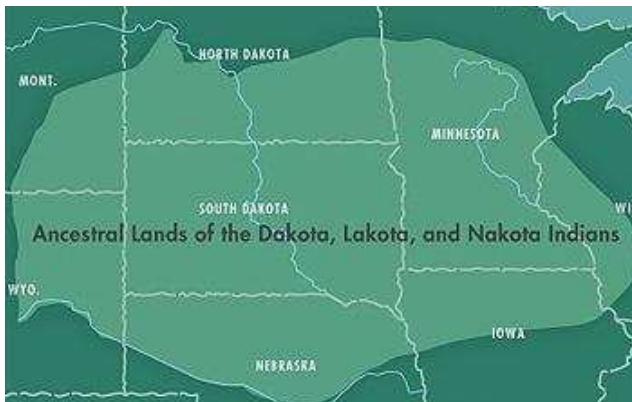


Teachings of the Buffalo Hunt

A Sacred Time for a Young Man

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. The Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota are three groups of Native Americans who speak different dialects. Sometimes they are called the Sioux. Look at the map (below left) to see the territory they used to have. Compare it to the lands that the Lakota currently have (below right). Use the Map Legend to understand how to read the map.



In general, the Lakota lived to the west of the Missouri River, the Nakota in the center, and the Dakota toward the east in what is currently called Minnesota.

Land of the Lakota

Map Legend

- Lakota Nation: Reserved by the 1868 Treaty for the Lakota people.
- 1876 Lakota reservation after the U.S. stole the Black Hills.
- Lakota reservations after 100 years of court actions.



This map shows Lakota territory. Notice how it matches the west side of the map on the left. Source: <lakotadakotanakotanation.org>

2. Look at the picture of the buffalo on the right. Describe in detail what you see. What do you think happens on a buffalo hunt? (Note: the plural of "buffalo" is "buffalo." You do not add an "s." Try using the singular and plural in several sentences. Name other nouns that do not have an "s" in their plural form.)

3. The subtitle of this article is: "A Sacred Time for a Young Man." What might be sacred about a buffalo hunt? Do young men and women have sacred traditions or practices in your culture? If so, what are they?



AFTER YOU READ: Based on the text and the photographs, what is sacred about the buffalo hunt? Point to specific details that explain how you know the hunt is a sacred time?

Teachings of the Buffalo Hunt

A Sacred Time for a Young Man

Oitancan Mani Zephier

I am Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota. So are my children. We are Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota first before we are American. We are the first people of this land. It is our land. European settlers try to destroy us and destroy our land. But we survive.

In my culture, women and men raise boys. We teach them how to be good people. Men teach boys how to hunt buffalo. In the old days, we hunted on horses. The buffalo hunt was dangerous.

Today, the buffalo hunt is different. Today, we use trucks. We do not use horses. We also use rifles. We shoot the buffalo behind the ear or in the forehead.

I have been on several hunts with my sons and my nephews. Each one is different. In each one, we learn important lessons. For example, the buffalo teach compassion. The buffalo choose which one will die. When it is time, this buffalo will walk away from the herd as

if to give itself to you. I have seen this several times. When the buffalo is shot, the other buffalo approach the wounded relative to say goodbye. I have seen buffalo try to stand the wounded one back up. I have also seen them “sandwich” the wounded buffalo and try to keep it standing. They are very intelligent and strong animals.

The buffalo give us many gifts. When a



The ceremony before the buffalo hunt.



On the Trail, Buffalo Hunt, circa 1910. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division.

young man kills his first buffalo, he drinks the blood and eats a piece of the heart. The blood is medicine. The blood tastes salty and thick. It's really not that bad. When the buffalo eat the grass off the land, they choose the medicines from the land. That medicine becomes a part of them, so their blood becomes medicine.

This is not all there is to know about the buffalo hunt. If you hunt buffalo, you will learn more. We never use the buffalo to make money. Buffalo are our relatives. They are us. We are them. We have the same spirits. We are the *Pte Oyate*, the Buffalo People.



After the hunt: processing the meat and the skin of the buffalo.



Oitanca Mani Zephier (Walking Leader) is from the Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Southern Cheyenne, and Arapaho nations. He is a father of 10, husband, and Operation Enduring Freedom Army Combat Medic Veteran. He is an entrepreneur and aspiring motivational speaker. Find him on Instagram at @OZinspires and Facebook.com/OZinspires.



The author's son, Wacinksabaya Ounye Zephier, at the buffalo hunt.