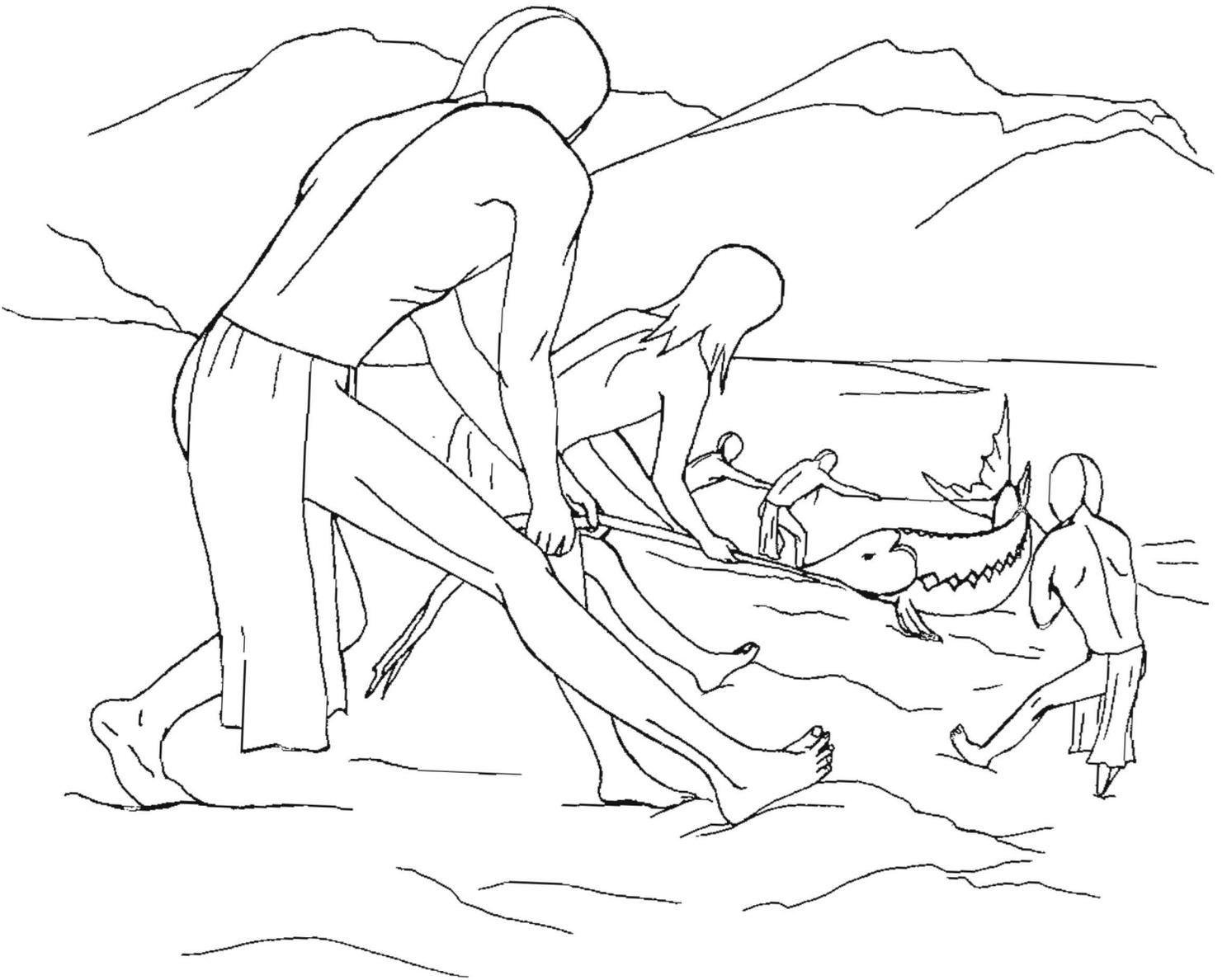
When the rivers ran free and people were few, sturgeon grew to be whoppers, eight feet and more, weighing half a ton. Landing a big one took a lot of hands.

Fishing gear, spears, and arrows were generally made from syringa wood. The wood was slit, a glue made from 2 parts pine pitch and 1 part beeswax, was forced into the slit, the back of the arrowhead or spear was pushed in, more glue applied outside, then sinew was tightly wrapped and embedded in the glue. When dry, this tool was not only solidly fastened, it was also waterproof.

Glue, varnish, and a paint primer was also made from hide scrapings and animal hooves boiled down in water.



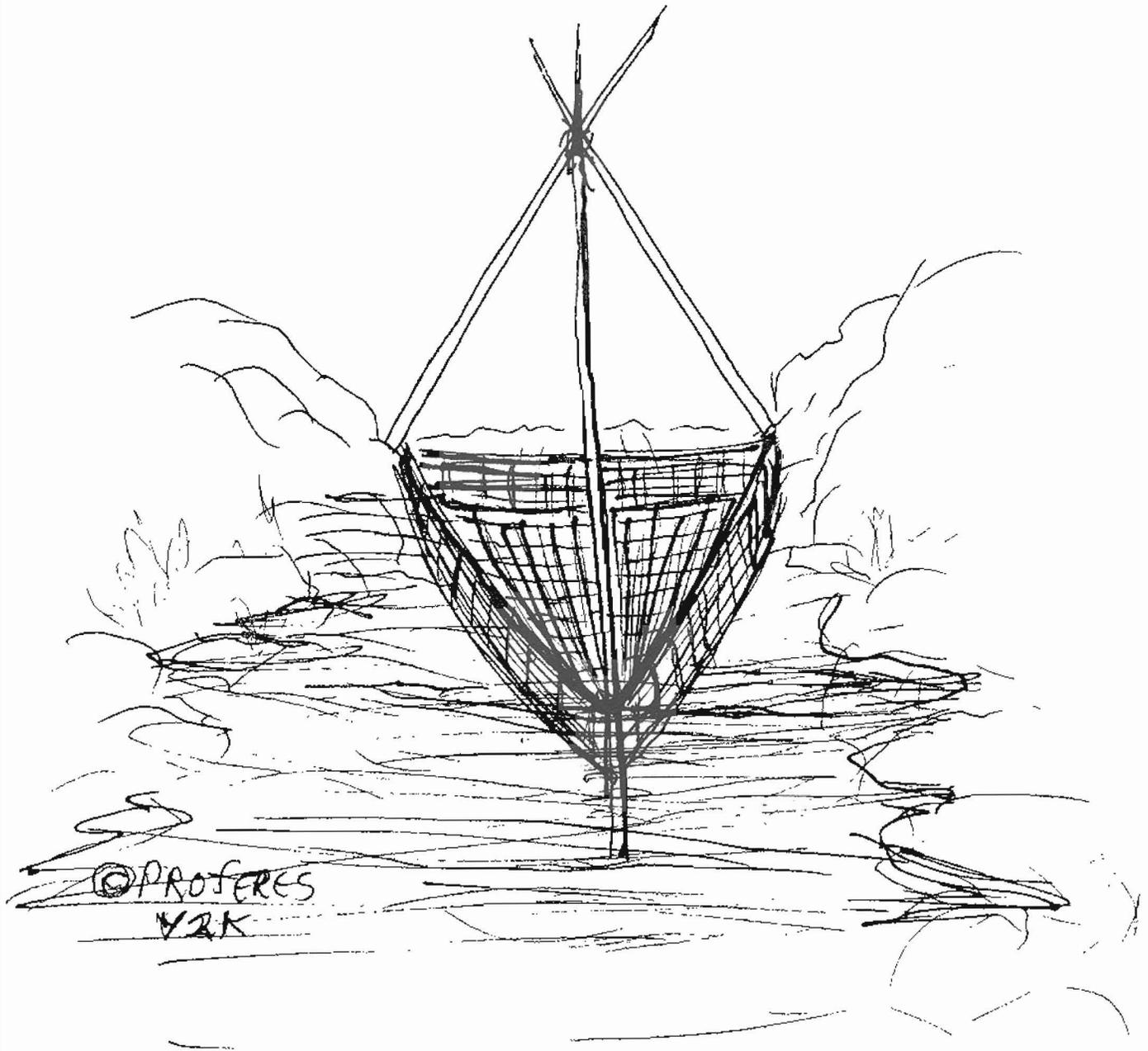
Nez Perce Fishing Tackle



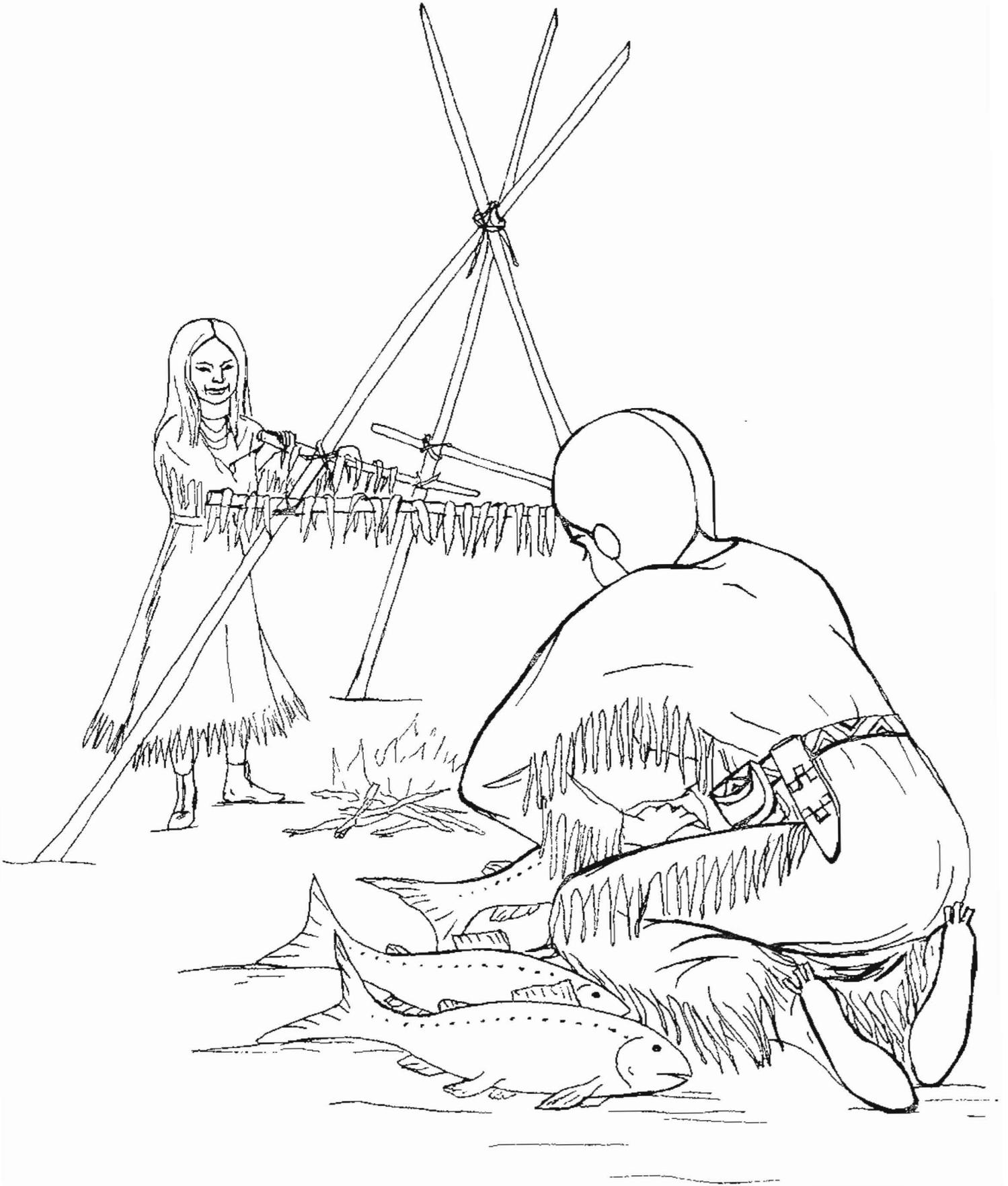
Kee-lax (Sturgeon)

Preserving the Catch

Women and girls cut the fish in strips and dried it on a tripod over a tiny fire. This kept away flies, and added flavor to it. People had no refrigeration in those days. Drying food was really the only way to preserve it. This, too, was women's work.



Nez Perce Falls Fish Trap



Blackberries

Blackberries are native to this continent, and they grew in abundance along the rivers and streams in the land of the Nez Perce. Both blackberries and huckleberries were enjoyed by the Nimiipu.



Huckleberries & Basket

Pemmican was made from jerky and dried berries, crushed with a stone mortar and pestle. Wild cherries were used, pits and all. The Nez Perce favored huckleberries, which can be dried by spreading a single layer of berries in a warm dry place. Dry about 10 days, until mashed berries do not bleed juice.

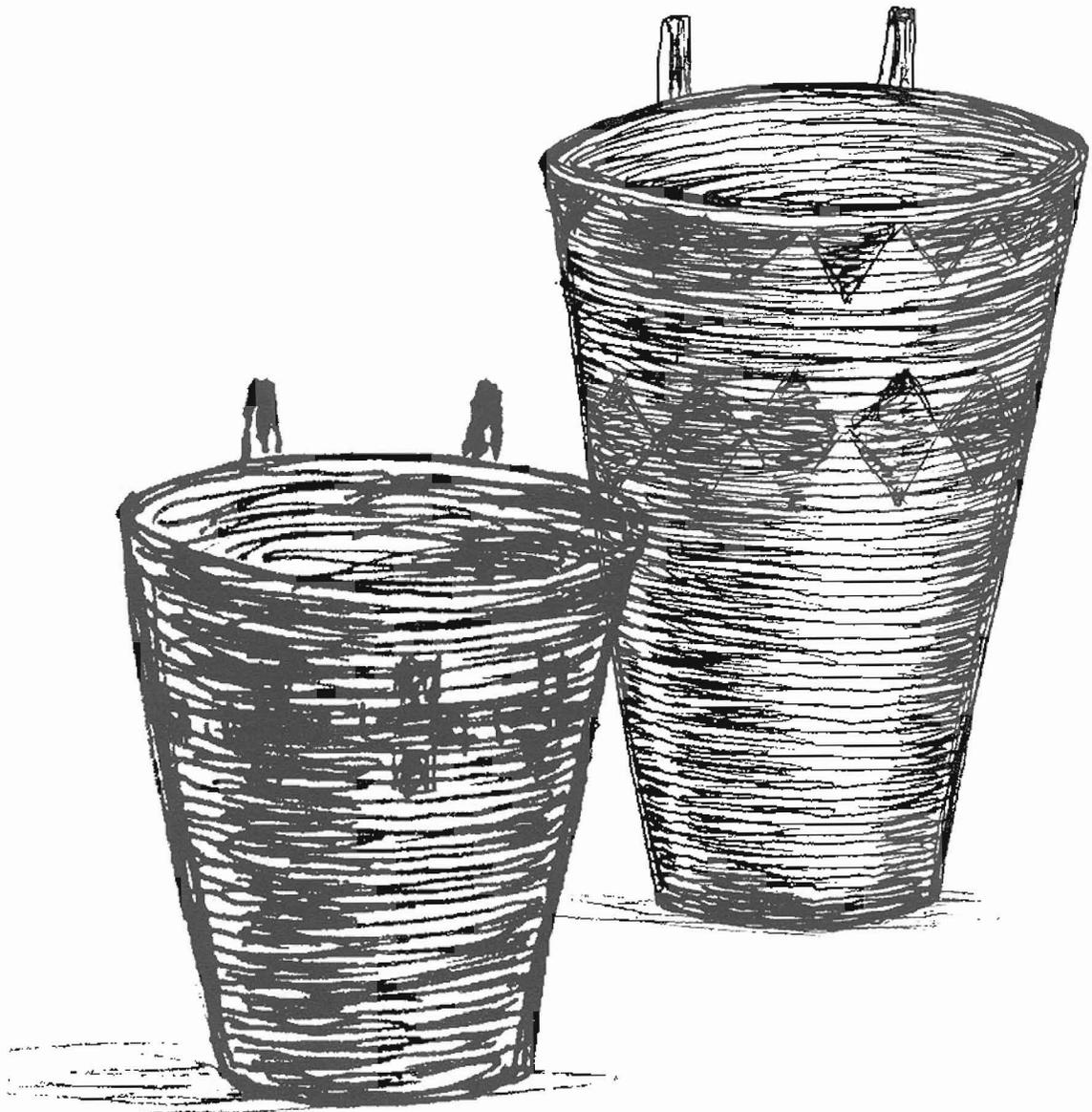


Blackberries

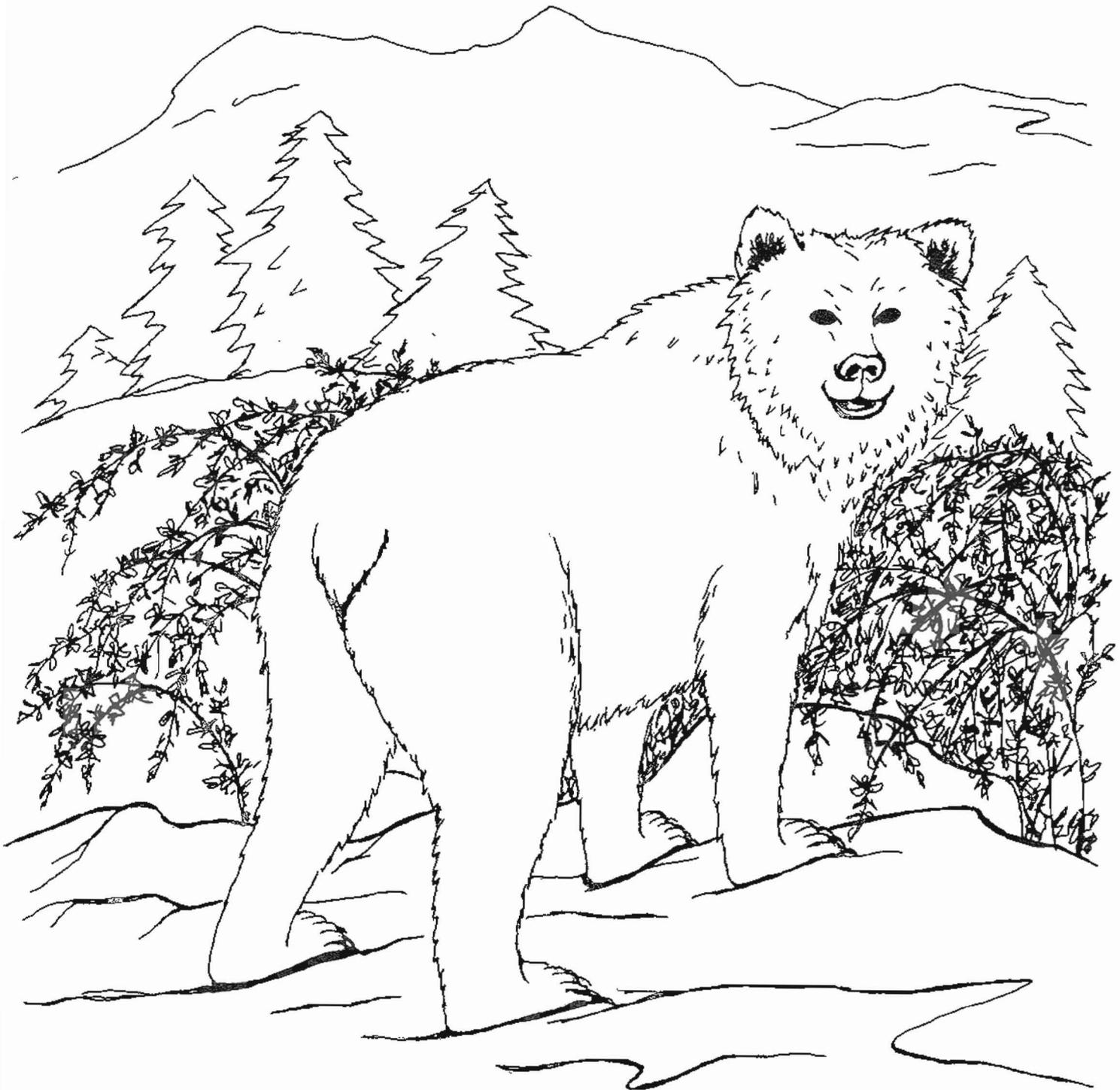
Hohots Also Likes Berries

Then, as now, people needed to watch for bears when picking berries, or doing anything in the woods. A mama bear of any kind with cubs is dangerous, but grizzlies (hohots) are especially respected whether or not there are cubs. Male grizzlies are just as dangerous.

The following illustration of berry baskets is of the type favored for picking huckleberries. They had loops on top to fit over a belt, leaving both hands free.



Berry Baskets



Hohots Picks Berries

Chores

Firewood was needed daily, and if the women didn't have time to gather it, the girls packed it in. They packed it on their backs, on ponies, and occasionally on dogs. Sometimes they had a long way to go to find wood, then it was a real "chore".

Plains tribes had no forests, they used "buffalo chips", dried buffalo "pies". So, too, did the Nez Perce when they were on the Montana prairie, and in Canada with Sitting Bull. (The ones who escaped during the last battle of the Nez Perce War of 1877 and went to Canada.)





Chores

Innocence

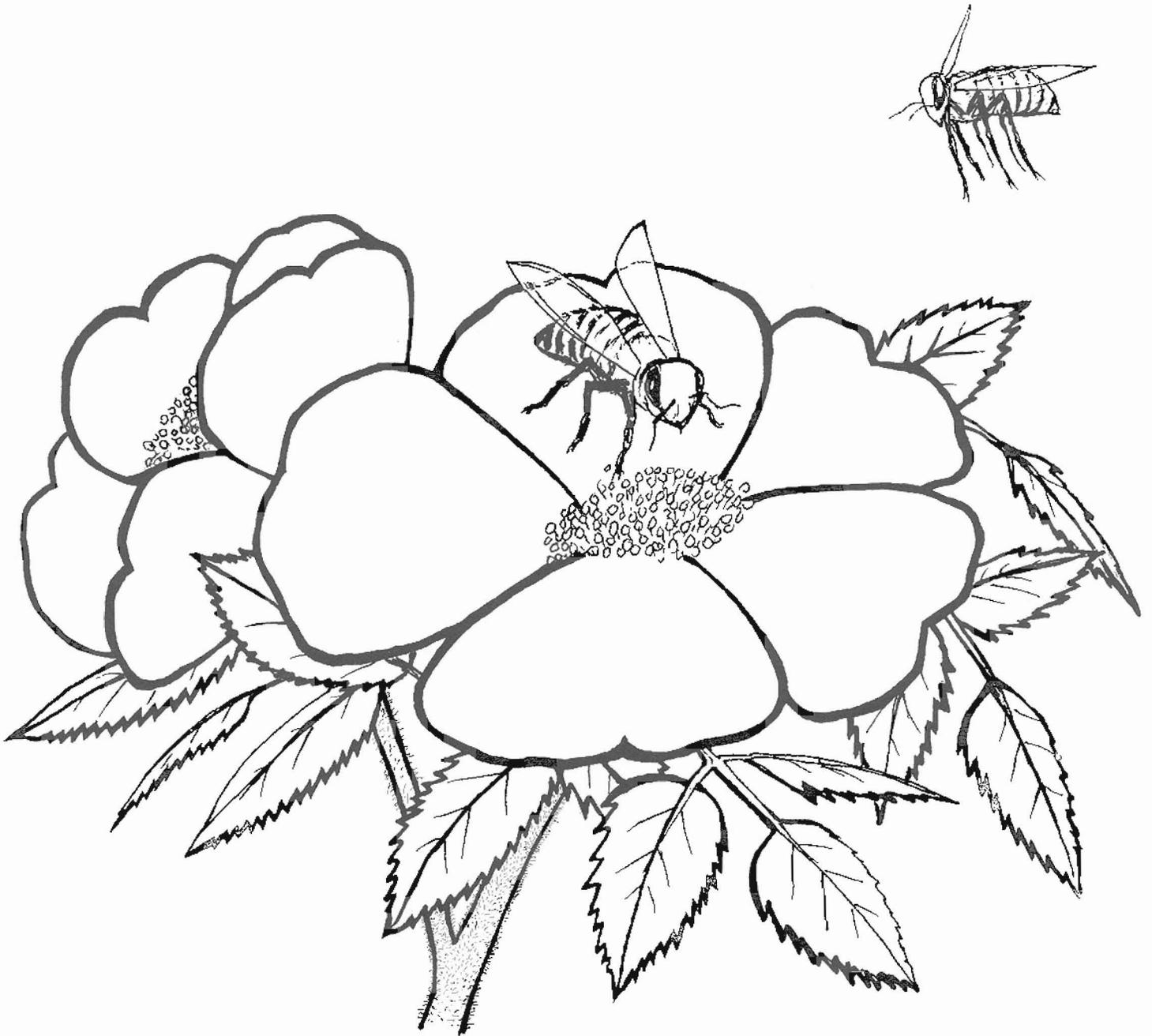
Meadows are alive with flowers, butterflies; the buzzing of life in spring; life that is still fresh, new, and exciting to the very young.





Prairie Roses

This little girl is fascinated by a wild honey bee. She would like to touch its iridescent wings, she knows that it could sting. She's also aware that the cane of the rose (also known as "woods rose") has thorns. Life is beautiful but there are dangers.



Wild Prairie Rose & Bees



Prairie Roses

The Cradleboard

The cradleboard, or te'kaus, was as useful as the car seat which we use today. The handle was used to both pick it up and to tie it onto a saddle. The hoop acted as a protective roll bar in case it fell or was accidentally dropped. The hoop was also a frame to hold up a shade cloth when the child was put on its back on the ground while the mother worked.

Diapers were made of the same long, soft, hanging moss that still grows in trees along mountain streams. Ho-pop. It is also edible.

The little, beaded, square shaped bundle, tied near the lacing on the child's right, holds her umbilical cord, and is most sacred. If this is lost it will bring bad luck to the child, and the family.





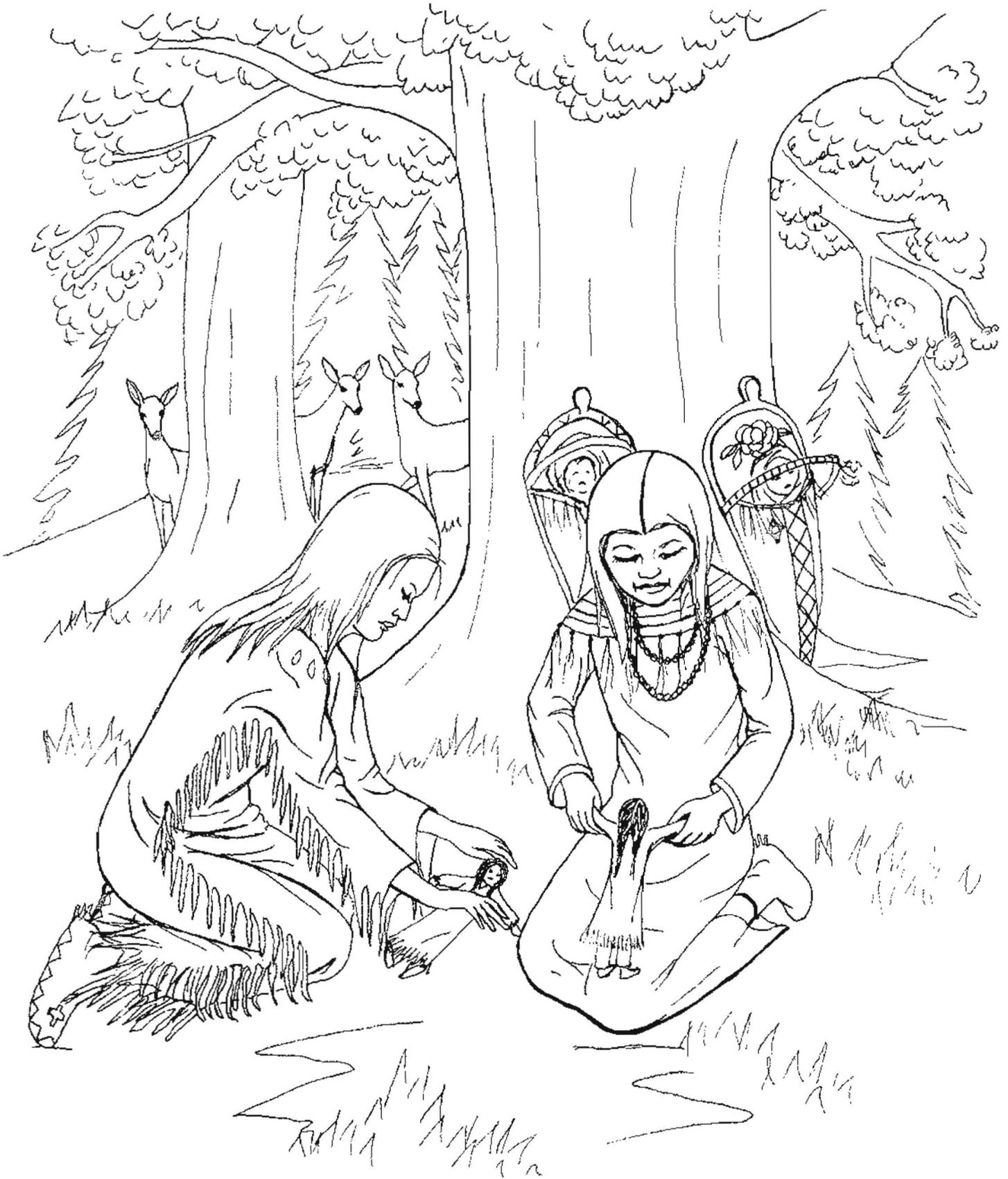
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Y2K

Babysitting

Then as now, the world over, big sisters tended their young siblings. And played with their dolls while the little ones were quiet.



Nez Perce Doll



Babysitting

Nez Perce Mothers and Children

There was always work, but there was also always time for those special moments of love between a mother and her children.

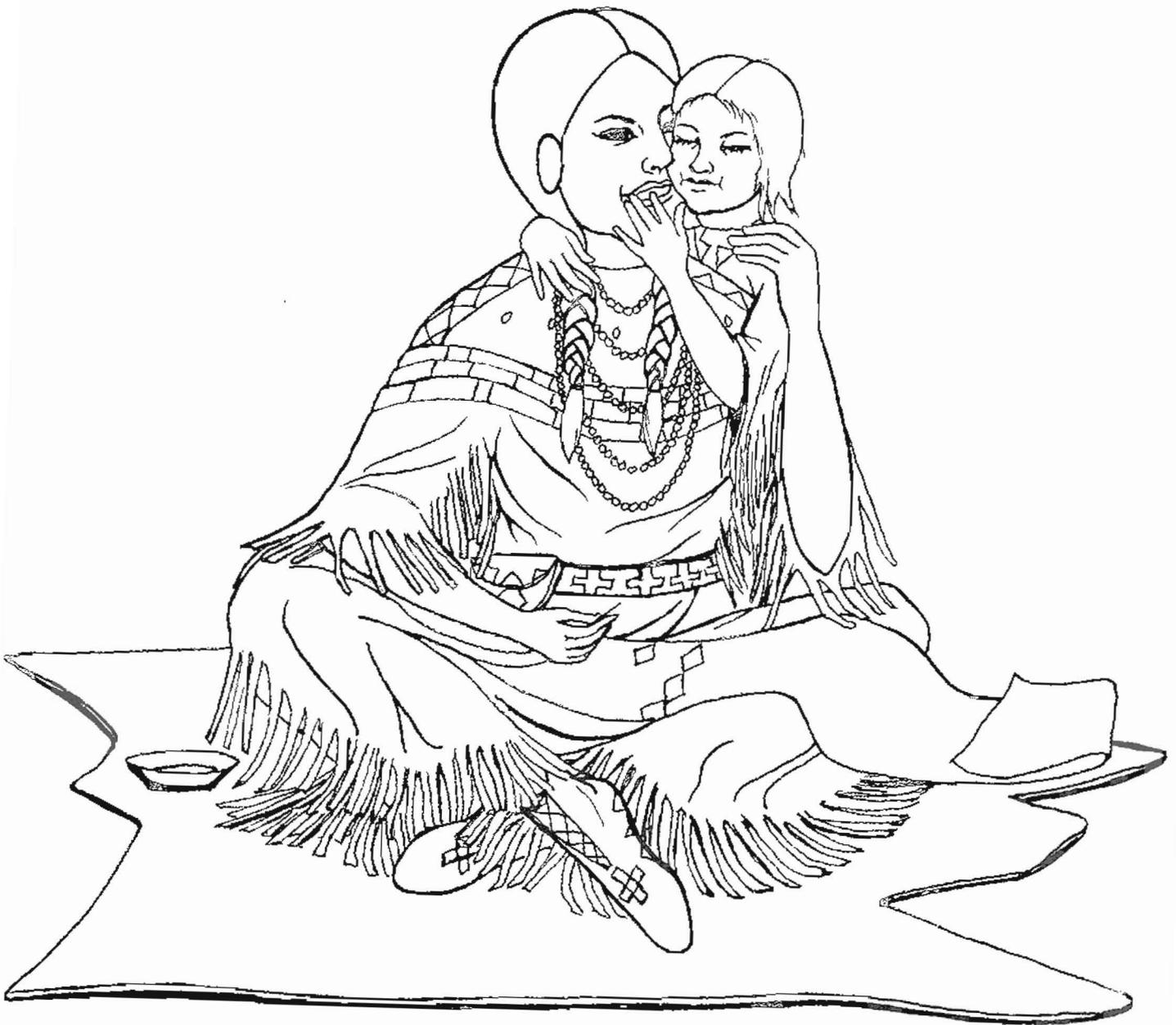
The Nez Perce loved their children, and welcomed their births. The birth of a child was counted as a blessing.

The child would be given a name, which was both secret and sacred. People would have many names throughout life, and the owner of a name was recorded in the white man's history only if he or she played a notable role in life's drama with white people. Nez Perce were known to whites by one name, to their own people by many different names as they journeyed through life.

Young children were taught to hunt. He-yupe, cottontail rabbit, was usually a young hunter's first kill with a bow and arrow. This event in a young boy's life was always recognized by parents and close friends as very important. The father would ask a great hunter if he would eat some of the boy's first kill. If a celebrated hunter ate of a boy's first kill it meant that the young hunter would become a good provider. A renowned hunter always accepted, and a special dinner would be prepared.

A similar type of recognition dinner was given by a family when young boys, or girls, caught their first fish. Thanks was always given to Man Above when fishing and hunting were successful. All children, girls as well as boys, were taught to shoot tiny bows and arrows when they were three or four years old.





Nez Perce Mother and Child

Digging Camas

The Camas Prairie near Grangeville, Idaho was named for the Camas, which was once one of the main food sources of the Nez Perce diet. Camas is still dug and enjoyed by the Nez Perce people. The Tolo Lake area on the Camas Prairie is a favorite site.

Camas digging, like many tasks, provided a social get together for old friends. It can be fun to work together as well as to play together. The camas thus harvested was baked for over two days in a large pit. While the women dug the camas (using a *tukas), the pit was dug by men while others gathered the stones to be heated. Children gathered mounds of green grass and leaves.

CAMAS: Genus cammasic, of the lily family, an edible, onion-like bulb having long clusters of bluish purple flowers and grass like leaves, easily identified in spring by the bluish flowers. DEATH CAMAS is a deadly look alike except it has white flowers. Flower buds surround a stalk. The top is a pale silvery blue, with a hint of pale green, shading to a medium purple/blue on the lower buds. Flowers are also a purple/blue, with light green centers and gold anthers (pollen). Flowers open with six, almost 1 ½ inch petals, bottom ones first, until entire stem is surrounded, top to bottom. Leaves are grass like.

**A digging stick with a fire hardened, curved (for leverage) wood bottom, generally with an elk or deer antler handle. It could also be just a wooden stick. The wood was generally syringa.*





Preparing for the Feast

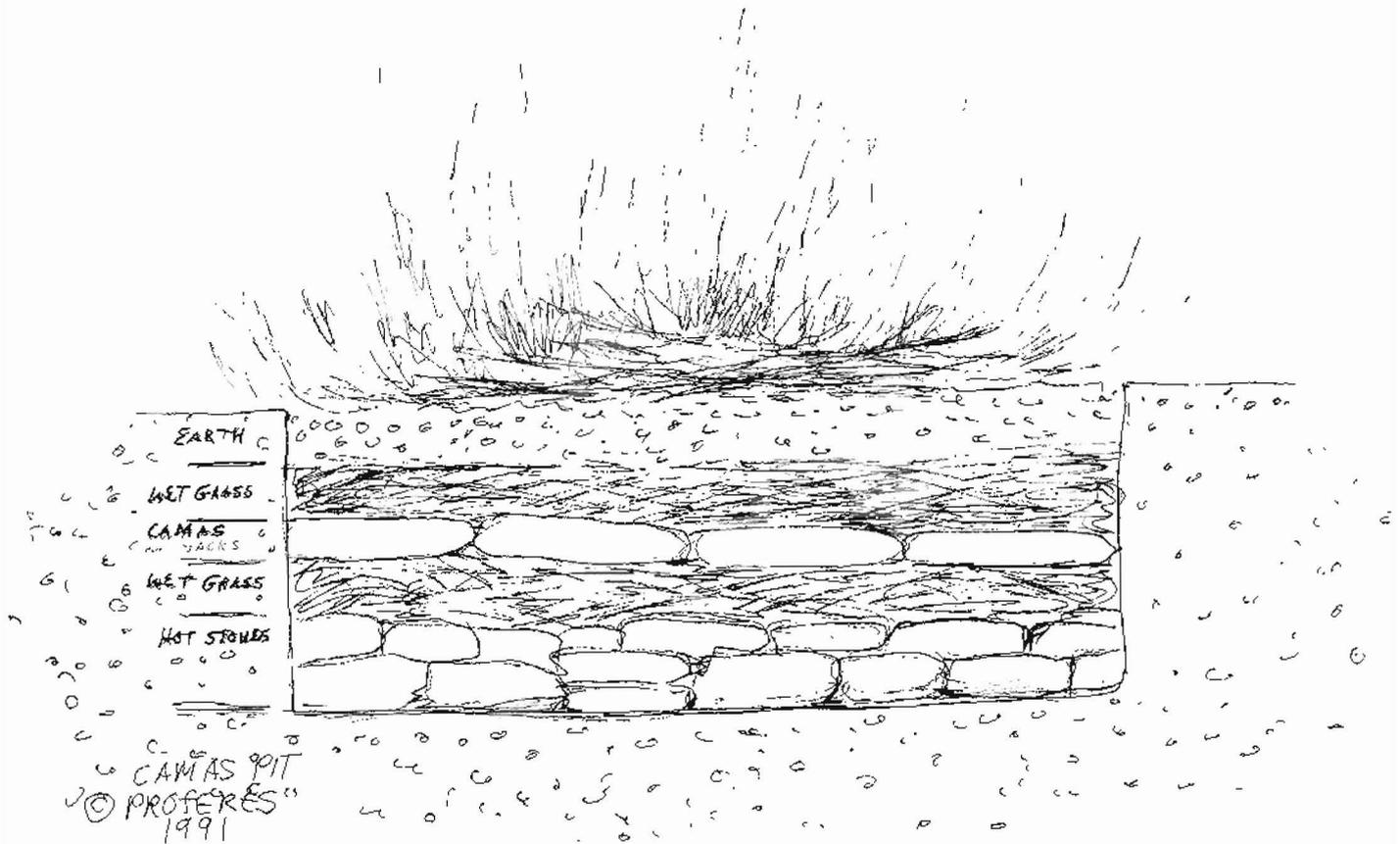
It took many hours for the women to dig enough bulbs for a large crowd. The men dug the pit (or pits, if there were enough people) about thirty inches deep, and five feet across. The pit was lined with special rocks that could be heated in a fire without exploding (due to moisture expanding inside). The rocks had to be gathered, as well as wood for the fire, and alder (or other) leaves and green grass, before baking could begin.

At least two layers of heated stones were placed in the bottom of the pit. Then a layer of wet grass several inches thick, then the camas bulbs in cloth sacks (piled about a foot deep), then a cat-tail or reed mat, another layer of wet grass, another mat, then dirt to finish filling the pit. A fire was built on top and kept burning.

Several hours before the bulbs were done the fire was scraped away, the dirt removed, and fresh meat was added, covered with green leaves and grass, the dirt was put back, and the fire rebuilt. When the meat was done the feast was enjoyed by all. Any left over camas was dried for later use.

Camas are dark brown when properly cooked, and delicious. If the timing wasn't right, and they over cooked, became mushy, they were made into soup, or formed into little cakes and dry baked. When dry, they would keep for several months, and could be used to flavor soup or stew.

Originally, before cloth sacks were available, the bulbs were cleaned and just spread loose, and about a foot deep on top of the wet grass.



Cross Cut View of Camas Pit



Preparing for the Feast

Mountain Tea

In addition to other edible plants and berries the women gathered mountain tea. Mountain tea is a shrub which grows in marshes in high meadows. It makes a reddish brew, and is served hot.



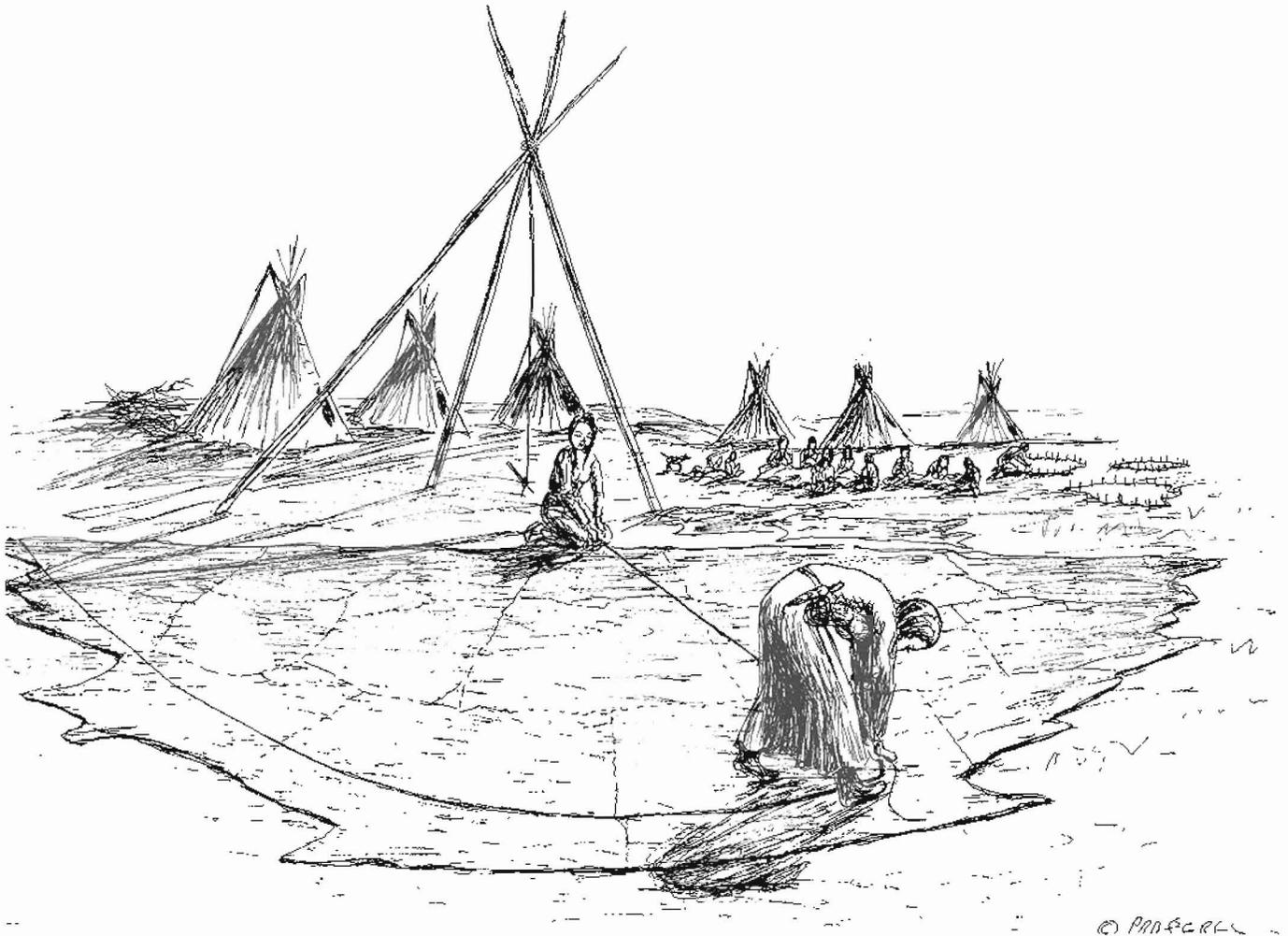


Mountain Tea

Making Tipis

After the buffalo skins were tanned and smoked (smoking made them water resistant) they were laid out on the ground. Then about ten women would sit down with the skins in their laps and sinew in their mouths (to keep it pliable). Working together, with their awls to punch holes, and the sinew for thread, they would sew the skins together using a close, tight, over and under stitch.

Once the required number of skins had been sewn together the now massive piece of leather was spread out flat and marked with the pattern of a large half circle, by means of one woman holding a rope about midpoint along one edge while the other grasped the opposite end of the rope, pulled it taut and held it with one hand while walking and drawing a half circle on the skin with charcoal held in the other hand. The leather was then cut on the charcoal mark, and smoke flaps were cut and sewn on.



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The Correct Measure



Making Tipis

Buffalo Pals

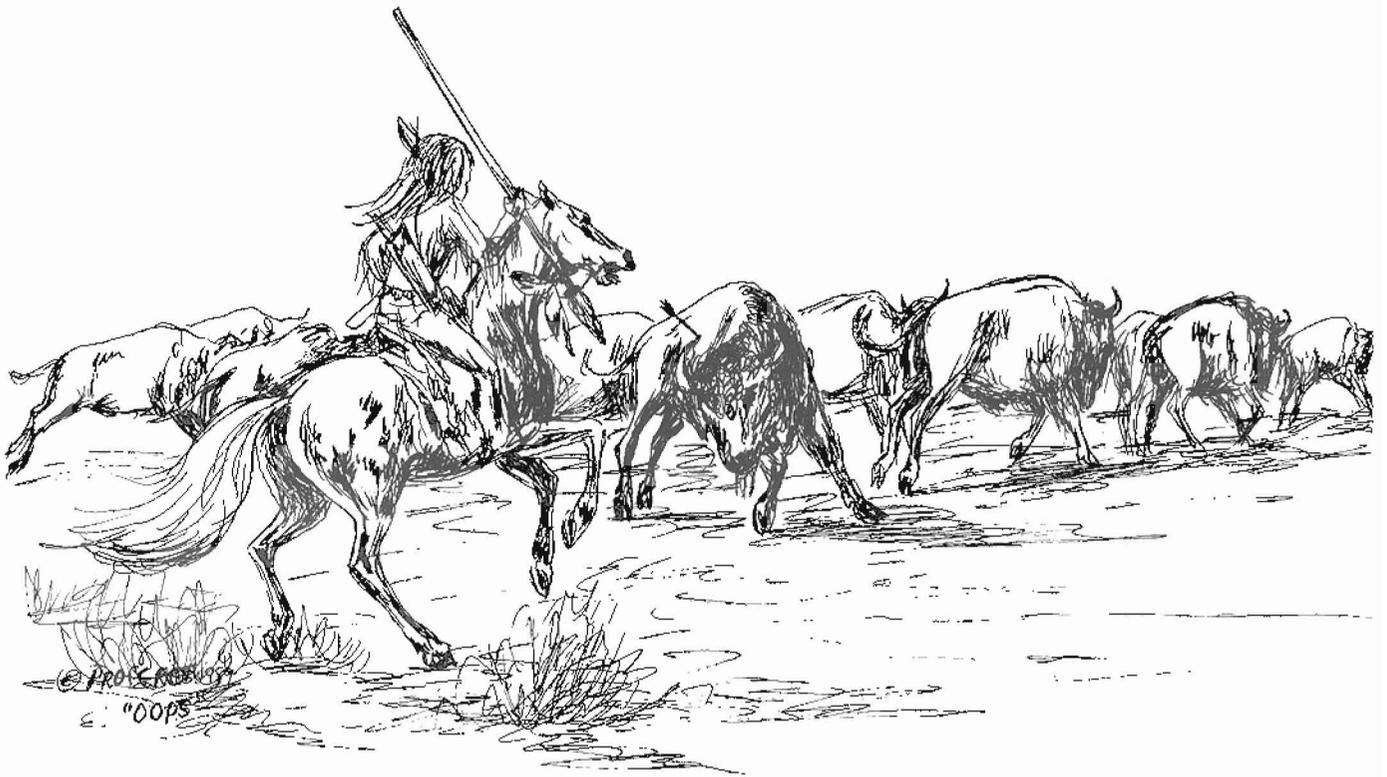
Buffalo were vital to the survival of the plains Indians, but they were also hunted by the Nez Perce. Not just for their meat and hides, but also for sport. And adventure.

There was also spiritual significance to the buffalo hunt.

Parties of Nez Perce would go east to the Montana plains on buffalo hunts that would last for up to five years. Some took their wives (they were polygamous) with them.

To provide adventure and excitement, a sport must also be dangerous, and nothing is more dangerous to a man on horseback than a wounded buffalo bull with sharp horns.

Man must always face the challenge of death or danger to feel alive.



Buffalo Hunt



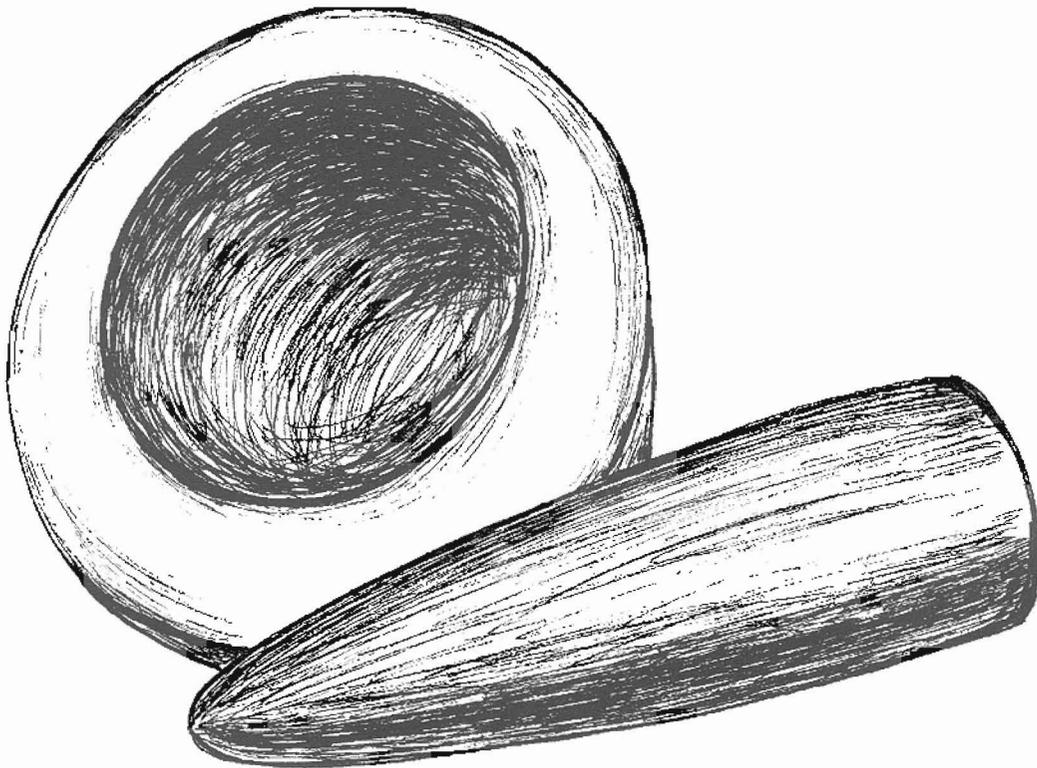
Buffalo Pals

Serving Spoons

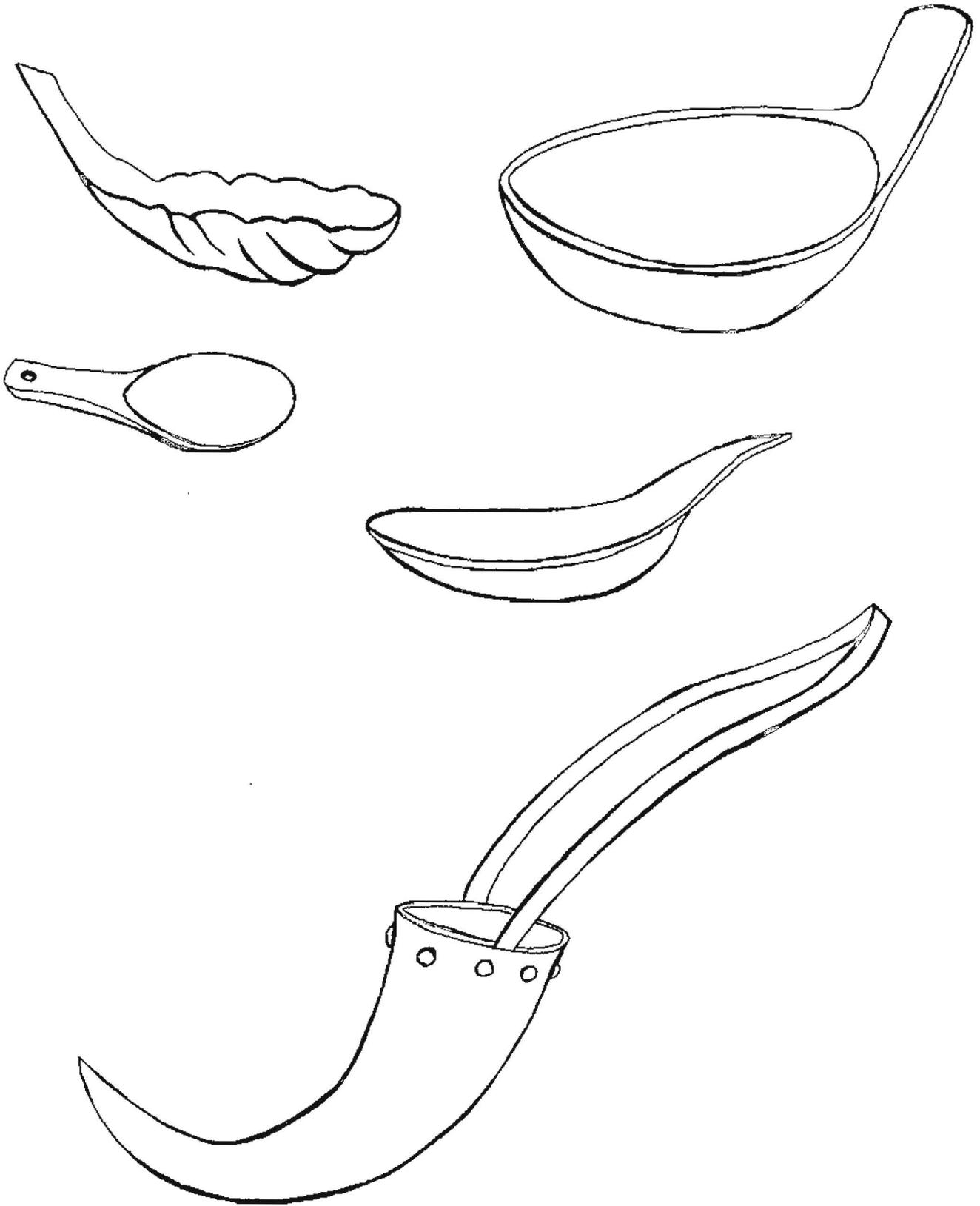
Before metal spoons there were horn spoons. Ceremonial dinners weren't served with just the fingers. Horn: buffalo, ram, mountain goat, was heated in boiling water until soft enough to be cut and bent into the desired shape.

Drinking horns were made from large buffalo horns, scraped smooth inside and scraped and polished on the outside.

Every household had a portable mortar and pestle made of shaped stone.



Mortar & Pestle



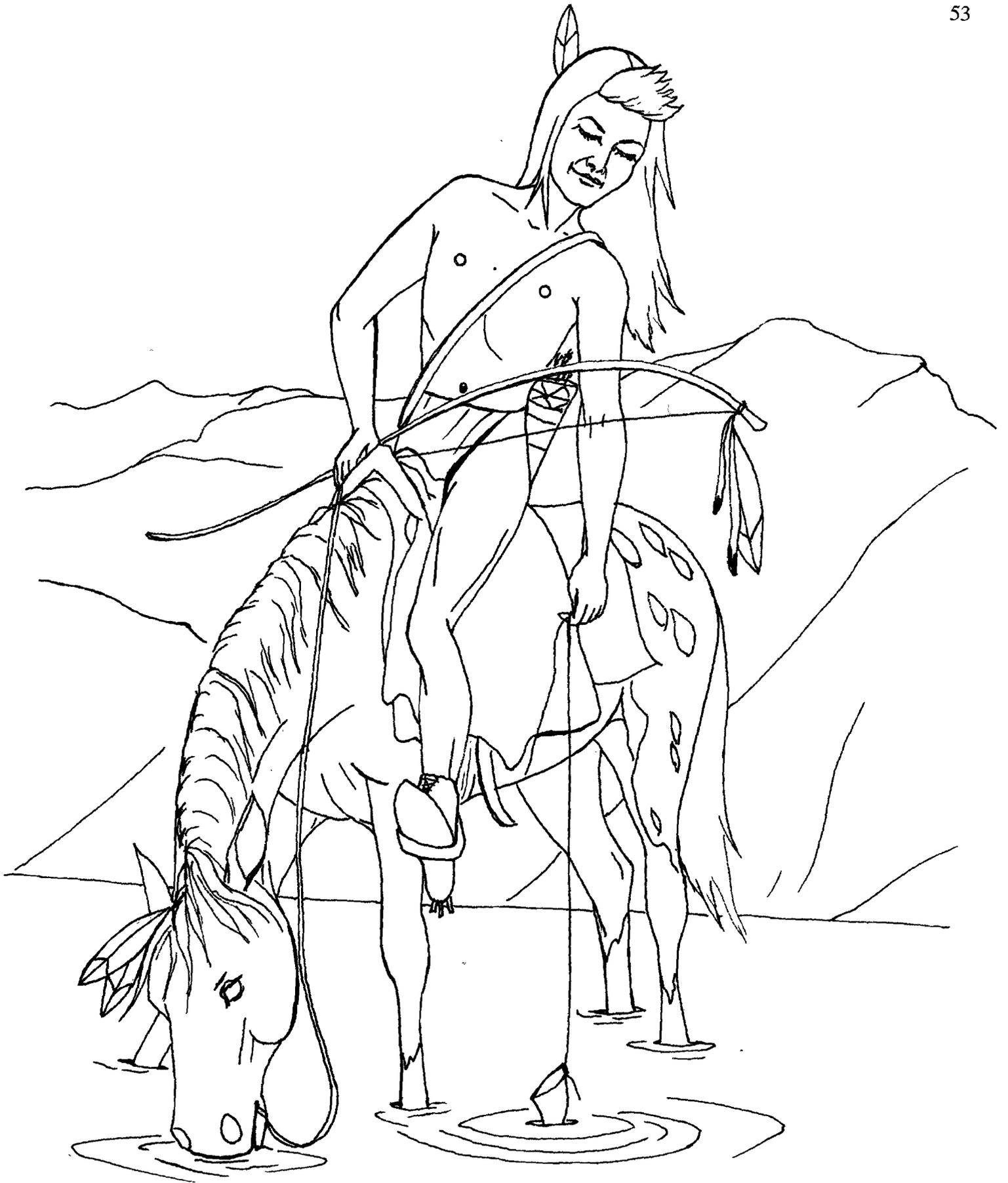
Serving Spoons & Drinking Horn

Refreshments

Tiny holes were cut on opposite sides of the rim of a drinking horn and a long loop of slender rope (rawhide string) tied into each hole. A hunter or warrior could thereby tie his drinking horn to his saddle, and could, without dismounting, dip himself a drink of water from a stream.



Refreshments

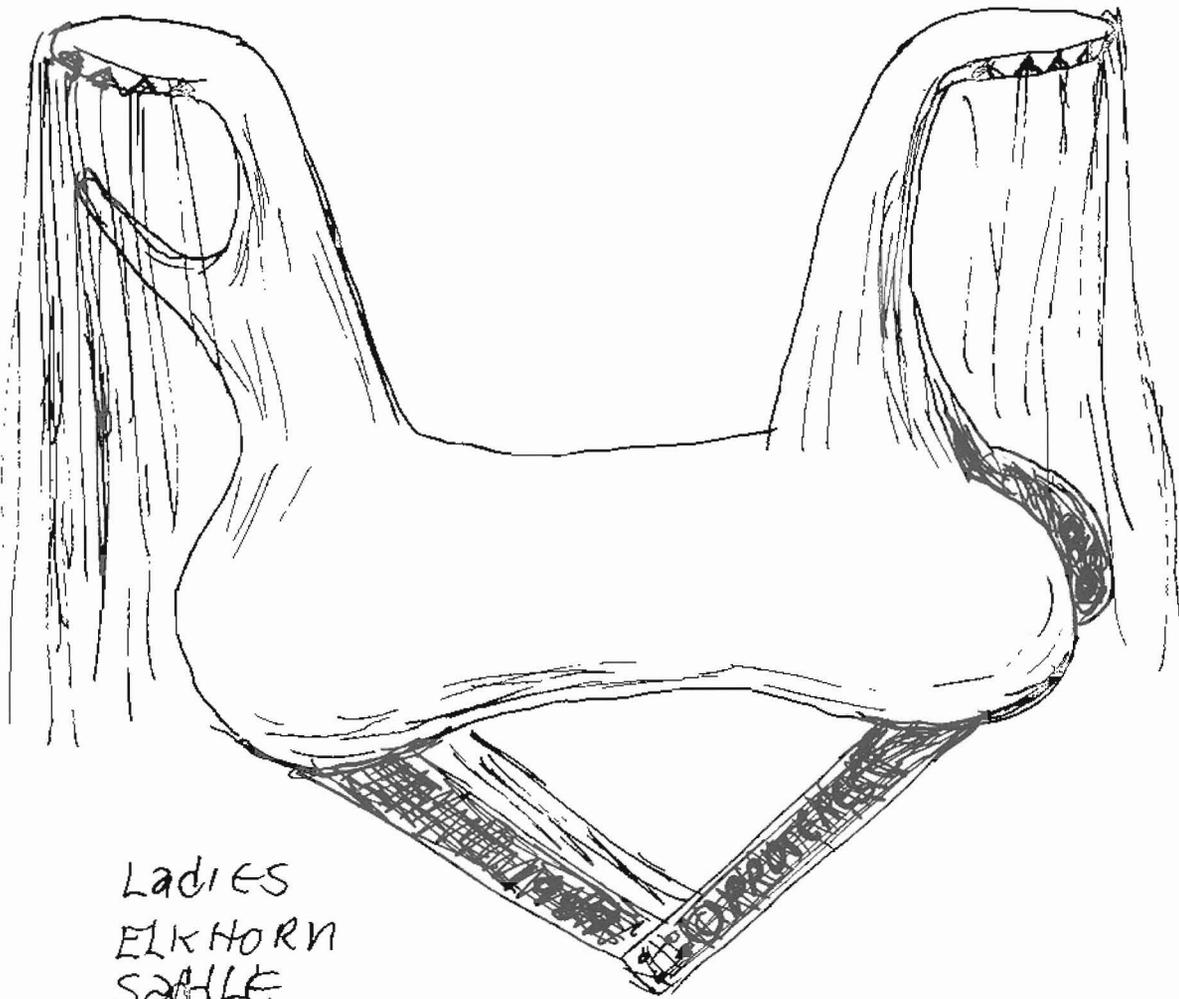


Drinking Horn

Women's Saddles

Both Nez Perce men and women used saddles when they rode. Women's saddles were made of similar materials and similar in design to a man's saddle, except the pommel and the cantle were both higher and more vertical, and there was a saddle horn on both the pommel and the cantle. A "hook" was left on the elkhorn just under the front horn, for hanging things. The whole thing was covered with buckskin, white being a favorite color. The horns were beaded and fringed. Furs were used for padding. A specially folded blanket was placed across the saddle prior to mounting, then unfolded for modesty, and to wrap over and protect the legs against brush. A quirt was always a part of the riding gear.

Women's saddles were designed so that a cradleboard and other things could be more easily tied on and leave the hands free to control the horse.



LADIES
ELKHORN
SADDLE

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Lady's Saddle

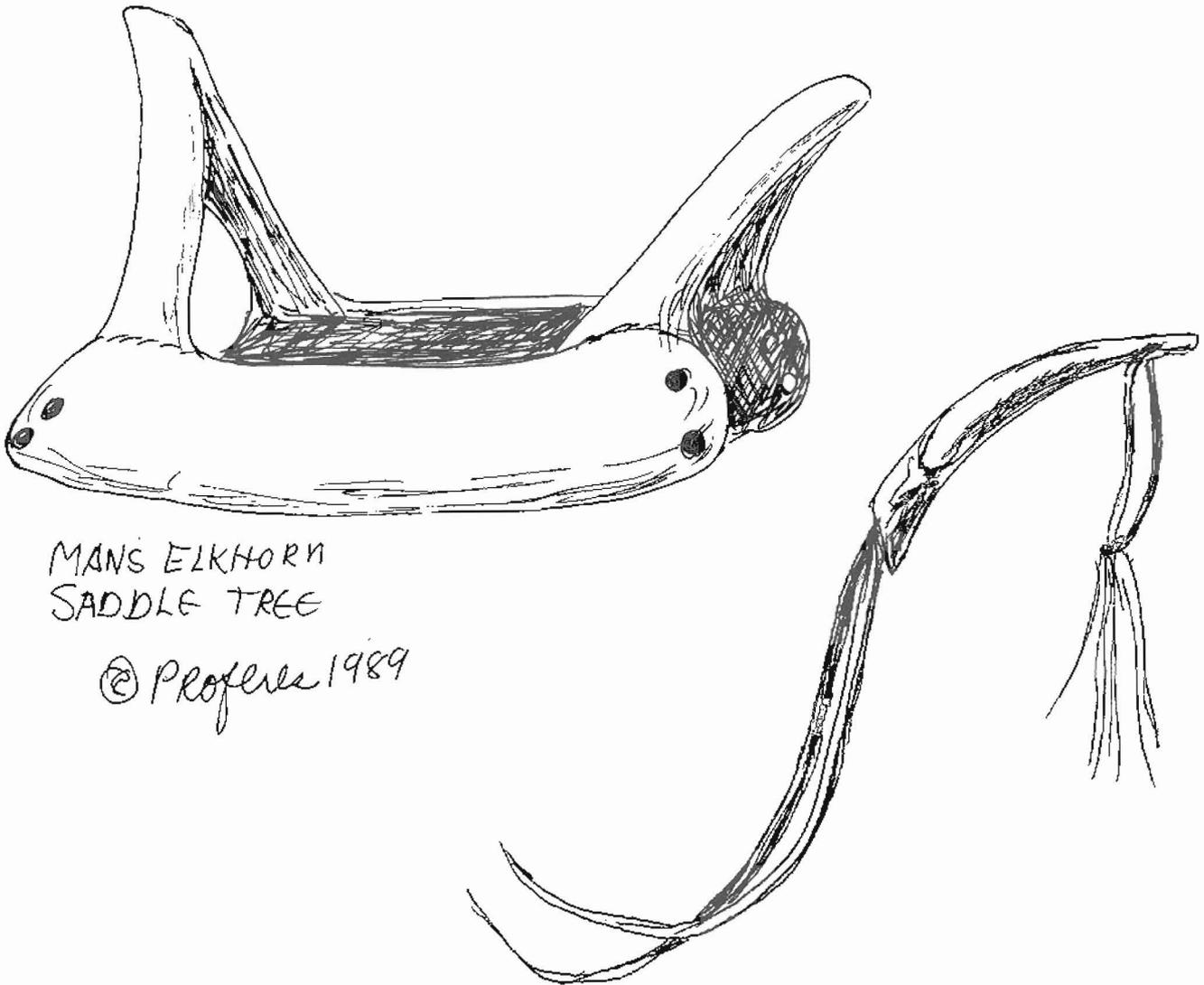


Lady's Saddle, on Appaloosa

Men's Saddles

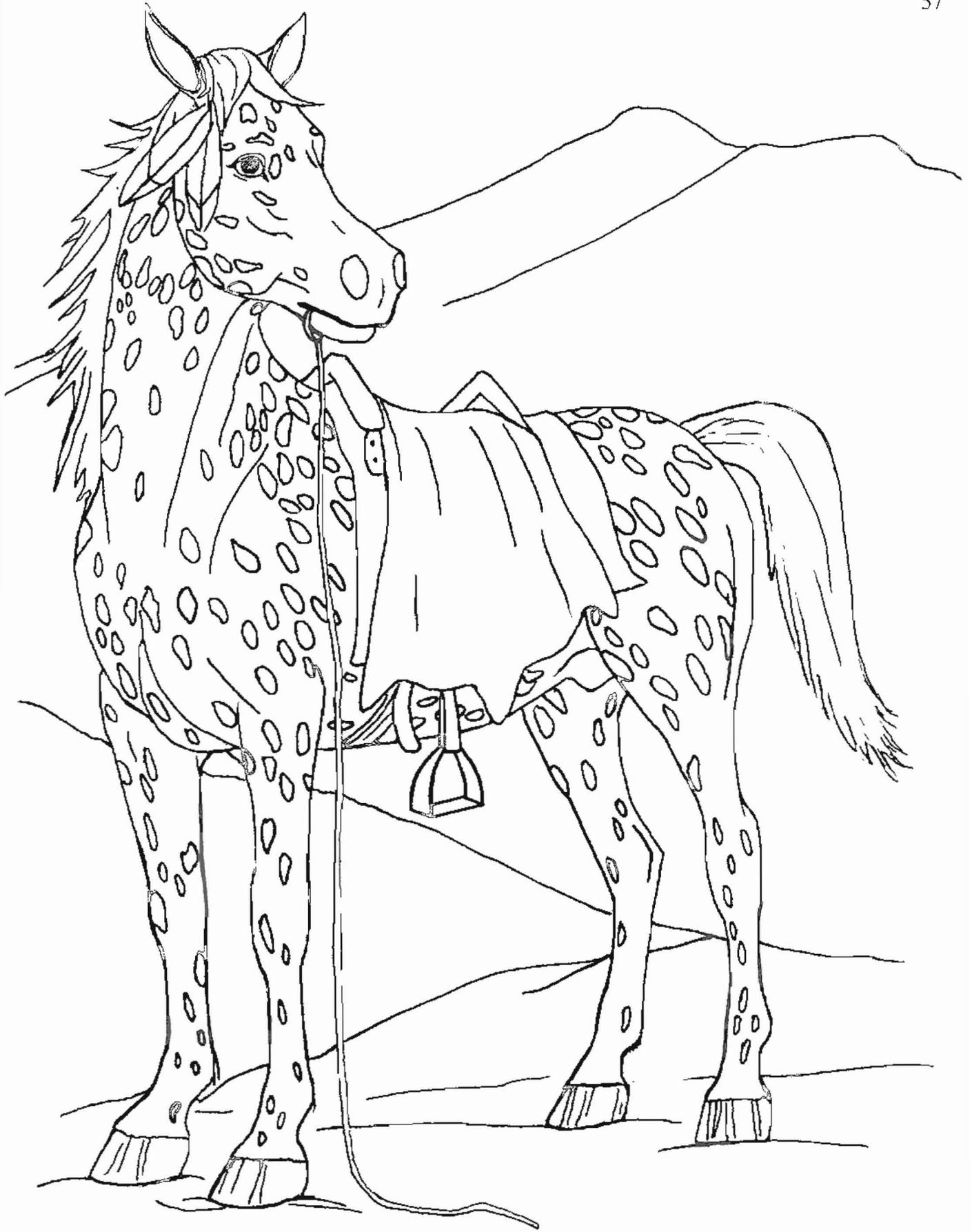
Men's saddles were designed very much like a U.S. Cavalry saddle, except that mostly forks of elkhorn were used for the pommel and cantle. The tree was carved of wood. Strips of leather fastened the saddle to the horse, and they were cinched underneath like any other saddle. Furs or buffalo robes were used as padding. Stirrups were made from the curl in a ram's horn.

Children learned to ride bareback, and adults could, but there's not a man anywhere who would prefer to ride bareback all day when saddles with stirrups were available to relieve pressure in the groin area.



MAN'S ELKHORN
SADDLE TREE

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Man's Saddle, on Appaloosa

Traditional Nez Perce Headgear

This headgear was in the form of a cap, with polished, split buffalo horns, or Rocky Mountain goat horns, anchored to a piece of round, thick rawhide underneath the cap, which was decorated with "fluffies"* , regular eagle tail feathers, hair, and ermine tails. The horns were stabilized by thin strips of decorated rawhide.

This man has his hair braided, then wrapped with strips of fur. His leather shirt is decorated with seed beads and tufts of tied hair. He is wearing a three strand, choker necklace of shell beads, and several strands of shell beads. He is also wearing a necklace made with grizzly bear claws.

* Fluffies are the long, soft feathers found at the base of the eagle's tail. They are called "prayer plumes" and are sacred. Wearing two of them indicates that the wearer is married.



FLUFFIES - 2 MARRIED
1 SINGLE

Fluffies



Clothing was made from tanned animal skins or, later, trade cloth. There were white and pale tan deer skins used for ceremonial purposes and special occasions. Their good clothes, which were dry cleaned with a special clay.

Good clothes were always beaded ("quilled" originally), and/or richly decorated with fringes, hair, furs, shells, and elk teeth. Elk teeth were widely used to decorate ladies' clothing.

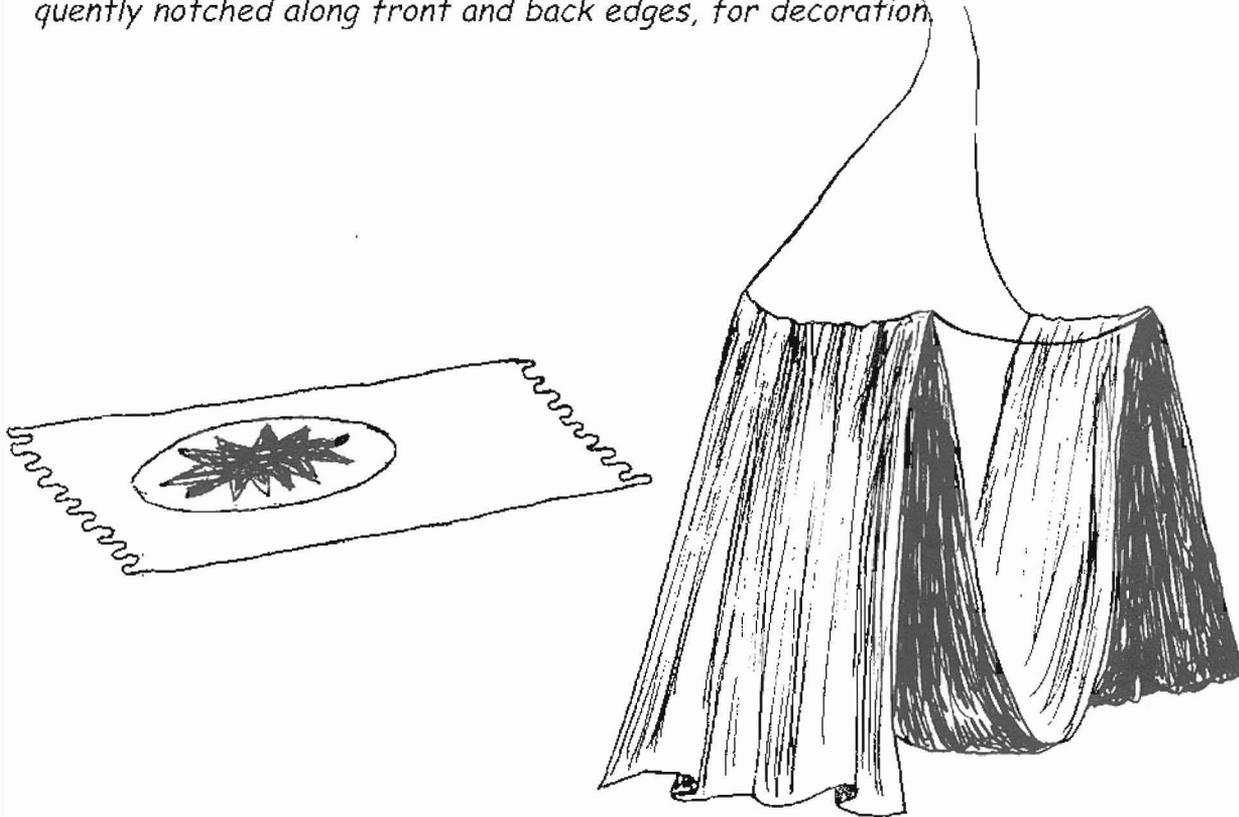
Patterns were sometimes cut into men's shirts, sometimes for spiritual reasons.

Many bead patterns were adopted and adapted from eastern plains Indians. Traditional Nez Perce bead work was of floral patterns. The war bonnet was also a plains Indian original, now worn even by the Apache.

The Nez Perce always wore clothing, the men (except in battle), and boys (except summer play activities) wore breech cloths, leggings (like cowboy chaps), and moccasins, topped with a long shirt, and optional belt. The breech cloth was one long piece of material that passed between the legs and was looped over a belt or skin string around the waist. It hung down both front and back. The front was sometimes beaded and decorated, but not for every day wear. Women and girls wore dresses, leggings (always, when it was cold), and moccasins. All wore blankets or blanket coats when it was cold. Women also wore a form of cape.

A functional head gear made by the Nez Perce from rawhide was the sunshade hat, pe-yaks-who-tzootz-who-tzootz.

It was cut from a single piece of rectangular rawhide. A zig-zag edged circle was cut from the center, leaving about an inch along each side. The points around the center hole stood up around the head like sharks' teeth. It was painted and frequently notched along front and back edges, for decoration.



Rawhide Sunshade & Breech Cloth

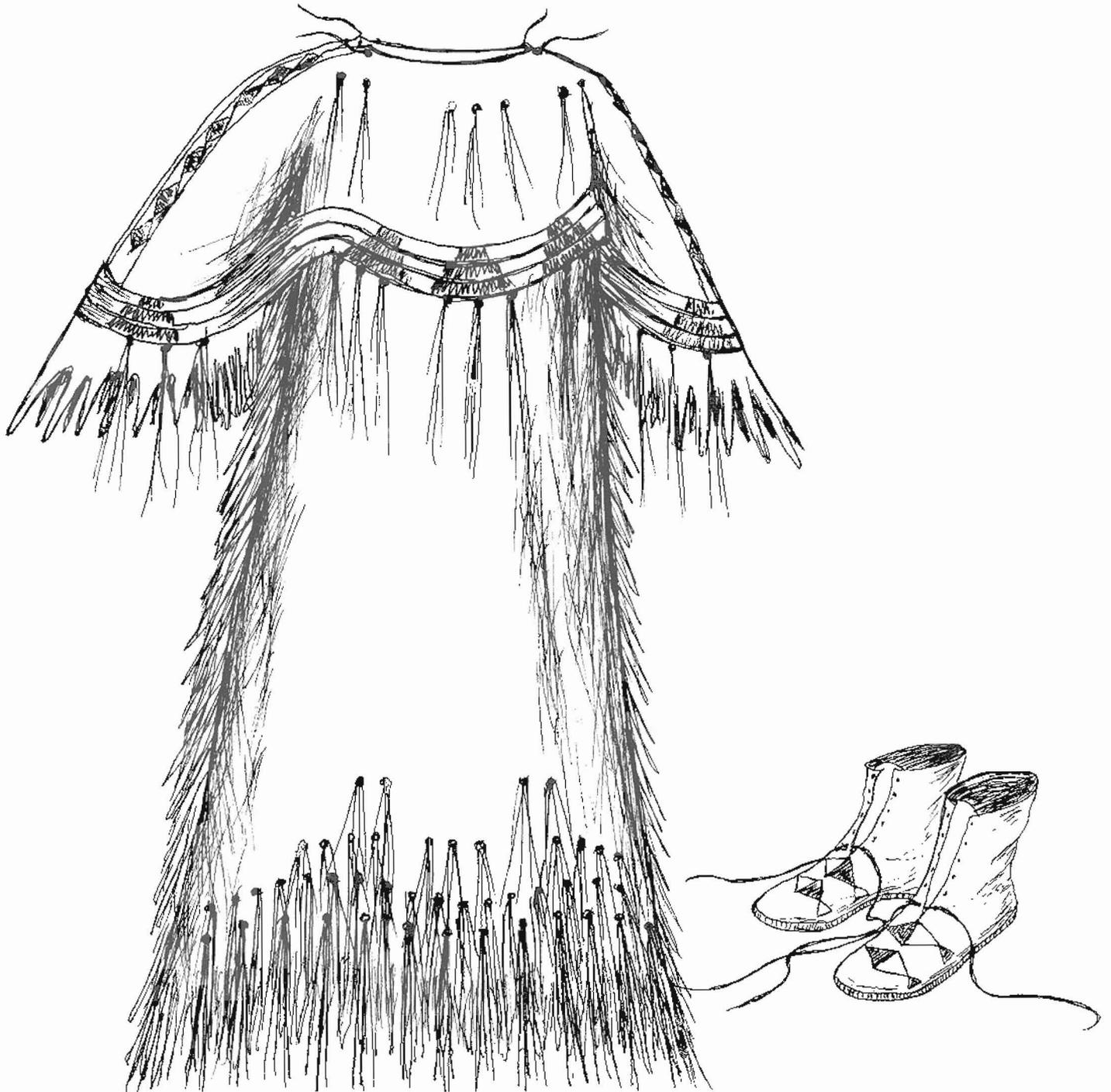


Man Wearing Sunshade and Buckskin Cut-out Shirt

Dry Cleaning with Clay

This lovely lady, who is wearing a traditional, woven, cornhusk hat, is using clay to clean a beaded leather shirt. Heavily beaded and decorated ceremonial clothes, good clothes, were worn only on special occasions, kept clean, and in good repair.

White clay was used on white leather, matching, colored clay on other leather garments. Damp clay was rubbed onto the stained area, allowed to dry and absorb the stain, then brushed off.



Two Skin Quill Dress & Moccasins



Dry Cleaning with Clay

Sweathouse (Wistitamo)

The sweat bath was an evening ritual with the Nez Perce. And was always done before hunting, fishing, games, or preparing for any important event.

Sweathouses were built to hold up to a dozen people. They were circular, dome shaped enclosures made from bent over green saplings and covered with cat-tail mats or animal skins.

A fire was built outside, and special rocks, gathered from the river bed, were placed in the fire to heat. The people would be stripped to their skins inside the sweathouse. There was a special ritual that went with sweating, and stories. Wisdom of old would be recited by the elders.

After everyone was seated the hot rocks were handed inside by using two green sticks. The hot rocks were placed in a rock lined pit. The door way was covered, and one of the people would dip a hand into a bucket of water and sprinkle water onto the hot stones to produce steam. Once in a while a rock would explode and someone would be injured. Special rocks were required, but errors in judgement sometimes happen.

After about ten minutes of steam and sweating, people would begin to emerge from the sweathouse and jump or slide into the cold water. Some switched themselves with handfuls of fine switches, sometimes herbal twigs, when it got hot, before emerging to get into the cold water. Men and boys were always first to use the sweathouse, then women and girls. Never together.

Mud baths were used for the sick. A round hole, four or five feet across, and better than a foot deep, would be dug along a creek where the soil would make good mud.

Water from the stream was channeled into the hole and hot rocks put into the muddy ooze to warm it as hot as could be endured, at which time the sick person got in, or was put in. The person being treated dozed or slept, if he could, while the bath cooled around him. He would then wash in the cold water of the creek. This was a cleansing ritual which was performed daily for about two weeks before health would return. The person undergoing treatment would often force himself to vomit by using or swallowing the end of a fine twig. This cleansed the inside as well as the outside of the body.

Fasting was also a part of the cleansing program employed to cleanse the body, as well as release spiritual powers.



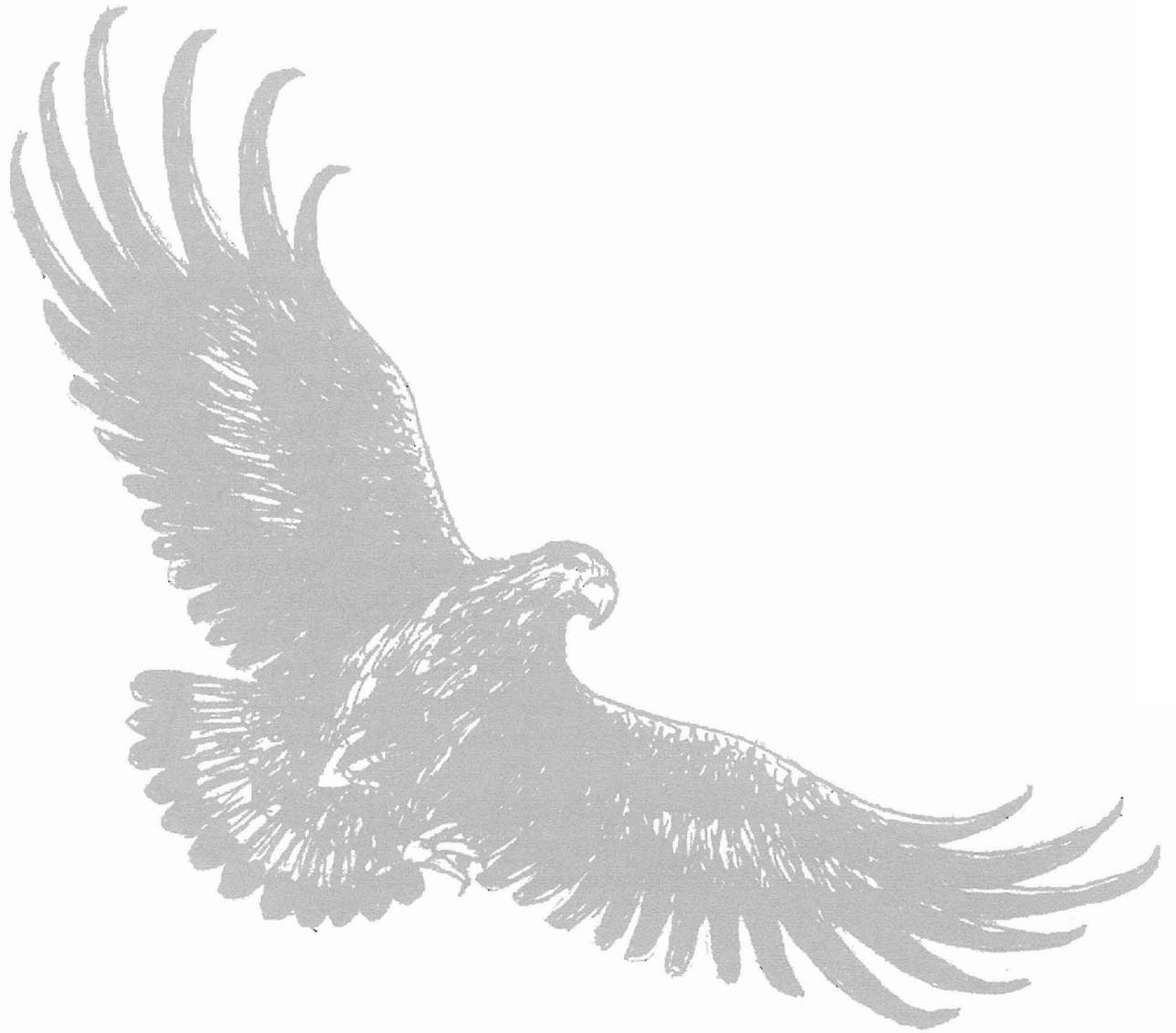
Mudbath



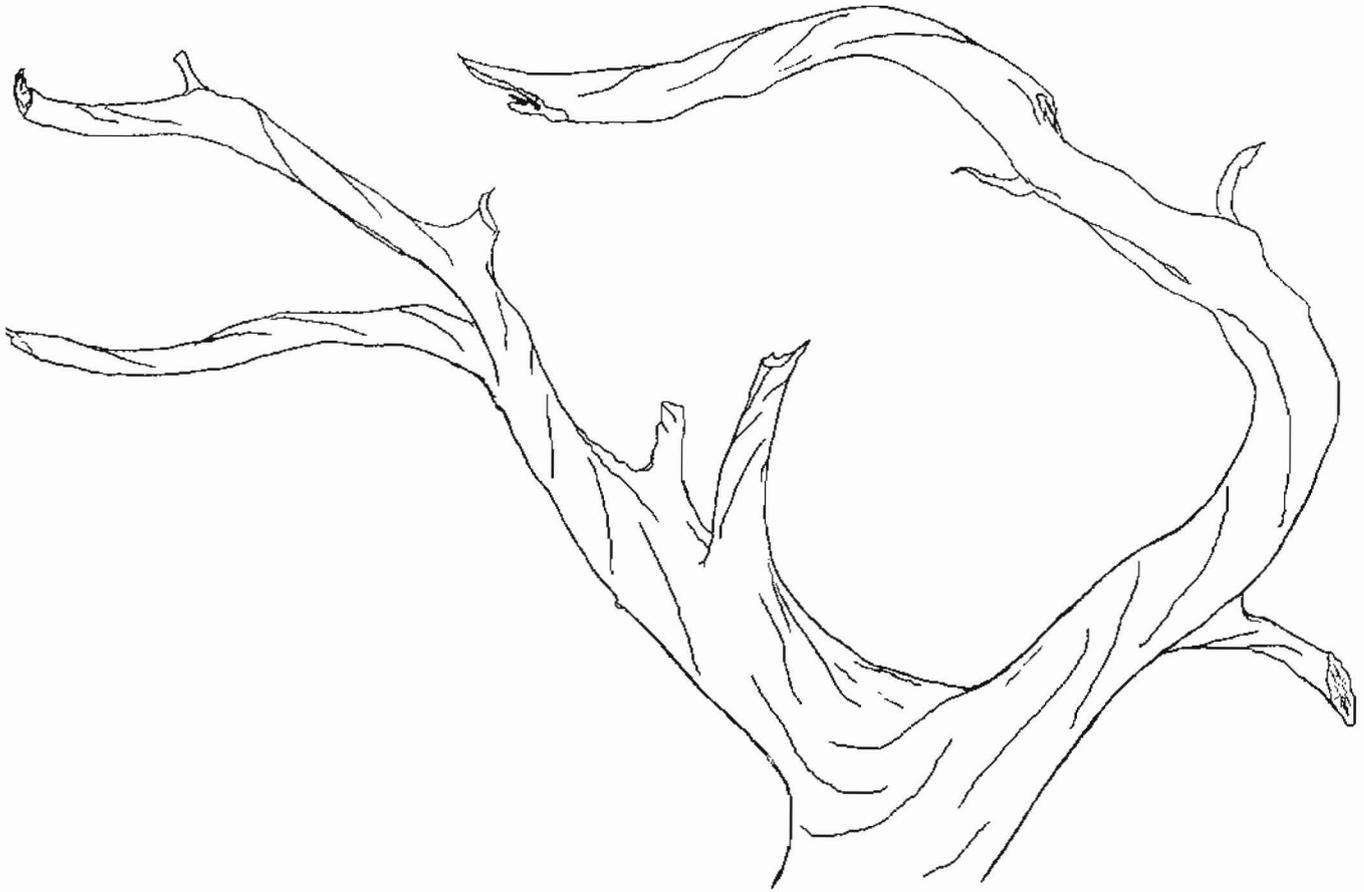
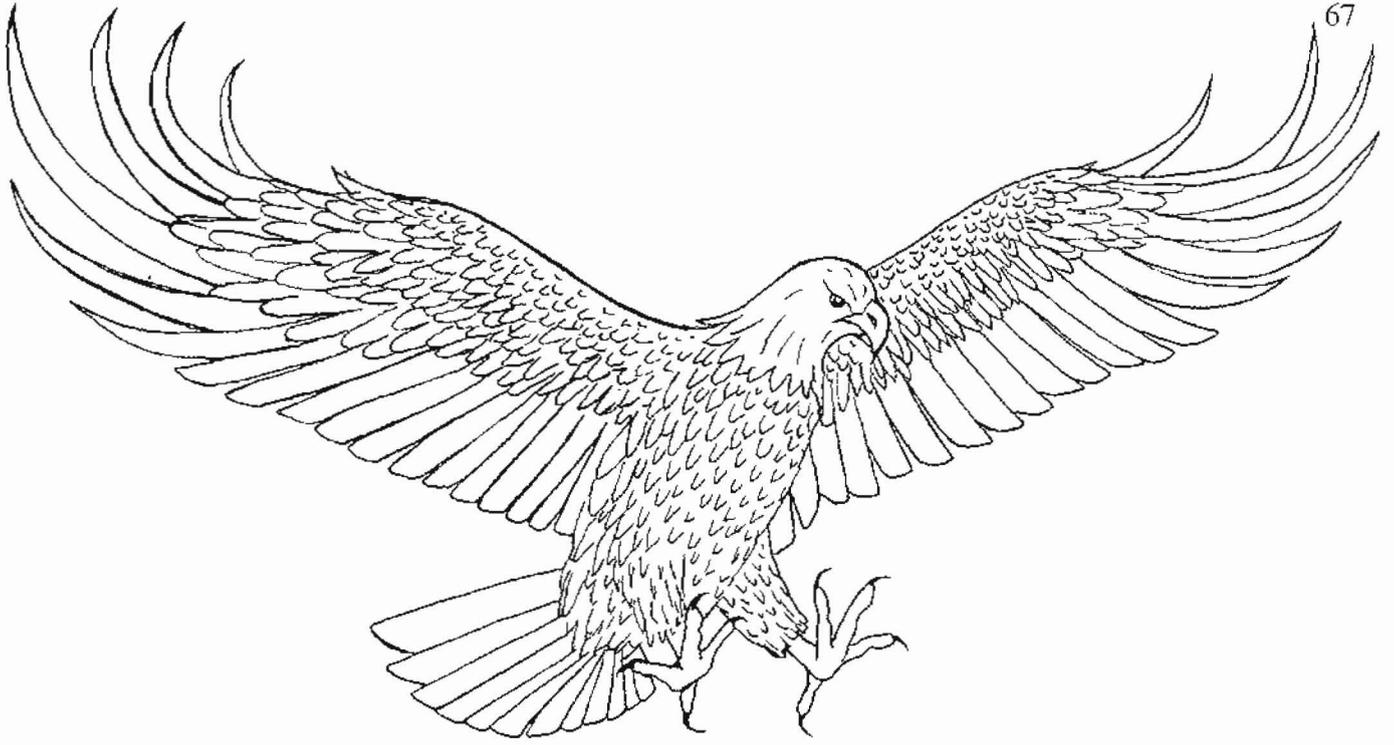
Sweathouse (Wistitamo)

Eagle

The eagle is sacred to the Nez Perce, it is a religious icon. As the highest flying bird, it can carry messages to the Great Spirit who rules above, and is most important in Vision Quest. Even its feathers are sacred.



Golden Eagle



Bald Eagle

Wolves

There is a spiritual bond between the Nez Perce Tribe and the wolf, who is Spirit Guide to them. Among the early Nez Perce the wolf was the icon who ranked even above the eagle.

All ancient peoples had bonds with animals, but those of mostly European descent no longer remember, even if some of them do feel a strange, unidentifiable stirring at the sound of the wolf's call in the night.

Some people do recognize though, that they have a mysterious kinship with certain animals. However, most never stop to consider, or think about this.





SMOKED SALMON (Or other fish.)

You can clean fish and cut into strips, sprinkle with sea salt, or not, and hang on a framework of small branches over a burned down fire of alder, maple, cherry or apple, and smoke gently for 10 to 12 hours. The way the old timers did it. Leave skin on.

Or: Cut fish into slabs or steaks (leave skins on). Mix 1/2 cup brown sugar and 1 cup sea salt with 2 tsp. black pepper, 1/2 tsp. ground cloves, 1/2 tsp. ground bay leaves, 1/2 tsp. allspice. Dredge fish with mixture, covering both sides, pack into a large crock, put in cool place (refrigerate, if you have room) for 3 to 4 hours. Remove from crock, rinse well in cold water, pat dry with paper towels, smoke for 10 to 12 hours, old fashioned way, or in a smoker or a barbeque. Use only brown sugar and salt, if you desire.

Or: Put 1 qt cold water into stainless sauce pan, add 3/4 cup apple cider vinegar, 3/4 cup sea salt, 3/4 cup brown sugar, 4 T. dark molasses, 1 T. black pepper, 1 tsp. ground cloves, 1 tsp. allspice, and 1 T. dried sweet basil leaves. Bring to boil and stir to dissolve sugar and salt and blend spices. Cool. Cut cleaned fish into chunks, pack into jars, pour cooled brine over fish, refrigerate over night, rinse well in cold water, drain, pat dry with paper towels, smoke 10 to 12 hours.

JERKY

Jerky can be made the same way that the old fashioned smoked fish is made, with plain salt, then hung in strips to be smoke dried, or you can add pepper and other seasonings to taste.

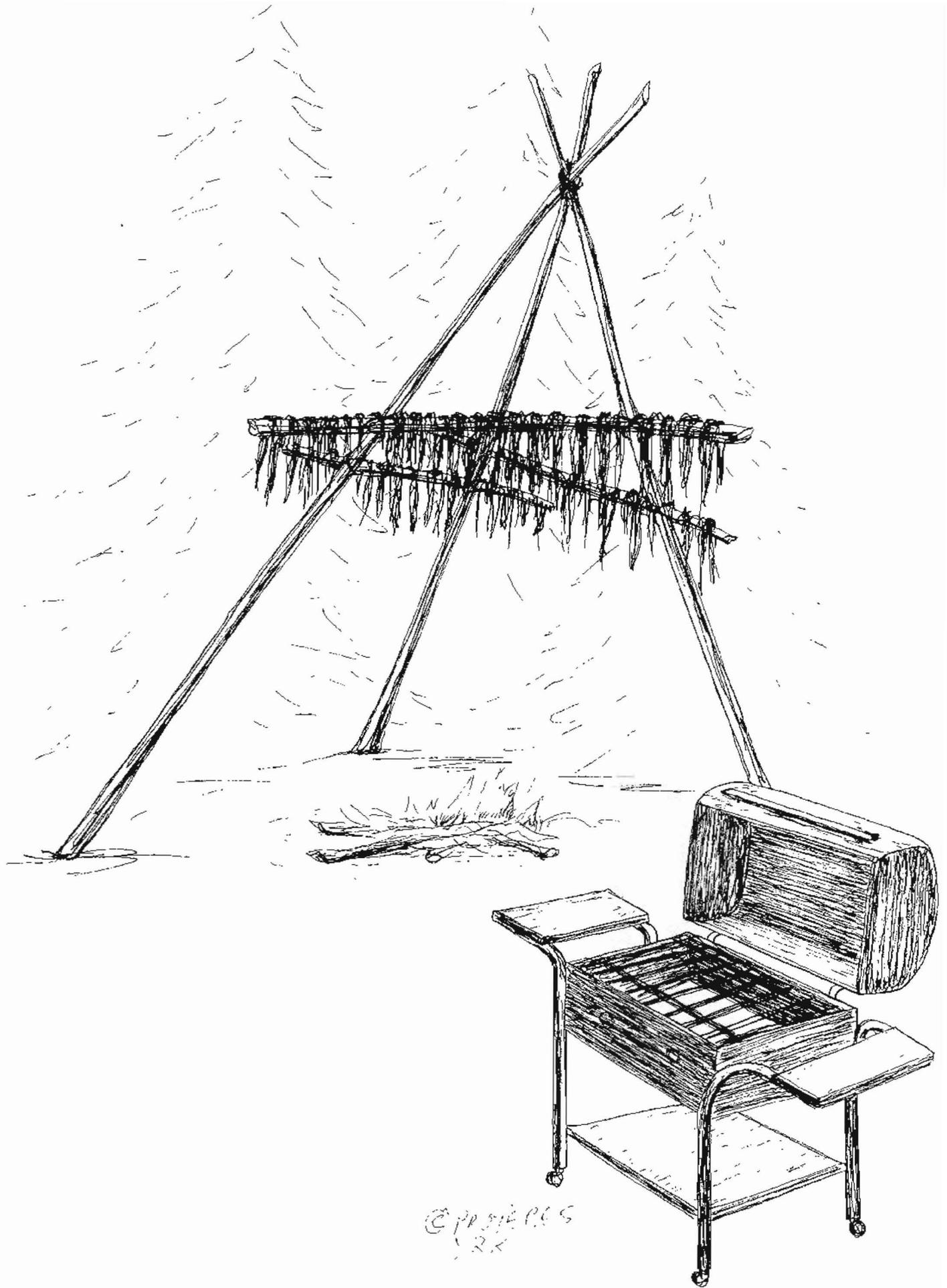
The easiest way to make jerky is in your kitchen, in the oven (or smoke it in your barbeque). Here's how:

First, mix your seasoning: 3/4 cup MORTON'S tenderquick, 3/4 cup brown sugar, 1T. black pepper, and 2 tsp. garlic powder. You will also need some liquid smoke if you use the oven.

Next, cut meat into thin strips. You can do this easily if you put fresh meat in the freezer for a couple of hours or so, or use frozen meat that is partially thawed (actually just beginning to thaw), meat must be very firm to cut. Use a sharp knife. I prefer New York or petite steaks.

Use a 9X13X2 glass dish, sprinkle powder evenly onto bottom of dish. Then spread one layer of sliced meat, brush on, very lightly, a spare amount of liquid smoke (if you use oven), and sprinkle a thin coat of season mix on top, put down another layer of meat, brush lightly with liquid smoke, then sprinkle on another layer of season mix. Repeat until all meat is seasoned. The thicker the slices, the more season mix you need, Try Worcestershire sauce, it adds zing. Brush this on.

Cover with plastic and refrigerate for 12 hours. Rinse well with cold water, lay out on paper towels. Pat dry, arrange single layers on cookie sheets (not touching) and bake at 150° for 3 to 7 hours. The longer you bake it, the harder and drier it becomes. If you use barbeque leave out liquid smoke and smoke as you would salmon, over a fire.



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Treaties and Sovereign Nations

The treaties and all the trouble they generated were the direct cause of not only the war of 1877, and a division of the Nimiipu, but hard feelings between them and their white neighbors even now.

It is apparent that most white people do not know that *the U.S. did not conquer the Nez Perce Nation. Nor did the U.S. conquer all Nez Perce neighboring tribes.*

These native peoples had possession of the northwest lands, this was a PERMANENT USE PERMIT issued by the Great Spirit Chief. The land was theirs to manage in the same sense that the children that were born to them were given to them to guide and care for, but they did not own them.

All children belong to the Great Spirit Chief, as does all the land.

Man does not even own his own body. He uses it, or abuses it, then it goes back to the earth from whose elements it was made. Man has *no power* over this. Man is not the boss.

Treaties came first, the war, with only a part of the Nez Perce Tribe, came much later.

It was the U.S. who wanted the treaties, because they wanted the land. The land they had no real claim to. Land they had neither purchased nor conquered by subduing the native peoples. White men from the U.S. had moved in, and while the area was designated as U.S. Territory, the U.S. had made no deal with the people who had been living there for untold centuries.

The Nimiipu, the largest group of native people in the northwest, recognized that as a Sovereign Nation, they had the power to deal.

They gave to the U.S. certain areas of land, and certain privileges. BUT THEY RETAINED CERTAIN PRIVILEGES ON THE LAND GIVEN.

This is why a member of the Nez Perce Tribe (subject of course to tribal law that forbids wanton waste) can hunt or fish any time he or she pleases, on the present reservation and in the usual, accustomed places off the reservation. And a non-tribal member must wait for the season, buy a license, and sometimes draw lots when game is scarce.

A deal is a deal. *These rights belonged to the native peoples, and they kept them.* They got little else for what *was once theirs.*

The fact that the non-treaty Nez Perce were forced to fight in a war that was forced upon them does not void these original treaty agreements.

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