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The Plains People

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From the Rocky Mountains to the woodlands of Southeastern Manitoba, the native people of the plains spanned the Southern provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Transportation

- Originally, the Plains people traveled everywhere on foot.
- During the winter, snowshoes made walking on deep snow easier.
- Sleds were pulled by dogs, and helped with transporting in the winter.
- Travois were placed on dogs and used for transportation—they were a structure made of two poles, which crossed at the top and attached to some netting or a wooden frame.



Typical Dog Travois



Horses

- Spaniards first introduced Horses to Mexico.
- By the early 1700s, they arrived on the Canadian Prairies.
- Horses carried five times more than the dog.
- Travois were placed on horses as well as dogs.
- With a horse travois, they could also carry lots more gear than before. They could carry larger tent poles, and make larger tipis than before. Everyone could keep far more possessions since they were now easier to carry.
- Food was brought back to the band by horse; therefore bands did not move camp as often.
- The swift horse made hunting easier, and traveling further distances a reality.



Typical Horse Travois



Sioux Hunting Party

Seasonal Migration / Adaptation

- In the winter, tribes would settle in wooded valley areas, where they were sheltered.
- They did not wander aimlessly, but moved their camps to the same areas each year, where they knew they could find food. They thought of the seasonal migration pattern as a circle, so the circle became a sacred symbol, signifying life and renewal.
- In spring, to avoid flooding and to follow the Buffalo, they moved to the prairies.
- The bands only came together in the summer, when the Buffalo herds were concentrated and together a tribe could perhaps perform a Buffalo jump.
- Small nomadic groups traveled individually, following a leader who would help the group find food to survive.



Peigan Camp

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