

THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND

History

"Once these mountains were cared for by The People of the Bird, wise, but weak. The Cheyenne People drove them west and sought to care for the Grandfathers themselves, but their warrior spirit was brash and headstrong. We drove them west and have ourselves cared for this land ever since."

- Swift Deer, Lakota Medicine-Maker

Historical Overview

The tribal people of the plains lived, believing they were alone in the world, in harmony with nature and its many gifts. The many Bands formed Tribes, Tribes formed Nations, and those Nations warred and made peace with one another, taught and learned from each other.

Life was simple enough, even after discovering the people of the land were not alone. The Spanish traders who came from the East brought the knowledge of horses to the people, and the people flourished. No more were the days of toiling in the soil and hunting parties on foot driving a weak bison over a cliff. The bison roamed, and the People followed. Camps became comprised of portable tipis decorated with furs, and pots were kept filled with sustenance gathered from the nearby land. Hunting parties departed and returned with meat from the nearby herd. As the herd moved, camps were struck, all possessions were stowed on travois, and the horses carried the people to wherever the bison led. In this way, the people never picked the land clean, the herds remained strong, and there was enough for all who roamed the plains.

When disputes over hunting grounds, ways, or any of the other follies of life occurred, raids and battles ensued between tribes. Rare was it that anger over something trivial would lead a band toward conflict. However, if a dispute went unresolved and was seen as enough of a threat, war parties were formed to defend the tribe. In battle, warriors used skill to overcome the enemy, but the most esteem was gained by performing *coups*, acts of bravery. Riding to another's defense, unhorsing or disarming an enemy, and stealing a horse or a weapon were all coups. The more daring the feat, the greater the coup. Having the bravado to ride backwards into battle, or with arms wide into a charge, or being deft enough to avoid injury before engagement would earn even more respect. Cowardice was deemed weak and unfit. All bravery was necessary in defense of one's own.

In this way, life continued with the nations of the People growing strong until the settlers came from the East. They arrived with their guns and their sense of ownership. They believed land could be divided and owned; they lived not as one with the earth, but as though they were its masters.

In time, the People learned that not all the settlers were of the same Tribe: there were those who named themselves American and those who called themselves British. And much like the tribes of The People, they were warring among themselves. Realizing that, there were those in each tribe who chose to throw their lot in with one or the other, depending upon who offered the greatest gifts in exchange. Even the People understood "the enemy of my enemy is my friend".

This was how things stood until the mining began. The Black Hills were ripe with shining metals that the Americans craved, but the Six Grandfathers were sacred, and the Lakota Sioux were their caretakers. To keep the Grandfathers safe, they would lay down their lives. Each time the Americans sought to break the

Grandfathers' spines for silver and gold, the Lakota unleashed a reign of terror, massacring any miners and soldiers they encountered, not caring for any losses they themselves suffered.

When the Americans could take no more, they called the Lakota to table, and The Treaty of Laramie was created. This accord finally ended the hostilities between the Lakota and the people of the Fortress at The Grandfathers. The killings would cease, the mining would be stopped, and so long as the Lakota allowed the Americans free passage to and from the Fortress, the surrounding land was ceded to their sovereignty.

Despite the treaty and the uneasy peace in the area around Fort Laramie, there were those pioneers who still wished to see the lands further west. Away from the safety of the Fortress, they were met with a mixed reception from the tribes they encountered. The Cheyenne and the Arapaho would attack any settlers whose paths they crossed, and few made it through their hunting grounds without an armed escort from the Fortress. The Crow, however, were willing to trade and teach the settlers about the land and that which lived upon it. They found peace allowed for greater prosperity and their hunting grounds had yet to be taxed with the few settlers in the area.

That was how things remained, until the Day the Land Wept.

What happened that day, no one knows, but those who witnessed it said the earth itself shook, like a dog trying to rid itself of fleas. Fissures cracked deeper than nighteyes could see. The sky grew dark and the Thunderbirds tore the sky asunder. Trees snapped in half and the wind was strong enough to throw men about like dust. But through all of that, the Six Grandfathers stayed stolid and seemed in the eye of the storm itself.

When the bodies were found and laid to rest, some bands had been completely destroyed, others had so few remaining that they would never survive on their own. And so each Nation brought their own together and when the edges of the Great Plains were discovered they realized there were enough People still that only three tribes would remain: The Lakota, The Cheyenne and The Crow. Never had the three seen eye to eye, and the survivors of other Tribes threw their lot in with those closest in mindset.

Strangely, The Grandfathers were not the only thing to survive: the Fortress of Laramie had made it through as well, though it had taken considerable damage. As if that were not enough, a new people appeared from the West: the Chinese with their Way.

In the years that followed, the Chinese claimed land, hidden from even the most skilled scouts, and began to settle and build. The people from the Fortress began to expand outside of their walls as well, pushing the terms of their treaty with the remaining People. Agreements were made and broken as the people of the Way, the people of the Fortress, and the people of the Land sought to share or hoard the plains and their resources.

One of the most unexpected results of the Day the Land Wept, was the appearance of the spirits. Whereas once only those touched could commune with them, the shattering of the land also rent the barriers between the physical and spiritual worlds. Suddenly, the spirits of the land around them could be seen by the eyes of all: Bear, Coyote, Eagle, Snake. With them, came others ... Wendigo, and Kee-Wakw, and things with no names. The Shaman and Medicine Makers grew stronger in their communion with the spirits and were granted gifts never known before.

When the warring with the Chinese and the Fortress looked most grim, the Shaman summoned any spirit who would heed the call: the defense of The Grandfathers was paramount. It was then, when the shaman were at their most vulnerable, that the Kee-Wakw chose to strike. They took advantage of the shaman's magic to come into our world, their only goal to sow chaos and cause destruction wherever they could reach. They traveled quickly, multiplied rapidly, and their taste for flesh was exceeded only by the Wendigo.

What remained of The Grandfathers and the plains was in grave danger, but it was that fight for survival which finally forced not only the Nations of the Land to work together, but the people of the Fortress and the people of the Way as well. Where once they had been disparate people on the verge of destroying one another, the eradication of the Kee-Wakw bound them together in a way they never thought possible. Like all good things, however, it was not to last.

And then the people of Cardiff arrived...

The Remaining Tribes

A note on the remaining tribes of the People of the Land: These are the largest populations that survived the shattering of the land, and many other tribes and bands assembled together under these remaining nations. This means that there may be others of different traditions still living within the following groups. We encourage you to do additional research on the following tribes, as well as the many others they might have absorbed, and portray them with honor and respect, not as caricatures.

Cheyenne

"Our land is everything to us... I will tell you one of the things we remember on our land. We remember that our grandfathers paid for it - with their lives." - Wooden Leg, Warrior

With horses from the East, the Cheyenne migrated away from the great lakes to the plains of the West. Learning from their new neighbors, their culture shifted from agrarian to nomadic now following the great herds of the bison. While originally allied with the Lakota, they were driven to the southwest of the Black Hills by the tribes of the Sioux who were protective of the Grandfathers. The nation flourished upon the plains and grew strong in numbers. At their greatest in population, the nation was comprised of 10 bands, each ruled by four chieftains.

From among the bands, the strongest and bravest strove to be invited into one of the warrior societies which existed to protect the nation from outside threats. A warrior sought to protect, provide, and present an example by which to lead others. Each gained rank and notoriety within the nation with *coups*. The Swift Fox, Crooked Lance, Shield, and Bowstring were the original four societies, and the leader of each joined the 40 chieftains upon a the Council of Forty-Four to make decisions on the governance of the nation. The council would select one of the societies to lead for a time. Their leader would organize hunting and raiding parties as well as tribal ceremonies, and the society would act to police and maintain discipline within the bands.

While rivalries always existed and still exist between the societies, all will stand and act together to face enemies of the nation. With the encroachment of the European settlers, the Crazy Dog and the Contrary Warrior societies came to be and were comprised of the warriors seeking to perform more daring coups.

After the Day the Land Wept, as with all other survivors, the Cheyenne numbers were few, but their warrior blood was strong. They believed that the Americans and British were the reason for the shattering of the land, and that they had not been able to cull their numbers or slow their advance sufficiently. In the mind of the Cheyenne, the foreigners, and those that sympathize with them, are the problem and there is only a single solution.

In the face of the Kee-Wakw incursion, the people lost their taste for heavily relying upon the spirits in any matter and looked to the warrior societies for guidance and protection. The bands realigned themselves to travel with and support the four original warrior societies. Ridding the land of the encroachment, be it spiritual or foreign, became the goal. Any native of like mind was welcomed into the Cheyenne nation, finding kinship with one of the bands through either distant blood or comparable conviction.

While the Lakota urged tolerance and the Crow exposed their bellies to the settlers from afar, the Cheyenne sought to hold the foreigners to whichever recent treaty boundaries the Natives as a whole had begrudgingly agreed. By 1885, a party of stern warriors on horseback, bristling with weaponry, bone armor clanking against each chest, was a sight to weaken the knees of even the bravest soul. The Cheyenne were a fierce, proud people, tightly knit, efficient, and disciplined. The societies rarely had to police the nation in this day because there was no time for fuss while remaining vigilant against the foes of the people. Those too complacent to share the gravity of the burden were shunned. Either one fell into line and re-entered the fold or found another tribe and home.

Crow

"Education is your greatest weapon. With education you are the white man's equal, without education you are his victim and so shall remain all of your lives. Study, learn, help one another always. Remember there is only poverty and misery in idleness and dreams - but in work there is self respect and independence." - Plenty Coups, Chieftain and Visionary

When horses came from the East, life for the Crow people changed much as it did for all other people of the land. The first caretakers of the Six Grandfathers, they were pushed further west by the Cheyenne. When the Lakota pushed the Cheyenne from the Grandfathers, the Cheyenne once again displaced the Crow such that their new hunting grounds spread to the base of the mountains.

The bands of the Crow were organized by bloodline, with warriors and gatherers following the tips of their mothers and wives. When a marriage between a man and a woman of different bands occurred, the man would move to live with his wife's family and share her tent and its possessions. Other interband marriages were negotiated as necessary, usually dependent upon which band needed the combined skills of the couple more.

Because of these traditions, the Crow were an adaptable people, accustomed to exchanging customs and teachings, both with one another and with any from outside the tribe. Their great leader Plenty Coups had a vision in his youth that one day the non-natives would take their lands. He always advocated cooperation so as to retain as much land and tradition as the tribe could. This made the Crow the most kind and receptive to the new settlers from the East. Where the Cheyenne would raid and kill any settlers they could find, the Crow would welcome them to the land and try to teach them of the bounty that could be gleaned if respected and cultivated properly. They had strong trade alliances with some of the local towns within their hunting

grounds and would stand against the Cheyenne if the settlers were directly threatened. The Crow believed that all could share the wisdom of the world, and didn't appreciate the bullying of another tribe.

After the Day the Land Wept, the Crow regrouped into a large band and assisted those settlers who had lost everything in reuniting with their people at the Fortress. Fear and anger from the people of the Fortress rebuffed such a large presence, and the Crow retreated from the vicinity and turned to their cousins, the other tribes of the plains. In their sweep of the new continent, the Crow were the first to encounter the Chinese. While welcoming to the people of the Way, the Chinese did not return the sentiment. The Chinese were the remnants of an ancient and proud culture and appeared to look down upon the "savages" who *lived with the land*. The Crow learned what they could from their encounters, but being rebuffed and driven from their lands again, they agreed to the plan of the Lakota Shaman to summon forth the spirits.

In the wake of the disastrous summoning, it was the medicine makers of the Crow who saved the most lives. Not with their powers, but with their knowledge. Their herbalism lore might not have been as advanced as the Lakota, but it was far broader. The Crow medicine makers knew which herbs could be substituted for others, and where to find them. They shared their knowledge of the local flora and fauna, having lived at one time or another across all that was left of the continent. In exchange, they learned the ways of the Lakota's healing and how to tend the ailments of the wounded be it spiritual or physical.

With the respect gained for their wisdom and their generosity, the Crow returned to hunting grounds agreed upon with the other tribes, the Fortress and the Chinese. While the Lakota stand vigil over the Grandfathers and the Cheyenne guard their lands with violent fervor, the Crow continue to explore, encounter, and learn peaceably, continuing to be advocates for cooperation in this new world. Like their kindred spirits, they prefer to withdraw and see the whole picture as though looking down upon all of the people and all of the land for perspective. They adorn their hair with a feather or a few, not only of their kindred crows, but of the many species of the plains. By 1885, when Crow traders come to a market, settlers and natives alike flock to their blankets for items, knowledge, news, and stories. It is not uncommon to see a Crow elder sitting out of the way of market traffic, surrounded by a gaggle of children who are wrapt in the legend being shared and hanging upon every word.

Lakota Sioux

"Treat the earth well, it was not given to you by your parents; it was loaned to you by your children." - Crazy Horse, War Leader

The Cheyenne introduced horses to their allies, the Sioux. The Lakota Sioux migrated from the Mississippi river valley south of the great lakes to the plains of the West. Like the Cheyenne before them, their culture shifted from agrarian to nomadic following the great bison herds. Lakota shaman felt the vast power of the Six Grandfathers, and worried that the bold Cheyenne would raise the ire of the spirits with their careless tempers. In deference to the shaman and with respect for the Grandfathers, the Lakota pushed the Cheyenne to the south and west, maintaining the hunting grounds closest to the Grandfathers for themselves.

The tribe flourished upon the plains and grew strong in numbers. They divided into several bands, not only to maintain a balance with the the lands, but also to patrol their territory for encroachment upon the Grandfathers. In this way, at any given time they could gather a decent sized force and swiftly deal with any interlopers.

At first when the Americans arrived, the coups earned by frightening and chasing cowardly mining parties, or killing the more aggressive ones, earned great esteem for the warriors. Of course, this led to the practice becoming more commonplace, and as the attacks increased, so did the number of settlers from the East.

The shaman scoured the ranks of the tribe for any with the gifts of spiritual communion. Regardless of a connection to the spirits developing early or late in life, all were placed into training as soon as the slightest hint of gift was noticed. As the conflicts between the settlers and the Lakota grew, calming and appeasing the spirits of the Grandfathers and the surrounding area became a daunting and exhausting task.

Many in the Lakota bands became deft at scouting and tracking as well as herbalism. The skills and knowledge of herbal applications for medicinal and spiritual practices developed rapidly. Most warriors and gatherers of any band were able to identify and properly harvest some common herbs for the shaman and medicine makers, allowing them to provide valuable resources. From their northern neighbors, the Ojibwe, the Lakota shaman and medicine makers learned the art of creating dreamcatchers, items believed to quiet the restless spirits angered by conflict, and protect the tribe.

All these practices meant life consisted of maintaining enough sustenance to live, trying to prevent invaders from approaching the Grandfathers, removing any who succeeded, and keeping the spirits calm. In time, the raids took their toll on the people of the Fortress and they called for peace. The result was a treaty that both sides signed, ceding the land around the Fortress to the people residing within, and mandating they keep away from the Grandfathers. Of course, in truth this merely reduced the size of parties attempting to slip through, though it did keep the warriors of the fortress from assisting any such endeavors.

After the Day the Land Wept, the shaman had to expend less effort to speak with and appease the spirits, and it became apparent that their powers were growing. Indeed, even the abilities of others within the tribe were growing: in time it seemed that most could learn to commune in one way or another, and almost all would see or sense the spirits as they passed near.

In response to increased hostilities from the Fortress, the shaman of the Lakota chose to test their powers and urged their brethren from the Crow and Cheyenne to join them. They called forth the spirits of the Grandfathers to protect the land from the foreign threat, yet despite all the new gifts among them, it was simply not enough. Their burgeoning ability paled in comparison to the powerful spirits who not only answered the call, but flooded the lands to wreak chaos.

In the wake of the destruction and with the treaty once more firmly in place with the people of Laramie and the people of China, encroachment upon the Grandfathers had been mostly eliminated. Each nation sought to rebuild within the bounds of their own territories. Once the worst of the threats were faced and handled, life seemed to return to what it had been before the land wept, at least if one chose to observe from afar. Still, things are never what they seem, and in truth, the Lakota people were simply more aware. The land was far greater than the earth beneath their feet, the plants, and the animals. There was more, and they had seen it with their own eyes, where once it was felt only with the heart.

And they were not alone; the Crow and the Cheyenne were also more in tune with the spirits, though they lacked the Lakota's fervor. Let the Crow mix with the settlers and the Cheyenne bristle at everyone; the Lakota stood with the Grandfathers.

By 1885, a Lakota Shaman, adorned in bone and quill chokers and bracelets each with small trinkets of feather, herb, or quill, would walk with almost a palpable spiritual volume and weight through a crowd of people. The crowd would part before and, at times, collapse behind the striding figure. Few would see the effect, some might be aware of the presence, and many might only remark on the calm which would seem to settle at the passage.

Major Events

The Vision of Settlers (early 1830s)

The young Plenty Coup, then a Crow hunter and warrior, had a vision of the settlers coming to take the native lands. The spirits lead him to understand that through cooperation the natives would retain more of their traditions and their land than through hostilities. In time through earning coup and showing wisdom, he rose in rank among the Crow. His vision still leads the tribe to collect and share knowledge and understanding with all others they encounter.

The First and Second Treaties of Laramie (late 1830s and late 1840s)

The Lakota came to two separate agreements with the American Government to stop the mining of the Grandfathers. If the Americans stayed clear of the Grandfathers and the Lakota hunting grounds, the Lakota would leave them be. This didn't particularly settle matters with any of the other tribes further from the Fortress, nor did it settle matters well between the Lakota and the Fortress except upon the surface.

The Yellowcreek Massacre (1843)

American soldiers raided a Cheyenne village on the first morning of the summer hunt when all of the warriors and able bodied natives were away retrieving animals. All who remained in one of the bands' villages, the elderly and small children of that band, were slaughtered and anything easily transportable was stolen. The military leadership at Fortress Laramie denied any part in the raid and blamed a mob of locals from a nearby settlement for stirring up trouble with a couple of military patrols. The signed orders which were seen and read by both patrol leaders could not be produced. Most of the stolen belongings were recovered and returned and a formal apology was sent by the Fortress and by the US government. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of those suing for peace on each side, this caused aggressions to increase and many more raids to be perpetrated by both the Americans and the Cheyenne, though none so bloody or heinous.

The Shamans' Summoning & the War (late 1860s and early 1870s)

In their desperation for resources, those holed up in Fortress Laramie after the Day the Land Wept broke their truce with the Lakota. They began making advances toward the Grandfathers, again, hoping to gather resources there while the Lakota were still scattered and few in numbers. The remaining tribes gathered together at the Grandfathers and begged the spirits for aid in its protection. Unfortunately, they opened the way for nightmarish legends to enter the world unbidden and all were scattered from the vicinity. The resulting war against these invaders consumed the efforts of all upon the continent for the next several years.

The Third Treaty of Laramie (1870)

In the wake of the summoning, the malevolent creatures attacked all they encountered and spread across the new continent. After a few unplanned but jointly fought battles occurred an uneasy alliance formed. Eventually, the People of the Land, Laramie, and New Lhasa officially came to an accord to settle their differences including land disputes. They were then able to coordinate their forces which turned the tide of war.

***Mato Paha Zuya* or The Battle of Bear Butte (early 1870s)**

The fiercest of the Kee-Wakw, *Schila Tanka Mato*, was felled though in the same battle as the most casualties of the War of the Summoning were suffered. The monster stood taller than five men with hide as thick as that of a bear and claws that could rip a person asunder with a mere swipe. The people of the Fortress had dragged two of their great guns on massive wagons, each manned by twenty warriors. The people of the Way brought their acrobatics and their poisons. The people of the Land, brought their courage and most esteemed warriors. In the end, the poisons of the Way made the beast stagger, the cannon balls of the Fortress cut the legs from beneath it, and in the greatest coup ever achieved, a warrior each of the Lakota, the Cheyenne, and the Crow lanced the creature between the eyes, through the heart, and deep within the belly in one swift attack.

Notable Leadership/Governance

Cheyenne

The Cheyenne are governed by the wisdom of their elders and lead by the Chietains of the four main warrior societies.

Fox Tail is as strong proud woman who is the chieftain of the band of the Swift Fox. She is known for her auburn locks, her grace, and her deadly precision with a bow or a spear. Born Bright Fox, she earned the name Fox Tail when she eluded American soldiers for two days before leading them into a Cheyenne ambush shortly before the Day the Land Wept. She was only 11 at the time.

Hook Nose is a warrior and chieftain of the Crooked Spear band. He is respected for his unwavering leadership in the aftermath of the Day the Land Wept. He earned his name for a feature, but he embodies everything about which a Cheyenne warrior strives to become.

Lean Bear is the chieftain of the band of Shield. Time and again in his youth, the Americans and the British abused him, attacked him, and once left him for dead. He earned his name for how he looked upon rising from his sick bed after the grave peril. He has taken to collecting the jewelry of his foes as coup and decorating his chestplate with each piece.

Buffalo Calf is the chieftain of the Bowstring band. Young in her life she earned a reputation for bravery by riding into battle to save her unhorsed brother. She shifted her focus from weaponcraft to warcraft that day. During a battle in which her husband was killed by a Kee-Wahk, she assumed power and has been followed by the society and the band ever since.

Crow

The Crow are lead by their elders and most decisions are forestalled until a solution has been presented and can be unanimously agreed upon.

Plenty Coup is a visionary who has lead his people through the strife of the American and British settlers, the Day the Land Wept, and the War of Spirituality in the wake of the Summoning. His unwavering message continues to be cooperation, exchange of information, and openness to new ideas. His example is what allows the unity of his tribe to be sustained.

Fallen Leaf is the leader of the Crow warriors when the tribe is gathered and is a chieftain of one of the bands. She is passionate and will often enter a tribal gathering full of so much vigor that there are those who believe she will be banished and told to seek the Cheyenne. A mere ten minutes with Plenty Coup is enough to calm her passion and redirect it toward a lofty goal. Her strong leadership sees her goals swiftly achieved under this guidance.

Lakota Sioux

The Lakota are lead by a council of shaman, medicine makers and elders. Their spiritual leaders are involved in all aspects of the tribal decisions and are sometimes called upon to consult the spirits before a decision will be reached.

White Bull, nephew of Sitting Bull who was killed during the Summoning, is a very young chieftain. Some say that he is swayed too easily by the shaman who are his elders, but he is the same man who drove a spear between the eyes of *Schila Tanka Mato*. He is the leader of the Three Spears Society. He would have been a powerful shaman were his passion not that of a warrior. There is always speculation that someday he will trade his shield for a rattle and the spirits themselves will tremble in his presence.

Yellow Twig is the leader of the medicine makers of the Lakota. She helps to make certain that each of the bands have the necessary supplies on hand and administers the tests for spiritual affinity for those with the passion to become healers. She is said to be kind to her patients and demanding of her apprentices. She seeks to attend all of the marriages and funerals within the tribe.

Swift Eagle is the leader of the Lakota shaman. He oversees all rituals for the tribe as a whole, but defers to the shaman who travel with each band when the tribe is not gathered. He is often in meditation and in commune with the spirits, though he will always make time to discuss rituals and rites with any of the tribe who ask. He is said to be kind when administering his spiritual affinity tests because in his words, "It is not me you dare not disappoint."

Geographical Landmarks

Ĥe Sápa/The Six Grandfathers

The Six Grandfathers are a small independent mountain range which contain much spiritual energy. Known to others as The Black Hills, the Grandfathers have been a sacred site to all of the The People of the Land for longer than any remember. Once, the Crow were the caretakers, and the Cheyenne after them. Now, the Lakota guard the Grandfathers and will let nothing get in their way. Settlers, regardless of origin, often covet the veins of gold and silver which lie beneath the Grandfathers.

Mnišoše/Missouri River

Parts of the Missouri and many of its former tributaries flow through the lands of the people. The rivers are a source of sustenance for the people. Their paths shifted in numerous places the Day the Land Wept and in the aftermath. Over the years, the flow of water has carved many a new route though just as often it has found a way to return to its original path before emptying into the sea. Many a traditional winter camp is made along the river banks in the same locations which have been used for centuries.

Culture

Daily life fluctuates from season to season. In summer, the strenuous daily work of hunting or trapping small game, weapons training or gathering sustenance, wood, or herbs is done in the the early morning or early evening, while camp chores and crafting are handled midday. In Spring and Autumn, strenuous tasks are completed when the light was best for them and as determined by the chieftain or leader of a smaller band. In winter, the few necessary tasks which lead some natives away from the season's encampment are generally completed midday, while the rest of the daylight is dedicated to crafting and the maintenance of tools and weapons.

Bison hunting means a change in the schedule as the entire tribe contributes. In the spring, the scouts leave the winter encampment to locate the herds. The bands move close enough to the herd for easy transport of the bounty. The chieftains form the hunting parties and decide when the hunt shall commence. The hunters work in common cause and attack at the same time. A hunter who acts alone might startle the herd and possibly start a dangerous stampede. A hundred or more bison are culled from the herd at once. The tribe works for the next several days to separate, treat, and preserve the various parts of each animal leaving nothing for waste. Skins are prepared for clothing and tipi walls among other items. Bones are used to make tools, armor, ritual components, and decorations with the tooling scraps saved to be boiled for broth. Meat is dried and made into jerky or pemmican. The chieftain decides when enough animals have been harvested, and the tribe resumes their wandering for the year. Another hunt is organized in summer, and one last one in the autumn to gather enough sustenance to feed the tribe through the following winter.

The Day the Land Wept didn't alter the bison hunts too much, but it did transform an occasional gathering into a daily affair. Before the land was shattered, only at times when great wisdom was needed or when different bands or tribes chose to meet would the chieftains and influential members of the tribes sit around a fire and share a peace pipe. Directly after the cataclysm, the gatherings became more frequent and different members of the tribes would be invited to share their news and insights with the elders. Eventually, as the fighting against the invading spirits heightened, mealtimes and peace pipe gatherings began to merge for efficiency. When the war was at its height, all members of a tribe needed to understand reports on scouting, news from the tipis of the medicine makers or the shaman, and any news from the warband. Today, per the chieftains' prerogatives and the season, natives travelling with the bands will gather at a given time of day. Should a shaman or a shaman's apprentice be present, a peace pipe might be passed. The tradition has evolved to discussing the events of the day while possibly sharing a light snack of freshly gathered foods, fry bread or pemmican. It is a time for any news to be passed, group consensus to be determined, and leaders to share decisions. Even while out on small independent missions, scouts or traders will regroup with other natives in the area once a day to *Pass the Pipe*.

Social Mores

Though the traditions, the habits, the styles and even the spirits revered by each tribe and even each band differ, the natives have much in common with one another. They have a great respect for the land and for sustaining their place in harmony. While conflict may arise, no tribe actively seeks aggression. It is a game for the young, and the tribes are led by the wisdom of their elders.

Natives are taught the contributions which are expected from each in day to day life from a young age. While many may find themselves in certain roles within the tribe like hunter, medicine maker, shaman, or some kind of crafter based on their aptitude and desire, all are still expected to contribute to the basic necessities of tribal life within their capacity as the need arises. No native is ever above making such contributions and such hubris is seen as unwise and inauspicious.

Recreation

When there is time, natives play games which fall in two general categories: chance and agility. Games of chance can be played for a few spare moments or take up an afternoon. It is traditional to wager items of significance to oneself. It heightens the excitement, but in the end teaches or reminds the lesson that the important things in life aren't material. Games of agility are played often as training tools and exercise. Races over and around terrain are held on a moment's whim. Some more organized games involve specific tools/equipment and rules.

Dice and Bowl

It goes by many names, but the basic rules are the same. Two sided dice or chips are made of whatever material is handy. One side is blank and the other has a marking. The dice are either placed into a bowl and tossed or dropped into a bowl from shoulder height while standing. Points are earned for various combinations of blank or marked sides showing. Many variations of scoring rules exist even within a single tribe. Common across the whole continent before the Day the Land Wept, Americans who had any interactions with natives local to the former northeast might be familiar with this game.

Double Ball

Double ball is a simple game played by two teams. The equipment includes the double ball, two wickets, and a stick for each player. The double ball is constructed by using an eight to ten inch tether to connect two weighted ends which usually are leather pouches or intricately woven leather strands forming a small ball. The wickets are posts that are five to six feet high with a stick fixed as a crossbar at the top. The sticks for each player are two to three feet in length and made of whatever one can find that is relatively straight and cleared of any branches. The wickets are placed at opposite ends of area declared as the playing space, and the players are divided into two teams. With the sticks, the players carry and pass the double ball balancing it across the stick by the tether. They attempt to approach the opposing team's wicket and toss the double ball so that it wraps around the crossbar. The opposing team will try to stop them. Some natives only count points for wrapping the crossbar, others count more points for the crossbar and also fewer for wrapping the post.

Holidays

Some observers of the natives seem to think that there's a holiday every other day. What they are seeing are the various rites and rituals common to the people, but likely only significant to the few with whom the observer is currently present. The only native customs that might be considered holidays in the European or Asian sense are the festivals of the seasons. In recent years, two or all three of the tribes have celebrated these festivals together from time to time.

The Spring Festival

The Spring Festival is often celebrated just before the first hunt. It normally falls around the time when the days begin to be longer than the nights. Traditionally, a few bucks are hunted and prepared for a feast along with smaller game. This feast serves to fortify the tribe for the strenuous days ahead. Varying rites will be performed to ask the blessings of the spirits for a successful hunt, an early thaw, and a prosperous new year.

The Summer Festival

The Summer festival is celebrated as the days become as long as they will last for the year. The berries have just been harvested, and the summer hunt is still a moon away. The food at this festival is lighter and more casually prepared and shared because the days are warm. The foods often include pemmican, berries, fry breads served with sauces made from berries and other simple fare. Varying rites will be performed to ask the blessings of the spirits for a successful hunt, a healthy summer crop, and a summer where the rivers won't run dry.

The Autumn Festival

The Autumn Festival is celebrated after the tribe has harvested their few crops spread throughout the hunting grounds and prior to the last hunt before the snows begin to fall. Stews filled with vegetables and fresh game are traditional. Varying rites will be performed to ask the blessings of the spirits for a successful hunt, protection of the food stores, and a mild winter.

Spirituality & Beliefs

All the People of the Land have a deep abiding respect for nature and its many facets. It has always been a fundamental belief that the earth, the elements, and the animals all had spirits and souls of their own and that they should be respected and revered. Once, only the Medicine Makers, the Shaman and the wise people communed with the spirits, while others were left to believe while never knowing them firsthand.

That changed the Day the Land Wept. The spirits that the People had always known existed made themselves known: Hawk and Hare, Bear and Wolf, Snake and Fox, and more. Unfortunately, they were not alone. So too came Unk Cekula, the Wendigo, and the Thunderbird, and some even less savory that had either been forgotten about or never known.

Rites and Rituals

Each tribe has many rites which may be observed to signify or highlight events including naming, passage from one phase of life or training to another, marriage, initiation into societies, the cycle of the seasons, hunting, raiding, and many others. Some of these are small involving only a single native or those directly involved while others are enacted by the whole tribe. The rituals involved vary between bands, tribes, chieftains, shaman, and even seasons, but most have common themes and traditions for specific occasions.

Shaman will use their training and knowledge to create rituals for events which are out of the ordinary. In times of peace this is rare, but in times of strife, they may be called upon to do so with much greater frequency. Since the Day the Land Wept and the following spiritual war, there has seemed to be some strife or another to keep the shaman of the tribes ever occupied and vigilant. Many rites specific to quelling spirits have been honed to almost rote, but still more are needed each season to address the ever changing balance of the land and the people.

Superstitions

Please note, there are many superstitions from various bloodlines, bands, and tribes. Below are a list of ones common to the tribes of the Keystone story.

-- It is auspicious to gather around an animal injured by the hunt and apologize for the pain as well as explain the necessity such that its spirit knows that its death is not in vain. Failing to do so might anger not only the spirit of the animal and curse any items made from its remains, it could also upset the local greater spirits or patron spirit of the animal.

- It is auspicious to break any weaponry of a premature or unsanctioned bison hunter on the spot lest future hunts be ruined by the impulse of one native. Stripping the native of all other possessions was traditional, but served as punishment rather than part of the superstition.
- It is auspicious to share a meal with a hungry neighbor. A native weakened by both envy and hunger is more susceptible to possession by malicious spirits.
- It is auspicious to place a dream catcher above one's sleeping space, especially if camping near to an area of high spiritual activity. Should the dream catcher violently stir while in view, it is best to leave it at the location as a distraction to any local spirits and move along quickly in the morning. Keeping a spirit touched dream catcher could draw the spirit to chase and haunt the owner.
- It is inauspicious to perform a crafting without some small error for fear that a malicious spirit may have guided ones hands for its own device.
- It is inauspicious to steal another's charms and won't count as coup. Not knowing the protections or capabilities offered by a given charm, a thief chances angering a patron spirit and calling down a curse.
- It is inauspicious to counter a leader's opinion without offering evidence of merit for disagreement. Disunity in the tribe could draw the attention of malicious spirits leading to misfortune.

Factions

Government

Regardless of the process by which chieftains are chosen be it by the consensus of the elders alone or by consensus of the whole tribe, a chieftain leads by example, and their word is law. Certainly many matters are put to a discussion with the elders of the tribe and possibly other members with a stake in or input for the matter at hand, but the burden of the final decision is borne by the chieftain. Most decisions center around the band's migration and ceremonies, but the chieftain and the elders are called upon to handle matters of dispute and wrongdoing.

While in council, the use of a speaking staff keeps discussions concise and argumentative exchanges few. The chieftain guides the passing of the stick to moderate the discussion. It is very inauspicious to speak while not holding the stick or to ramble such that the chieftain reclaims the stick before one has finished. Often, especially in large councils, others in attendance may move toward or away from the one who speaks to show allegiance with or distance from an idea shared. This practice can keep a large council from taking too much time or devolving into too much repetition.

Tribes do not move through the plains as one large group. Generally, they only gather for festivals, hunts, or at times when great matters must be addressed. As such, each of the smaller bands who regularly travel together has a chieftain. When the tribe is gathered, there is a consensus on who the chieftain of the whole tribe is such that contentious decisions will have a clear way of resolution. It is often the most senior of the band chieftains who will assume this role, but sometimes much coup and a well regarded perspective will earn an elder this role for a time.

Military

The tribes do not keep a standing military as other nations might. Their hunters are their warriors, and their warriors are their hunters. All members of a tribe have a rudimentary knowledge of warfare and martial skills as needed for survival. The Cheyenne do have their warrior societies which are slightly more formalized,

but not all members of their potential warhost will belong to one and the elderly members of their warrior societies might not ride to war.

Three Spears Warrior Society

Those who achieved coups against hostile spirits might be invited to the newest warrior society, the Three Spears. This society includes warriors from all three nations and might be called upon should the spirits threaten any of the People or even the uneasy Chinese and Laramite neighbors. Note: Players may not start as a member of the Three Spears Warrior Society.

Social

There aren't any formal organizations for Shaman or Medicine Makers, but they will gather to share information and ideas when bands or tribes meet or even when called together as has happened in times of need like the disastrous Summoning.

Views on Other Nations

Cheyenne

Fortress Laramie and New Lhasa

We respect that the people of the Fortress and the people of the Way will fight to defend and protect their own. Their warriors are proud and clever and have gained many coups while facing common foes in the eyes of the tribe. Their Chieftains seek to provide for the wellbeing of their people, but they turn a blind eye when their *citizens* are greedy and seek to hoard. Neither can be fully trusted. They lay claim to land that is not theirs and are always seeking more.

Treaty of Cardiff Nations

More settlers have come from across the ocean to plunder the land. We've dealt with their kind before: promises of friendship broken by greed. They will learn the consequences of such betrayal. The British and Americans we have already met, and their goals are no different than those who came before. The Romans are no longer trying to save our heathen souls, but there must be some hidden agenda because it is in their very nature.

Crow

Fortress Laramie

Our tribe appreciates the tolerance displayed by those of the Fortress in their acceptance of all within their walls. Their code of conduct is stringent, and their use of the land could be less destructive and more harmonious. Still, that most of their citizens will try to speak first before acting rashly speaks well of the bonds forged through the hardship of the Day the Land Wept.

New Lhasa

Our tribe appreciates the calm and methodical nature of the citizens of the Way. We have been able to teach them much of herbalism through trade, and they craft fine baubles which can be traded anywhere else we travel. It is sad that they protect their lands with vigilance bordering on the fervor of the Cheyenne. There is so much more which we could teach and learn if they would only be open to an exchange of ideas.

Britain

These people from across the seas have the most marvelous and clever of devices. However, it is concerning to hear of the thick clouds which constantly hang above their cities. Should the British wish to build a factory, we will try to dissuade them from the task. Perhaps we can convince some of them to remove the devices from before their eyes so they may see the splendor of our land.

America

These Americans who have traveled to our land seem to be adventurous. They are hard working and earnest, though they won't always listen to sense when we try to explain that they work against the spirits and the land. Many tales have been shared with those who have come already. We look forward to hearing and sharing more stories from those who have yet to arrive.

Rome

The Italians are an interesting mix. Some are quiet and observant. Some are boisterous and opinionated. Some are quite task oriented. Their stories of how the Angels aided them the Day the Land Wept remind us of how the spirits have aided us in large ways and in small throughout the years. There is a mystery to these people, and we are curious to learn more.

Lakota Sioux

Fortress Laramie

Our history with the people of the Fortress is not the best. We have cousins who live among them and are loyal to them. Perhaps they will teach the others of the Fortress to respect the power of the Grandfathers. For now, the Fortress leaves them in our care. Should any of their citizens stray too close again, we will remind them of the boundaries by any means necessary to turn them away.

New Lhasa

We do not treat much with the people of the Way. For the most part, they choose to stay within their borders as we choose to stay within our own. With the lands of the Cheyenne, Crow, and the Fortress between, it is our traders who have had the contact. The people of the Way do not understand the spirits, but after the Summoning, they do not scoff the power therein. That is enough.

Britain

These British are different than those who had lived in Canada. The Day the Land Wept seems to have driven them to madness. They forsake the beauty and power of their own bodies for cold metal and crude function. They best not be planning to mine anything from the Grandfathers to feed their lunacy.

America

The Americans haven't lost their work ethic. Neither does it seem that they have lost their greed or ambition. We remember when they ruled the Fortress. We will stand vigilant against their desire for what lies beneath the Grandfathers.

Rome

The Romans are as righteous now as they've ever been. Be it their god or their angels, it doesn't matter where the allegiance rests. They still believe that they are correct, and everyone else is foolish. Should they choose to explore, their blindness will be corrected soon enough by the land and the spirits.

Crime & Punishment

Allied Band/Tribe/Nation:

Horse Thieving: To steal a horse from its rightful owner. (Loss of Coup, Walker for owner's band)

Rustling: To steal a herd of cattle from its rightful owner. (N/A - No one owns the herd.)

Unnecessary Bison Hunting: To hunt wild bison that are unneeded. (Should the native survive the walk back to the encampment stripped of all possessions - From a minimum of Walker for at least a year with Small Rations and Loss of Coup up to Banishment, dependent upon maturity of the hunter and possible other previous offenses)

Murder: To end the life of another person, regardless of circumstance (Banishment)

Attempted Murder: Like Murder, but without success. (Banishment)

Theft of an Official: To rob resources or funds from someone who holds an official position of office, such as chieftain or war leader (Loss of Society/Coup, Walker)

Theft: The theft of resources or funds under \$100.00, not counting horses or cattle. (Walker for a number of migrations/encampments)

Drunk in Public: Displays of egregious behavior while drunk if it disrupts the peace or function of the tribe. (Small Rations)

Public Lewdness: Appearance that promotes lewd behavior or otherwise considered indecent if it disrupts the peace or function of the tribe. (Small Rations, if enough disruption, Walker)

Disorderly Conduct: Behavior that causes a ruckus, such as rough-housing, fights and the like if it disrupts the peace or function of the tribe. (Small Rations, if enough disruption, Walker)

Betrayal of individual: a betrayal of trust be it a lapse in service, an indiscretion (Small Rations, Walker)

Betrayal of leader: a betrayal of trust be it a lapse in service, an indiscretion (Loss of Coup, if serious enough, Loss of Society, Walker for at least a season)

Betrayal of band/tribe/nation: a betrayal of trust be it a lapse in service, an indiscretion (Banishment)

Enemy:

Horse Thieving: To steal a horse from its rightful owner. (Coup)

Rustling: To steal a herd of cattle from its rightful owner. (non-native enemy - Coup; native enemy - N/A)

Murder: To end the life of another person without cause (Banishment)

Killing by Self Defense: To end the life of another person with cause (Not a crime)

Attempted Murder: Like Murder, but without success. (Banishment)

Theft of an Official: To rob resources or funds from someone who holds an official position of office, such as chieftain or war leader (If not in battle - Walker, Loss of Coup/Society; If in battle - Coup)

Theft: The theft of resources or funds under \$100.00, not counting horses or cattle. (in battle - possible Coup; outside of battle against native - Small Rations, Walker; outside of battle against non-native - subject to Town laws, 1 week to 1 year in prison)

Does not apply to Tribal Law:

Bank Robbery: To rob resources or funds from an established bank. (subject to Town law - 20 years in prison)

Train Robbery: To rob resources or funds from an active train. (subject to Town law - 20 years in prison)

Theft of an Official: To rob resources or funds from someone who holds an official position of office, such as a sheriff, marshal or mayor. (subject to Town law - 5 years in prison)

Grand Larceny: The theft of resources or funds in excess of \$100.00, not counting horses or cattle. (subject to Town law - 5 years in prison)

Drunk in Public: Displays of egregious behavior while drunk. (subject to Town law - Night in jail, plus \$10.00 fine)

Public Lewdness: Appearance that promotes lewd behavior or otherwise considered indecent (subject to Town law - Night in jail, plus \$10.00 fine)

Disorderly Conduct: Behavior that causes a ruckus, such as rough-housing, bar fights and the like. (subject to Town law - \$10.00 fine)

Carrying a Weapon in a No-Weapon Zone: Being armed in an area marked as a "No-Weapon Zone" by the authorities. (subject to Town law - Confiscation, plus \$10.00 fine)

NOTE: Fines might be settled for some form of barter rather than currency if the lawman is feeling lenient. Should such poor behavior of an individual or small group in a town affect a Tribe's ability to interact peaceably, Native punishments may also be applied.

Native Punishments:

Small Rations - must give up most of their share to learn humility

Walker - Must walk in the wake of the tribe while migrating and assist any who need it or request it. Must stay with the camp and assist any who need it or request it. Duration is for a given period - set number of migration/encampment cycles or set number of seasons.

Loss of Coup - Coups are nullified in the face of the cowardice of a crime. Esteem and position within the tribe are lessened.

Loss of Society (Cheyenne) - Individual is stripped of membership to a Warrior Society, any coups counted to earn place within the society, and any coups counted while part of the society.

Banishment - pushed forth from the tribe with or without clothing, personal possessions including weapons and camp tools, horse(s). Severity of the banishment decided upon the severity of the crime. Survival alone is between the individual and the Spirits. (Rarely is a banished individual accepted back into the tribe, but it has happened on extremely rare occasion.)

Costuming Guide/Clothing

Hunters and warriors, be they male or female, dress in hide trousers and shirts. Female gatherers might wear longer hide dresses with or without trousers. Shaman and medicine makers dress as they desire, often having both practical and ceremonial garb in their kit. Bones, feathers and quill beads are used to adorn the clothing and hair of most. Some adornments signify supplication to or blessings of the spirits, others signify coups great or small, still more denote band or tribal allegiance, and finally some are just decorative.

Warbonnets are specifically discussed in a section below.

As always, we expect to play in March, June, September and November, so it will be wise to be able to layer your costume pieces with insulating garments or remove items to keep cool. Please keep in mind that this nation may often find themselves off the trails in the woods when choosing and designing whatever will cover your legs and feet.

Natural hides are generally brown when tanned and range in color from light to dark depending upon the exact source and tanning method. We understand the cost and possible objections involved with using actual leather, so suedecloth or other materials in similar solid colors are completely acceptable. Natives would paint, bead, fringe, and dye various parts of an article of clothing for decoration, but for the most part would leave the base color as is. There are many examples of traditional and ceremonial pieces online, and we encourage you to do your own research. If you choose to use a full costume piece in a different color than brown or a natural fur color of a smaller animal, we simply ask that you have an explanation for the choice.

A somewhat silly but quite acceptable example: Your Cheyenne grandfather stole Bessy on a raid of a wagon train many years ago. The cowhide cape has been maintained well and still has the black and white hair with the cow's markings clearly visible. You are careful to remove any debris caught in the hair, beat the dirt gently out of the cape, and brush it after each wear to make certain that you can pass it along to the next generation of your family.

In an effort to signify tribal allegiance, we have designated certain accessories to be the required *fashion* for each tribe. We are not forbidding the use of these accessories from any character, but we ask that the most obvious and ornamental pieces be specifically related to the fashion and traditions of each character's tribe as described below. One should be able to tell a native's current tribe on sight.

Cheyenne

Cheyenne often wear jewelry as armor or armor as jewelry. There isn't too much divide as their life is lived in defense and protection. Whether it is a full chest plate of rib bones or a long necklace of rib bones, beads and other baubles, their individuality, their coups, their places within the tribe, their allegiances are spoken in the decorations which adorn these pieces.

Crow

Crow adorn their hair in falls of feathers. Generally tied with sinew and beads to the end of a cord, these feathers might dangle from a head cord, braid wraps, or even short earrings. Some Crow will plait the feathered cords directly into their hair. Others have traded with the Fortress or New Lhasa for barrettes and combs to which they affix the feathers.

Lakota Sioux

Lakota Sioux walk with talismans and trinkets. Most wear a combination of a choker and a bracelet or two of quill and bone with some item of spiritual significance as the focus. It is not uncommon to see small dreamcatchers or small leather pouches affixed to a choker, though just as often intricate beadwork will hang from that spot.

Coup and Warbonnets

Feathers worn upright in a warbonnet are signs of coup which has been earned. They are only worn for ritual ceremonies or when riding into battle. Some warriors could only hope to earn the right to a few in their

lifetime, though a number of seasoned native warriors who saw war with the Kee-Wakw and other hostile spirits have earned a full array of feathers for themselves. *It is rare that a warbonnet would be spotted within the limits of a non-native settlement.* Out of respect for native culture and due to past misunderstandings, those of Fortress Laramie and of New Lhasa won't usually copy the fashion anymore, though a few have earned the coup. Those of Cardiff seem to be learning.

It is possible that a character might earn enough coup in game to wear a feather or two or even to construct a warbonnet and ask the blessings of the spirits. It is a costume piece which could be worn for special occasions or when planning to make war upon a major foe, but would be viewed as pompous if worn all the time. Please respect that it is a privilege to be allowed to wear feathers upright or a warbonnet and, if desired for your character, do what it takes to earn that privilege!