

Wednesday, September 26, 1804

Unit: Politics & Diplomacy (Elementary and Middle School)

On Wednesday, September 26, Black Buffalo and his soldiers were still on the keelboat. The Sioux people were lined upon the riverbank, watching the boat as it sailed up the river. Acting much more friendly than he had the day before, Black Buffalo asked the captains to stop the boat at his village. The captains decided to try once more to have a friendly meeting with the Teton Sioux. Captain Lewis went with Black Buffalo to the Sioux village while Clark remained on board to guard the boat.

Clark became anxious after about three hours when Captain Lewis did not return to the boat. He sent Gass to find out what was happening. Gass returned with word that Captain Lewis was fine and that the Sioux were planning a big feast and entertainment for the Corps for that evening. Black Buffalo asked the captains to spend one more night with the Sioux, and they agreed.

That Wednesday night, Black Buffalo and his tribe held a great feast and celebration ceremony for the Americans. Fires blazed, roasted buffalo meat was passed around, the chief made a speech, and, using a special pipe, he conducted a solemn pipe ceremony. Sioux musicians and dancers performed around the fire while the Americans sat in the circle in awe. The captains were very tired by midnight and told the chiefs it was time for sleep. The chiefs returned with the captains to spend another night on the keelboat.

Now read from William Clark's journal, in his own words, what happened that day.

Note: Spelling and punctuation have been edited below for easier reading for elementary students. The original spelling is available from the journal entry for Wednesday, September 26, 1804, by William Clark.

William Clark
Wednesday, September 26, 1804

..Set out early and proceeded on and came (by the wish of the chiefs) to let their squaws and boys see the boat...great numbers of men, women, and children on the banks viewing us....

Capt. Lewis and five men went on shore with the chiefs, who appeared to make up & be friendly. After Captain Lewis had been on shore about 3 hours, I became uneasy for fear of deception and sent a sergeant to see him and know his treatment...[The sergeant]

reported [that the Indians] were friendly and they were preparing for a dance this evening....

[The chiefs] made frequent solicitations for us to remain one night only and let them show their good disposition towards us. We determined to remain. After the return of Capt. Lewis, I went on shore. On landing I was received on an elegant painted buffalo robe and taken to the village by six men and was not permitted to touch the ground until I was put down in the grand council house on a white dressed robe.... I was met by about 10 well dressed young men who took me up in a robe, highly decorated and sat me down by the side of their chief on a dressed robe in a large council house. This house formed a circle of skins well dressed and sewn together. Under this shelter about 70 men sat forming a circle in front of the chiefs, a place of 6 feet [in] diameter was clear and the pipe of peace raised on sticks under which there was swans down scattered. On each side of this circle [were] two pipes and two flags (of Spain & the flag we gave them) in front of the Grand Chief. A large fire was near in which provision were cooking in the center ...about 400 lbs of excellent buffalo beef as a present for us. Soon after they set me down, the men went for Captain Lewis and brought him in the same way and placed him also by the chief. In a few minutes an old man rose and spoke...[He] approved what we had done and informing us of their situation requesting us to take pity on them and which was answered. The great chief then rose with great state [speaking] to the same purpose as far as we could learn and then with great solemnity took up the pipe of peace and after pointing it to the heavens the four quarters of the globe and the earth, he made some dissertation, lit it and presented the stem to us to smoke. When the principal chief spoke with the pipe of peace, he took in one hand some of the delicate parts of the dog which was prepared for the feast and made a sacrifice to the flag. After a smoke had taken place...we were requested to take the meal.. (then put before us the dog which they had been cooking & pemmican & ground potato in several platters (Pemmican is buffalo meat dried or jerked and pounded & mixed with grease raw. Dog [the Sioux] – think [is] a great dish used on festivals. [I eat] little of dog [but] the pemmican and potato are good.) We smoked for an hour [till] dark & all was cleared away. A large fire [was made] in the center

About 10 musicians playing on tambourines (made of hoops & skin stretched) long sticks with deer and goats hoofs tied so as to make a gingling noise....Men began to sing & beat on the tambourines. The women came forward highly decorated in their way with scalps and trophies of war of their fathers, husbands, brothers, or near connections and proceeded to dance the war dance which they done with great cheerfulness until about 12 o'clock, when we informed the chiefs that they were fatigued and then retired and we, accompanied by 4 chiefs, returned to our boat. They stayed with us all night.