Sitting Bull Essay, Research Paper

In 1831 an indian child was born, of the Sioux Nation and the Hunkpapa Tribe. His father, Sitting Bull, and mother, Her-holy-door, did not name him Sitting Bull, he was named Jumping Badger. He was never called Jumping Badger, he was called Slow because of his willful and deliberate ways.

When Slow was fourteen he insisted on going along with the adult warriors into battle. Usually the untrained youths were errand boys while learning about battle conditions. Slow, screaming a war cry, jumped into the battle when he saw a Crow splitting away from the main battle and knocked him from his horse, earning his first coup. Another warrior swarmed in for the kill and counted the second coup. This coup elevated Slow to the status of Warrior. His father performed the necessary rituals and renamed him Sitting Bull, taking the name Jumping Bull for himself..

When Slow was freed from the cradle board he was instructed in the warrior ways by his father and uncle, Four Horns. They spent hours each day sharpening his riding and shooting skills. Success in the two basic roles – war and hunting – depended on the ability to maneuver a speeding pony in tight circumstances and the swiftness and accuracy of launching arrows from a bow. Slow was reared to excel in both. By his tenth year, Slow had absorbed the traditions and customs of war and the hunt, but like the other kids he played the games they loved because they were fun and because they taught them how to win, which was important for a warrior. Slow was taught from earliest childhood about the four top indian qualities: bravery, fortitude, generosity, and wisdom. Bravery came first, and war honor were carefully judged. The warrior who most fearlessly risked his life earned the admiration of all the people and received the most cherished honors. First coup (striking an ene!

my with a coup stick) showed more daring than slaying. A warrior who had counted first coup, (or second or third) bragged about it. They had to have it witnessed, and was given an eagle feather to wear in his hair as a badge of honor. The best warriors only wore one or two feathers on a daily basis and wore their full bonnets (some warriors had bonnets with feathers clear down to their heels) for formal ceremonies.

Sitting Bull and Light Hair, his first wife, had one son who died at the age of four. He then adopted his sisters second son who was the same age. He had two daughters by his second wife, Snow-on-Her and one son by Red Woman. He was married to Snow-on-Her and Red Woman at the same time. The two women were very jealous of each other and fought all the time. Life was not pleasant in that tipi. Sitting Bull eventually threw Snow-on-Her out of the tipi. After Red Woman died, Sitting Bull allowed his sister to move in with him and adopted her older son. Still needing a wife Sitting Bull offered some of his best horses to Gray Eagle for his sister Four Robes. Four Robes wanted her sister, Seen-by-the-Nation and her two sons, to live with her. Sitting Bull agreed and also adopted these two boys. He also agreed to marry Seen-by-the-Nation. He again had two wives.

Sitting Bull and his wives lived in Tipis which were conical dwellings made of buffalo skins stretched over a framework of lodge poles. They stood with other tipis of the band near rivers or creeks. In cold weather a fire burned in the center of the tipi where cooking took place. In nice weather the fire was built outside. The women of the tipi were in charge of cooking, cleaning, and raising the children. She was in charge of the girls until they married and the boys until their voices changed. The women were not considered beneath the men. They each had jobs to do. In fact, the mother ran the tipi affairs, after all she owned the lodge and all the family belongings, not the husband.

Sitting Bull was a ‘Wichaska Wakan’, a holy man, he saw things in visions and in dreams and what he saw came true. He could predict the future. Sitting Bull understood the natural phenomena existed in every part of nature, of honoring them, fearing them, and appeasing them with elaborate ceremonies and individual rites and taboos.

Sitting Bull’s horsemanship in battle was awesome. Bareback he could lunge to one side or another flattening himself, dodging arrows, and making the smallest target possible by gripping the horse’s mane with his hands and the trunk with his legs. He could even five a trade musket or pistol from this position.

Sitting Bull was named tribal chieftain in 1957 after being nominated by four close friends at a convention of warriors at a tribal gathering. In 1868 in a radical move to save the weakening leadership, Sitting Bull’s uncle nominated him to be the supreme chieftainship of all the Lakota tribes. The post of supreme chief would cover all matter of the people, including authority over all decisions of war and peace. While some did not agree, Sitting Bull was named Supreme Chieftain.

In a battle of wills over Sitting Bulls’ Ghost Dancing at the Antelope settlement, an order was given to arrest Sitting Bull. The arrest order was made because it was known that Sitting Bull wanted to travel to other territories, and as the Calvary was afraid he would cause more uprisings and problems, they wanted to keep him in one place. On December 15, 1890 as Sitting Bull was sleeping on his pallet in his small cabin the police broke into his home and dragged him out. They were so nervous about approaching the famous Sitting Bull that they mistreated him and shoved him out the door stark naked. A crowd had now gathered around the police. As Sitting Bull was pushed towards the waiting horses the crowd went wild. People cursed the police, and shouted “You shall not take our Chief”. The police tried to keep order. Suddenly Catch-the-Bear shot Bull Head (a policeman), as Bull Head fell he turned and shot Sitting Bull in the chest. A viscous battle then took place leav!

ing many dead and wounded.

Although Sitting Bull had fought many wars with the White Man he is probably best known for the Battle at Little Bighorn, or Custer’s Last Stand. In 1873 Custer led an expedition to explore the sacred Black Hills. His report of gold in the hills attracted gold seekers who dug up the mountains that the indians believed to be sacred, causing the indians to be angry at the white man. Making matters worse the government ordered all indians to give up their old way of life and live on the reservations. Most indians ignored or were unaware of this order. Because of this refusal to follow orders Custer along with General Terry and Colonel Gibbin and General Cook planned a three pronged attack on Sitting Bulls encampment on June 25th. The attack failed miserably, Custer failed to follow his own highly respected scouts report. Custer was told of many more indians than he could handle. The battle lasted three days. Sitting Bull in a vision at Medicine Rock on June 14th saw thi!

s victory for his people. Sitting Bull had offered a hundred pieces of skin, cut from his arms, as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit during their big Sun Dance so his people would live right before his vision.

The summation of Sitting Bulls’ importance in the Battle of Little Bighorn as written by Robert M. Utley tells us of the respect Sitting Bull commanded from all. “Sitting Bull’s significance at the Little Bighorn lay not in flaunting bravery, or directing the movements of warriors, or even inspiring them to fight. It lay rather in a leadership so wise and powerful that it drew together and held together a muscular coalition of tribes, one so infused with his defiant cast of mind that it could rout Three Stars (General Cook) and annihilate Long Hair (General Custer). Never had the Sioux and Cheyennes triumphed so spectacularly, and never would they again. For that, more than any other chief, they could thank Sitting Bull.”