

The American west

How did the plains Indians survive on the
great plains?

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✓ good organisation skills

Introduction

The Native Americans were not one people, but many tribes. The most famous tribes were the Apache, Sioux, Blackfeet and Cheyenne, each one led by its own

Council of Elders.



Sioux tribe

good source relation

Social structure

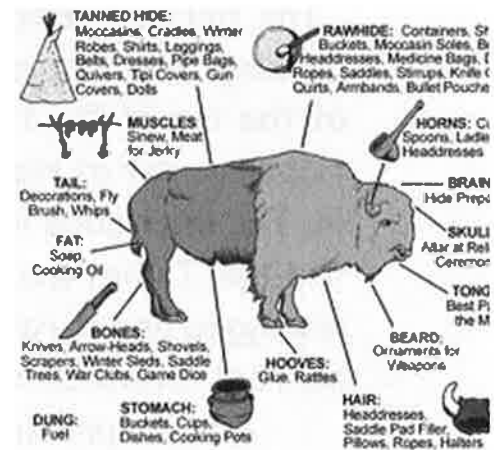
Problems and solutions

The most worrying problem about living in the Great Plains had to be having very little water and food. When the Sioux moved to



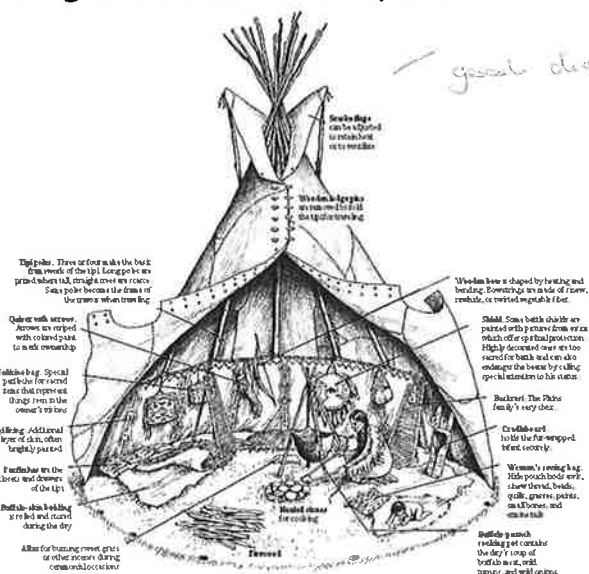
the Great Plains, they no longer grew beans and maize because it was against their religion to farm from the land. The plains needed a reliable food source which would last them through the treacherous, harsh winter months. However, the plains had the buffalo; the animal provides parts such as liver and kidneys which can be eaten raw. Hide was used for tipi covers, bedding, clothes and robes. Horns were used for spoons and dishes and the hair for rope. Fun toys for kids were made also; the bones were used to make a sledge. Various other parts were used to make drums, shields and knife cases.

The second main problem was the weather. They called it the 'norther'. The weather made it very hard to make shelter and there was very little wood to make cabins and the Sioux needed to



very clear explanation

good diagram



move fast to go on hunts for the buffalo.

One of the most brilliant ideas created for the sioux' homes were the tipi. It was ideal. Not much wood had to be used and with its unique shape, it could be packed up quickly for going hunting, moving or being used as a sledge for kids in the winter (which could also be used as an easier way of transporting). This



was good because the Indians had to move around a lot (from 6-8 times a year). This was to insure a life of continual moving because they believed in the god 'the great spirit' and this is what they believed he had wanted them to do. John O'sullivan came up with the phrase 'manifest destiny' which meant clear future. The phrase meant that America had a destiny and the plains Indians believed that this was

Plz ask me about this

travelling west.

The tipi was designed to enable an indoor fire for heating and cooking. The fire is set in the centre of the floor. Two smoke flaps at the top of the tipi can be adjusted with long poles. These smoke flaps are set at right angles to the wind, preventing the wind blowing in. The liner adds insulation in winter as well as circulating air within the tipi. In hot weather the lining is not used and the outside skin is unpegged and is rolled up to create ventilation, so overall it was a perfect invention which was great for both winter, and summer.

detailed knowledge

A third problem was that the plains Indians came into encounter with other dangerous tribes. The Sioux had to be protected from tribes such as: Pawnee, Apache, Cheyenne and Blackfeet. They also had to be weary of American settlers. With many enemies around, protecting the women was a very important role within the tribe. This meant that the Sioux had to be very skilled at warfare and also at hunting buffalo. They did not only just hunt buffalo, but ducks, deer and turkey. The children played games which were designed to help them out in the real world; like hunting games. To keep the tribe in order, all men and woman had different roles; women and scared men (scared of initiation) gathered and

Scared?

3

cooked food. This helped the Sioux to survive on the plains by working together and all participating. With all the fighting and killing going on, the Sioux did try to make peace treaties with the Americans.

A further main and dangerous problem was illness. The Americans had brought diseases such as smallpox, measles and influenza. Priests had started disappearing which left the Sioux wondering what they had done to deserve punishment like this. Fortunately, they had the medicine man. The medicine man was important because he interpreted the visions of young men and most of all was vital to the life of the tribe. The medicine man could make contact with the spirits of all living things. He did everything from interpreting visions to curing the sick. The plains Indians also believed that the medicine man could talk to the spirits and ask them for help. Also, with the active lifestyle that the plains lived they were generally fit and healthy.

can you give examples of traditional remedies?

Nature and land

Hunting

The Sioux were nomadic. Moving around 6-8 times a year was a way of life. Keeping themselves alive was very important to tribes and buffalo was the best answer for it. When hunting the buffalo, the tribes would send out scouts to spy on herds and report back the size and whereabouts them. If they stalked the buffalo individually, they would pick a day with downwind so that the buffalo couldn't sense them. They would also use wolf skin as a coat because buffalo aloud wolfs to approach them.



The buffalo jump was also an effective way for killing buffalo. This method drove the buffalo to their deaths. Piles of rocks (drive lines) were to keep the buffalo in a straight line. Hunters would wave robs to scare the buffalo and keep them in order. The run could go up to 8miles long but finally it would lead the buffalo in the buffalo pound.

This was a vital part of living for the Sioux and was a main part of keeping them alive. Without the buffalo, the Sioux would have died of starvation very quickly because the buffalo was their most important natural resource as it provided food, shelter and clothing.

Warfare

A main reason of war on the Great Plains was for horses. The more horses you had, the wealthier you were.

Year:	Tribe:	Tipis:	Indians:	Horses:
1860	Blackfoot	300	2,400	2,400
1869	Comanche	300	2,538	7,614
1871	Crow	460	4,000	9,500
1871	Oglala & Brule Sioux	600	5,000	2,000
1871	Pawnee	260	2,364	1,050
1878	Hunkpapa / Miniconjou Sioux	360	2,900	3,500

Another reason of battle was to seek revenge or kill enemies. Unlike settlers, the Sioux didn't believe in conquering land because they didn't believe that land could be owned. Staying alive in battle was one of the most important things for the Sioux. This was classed as bravery to the Sioux so they could look after the woman and children.

The greatest achievement for the Sioux was to touch their defeated worrier with a stick called a coup stick. This was more

honourable to the Sioux than actually killing their enemy. This was called counting coup.

Another warfare skill was scalping. One further reason to not get scalped was to avoid being scalped in battle. This was one of worst things that could happen because if your enemy had your scalp, he had you spirit. When an Indian killed a person in battle, he would scalp him and bring it back to camp. The scalps were dried and displayed on the top of tipi poles, hanging from horses, bridles or sewn into the seams of warriors clothing.

In conclusion, I think the plains Indians survived on the Great Plains by being able to adapt well to their surroundings and by hunting the buffalo. I believe that if the Americans hadn't interrupted the Indians way of life, they would still be living the natural life they lived today. They had buffalo which gave them pretty much everything they needed to survive. The quote: 'we were like deer, they were like grizzly bear' by Chief Joseph highlights the fact that the plains Indians were very vulnerable against the U.S army and without them interfering in their way of life they could of easily survived longer.



$\frac{13}{16}$

Grade B/A

Well done, Krista.

This is an extremely well written and interesting piece of independent research. Your strong writing technique and evident ability to match problems to solutions indicates that you could achieve Grade A/A* in the subject.

Moving forward, you do need to investigate at least one battle in depth. Also, you need to learn how to use an introduction to build an argument using a hierarchy of points.

very impressive so far! 15m

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/shp/americanwest/nativeamericansrev3.shtml>

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Hunting_techniques_of_the_Sioux_Indians

<http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/human/archaeo/aspects/buffalo.htm>

<http://nativeamericans.mrdonn.org/plains/buffalo.html>

✓ mature research skills

Are you also using the textbook at home?

This would really help you to gain grade A/A+