



Blackfoot

Thunder's Pipe

This happened in the long, long-ago days: A little distance from the village the children were playing at pitching tipis. They cut sticks for poles and used their blankets for lodge covers. With the children was an older girl. They were so engrossed with their play that they never noticed the sky darkening with thunder clouds, but the girl looked up when she heard a rumble of distant thunder. "Thunder, take away your clouds," she said. "Go away and I will marry you," and immediately the clouds parted and the sun shone.

Later, when the children were still at play, a tall man came to her. "Come with me," he told her. "I am Thunder, you promised to marry me." He was commanding and more good looking than any young man can ever be, and she let him wrap her in his blanket.

Thunder took her to the sky where they lived for a while, but he felt sad that she often cried to be with her mother and father again. "I will take you back," he told her. "I want you to give this sacred pipe to your father. Whenever in difficulties he should ask for help, offering up smoke and I will help. When he is old, he should give this pipe to his children, and they to their children, because for as long as it is looked after, the people will be strong and happy."

After many days had passed there was another thunderstorm. When the sun appeared again, the girl, whom everyone thought was dead, appeared, it is said, walking across the camp circle holding in front of her a large and beautifully decorated pipe. Looking straight ahead she walked to her parents' lodge. People crowded around to hear and see the pipe she had brought.

This story has come down from ancient times, which is why it is called the Longtime Pipe. Each springtime, when the first thunder is heard, the keeper of the Longtime Pipe opens the bundle in which it is kept and offers prayers, asking for blessings on the earth, the people, and the world.



