

Kid's Corner

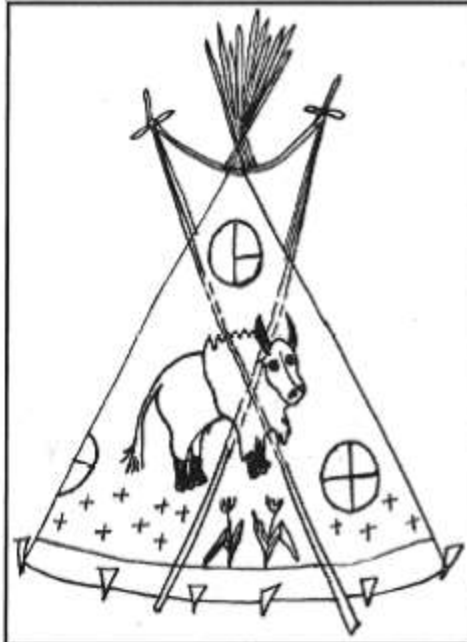
The Tipi *by Eunice Te 'Wa 'Ha*

"Tipi" is a Sioux word. The first Syllable "Ti" means *dwelling*. The Second Syllable "Pi" means *used for*.

The women of the tribe had most of the work of the household. She erected the Tipi, procured the wood for the fire, managed the farming affairs, dressed the game, caught the fish and made traps for small animals. The young girls made tiny samplings of the Tipis, and this way they learned how to construct them.

When the white man came, he brought with him different sewing materials than the Indians had. Before the new materials were available, the Tipi covering was made of soft animal hides sewn together in the shape of a half circle. About two dozen buffalo hides were needed to make a 14-foot-wide and 10-foot-high Tipi. Some Tipis were 25 feet high, capable of providing for 20 people. Here is a description of an average Tipi:

The frame was made of four pine poles; often spruce was used. The spruce is very sacred to all western Indian tribes. It is the most majestic of all trees. These poles were tied together near the top with sinew. Then, half a dozen more poles are set in between these four poles in a circular pattern. These are also tied at the top. The hide covering is then



lashed to one pole, pulled around the frame, and lashed again to the same pole. The bottom is pegged. Or weighted down with rocks. Poles are used to adjust the flaps for a smoke-hole vent. An entrance is made through a slit covered with a hide curtain.

The inside of the Tipi is lined with a piece of hide that hangs down all around the edges. This prevents drafts and also provides storage space. A fire is made in the center of the Tipi, under the smoke hole, inside a ring of stones. Tribal ceremonial materials are kept in the rear of the Tipi. Soft skins and furs were placed on the ground for seats and for sleeping. The husband and wife slept on the left side of the entrance, and the children slept on the right.

In warm weather the lower part of the Tipi is raised up on the poles to allow fresh air to blow throughout the structure. In cold weather, the space around the bottom, between the stakes and the ground, is packed with sod, to hold the Tipi down tightly and thus keep out the snow drifts and cold air.

Tipi designs are usually based on the dreams or imagination of the owner. Often the owner's particular clan emblem was painted on the door flap. Colors used in painting the Tipi can be symbolic: The colors green can express the earthen and blue can express the sky. Other colors can express a direction: Yellow - east; Black - west; Red - north; and White - south.

It takes a great deal of work to make the Tipi as it was once made—before modern sewing materials came. But when a new Tipi was needed, the woman who wanted to build one, invited her friends and relatives to come and help. She provided meals and it was the occasion for socializing too. In this way the families helped one another.