

**NEW WORDS:**

legendary  
generation  
segments  
unearthed  
dismounted  
picketed  
purify  
flood stage  
religious  
amazement  
emerged  
kidney  
brisket

**THE SKULL STORY**

**The Skull Story and Ghost Woman**

Developed by the Blackfeet Tribe

**GEOGRAPHICAL AREA:** The Plains Region

**STORY TYPE(S):** Indian Values

**Summary:**

This is the true story of how a skull helped some Blackfeet hunters get buffalo meat for their people. The hunters had trouble finding any buffalo until they came to a river near flood stage. On the opposite bank they saw seven buffalo but decided it was too dangerous to cross. While standing there, one hunter unearthed a human skull which he painted in a sacred manner. When he placed it in the water it floated across and drove the buffalo toward them. The hunters easily shot six of them, leaving the seventh for the skull spirit which had helped them.

Within this story respect is shown for the dead. Though only a skull is unearthed, it is respected for the spirit of the dead person it represented. Some tribes leave food, water and tobacco for such spirits to show that they are not forgotten and are still honored.

**Teacher Guided Activities:**



1. Discuss common practices for honoring the dead. What is done on Veterans Day or Memorial Day and why? Have students speculate on why such practices exist.

Ask students to speculate on why the hunters did not kill the seventh buffalo? Was that a good thing to do? Why or why not?



2. Have students locate articles where tribes are currently working towards restoration of burial grounds, the return of bones of ancestors from museums or the restoration or return of ceremonial objects from museums.

Discuss why these activities are important to Indian people. What do the articles say? (See *Akewasane* Notes or *Wassaja* or other local Indian newspapers.)

**Student Activity Card(s):**

**See Circles in Harmony Activity Card (5A-5B).**

Indian people because of the dependence on their immediate environment are keenly aware of the cycles in nature. There has been a conscious effort to restore what has been taken from nature and not to waste things. Using this card have students list as many circles or cycles as possible which may be seen in nature.

Discuss what a food chain is and have students give different examples.