

## THE STONEY INDIANS.

UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

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The Stoney Indian Reserve lies forty miles west of Calgary. It is approximately 100,000 acres in area--a strip of land running east from the Rockies, from the Rocky Mountain National Park boundaries to the Ghost River, and being roughly 8 miles wide. The Calgary-Banff highway divides the Reserve into the North Side and the South side.

The Reserve lies in the foothills and is a delightful country. The Bow River cuts through it and everywhere are lakes and creeks and springs. The hills are wooded with willow, poplar and spruce. Wild flowers grow profusely and in the summer time it is a lovely place. There are many delightful spots for camping and many delightful walks.

The Reserve has one serious drawback and that is, it is very stony. This makes the ground unsuitable for farming, and for that reason the people of this Reserve have not as much chance to be self-supporting as those of other reserves having agricultural lands.

The Stoney Indians are a part of the Sioux nation. They are divided into three bands--Wesley, Bearspaw and Chiniqua. Each band has its Chief and two Councillors. The people elect their Chiefs and Councillors, but their choice must be approved by the Indian Department at Ottawa. These people hold office until their death unless removed for any just reason.

The homes of the Stoneys are cabins, scattered here and there on the Reserve. A group of these form a village--Bearspaw Village--Chiniqua Village. In the summer they put up teepees for their homes. If men are out working on a job in the winter or fall, they build a wall of spruce to the north and west and place their teepee in the protection of the enclosure.

The Stoneys leave the Reserve and go out among the ranches of southern Alberta and the foothill farms of the north every ~~year~~ spring and fall. They do odd jobs, such as fencing or cutting brush and may be paid in food or with a cow or horse, or perhaps in money. On the Reserve they cut and sell wood for firewood, posts, logs, etc. They have the right to hunt and sell the skins, raw or tanned. They leave on their hunting trips in the fall and return before Christmas. They return from their spring jobs about May, just in time to plant some greenfeed and potatoes in their gardens.

Treaty is paid to these Indians once a year, at the rate of \$5 a person. This is paid by the Indian Agent, who is the representative of the Indian Department. Payments are also due the Stoneys from the Calgary Power Company for water rights on the Bow River. They must pay so much money for every horsepower of electricity manufactured. This sum is divided equally between the Government and the Stoneys, but until it is decided whether water rights were transferred with natural resources from the Dominion Government to the province, no payments will be made to the Stoneys.

The Stoney men have adopted Canadian dress, though many of them still wear their hair in braids. ~~The~~ younger ones get away from this.



The women, however, have clung to their shawls and brightly colored handkerchiefs. They wear gay print dresses with full skirts (for riding) and long sleeves. They form a very picturesque sight in a crowd.

The Indian baby or papoose is placed in a moss-bag. This is a bag made of skin, with a firm support at the back, and lined with moss. The baby is put in and the bag laced so that only the little face shows. Sometimes four or five shawls of various materials are dropped down over the baby's face to keep it warm. The moss-bags are strapped under the shawl on the mother's back. The child is carried in this way until it is old enough to ride behind its mother on a horse, or sit beside her on the seat of a ~~democrat~~ democrat. It is really marvellous how skilful Indian mothers are at handling their papooses.

Some of the Indian babies are cute wee things. They have tiny faces and bright black, almond shaped eyes. Their hair is jet black, too. Some Indian mothers take excellent care of their babies and keep them sweet and clean. Others are not so careful. But all Indian parents are very fond of their children and are very good to them. I have one girl in my group who lost her mother when she was a wee thing. It seems that the team ran away and the mother knew she was in danger, so she unstrapped her shawl and threw the baby clear. The moss-bag caught on a tree branch and the baby was saved, though the mother met her death. The baby was adopted. The Indians are very good in that way. If there is an orphan or an unwanted child on the Reserve a home is always found for it.

Indian women have never received the same recognition as the men. They are always pushed into the background and as a result are shy. Only a few of the women speak good English, but it is easy to make them understand. Some of the women are excellent housekeepers and their cabins are as clean and tidy as our own houses. They have curtains at their windows and oilcloth on their table, and use dishes and cutlery at their meals. They are particular also about their clothing. Other women, of course, are careless and slovenly and their cabins are a disgrace, but as time goes on we hope the children will take back some idea of cleanliness to these homes. We had sixteen Indian mothers at our C.G.I.T. banquet recently and every one of them was well-mannered and courteous.

Indians really worship. There will be two hundred of them in church every Sunday morning. The service starts about 11 a.m. and lasts till 1 p.m. Many of the Indians have no clocks and as a result they arrive at church all through the service. Frequently the last one arrives when it is time for the rest to depart. Indian families separate at the church doors. The women go to the left and the men to the right. The children usually stay with the mothers. The length of the service is due to the fact that as many of the Indians do not understand English, Scripture, announcements and sermon must be interpreted. Prayers are offered in Stoney by some of the men and in English by the minister.

After church everyone visits and the school children see their parents. It makes a gay scene. The fence is a line of horses and saddle ponies and there are countless Indian dogs around. The Indians are delighted if you shake hands with them and say "Bondage", which means "Good-day".



The Stoney Indians are a very likable people. They are happy and cheerful, even though they may sometimes grumble about hard times. But would we not do that also if we had no money and our families were cold and hungry? The Stoney's have had a very hard winter and I am sure they must be glad that summer is coming.

The old and the sick receive rations of tea, flour, meat, etc. from the Indian Department. This morning at church, all the old people were given a package of big flat buns. It was Old People's Sunday and I saw an old woman over ninety there. She was as small as a child in size and could hardly see. Yet she smiled as she went out. They are a great people truly.

They make bannock from flour, baking powder and water and cook it in flat cakes, I believe on top of the stove or on hot flat rocks. They buy bread and buns when they can. Bannock, meat and tea are their chief foods. They are very fond of tea and tobacco. Men and women, and I may say, boys.

All Indians, young and old, can ride. Their horses are cayuses, rather small and very wiry. The Stampede is the big attraction for these Indians. They love the fun and the noise, and there is the chance of picking up some money. But they usually spend a great deal more, and it seems a shame that they spend their money on icecream, bananas and hot dogs, when it should be kept for buying food and clothing later on in the year. After Calgary comes Banff. Some of the Indians follow stampedes from place to place. The children count the \$s and live for the Calgary Stampede. They even stage a miniature one of their own.

I must tell you about the Annual Singing Festival which is usually held in February. Everyone comes dressed in their best, and we see gowns of red and rose, green, yellow, purple and pink. The larger the woman, the brighter the color often. They have quartettes, trios, duets, solos and choruses, sung in Stoney, Cree or English. The men have marvellous voices, so deep and clear and true. The women as a whole are shriller, but some have very sweet voices. Prizes are awarded by visiting white judges, and are usually meat, flour and tea. Apples are passed around in the interim and the Reserve kiddies get candy. Then the story-telling contest begins and they see who can tell the best story of early days. Of course, they are supposed to be true, but Mr. Staley says some of the bears grow year by year! But everyone has a good laugh and a good time.

Stoney's intermarry a great deal and all possible is done to get them to marry in the church. It is very encouraging to note that almost all of the younger people are married in the church. They consider it much more binding. Otherwise when they tire of each other, they simply move on. That is one deplorable condition among these people.

Treaty day is a great day with young and old. After treaty is paid they crowd into the store and have a buying orgy. But they get no luxuries these days. Every woman, I think, gets four yards of print for a dress, a new silk handkerchief for her head and perhaps a sweater. The men buy new overalls and shirts. The children usually get a



sweater or windbreaker and perhaps fifty cents or a dollar out of their treaty money, and the parents keep the rest in most instances. But the youngsters get candy, gum, bananas and pop, and the day is a real treat for them. Indians will buy perhaps a 20¢ article, give you a \$5 bill and let you count out the change. Then after they have checked it, they ask for a 5¢ or a 25¢ article and the process is repeated. I suppose they do this to keep track of their money--or perhaps there is a little Scotch in them!

Some diseases have taken a heavy toll of the Indians. Smallpox and tuberculosis are to some extent being overcome. Tracoma, a serious eye disease, is now very prevalent.

An Indian is a master fire-lighter. They often say, "White man take a long time, lots of matches, make a big fire, stand a long ways away, cook one side, cold the other. Indian, one match, make little fire, stay close and be warm!"

Indian names are often given as a result of some happening or saying that takes place at the time the baby is born. Thus we have in school children by the name of Blue Sky; Big Snow; Wolf Child; Two Young Men; Powderface; while some of the older Indians are called Walking Buffalo; Big Stoney; Lefthand; Good Stoney; Bearspaw; and Baking Hot in the Oven!