

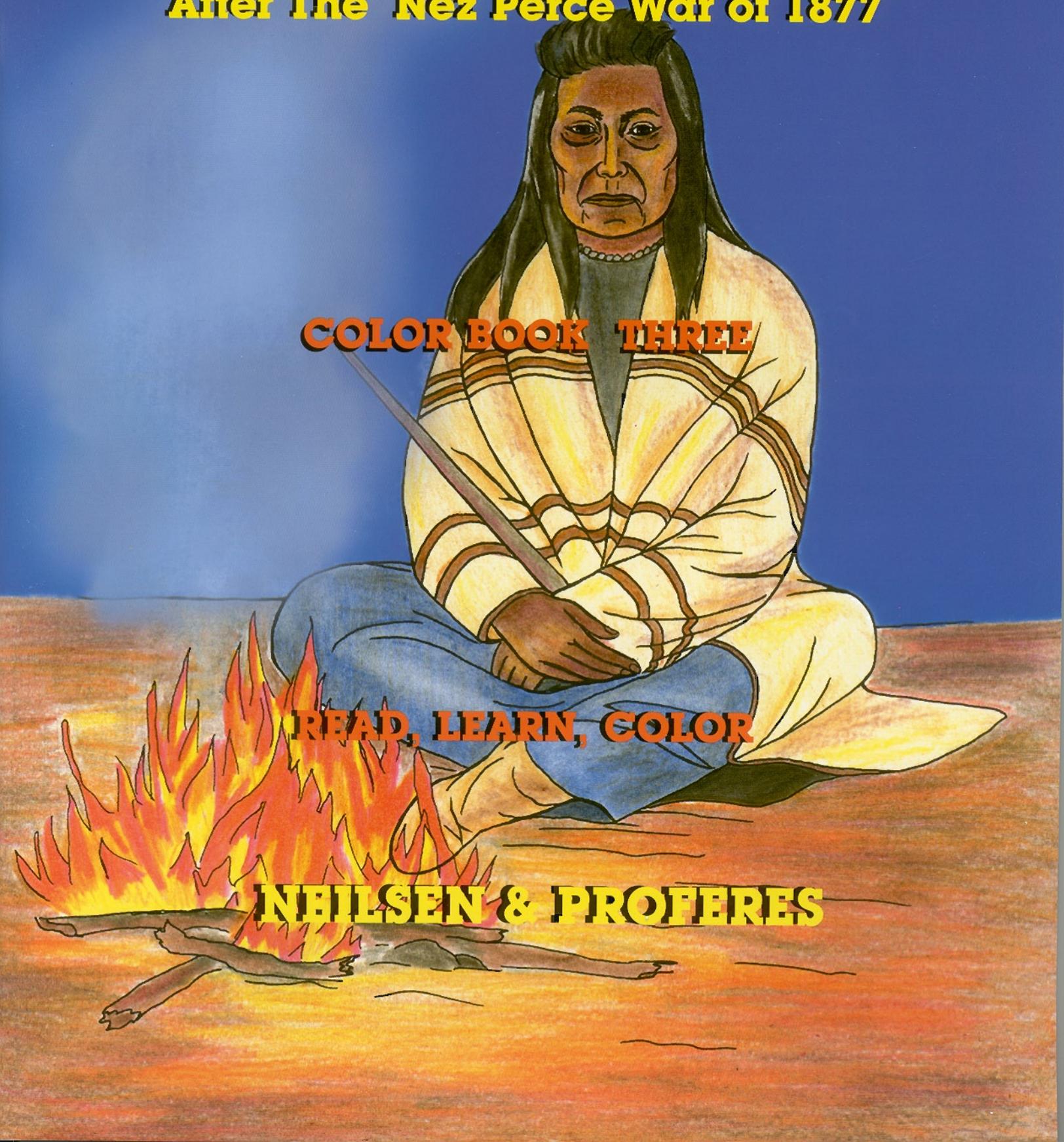
THE NIMIIPU

After The Nez Perce War of 1877

COLOR BOOK THREE

READ, LEARN, COLOR

NEILSEN & PROFFERES



The Nez Perce War of 1877

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 Nez Perce, 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.* The U.S. did not conquer the Nez Perce Nation.

The treaties, or rather *broken 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. Powerful, greedy men wanted what the Nez Perce had reserved for themselves at the first treaty in 1855, and the government listened. Later, gold was discovered near Pierce, Idaho, close to where the Nez Perce saw their first white men, Lewis & Clark, in 1805. Now the rabble as well as the powerful demanded Nez Perce land.

Joseph and his people had already submitted to General Howard's demand that they give up their lands and come to the reservation in Idaho, in spite of the fact that they had signed no new treaty, though other Nez Perce had signed for them. Joseph had protested, saying that others could not take away their right to make their own deals. All these people (Joseph's band was not the only one ordered to give up their land) became known as the *Non-Treaty Nez Perce*. Joseph's band had left the Wallowas, crossed flood swollen rivers, and arrived on the Camas Prairie near Cottonwood, Idaho, and the women were digging camas when two young men, astride a frisky horse, accidentally rode over a pile of camas bulbs and destroyed them. The angry husband told the young man piloting the horse that if he were so brave, why didn't he go kill the white man who had murdered his father. The young man accepted the challenge, and with two cousins rode off to do exactly that. The man was not at home, so they rode on, and killed every white man they could find who had killed or abused Nez Percés. Joseph was away, down on the Salmon River, butchering beef.

All the Nez Perce were held responsible for the actions of the young men. Thus began this war. The Nez Perce moved down to the bottom of White Bird Creek, where the young men had killed the local store owner and burned the store. They decided to send a peace party with a white flag to intercept the Army before soldiers could fire into their camp.

The Army came. Early in the morning of June 17th, they fired on the peace party with the white flag. Thus began a war that followed the Nez Perce across Idaho, into western Montana, back down into Idaho, up to Montana, across Yellowstone Park in Wyoming, back into central Montana, and north to the Bear's Paw Mountains, where they camped on Snake Creek, 1300 miles from home, and fought the last battle before Joseph surrendered. And he was the only chief left alive to do so besides Chief White Bird, who elected to leave on foot with his tiny band of people rather than surrender. White Bird made it to Chief Sitting Bull's village in Canada, as did several of Joseph's people, including his young daughter, known as Sarah.

Joseph and those with him were promised that they would be returned to Idaho, but they were sent to a swamp at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas where half of them contracted malaria. Many adults and children died. Not one new born survived in exile. They were forced to live in filth. Their condition was so bad that Joseph said, "The Great Spirit Chief who rules above seemed to be looking some other way and did not see what was being done to my people."

THE NIMIIPU

After The Nez Perce War of 1877

COLOR BOOK THREE

NEILSEN & PROFERES



BIRCH HILL BOOKS

Lewiston, Idaho

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E-mail: proferes@lewiston.com

Websites:

www.proferes.com

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Artwork by Jo Proferes

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Front cover: *The Last Dream, colored with Crayola Color Pencils. Colored by Janessa Neilsen.*

Dedication:

To Joseph and Sarah, his daughter.

To the great Sioux, Chief Sitting Bull, who was far more compassionate and humane than he has ever been represented as being, who has been credited with atrocities and black deeds he never committed, and without whose aid many Nez Perce who escaped to Canada would have perished.

To Yellow Wolf, who survived until August, 1935, personally documented the events of the Nez Perce War of 1877, and gave us greater insight into customs and philosophy, then told the story of this war (and much of early Nez Perce legend and verbal history) to L.V. McWhorter, a white man.

To L.V. McWhorter, that white man, who preserved and published that history and that story so the world would know who the Nez Perce were and what happened to them.

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. In this book in the drawing "*Marriage*" neither the priest nor the drummers are represented.

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 any of 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 Thurlkill, 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.

After the War of 1877

Chief Joseph's daughter, Sarah, along with several others, escaped to Canada the first day of the attack by Miles cavalry, Sept. 30, 1877. Either the evening of the day Joseph surrendered, Oct. 5, 1877, or the night before, Chief White Bird and over twenty people walked away and made their way to Chief Sitting Bull's village in Canada, where they were greeted by the one's who had fled the first day of the battle.

Four hundred eighteen Nez Perce left Snake Creek on October 7, with the wounded on travois. Six days later they arrived at the Missouri River, where the wounded and the sick were put on steamboats.

The others headed overland toward Ft. Keogh, 200 miles southeast of Snake Creek. They arrived there on October 23, relieved to have reached their destination. They were to stay here for the winter, then be returned to Idaho. Only this was not to be. General Sheridan overrode Howard's promise to the Nez Perce and shipped them to Ft. Leavenworth in November, where they spent the winter in a swamp. All the babies born that winter died, as did twenty-one adults.

In July, 1878, the U.S. Army turned the Nez Perce prisoners over to the BIA, who moved them to the Quapaw Reservation in Oklahoma, by train, where they spent another year. They called it *Eeikish Pah*, The Hot Place. They were still plagued by the malaria they had contracted in the Ft. Leavenworth swamp. Again, all newborns died, and older children and adults continued to perish. "The Great Spirit Chief who rules above seemed to be looking some other way and did not see what was being done to my people," said Joseph.

Joseph, with Yellow Bull and Ad Chapman (as interpreter), went to Washington D.C. in the spring of 1879 to plead for their return to Idaho. Congress did not grant them their wish. Instead of Idaho, they were moved to the Ponca Reservation near what is now Tonkawa Oklahoma. 1880 was better for the little group of Nez Perce at Shikaskia Creek on the Ponca Reserve. They were given 100 head of cattle (to start a herd), pigs, and other livestock, and their gardens did well, but there was frustration. During the next three years they had four different Indian agents, and their neighbors moved in on their land, and stole their cattle.

Then things began to change. Three Christian Nez Perce came from Idaho to preach and teach, and open a school. Joseph's visit to Congress began to pay off. National organizations began to support the Nez Perce cause, paving the way to return them to the northwest. In 1881 General (he had been promoted) Miles appealed to the President of the United States to return the Nez Perce to the northwest. Finally, in 1882, Congress approved a transfer of part of the group to Idaho: two old men, widows and orphans. Twenty nine, in all. They returned in May, 1883. In 1884, Joseph and two hundred eighty two Nez Perce remained on the Ponca Reserve. In July Congress passed a bill to remove them to the northwest.

It was in May, 1885 when Joseph and those remaining, who wanted to return to the northwest, were loaded onto a train at Arkansas City and shipped to Wallula, Washington. From here, most of them went home, or to stay with relatives.

Joseph and a few faithful followers went to Nespelem, Washington. He wasn't wanted by the Christian Nez Perce at Lapwai, in Idaho, and the white people who occupied his land in the Wallawas in northeastern Oregon refused to let him return there.

Joseph had lost both his wives, and all his children, except the daughter known as Sarah Moses, who was married to a Christian Nez Perce and never permitted to see him. She died young, of consumption, having lost all the children born to her, and is buried at Spalding, Idaho. Hers was a tragic, unhappy life. Joseph married two more women, one with children. He didn't father any more of his own, and when told by an Indian Agent that having more than one wife was illegal, he is reported to have told the agent, "You tell my wives, you tell them which one goes." He kept both.



Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull was chief of the Hunkpapa band. He was a mystic, a medicine man who received guidance through dreams and visions. He was a fierce and courageous warrior who was willing to endure great physical suffering to gain spiritual power.

Opening his village and taking in the Nez Perce who had escaped from Snake Creek was not, of course, his first act of compassion. At seventeen he had killed a woman to end her suffering. She was a captive Crow woman who had been judged as immoral by the Sioux women, who had strict moral codes. They had tied her to a tree, piled dry brush around her, and set her on fire. The young Sitting Bull killed her with bow and arrow.

Sitting Bull had, himself, just arrived in Canada in May, 1877, having decided it wise to leave after the Battle of the Little Bighorn. It was not he who had killed Custer. He had spent a lot of his time during that battle, which he had seen in a vision, away from it, "making medicine". He already knew the outcome of the battle long before June, 22, 1876. What he was worried about was a warning from the vision, a warning that if the warriors took the soldiers' guns and horses after the battle it would bring a terrible curse to the Sioux.

Hunting was not good in Canada (still he shared with the Nez Perce, some of whom stayed about three years), and he moved back to the United States after four years. He had asked the Canadian government for help, but was denied, so rather than let his people starve, he returned. Many of his people had already returned by this time. The warriors had, against his warnings, taken the dead soldiers' horses and guns. The curse had started, and from here, it was all downhill. In the vision he had seen the end, and knew even his own fate. Sitting Bull surrendered his rifle and spent the next two years at Fort Randall. Then he was persuaded to join a wild west touring show where he was billed as "The Slayer of General Custer". A little later he joined Buffalo Bill Cody's wild west show. He and Cody became good friends, but Sitting Bull didn't stay. Like Chief Joseph, he wanted justice for his people. He, too, traveled to Washington, D.C. Nothing was done. None of their lands were returned. They, too, suffered a shrinking reservation. As one elderly Sioux remarked, "...White men have made us many promises but kept only one: they promised to take our land and they took it."

In 1889 there was a new religion among Indian peoples. It originated in Nevada and was known as the Ghost Dance Religion, and it was one that white men feared.

The prophecy of this new religion foretold the passing of the white man and the return of the country to the Indian nations. Sitting Bull was accused of being the "high priest" of this movement and was arrested. He had tried it and found it lacked the power he already had in his own "medicine". He had not been impressed.

Sitting Bull was killed by a Sioux policeman. The rest of his vision was soon to be fulfilled. By this time Miles had become a general. He had had a hand in the last dealings with Sitting Bull, which led, in a matter of weeks, to the tragedy at Wounded Knee. The prophecy of Sitting Bull's vision had been fulfilled. Truly, the heart of the Sioux was buried at Wounded Knee.



Coupstick



Sitting Bull

Traditional Warbonnet

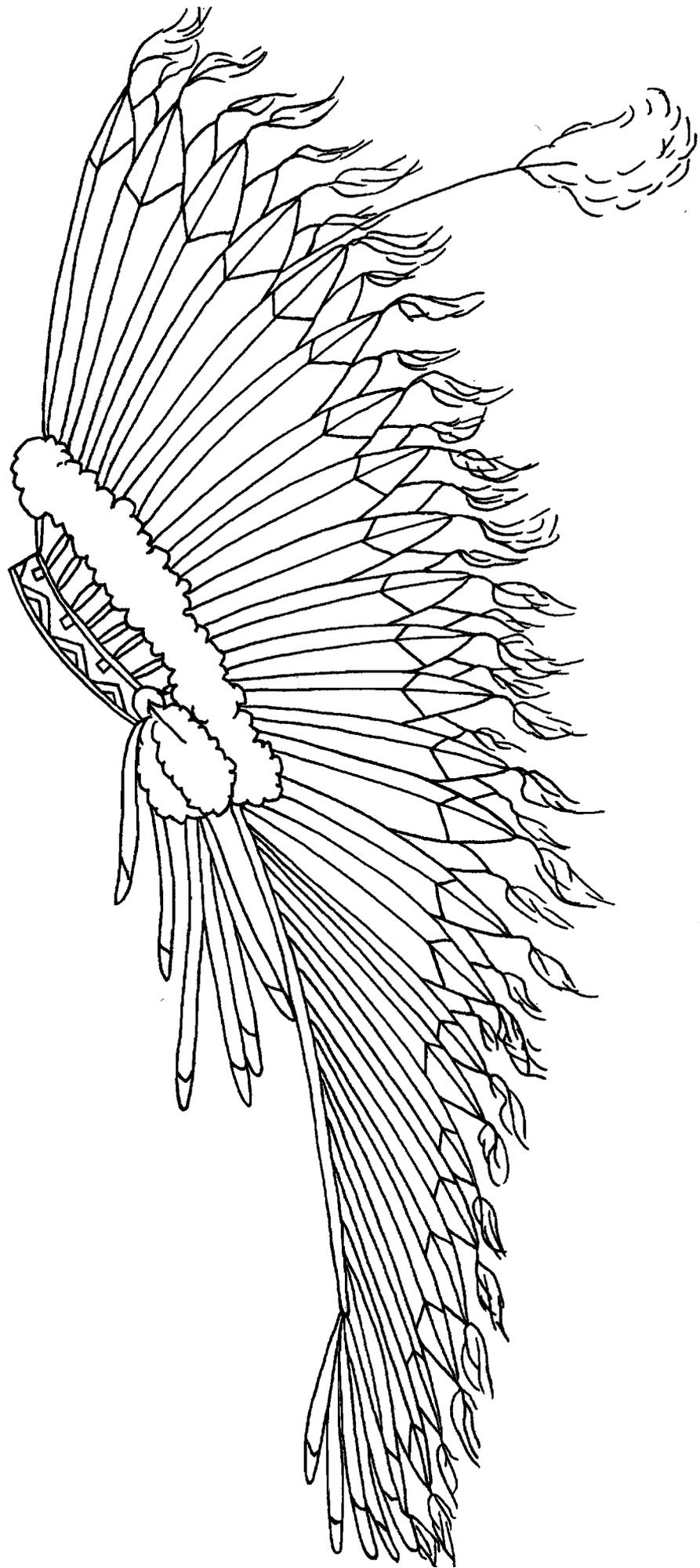
The warbonnet, worn first by the plains Indians and later adopted by many Indians (especially for ceremonial dress), was made mostly from the white, dark-tipped tailfeather of the golden eagle.

Feathers were earned for great deeds during war, hunting, or service to the community. Counting "coup", touching the enemy with a "coupstick" in battle also earned a feather.

Originally, to wear a warbonnet, the person had to have earned each feather that went into it. Another could donate his "coups" to a person who lacked a few feathers to finish a warbonnet. A person who had earned enough feathers for a warbonnet was recognized as a person of great integrity.

Eagle feathers, and eagles are sacred, and represent the "world above".





Shelter

The Nez Perce who had managed to escape the first day of the attack at Snake Creek, including Joseph's twelve year old daughter, and others, including White Bird and his people (possibly two-hundred, altogether), ended up in Canada with the mighty chief of the Hunkpapa Sioux, Sitting Bull, instead of going to Indian Territory in Oklahoma.

Chief Sitting Bull's first request of his women was that they help the Nez Perce women make tipis for their families. But first, enough buffalo had to be hunted to make covers for the almost twenty lodges. That would take about twelve skins per lodge.

After the hunt the buffalo were butchered out on the hides, and the meat saved, and most of it dried. The brains were also saved, to tan the skins of the animals from which they had come. Fat, liver and other ingredients were sometimes added to the brain. The fresh hides were stretched and staked to the ground where they were scraped on both sides to remove both hair and any clinging flesh. The brain tissue mixture was boiled to mush in a brass bucket and then rubbed into the clean skins, which were then folded, and left overnight. The next day two women worked each hide by stretching until it was soft. It was then oiled and loosely stitched into a cone shape, hung over a tripod, and smoked by a tiny fire of rotted bark and powdered buffalo chips. Tanning fresh skins required about five days of processing and labor.

The Sioux women began their lodges with a three pole tripod base, and maintained that their lodges were more stable and would not blow down in the wind. Prairie winds blow long and strong. But the Native American way is one of free choice. The Nez Perce women stood behind their four pole base, until the wind proved them wrong.

After a tipi is set up, about four more skins are needed to make a liner for the inside. This liner is about five feet high, and is tied to the tipi poles on the inside. The bottom of the liner reaches the ground. The liner provides an air space between itself and the outside cover. Outside air, coming in from the bottom, carries the smoke from the fire (built in the center of the lodge) up and out through the smoke hole at the top where all the poles come together. The smoke flaps at the top are controlled with separate, outside poles, and act as a damper. The liner also provides insulation from the cold during winter, and, in the summer, with the bottom of the outside cover lifted, there is a cooling draft. The top of the liner also makes a handy place to hang clothes in a shelter that has no closets.





Woman's Work

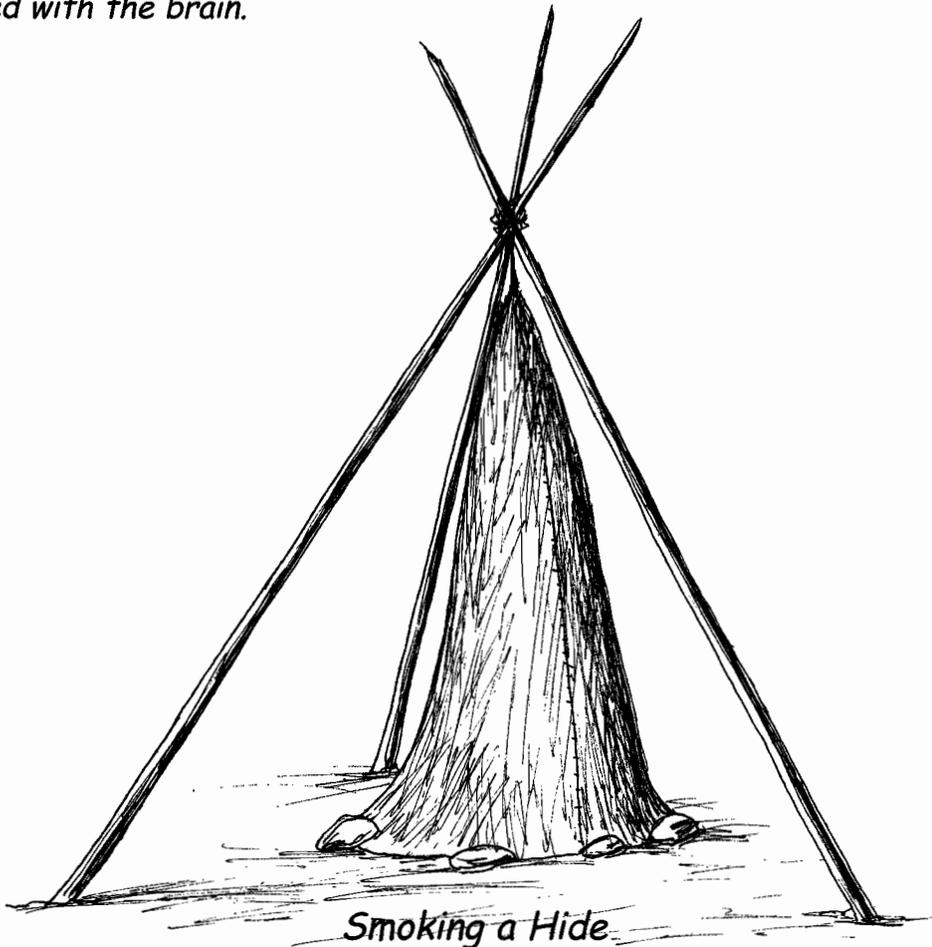
Scraping the hide was also women's work. Both sides had to be scraped, unless the hide were to be used as a robe, or for bedding. Women always visited and joked with each other to make the work go faster. Their's was a communal life, they never lived in isolation, unless they wanted to die.

They found the time to scrape and tan the hides, preserve the food, paint and bead leather goods, weave baskets, and care for and love their children, all without complaining.

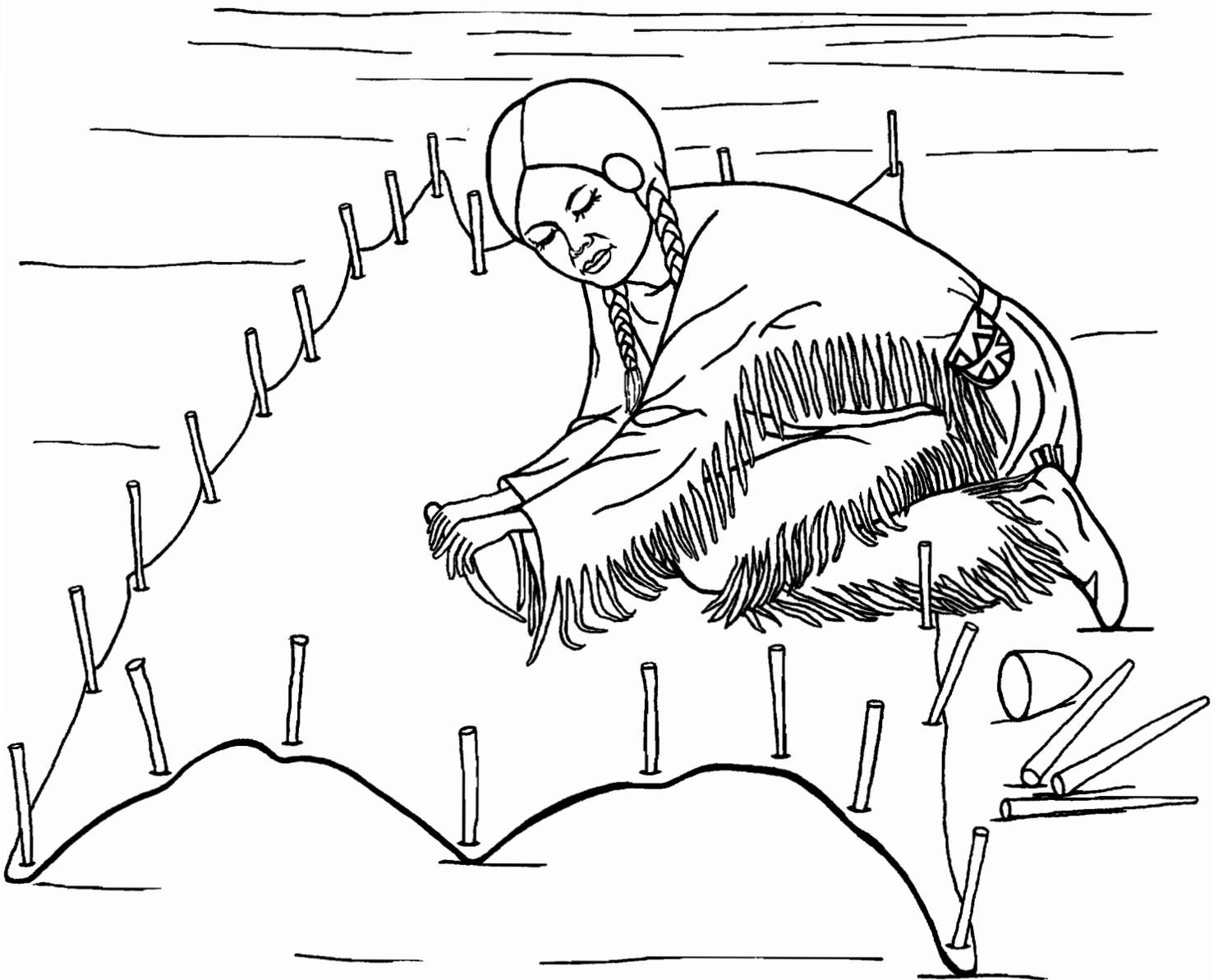
After the hides were scraped they were tanned, then smoked over a very cool fire, because smoking helped to waterproof the hides, which was important for buffaflo hides used to make tipi covers. It was also important to have water resistant every day clothing, made from deer and elk skins.

Hides were sewn together on the sides to form a cylinder. Hides need to hang over a smoke pit on a tripod that is short enough so that they come to the ground. Strips of old skin were temporarily attached to the bottoms and flare out at bottom to form a funnel to catch the smoke. The smoke pit was about 16" in diameter and a foot deep. Fire was made with dry chips and let burn to bed of coals. A pile of green alder chips was put on the coals, and once it began to dry and burn, water was sprinkled over chips to make a heavy smoke.

The bottom was held down with a few rocks. Smoke not only made the hides water resistant, it also colored them. If used for tipi covers, the hides were also oiled or fat was used with the brain.



Smoking a Hide



Scraping a Hide

The men's Club

Buffalo were vital to the survival of the plains Indians, and now they became vital to the Nez Perce. Without the help of Sitting Bull's people, the buffalo hunt for hides for tipis, robes, new clothing, and meat for food, they would have starved. And many would have died from the cold, because they had left Snake Creek with almost nothing. The war had left them in poverty. It was a blessing that there was a successful hunt, because hunting in Canada was poor at that time.

There was always a spiritual significance to the buffalo hunt, but special thanks were given to Man Above for this blessing.

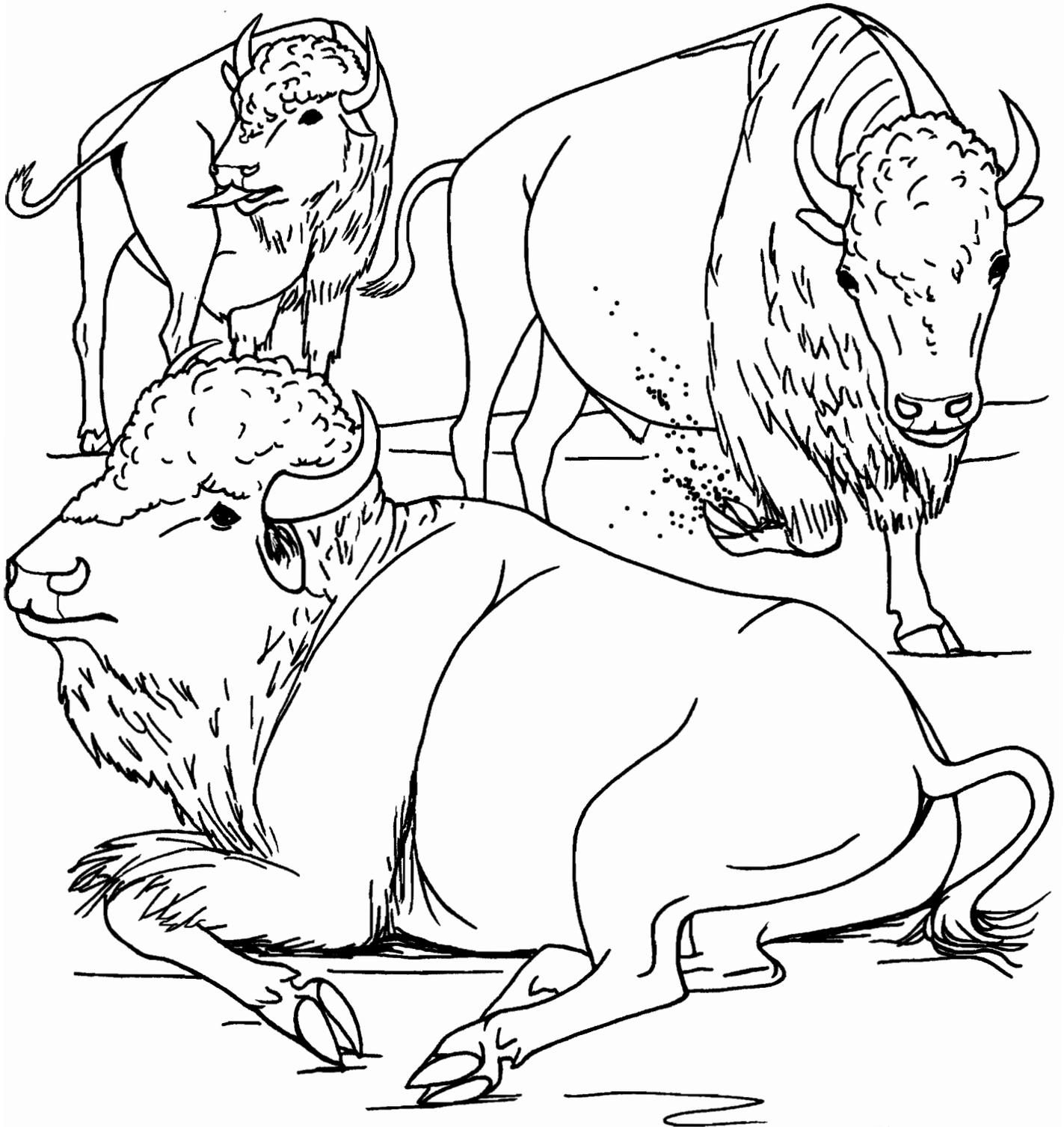
Buffalo are not solitary animals, they are social creatures who gather together. The cows even "babysit" for each other, just as cattle do, one cow caring for several calves while their mothers graze. They take turns.

Except during the breeding season the bulls enjoy each others' company, and "hang out" together. They range on the outside of the herd, protecting the cows and calves in the inner circle.

They wallow in mud and throw dirt onto their backs to control biting insects.



Buffalo Hunt



The men's Club

Buffalo Chips

There were still a lot of buffalo on the Montana prairie during the Nez Perce War of 1877, and lots of prairie fuel, dried buffalo "pies", which the plains tribes had gathered for centuries.

This was the fuel gathered and used by Nez Perce women when they were on these plains at the time of the war. During the seige at Snake creek, when they were living in the pits they had dug in the alluvial debris with their kitchen pots, buffalo chips were their only fuel. They could have a fire only during the day, because a light over the pit would furnish a shell target for the army. At this time the chips, frozen to the ground, could be gathered only at night, pried from the ground with knives and fingers. Those who escaped to Canada found this was the only fuel on the Canadian plains. Buffalo were scarce in Canada, but they had left behind many "chips".

Buffalo chips make a very hot fire, and were used by other tribes to fire clay, to make pottery. Cow "pies" also work well, as does sheep and goat manure that piles up and packs hard in deep layers in pens where they are corralled.





Gathering Buffalo Chips

Prairie Dogs

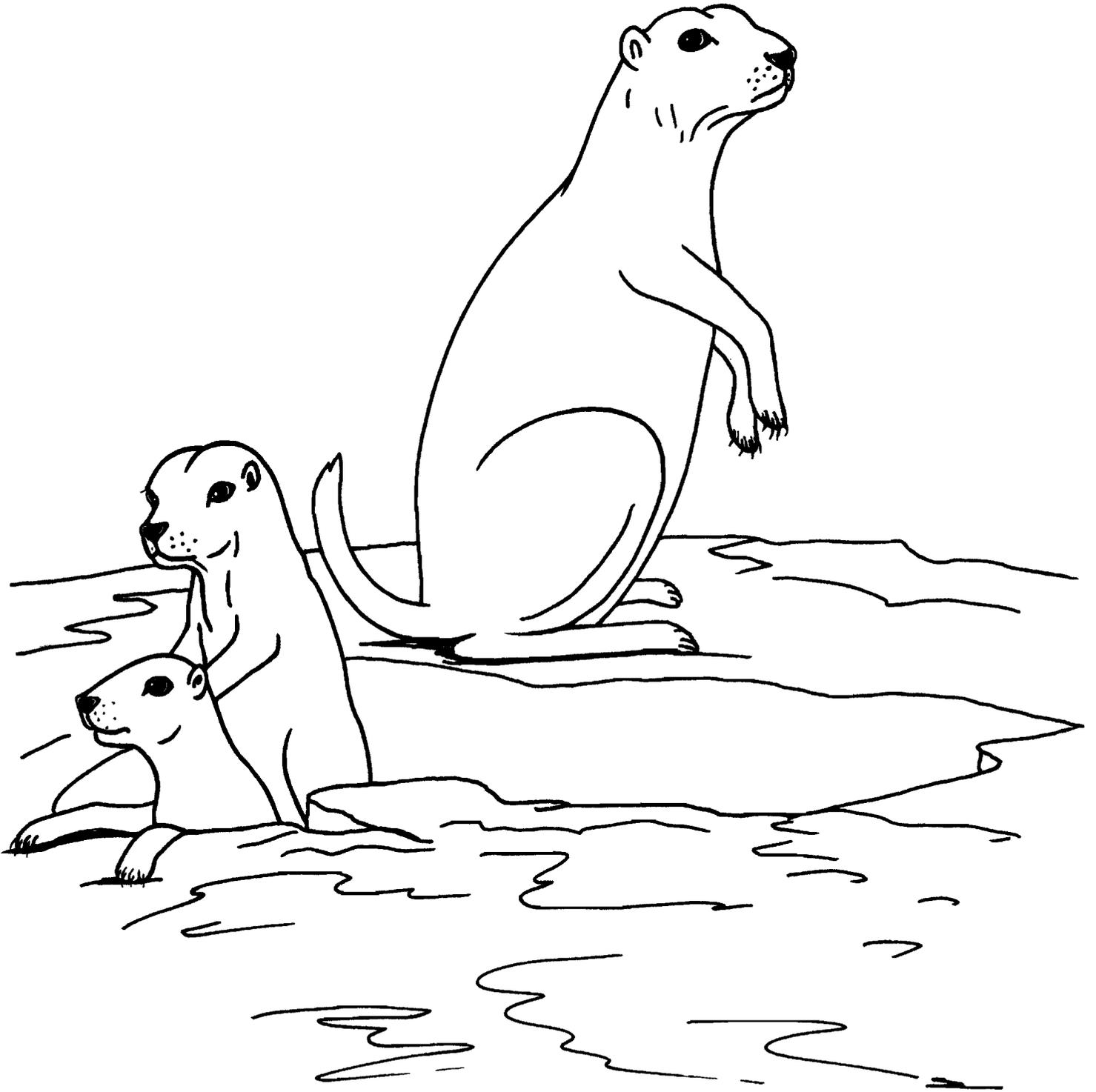
Prairie dogs were everywhere on the Montana Prairie, alerting their "villages" with a short barking sound whenever intruders came close. It was this bark that gave the prairie "dog" its name. Prairie dogs are burrowing rodents who live underground in the connected tunnels they dig. These burrows can reach a depth of a twelve feet. As they dig a burrow they kick the dirt out around the holes to form little hills, from which they keep watch, and "bark" when they see anything that doesn't belong in their "village". They eat grass.

Many times they abandon a burrow, and other animals move into it. Rattlesnakes like prairie dog holes.

Prairie dog burrows were dangerous to large animals like horses and buffalo, who could fall through and break their legs. This meant death, because there was no healing. Even now, a horse with a broken leg is put to sleep.



Buffalo Skull



Prairie Dogs

Hockey

While at Sitting Bull's camp the Nez Perce found time to play, especially the young people. One of their favorite winter games was sweikkutum (hockey), which they had played on the frozen rivers and lakes in their homeland.

Hockey, Nez Perce style, was played with any hardwood stick they could use to hit a small wooden ball, usually a hard knot.

Teams numbering anywhere from two to twenty were chosen. Goals were marked at each end of the game area. A chosen person would throw the ball from the sideline to start the game.

Sioux, on the prairie, had no wide expanses of ice. They played the same game using a ball of buffalo hair covered with skin, on bare ground.

Young children also played, even during war. Despite the horrors that had befallen those around them, and the nightmares they had at night, the children were not traumatized to the point they could not play in the daylight. The children found ways to entertain themselves. There is healing in doing the things you've always done, and play is a distraction from things that are too serious.



Children Play



Hockey

Bull's Eye!

The Nez Perce also played toktai, a pole and hoop game in which a willow hoop six to ten inches in diameter was rolled across a cleared area on the ground.

The object of the game was for a player to throw a six foot pole through the hoop, but high points were gained if the pole were thrown in front of the hoop in such a way that the hoop would fall on the pole, or lean against it.

This was an exciting game, which required a great deal of skill, and luck, since the ground was not perfectly flat, nor the hoop perfectly symmetrical. This game generated a great deal of betting, which was also a favorite Nez Perce pastime.

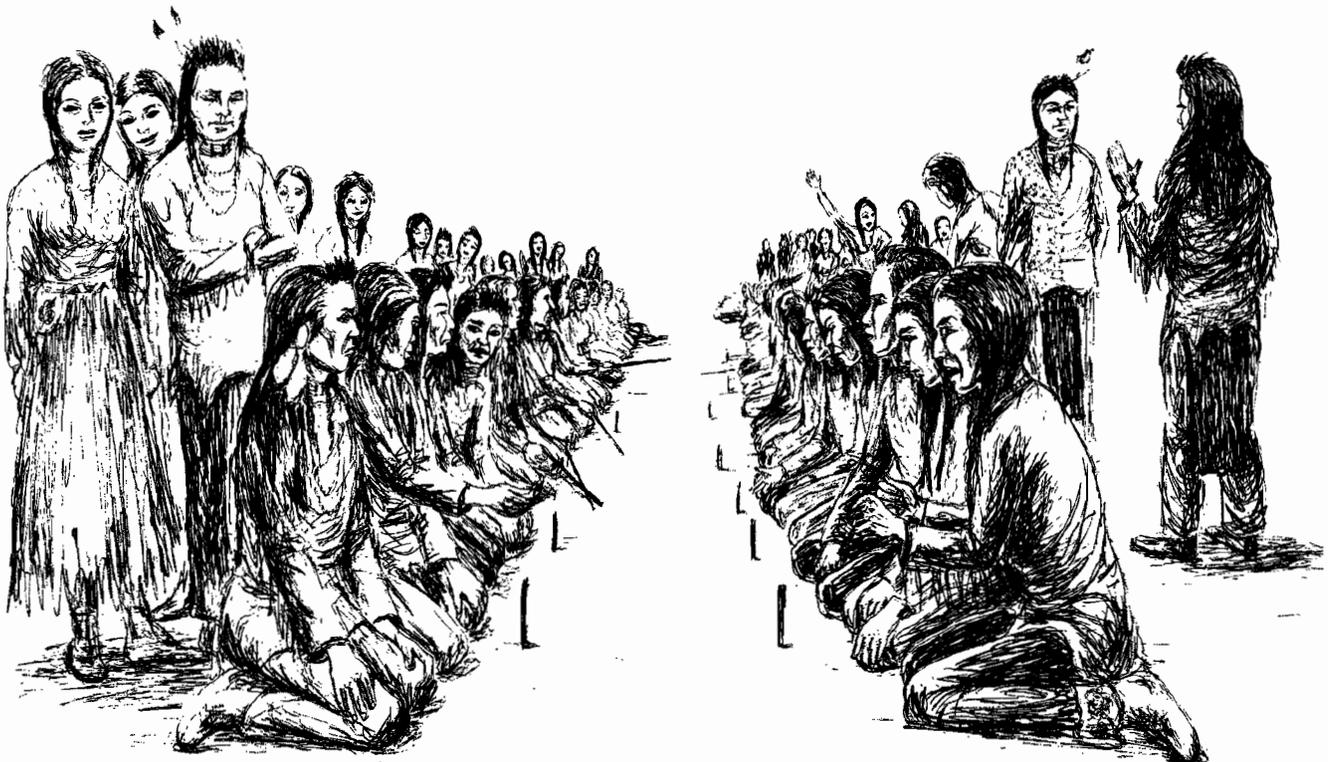
When it came to gambling many Native Americans had an almost universal hand game, the stick game, the object of which was to guess in which hand a player held a small wooden button, or carved bone.

The Nez Perce used four small bones, two white, two marked with black. Bets, consisting of clothes, robes, weapons, food, horses, and other valuables, were placed.

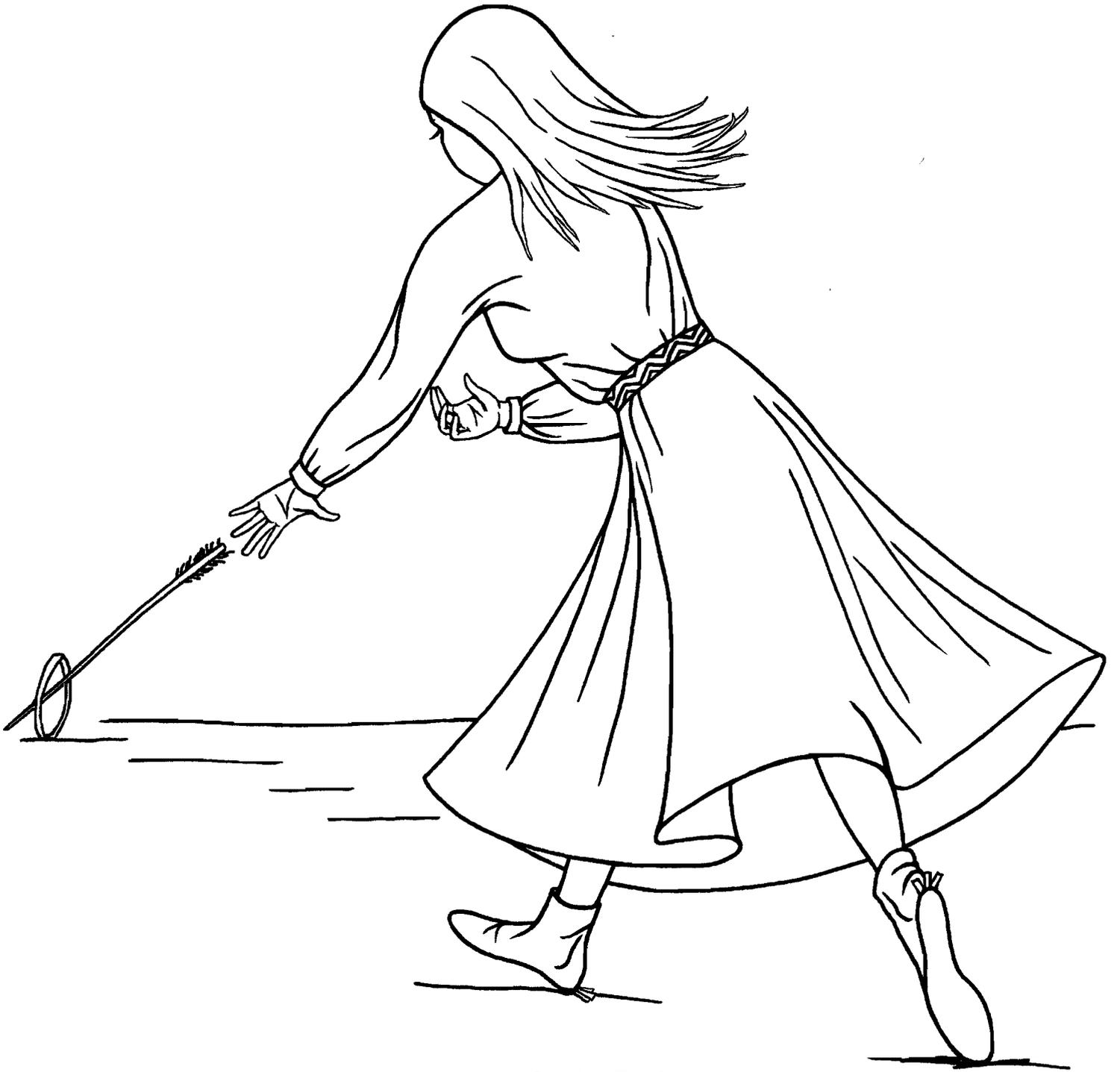
Two lines of people, about ten to each side, would sit, facing each other across a small space. At the beginning of the game each side had five sticks, upright in the ground (live sticks), and a set of bones, one white, one marked.

There were two main people on each side, "pointers", or "guessers", one of which (on each side) was the "main guesser".

There were also a couple of singers who sang, or chanted while beating a rhythm with sticks. When one side scored the other took its turn. Games could go on for days at a time.



Which Hand?



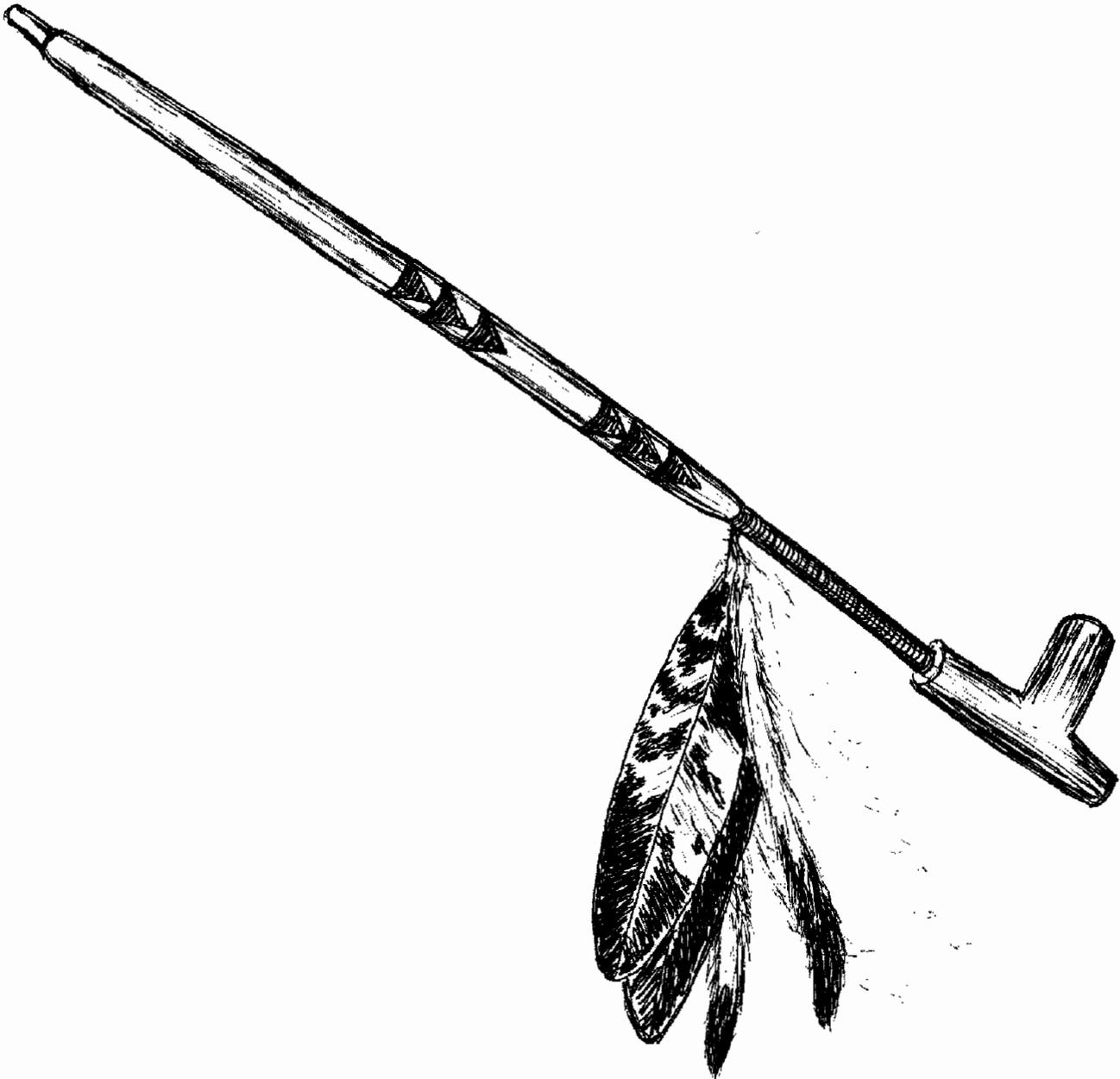
Bull's Eye!

Prayer Power, Magic

Eventually twenty eight people who had found refuge with Chief Sitting Bull left for home, hoping to avoid both soldiers and settlers. One of these was Chief Joseph's daughter, who became known as Sarah Moses. "I gave her a rope..." She never saw her father again. She died young, and is buried at Spaulding, Idaho.

Unfortunately these people encountered both soldiers and settlers, and on one day were plagued by soldiers twice. After having eluded soldiers in the afternoon, just before dark they thought they saw buffalo coming.

Instead of Buffalo, it was more soldiers. An old man, Pauh Wahyakt, took out his pipe (pipes were used in both sacred ceremonies and for pleasure), smoked and prayed. A dense fog soon fell over them and they rode by the soldiers and into a gully, where they continued to ride all night.





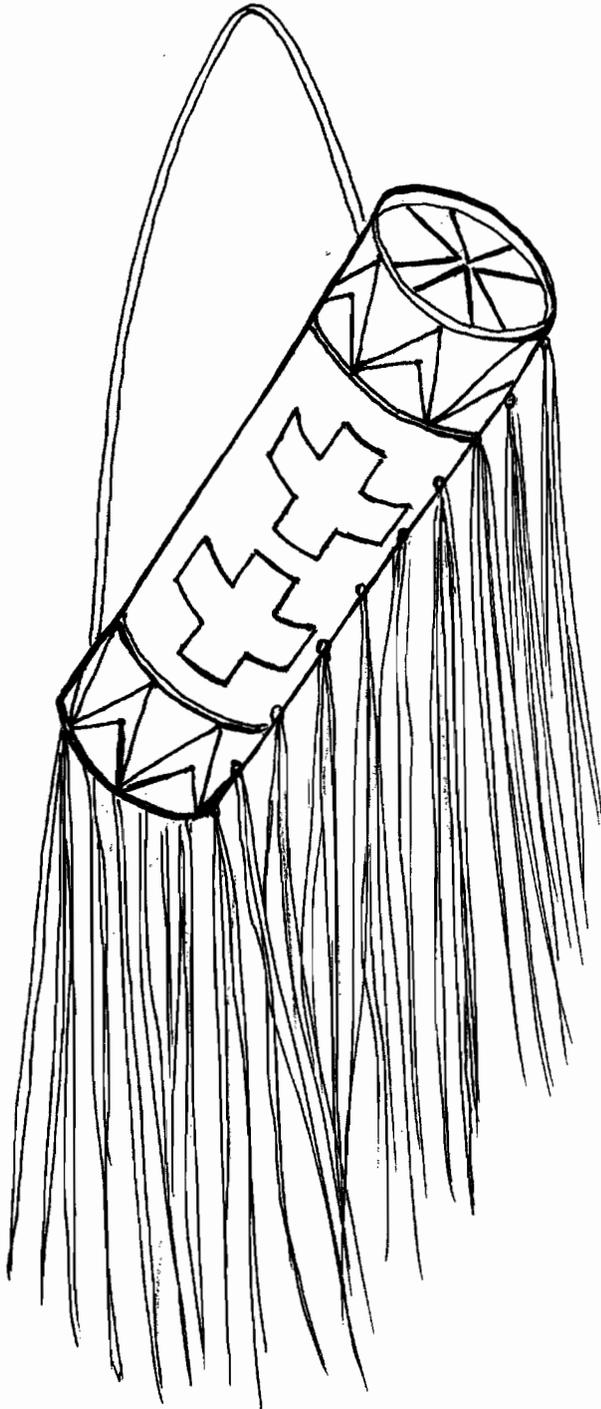
Prayer Power, Magic

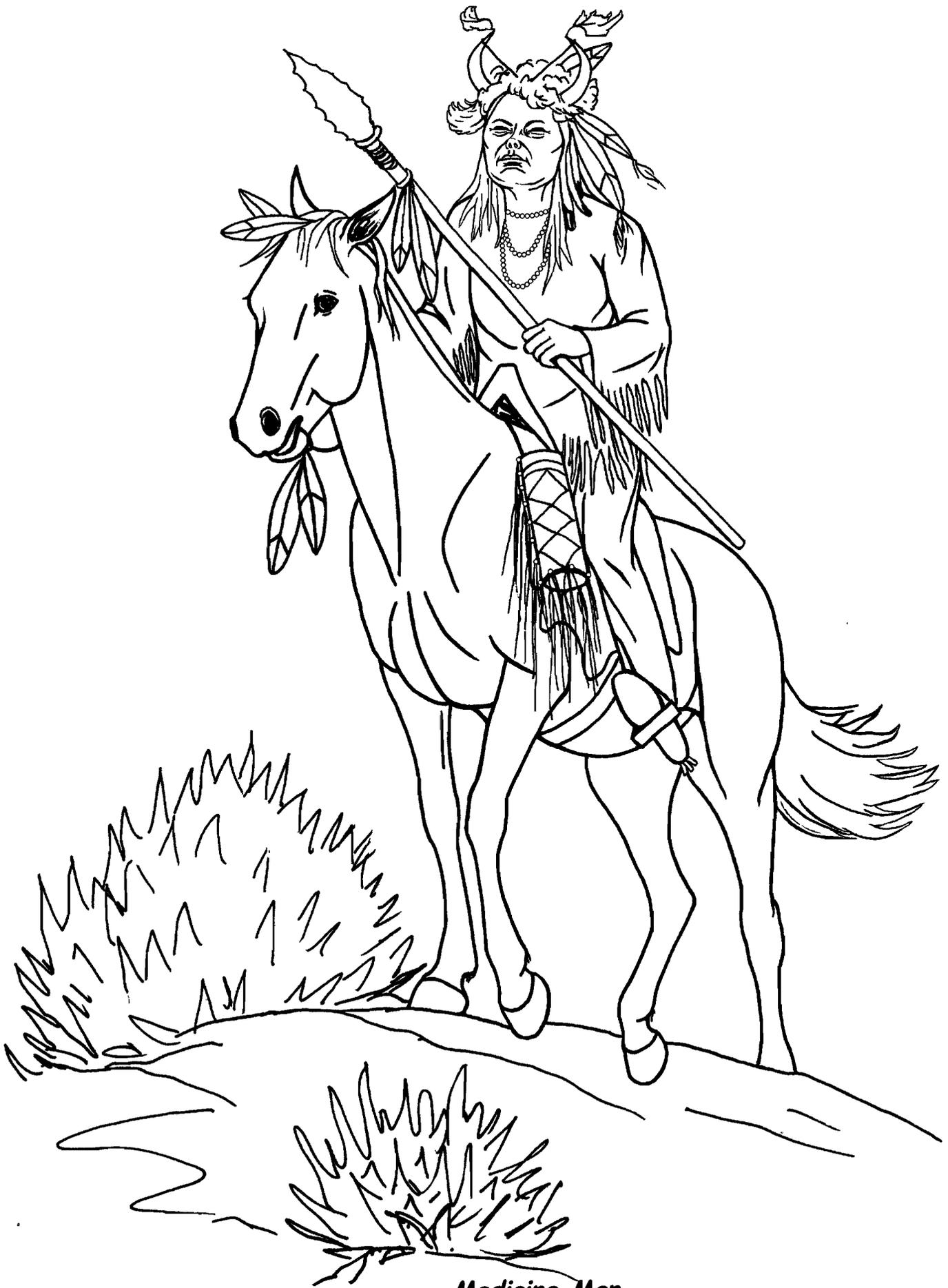
Medicine Man

A medicine man is illustrated in this sketch. Every detail of his outfit and gear holds a special significance, special power or magic.

Notice that his shirt has small holes cut out on only one side. He is wearing the traditional Nez Perce headgear, and has painted his face. His "medicine bag" hangs from his saddle, alongside his left thigh.

The medicine man had real power over earthly "entities and things". While there were many magic things in that medicine bag, and in the other things, the real magic rested in the man himself, the magic was in his mind. When he died, the real power died with him. He could, however, leave certain "vibrations" behind, in, or on, physical or material things. He was never without his medicine bag.





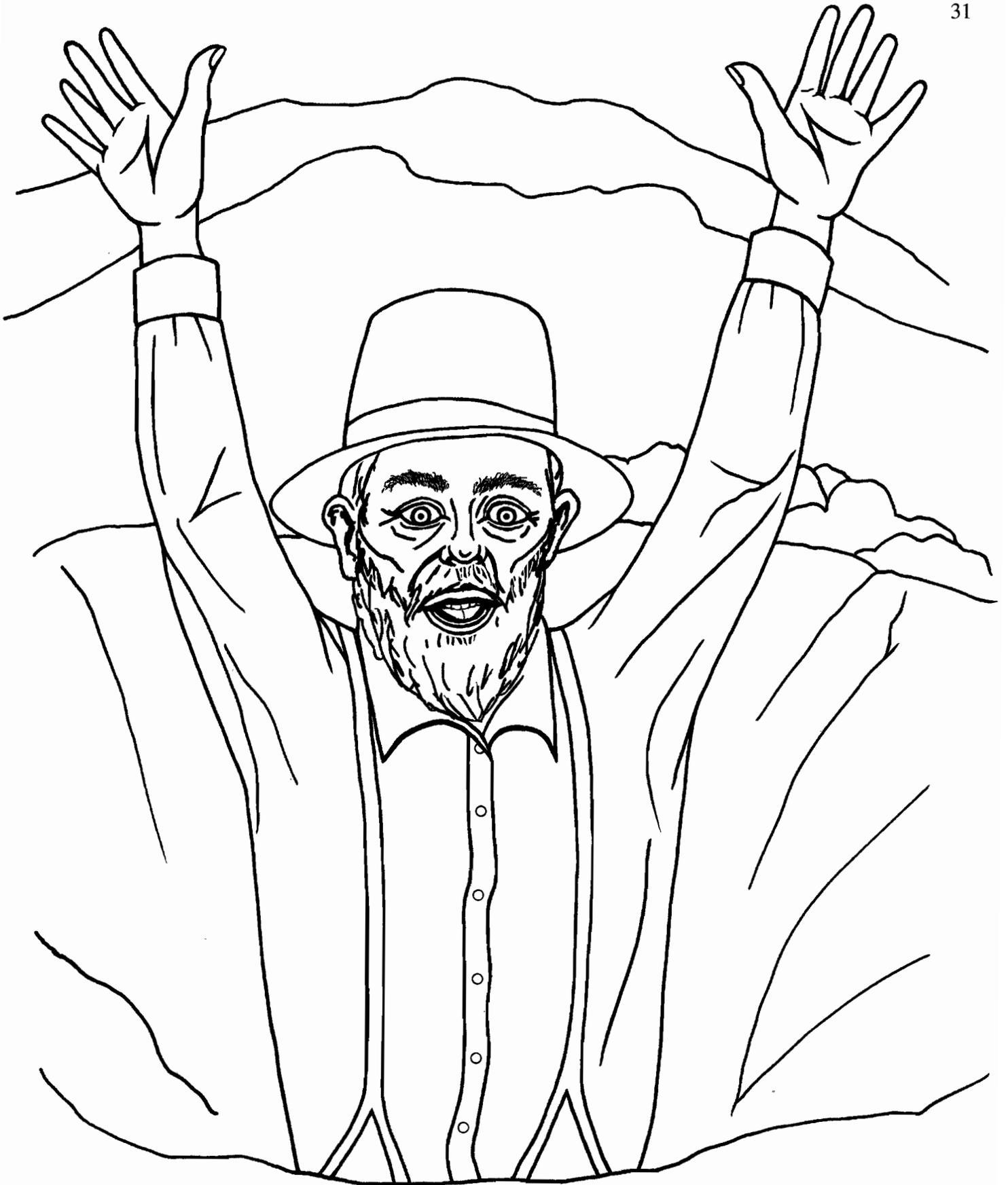
Medicine Man

There were perils in the long journey home.

Farther along in their journey home from exile in Canada, through Montana, toward Idaho, they passed by a miner's cabin. Yellow Wolf and another man stayed behind while the others climbed the mountain toward Cadotte's pass (in Montana). Two days later Yellow Wolf and his companion, driving some horses, caught up with the rest of them. They told how they had surprised a prospector digging a hole, and how scared he had been, but he was friendly, he fed them.

Later, they came to a place with a barn where there were horses in a corral. A white man shot at them, scaring the horses, which escaped from the corral. So they rounded up the horses and brought them along. From here the Nez Perce rode over Cadotte's Pass and camped on the west side.





"I'm Dead!"

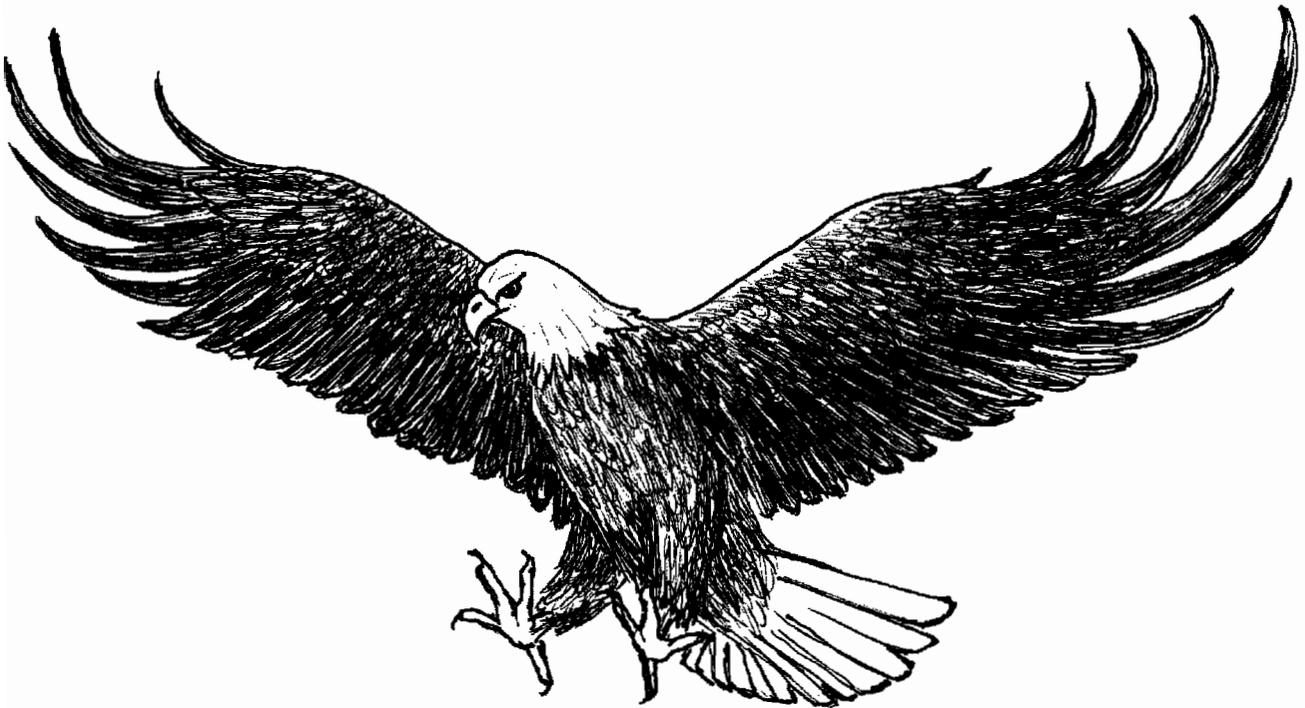
Wottolen

Wottolen was known as an inatsinpun (prophet). It had been he, at Snake Creek, who had strongly advised Looking Glass (in charge again after the Big Hole) against making camp by the Bear's Paw. He had received a definite impression of impending danger. (Looking Glass had also been warned by two others at the Big Hole, but had ignored them.)

Today, Wottolen would be known as a psychic. His grandfather, Red Grizzly Bear (Hohots Ilppilp), who aided Lewis and Clark was also one. There were several of these Nez Perce who possessed this ability in some degree. They depended on their dreams for guidance.

After the tragedy at the Big Hole, when the Nez Perce were camped at Camas Meadows, an injured warrior named Black Hair had dreamed that Howard was camped at Camas Meadows, and that Black Hair and his companions were stealing Howard's horses. He revealed the dream.

The next morning they broke camp and traveled about fifteen miles, but that night the warriors returned to their campsite of the night before and found Howard camped there. This was when they ran off Howard's mules.



Bald Eagle



Wottolen

Eclipse

Over the Continental Divide, heading homeward, these people encountered Nez Perce Christian scouts who worked for General Howard. Wottolen refused to go back to the reservation with them but told the women, some of whom hoped to be reunited with Joseph, that they could go, if they wished.

A confrontation ensued in which Wottolen got the upper hand. He told the Christian Nez Perce to go, that the women would decide what they wanted to do, later.

The five women and two children who decided to go to Kamiah were afraid. Afraid of soldiers, and afraid of the other Nez Perce on the reservation. Wottolen told them to go, that they would cross the prairie without being seen.

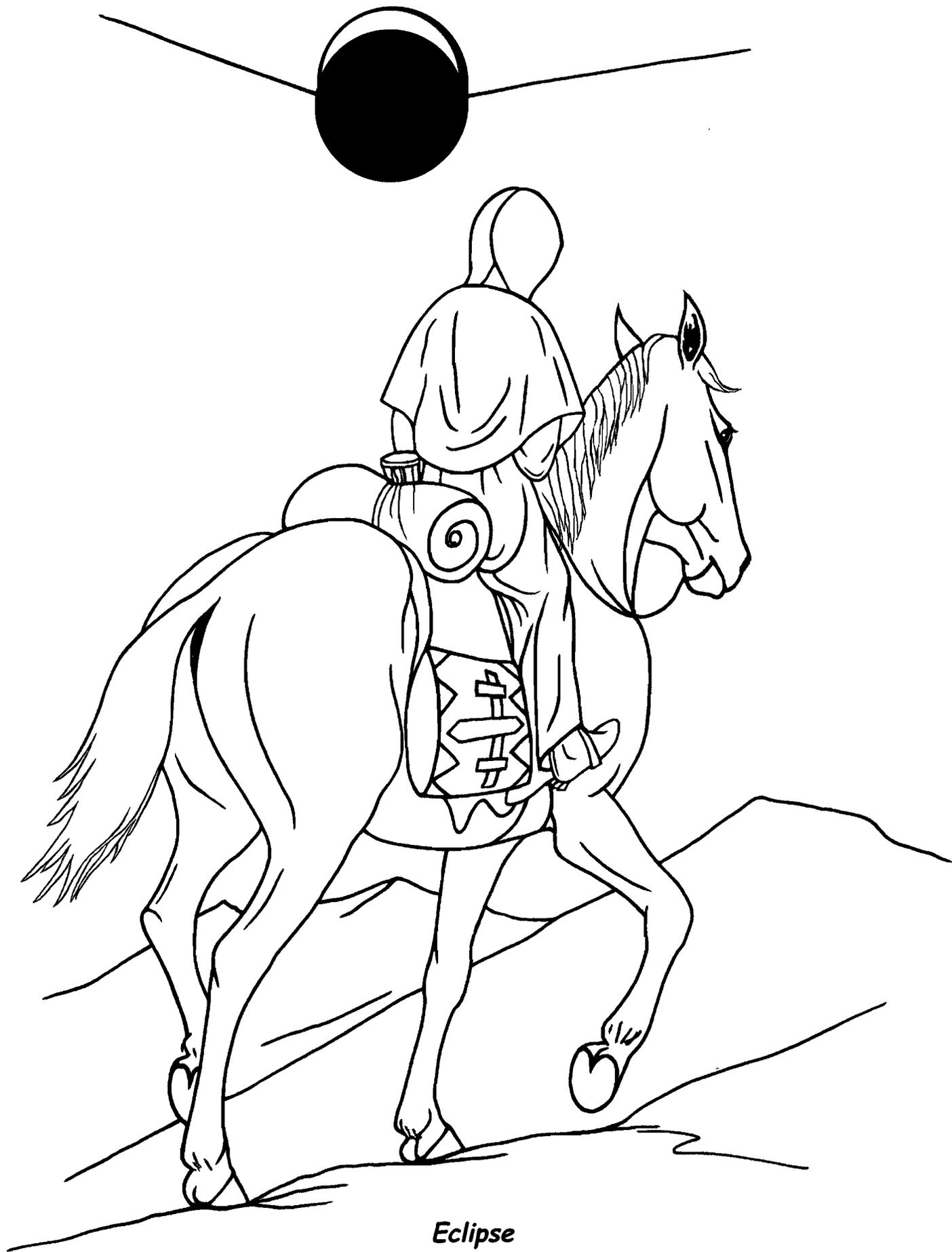
They left the rest of the people there with Wottolen and Yellow Wolf, and started toward Kamiah.

About two hours later they were frightened when it began to get dark and the sun was covered with black. Then they remembered that Wottolen had said that they would not be seen. They knew, too, that sometimes Waah-taah-naah-yast (Sun) hid behind Hee-tsem-toks (Moon). They continued riding and Waah-taah-naah-yast returned. It was almost dark when they surrendered at Kamiah.

Have you ever seen an eclipse of the sun? Or a picture of one? The sun is darkened, and it is like night, except there is a rim of light around the sun's edge. Then when the sun peeks out above, its edge is very bright, and the sky above and beside it is also bright. The dark is really the deepest color of blue/purple/black possible.



TO SEE THE SUN AGAIN
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Eclipse

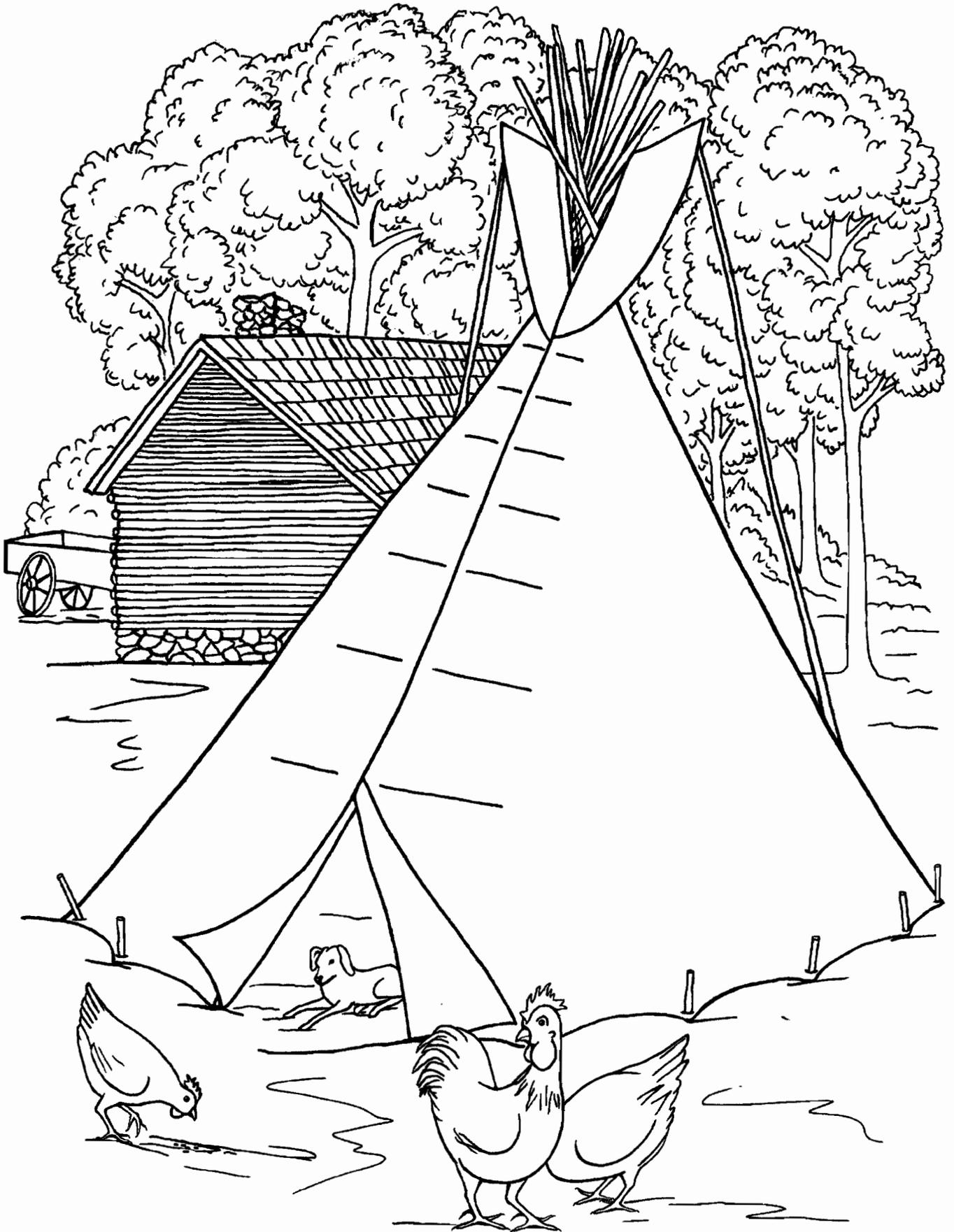
Transition

The Nez Perce had once lived in long houses with thatched roofs, year around, along the rivers, but they found it difficult to adapt to living in their "Christian Houses". Even "old" converts lived in tipis and used their houses for storage.

A house with a tipi beside it was a common sight for many years, even after the turn of the century.



A New Way of Using Mother Earth



Transition

Gifts

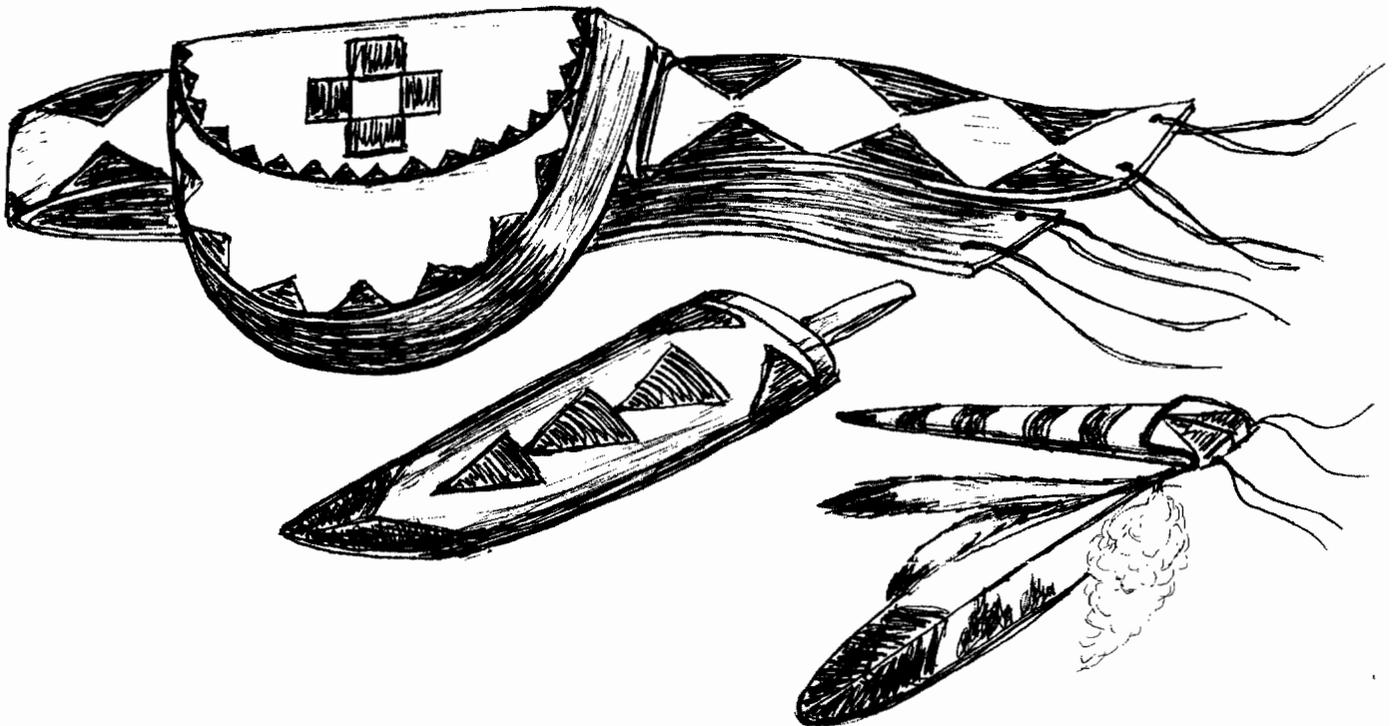
When a Nez Perce girl was old enough to be accepted as an adult the occasion was celebrated with gifts.

Friends and relatives would give her new clothes, moccasins, a beaded belt with a half-round pouch (like a "fanny pack"), a metal awl and knife (both in scabbards to wear on the belt), sharpening stone, needles, thread, money, and jewelry. At this time she also would probably receive her own hatchet.

The new clothes, jewelry, and belt were as welcome as these items would be to any girl today. So was the bag, but it was to hold the needles, thread, and sharpening stone with which she was now expected to make her own clothes. The awl was to be used to make the holes in tanned skins so that sinews or thread could pass through to sew garments and tipi covers. The knife was also a work tool, as was the hatchet, which was used to cut wood into suitable lengths to carry home for firewood.

Being accepted as an adult had special privileges, but also responsibilities, as now it still does. There is much to be learned from giving and receiving gifts.

There is a time in childhood when children are expected to give, as well as receive, and Nez Perce children were given many responsibilities when they were quite young. Tending the horses was one such chore.





Marriage

There was a lot of adjusting to be made by new converts to Christianity. Men were required to cut their hair, and at the wedding the man was told that he could kiss the bride, in public.

If the bride wasn't fully converted (and sometimes it was both bride and groom), there would be two weddings, a Christian wedding, and a wedding the old way.

A traditional Nez Perce wedding can be as simple as sharing a blanket and moving into a lodge together.

It can also be a special ceremony with family and friends, sanctified by a priest. In this ceremony, a lane is formed by family and friends, the men on the north, the ladies on the south. The betrothed walk westward in this lane to stand on a blanket or buffalo robe before the priest and the singers. They and their guests "turn with the sun". A sacred song is sung. The Spirit of the Eagle prevails over this sacred ceremony, and the lane formed by the men and women is a conduit for great spiritual power which sweeps through as ancient powers return to bless this event.

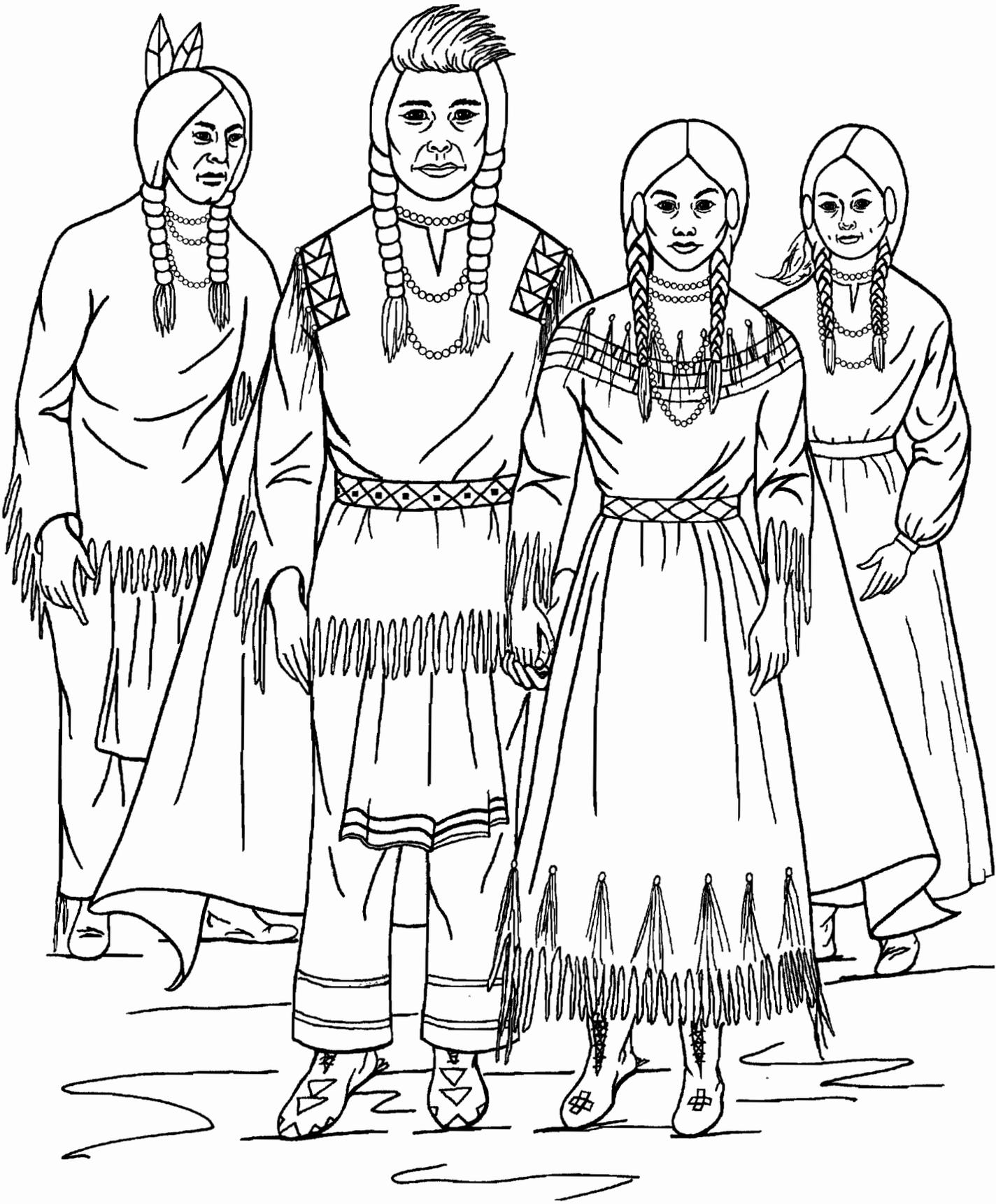
The father gives the bride. A male family member instructs the groom about his role as husband, father, and provider. A female family member advises the bride as to the care of her husband and children. The priest then instructs each what his and her duties and obligations are to each other, their children, and the community. And what the obligations of the families and the community are to the couple, the new family. Sacred songs are sung.

The couple face east and step off the blanket which is picked up in a special ritual and placed on their shoulders, encircling them. This seals the marriage. Sacred songs are sung. They may now wear two eagle feathers, and the woman will wear two braids.

After the ceremony, which must conclude before sundown, there is a celebration feast and a giveaway, furnished by both families for their guests. In addition, gifts are exchanged between the two families.

With the return and practice of the Seven Drums Religion this ceremony is once again being performed by the Nez Perce.





Sacred Ceremony

When We Die

When a Nez Perce died, ritual mourning began. Women would loosen their hair and "keen" for the one who had passed. Word of the death was spread to the families who would want to know.

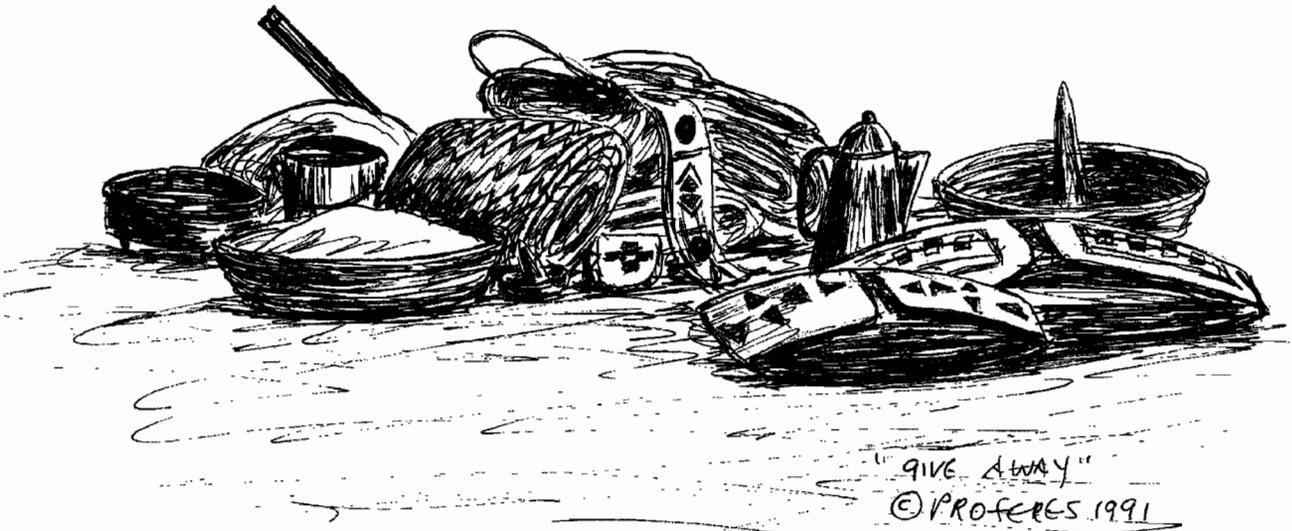
The deceased was carefully dressed in his or her finest clothing and wrapped in a fine buffalo robe with his or her very personal things. The body was placed on a pony drag and taken to the grave site and lowered into the earth. (The Nez Perce buried their dead.)

A Priest would then close the brief ceremony with prayers and a ritual that would take the ghost to Ahkunkenekoo (Land Above) to make sure the ghost didn't remain behind to haunt anyone. Part of this was a seven drums ceremony.

A feast and "give away" was organized to follow the burial. As soon as the burial ceremony was over the mourners then returned to the feast in their poorest clothes and the women loosed their hair. They would be in mourning for a year.

As soon as the feast was over the giving of gifts began. Everything except horses and the most personal things (which had been buried with the body) were in a big pile, and all of it was given away.

If a person were to die during extreme poverty, as some did after returning from exile after the War of 1877, very close friends and relatives would place things in the "give-away" pile so that there would be a respectable "give-away".



Giveaway

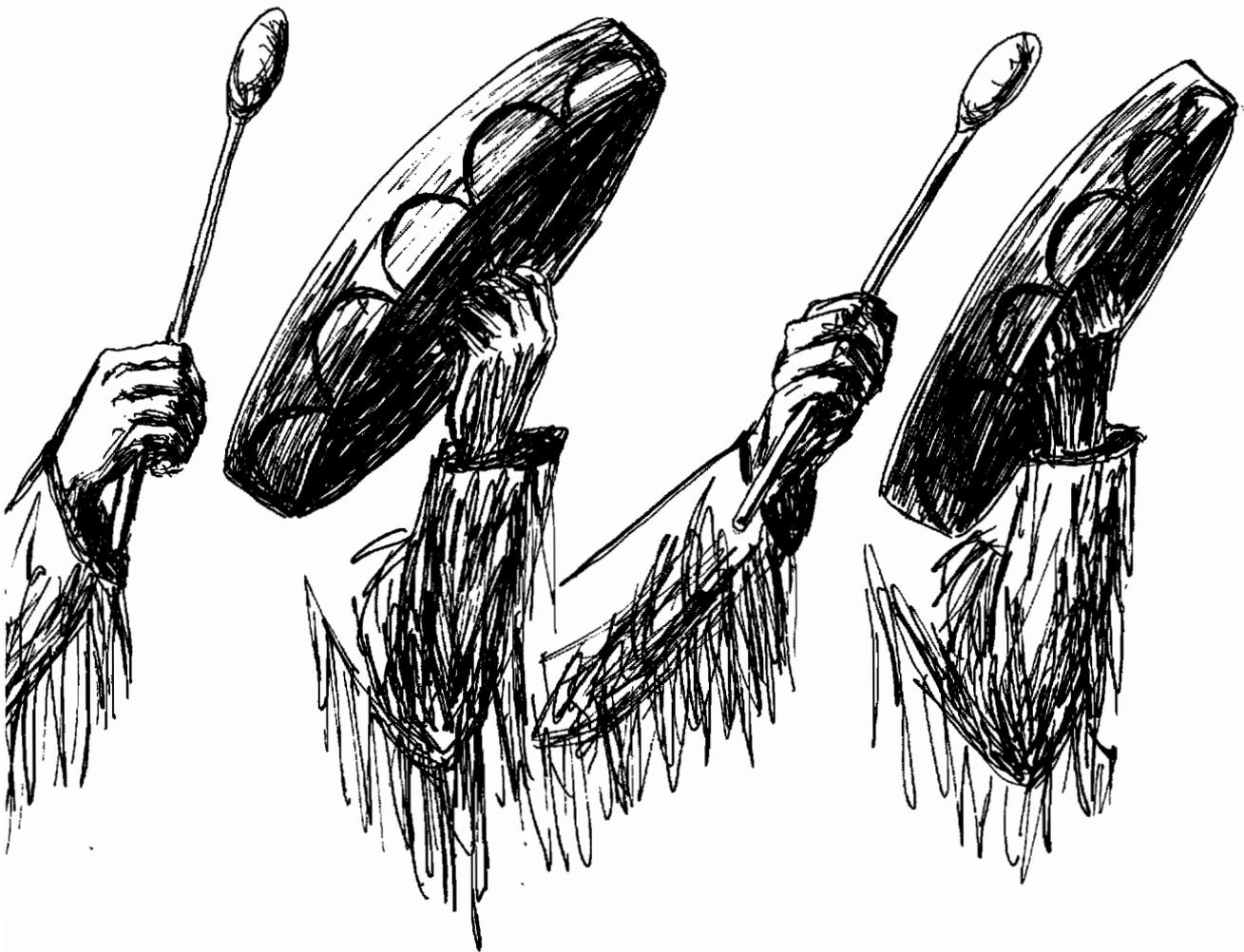


When We Die

Mourning

In addition to grief, a Nez Perce woman would sometimes retreat from life when she was unhappy, didn't wish to see someone her husband had brought into the home, or was just plain depressed.

She made no pretense of being "okay". She simply withdrew into silence and threw her blanket over her head. She went into mourning.





Mourning

Jackson Sundown

Jackson Sundown was a young pre-teen during the war of 1877. He was born about 1866 and was a member of the Wallowa band. He was popular with the other kids. And apparently as "immortal" as any youngster of today, because according to elders who have since passed away, he was daring and courageous. He rode wild buffalo for fun.

After the war he attempted to compete in rodeo events as a bronc rider. He was too good. He was barred from many northwest rodeos as a contestant. Nobody wanted to compete with him. Finally he was paid for exhibition riding. It was 1916 when he was finally allowed to compete in a World Championship Rodeo. He was about fifty years old at the time. This was at Pendleton, Oregon. The other bronc riders were furious. He won. And won again and again. The judges made him ride several times because they didn't want the championship to go to an Indian. Public opinion, the outrage of the spectators at the rodeo, finally forced the judges to give him the World Championship Bronc Riding title. He won the saddle. Jackson Sundown, a tall, slender man, was humble and self spoken. When asked how he wanted his name on the championship saddle he replied, "Put wife's name on." It was years before he was finally accepted in the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. His fans, including Dick Spencer, publisher of *The Western Horseman*, voted for him every year until he was accepted in 1976. He died of pneumonia on December 17, 1923 and is buried at Jacques Spur ("Jacks" Spur), Idaho, east of Lapwai ("butterfly"), Idaho. He was baptized at Slickpoo Mission in 1912.





Jackson Sundown

Yellow Wolf

Old Joseph's sons, Chief Joseph and Ollokot, and Joseph's nephew, Yellow Wolf all had major rolls in the war that followed Old Joseph's refusal to sign away his people's land. Yellow Wolf's mother was actually Joseph's first cousin, not sister.

Yellow Wolf fought in every major battle and most of the skirmishes during the war. At the beginning of the Battle of White Bird he had only a bow and arrows and his kopluts, or war club.

During the battle he managed to take a rifle from a soldier after the man had fired at him, and missed. He also took the ammunition belt. Like most Nez Perce warriors he stripped for battle. During the coldest weather he did not become cold, he "had the fire". He was courageous and fearless. He was also protected by Spirit guides, one of whom wished him to be alone in battle, and advised him with a human voice. He would go three or four days at a time without eating, drinking water only during these times. He was never without his magic war whistle.

Yellow Wolf's magic war whistle was made from the wingbone of a crane, created under the guidance of Spirits. It was not a musical instrument, not to be used for entertainment, but for protection when in danger, for war or other dangerous places.

The fluffy eagle feathers on the war whistle were prayer feathers, and had great spiritual significance. They fluttered even when there was no breeze. Spirit Power. Yellow Wolf had great Power. This power was acquired in part through finding his Wyakin. Spirit power.

Yellow Wolf was sent into the wilderness by his parents at thirteen to find his Wyakin. He took a blanket, but no food. This was a period of fasting.

After almost three weeks, during which he slept and wandered from place to place, he saw a form suspended in the air in front of him. The Spirit of a wolf, yellow in color, which talked to him with a human voice. It promised to give him its power, its keen sense of smell, its fierceness in battle, the power to subdue a grizzly bear, its ability to hunt.

Yellow Wolf possessed an uncanny sense of smell (even from a great distance), he was an exceptional hunter, fierce and deadly in battle, and enjoyed matching wits in combat with a grizzly. Once, when one refused to come out of its den at his call, he threw rocks inside to anger it. Of course his hunting companions retreated. Only a fool, or someone who possessed unusual Power would do such a thing. Such powers, given by the Wyakin, are conditional. The price is obedience to commands, to guidance. Old time Nez Perce warriors considered it bad luck to sleep with a woman during wartime. It was said that the Wyakin would withdraw its protection from a warrior who did so.

Yellow Wolf had many different Spirit guides. He considered the name "Yellow Wolf" his nick name. His war name was Heinmothihhih, which meant white thunder or white lightening. He possessed the force of lightening in battle. It was this Spirit of thunder/lightening that directed him as a small boy in the making of his Kopluts, his war club, which he used through the war years.

None of these Spirit related names was his true name, which, as with all Nez Perce, is both secret and sacred.

The man known as Yellow Wolf survived the war, and it is mainly through him that we know what really happened to the Nez Perce. He wanted the world to know, and when he came to know L.V. McWhorter, he realized that here was a man who cared, one who would listen.

Had Yellow Wolf not stopped at the L.V. McWhorter ranch near Yakima, Washington, in October, 1907 to leave a sick horse (he was known for his skilled horsemanship), the world would never have known. Neither Yellow Wolf nor any of his fellow veterans (including women) would have told their stories before they passed on.

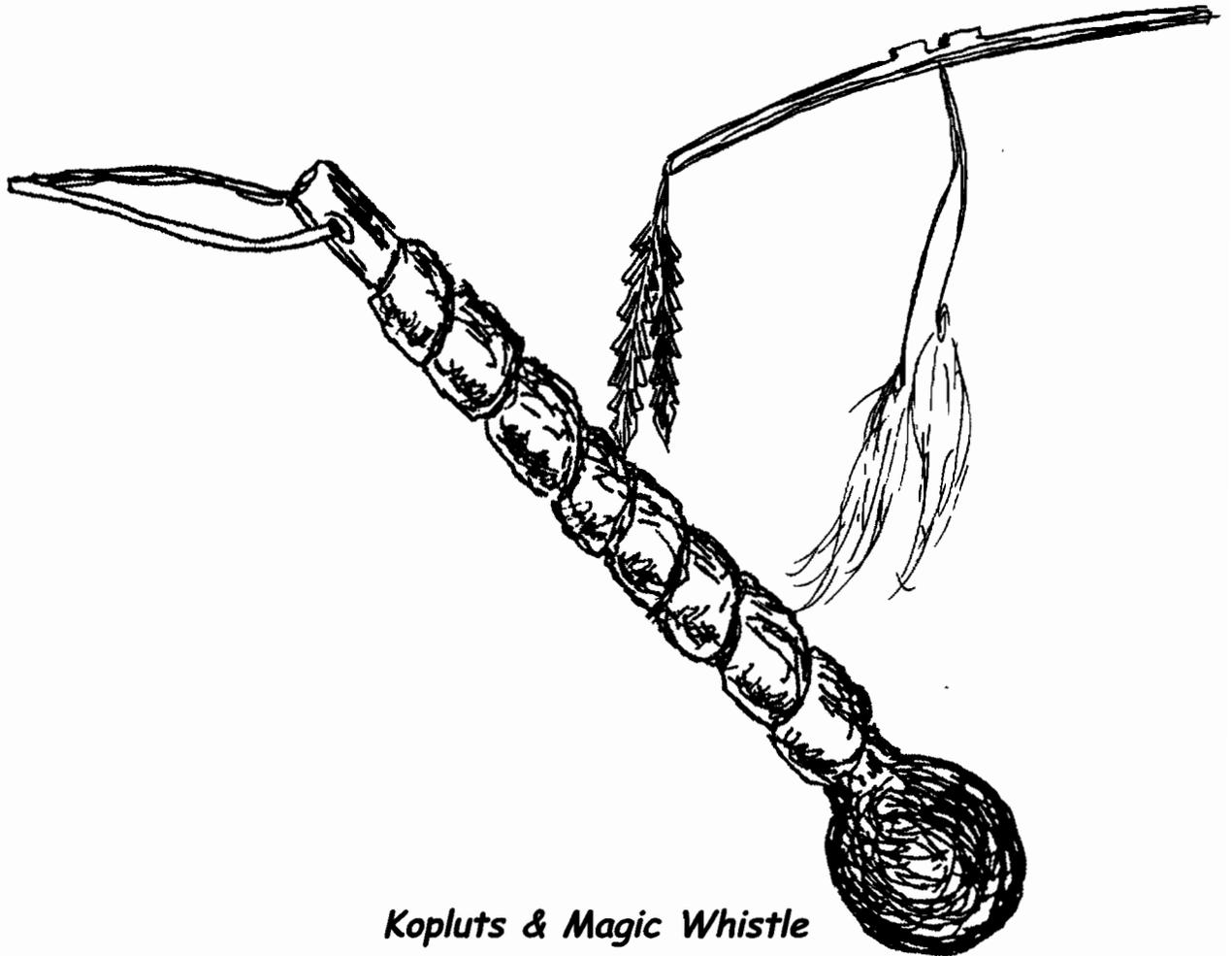
Yellow Wolf had been picking hops. He returned ten months later for the horse, in 1908, and when hop season was over stopped at the ranch again. He began to tell McWhorter the story.

Every year for the next twenty-four years, he added to the narrative. Of course there were interpreters, and witnesses to verify the narrative and make sure all the details were correct. Yellow Wolf and L.V. McWhorter formed a friendship that endured until Yellow Wolf's death on August 21, 1935. Two books, *Yellow Wolf*, and *Hear Me My Chiefs!*, and the reams of papers left by McWhorter are the fruit of this friendship. They are invaluable to those who seek the truth about what happened to the Nez Perce. Yellow Wolf was almost eighty years old when he died.

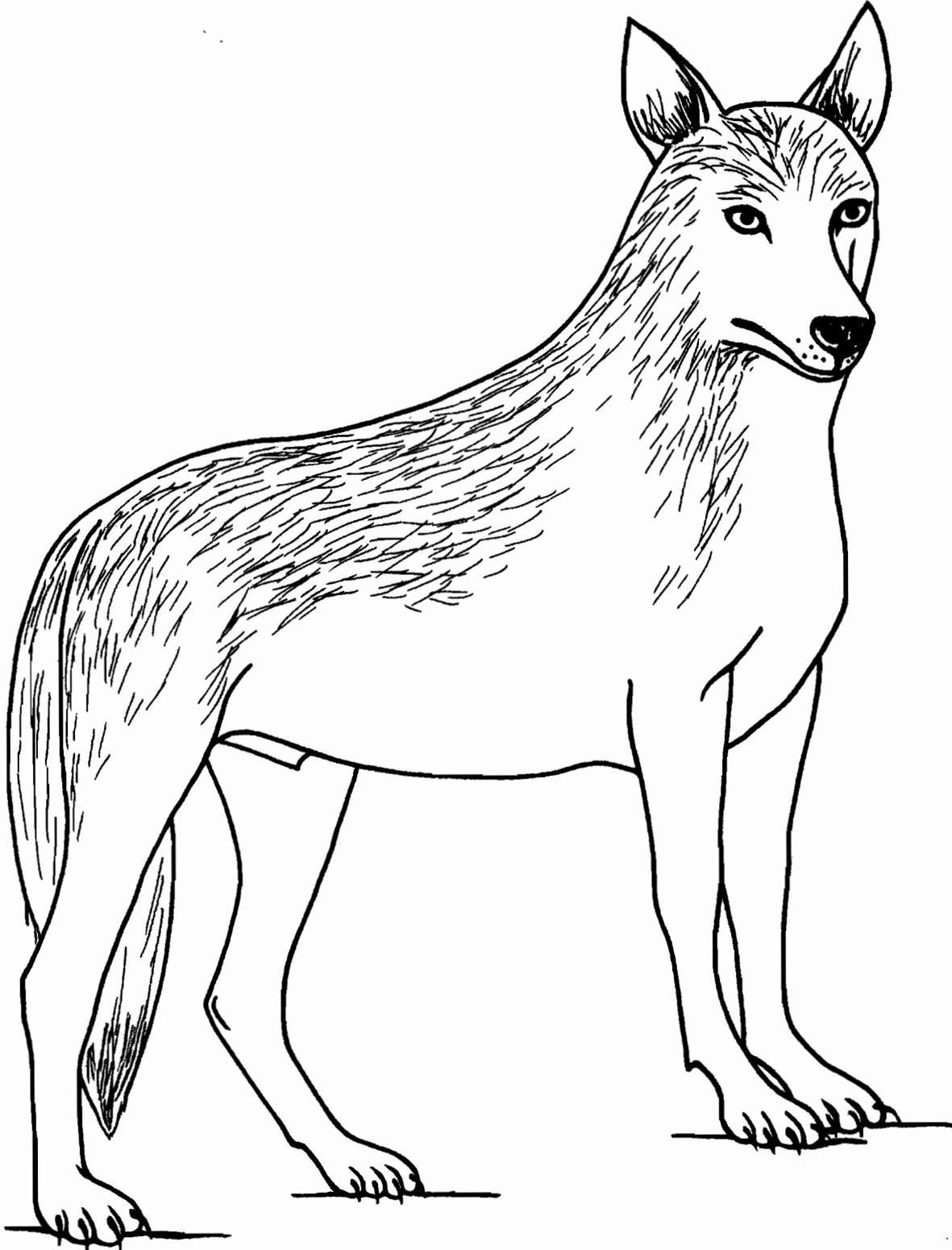
On the evening before his death Yellow Wolf told his son, "I am going in the morning when the sun pauses on the horizon's edge. It is then that I will leave you and all others. You, my son, and my daughters gone, were only loaned to me. Loaned by Ahkunkenekoo (God). You are my brother, they, my sisters. I go with the new sun."

The next morning as the sun rose he said: "I am now going! My old friends have come for me! They are here! Do you not see them? There stands Crow Blanket, and Curlew, and Sun Faded. They have come to take me to Land Above." These were his last words.

Yellow Wolf is buried close to Joseph, at Nespelem, Washington.



Kopluts & Magic Whistle



Yellow Wolf's Wyakin



Yellow Wolf

Hin-ma-toe Yah-lut-khit
(Thunder Over the Mountains)
Joseph, the Last Dream
Joseph - 1840-1904

Joseph did fight during the Nez Perce War of 1877, but was not classed as a warrior. He fought when it was necessary. He was a man of peace. In 1879 he said this :

"I would have given my own life if I could have undone the killing of white men by my people. I blame my young men and I blame the white man.... My friends among the white men have blamed me for the war. I am not to blame. When my young men began the killing my heart was hurt. Although I did not justify them, I remembered all the insults I had endured, and my blood was on fire. Still I would have taken my people to the buffalo country without fighting, if possible.

"I could see no other way to avoid war. We moved over to White Bird Creek, sixteen miles away, and there encamped, intending to collect our stock before leaving; but the soldiers attacked us and the first battle was fought.

Joseph's main role was guardian of the people. He was a spiritual leader and mediator, his name, "Thunder Rolling Over the Mountains" also means "Thunder Traveling to Loftier Heights", according to present descendants of the Joseph Band. They point out that it could also mean "Hurricane".

He never ceased trying to persuade the government to better the living conditions of his people, in spite of his own great personal losses.

Once they had all returned from exile Joseph was banned from the Lapwai reservation. He spent the rest of his life trying to return to the Wallowa Valley, which he rightly felt belonged to his people, since they had neither sold the land nor signed any treaty giving it away.

Joseph's eloquence, his compassion and nobility would have made him a great man in any century, or in any nation. "All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief," said Joseph, "they are all brothers. The Earth is the Mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it... I have asked some of the great white chiefs where they get their authority to say to the Indian that he shall stay in one place, while he sees white men going where they please. They cannot tell me. I only ask of the government to be treated as all other men are treated. If I cannot go to my own home, let me have a home in some country where my people will not die so fast... Whenever the white man treats the Indians as they treat each other, then we shall have no more wars. We shall be all alike, brothers of one father and one mother, with one sky above us and one country around us, and one government for all. The Great Spirit Chief who rules above will smile upon this land, and send rain to wash out the bloody spots made by brothers' hands upon the face of the Earth. For this time the Indian races are waiting and praying."

Joseph had nine children. Only one lived out the war. She was the one who escaped to Canada. He never saw her again after he gave her a rope and told her to catch herself a horse. She became Sarah Moses, died young, without leaving children, and is buried at Spalding, Idaho.

Joseph died while sitting before his tipi at Nespelem, Washington, on September 21, 1904. His doctor stated that Joseph died of a broken heart.





Joseph, the Last Dream

The first U.S. treaty with the Nez Perce in 1855 “set up” the reservation, the two which followed were for the most part just a method of shrinking the Nez Perce lands, and even today, the rights of the people. For almost everything promised by the U.S. the Nimiipu have had to sue.

The treaty of 1863 (and 1868) was different from all other treaties. The story told was that the Christian Nez Perce leaders allegedly signed for the non-Christians and the government was satisfied.

Actually the government just accepted the document without all of the signatures. The Nimiipu of today feel that the government should have just left those who didn’t sign out of the reservation. But the government wasn’t about to do that, white men wanted the land where these people lived.

It wasn’t just the land the white man wanted. Gold had been discovered. The bands living outside of the newly formed boundaries were told to move onto the reservation and the reservation was made smaller to accomodate the demand of the whites who wanted the gold on Nez Perce land.

Article 2 of the 1855 Treaty specifically forbid any white man to reside on Nez Perce land unless he was employed by the Indian Department or was invited by the tribe. But when gold was discovered the whites swarmed in. Nez Perce women were raped and abused, their men murdered, and those who committed these crimes went unpunished. Troops were brought in, but not for the protection of the Nimiipu. Instead, a revised treaty was demanded. Many refused to sign.

Those who refused to sign this treaty thereby became known as “*Non-Treaty Nez Perce*”. They called this the “*Steal Treaty*” or the “*Thief Treaty*”. This unfortunate incident, regardless of what might actually have transpired, caused hard feelings and was the beginning of the end of the Nez Perce as a great nation. Old Joseph, the father of Chief Joseph, had embraced Christianity many years before, having been baptized by Henry Spalding and given the name of Joseph, as he is known today. After the “Steal Treaty” he was reported to have torn his copy of the treaty papers to shreds and then destroyed his New Testament.

The traditional way of Nez Perce government had always been to hold council where everything was done by agreement. Those who refused to agree on any matter had always been free to exercise their agency to act for themselves, and had not been condemned for it. No man, nor group had ever been forced to go along with the majority. Each had had the right to act for himself. If something seems not quite right about the signing of this 1863 treaty, perhaps there is more to the story.

The descendants of those who signed this treaty suggest that coercion may have been employed by government agents. Not all of them may have signed willingly.

When Chief Joseph maintained that he had not signed any treaty, nor sold the land that his father had left him, he told the truth. By all accounts, both friend and enemy, his character was impeccable.

Then there was the DAWES ACT of 1887. This act divided the reservation into, and assigned lots. It basically destroyed Nez Perce tribal government, it was a compulsory turning away from traditional ways and culture to white values. It also allowed the leasing of Indian land to whites.

Finally, there was the 1893 AGREEMENT. **This was the instrument which opened the reservation to white homesteaders.** After all, the tribe was small, it would never be able to use all that land, according to the greedy white men who executed this shameful land grab. **Now there were 86,454 acres left.**

Nez Perce Reservation, 1855 to 2000

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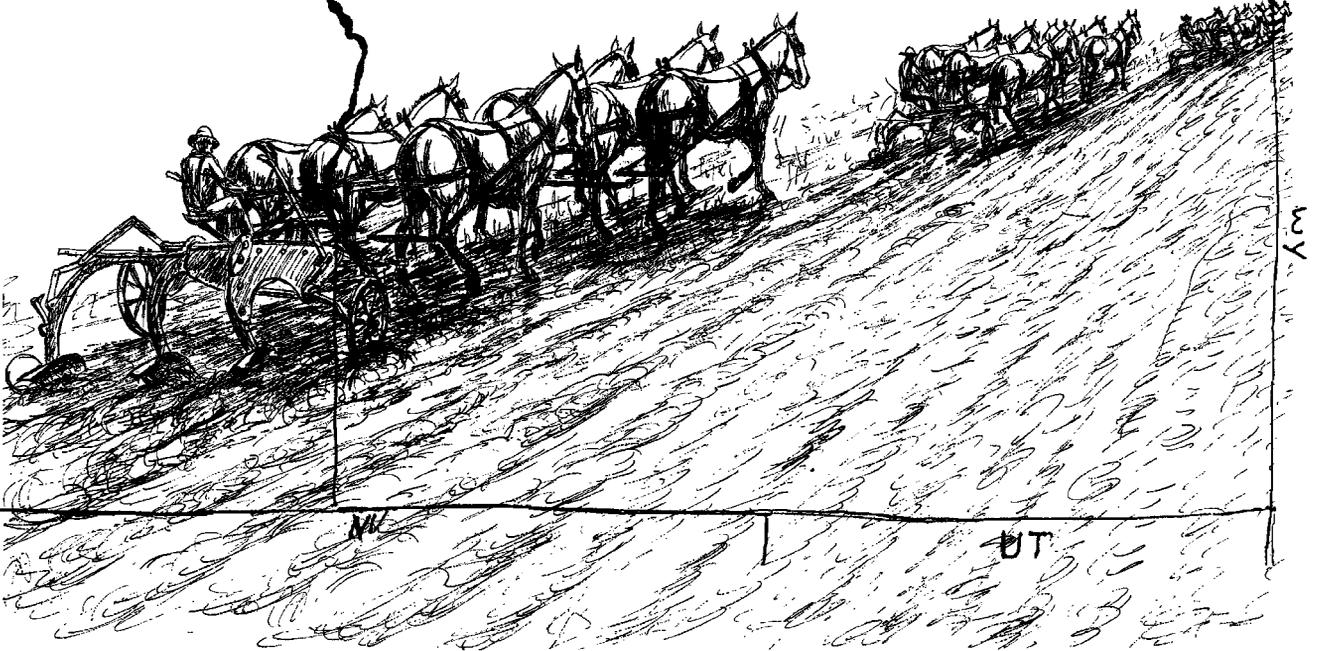
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FRY BREAD

Indian fry bread is not a traditional Indian recipe, it was a modified adaptation. The way Nez Perce ladies make it is delicious. They also make some of the finest pie crusts you'll ever eat, and make out of this world, double crusted huckleberry pies. Most Nez Perce women are fantastic cooks, probably because they respect food, the Creator, and Mother Earth, from which it comes.

The following recipe is one I acquired from my grand daughter, Angela. It came from her *kotsah*, her maternal grandmother, Julie Moses. Every cook makes changes, either in the ingredients or the method of preparation. This recipe came to me as a list of ingredients. I made it two ways. Choose the one that appeals to you. Remember that when these ladies first began making fry bread they had no bread boards nor rolling pins.

Preheat deep pan or electric skillet to 375°

2 cups flour

1 T. baking powder

2 tsp. salt

2 T. sugar

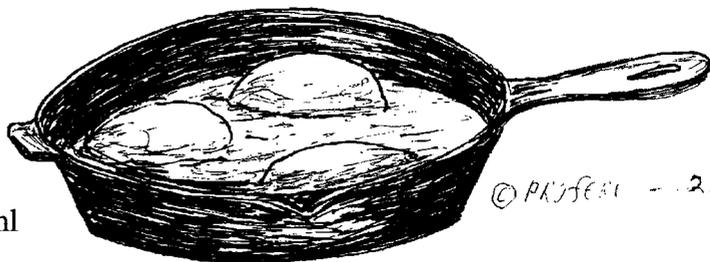
Blend in mixing bowl, make well.

Add 1 1/3 cups milk to well, all at once, stir in flour, little at a time until like thick gravy.

Now bring in rest of flour quickly, as for biscuits, blend and turn onto floured board. Sprinkle with flour and knead.

Add at least 1 inch of oil to skillet, grease hands with solid shortening and "pinch" off 1 1/2" balls of dough, flatten in the hand to 3/8 to 1/2 inch thick disks by "patting", gently lift and lower one side into hot oil, **do not drop**. Fry about 1 1/2 minutes each side, turn with slotted turner, when brown, lift, let drain a few seconds, place on paper towel lined platter. Check first piece for doneness.

If you prefer, do it the modern way: After you have kneaded the dough, sprinkle with flour and roll to 3/8 or 1/2 inch thick, adding flour to prevent pin from sticking. Now dip biscuit cutter into shallow bowl of flour and cut with twisting motion. Transfer to hot oil with slotted turner. Cook as above. Check first piece for doneness, if doughy in center they need to cook a little longer.

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<http://users.lewiston.com/proferes/index.html>

www.proferes.com

E-mail: proferes@lewiston.com

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