

The Stone Carver

It was a warm day and the heat felt good to the old man. He sat at his workbench but did not work. He closed his tired eyes and held his wrinkled face toward the sun. A young boy stood nearby. He looked at the deep lines in the old man's tanned skin, the soiled shirt hanging from thin shoulders, and the sharp knees that poked against baggy pants.

His bright eyes saw the tumble of rough pipestone on the ground and the shiny tools lay on the dusty bench. When the boy looked up, he saw the old man watching him. The old man smiled and pointed to a piece of stone, and the boy picked it up.

"What do you see in the stone?" the old man asked. The boy examined the red stone closely, turning it over and over in careful hands. At last he placed it in the old man's hand. "I see only a stone", he whispered. Smiling, the old man said, "I see a turtle". Then picking up the knife, he began to carve. The bright blade moved quickly, as a pile of soft red dust grew slowly on the ground between his feet. He did not speak again and did not seem to notice when the boy left.

Several days later, the boy thought of the man with the formless red stone. He remembered what the man had said and he wanted to see the stone again. The man was seated at his workbench holding the carved turtle when the boy arrived. He touched the boy's shiny nose with a red stained finger, and then rubbed the skin oil into the stone. He pressed the stone against his own brow and showed the boy how skin oil enhanced the patterns in the swirling stone.

Then he placed the turtle in the boy's hand. The boy turned the turtle over and over as his thin fingers explored every surface and traced every line. "Yes" he told himself. "a turtle was hidden in the pipestone". When he looked up, the old man picked up the turtle. Handing him a knife, the old man said "There is a wolf in the stone at your feet."

The boy picked up the stone and he turned it over. He saw a young wolf caught in it. He took the knife and carefully began to carve. He watched the fine red dust slide across the bright blade. He looked at his red-stained hands. He wondered how many stones he would carve before he became an old man holding his face toward the sun.

In this Native story, the old man teaches a young boy how to carve in pipestone. How many of you have heard of pipestone? It is a soft red rock that is found in southwestern Minnesota at a place that is now called Pipestone, Minnesota. We know that representatives from many Indian nations visited the pipestone quarry to get this precious stone. Today, it is probably the main stone used to carve special pipes used in ceremonies. There are many legends that tell about Pipestone Quarry. It was a place where members of many tribes could meet in peace because it is a sacred place.

In this story, the old man encourages the boy to become a stone carver. He doesn't push his will on the boy, but, by example, shows him how to carve. He gives the boy a carving knife, and an idea. The boy takes over from there. The actions of the old man are similar to the way effective leaders operated in Native life in the past. They encouraged others to shine and be their best.

What we can learn about Native leadership styles is very different from the leadership that is modeled in the larger American society. We see these models everyday on television, online, in CD lyrics, in video games and many other places. Examples:

Reality shows on television emphasize winners and losers, and losers are humiliated. Even some cooking shows emphasize the same theme, that winners brow beat and humiliate their opponents to win. First and best is what is important and prestige and money are the rewards. While team sports emphasize cooperation within the group, the object again is to be first and best. Even American politics emphasizes the same theme: candidates compete and try to outsmart one another to come out on top and win the political office.

Traditional Natives leadership is more difficult to achieve. It involves: 1. taking the *responsibility* to do something for the welfare of the group 2. identifying developing and using one's *skills* and *values* for the welfare of the group 3. *modeling* a healthy lifestyle including physical, emotional, and spiritual health and 4. *nurturing* the leadership skills in others.

American Indians are now a very small portion of the total American population. We cannot afford to have a few winners and many losers. We need the potential of all our people.

❖ How the Fawn Got Its Spots ❖

(*Dakota {Sioux}—Plains*)

Long ago, when the world was new, Wakan Tanka, The Great Mystery, was walking around. As he walked, he spoke to himself of the many things he had done to help the four-legged ones and the birds survive.

"It is good," Wakan Tanka said. "I have given Mountain Lion sharp claws and Grizzly Bear great strength. It is much easier now for them to survive. I have given Wolf sharp teeth and I have given his little brother, Coyote, quick wits. It is much easier now for them to survive. I have given Beaver a flat tail and webbed feet to swim beneath the water and teeth which can cut down the trees and I have given slow-moving Porcupine quills to protect itself. Now it is easier for them to survive. I have given the birds their feathers and the ability to fly so that they may escape their enemies. I have given speed to the deer and the rabbit so that it will be hard for their enemies to catch them. Truly it is now much easier for them to survive."

However, as Wakan Tanka spoke, a mother deer came up to him. Behind her was her small fawn, wobbling on weak new legs.

"Great One," she said. "It is true that you have given many gifts to the four-leggeds and the winged ones to help them survive. It is true that you gave me great speed and now my enemies find it hard to catch me. My speed is a great protection, indeed. But what of my little one here? She does not yet have speed. It is easy for our enemies, with their sharp teeth and their claws, to catch her. If my children do not survive, how can my people live?"

"Wica yaka pelo!" said Wakan Tanka. "You have spoken truly; you are right. Have your little one come here and I will help her."

Then Wakan Tanka made paint from the earth and the plants. He painted spots upon the fawn's body so that, when she lay still, her color blended in with the earth and she could not be seen. Then Wakan Tanka breathed upon her, taking away her scent.

"Now," Wakan Tanka said, "your little ones will always be safe if they only remain still when they are away from your side. None of your enemies will see your little ones or be able to catch their scent."

So it has been from that day on. When a young deer is too small and weak to run swiftly, it is covered with spots that blend in with the earth. It has no scent and it remains very still and close to the earth when its mother is not by its side. And when it has grown enough to have the speed Wakan Tanka gave its people, then it loses those spots it once needed to survive.

WAKUWA ETIPI – CAMPING OUT

By Elsie M. Cavender, Dakota Elder Upper Sioux Community
Granite Falls, Minnesota

From: "Collection of Legends and Stories"

Prepared for Dakota Project by Elitta Gouge

Part 1

I was seven years old when Grandpa and Grandma Roberts took me with them on a camping and trapping trip. For about five weeks from the latter part of October to three days before Thanksgiving, we camped at a place called Dry Wood Lake, 15 miles west of Sisseton, South Dakota.

Our form of transportation was a two-horse drawn, two-seated buggy, without the back seat; it held everything that was needed for the camp. My grandparents were very organized in their packing and very seldom forgot anything. When something was forgotten, additional supplies were obtained near our destination.

Grandpa's three dogs joined us on this trip, but since we traveled at a slow, steady pace, the three animals had no problem keeping up with the horses. Naturally, all three had Dakota names: Ohitika (which means fierce, terrible, brave); Kado (which I believe means the diamond in playing cards); and Siyo (prairie chicken). Siyo (she-yo) was a good bird dog and the other two were good hunting dogs. They made good companions and Grandpa liked to use them when he hunted the birds and animals that helped supply the necessary food.

Part 2

On the first evening, camping was set up at Appleton, Minnesota. There were non-Indian friends there who were used to seeing Dakota campers. In the past it had been a favorite place to camp and dig for wild turnips, or tipsinna, as we call it. Our second camp was at Goodwill on the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Reservation, which is where some of the relatives lived. While we were there, Grandpa and Grandma had a good time visiting, and we all enjoyed their hospitality.

The next day was spent in Sisseton purchasing the necessary food supplies: flour, potatoes, beans, rice, coffee, a slab of bacon, several cuts of beef, tea, lard and eggs. Of course, they also bought candy and fruit, especially for me! Since we were to camp by the farmer who rented Grandpa's land, there would be more meat and milk products available from him when needed. We left Sisseton as soon as possible so that we would be settled at the campsite before nightfall. Grandpa owned 40 acres of timberland and another 120 acres of farmland which he rented to a non-Indian farmer. It was close to his farm that we were to camp, near a small lake. When we arrived at the campsite, already there was a light covering of snow on the land and it was cold. During our five weeks of camping, two additional snowstorms came up and left a good amount of snow; yet we were comfortable and cozy. I don't remember that I was ever cold.

Part 3

Grandpa had selected a sheltered spot and the first thing that went up was the canvas wall tent. Straw bales were picked up from the farmer and these were laid around the inner walls with some of the straw spread out on the floor, over which were placed heavy pieces of carpet. The bottom edges of the tent had flaps which were tucked under the bales and carpet pieces. This was to be our home and sleeping area.

To keep us warm, Grandpa had ordered a specially made, small, four-burner tin stove. He cut out a lined opening at the top of the canvas tent for the stovepipe. The stove kept us warm during those weeks, although at night we used the flannel blankets and heavy quilts that Grandma brought along.

Part 4

The next morning, the tipi that Grandma had made was put up. This was to be used for the skinning of the small game, the tanning of hides and the drying of the skins. When all of the work was finished and we were properly sheltered, Grandpa went off to start his trapping. Almost every day he went out, leaving the tent while it was still dark and usually not returning until well after dark in the evening. I was allowed to sleep in and by the time I woke up, only Grandma would be there. She made sure that I had a good breakfast; sometimes I would have eggs (boiled or fried), bacon, and potatoes. When Grandpa visited the farmer and his wife, he returned with jams and jellies along with milk, cream and butter. The farmer's wife said, "Take some for the little girl." So I enjoyed those things with my meal, except the milk, which I didn't drink.

Part 5

During the day, I followed Grandma around (if I wasn't playing) and watched or even helped her as she did her daily tasks. Grandma was a little woman, very spunky with strong principles. She always got up with Grandpa, made his breakfast and made sure that he ate before he left. While she waited for me to wake up, she did her sewing and mending. It must have been the only quiet time for her as she stitched or repaired moccasins for Grandpa, or made or repaired mittens, gloves and shirts. She always had my breakfast to serve, the dishes to wash, along with the clothes, the tent and tipi to keep clean. She also had the wood to gather and the fires to keep burning. In the tipi, she tanned and stretched hides and then smoked some of them by hanging the hides over the open fire. Most of the work in the tent and the tipi belonged to her and she was zealous in doing it.

Part 6

She took along a bag of her Indian corn and decided one day to make hominy soup. I went with her to the pond to wash the corn out. Grandpa had cut two holes in the ice, one for the horses to drink from and the other from which to dip out our drinking water. In the hole in the ice, I would see little minnows surface and I always wanted to catch a few to take back to the tent, but Grandma never allowed me to do that, for she said the minnows would die. The minute the hominy (which was made with oak wood ashes) was placed in the water, the minnows disappeared. "We drank the water and never got sick from it. There was nothing wrong with the water in those days." (1913)

Part 7

Grandma and I had supper by ourselves many times because Grandpa usually came in after dark. When he did return, he was always loaded down with small game – mink, raccoon, skunk, muskrats, even a weasel once and jack rabbits for eating. This meat Grandma would sometimes dry out on a line that she put up outside for that purpose. In the evenings, she always brought the meat back inside to keep it away from wolves and other animals that would come around. Grandpa even brought back marten once, which we call “ptan” in our language. I remember that the fur, which was a brownish-black color, was very soft to the touch. Since Grandpa always carried his gun along, there would even be a pheasant or two or some other kind of fowl that he would bring back for an evening meal. We never wanted for a variety of meats.

Part 8

Grandma’s real work started in the evening with that load of small game. While Grandpa went out to feed the horses and dogs, Grandma started her work. I asked her once, “Grandma, are you going to skin all of the animals?” I was really asking her if she was able to skin all of the animals. She replied confidently, “Yes, I am.” By the end of the evening she was finished. When Grandpa finished with the horses and dogs and had had his supper, he began making long triangle-shaped frames and nailed the skins onto the frames to dry in the tipi. On sunny days, Grandma took the frames of skins from the tipi out into the sun. In the evenings she again put them all inside. Grandpa ran out of pieces of wood that he brought along for his frames and the farmer gave him more material. Grandpa and Grandma worked together as a team, each knowing exactly what to do, and they made the work seem easy. Later, those dried skins and pelts were neatly packed at the bottom of the wagon and sold on the way home.

Part 9

One afternoon, after Grandma had decided to bake bread, I walked with her a short distance to a fence. On the fence were vines from which she picked something that was used as the yeast for the bread. That evening she mixed this with a small

amount of flour and other ingredients, and it was left to sit all night. By morning it was bubbling. Grandma then kneaded the dough with more flour, and left this by the fire until noon. Then she shaped her dough into biscuits and placed them into a cast-iron pot or dutch oven with a large overlapping cover. In the tipi at the open fire, she pushed aside the live coals and placed the pan in the cleared spot and then pushed back all the live coals over the pan, covering it completely. She had no timer but she knew exactly when to take the pan out. When she did, the bread was baked to near perfection. She also made loaves of bread and each time it came out the same way. The jams and jellies and butter from the farmer's wife made the bread even tastier!

Part 10

Grandpa returned one evening with two prairie chickens. Since there was so much work to do, Grandma decided to make an "oven supper" and let it cook while she got on with dressing the small game. She quickly removed the heads and entrails. Grandma took a mixture of water and brownish-yellowish clay or mud and coated the chickens with this, feathers and all. I asked her, "Grandma, are we going to eat that?" She assured me that it would be good eating even though, to me, it did not look too appetizing. The chickens were placed under the live coals and left there for several hours. Later that evening, when they had finished with all the work, we enjoyed a midnight supper. When the birds were removed from the coals the coating and feathers practically fell from the meat, and underneath was deliciously browned. "I can't remember ever eating any fowl since then that has tasted as good as that." I learned to appreciate the food that was put before me, and I learned that what Grandma cooked, was always delicious.

Part 11

Being with Grandma all day, I was never lonesome. Yet, I was also glad when Grandpa returned. On the evenings when there was not quite so much to do, Grandpa would tell stories. He had a special way of imitating animal characters and changing his voice for each one. Sometimes, there were songs in the tales that he remembered as well, and he would sing as he told the story. These were very special times for me. I have been able to remember several of those tales but not with his special effects. That and many of his other stories are lost to me.

Part 12

On several evenings, Grandpa was late in returning to the tent. On those nights, I could tell that my grandmother worried about him. Later on, I thought about what would have happened to us if Grandpa had met with an accident of some kind; thankfully he did not. Grandma spoke no English, neither did I. I would have been no help to her if we had to go to the farmer and his wife. Grandpa spoke a little bit of English, enough for us to get along. He was able to take good care of me and my brother and sister. So could Grandma. They loved us very much. If I had my wish, all children would have grandparents like them.

Part 13

Grandpa showed me how special I was one evening as he came home carrying his pack of animals on his back. In one hand, he carried a gift, which he held out to me. He had cut a tripod of long slim branches from a small tree and in the crutch of the tripod was a little bird's nest made of grass, feathers and mud. He knew what bird had made it and told me, but it is information that I have long since forgotten. There's an expression from the non-Indians that I have heard, something about stopping to smell the roses. Grandpa stopped to admire the handiwork of a little creature and wanted me to do the same. Loaded down as he was, he still found the extra hand to carry back this miniature work of art. Of course I was delighted and pleased with the gift, so pleased in fact that I kept it until I was 18 years old. By that time it was so dry that it began to fall apart. When I threw it away, I told him about it, but he seemed not to remember.

He was impressed when he learned that I had treasured my bird's nest for so many years. "That was the best gift I have every received!"

Part 14

As the skins and furs mounted up in the tipi, Grandpa and Grandma began to think about going home. The first blasts of winter came with two heavy snowstorms and they did not want to be caught in that area for the rest of the winter. Grandpa decided that we would go home in time for the Thanksgiving holiday, since they both were satisfied with the fruits of their labor.

On the return trip Grandpa sold his pelts to Burns and Sons in Appleton. He had done business with them many times before and preferred to travel back that far to sell his pelts. They paid him about \$500 for his load, giving him \$100 in cash and a check for the balance which they put in the mail for him the same day. He picked that up in Granite Falls on the way home.

It was never my privilege to be with my grandparents again on such a trip. I cherish those times spent with my grandparents. They took good care of me; they loved me and always kept me clean. I was very happy and I loved their Dakota ways.

The Author:

Elsie M. Cavender was a Dakota elder and storyteller who preserved the oral history passed down from generation to generation. Cavender, a full-blooded Wahpeton Dakota, was the descendent of three Indian chiefs. She was born in the village of Pejihatuzizi, now known as the Upper Sioux Agency. This is where she spent most of her life. She was raised by her grandparents John and Isabel Roberts. John Roberts' father was Inyang Mani, who signed the treaty of 1851 at Traverse de Sioux. Isabele Roberts' father was Mazomani, who signed the treaties of 1830 and 1858.

As a child, she listened to her grandfather, a Presbyterian lay leader for 50 years, tell stories about the U.S. – Dakota Conflict of 1862. This conflict was also known

at one time as the Sioux Uprising. Several hundred white settlers, soldiers and Indians were killed as the conflict swept across southwestern Minnesota. In the end, 38 Indians were hanged and thousands of Dakotas and Winnebagos were subjected to banishment or bounties. In a 1987 interview marking the 125th anniversary of the conflict, Cavender recalled her grandmother weeping as she told of seeing her own grandmother stabbed to death by a soldier while on a forced march from Fort Snelling to South Dakota.

Cavender knew no English until she went away to Indian schools in Pipestone, Minnesota and Flandreau, South Dakota. When she died February 1, 1993 at age 86, she was one of fewer than three-dozen speakers of the Dakota language living in the four Dakota communities in Minnesota. She helped historians identify Dakota elders and chiefs and translate American Indian names. As an oral historian, she passed along hundreds of stories to her children and grandchildren. Some have been recorded and eventually will be published.

■Information adapted from article in the February 3, 1993 edition of Minneapolis Star Tribune.

MIDDLE SCHOOL LESSON-ORAL TRADITION

3. DEVELOPMENTAL CHECKPOINT

Middle School students will have an awareness that the Anishinabeg have long understood that distinct plant and animal communities exist within the natural world; as well as having a sense of the balance or imbalance of those communities by the character they reflect. **Middle School students** will recognize that this knowledge is transmitted through American Indian oral tradition.

OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Written interpretation of "The Tree of Life" from *Ojibwe Heritage* and other readings relating to science concept of biomes
- Analysis of two selected biomes

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Science, Geography, Earth Science

LESSON OUTCOMES