

## **1. Description**

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

The Assiniboine speak Assiniboine, which is a Dakota Branch of the Siouan Stock

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

ISO 639-3: asb

### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

2090, 1217 In United States

2090, 873 In Canada

### 1.4 Brief history:

The Assiniboine form a member of the Dakota branch of the Siouan Stock. The reason they separated from the Dakota traces back two a quarrel between two women over the apportionment of a buffalo. In the Mid 17<sup>th</sup> century it seems the Assiniboine inhabited the area of the Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg but over time they traveled northwest to as far as the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan rivers.

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

Unknown

### 1.6 Ecology:

Buffalo hunters, that serves as their primary food source. They are a traveling and Tepee “esque” using tribe.

### 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

At the highest believed recorded population believed to be 10000. That number has since dwindled. The mean village size could be somewhere around 250 lodges in a tribe. The home range was a massive expanse of Canada and the United States.

## **2. Economy**

### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

in early historical times they seemed to have picked wild rice, but the most carbohydrates they get are from roots, seeds, the inner bark of Cypress trees, and in desperate situations pulverized insects left to dry in the sun

### 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Large game seems to be main food source. Buffalo meat was the most prominent protein / lipid source.

### 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Bow and Arrows are the most commonly used weapons, although guns are also used. Traps were the way the Assiniboine had the most successful buffalo hunts. The community would build a large pin, about an acre by and acre, and herd a large group of buffalo and then they would pick off the trapped buffalo.

### 2.4 Food storage:

Unknown.

### 2.5 Sexual division of production:

Men traditionally hunt, women sometimes gather vegetables and tree bark. There are also accounts of a pottage being made by old women mincing with their teeth and spitting into the cauldron.

### 2.6 Land tenure:

### 2.7 Ceramics:

Not seen

### 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

In the event of a large buffalo kill the amount of meat was divided up amongst the families ad the biggest families go the biggest meat, but the hunter was give his choice of cuts first for his own family.

### 2.9 Food taboos:

The only food taboo I found was in preparation of food. Women traditionally used a spit and turned the food over a fire. Men on the hunt however would boil their food over a makeshift pit for boiling of meat. They would dig a circular excavation and line it with skin on the bottom, they then put meat and water onto the skin and used hot rocks to make the water boil. The women had said they never employed that method of cooking.

### 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

Had Canoes, and were capable of river canoeing, but they weren't a huge aquatic tribe.

## **3. Anthropometry**

### 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

Male: 5'8

Female:5'2

### 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

Male: unknown

Female: unknown

## **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

### 4.1 Age at menarche (f):

Early Teenage years

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

- no information on multiple births
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):  
None was specified, but I am left to deduce that a few years would go between births so as to keep pop from being overcrowded.
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:  
Polygamy was frequent. No specific percentage could be found, but multiple wives to one man weren't uncommon.
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:  
The suitor would send a messenger, with two horses, to the home of the woman and the gift would be accepted by the brother. If the gift was satisfactory then the bride's family would prepare a feast and ask for gifts from the family to give to the suitor. The woman would be led to the suitors home and would give him a meal, several pairs of moccasins and whatever other gifts the family had offered. The next day the boy's family would go to the home of the Girl and give their gifts to her family. After the gifts were exchanged the boy may come for the girl whenever he pleased. They would also get their own lodge together as soon as possible.
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns:  
If a man's wife died he had pre-emptive right to her younger sister, and if the girl was still immature then she was kept for him until puberty.
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:  
A Bride was not allowed to speak to her father-in-law. A Husband is not allowed to speak to either of his bride's parents. It seems that the husband could speak with his father-in-law if he brought him a scalp, it seems the ban of talking to the mother in law is unbreakable.
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:  
Homosexuality wasn't specifically mentioned, but there were berdaches (men who assume the role of women). These men traditionally never married and mingled freely among men and women. Although there is one Stoney tale where a berdache married a man, he performed both and man and woman's work.
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):  
More endogamy than non, families seem to be close to one another
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?  
Only one father was recognized, although a god father was who would give the child it's name.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")  
Unspecified but left to assume that she was seen as the mother of the child.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?  
Not believed to be incremental
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape  
Unknown
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)  
All were fine, but first cousins weren't allowed to marry.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?  
No, women were faithful to their husband
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring  
In the event of a big kill a certain amount of extra meat was always given to the master of the pound as he always divided the meat up evenly between tents without taking any for himself.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?  
Elder kin, such as in-laws of the father would step in to help the father raise his children
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females  
number unknown
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades  
No evidence of Couvades. Although during a birth the father was expected to leave the room or else the baby wouldn't come.
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)  
Most marriages seem to be between two people that're the same age.
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?  
As mentioned above, Brides never spoke to their father-in-law and husbands never held a conversation with the father or mother-in-law
- 4.24 Joking relationships?  
There were no specific names for joking friendships, but there is evidence that communities were very friendly with one another as there are many games the Assiniboine played that required communities worth of people.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?  
There is an in depth process described above, but not one specific ceremony.
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

The name was often given by a near relative of the infant who had a supernatural revelation of the name to be given to the child. If not in the matter a Brave man was enlisted (usually the price of a horse or saddle) to name the child after one of his martial exploits. The parents would host a feast; the Brave would stand and tell the story of his adventure then name the child. He would then pass the child around the circle with everyone calling the child by its new name until it reached its mother.

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

There is no preference for in or out of a community

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

Marriages weren't arranged.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

Unknown

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

A man (leader of the war party) would have a vision of himself fighting man warriors and winning with few casualties, if he could explain his dream well enough and warriors agreed to come then they would set out. They would stop for times and the leader would sing at each stop a ceremonial song, on the last stop they would sleep. The leader would supposedly have another dream, a sort of conformation of the first. The party would go forth the next day as the leader would tell the party where they shall meet the enemy.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

Dreams, revenge, raids and theft of crops, horses, and equipment.

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

Roughly six societies, rather diverse but seemed to come from similar heritage, and they were most often at war with the Dakota, Crow, and Blackfoot tribes.

4.18 Cannibalism?

No cannibalism was recorded

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Vary from between 100 people to 230 people in village

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

Capable of moving but seemed to have spread out vastly and remained in claimed areas.

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

There was a chief (chosen dependent on his personal characteristics, such as bravery) who would set up his lodge in the center of the circle. It was only at certain times that a chief was present though, mainly the march and the great tribal hunt.

5.4 Post marital residence:

unknown

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

During the march there were outposts of people made to keep watch and the guard was changed every day.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

None specifically stated, but we can assume tribes were friendly amongst their own ranks due to all the games that are associated with the Assiniboine

5.8 Village and house organization:

Men would hunt for the large game, wives and women and berdache would take care of the village,

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

More based on the location, the chief had his tent in the center of the circle from there on out it was ranked as importance how close your tent was to the center, the more important you were the closer you got to the center.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

Lodges were floored with several layers of spruce needles, these supported the bedding.

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

A few of the clan names (translated) include: The Roamers, Northern people, People of the woods, Buffalo-hip, Red-Butt, Fat-smokers, Rock-people, Paddlers, Canum Mentulae, Speakers of the Cree (Half-Crees), Mountain people, and Those Who Stay Alone.

5.12 Trade:

Most often a service shall be given for another service or a share of meat from a good hunt.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

They appear fairly egalitarian; they share a lot and offer up their services to one another.

### **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Two classes of medical practitioners, the root-doctor and the holy man. The holy man is the classic Shaman; he can lay a curse onto another being in another tribe even, but it will cause an equal amount of pain to him or someone near him. The root-doctor was strictly a commercial business; they are not looked on highly.

#### 6.2 Stimulants:

Tobacco and the smoking of medicine pipes, but no mention of anything other than tobacco.

#### 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Birth: shortly after birth the ears of the child are pierced, there is little ceremony to this event

Puberty: When a girl has her first period she tells her mother and then sits in a sweat-lodge for four days. At the close of the period she goes to the river to bathe, her old clothes are burned and she is given new ones to wear.

Death: When a man dies his relatives wash his body, combed and braided his hair, and painted his face. Some say the men are buried sitting up and facing the east, some say they are buried with the feet always pointing west. There was no mention of how a woman's death was handled.

#### 6.4 Other rituals:

The Horse Dance: A religious ceremony akin to the sun dance

The Sun Dance: Another Sacred dance, but it can only be performed by those who have the power to do so. Not a literal power, but they have been granted the insight, at this time only one man can perform it.

Fool Dance: A ceremony that comes from a story, happens annually. Men dance in foolish outfits and masks in honor of the old fool story.

Grass Dance: The dance of the Soldier organization.

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation):

The creation story comes from a collection of many small stories called "the trickster" stories. To paraphrase Iktomi made a clay man at the origin location for the Assiniboine, This man soon grew lonely and wanted company so Iktomi made a woman from the clay man's bone and that was how life was created.

#### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

a stoney flute and drum, very crude but effective instruments. The flute was made of wood and the drum was made of deer skin and hoof.

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

#### 6.8 Missionary effect:

little to none.

#### 6.9 RCR revival:

The Assiniboine are a part of the Lewis and Clark, and with a want to preserve that history so too has come the interest in reviving or reinvigorating the ceremonies of the Assiniboine.

#### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

The soul would travel to the spirit world after death. Dogs were sometimes killed along with a person so they could have a companion with them in the spirit world.

#### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

No evidence of this

#### 6.12 Is there teknonymy?

No evidence

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

Iktomi can loosely be considered the creator, he created the many from clay and the woman from him and life began there and the spirits guided the clay man and his wife along as they created the Assiniboine people.

### 7. Adornment

#### 7.1 Body paint:

Eyes were surrounded by daubings of white clay, rest of face was painted red or reddish brown and blackened to indicate the killing of an enemy.

#### 7.2 Piercings:

Ear-beads were the terms for piercings and they were very common

Babies had their ears pierced very young actually.

#### 7.3 Haircut:

Men: Sometimes wore their hair very long sometimes splicing together several lengths

Women: Married women let hair grow at random and sometimes even over the eyes.

#### 7.4 Scarification:

Two parallel black stripes were tattooed from the neck down the breast.

#### 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

ear-beads and bear-claw necklaces were very common

#### 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

#### 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Men: Round white wolf-skin caps, feathers, and a skin band for headgear. Winter shirts were decorated with a rosette in the front and the back while the sleeves were adorned with human hair.

Women: Mountain goat skin, ornamented with porcupine quills and elk teeth. Lower edge of garment was decorated with bells and deer hooves

7.8 Missionary effect:

None

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

**The remaining tribes still practice much of the similar adornment styles for special events and ceremonies.**

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system:

Mitimnon – my older brother (woman speaking)

Mitangin – my older sister (man speaking)

Misu – Younger brother (man or woman speaking)

Mitanke – Younger sister (man speaking)

Mitang – My younger sister (woman speaking)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

During a marriage the man only sleeps with his wife / wives. In the event of the wife's death the husband has first go at her little sister, as stated earlier.

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

**The Assiniboine are majorly similar to the Cree, and they're very closely related to the Dakota line.**

**9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

## **Numbered references**

1. Anthropological papers of the American Museum of Natural History Volume IV. The Assiniboine. New York: published by board of trustees 1910.