

Blackfeet

by

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Clothes

Beads on a girl's hide dress were sewn in a way that they resemble porcupine quill designs. The women's dress is made from two elk dog skins sewn together so that the hind quarters formed sleeves. The yoke is overlaid with beads and fringed with brass-colored beads and shells. According to a Blackfeet myth, shortly after their creation, the men were naked because they were unable to tan buffalo hides. The women were starving because they couldn't hunt. Buffalo leather was the raw material for those black soled moccasins that gave the tribe its very name. The people also used leather to make breech clothes, leggings, dresses, and robes. The Blackfeet used buffalo bones, horns, hooves, and hair to make utensils, arrowheads, jewelry, and children's toys. The cleaned lining of the buffalo's stomach made a fine water carrier. The Blackfeet hunt elk dogs, bison, deer, birds, and horses. They painted pictures of animals were used to tell their vision.

Food

There was no animal more important to the tribe than the American bison. Before white hunters came to the Great Plains, millions of buffalo roamed freely from the woodlands. The Blackfeet Indians let no part of the buffalo go to waste; in addition to eating the meat, the people used the skins, the horns, and even the dried dang of the animals as fuel for fires. The humps, tongues, and livers of buffalo were their delicacies. The hide was every bit as important as the meat was to the Indians survival.

Ceremonies

A Blackfeet marriage could take place after a young man had proven himself in battle or a horse raid. Then he sent a trusted friend or relative to his intended bride's home with a gift of horses. If she accepted the horses, the couple was engaged. The wedding was usually a few days later. The fingers of the bride and groom were cut and their blood was mingled to seal the marriage. After a fest of honor the new couple, the wife left her family's tepee to join her husband.