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Tribal Affiliation Presented: Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Lakota)

Introduction: This lesson takes a look at one way the Lakota People have created equilibrium in their culture and people.

Cultural Objective: Students will learn about the White Buffalo Calf Woman and how she supported the Lakota people by bringing them the Chanupa.

Cultural Information:

At one time, the buffalo was the main food source for the Lakota people. From the buffalo, Lakota people used the hide to make tipis, clothing, blankets, and moccasins. All parts of the buffalo were used, even the buffalo chips were used. All of the meat from the buffalo was harvested and what wasn't eaten fresh was *gablá* (dried), and stored and carried in *parfleche* (container/bag), also made from the buffalo hide.

When the white people came and hunted the buffalo, mainly for its hide and tongue, they drastically diminished the buffalo population. Another reason the buffalo population was decimated was the white man knew without the buffalo, the Indian people would starve. Buffalo became hard for the Lakota people to find. Because of this, the people were starving.

Because the people were starving, they prayed for help. Tunkasila heard their prayers and he sent White Buffalo Calf Woman. White Buffalo Calf Woman came and presented herself to the people. She carried a sacred *Chanupa* (pipe) with her which she gave to the people. This is the pipe which is held by the Pipe Keeper for the Lakota People, Chief Arvol Looking Horse on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Reservation in South Dakota.

White Buffalo Calf Woman taught the people how to use the pipe, how to pray, and she taught them songs. With this new knowledge, the people began to use the sacred pipe in prayer and ceremony. The use of the sacred pipe helped the Lakota people to begin to restore themselves and to begin to regain their balance, it even helped bring the buffalo back.

In 1978 the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed. The Act gave the Lakota people the right to practice their religion, access sacred sites, use their sacred objects, and freely practice ceremonies and traditional rites. Because of this, more Lakota freely and openly practiced their Lakota Religion. Today some people continue to carry pipes and practice the teaching of the White Buffalo Calf Woman.

The ***chanupa*** can help people to keep a balance. A pipe carrier holds a great deal of responsibility; they must care for the pipe, live a life that is clean and must be respectful of themselves and others. The pipe can help people stay balanced and more focused in their life, to continue to say prayers daily. It helps people to take care of their family and others, it can give strength. It gives a belief system of honor and respect. It gives a path to follow in a way that creates equilibrium.

1) What significance is the Chanupa to the Lakota People?

2) What brings balance to your life?

Lakota Terms:

Chanupa: pipe

gabila: to cut meat so it can be dried

Parfleche: a hide, especially a buffalo's hide, with the hair removed, dried by being stretched on a frame in a manner traditional among some North American Indian peoples. Also, an article, bag made with the use of parfleche.