

1. Description

1.1. Name of society, language, and language family:

1.1.1. *Kaska Indian, Athapaskan speaking, also known as Nahane, Eastern Nahane, Caska, and Nahani* (Ethnologue: Languages of the World)

1.2. ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

1.2.1. 639-3 (Ethnologue: Languages of the World)

1.3. Location (latitude/longitude):

1.3.1. *lat. 58° by long. 126°; northeast, to lat. 60° by long. 126°; southwest to lat. 5808' by long. 130°6'; northwest, to lat. 60° by long. 131°* (Allard, 1929)

1.4. Brief history:

1.4.1. *According to Honigmann the Kaska claim to be descendents of the Tilingit through the Pelly Indians. They were hunters and gatherers before contact with white men. In the early 1800's they began going to Dease Lake and trading furs and the like for weapons and other supplies. (Honigmann, Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society, 1949) Early in the Twentieth century, missionaries began to convert the Kaska, and in 1926 a mission was established near McDame Creek and has led to the majority of the Kaska being Roman Catholic today. (Countries and their Cultures: Kaska, 2011)*

1.5. Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

1.5.1. *The Kaska remained relatively untouched by Missionaries until the early 1900's but today are almost entirely Roman Catholic. They readily accepted technological change that made their lives easier and allowed greater access to food, and so they were acculturated into western culture pretty easily. They still retain some aspects of their original culture but it is mixed with western culture. Missionaries began teaching children to speak English around 1926 and today the English language is spoken more than their aboriginal language. Priests also taught the children other elementary knowledge and soon began developing schools as well as sending some older children to boarding schools established in larger towns and cities. (Honigmann, Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society, 1949)*

1.6. Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

1.6.1. *As of 1995 they had around 900 people. (Ethnologue: Languages of the World) They tended to live in small family groups consisting of a man his wife and their children and the occasional other person such as a son in law an aged relative or an orphan that was the child of another member of the extended family, those families belonged to a larger clan, the clans were Crow, Bear, and Wolf. Children gain clan membership sometimes from their mother and sometimes from their father. Members of the same clan are not allowed to marry. (Allard, 1929)*

2. Economy

2.1. Main carbohydrate staple(s):

2.1.1. *Berries, fern roots, lily bulbs, mushrooms, muskeg apples, wild onions(they only ate the greens of onion), rose petals for tea, and rhubarb. Also sometimes chewed on spruce gum and birch sap.*

2.2. Main protein-lipid sources:

2.2.1. *bear, moose (sometimes they also drank warm moose milk), caribou, lynx, sheep, groundhog, beaver, goat, gopher, mink marten, multiple kinds of birds and rabbits were hunted as often as possible but eaten mostly in warm months and fish tended to be the main source of meat in cold months. (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)*

2.3. Weapons:

2.3.1.1. *Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bows and arrows, spears gaff hooks, slings, and clubs were used in war and in hunting but for hunting they preferred traps (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)*

2.4. Food storage:

2.4.1. *They dehydrated this strips of meat by hanging it over a small fire, they did not smoke meat, after it was dehydrated they softened the meat by pounding it then stored it in skin bags or in cleaned out intestines. They preserved berries by boiling them then spreading them on a thin layer of bark and allowing it to dry then adding more layers, eventually the dried berry layers created a sort of cake that was then rolled up in the thin bark and stored away. After the preservation was done they had different ways of storing it. In winter they could allow meat to freeze so fresh meat was covered with spruce limbs and put in a hole dug in the snow. Other times they would hang preserved food from tall poles or build platforms high in trees and cover the food with brush and weigh it down with poles, or they would cover a supply of meat with a pile of rocks. (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)*

2.5. Sexual division of production:

2.5.1. *Women gathered food and cooked and kept camp, men hunted, prepared traps, preserved meat, and made things such as snow shoes and canoes. (Honigmann, Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society, 1949)*

2.6. Land tenure:

2.6.1. *No real land tenure the many groups of Kaska shared the region in intervals. They would move around and switch tracts of land often, later though land was passed sometimes through the father and sometimes through the mother, it was determined mostly on who the child was marrying*

2.7. Ceramics:

2.7.1. *No real ceramics but some evidence is dried clay being used to line spruce bark containers, these were used to boil water* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

2.8. Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.8.1. *Men from neighboring families would sometimes help each other hunt, and large game was often split amongst neighboring groups regardless of who did the killing.* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

2.9. Food taboos:

2.9.1. *no real taboos but there were several animals that they refused to eat such as crows which they said were inedible, and eating wolves or frogs was never even considered. They avoided porcupines in order to allow their population to increase so that they could fall back on porcupine during the winter if other food sources were depleted or not producing sufficient sustenance*

2.10. Canoes/watercraft?

2.10.1. *They made simple spruce bark canoes that took them a couple hours to make. They would throw these away as they seldom used them and did not much care for traveling on the river.* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

3. Anthropometry

3.1. Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2. Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1. Age at menarche (f):

4.1.1. *Menarche is held as a very private thing and Kaska women don't even seem to discuss it with each other so it was an inappropriate topic to discuss* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.2. Age at first birth (m and f):

4.2.1. *Child birth isn't really talked about either and is considered a private matter* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.3. Completed family size (m and f):

4.3.1. *I could not find any general family size but it doesn't seem uncommon to have multiple children and sometimes even adopt orphaned children.*

4.4. Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5. Age first marriage (m and f):

4.5.1. *Ideally they feel marriage should happen no earlier than 19 but some do marry younger.* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.6. Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: *Very few marriages end in divorce, and it is harder for a divorced person to find a second spouse.* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.7. Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.7.1. *According to Allard, before the catholic church became involved in the region it was common for a man to have multiple wives and would marry as many wives as he could support* (Allard, 1929) *However, Honigmann states that there were no instances of polygyny within the 40 years prior to him writing his articles. Honigmann also states that polyandry sometimes occurred but was initiated by the first husband offering a brother or close friend the chance to also be married to his wife* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.8. Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.8.1. *A brideservice is paid, their brideservice has no set time period but is usually a single winter and must be served before the marriage occurs. During this time the man lives with his fiancée's family and the couple act as if they are already married.* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.9. Inheritance patterns:

4.9.1. *Things can be inherited either patrilocally or matrilocally though there is a tendency for matrilocality because often a man will stay with his wife's family past the defined brideservice period* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.10. Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.10.1. *Mothers tend to have more to do with child rearing. Fathers often become estranged from daughters after their daughter begins menstruation. Parents often push their children to do hard tasks in order to toughen them up for later life.* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

4.11. Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.11.1. *Homosexuality does occur in both men and women. In some cases where a couple has no sons they will choose one of their daughters to be raised as a boy and tie dried bear ovaries behind the girl's belt to guard against copulation, she is raised and trained as a boy and many such girls have homosexual relations* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)

- 4.12. Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- 4.13. What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
- 4.14. What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
- 4.15. Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
- 4.15.1. *Initial fertilization was not considered incremental but they believed that further copulation would help the baby develop and that a lot of copulation would result in twins.* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)
- 4.16. Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
- 4.17. *Rare but does occur. In many instances Kaska women feign not wanting to participate in coitus and resist the man and the man forces her but this is not considered rape by either party. If a woman is serious about not participating she will hit the man if she does not hit him it is assumed she is playing* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)
- 4.18. Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- 4.18.1. *Cross cousin. Also they seem to like the idea of two brothers marrying two sisters, not allowed to marry someone of your one clan* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)
- 4.19. Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- 4.19.1. *Yes, in fact boys seem to have fewer sexual freedoms as the Kaska believe that masturbation can cause blindness and coitus before the age of 19 can cause sterility. Women on the other hand have no such hold backs except that modesty is very important to the Kaska, to the point that few men ever see their wives entirely naked, and for men and women both, sitting in mixed company with your knees apart is unacceptable no matter how covered you are.* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)
- 4.20. Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- 4.20.1. *Homosexual partners give gifts to each other as if they were a heterosexual couple. Honigmann comments on a man saying of a homosexual man that he treated his lovers “just as good as women.” While this isn’t surprising it’s the only thing on gift giving I came across.* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)
- 4.21. If mother dies, whose raises children?
- 4.21.1. *No particular answer to this, the responsibility is probably shared, Honigmann states that there are many instances of adopting children that are related to you in some way that have been orphaned* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)
- 4.22. Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females
- 4.23. Evidence for couvades
- 4.24. Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.25. Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.26. Joking relationships?
- 4.26.1. *Older boys avoided directly addressing their sisters, grandparents and grandchildred had joking relationships. Men often had joking relationships with their brothers wife, and brothers-in-law tended to have camaraderie.*
- 4.27. Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- 4.28. Incest avoidance rules
- 4.28.1. *Marrying anyone related to you any closer than cross cousins is very bad however it was acceptable for a man to sleep with his fathers sister* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)
- 4.29. Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- 4.29.1. *Since the 1920’s the Roman Catholic church has converted many of the Kaska Indians so many use the Catholic ceremony but aboriginally speaking they had no ceremony to recognize marriage, a man and woman living together and sleeping together conotated marriage* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)
- 4.30. In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- 4.30.1. *A new wife gradually takes on her husbands last name* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)
- 4.31. Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- 4.31.1. *No real preference it was even ok in some instances to marry white people.* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)
- 4.32. Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- 4.32.1. *Not really but a man who saw an eligible mate for his daughter that he liked would invite the bachelor to work his trap lines with him for a winter which would mean the bachelor living with the family and thus being around the daughter, if this led to intimacy between the two the father would count the work done by the bachelor as his bride service. It was preferred that a man approach a woman’s father and ask his approval before proposing.* (Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society*, 1949)
- 4.33. Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

5. Warfare/homicide

- 5.1. Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

5.2. Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

5.2.1. *Ingroup violent death did occur but not often. Outgroup violent death was also pretty rare as it would start a war and they had little want to go to war.* (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)

5.3. Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

5.3.1. *War could be started by someone killing a member of another tribe. This rarely happened and they didn't like to go to war. They never fought simply for prestige but prestige could be gained through war.*

5.4. Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

5.5. Cannibalism?

5.5.1. *After winning a battle Kaska men would eat the belly fat of victims thinking that it strengthened them and gave them the ability to consume raw meat if the need should ever arise.* (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)

6. Socio-Political organization and interaction

6.1. Mean local residential (village) group size:

6.2. Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

6.2.1. *They moved with the seasons to the best location for finding game during each period of the year* (Honigmann, Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society, 1949)

6.3. Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

6.3.1. *No real chiefs to begin with but they did have shaman who held respect. Elders were viewed as wise but often more pitied for their weakness that revered for their wisdom* (Honigmann, Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society, 1949)

6.4. Post marital residence:

6.4.1. *They moved back in with their respective families* (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)

6.5. Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

6.6. Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

6.7. Special friendships/joking relationships:

6.8. Village and house organization:

6.8.1. *Conical or v shaped huts that made of long poles covered in moss and brush and bark. They could house up to 20 people and would be lived in by one or two closely related families. Sometimes they made temporary housing by making small lean-tos or by digging pits in the snow and building a fire inside so that the snow would begin to melt, then let the walls freeze and solidify.* (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)

6.9. Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

6.10. Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

6.10.1. *They carpeted the ground with spruce brush and slept on that then covered themselves with rabbit or gopher skin blankets and made pillows from skins as well and stuffed them with feathers* (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)

6.11. Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

6.11.1. *They were members of one of three clans, wolf, Bear, or crow which were sub groups of larger clans.*

6.12. Trade:

6.12.1. *They began trading furs and meat for other materials such as rifles when white men first started showing up, this led to a growing dependency on newer technology and eventual acculturation into western culture* (Honigmann, Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society, 1949)

6.13. Indications of social hierarchies?

6.13.1. *Very little social hierarchy though people could be looked down upon for acts such as pregnancy out of wedlock, and adultery. There tended to be war leaders but they had no real authority.* (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)

7. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

7.1. Time allocation to RCR:

7.2. Specialization (shamans and medicine):

7.2.1. *Men and Women could become shaman, this happened by going on a vision quest and receiving part of an animals wind (or spirit) into your own. Shamans were corers, conjurers and prophets. Sorcery was a slightly different matter and considered evil. A sorcerer was said to be able to take the spirit from a man by chanting during battle.* (Honigmann, The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, 1954)

7.3. Stimulants:

7.4. Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

7.4.1. *When a person was dying the entire family and friend group would gather around him and weep with him and shake his hand until he passed. The body was then burned buried or left in a tree. After handling the corpse people did ceremonies to ward off the molevolence associated with death, then they went to camp and circled it in a dance while people who hadn't attended the burial smacked them with sticks at which point the dancers fell to the ground then immediately went*

inside, washed their hands and were fed small portions of meat. Men who died in warfare were left where they died.
(Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

7.5. Other rituals:

7.6. Myths (Creation):

7.6.1. *Animals once ruled the earth, then a great flood came and men built canoes and were blown all over the world and when the waters receded they went to land where they could, separated from their bretheren. Before the flood all men lived in one place but the flood put distance between men causing them to create many more civilizations* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

7.7. Cultural material (art, music, games):

7.8. Sex differences in RCR:

7.9. Missionary effect:

7.10. RCR revival:

7.11. Death and afterlife beliefs:

7.12. Taboo of naming dead people?

7.13. Is there teknonymy?

7.14. Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

7.14.1. *Deities associated with animals, a supreme god, reincarnation, magic within the spirit. Many of these ideas have been changed by Catholic influence* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

8. Adornment

8.1. Body paint:

8.1.1. *Lines were tattooed on a mans arm after fighting in battle as a sign of how many battles he had survived. Boys and girls at the age of ten began getting tattoos that were short parallel lines on both upper arms, the only real reason given is as stated above to document wars faught in but women did not fight in wars and neither did young children so the reasoning is unknown.* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

8.2. Piercings:

8.3. Haircut:

8.3.1. *Girls and young women wore their hair in two or three braids. Men let their hair grow long and left it down. A death of a relative required you to cut your hair regardless of your sex* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

8.4. Scarification:

8.5. Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

8.5.1. *beads, feathers and small painted bones were used on necklaces and bracelets, some men wore necklaces made of porcupine quills that had been painted by wives or lovers.*

8.6. Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

8.7. Sex differences in adornment:

8.7.1. *No sex differences in clothing except that women switched from pants to skirts when menstruating* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

8.8. Missionary effect:

8.9. Cultural revival in adornment:

9. Kinship systems

9.1. Sibling classification system:

9.1.1. *There is no classification beyond three generations so a great grandparent is just referred to as a grandparent if at all. A fathers sister is not generally considered an aunt nor is a mothers brother considered an uncle, instead they are viewed as possible future in-laws since cross cousin marriage is accepted. A mans brother-in-law is generally just considered his brother as is a woman's sister-in-law* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

9.2. Sororate, levirate:

9.3. Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9.3.1. *Cousin terminology is Crow type* (Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: an Ethnographic Reconstruction*, 1954)

10. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

On top of ritualistic cannibalism, the Kaska Indians tend to be ruthless people despite the fact that they seldom go to war. In battle they scalp their victims, once they win they spike living children on poles that they then stand on end like a flag pole. They force the women to marry into their tribe, men are rarely taken prisoner but are allowed to marry into the tribe. After a victory the warriors head back to their people with the women and yet more children and kill a child every time they stop to make camp.

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