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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Description of traditional organization of a camp.
- Description of the Ladies' Handgame.

ENCAMPMENT

To camp, before the whites set foot on this North American Continent, was no easy task. Firstly, scouts were sent out to look for a good location for what time of the year it was, then report back to camp. In order to survive there had to be some sort of organization, and it is said that this type of organization had to cope with many kinds of problem situations, such as, the enemy, sanitation, grazing, clean water, safe playing areas, exercise areas, protection from sudden attack, not only from the enemy but also from the elements of nature. Let's not forget that the Indian was strong and healthy. To be that requires this day good clean eating and good health habits, self-discipline, a brain that was honed sharp, good eyesight, good hearing and extra sensory perception, to be able to react instantly. All this took teaching and learning and practice made perfect. Without any organization, without discipline, without teaching that is effective, the encampment would not survive. The Indians lived in a circle and activity started at the centre, to northside and went in a circle as the sun rose and set. Pipe ceremony feasting, the camp cryer, meetings of council for any planning, with all these activities, they always started by calling the wise elders to come and smoke. And Indians them days didn't call for smoke just because someone felt like smoking. No sir, it was to bring

all expertise together and a pipe ceremony took place to ask for help from above - as the pipe was given to experts of the land, about rivers, spring, movement of game, location of enemies, and give thanks and ask for survival. When the smoking was done then the conference took place. After the conference had concluded, the prayer was had to put the pipe away. As the prayer ends, the pipe itself was touched to the ground to signify conclusion, and everyone said, "Thank you," to the Creator. Then the camp cryer was told what to say to the camp, as all had been anxiously waiting to hear the outcome, and it seemed that all hell broke loose to hear yells and shouts of approval and riders inside the circle would ride side by side four or six deep and sing circle camp songs.

Then first thing the next morning a party assigned would proceed to the new campgrounds and pipe ceremony was had, to bless the area and a lot of preparation took place before and a lot happened too having settled in the new camp. Celebration, feasting and many, many prayers. The planning was never ending; it was continuous. How else would a people anywhere without proper involvement survive. I suppose the ultimate in those days, was to be strong and healthy and produce a son likewise, to be grey headed and to boast many grandchildren and to be able to boast many happy times and to learn from the hard

times. I remember in our old village when the old men were still bursting with dignity and pride. Although they seem old you could feel their exuberance in their presence and feel also their strength and power.

In the centre lived the Chief - his right hand man next to him lived directly north of the centre, the Council elders lived side by side of the right man, along with the medicine man and Sundance maker and so on. Not all tribes were the same; all adopted their own ways. Generally it was the same but no set rule, depending on the leaders, and they all had a camp cryer who was told what had been decided by Council and usually had loud voices, so all could hear. And they were well organized. It is hard to visualize or attempt to realize, actually in those days they must have been well organized and well disciplined to even survive. So the encampment was security for families, but each made a contribution in whatever it may have been, to the safety and security. It's hard to imagine this day and age but proof is Indians didn't die out. They survived the impossible, what with Western civilization, psychological genocide, cultural genocide, the awesome destruction of our family unit. Here and there in Saskatchewan and elsewhere, Indians are groping and trying to grasp some of the values and traditions that do not compare to Indian Affairs, who have failed measurably to bring a people out of the miseries applied to Indians.

Stubborn and persistent our culture remains, only to be rekindled.

Solomon Mosquito

## LADIES' HANDGAME

Games were a very important part of Indian people. Field games, boys' games and girls' games, these were discipline orientated and well-organized. Some were to test young people for endurance, some were a test of strength and so on. So they must have had some rules to go by, they had to in order to be a human, so people can get along, to succeed in living day after day after day for thousands of years. And every tribe had their own rules, and the games varied with tradition and custom.

Some were religious, in this case the Ladies' Handgame of the Assiniboine or Stoney, whom were of Siouxan lineage. If an Indian was having sickness in the family, the man or the wife made a vow of a spiritual promise in exchange for health and an offering is made. An Indian man, who the bundle belongs to, is

asked by offering a pipe. When the smoke was finished then the circumstances were told to the Ladies' Handgame maker, just as serious as the Sundance. Then the family goes home to prepare and a day set, usually in the evening, to get and make the offerings and prayers, and the feast is had. Then the fun begins, ladies and girls on one side, and men and boys on the other side. The Ladies' Handgame maker then unwraps the bundle and the helper distributes the object to be hidden in the hand. The objects are made of some kind of wood, carved for this purpose. The men and the women go in front of the Ladies' Handgame maker and they are blessed and a feather is tied to the hair, decorated long sticks are given to each, and they stand in the centre and point right or left, middle or on sides. After the singing had started with special songs and a special beat, fun is had, besides trying to outguess the other. Sometimes the ladies win and sometimes the men win and after so many wins, or a win, the winning side would stand and do sort of a women's traditional dance, only to a round dance beat, and songs are special thank you songs or victory songs.

And everyone enjoyed themselves, the real heart to heart enjoyment, spiritual enjoyment. And the best way is take part to get the feeling. Of course the taking part has to be serious, don't partake to examine. Indian culture doesn't work that way. It is simplicity itself mixed with humility and humbleness that the white man find hard to even enter his mentality. White man is different and above all Indian is different; so much so that it is misunderstood by many.

How can I understand my own Indian when the white man has pounded away at my brain, only to attain a piece of paper so that my pockets will be bulging with the almighty dollar, sinking me to oblivion to become a robot, an automaton, in this technological age.

Solomon Mosquito

(End of Interview)

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