

Unit 2 Document Set 3: The Little River Women Society

Frances Densmore's typed notes

Mrs, Holding Eagle

In Olden times there were certain Spirit Women who lived in every hill and timber. All these Spirit women got together (made up a society or ceremony) and planned to take it to (the) Mandan Tribe. It started on (a) bare peak 15 miles below Mandan this side (of) Eagle Nose

So started it-

(The) Eagle came along and said he wanted to join them- and have a part of the feast. He gave them each a present of a feather. Each woman wore one. Before (they) got to the village the Coyote came and said to them. If I don't belong to your society things won't go well. He gave them a song and told them to make grass wreaths. Bear came along, he wanted to join too and have part of the feast. Bear gave them a song also his claws (Bears claws) worn by two women, the leader and the one that came last.

They just made one trip next day [and] got to village.

These spirit women came to (the) village and when (they) entered. Their feet didn't touch (the) ground. They told every young maiden to get food (and help) start this Society. I bring this Society to you because you are people of (the) Missouri (River). (They) took (the) things (the maidens brought) with (them into a) certain lodge sat around (and) ate. Because they were spirit women they didn't talk aloud, just whispered. Took off their head-dresses [of] grass and laid them down. Then had a feast and taught songs to (the) maidens, and sang all songs given by (the) Spirits. They were easy to learn, so they learned them all at that one time.

The Spirit women showed the head-dresses to the maidens, and told them to make some like them. These Spirit women had snakes around their heads, but said instead of snakes you can braid grass and wear it in your head-dress. When they had given this Society to (the) maidens they went away. Since (that time) the older women give it to the younger women

She (probably Mrs. Holding Eagle) was one who wore (a) bear necklace at time of Ceremony, the older women made head dresses and sold it -with right to make and sell others—at value of horse or buffalo robe, the head dress was thrown away after the ceremony but the buyer could make a new one next year.

Mrs. Holding Eagle sold this right to Mrs. Sitting Crow

**When they came in (to the village) Often they went around in (the) open space in (the) middle of the village making head-dresses and singing**

**Bear -**

**Shell - said**

**Coyote- said I am**

**When they came where Bear and Eagle came to Creek, and a shell said I want to join too So (they) used shell for (a) necklace. Green water Snake wanted to join, which was reason for braided head-dress.**

**2 -only- wore shell ,but were not same who wore-'1 bear claws**

**After two villages united in the Ceremony there were four wearing shell and claws**

**The right to wear claws and shell was handed, down by an older woman to her Neice - never daughter -**

**She joined the Society when 16 ( Mrs. Holding Eagle ? )**

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