

SIGN TALK of the REDSKINS



Indian days and Indian ways are changing fast! Buck McClintock, author of this article, has many friends among the tribes of the Indian nations. He caught the Indian before the changing conditions of the West have relegated beads and buckskin finally and irrevocably to the shadowland we call the "Past." And from the lips of Redskin chiefs he gleaned his information on the sign talk used between brave and brave, tribe and tribe, race and race.

A Hundred Different Dialects.

THE sign language of the Redskins was well known to the old-time plainsmen of the West. It was the means of communication between Redmen, tribes, and races. Most folks nowadays, thinking of the Indian, imagine that all Redskins spoke the same tongue. That is wrong.

There were over a hundred different dialects and languages spoken by the American Indians fifty years ago. When border fighting with Indians was an everyday occurrence in the West, when tribe and

tribe united in warfare against the invading Paleface, some means of inter-communication between tribe and tribe was necessary, and so they used the sign talk.

From Red Eagle, an educated chief of the Sioux tribe, who visited England two years ago, I learned much of the sign talk used on the plains. He greeted me by placing his hand over his heart and then moving the hand outwards to me, palm downward. He had said, in sign talk: "My heart goes out to you."

The way the Indians informed a man that



The word "horse" was brought to mind when the Indian straddled his right wrist with two forked fingers.

he lied, and that his words were not to be believed, was simple and to the point. They held forked fingers before the mouth: "He speaks with the forked tongue." When in agreement with the speaker, one finger was held out in front of the mouth: "He speaks with the single tongue."

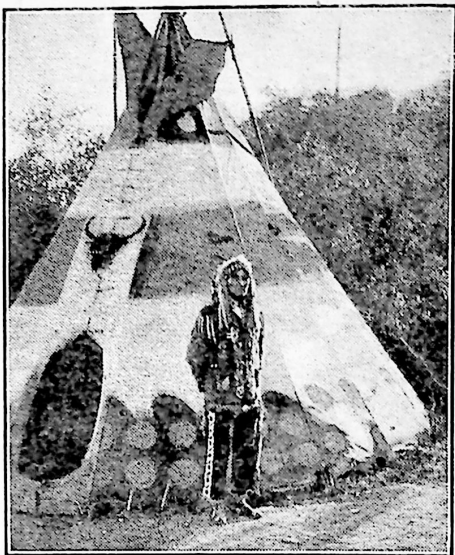
Sign talk was a silent and easy way of warning hunting parties of the approach of game. When the Indian brave crooked his right and left forefingers and held them up at the sides of his head, it was apparent that he pictured the horns of the bull buffalo. To see him straddle his right wrist with two forked fingers of his left hand brought the word "horse" to mind at once. Both arms raised above the head, fingers outstretched, visioned the branching antlers of the elk. The snake sign was the arm extended and moved slowly forward in an undulating gesture, with a sibilant hiss from the mouth.

Indians and Film Work.

A good friend of mine, who recently returned from a hike along the Mexican Border, told me



The snake sign was made by extending the arm and moving it slowly forward in an undulating gesture, with a sibilant hiss from the mouth.



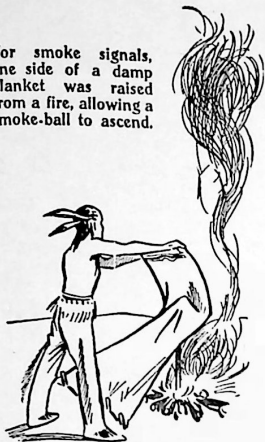
Chief Bull Child, of the Glacier Park reservation, in front of his teepee, one of the finest on the reservation, and of which he is very proud.

how, in a forgotten corner of the Mojave Desert, he rode at sundown to the door of an adobe hut, and, knocking, was greeted by—of all people!—the man who trained the Indians who acted in that epic Western film, "The Covered Wagon." His name is Lee, and he is a direct descendant of the famous Mormon, Bishop Lee, who was responsible for instigating the terrible massacres on the settlers' wagon trains in Utah last century. Be that as it may, his descendant has proved a worthy Westerner, and was chosen to undertake the very difficult task of gathering and training the Indians of seventeen



The peace sign was made by raising the right hand aloft, palm outward; or holding a blanket up before the body.

For smoke signals, one side of a damp blanket was raised from a fire, allowing a smoke-ball to ascend.



and every man learnt it in addition to his own tribal signs. An Indian passing through strange territory and meeting men of another tribe made the peace sign—raising his right hand aloft, empty palm outward; or holding his blanket up before him so that it covered his entire body.



At night, flaming arrows were used as a means of signalling.

different tribes who performed so realistically in the famous film. Lee was one of the few men in the West who could take it on—because he knew the Sign Language.

Certain signs composed a universal lingo among the Red men,

An imaginary thread drawn from the mouth expressed "life," while the cutting of the thread by a motion of the other hand indicated "death." Death was also indicated by placing the fingers of one hand against the palm of the other, held vertically, and letting the fingers slip down till below.

For long distances smoke was used. The Indian built his signal fire on some up-standing butte or hill, if such was to hand, using damp wood, so as to cause thick smoke. He sent his message in the form of smoke puffs or streamers.

It really took two to send smoke signals, though one quick man could do it at a pinch. A blanket, previously damped, and held off the flames by a stick thrust upright amid the fuel, was laid over the fire. One side of the draped blanket was lifted right up, allowing a round smoke-ball to ascend. For the smoke-streamer, the blanket was left on longer and held off longer. A long, straight streamer of smoke was allowed to rise for about half a minute; then the blanket was whipped into place for the next signal.

Three streamers close together meant "Danger." One continuous streamer told



Chief Aims Back, of the Glacier National Park reservation, all dressed up for state occasions. He uses the eagle wing as a fan.

the Indians for miles around of the approach of enemies. Three short puffs and a streamer said "Friends," and two streamers meant "I am lost."

The Flaming Arrow!

At night, when smoke could not be seen, fire arrows were used. The arrows were prepared by treating the head of the shaft with gunpowder and ground bark. The arrow was notched into the bow-string, a brave touched it off with a lighted torch, and whizz! went the flaming messenger into the night.

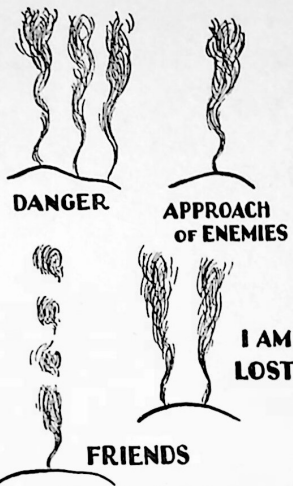
One fire arrow sent high into the sky meant "Enemies at hand." Two meant danger, and three that the danger was great.

A fire arrow shot in a diagonal direction indicated the direction as plainly as a pointing hand. Two arrows shot simultaneously said: "We shall attack!" Three arrows shot simultaneously: "We attack now!" Several arrows, shot at the same time, meant "Retreat. The enemy are too much for us."

The calumet, named after the reed from which it is made, and commonly known as the "pipe of peace," was another symbol between tribes. But if a chief refused the pipe it meant war!

Each tribe and nation had its own distinctive sign. The Sioux sign was made by placing the edge of the hand across the throat. The Arapahoes bunch the fingers of the right hand and tap their breasts with the tips, bunched fingers meaning a bunch of needles and tapping the chests meaning "The Tattooed Chests."

The Arapahoe tattoo marks, on close inspection, prove to be scar marks caused by the "Sun Dance."



For long-distance signals, smoke was used. Four smoke signals and what they meant are shown here.

A Painful Test!

EVERY young brave had to pass the "Sun Dance" test in days gone by, before he was admitted into the ranks of the warriors. The dance was a fiendish piece of torture, and it speaks volumes for Indian pluck and endurance to state that men went through it without a murmur!

A wooden skewer, about a foot long, was thrust into the fleshy part of a man's chest on one side and pushed through till it emerged on the other. To each end of the skewer was fastened a rope, and the ropes were made fast to the top of a high pole. The young

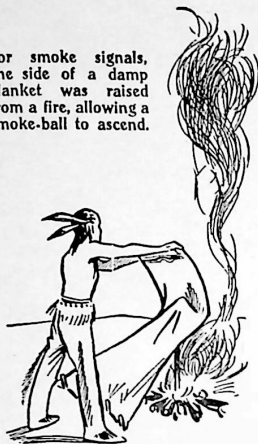
Indian then leaned backwards until he was held up by the ropes which pulled on the skewer through the flesh and skin of his chest!

All through the blazing heat of the day he moved round the pole, ever leaning back, facing the sun as it moved across the heavens! And he gained blessed relief at last when the flesh and skin gave way, and the ropes pulled the skewer free! How the tribe shouted as the Medicine Man brought gunpowder and rubbed it into the gash, darkening the scar so that it would show through life as that of the tried and proved stoic!

One sign there was which was not made with hand, limb, smoke, or arrow. It was done on horseback. If a rider, sorely wounded or needing help, desired to summon distant tribesmen, he rode backwards and forwards for a few yards across the trail. It called for instant action. The watchers knew it meant "Come to me!"

THE END

For smoke signals, one side of a damp blanket was raised from a fire, allowing a smoke-ball to ascend.



different tribes who performed so realistically in the famous film. Lee was one of the few men in the West who could take it on—because he knew the Sign Language.

Certain signs composed a universal lingo among the Red men,

and every man learnt it in addition to his own tribal signs. An Indian passing through strange territory and meeting men of another tribe made the peace sign—raising his right hand aloft, empty palm outward; or holding his blanket up before him so that it covered his entire body.



At night, flaming arrows were used as a means of signalling.

An imaginary thread drawn from the mouth expressed "life," while the cutting of the thread by a motion of the other hand indicated "death." Death was also indicated by placing the fingers of one hand against the palm of the other, held vertically, and letting the fingers slip down till they dropped below.

For long distances smoke was used. The Indian built his signal fire on some up-standing butte or hill, if such was to hand, using damp wood, so as to cause thick smoke. He sent his message in the form of smoke puffs or streamers.

It really took two to send smoke signals, though one quick man could do it at a pinch. A blanket, previously damped, and held off the flames by a stick thrust upright amid the fuel, was laid over the fire. One side of the draped blanket was lifted right up, allowing a round smoke-ball to ascend. For the smoke-streamer, the blanket was left on longer and held off longer. A long, straight streamer of smoke was allowed to rise for about half a minute; then the blanket was whipped into place for the next signal.

Three streamers close together meant "Danger." One continuous streamer told



Chief Aims Back, of the Glacier National Park reservation, all dressed up for state occasions. He uses the eagle wing as a fan.

the Indians for miles around of the approach of enemies. Three short puffs and a streamer said "Friends," and two streamers meant "I am lost."

The Flaming Arrow!

At night, when smoke could not be seen, fire arrows were used. The arrows were prepared by treating the head of the shaft with gunpowder and ground bark. The arrow was notched into the bow-string, a brave touched it off with a lighted torch, and whizz! went the flaming messenger into the night.

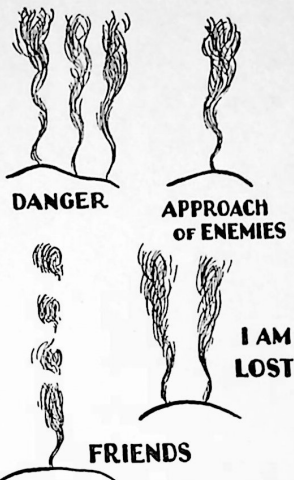
One fire arrow sent high into the sky meant "Enemies at hand." Two meant danger, and three that the danger was great.

A fire arrow shot in a diagonal direction indicated the direction as plainly as a pointing hand. Two arrows shot simultaneously said: "We shall attack!" Three arrows shot simultaneously: "We attack now!" Several arrows, shot at the same time, meant "Retreat. The enemy are too much for us."

The calumet, named after the reed from which it is made, and commonly known as the "pipe of peace," was another symbol between tribes. But if a chief refused the pipe it meant war!

Each tribe and nation had its own distinctive sign. The Sioux sign was made by placing the edge of the hand across the throat. The Arapahoes bunch the fingers of the right hand and tap their breasts with the tips, bunched fingers meaning a bunch of needles and tapping the chests meaning "The Tattooed Chests."

The Arapahoe tattoo marks, on close inspection, prove to be scar marks caused by the "Sun Dance."



For long-distance signals, smoke was used. Four smoke signals and what they meant are shown here.

A Painful Test!

EVERY young brave had to pass the "Sun Dance" test in days gone by, before he was admitted into the ranks of the warriors. The dance was a fiendish piece of torture, and it speaks volumes for Indian pluck and endurance to state that men went through it without a murmur!

A wooden skewer, about a foot long, was thrust into the fleshy part of a man's chest on one side and pushed through till it emerged on the other. To each end of the skewer was fastened a rope, and the ropes were made fast to the top of a high pole. The young

Indian then leaned backwards until he was held up by the ropes which pulled on the skewer through the flesh and skin of his chest!

All through the blazing heat of the day he moved round the pole, ever leaning back, facing the sun as it moved across the heavens! And he gained blessed relief at last when the flesh and skin gave way, and the ropes pulled the skewer free! How the tribe shouted as the Medicine Man brought gunpowder and rubbed it into the gash, darkening the scar so that it would show through life as that of the tried and proved stoic!

One sign there was which was not made with hand, limb, smoke, or arrow. It was done on horseback. If a rider, sorely wounded or needing help, desired to summon distant tribesmen, he rode backwards and forwards for a few yards across the trail. It called for instant action. The watchers knew it meant "Come to me!"

THE END

Our Incurable Interviewer Calls On HARRY WHARTON (Captain of the Remove Form at Greyfriars)



"Trot in and take a pew!" was the hospitable reply of Harry Wharton, after I had looked round the door of Study No. 1 and explained the purpose of my visit. "Can't spare much time, I'm afraid. Always busy here, aren't we, Franky?"

A nod from the pleasant-faced Frank Nugent confirmed the statement of the Remove skipper.

"You shan't be interrupted for long," I assured him. "Now, in the first place —"

"Wharton in?" roared a hearty voice from the doorway before I could say more. "Oh, there you are! Gym. practice in five minutes, remember!"

"I haven't forgotten, Bob."

Slam!

"That was Bob Cherry," smiled Harry Wharton. "Bit noisy, but one of the very best. Now, to resume—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton, with a frown. "Roll away, old barrel! We're busy!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here! Who's going to help me with my prep.?"

"Echo answers 'who'!" chuckled Nugent. "Nobody in this study anyway, Fatty! Buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Nugent! As you're so jolly rude, I shall take good care not to buzz off now! I—— Yoooooop!"

Billy Bunter changed his mind about staying. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he had his mind changed for him. A heavy lexicon from Wharton and a fives bat from Nugent collided with him

simultaneously, and Bunter gave a roar, and decided to buzz off after all!

"Now for a little peace!" sighed Wharton. "Come in!"

An inky-fingered fag put his head round the door and burst out with:

"Wingate wants you at once, Wharton! I heard him tell North it was about the row in your dorm. last night."

Wharton groaned.

"Oh, all right, Gatty! Look here, about this interview—"

"Quelchy wants you, Wharton!" called out a stentorian voice from the passage, and Bolsover of the Remove looked in. "It's about those broken windows in the Form-room, I think."

"Oh, crikey!"

"Wharton here?"

It was a chorus from the doorway. Half a dozen rather grim-looking juniors marched in and started speaking together.

"About the Soccer team—"

"You've put in that dud Hazel—"

"You've left me out again—"

"Sure, and it's a spalpeen ye are—"

"If you don't put me in—"

"Shut up, you idiots!" hooted Wharton, putting his fingers to his ears.

"Quelchy comes first!" grinned Bolsover.

Seizing a handy megaphone, I bawled into Wharton's ear:

"See you again when you've got a minute to spare—in other words, when you're no longer Form captain!"

And as I guided the Ford-Rolls back to London town, I had to admit that a Remove captain's life is not one of unadulterated bliss!