

## **Two Blackfoot Creation Stories**

*Taken from <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/blkftcreation.html#order>*

### **“The Order of Life and Death”**

There was once a time when there were but two persons in the world, Old Man and Old Woman. One time, when they were traveling about, Old Man met Old Woman, who said, "Now, let us come to an agreement of some kind; let us decide how the people shall live."

"Well," said Old Man, "I am to have the first say in everything."

To this Old Woman agreed, provided she had the second say.

Then Old Man began, "The women are to tan the hides. When they do this, they are to rub brains on them to make them soft; they are to scrape them well with scraping tools, etc. But all this they are to do very quickly, for it will not be very hard work."

"No, I will not agree to this," said Old Woman. "They must tan the hide in the way you say; but it must be made very hard work, and take a long time, so that the good workers may be found out."

"Well", said Old Man, "let the people have eyes and mouths in their faces; but they shall be straight up and down."

"No," said Old Woman, "we will not have them that way. We will have the eyes and mouth in the faces, as you say; but they shall all be set crosswise."

"Well," said Old Man, "the people shall have ten fingers on each hand."

"Oh, no!" said Old Woman. "That will be too many. They will be in the way. There shall be four fingers and one thumb on each hand."

"Well," said Old Man, "we shall beget children. The genitals shall be at our navels."

"No," said Old Woman, "that will make childbearing too easy; the people will not care for their children. The genitals shall be at the pubes."

So they went on until they had provided for everything in the lives of the people that were to be. Then Old Woman asked what they should do about life and death.

Should the people always live, or should they die? They had some difficulty in agreeing on this; but finally Old Man said, "I will tell you what I will do. I will throw a buffalo chip into the water, and, if it floats, the people die for four days and live again. But, if it sinks, they will die forever."

So he threw it in, and it floated.

"No," said Old Woman, "we will not decide in that way. I will throw in this rock. If it floats, the people will die for four days. If it sinks, the people will die forever."

Then Old Woman threw the rock out into the water, and it sank to the bottom.

"There," said she, "it is better for the people to die forever; for, if they did not die forever, they would never feel sorry for each other, and there would be no sympathy in the world."

"Well," said Old Man, let it be that way."

After a time Old Woman had a daughter, who died. She was very sorry now that it had been fixed so that people died forever. So she said to Old Man, "Let us have our say over again."

"No," said he, "we fixed it once."

- ⊘ Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, pp. 19-21.

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### **“The First Marriage”**

Now in those days, the men and the women did not live together. The men lived in one camp and the women in the other. The men lived in lodges made of skin with the hair on; the women, in good lodges. [The idea is, that the women dress the skins, hence the men could not live in dressedskin lodges.] One day Old Man came to the camp of the men, and, when he was there, a woman came over from the camp of the women. She said she had been sent by the chief of the women to invite all the men, because the women were going to pick out husbands.

Now the men began to get ready, and Old Man dressed himself up in his finest clothes. He was always fine looking. Then they started out, and when they came to the women's camp they all stood up in a row.

Now the chief of the women came out to make the first choice. She had on very dirty clothes, and none of the men knew who she was. She went along the line, looked them over, and finally picked out Old Man because of his fine appearance.

Now Old Man saw many nicely dressed women waiting their turn, and when the chief of the women took him by the hand he pulled back and broke away. He did this because he thought her a very common woman. When he pulled away, the chief of the women went back to her lodge and instructed the other women not to choose Old Man.

While the other women were picking out their husbands, the chief of the women put on her best costume. When she came out, she looked very fine, and as soon as Old Man saw her, he thought, "Oh! There is the chief of the women. I wish to be her husband." He did not know that it was the same woman.

Now the chief of the women came down once more to pick out a husband, and as she went around, Old Man kept stepping in front of her, so that she might see him. But she paid no attention to him, finally picking out another for her husband.

After a while all the men had been picked out except Old Man. Now he was very angry; but the chief of the women said to him, "After this you are to be a tree, and stand just where you are now."

Then he became a tree, and he is mad yet, because he is always caving down the bank.

- ⊘ Source: Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, 1908), v. 2, part 1, pp. 21-22.