The People of the Plains

The Plains People were hunters and gatherers. Food was plentiful on the plains. Buffalo, deer, elk, and antelope roamed in abundance. These people also gathered wild berries and plants. Wood, stone, and animal hides were used to supply their needs.

Buffalo hunting was the most important job of the Native men. The well-being of the whole group depended on their skills as hunters. The largest hunt usually took place in late summer or early fall. There were strict rules in connection with this hunt. One of the most important was that no one was allowed to hunt alone, because the herd of buffalo might stampede. Then the tribe would be left without food for the long winter. Anyone who broke this rule was severely punished.

The main role of the women was to prepare food, make clothing, build and care for the home and care for the children. They also had the job of skinning and butchering the buffalo carcasses. All of the buffalo was used. Nothing was thrown away as can be seen from the diagram.

Most of the buffalo meat was made into pemmican - a combination of powdered dried buffalo meat and berries, mixed together with buffalo fat.

The Plains tribes lived in tipis which could be easily moved as the seasons changed. These tipis were the property of the women. During the winter they lived together in small political groups called bands or clans. The majority of the Plains Peoples were patrilineal. Each clan contained about ten extended families.

Each Plains tribe was governed by a tribal council consisting of both men and women. Group decisions were reached by consensus after the opinions of the adults were heard. This often took much discussion, debate and persuasion. When it was necessary, a tribe would choose a chief. This man was usually brave, generous, a good speaker, a wise decision-maker and a good hunter. The position of chief ended when the special situation requiring a chief ended.

These people believed strongly in the importance of sharing and generosity. They did not believe in private ownership of land. The land had been made by the Great Spirit for all to use. These tribes honoured the Great Spirit and believed everything on earth was to be respected. They believed that rocks, trees, lakes, rivers, animals and people had all been given spirits and special roles by the Great Spirit. The hunters and trappers thanked the animals for giving up their lives to provide them with food, clothing and shelter. The women thanked the plants they used in the same way.
Lesson Two: The People of the Plains

Name: ___________________________ Date: ______________________

The Plains People were __________________ and __________________. They hunted animals such as elk, deer, antelope and __________________. They also gathered wild berries and __________________. Wood, stone and animal ______________ were used to make their clothing and utensils.

_____________________________ was the most important job for the men. The main buffalo hunt usually took place in ________________. The most important rule of the buffalo hunt was that no one was allowed to hunt ________________.

The main job of the women was to prepare __________________ and to ______________ ________________. They also had to make ________________, which was made from powered dried buffalo meat and ________________.

These people lived in ________________ which were owned by the __________________. During the winter they lived in small groups called ________________. They traced their ancestors through their fathers. Therefore they were ________________.

The Plains People made decisions through __________________ of the whole group. Each tribe was governed by a __________________. They only chose a ________________ when it was necessary.

They believed in sharing and ________________. They also believed the ________________ had made the land for all to use. They always ________________ the animals they killed for giving up their lives to enable them to live.
**The Buffalo**

- **Hair**
  This was used to stuff balls and saddle pads. It was also woven into belts and headbands.

- **Stomach**
  The stomach was eaten, and it was also used as a cooking pot.

- **Hide - without hair**
  This was made into summer clothing, tipi covers and shields.

- **Hide - with hair**
  This was made into winter clothing, floor covers and moccasins.

- **Horns**
  Indians made these into cups, spoons and clubs.

- **Skull**
  This was used in a religious ceremony called the Sun Dance.

- **Meat**
  The hump was a special delicacy.

- **Tail**
  Attached to a stick, it made a fly swatter.

- **Bladder**
  This was a natural waterproof bag.

- **Teeth**
  These were made into valuable necklaces.

- **Intestines and Blood**
  The blood was put in the intestines, cooked and eaten like sausages.

- **Hoof**
  When boiled in water, hooves made glue.

- **Claws**
  These became the noisemaker in a rattle.

- **Bones**
  These made tools such as scrapers, knives and needles for sewing.

- **Fat**
  Poured over dried meat, hot fat made pemmican.

- **Sinews**
  These were used for laces, thread and bowstrings.
Lesson Two: The People of the Plains

Complete the following chart telling how the Plains People used all parts of the buffalo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Part of the Buffalo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
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<td>Tools</td>
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<td>Other Uses</td>
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