

Authors Note

Suitable for Ages 14+

This story is to be told with respect. It is not just a story but part of a noble culture. Oral traditions create the most amazing stories, it is almost a crime to trap them on a page. Please take the time to learn it and recite it without paper, it will change with each re-telling; this is fine, it is a living story let it run wild and grow!

The Stick Indians

A long-time ago in the far North there lived a people. A proud people, a noble people, tall and handsome they lived in harmony with the forests and the creatures within them.

Then a winter arrived the likes of which had never been seen. The ground froze hard, the very trees cracked in the frost, the animals moved south and many of the nations of the forest moved with them. But the proud people of the North remained in the home of their ancestors, the forest was their protector; the spirits of the trees would not allow any harm to come to them.

But this winter went on and on, seemingly without end; the food supplies, so carefully stored away in the summer, began to run out. The people began to starve; as they starved the weakest began to die, then the stronger, until even the strongest brave began to succumb. Eventually only a few remained, the very existence of this noble people seemed to be ebbing away.



They gathered, shivering, in a crude shelter to decide what to do; no one dared to speak the words that they were all thinking. There was no shortage of meat, it lay in abundance around the village, frozen but with a small fire it could be thawed. Many objected, it went against the very laws of nature, it was against everything their ancestors had taught them and not even the beasts of the

forest behaved this way. But the hunger gnawed at their souls as well as their bodies and reluctantly, and with fear of the path they had chosen, they submitted to it.

The meat from their friends and families sustained them through the endless storms; it restored their strength, but it consumed the last scraps of their souls.

Eventually the sun's warmth began to lift the icy grip of winter, a handful of survivors emerged from the white desolation but they were changed beyond all recognition. Short, thin and drawn, their eyes bulged above their hollow cheeks, their fingernails grew long and hard and their teeth had become sharpened yellow fangs. The Moose began to return as did the Beaver but this fresh meat would not satisfy their appetites; they wanted, nay they craved, human flesh!



And, as the animals returned, so did the other nations. One night the people were walking through the forest, when they heard a sound. Listening carefully, they heard it again; it was a whistle. It came from a hunting party of another nation, they carried a huge deer between them, enough meat to sustain them for weeks but it wasn't the freshly killed beast that made them drool; it was the men that carried it.

Falling upon them without weapons, crazed with a lust for human flesh they, they tore at skin with their sharp fingernails, pulled at sinews with their teeth and lapped blood from the forest floor like dogs. And so it went on; the nations of the forest began to dread and fear these abominations, they could not conceive that they might be humans, they could only have been spawned from some evil darkest unknown regions so they began to call them "The Stick Indians."

And whilst the fresh supply of human derived protein sustained them the people realized that they had a problem; they were not immortal, and they were unable to breed. Troubled by their dwindling

numbers they went to seek the advice of a skin walker. Once he was a wise and noble medicine man but he murdered his own brother and chose to take the witchery way.

They laid their problem bare before him. He muttered to himself then howled like a dog before transforming himself into a wolf and disappearing into the black night. After three long nights he returned, and something fell from his mouth; it was the hand of an unborn child.

And so, the path was laid before them, for the survival of the people their children must be torn from the bellies of their human mothers before they are able to take their first natural breath.

This tale should be told with caution, these are not creatures to be spoken of lightly or in jest and most importantly remember this:

Never whistle in the woods after dark!

Reflection

The stories of the Stick Indians are not well documented, it is not something that is talked about. Cultures that rely on oral traditions don't just tell stories to entertain, the word Folklore means folk teaching. Clearly this story teaches against the dangers of cannibalism.

You might ask, were the people who told these stories so barbaric that they needed to warn themselves against this danger. No is the answer, but the environment in which they live can be cruel and unforgiving.

In 1845 an expedition to find the North West Passage lead by British Explorer Captain Sir John Franklin became stranded on Beechey Island in the far North of Canada. There is strong evidence that the survivors resorted to cannibalism. Just a year later, in the winter of 1846-47, a group of American Pioneers known as the Donner Wagon Party became trapped by snow in the Sierra Nevada and resorted to eating their own dead.

Cannibalism is not the preserve of the un-civilised, when all other hope is gone then... well who knows.

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An attempt to profit from my time and toil,

Will surely make me seethe and boil

and so to compensate the hurt

I'll instruct my lawyer to take your shirt

and for each pound you've made I'll seek three.

To help the sick so mote it be...