

COLORADO INDIANS – FAMILIES & CHILDREN

Families

What do these photos tell you about how indian families were like?

Julian Buck's Family

This is a photo of the Julian Buck family and some friends. Julian Buck and his wife were Ute Indians. They are standing in the back row (left and center). Their child is in the cradle board.



Julian Buck's Family

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Julian Buck was the son of Buckskin Charlie, a Southern Ute chief. Buckskin Charlie lived a long and interesting life, serving as a principal chief for fifty-six years. When he was a boy, the Utes controlled much of Colorado. As a young man, he saw Colorado settled by white miners and farmers. In his later years he watched the Utes lose most of their land. He died on a reservation in 1936, at the age of 96.

A Travois With a Wooden Cage

The woman in this photo is taking her two children on a trip. The children are riding in a wooden cage mounted on a travois.



Travois Wooden Cage

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

A travois is made of poles attached to a horse. Indians used travois to haul their belongings from one place to another. It was a comfortable way to travel across the plains.

Their Own Words

"As a little boy, I used to ride in a travois basket when the tribe moved camp. The long lodge poles were crossed over the shoulders or tied to the sides of a horse. Thus they were dragged over the country. Buffalo skins were used to stretch across between the widely gaping poles behind the horse....I have fond recollections of this kind of traveling. Many an hour I have slept in that kind of gentle bed. Roads were not needed for this kind of vehicle. A travois can be taken anywhere a horse will go, and there is never any jolting. The spring of the poles and the skin takes up all the shock."

Source: Thomas B. Marquis, Wooden Leg: A Warrior Who Fought Custer (Lincoln, 1931), p. 5.

A Family In Their Tipi

This 1905 photo shows an unidentified Indian family inside their tipi. This photo was taken on the Flathead Indian reservation in Montana. Even so, the inside of this tipi was likely typical of tipis of other Indian bands in the Rocky Mountain West.



Family in tipi

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The inside of this tipi contained most of this Indian family's household items. You can see many pillows and blankets around the edge of the tipi. You can also see coffee pots and other containers around the fire in the center of the tipi. The way Indian women put up their tipis created a draft that forced the smoke from the fire to escape out the top.

Ute Family

This Ute family and its dog are posing for a photo in front of a tipi.



Ute Family

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Dogs were favorite pets among the Utes. Each family kept at least one dog and some as many as a dozen. Some of these dogs were related to wild coyotes. Running free and feeding themselves, dogs helped keep the camp free of garbage.

A Family Around An Outdoor Oven

This photo shows an Indian family posed by an outdoor oven. Apparently, the family belonged to the San Juan Pueblo. The photo was taken at the Manitou Cliff Dwellings Museum near Manitou Springs, Colorado.



Outdoor Oven

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The oven is made of earth, but there is a shiny metal pot inside the oven. The men are wearing cotton shirts and beaded leggings. The women are wearing mantas, leggins, and mocassins. This photo was taken about 1915.

Buckskin Charlie's Family

Ute Chief Buckskin Charlie (his Indian name was Sapiah) poses here with his wife and two children. His wife's name was Emma Naylor Buck (Indian name was To-Wee). Chipeta, the widow of Ute Chief Ouray, is sitting to Sapiah's right. This photo was taken in 1911.



Buckskin Charlie's Family

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Chief Sapiah is wearing a cotton shirt and vest. On the vest you can see a medal. It was a Rutherford Hayes Indian Peace Medal, given him by that President of the United States. His wife, To-Wee is wearing a bead necklace. Behind the family is a tipi. Blankets and ceremonial headdresses cover the entrance of the tipi.

Ute Chief Severo's Family

Ute Chief Severo, his wife, and his daughter pose for a studio photograph. Severo is wearing stiped pants, a military coat, and vest, and a kerchief. His wife is wearing a print dress, a concha belt, mocassins, and a shawl. The young girl is wearing a print dress and a shawl. She is also holding a doll in a play cradleboard.



Chief Severo's Family

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Chief Severo's military jacket may have been a gift, a trophy of war, or a symbol of Severo's authority. Severo was the head of the Ute reservation police at this time. When Indians were removed to reservations, one of the powers the whites left them was policing themselves. This photo was taken in about 1897, probably in Durango, Colorado..

Children

What do these photos tell you about how Indian children grew up?

An Ute Boy On His Pony

The boy on the horse is an Ute Indian. The photo was taken around the year 1900, probably on the Southern Ute Reservation.



Ute boy

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Indian boys learned to ride horses almost as soon as they learned to walk. They spent a lot of time around horses. Their main chore was to guard their village's herd of horses. They had to warn the adults in case of raids by other Indian tribes.

Their Own Words

"We all played at living in camp. In these camps we did the things that older people do. A boy and girl pretended to be husband and wife, and lived in the lodge; the girl cooked and the boy went out hunting. Sometimes some of the boys pretended that they were buffalo, and showed themselves on the prairie a little way off, and other boys were hunters, and went out to chase the buffalo. We were too little to have horses, but the boys rode sticks, which they held between their legs, and lashed with their quirts to make them go faster."

Source: George Bird Grinnell, When Buffalo Ran (New Haven, 1920), p. 21-22., As remembered by Wikis, a Cheyenne boy.

Ute Girl

This is a photo of Mary Buck, a Ute girl. It was taken about 1900, when the Utes lived on a reservation in southern Colorado. She is holding a doll in a small cradle board.



Ute girl

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Indian girls liked to play with dolls and to build “play lodges,” pretending they were grown up. Playing helped them practice many of the skills they would need later in life.

Their Own Words

"In these larger camps, we children had much fun, playing our different games. We had many of these....Often the little girls caught some of the dogs, and harnessed them to little travois, and took their baby brothers and sisters, and others of the younger children, and moved off a little way from the camp, and there pitched their little lodges."

Source: George Bird Grinnell, When Buffalo Ran (New Haven, 1920), p. 21-22, as remembered by Wikis, a Cheyenne boy.

A Plains Indian Doll

This doll belonged to a plains Indian girl. She is wearing a muslin dress decorated with beads. Her leggings also are made of beads. The doll was made sometime after 1860.



Indian doll

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The dolls that Indian girls played with were made from materials close at hand. The doll's hair was usually made of horse hair. Its clothes were made of animal skins or, later on, of cloth. Indian dolls also were made of reeds, wood, and tree bark.

Their Own Words

"Fathers and mothers made fine toys for their children. For their little girls, Arapaho mothers made dolls dressed in perfect buckskin costumes, beaded and fringed just as our own costumes were. The tiny moccasins these dolls wore were made as carefully as moccasins for people."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 35.

Ute Boy

This is a Ute boy. He is standing on a blanket in front of a tepee. He is dressed in traditional Ute clothes. He is wearing a pipe breast plate, a beaded necklace, leggings, and beaded moccasins.



Ute boy

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Indian children wore clothes that looked like adult clothes. Boys wore shirts, leggings and moccasins made of deer skin. Girls wore deer skin dresses that looked a lot like those their mothers wore.

Their Own Words

"Fathers made bows and arrows for their sons, and made them so true that little boys could bring down squirrels or birds with them. Sometimes the boys dressed the squirrel they had shot, and cooked and ate it, and then sat around their fire telling their "buffalo story," as if they were old hunters."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 35.

Ute Girls Dressed Up

The girls in this photo are Ute Indians. They are dressed up, wearing long dresses, earrings, and bracelets. One girl's dress is made of deer skin, the other of cloth.



Ute girls

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Indian clothing styles changed over time. After the Indians began trading with whites, cloth was easier to get than deer skins. By the late 1800s, most Indian men and women wore clothing made of cloth.

Carrying Water To Camp

The child in this photo is helping a woman carry water from a river to their village.



Indian carrying water

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Girls learned how to do women's work by helping out when they were young. The girl in this was too young to carry very much water. But helping out was a good way to learn how it was done.

Their Own Words

"Because we have no schools, like the white people, we have to teach our children by telling them what to do; it is only in this way that they can learn... Their relations, therefore, talk to the children.... My grandfather was an old man, who long before this had given up the warpath. He spent most of his time in the camp, and he used to make speeches to the little and big boys, and give them much good advice."

Source: George Bird Grinnell, When Buffalo Ran (New Haven, 1920), p. 29-30. As remembered by Wikis, a Cheyenne boy.

Infants

What do these photos tell you about how Indian infants were cared for?

A Ute Mother With Her Baby

This is a photo of a Ute Indian mother and her baby. The baby is strapped to the mother's back in a cradle board.



Mother and her baby

Photo Credit: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

A cradle board was made before the baby was born. It usually was a gift from women relatives. Making the board also was a ceremony. As they worked, the women prayed that the child might have a long life.

Their Own Words

"It kept the baby safe from falls or accidents, and comfortable when he traveled. Strapped in his cradle, he learned to look at and listen to everything that went on around him, and he grew straight and strong."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 30-31.

A Ute Baby On Cradle Board

This Ute baby looks very comfortable in its cradle board. The mother probably wanted to show off the cradle board as well as her baby. It also helped keep the baby quiet while the photo was taken.



Ute baby on cradle board

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

A cradle board was a useful device. A mother could attach it to her back or hang it on her saddle when she was traveling. When she was working, she could hang it on a tree limb or stand it against a tree.

A Fancy Cradle Board

This is a fancy cradle board. It is decorated with beads in designs that look like flowers. It also has fringes.



Cradle board

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Most cradle boards were decorated. A long time ago, cradle board makers decorated them with porcupine quills. The quills were dyed with vegetable coloring. After the arrival of Europeans, they used colored glass beads to make designs.

Their Own Words

"Nearly every Arapaho mother had a carrier, or what white people call a cradle board, for her baby.... Usually the skin that covered the carrier was decorated with quill or bead designs. Sometimes a kind of veil was fastened over the top to let down as a cover for the baby's face when he needed protection from wind or sun."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 30.

Ute Children

The Ute children in this photo are standing beside a tepee. The youngest child is in a cradle board.



Ute children

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The child in the cradle board in this photo probably was old enough to walk. Toddlers as well as little babies were strapped into cradle boards. It kept them from wandering off when their mothers were too busy to watch them.