

NATIVE AMERICANS PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS

Educational Video
29 Minutes

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BEHIND THE SCENES

Every effort has been taken to make this video as accurately and authentically as possible.

Tipis, wardrobes and props were designed by Larry Belitz, the same craftsman who worked on *Dances with Wolves*, and who has spent most of his life learning the ways of the Lakota-Sioux, the tribe featured in the video. All items are of museum quality and were historically hand-crafted using authentic techniques and materials. The featured tipi is made of 18 buffalo hides, each hide skinned, tanned and finished by Larry, a process that takes six months.

The same attention to detail was taken in selecting the featured horses. All horses are Spanish-Barbs, among the few descendants of the original horses brought to this continent by the Spanish in the 1500s and which were later adopted by the Plains Indians, after the horses made their way from the Southwest into the Plains.

Native Americans featured in the video are Lakota-Sioux and the locations, all of them in South Dakota, are authentically portrayed.

Shunka, the dog, was the type of dog you would have found in many Plains villages.

All featured museum pieces were verified by the Akta-Lakota Museum.

The producers relied only on highly respected books, articles, academic advisors, and original documents. They conferred with Native American leaders to insure an accurate and sensitive portrayal of the Plains people.

The producers also worked closely with educational consultants to assure that this program is specific to textbook, framework and syllabus objectives.

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INTRODUCTION

This video is designed to introduce students to Native Americans of the Plains and to help establish an affinity for their culture.

Students will see that the Plains is a unique region consisting of gently rolling land, covered in many areas by tall grass but few trees. The land was ideal for the vast buffalo herds which once roamed here. The Plains was home to many prominent tribes, including the Blackfeet, Crow, Cheyenne, Omaha, Kiowa, Commanche, Sioux and others.

The focus of this video is the early 1800s, before significant European-American intrusion into the Plains, when the Lakota-Sioux controlled much of South Dakota, hunting buffalo with horses which were the descendants of those left behind by the Spanish in the 1500s.

The video depicts the day-to-day life of a typical Sioux family as told through the narrative voice of Wi-ya-ka-luta (Red Feather), a 12 year-old boy. Students will learn how the Sioux hunted, cooked, made tools, weapons, and clothing. Also discussed are the Sioux concepts of religion, spirits and the natural world.

The climax of the video portrays Red Feather's father stalking a buffalo, using a wolf skin disguise.

Painstakingly researched and authentically recreated, this video provides a rare glimpse of a prehistoric culture in an engaging and entertaining format.

New in this revision is a discussion of how the way of life of the Ojibwa would be forever changed when a new people, the Europeans, entered America. Also featured are sequences depicting modern-day life on reservations.

OBJECTIVES

After viewing the video, students should know:

- where Native Americans originated
- the unique natural environment of the Plains
- prominent Plains tribes
- the names of other Native American tribes
- how the Plains people constructed and erected their tipis
- how the Plains people made fire
- how the Plains people made their tools, weapons and clothing
- how the Plains people hunted
- how the Plains people cooked
- some of the games played by Plains children
- the Plains view of the natural world, religion and spirits
- the role of the medicine man in Plains culture
- that while Northwest Coast children may have led different lives, they had many things in common with children of today
- how a new people, the Europeans, entered America and changed forever the way of life of all native peoples
- what reservation life is like for Native Americans today

SUMMARY

The video opens by portraying the natural environment of the Plains: images of rolling land covered by tall grass and few trees.

Historic photographs depict some of the tribes who lived in the Plains, including the Crow, Arapaho and Sioux. The narrator states that while the tribes had different names and languages, they all hunted the buffalo.

Paintings depict how Plains Indians hunted buffalo on horseback. The narrator adds that the Plains people never hunted for sport, but to feed and clothe themselves. Beautiful scenery accompanies the Plains view that everything in the natural world was sacred and possessed a spirit life. Medicine men were said to have a special knowledge of both the spiritual and natural worlds.

Students learn that Plains Indians showed respect for the natural world in nearly everything they did. Featured museum pieces include clothing, ceremonial pipes, and utensils adorned with animal likenesses. Also featured are ceremonial clothing, dolls and a headdress.

While Plains tribes did not have written languages, they did keep track of important events by depicting them on buffalo hides called winter counts.

Posing the questions, "Who were the Plains people?", and "Where did they come from?", the video segues to an animation sequence that shows the probable migratory route of all Native Americans, from Asia across the Bering Land Bridge that existed some 30,000 years ago.

Animation also shows how Native Americans settled into various regional groups, distinguished by common adaptations to unique natural environments. Students learn that one of the groups, Native Americans of the Plains, inhabited a region that was ideal for the buffalo which once roamed here. Following the buffalo on their annual migrations, the people adopted a nomadic life style.

The video then follows a typical Plains family in its day-to-day activities as told through the voice of Wi-ya-ka-luta (Red Feather), a 12-year-old Sioux boy.

Red Feather is first seen with his father, Strong Bow, and another man, Big Horse, as they ride to the knoll of a hill in search of buffalo. Red Feather, in voice over, tells us of the importance of the buffalo; without them, his people would not be able to live the way they do.

Back at their village, Red Feather's mother is shown erecting their tipi with the help of another woman in the village. Poles form the basic shape of the tipi and they are then covered with buffalo hides.

While the mother erects the family tipi, Red Feather's sister, Runs-Like-a-Rabbit, is shown setting up a miniature "toy" tipi of her own. Red Feather tells us this is how Plains children learn things, by copying their parents.

The mother is then shown doing other domestic chores, including scraping a fire pit, laying buffalo robes on the floor, and setting up back rests.

The mother next prepares dinner. A hot rock from the fire is dropped into a buffalo stomach cooking bag, causing water to boil. Buffalo meat, prairie turnips and spearmint leaves are added.

The father is next shown making weapons. Featured items include a bow made from a tree branch, bow string made from buffalo sinew, an arrow made from a branch of a currant bush, and an arrowhead made from flint.

Next, children are shown playing a variety of Plains games, including buffalo hunt, throw-one-up-like-a-ball, the hoop game, and shinny (the Indian version of lacrosse). The games are not only fun diversions but some of them teach the boys to become better hunters.

After the tipi is set up, Red Feather 's mother builds a fire by using a spinning stick and a bow. The spinning causes the wood to heat up, igniting dry grass. Twigs and sticks are added, resulting in a large fire.

We next see Red Feather as he, his father and Big Horse decide to stop for lunch during their search for buffalo. Red Feather's job is water boy and he is shown filling a buffalo bladder bag from a nearby creek, and cooling down the horses by splashing them with water.

Back at the village, Red Feather's mother is shown making a dress from deerskin. She uses a marking stone to draw a pattern, and then a flint knife to cut the pattern out. She stitches the dress together using a bone awl and sinew thread.

An elderly woman in the village is shown embroidering, wrapping dyed porcupine quills around sections of deerskin. The end result is a beautiful bag.

In the climax, Red Feather and his father finally find the buffalo. Red Feather's father, wearing a wolf skin disguise, is shown stalking a buffalo and then successfully shooting it.

In a revised epilog students learn that the way of life of Plains tribes was forever changed with the arrival of Europeans on this continent, and how a series of conflicts resulted in the complete conquest of the Plains people and all Native Americans.

The video then features a number of sequences featuring what life is like on modern-day reservations. Students will learn that while alcoholism and unemployment rates are high, life on most reservations is improving.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When and how did Native Americans arrive in North America?

Most anthropologists today accept the theory that all Native Americans are descendants of Asian peoples who migrated to this continent in pursuit of game animals as long ago as 30,000 years, crossing a land bridge that once existed where the Bering Sea is today.

2. How long did the migration take?

There were probably several migrations spread over thousands of years.

3. Where did these Asian people settle?

They settled in all parts of North and South America, adapting to the unique natural environments found in the various regions.

4. How are Native Americans classified?

While Native Americans can be classified in a number of ways, including language and tribal affiliation, the video focuses on classification by group, according to the common habits and customs acquired to adapt to a region's natural environment.

5. How many groups are there?

Seven are featured in this video which covers all U.S. states, excluding Hawaii and portions of Alaska. The seven featured groups are the Eastern Woodlands, the Plains, the Southwest, the Plateau, the Great Basin, California, and the Northwest Coast.

6. What are some of the tribes of the Plains?

Blackfeet, Crow, Arapaho, Sioux, Kiowa, Commanche, Omaha, Cheyenne and others.

7. What did all these tribes have in common?

Chiefly, they all hunted the buffalo.

8. Did Plains Indians have a religion?

They believed in good and evil spirits and that everything in the natural world was connected in a spiritual way.

9. Who were medicine men?

They were individuals who were said to have a special knowledge of the spiritual world and who could alter events.

10. Who was responsible for setting up tipis?

Women set up tipis and performed most other domestic labor.

11. How many buffalo hides were needed to cover a tipi?

Red Feather's tipi was large and required 18 hides.

12. How did Plains Indians build a fire?

They used a spinning stick and bow. The spinning stick created friction causing the wood to heat up, making dry grass smolder and then flame. Twigs and sticks were added to build a fire.

13. How did Plains Indians cook their meals?

Featured in the video is a buffalo stomach cooking bag. It was filled with water and the water was boiled by dropping a hot rock into the bag.

14. How did Plains Indians make bows?

The bow was carved from a tree branch. Bow string was made by braiding buffalo sinew.

15. How did Plains Indians make their arrows?

The shafts were made from branches of the currant bush. The branches were first peeled of their bark and then the shaft was straightened using a bone straightener.

16. How did Plains Indians make arrowheads?

They chipped them from flint, the final touches being done by pressing the tip of a deer antler against the edges of the arrowhead. Arrowheads and feathers were secured to the shafts by wrapping them with sinew thread and covering the thread with glue made from buffalo hide.

17. What games did Plains children play?

Featured in the video are buffalo hunt, throw-one-up-like-a-ball, the hoop game, and shinny (their version of lacrosse).

18. What were the duties of the water boy?

They fetched water for the men and cooled down the horses.

19. What was the water bag made of?

A buffalo bladder.

20. How did Plains women make their dresses?

They drew a pattern on a deerskin using a marking stone and then cut the pattern out using a flint knife. A dress was stitched together using a bone awl and sinew thread.

21. How did Plains women embroider?

They wrapped dyed porcupine quills around sections of buffalo hide or deerskin.

22. How did Plains Indians stalk buffaloes?

In the method featured in the video, they crept slowly along the ground wearing a wolf skin disguise.

23. Why wouldn't the buffalo be frightened by a wolf?

Wolves frequently followed the buffalo and the buffalo were used to their presence. A single wolf posed no threat as buffalo were aware that wolves hunted in packs.

24. Was buffalo hunting dangerous?

Yes, Red Feather mentions that several men in his village had been killed by charging bull buffaloes.

25. What became of the Plains people?

The way of the Plains people and the buffalo were forever changed with the arrival of European Americans into the Plains.

26. Where did the government put Indians after they were forced to give up their land.

On reservations.

27. What did the government do with many Indian children?

Forced them to attend strict boarding schools.

28. How many Indians choose to remain on reservations today?

More than a half million.

29. What are two major problems found on most reservations today?

Unemployment and alcoholism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to encourage classroom discussion

1. This video shows Plains Indians making and using flint arrowheads and knives.

Question: How would this change with the arrival of European Americans?

Plains Indians would forego their stone tools and weapons for steel and iron. The bow would be replaced by the rifle.

Question: How would the rifle improve Plains Indian hunting skills?

The rifle was more accurate and could bring down buffalo and other game from a much greater distance.

2. The video explains the importance of medicine men in Plains life.

Question: Are there counterparts to medicine men in modern society?

Priests, ministers, rabbis and other religious leaders fulfill many of the same functions as medicine men and act as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual worlds.

Question: What function did medicine men perform not usually associated with modern religious leaders?

While not discussed in the video, it is commonly known that medicine men treated the sick.

3. Horses are featured throughout the video as an integral part of Plains culture.

Question: Did Plains Indians always have horses?

No. While not discussed in the video, the horses were the descendants of those left behind by the Spanish in the Southwest in the 1500s. The horses made their way to the Plains where they were adopted by the Indians there.

Questions: Before the horse, how was Plains life different?

One of the important differences was the way Plains Indians hunted buffalo. The Indians relied more on stalking and deception, driving buffalo into box canyons or over cliffs.

4. Many people assume all Plains tribes have always lived on the Plains.

Question: Is this true?

No. Some tribes arrived on the Plains from other regions as late as the 1700s. The Sioux, for example, were driven out of the Great Lakes area by the Chippewa.

5. Plains tribes kept track of important events by making pictographs on buffalo hides.

Question: Since they didn't have a written language, how else might Plains Indians have kept track of their history?

Through oral traditions: myths, legends, song, stories, etc.

6. In the video, a woman is shown embroidering, using dyed porcupine quills.

Question: What material would replace porcupine quills later in the 19th century, after contact with European Americans?

Glass beads, which came in more colors, were generally more vibrant and were more easily embroidered.

7. In the video, a woman is shown embroidering, using dyed porcupine quills.

Question: How did Plains Indians utilize the natural resources of their region?

Answers include:

- made tipis from buffalo hides
- clothes were made from deerskin
- cooking bags were made from buffalo stomachs
- water bags were made from buffalo bladders
- scoops and spoons were made from buffalo and rams' horns
- arrowheads and knives were made from flint
- bows and arrows were made from branches
- thread and string were made from buffalo sinew
- awls were made from animal bones
- hammers were made from elk antlers
- buffalo hair was used to fill pillows

Question: If the Plains Indians didn't have the buffalo, what other materials might they have used to construct their lodges?

Answers include:

- deerskin
- tree branches
- bark
- furs

7. Many children are fascinated by Plains Indian life.

Question: Comparing it to modern life, how would Plains life be better or worse than today?

There are countless specific answers but, in general, Plains Indians led comparatively simple lives, living close to nature. Modern people have many modern conveniences but must live with modern day stress such as crime, congestion, pollution, etc.

8. The video features life on reservations today.

Question: Is it better for Indians to remain on reservations or leave them?

By staying on reservations, Indians maintain familiarity with family, friends and customs, but there are few employment opportunities there. Leaving can bring employment opportunities but can also lead to a loss of identity.

9. The video discusses some problems facing modern-day reservation Indians.

Question: What contributes to the high rate of alcoholism found on many reservations and reserves?

The high rate of alcoholism is largely due to the high unemployment and resultant loss of hope found on many reservations. Without employment and something to work toward, many Indians lose their self-esteem and fall into idleness and despair. Many turn to alcohol as a way to escape their problems.

ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to encourage students to learn more about some of the things covered in the video.

1. The video discusses Native Americans as descendants of Asian peoples who migrated to this continent as long ago as 30,000 years, crossing a land bridge that once connected Asia with North America. Many Native Americans living today don't accept this explanation, citing accounts of their own which have been passed down orally from previous generations.

Activity: Ask students to research books on Indian legends at the library and report back to the class how a selected tribe explains its origin.

2. The Plains covers a vast portion of the United States.

Activity: Have students draw a map of the region with its significant topography, natural resources and major tribes.

3. Tipis were efficient dwellings and quick to set up.

Activity: Ask students to make miniature tipis based on what they saw in the video or from pictures in books. Substitute cloth or chamois for the hide, and small sticks or dowels for the poles. Tipis may be decorated with Indian designs.

4. Plains people kept track of important events by painting pictures on buffalo hides. One drawing shown in the video depicts an arrow penetrating a knee next to wavy lines depicting a creek. Authorities interpret this pictograph as representing the massacre at Wounded Knee Creek.

Activity: Ask students to make pictographs of their own that represent important events of today. The moon landing might simply show the figure of a man standing on the moon.

5. This video ends just before the European Americans entered the Plains.

Activity: Ask students to research and report how Plains Indian life changed with the arrival of the European Americans.

6. While the historical way of life of Native Americans has been altered, Native Americans haven't vanished. In addition to those living and working in cities and towns, more than a half-million Native Americans live on reservations.

Activity: Have students research a selected reservation and report to the class the way of life of reservation Indians today.

Activity: Have students draw a U.S. map featuring modern-day Indian reservations.

GLOSSARY

adorn: to decorate.

alcoholism: a disease caused by repeatedly drinking too much alcohol.

anthropologist: person who studies the origins, characteristics, customs and beliefs of a people.

awl: a pointed tool for making small holes in leather or wood.

bison: a four-legged mammal with a shaggy mane and a humped back.

buffalo: See *bison*.

descendants: people who are the offspring of a specific ancestor.

drought: an extended period of dry weather.

embroidery: the art of working ornamental designs, usually using a needle and thread.

environment: that which comprises all the things of a specific place or region.

famine: a condition marked by a scarcity of food.

flint: a hard rock that tends to fracture before shattering.

lodge poles: the main poles used to form the basic shape of a tipi.

migration: the movement of people or animals from one region to another.

medicine man: a man said to possess supernatural powers.

nomad: a member of a tribe which has no permanent home and moves from place to place in search of game.

reservation: an area of land set aside by the government for the use of Native Americans.

sinew: animal tendons used by primitive cultures to make thread, string and rope.

spirit: a supernatural being without physical form.

tipi: a cone-shaped tent with an outer covering of hides, bark or furs, used by some Native American tribes. Also spelled *teepee* and *tepee*.

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SCRIPT

Narrator

These broad plains were once home to the buffalo. Great herds stretched as far as the eye could see. Today the buffalo are mostly gone. So, too, are the people who hunted them. The people who called this land their home. The people of the plains.

MAIN TITLE: "Native Americans: People of the Plains"

The people of the plains had many names: Crow, Arapaho, Sioux. Each had different names. Each spoke different languages. But they all hunted the buffalo. Where the buffalo went, so did the people. The buffalo provided food, clothing and shelter.

Riding on horseback, the Plains people were bold and efficient hunters. But the Plains people never hunted for sport. They only killed to feed and clothe themselves. After all, to them, the buffalo as with all living things, was sacred and possessed a spirit life.

Everything in nature, the grass, the wind, the water, they all possessed a spirit life and all were to be respected. Everything in the natural world had a reason for being here, and everything was connected to everything else in a spiritual way.

But there were also evil spirits in the world, and when things went wrong, like drought, famine, disease, it was usually because of the evil spirits.

Medicine men were said to have a special knowledge of the spiritual world and were called upon to make things right again; sometimes by conducting ceremonies and dances where the people would become in better touch with the natural world around them.

Respect for the natural world is evident in nearly everything the Plains people did. Many of their possessions were adorned with animal likenesses. Their ceremonial pipes were not only colorful but were sometimes carved with animal figures. And so, too, were many of their cooking and eating utensils. These serving spoons were carved from buffalo and ram horns.

Their ceremonial clothing was among the most beautiful of all Native Americans. And so were the dolls they made for their children.

This headdress was worn by a warrior who performed many acts of bravery, each feather representing some heroic deed.

While they didn't have a written language, many Plains tribes kept track of important events by painting pictures on buffalo hides. Each picture stands for one year.

Who were the Plains people? Where did they come from? How did they get here? While many Native Americans explain their origin in a different way, most anthropologists believe the following.

About 30,000 years ago, North America looked much like it does today. A narrow stretch of ocean separated Asia from this continent. There were no people living here.

Then, ice began to move across the Northern Hemisphere. As it did, sea levels dropped, exposing a land bridge connecting Asia with North America.

Large game animals, like bison and mammoth, crossed this land bridge, entering the new continent, soon followed by Asian hunters.

There were probably several migrations, over thousands of years, and eventually, the people spread throughout North and South America, before the ice retreated and the land bridge became covered by water again.

There were hundreds of tribes, but each can be classified into one of several groups, according to the natural environment in which they lived.

The names of these groups are the Eastern Woodlands, the Plains, the Southwest, the Plateau, California, and the Northwest Coast.

Each of these groups lived in an environment that was unlike the others. None of the others lived in an environment that was quite like this one, the land of the Plains people.

The Plains is made up of gently rolling land, covered by tall grass and few trees. The land is ideal for the buffalo which once roamed here. Grazing on the wild grasses, the buffalo were free to migrate hundreds, even thousands of miles, following the same pathways year after year. And where the buffalo went, the people followed. They were nomads, following a nomadic life; always on the move, never in one place for long.

What would it have been like to have lived back then? To have followed the buffalo? To have lived like the Plains people?

Red Feather

We had not seen buffalo for many days. If they were anywhere near, my father would find them. He is one of the best in our village finding the trail of the buffalo. He is called Strong Bow.

The other man is called Big Horse, my father's friend.

I am called Wi-ya-ka-luta. It means Red Feather.

I've lived for 12 winters and, usually, boys my age don't get to ride with their fathers, but my father says I'll soon be ready for the hunt myself and I must learn the ways of the buffalo. For the buffalo is all important. Without it, we would not be able to live the way we do.

Our very homes are made from the buffalo. Our tipis have been sewn together from buffalo hides.

A tipi makes a very nice home and it is very quick to set up, which is a good thing, because we're never in one place for long.

My mother, Sound-of-the-Wind, always sets up our tipi. She does so with the help of another woman in the village.

First, three lodge poles are set up to make the basic shape of the tipi.

Thinner poles are placed between the three main poles.

All the poles are then bound together.

Shunka, our dog, enjoys watching the work.

Buffalo hides are then draped over the poles. This is hard work because buffalo hides are very heavy and a total of 18 hides are used to cover one tipi.

The hides are then stretched tight and pegged around the outside edge. The hammer my mother is using is made from an elk antler.

While my mother puts up the real tipi, my little sister, Runs-Like-a-Rabbit, practices putting one up herself. This is how we learn things, by copying our parents.

After the tipi is up, my mother will clear a place inside for our fire. She is using a buffalo horn to scrape away the grass. The fire will keep our tipi warm on the coldest of nights, and it can also be used for cooking.

Before the fire is lit, flaps at the top of the tipi are opened to let out smoke.

Next, my mother places buffalo robes on the ground to make a nice soft floor.

She sets up back rests; these are made out of sticks, and lays out a couple of pillows which are filled with soft buffalo hair. A tipi can be a very comfortable place.

One of the last things my mother does is to hang our wind chime. It is made from buffalo hooves and makes pretty sounds when the wind blows against the tipi.

After the tipi is set up, my mother will build a fire. Dry grass is placed between two pieces of wood.

Next, she uses a bow and a spinning stick. The spinning stick causes the wood to heat up.

She has to spin very fast, but soon the grass begins to smoke.

Then, at just the right moment, my mother will stop spinning so that she can blow on the smoking grass, until finally a flame appears.

She'll add bigger and bigger sticks to the flame until there is a real fire.

After the fire has been burning awhile, my mother will remove one of the hot rocks. This is placed in a cooking bag. The rock will cause the water to boil in a very short time. After which, my mother will add some pieces of buffalo meat, which we eat practically all the time, as well as some prairie turnips which grow wild just about everywhere.

Runs-Like-a-Rabbit likes to add the final seasoning; in this case, some spearmint leaves.

I almost forgot. The cooking bag is actually the stomach of a buffalo. It never leaks, even with boiling water inside.

While my mother is cooking, my father will usually make tools and weapons. Our bows are made from tree branches.

After removing the bark, a branch is carved to the proper shape, using a stone scraper.

It can take a long time, but gradually the bow takes shape.

The bow string is made from sinew - dried buffalo tendons. It first has to be shredded into thin strands. We use buffalo sinew to make thread, string and rope. Two strands have to be twisted and braided together. A freshly made bow string is almost impossible to break.

Arrows are made from carefully selected branches of the currant bush. The bark first has to be scraped away, again using a stone scraper. It is then sanded between two coarse rocks. And then straightened using a buffalo bone with a hole in it. Straightening is very important because if an arrow isn't straight, it won't fly straight.

Arrowheads are chipped from flint, the final touches being done with a deer antler. The arrowhead is then tied to the shaft with sinew.

The same for the feathers, they're tied to the shaft with sinew, then covered with a coating of glue which is made from buffalo hooves.

A properly made bow and arrow in the right hands is a very deadly weapon. A single shot, aimed properly, can bring down a buffalo at full gallop.

Work isn't all we do. There's usually time for games, at least for children, like buffalo hunt. It's not only a lot of fun, but it teaches us to be buffalo hunters.

Throw-one-up-like-a-ball is always a lot of fun. Girls especially like it, because they get to throw small boys into the air.

The hoop game also teaches us to be better hunters. The girls think it's funny when we miss, but sometimes we make it.

Shinny is another popular game. The object here is to hit a ball into your opponent's goal.

We still have not found the buffalo and so my father decides to stop and eat. My job is water boy and that means I must fetch water for the men.

The water bag I'm using is made from a buffalo bladder. It's very strong and like a buffalo stomach, hardly every leaks. It's very handy to have on a trip.

Another job of the water boy is to cool down the horses so they'll be fresh for the rest of the day.

Back at the village, my mother is making a new dress.

She starts by drawing an outline on a deerskin using a marking stone.

Then, using a flint knife, she cuts the pattern out. This will be a dress for Runs-Like-a-Rabbit, but it's only half done.

My mother will next stitch this half with a matching half, first using a bone awl to make some holes, and then sewing the two pieces together with sinew.

This is an everyday dress, so it won't be decorated. But many of our things are beautifully decorated.

One woman in our village is well known for her beautiful embroidery. She does it by wrapping dyed porcupine quills around sections of buffalo or deerskin.

This takes a lot of time. It will take several passings of the moon to finish a beautiful bag like this.

Finally, we have found the buffalo. But there is a problem. There are many calves, which mean the buffalo will be very cautious. They'll run with the slightest noise.

My father decides it will be best to use a sneak attack. He has brought a wolf skin for this very purpose. Wolves frequently follow the buffalo, and the buffalo are used to their presence. The buffalo will not be frightened by a single wolf.

My father will hunt alone, using his bow and arrow.

My father must move slowly and carefully. He doesn't want to frighten the buffalo. Several men in our village have been killed by charging bull buffaloes.

Buffalo hunting is dangerous. Several men in our village have been killed by charging bull buffaloes.

It can take a long time to get close enough to shoot.

Today, the hunters were fortunate. But little did they know their days as buffalo hunters were coming to an end.

A new people had entered America. Soon the new Americans, the European-Americans, would enter the plains and when they did, the way of the Plains people would never be the same again.

Wanting the land occupied by Indians, the new Americans engaged in a series of conflicts that would eventually result in the complete conquest of the plains people and all Native Americans.

Indians everywhere were forced to give up their way of life and to live on small reservations, areas of land set aside for Indians.

No longer able to hunt and fish in the old ways, the Indians were rationed food and clothing by the government. Some agents who were supposed to help the Indians were dishonest. They stole money and supplies, so the Indians never got all that they were entitled to. As a result, the Indians lived in total poverty and many starved.

Tribes were forced to give up many of their traditions and could no longer perform many of their religious rites and ceremonies.

Many Indian children were separated from their families and were sent to strict boarding schools where they were forced to give up their Indian ways.

In the 1950s, the government encouraged Native Americans to relocate to the nation's cities, where they could find jobs and live in modern ways, but not all Indians chose to do this.

Today, Indians can live anywhere they want, and many choose to live off reservations in cities and towns, employed in the same sorts of jobs as other Americans.

But more than a half million Indians prefer to remain on reservations located throughout the United States.

Life here is better than it used to be and, in some ways, is similar to life anywhere else.

Indians drive cars and live in modern dwellings like other Americans.

They dress in modern clothing.

They shop in stores.

Many attend Christian churches.

Indian children go to schools that look like schools anywhere. . .and study the same kinds of subjects.

They play the same sorts of games and enjoy the same things as other American children.

While reservation life is a lot like life anywhere else, there are some big differences. Unemployment is very high. On some reservations, four out of five people are out of work, and because of it, alcoholism and poverty are widespread.

No one knows that better than Sergeant Wendel Yellow Bull of the Pine Ridge reservation police.

"Due to a lack of money, unemployment is very high, jobs are not available. We have young kids, high school kids, coming and graduating, needing jobs and the jobs are not there. And this leads to a lot of excessive time, boredom, and the alcohol and the drugs seem to be a way to go."

In recent years many tribes have opened casinos in order to create jobs and bring in additional income. But only a few tribes -- those near major cities -- have actually profited from casinos.

A few Native Americans are able to earn incomes by selling their arts and crafts.

Shane Espinosa is learning to tan hides in the way his ancestors did before him. Deerhides like this were used by Plains Indians to make dresses, shirts, and other types of clothing. Today, Shane sells his hides to earn needed money for himself and his family.

Another longtime craft of many plains tribes is porcupine quillwork. Delores Yellow Bull, a Lakota Sioux, is working on a quillwork piece she hopes to sell. The quills must first be softened which is done by soaking them in the mouth. They are then wrapped around sections of deerhide. Quillwork is used to decorate many items, like these wrist cuffs and barrette.

Marc Zimica has been carving ceremonial pipe bowls since he was a boy and has gone on to become one of the world's best pipe makers. While Marc uses some modern techniques, his pipe bowls are similar in style to bowls that have been carved for many generations and will sell for hundreds of dollars.

Crafts like these not only bring in needed income, but they enable crafts people to stay in touch with their traditional ways, and that's important to many Indians.

That's why on many reservations, Indians are participating in ancient ceremonies like the sweat lodge ceremony being prepared here by a spiritual leader and his assistant. Before the ceremony begins, hot rocks are brought into the lodge. Water will be poured on the rocks, creating steam. People will take their places in the lodge, to pray, to sing, and to be physically and spiritually purified.

One of the most exciting events on reservations are powwows, where Indians come together and participate in many activities like dancing. Dancing is not only fun, but the best dancers can earn thousands of dollars in prize money. There are separate divisions for men, women, and even children.

Another popular attraction at many powwows is the rodeo, and one of the most popular parts of the rodeo is the bull riding competition. Here, Indian riders get to compete for thousands of dollars in prize money. It seems fitting that Native Americans, once among the greatest riders in the world, are now among the best on the rodeo circuit.

Today, the tipis are gone, and so too the vast buffalo herds that once roamed this land. But when the light is just right and you happen to be looking, you can still find evidence of an earlier place and time.

And maybe, just maybe, the arrowhead might have belonged to three hunters, one of them named Red Feather who passed this way nearly two hundred years ago.

Boy

Look. Look what we found, Annie. Look.

Girl

Wow. What is it?

Boy

It's an arrowhead. Betcha it's from when the Indians were around.

Narrator

And maybe, just maybe, the arrowhead might have belonged to three hunters, one of them named Red Feather, who passed this way nearly two hundred years ago.