

"Well, we have heard of you; you must have come from above, as we did."
"No," answered Wi'saka, "I have always been here, and I made this earth and all that you can see on it."

"Well," said one, "This must be the Great Spirit."

"Yes," answered Wi'saka, "That is who I am. Who can do any more than I have?"

"But, if you are the Great Spirit, why didn't you put us here?"

"You came too soon, there were others to precede you," he said to them, and they believed, and asked him what he ate. Wi'saka told them that he lived upon muskrats and he ordered the muskrats to dive into the lake and fetch him yakepin roots.² When he had plenty he told them to stop, and then he gave the roots to the Indians. They camped beside his lodge and he lent them his cooking utensils. He showed them how to make clay kettles and how to cook their food.

Wi'saka likewise showed the people the forest he had made, and in the woods he showed them how to peel bark and make household utensils. He showed them how to make string to tie their lodge poles together. He instructed them how to gather and prepare reeds to weave mats, and how to make rush-mat wigwams. The next day he told them that there would be animals in the world, and at his command deer, buffalo, and other game appeared.

[2006]

2. yakepin roots: Unidentified plant roots.

Lakota

The Lakota are part of what became known as the Sioux Nation, a confederacy of three large groups of native peoples of the same linguistic stock – the Dakota (Santee or Eastern Sioux), Lakota (Teton Sioux), and Nakota (Yankton Sioux). Those peoples are further divided into smaller tribal groups, such as the Ojibwa of the Lakota. When the French encountered these peoples, whose own names mean allies or friends, they called them collectively the "Sioux." They originally lived south of Lake Superior in present-day northern Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota, but conflicts with the neighboring Ojibwa forced the Sioux westward during the seventeenth century. The Dakota settled in what is now southern and western Minnesota, where they retained their agricultural way of life. But the Lakota and the Nakota moved farther north and west into present-day North and South Dakota, western Nebraska, and eastern Wyoming, where they became nomadic hunters of buffalo and other large game. By 1750, there were probably 30,000 Sioux, half

of them Lakota. Allies of the British in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the Sioux in 1825 signed a treaty with the United States under the terms of which they were granted possession of the "Great Sioux Reservation," a vast territory including much of present-day Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Wyoming.

Under the terms of a series of later treaties, however, the Sioux were steadily forced to sell or yield their lands to the federal government. They were further displaced by the Homestead Act of 1862, which offered white settlers free title to 160 acres of "public domain" land in the West. During the next thirty years, as hundreds of thousands of farms were established on the Great Plains, the Lakota struggled to survive and maintain their way of life in the Black Hills, a section of South Dakota west of the Missouri River, which they were granted in perpetuity by the Fort Laramie

Sitting Bull

This autographed photograph of the Lakota chief holding a pipe, the sacred emblem of the Great Sioux Nation, was taken in 1884, five years before their once-vast lands were reduced to a handful of reservations with defined boundaries by an act of Congress.



"Well, we have heard of you; you must have come from above, as we did."

"No," answered Wi'saka, "I have always been here, and I made this earth and all that you can see on it."

"Well," said one, "This must be the Great Spirit."

"Yes," answered Wi'saka, "That is who I am. Who can do any more than I have?"

"But, if you are the Great Spirit, why didn't you put us here?"

"You came too soon, there were others to precede you," he said to them, and they believed, and asked him what he ate. Wi'saka told them that he lived upon muskrats and he ordered the muskrats to dive into the lake and fetch him yakepin roots.² When he had plenty he told them to stop, and then he gave the roots to the Indians. They camped beside his lodge and he lent them his cooking utensils. He showed them how to make clay kettles and how to cook their food.

Wi'saka likewise showed the people the forest he had made, and in the woods he showed them how to peel bark and make household utensils. He showed them how to make string to tie their lodge poles together. He instructed them how to gather and prepare reeds to weave mats, and how to make rush-mat wigwams. The next day he told them that there would be animals in the world, and at his command deer, buffalo, and other game appeared.

[2006]

2. yakepin roots: Unidentified plant roots.

Lakota

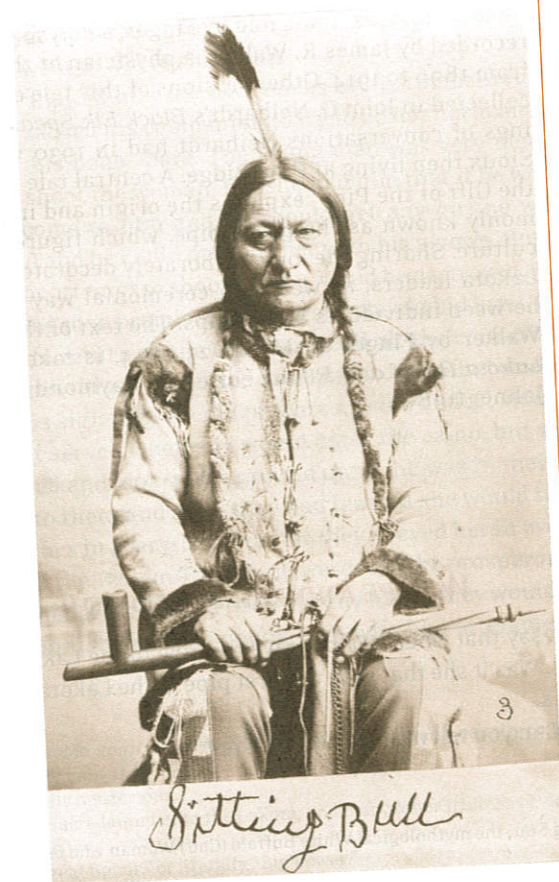
The Lakota are part of what became known as the Sioux Nation, a confederacy of three large groups of native peoples of the same linguistic stock – the Dakota (Santee or Eastern Sioux), Lakota (Teton Sioux), and Nakota (Yankton Sioux). Those peoples are further divided into smaller tribal groups, such as the Oglala of the Lakota. When the French encountered these peoples, whose own names mean allies or friends, they called them collectively the "Sioux." They originally lived south of Lake Superior in present-day northern Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota, but conflicts with the neighboring Ojibwa forced the Sioux westward during the seventeenth century. The Dakota settled in what is now southern and western Minnesota, where they retained their agricultural way of life. But the Lakota and the Nakota moved farther north and west into present-day North and South Dakota, western Nebraska, and eastern Wyoming, where they became nomadic hunters of buffalo

of them Lakota. Allies of the British in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the Sioux in 1825 signed a treaty with the United States under the terms of which they were granted possession of the "Great Sioux Reservation," a vast territory including much of present-day Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Wyoming.

Under the terms of a series of later treaties, however, the Sioux were steadily forced to sell or yield their lands to the federal government. They were further displaced by the Homestead Act of 1862, which offered white settlers free title to 160 acres of "public domain" land in the West. During the next thirty years, as hundreds of thousands of farms were established on the Great Plains, the Lakota struggled to survive and maintain their way of life in the Black Hills, a section of South Dakota west of the Missouri River, which they were granted in perpetuity by the Fort Laramie

Sitting Bull

This autographed photo of the Lakota chief holding a pipe, the sacred emblem of the Great Sioux Nation, was taken in 1884, five years before their once-vast lands were reduced to a handful of reservations with defined boundaries by an act of Congress.



Treaty of 1868. That treaty was violated when gold was discovered in the Black Hills in the 1870s, attracting thousands of white prospectors and triggering a war between the Sioux and the U.S. Army. Despite the leadership of Sitting Bull (1831-1890), a Lakota chief and medicine man, and the defeat of General George Custer at the battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, the Sioux finally bowed to the military forces of the United States and to the federal government's determination to open their lands to white settlers. As Sitting Bull said of those settlers in a speech delivered in 1877, "They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own and fence their neighbors away; they deface her with their buildings and their refuse. That nation is like a spring freshet that overruns its banks and destroys all who are in its path. We cannot dwell side by side." Finally, in 1889, Congress reduced the Great Sioux Reservation into five scattered reservations, the largest of which was and remains the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Reading "Wohpe and the Gift of the Pipe" (Lakota). The following Lakota story, as it was told by Finger, a holy man of the Oglala Sioux, was recorded by James R. Walker, a physician at the Pine Ridge Reservation from 1896 to 1914. Other versions of this tale exist, including a later one collected in John G. Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), based on recordings of conversations Neihardt had in 1930 with Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux then living at Pine Ridge. A central tale to the Lakota, "Wohpe and the Gift of the Pipe" explains the origin and importance of what is commonly known as the peace pipe, which figured prominently in Lakota culture. Sharing the long, elaborately decorated pipe was a ritual among Lakota leaders, as well as a ceremonial way of endorsing agreements between individuals and groups. The text of the story, which was told to Walker by Finger on March 25, 1914, is taken from James R. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, edited by Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine A. Jahner (1980).

WOHPE AND THE GIFT OF THE PIPE

Question: You say that when *Wohpe*¹ gave the pipe to the Lakotas she was in their camp for many days. Was it she that gave the first pipe to the Lakotas?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Can you tell me how she did this?

1. *Wohpe*: Falling Star, the mythological White Buffalo (Calf) Woman who brings the sacred pipe to the Lakota.

Answer: Yes, but it is a long story.
Question: Will you tell it?
Answer: (The legend of the giving of the pipe to the Lakotas)
In the long ago the Lakotas were in camp and two young men lay upon a hill watching for signs. They saw a long way in the distance a lone person coming, and they ran further toward it and lay on another hill hidden so that if it were an enemy they would be able to intercept it or signal to the camp. When the person came close, they saw that it was a woman and when she came nearer that she was without clothing of any kind except that her hair was very long and fell over her body like a robe. One young man said to the other that he would go and meet the woman and embrace her and if he found her good, he would hold her in his tipi.² His companion cautioned him to be careful for this might be a buffalo woman who could enchant him and take him with her to her people and hold him there forever. But the young man would not be persuaded and met the woman on the hill next to where they had watched her. His companion saw him attempt to embrace her and there was a cloud closed about them so that he could not see what happened. In a short time the cloud disappeared and the woman was alone. She beckoned to the other young man and told him to come there and assured him that he would not be harmed. As she spoke in the Lakota language the young man thought she belonged to his people and went to where she stood.
When he got there, she showed him the bare bones of his companion and told him that the Crazy Buffalo had caused his companion to try to do her harm and that she had destroyed him and picked his bones bare. The young man was very much afraid and drew his bow and arrow to shoot the woman, but she told him that if he would do as she directed, no harm would come to him and he should get any girl he wished for his woman, for she was *wakkan*³ and he could not hurt her with his arrows. But if he refused to do as she should direct, or attempt to shoot her, he would be destroyed as his companion had been. Then the young man promised to do as she should bid him.
She then directed him to return to the camp and call all the council together and tell them that in a short time they should prepare a feast, and all sit in the customary circle to have the feast served when she would enter the camp, but the men must all sit with their head bowed and look at the ground until she was in their midst. Then she would serve the feast to them and after they had feasted she would tell them what to do: that they must obey her in everything; that if they obeyed she would tell them what would have their prayers to the *Wakkan Tanika*⁴ answered and be prosperous and happy; but that if they disobeyed her or attempted to do her any harm, they would be neglected by *Wakkan Tanika* and be punished as the young man who had attempted to embrace her had been.

2. tipi: Often spelled *tepee*, a portable, conical house used by the Plains Indians, usually constructed of cottonwood poles and buffalo hides or canvas.
3. *wakkan*: Powerful and spiritually mysterious.
4. four puffs of smoke: Four is a sacred number to the Lakota, and many other tribes, as evidenced in the four directions and the four winds.
5. *Wakkan Tanika*: The Lakota "Great Spirit," or literally "Big Power."

Treaty of 1868. That treaty was violated when gold was discovered in the Black Hills in the 1870s, attracting thousands of white prospectors and triggering a war between the Sioux and the U.S. Army. Despite the leadership of Sitting Bull (1831-1890), a Lakota chief and medicine man, and the defeat of General George Custer at the battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, the Sioux finally bowed to the military forces of the United States and to the federal government's determination to open their lands to white settlers. As Sitting Bull said of those settlers in a speech delivered in 1877, "They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own and fence their neighbors away; they deface her with their buildings and their refuse. That nation is like a spring freshet that overruns its banks and destroys all who are in its path. We cannot dwell side by side." Finally, in 1889, Congress reduced the Great Sioux Reservation into five scattered reservations, the largest of which was and remains the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

bedfordstmartins.com/
americanlit for research
links on Native American
tales and stories

Reading "Wohpe and the Gift of the Pipe" (Lakota). The following Lakota story, as it was told by Finger, a holy man of the Oglala Sioux, was recorded by James R. Walker, a physician at the Pine Ridge Reservation from 1896 to 1914. Other versions of this tale exist, including a later one collected in John G. Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), based on recordings of conversations Neihardt had in 1930 with Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux then living at Pine Ridge. A central tale to the Lakota, "Wohpe and the Gift of the Pipe" explains the origin and importance of what is commonly known as the peace pipe, which figured prominently in Lakota culture. Sharing the long, elaborately decorated pipe was a ritual among Lakota leaders, as well as a ceremonial way of endorsing agreements between individuals and groups. The text of the story, which was told to Walker by Finger on March 25, 1914, is taken from James R. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual*, edited by Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine A. Jahner (1980).

WOHPE AND THE GIFT OF THE PIPE

Question: You say that when *Wohpe*¹ gave the pipe to the Lakotas she was in their camp for many days. Was it she that gave the first pipe to the Lakotas?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Can you tell me how she did this?

1. *Wohpe*: Falling Star, the mythological White Buffalo (Calf) Woman who brings the sacred pipe to the

Answer: Yes, but it is a long story.

Question: Will you tell it?

Answer: (The legend of the giving of the pipe to the Lakotas)

In the long ago the Lakotas were in camp and two young men lay upon a hill watching for signs. They saw a long way in the distance a lone person coming, and they ran further toward it and lay on another hill hidden so that if it were an enemy they would be able to intercept it or signal to the camp. When the person came close, they saw that it was a woman and when she came nearer that she was without clothing of any kind except that her hair was very long and fell over her body like a robe. One young man said to the other that he would go and meet the woman and embrace her and if he found her good, he would hold her in his tipi.² His companion cautioned him to be careful for this might be a buffalo woman who could enchant him and take him with her to her people and hold him there forever. But the young man would not be persuaded and met the woman on the hill next to where they had watched her. His companion saw him attempt to embrace her and there was a cloud closed about them so that he could not see what happened. In a short time the cloud disappeared and the woman was alone. She beckoned to the other young man and told him to come there and assured him that he would not be harmed. As she spoke in the Lakota language the young man thought she belonged to his people and went to where she stood.

When he got there, she showed him the bare bones of his companion and told him that the Crazy Buffalo had caused his companion to try to do her harm and that she had destroyed him and picked his bones bare. The young man was very much afraid and drew his bow and arrow to shoot the woman, but she told him that if he would do as she directed, no harm would come to him and he should get any girl he wished for his woman, for she was *wakan*³ and he could not hurt her with his arrows. But if he refused to do as she should direct, or attempt to shoot her, he would be destroyed as his companion had been. Then the young man promised to do as she should bid him.

She then directed him to return to the camp and call all the council together and tell them that in a short time they would see four puffs of smoke⁴ under the sun at midday. When they saw this sign they should prepare a feast, and all sit in the customary circle to have the feast served when she would enter the camp, but the men must all sit with their head bowed and look at the ground until she was in their midst. Then she would serve the feast to them and after they had feasted she would tell them what to do: that they must obey her in everything; that if they obeyed her in everything they would have their prayers to the *Wakan Tanka*⁵ answered and be prosperous and happy; but that if they disobeyed her or attempted to do her any harm, they would be neglected by *Wakan Tanka* and be punished as the young man who had attempted to embrace her had been.

2. *tipi*: Often spelled *tepee*, a portable, conical house used by the Plains Indians, usually constructed of cottonwood poles and buffalo hides or canvas.

3. *wakan*: Powerful and spiritually mysterious.

4. *four puffs of smoke*: Four is a sacred number to the Lakota, and many other tribes, as evidenced in the four directions and the four winds.

6. shaman: *Shaman* is actually a term for an East Asian medicine man. Walker may have misunderstood or mistranslated the Lakota term *wicasa wakkan*, a man who acquires power through a "vision quest," a process of deep understanding of the world of the spirits.

[1980]

Thus it was that the Beautiful Woman brought the pipe to the Lakotas. *Wohpe* would be in the smoke of any such pipe if smoked with proper solemnity and form. shamans instructed the people that they could make other pipes and use them and that occasions. With due ceremony they made wrappers for the pipe so that it is *wakkan*. The instructions that it was to be kept sacred and used only on the most solemn and important knew that it was *Wohpe* who had given the pipe and they appointed a custodian for it with cloud of smoke and the woman entered the smoke and disappeared. Then the shamans fire had burned to coals she directed the shaman to place on it the sweetgrass. This made a man⁶ to have an abundance of sweetgrass. She stood in the midst of the circle and when the cottonwood, which they did. Then she directed all to sit in a circle about the fire and the shaher to go, she called all the people together and bade the women to build a great fire of dried one was happy for she went from tipi to tipi with good words for all. When the time came for After this she remained in this camp for many days and all the time she was there every-for them that their prayers should be answered.

would be present and hear their prayers and take them to the *Wakkan Tankka* and plead them. But she would serve them in this way. When the smoke came from the pipe she their keeping, telling them that as long as they preserved this pipe she would serve the council how to gather the bark and the tobacco and prepare it, and gave the pipe into hand it to another. Thus the pipe was passed until all had smoked. She then instructed

She smoked a few whiffs and handed the pipe to the chief and told him to smoke and tobacco and filled the pipe with the bark and tobacco and lighted it with a coal of fire. to see her as smoke. Then she took from her pouch a pipe and willow bark and Lakota to serve them always; that they had first seen her as smoke and that they should always she served the men with food, and when they had feasted she told them that she wished fringes and colors more beautiful than any woman of the Lakota had ever worked. Then saw a very beautiful woman dressed in the softest deer skin which was ornamented with children and then to the women and then she bade the men to look up. They did so and

Then the woman entered the circle and took the food and served it, first to the little young man had very sore eyes and all the time they were as if biting smoke was in them. obeyed me and there will be smoke in your eyes as long as you live." From that time, that He saw a puff of black smoke which blew into his eyes and a voice said, "You have dis-toward the ground except one young man and he looked toward the entrance of the camp. began uttering low exclamations of admiration, but all the men steadily kept their eyes served and every man bowed his head and looked toward the ground. Suddenly the women pared for a feast and all dressed in their best clothing and sat in the circle ready to be and in a few days they saw four puffs of black smoke under the sun at midday, so they pre-decided to do as she had instructed the young man. They made preparations for the feast Then she disappeared as a mist disappears so that the young man knew that she was

Akimel O'odham (Pima)

The Akimel O'odham, commonly known as the Pima, are among the earliest residents of the Southwest. They are descendants of the ancient Hohokam, who as early as the second century BCE began to develop an expansive and complex civilization in what is now southern Arizona, New Mexico, and northern Mexico. Culturally similar to the natives of central Mexico, the Hohokam lived in large adobe towns, which the Spanish would call "pueblos," and built an extensive system of canals to irrigate their arid farmlands. Following a series of droughts, however, the Hohokam abandoned their majestic pueblos and moved into smaller villages along the Salt and the Gila rivers. They were an agricultural people, who developed prosperous farms and villages. When Spanish explorers encountered these dispersed peoples in the early 1600s, they renamed them the Pima and the Papago. In the eighteenth century, the Spanish were allied with the Pima against the incursions of the Apache. In the nineteenth century, Pima villages became trading posts, selling animals and food to settlers bound for southern California and those participating in the California gold rush of the late 1840s. As part of the Gadsden Purchase of 1853, however, the Pima lands in Mexico became part of the United States. The prosperity of the Pima farmers and traders ended, and the tribe was soon consigned to the Gila River Reservation, established in 1859. Today, the Pima and Papago tribes have reclaimed their original names, the Akimel O'odham (River People) and the Tohono O'odham (Desert People).

Reading "The Story of the Creation" (Pima). The Pima did not have a written language, and much of the record of their complex culture is lost. But some of their stories were preserved orally in tribal culture and finally transcribed by J. William Lloyd, a physician and writer. At the Pan-American Fair in Buffalo, New York, in 1901, Lloyd met Edward H. Wood, a Pima whose uncle, Thin Leather, knew many of the Pima stories and legends. Together Lloyd and Wood worked with Thin Leather in Arizona to collect and record Pima narratives. The following story begins in a way similar to that of the book of Genesis, but this Pima creation myth draws on many elements of the natural landscape of the Southwest. The text is taken from the collection put together by Lloyd and Thin Leather, *Aw-Aw-Tam Indian Nights, Being the Myths and Legends of the Pimas of Arizona* (1911).