

Explain the importance of the women to the survival of the Plains Indians on the Great Plains

Key question: How did Plains women help the Plains Indians survive on the Great Plains?

Sentence starter: Without the Plains Indians women the tribe would not have been able to ...

Key information

Polygamy was important because it meant that women without husbands still had a role.

Women were allowed to vote and own property in the Sioux tribe.

Women controlled the tipi. They made it, owned it, put it up and moved it. It could be taken down and packed for transport in ten minutes.

Women were responsible for feeding and clothing their families. They processed buffalo hides and meat turning them into products that could be traded.

Separation of roles was very important to the survival of the Indians because it meant that their labour (work) was used very efficiently.

Native American Indians practiced polygamy (they had more than one wife), because many men died in the struggle to survive, so there was an excess of women to be cared for.

Women were responsible for gathering berries and plants for food, creating clothes and crafts.

It was believed that women could easily contact the spirit world - this gave them status. They had visions that helped the tribe make decisions.

Men and women had set roles and that could not change. Everyone needed to perform their own specialised roles with great skill if the tribe was to survive.

From puberty girls received training on how to contact the spirit world.

Women were valued as bearers of children. Children were considered sacred by the Sioux and were given a lot of attention. Children were seen as the future of the band.

Polygamy was a way of making sure that all the women were cared for. If a woman's husband was killed in warfare or hunting then she would remarry. Divorce was allowed. Either partner could declare a marriage over, but the woman kept the tipi.

Women could not be chiefs and a successful man could have more than one wife in the Plains Indian society.

Women were valued in the Plains Indian society.

Puberty and menstruation began the start of this process, and young girls received training on how to contact the spirit world.