

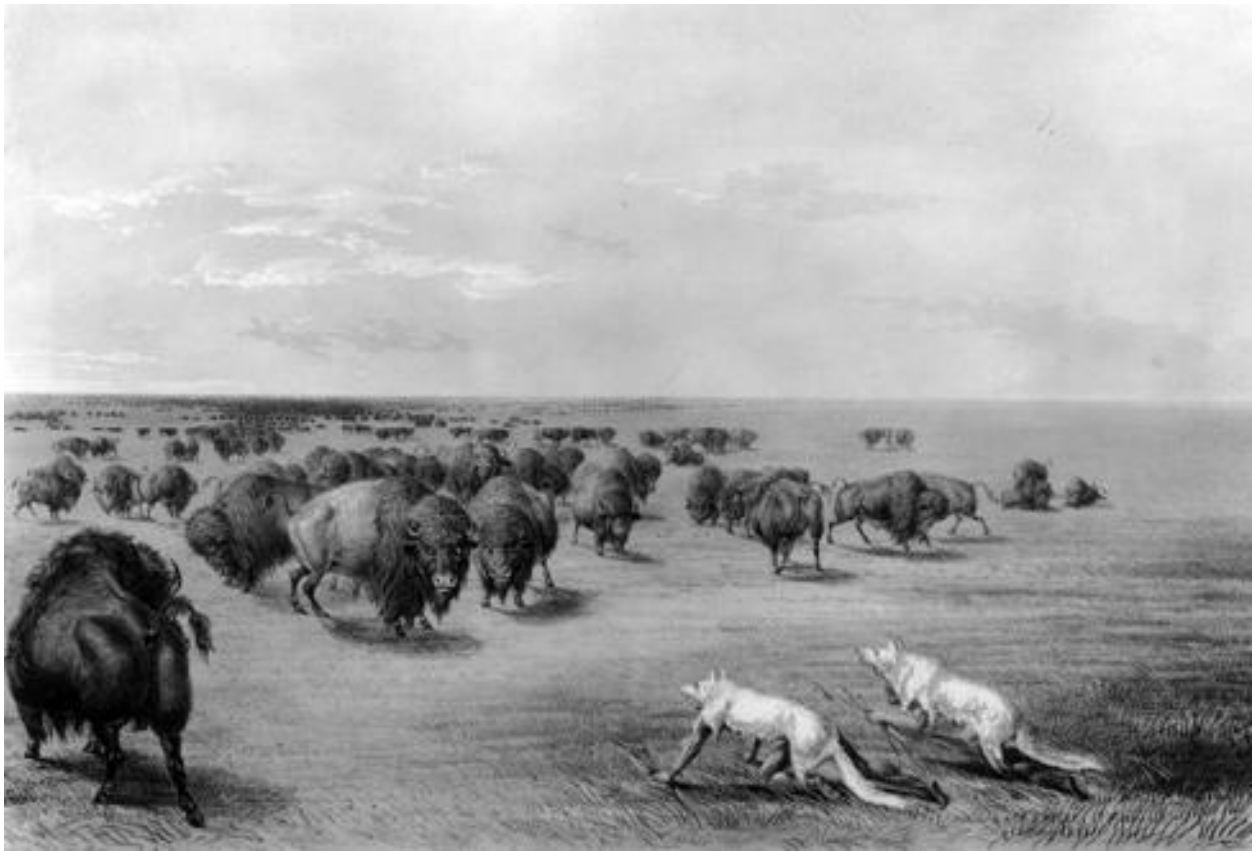
COLORADO INDIANS – WORK & TOOLS

Early Hunting

What do these photos tell you about how Indians hunted before they were introduced to horses?

Stalking Buffalo In Wolf Skins

This painting shows two Indians dressed in wolf skins crawling toward a herd of buffaloes. They are trying to get close enough to kill a buffalo with their bows and arrows. The painting was made in the mid-1800s by an American artist named George Catlin.



Stalking buffalo

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Before they had horses, Indians hunted buffalo on foot. Getting close enough to kill a buffalo with a bow and arrow was not easy. As buffalo were afraid of people, they ran away when they saw hunters

coming. One way to get close was to sneak up on a herd by dressing in animal skins. The buffalo in this painting are standing their ground, prepared to defend the herd from these "wolves."

Indian Man With Bow And Arrows

This man is holding a bow and arrows. Plains Indians did not use long bows like people today use to shoot at targets. They used short bows about 4 feet in length. These were easier to use on horseback when hunting buffalo. The man in this photo holds extra arrows in the hand gripping the bow.



Bow and arrow

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

For many years, the Indians of Colorado relied on bows and arrows as their main weapon. The bow was about 4 feet long. By holding a supply of arrows in his left hand, an Indian hunter or warrior could reload and shoot again quickly. A skilled warrior could shoot arrows almost as fast as a soldier could fire bullets with a revolver.

Their Own Words

"Bows could be made of several kinds of wood, depending on how big they were to be and the kind of arrow they were to shoot, but the Osage orangewood was the kind most commonly used because it was tough and would bend without breaking."

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

Driving Buffalo

The Indians on horseback are driving a herd of buffalo into a trap. They will drive them into the circle formed by people in the upper right corner. There they will kill the animals with bows and arrows.



Driving buffalo

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The trap in this drawing is called a "surround." Driving the animals into a circle formed by humans confused the buffalo. They ran in circles until they were exhausted and could be killed with bows and arrows. Indians used this method even before they had horses.

Hunting On Snowshoes

The Indians in this drawing are hunting buffalo during the winter. The Indians shown here are using snow shoes to walk on top of the snow. Notice that the other tools they are using are a spear and a bow and arrows.



Hunting on snowshoes

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The Indians had ways to kill buffalo without using horses. During the winter, they drove the animals into deep snowdrifts. There the buffalo sank into the snow and could not escape. Indians also could kill large numbers of buffalo at one time by driving them over steep cliffs.

Their Own Words

"For arrows we preferred only one kind of wood. This was a dogwood...the Arapaho called it Pawnee wood. The grain is so fine and the wood so hard that it will not split or break off in shooting. Even a crooked piece of Pawnee wood could be made straight when it was peeled and worked and dried."

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

Hunting with Horses

What do these photos tell you about how Indians hunted after they had horses?

Chasing Buffalo on Horseback

This painting shows Indians chasing buffalo on horseback. The hunter at the lower left is shooting an arrow at one buffalo. The hunter in the center is using a lance or spear. The picture was painted by George Catlin, an artist who traveled in the west during the mid-1800s.



Chasing buffalo

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

A hunter needed a special horse for hunting buffalo. It had to be very fast and not afraid to get close to a buffalo on the run. These “running horses” were very valuable. Men tied them up at night close to their

tepees to keep them from being stolen by enemy tribes. A man might own 10 or more horses, but only one fine buffalo horse.

Their Own Words

"Heavy as they were, the buffalo were fast and hard to kill. When a herd was on the run, it was like thunder rolling over the ground too fast and furious to stop. If a man's horse stumbled, he might be trampled to death by the running herd."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 342.

Hunting Buffalo

This drawing shows two ways Indians hunted buffalo on horseback. The Indian in the center is chasing a buffalo to get close enough to shoot it with an arrow. The hunter on the right-hand side has stopped his horse to shoot with a rifle.



Hunting buffalo

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

At first, Indians hunted buffalo only with bows, arrows, and spears. Later, Indians got guns from white traders in exchange for buffalo hides. Guns made it easier to kill more buffalo. Killing more buffalo made it easier to get more goods through trade.

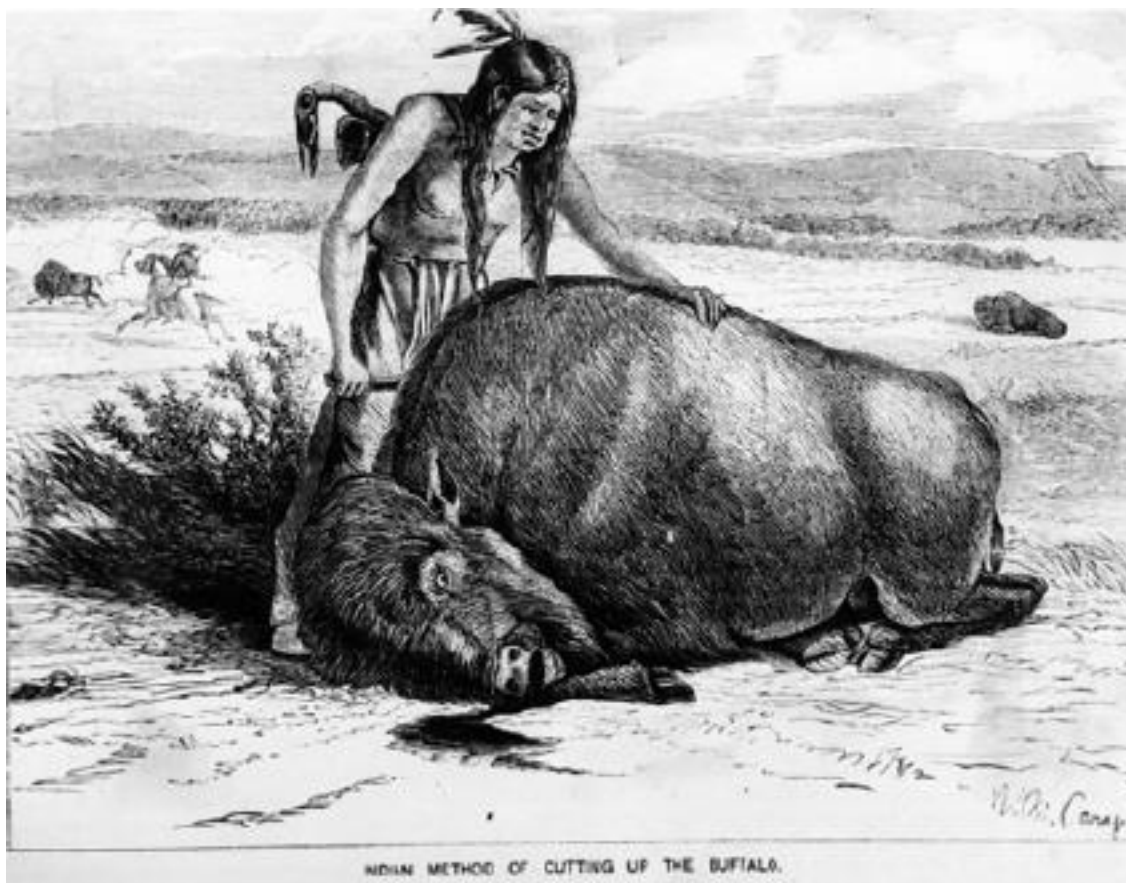
Their Own Words

"The Cheyenne and the Arapaho never needed saddles for their horses. When they rode for business, they rode bareback, lickety-split, controlling their horses with a rope in the mouth and guiding them with knee pressure."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 32.

Standing Over The Kill

After killing a buffalo, the hunter had to remove the skin from the animal. The first step was to slit the buffalo's hide down its back. The hunter in this drawing is using his knife to do this.



Standing over the kill

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The hide was a valuable part of the buffalo. It was used to make robes, bed covers or tepee coverings. Hides also could be traded for other goods the Indians needed. Hunters were expected to share the meat they brought back with others in the camp. But they could keep the hide.

Skinning A Buffalo

In this drawing, two Indians are skinning a buffalo. After slitting the hide down the back, the Indian cut it loose on both sides. Their horses are grazing in the background.



Skinning a buffalo

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Indians used the buffalo hide to bring the meat back to camp. After pulling the hide free, the hunters laid it on the ground hair-side down. Then they butchered the animal, placing the meat on the skin-side of the hide. Then they wrapped up the meat in a bundle of hide, loaded it onto a horse, and returned to camp.

Hauling Hides On A Travois

The Indian in this photo is hauling hides on a travois. A travois is made of poles attached to a horse or dog. Indians used horse-pulled travois to haul heavy loads.



Hauling hides

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The American Indians invented the travois. It was a very useful invention. A horse could carry only about 200 pounds on its back. But with a travois, it could pull 500 to 600 pounds. The Indians sometimes used tepee poles for travois. But dragging the poles along the ground soon wore them down. They preferred to use shorter poles made of hard wood such as hickory or oak.

Women's Work

What do these photos tell you about the kind of work Indian women did?

Scraping A Hide

The Indian woman in this photo is scraping an animal hide. The hide is stretched and held in place by wooden stakes. She is using a metal tool as a scraper.



Scraping a hide

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Women scraped hides to remove bits of fat and flesh left on the hide. If these were not removed, the hide would spoil. Scraping also made buffalo hides thinner and lighter. After scraping, the hide was tanned. A tanning mixture made of brains, liver, soapweed, and grease was rubbed into the hide. Tanning made it soft.

Their Own Words

"Then women had had a great deal to do when buffalo were killed. As soon as they had skinned the animal, they spread the skin on the ground and pegged it down to stretch and dry. They dressed it with bone and horn tools, to take off all the flesh and to soften it. The women spent many hours down on their hands and knees working on a hide, but when at last it was fleshed and softened and dried it made the finest and warmest kind of robe."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 28-29.

Various Tools

The tools in the photo include a scraper (bottom), an awl (middle) and an awl case (top). The steel blade in this scraper has an elk-horn handle. The blade is fastened to the handle with strips of leather. The awl is a bone sharpened at one end.



Tools

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

Indian women had many specialized tools. They used scrapers to scrape hides. Awls were used to punch holes in leather. Women also used flint, and later steel, knives; spoons made of bone; and bone needles for sewing.

Drawing Water

The women in this drawing are collecting water. They are loading the water jugs on travois pulled by dogs. The dogs will carry the water back to camp. This illustration appeared in 1870 in a magazine called Appleton's Journal.



Drawing water

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The Indians who lived on the plains usually camped beside a stream so they would have fresh water. Each morning the women went to the stream to bring water back to camp. The Cheyenne did not use water that had stood over night. They called it "dead water." It was better to drink "living water" fresh from a stream.

Their Own Words

"Whenever we camped, they [the women] carried water from the nearest stream or spring, and wood for our fires. Mornings and evenings, it was a pleasant sight to see them going in groups for water, singing and laughing and talking....Often they stopped to bathe in the stream before they came back."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 27.

Gathering Fire Wood

The women in this photo are carrying wood back to camp. For the Indians of the plains, this chore was often not easy. That was so because there was so few trees on most of the plains. Indians often used buffalo chips for fuel. Gathering buffalo chips was also women's work.



Gathering firewood

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Gathering wood for cooking and heating also was a woman's job. They went out in groups to gather sticks lying on the ground or break off dead branches from the trees. They tied these together in bundles and carried them back to camp. A small fire made of twigs would keep a tepee warm at night.

Sitting On A Travois

The woman in this photo is sitting on a travois. The travois was made of long poles with a platform in the middle. A child is standing on the platform behind her.



Sitting on a travois

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Each family's herd of horses included work horses as well as horses used for hunting and for war. These horses often belonged to the women. They used them to pull the travois when it was time move camp.

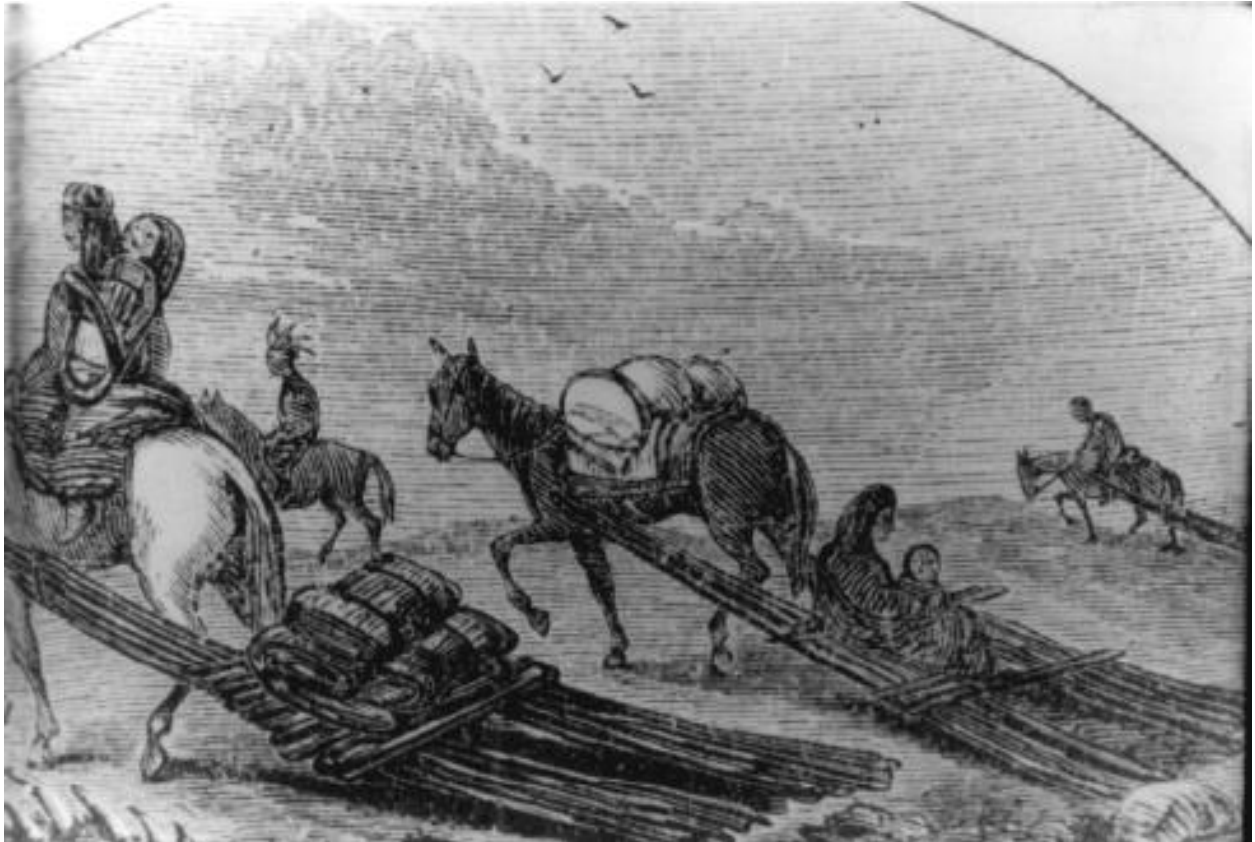
Their Own Words

"The Utes were moving camp with 400 ponies, many superb animals. Tent poles, six on either side, were fastened to the ponies of the squaws, one end of each pole dragging on the ground behind. The squaws attend to loading and packing the animals. On the top of many of these packs were perched papooses, strapped securely on, but old enough to drive and guide their ponies."

Source: An account from 1873 in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1990), p. 21.

Moving Camp

This drawing shows Indians using travois to move camp. The travois on the left is loaded with bundles. The one in the middle is carrying a woman and a child.



Camp

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

When camp was moved, the boys drove the horses into camp. The women took down the tepees, tied 5 or 6 of the poles to each horse, and laid hide over the poles behind the horse to fastened them together. This made a platform on which the women could place bundles. They bundled up all their belongings and placed them on the platform between the poles. The women drove the horses to the next camp.

Their Own Words

"The dragging of the poles on the ground made a very road track that was used year after year until the path became a well-worn road. They always followed their forefathers' path, no matter how worn it became. These "Lodge Pole Trails" became wilderness highways followed by explorers, prospectors, and freight wagons. Many of these old Ute trails are the routes of present-day highways."

Source: Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1990), p. 22.

Setting up Tepees

What do these photos tell you about how Indian women set up their tipis?

Preparing To Set Up A Tepee

These Ute women are preparing to build a tipi. One woman is lifting the poles. The bundles in the center of the photo are the tipi cover. The photo was taken in 1913 near Colorado Springs, where visiting Utes were making a camp.



Tepee

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By 1913 when this photo was taken, Indians used canvas instead of buffalo hides to cover tepees.

Their Own Words

"The woman of the family had built the lodge, and when we went to a new location she was the one that moved it. Raising or striking a tepee was women's work, as it always had been, and they took great

pride in it. The important thing, besides the know-how, was the lodge poles. These must be long and straight and slender."

Source: Althea Bass, The Arapaho Way: A Memoir of an Indian Boyhood [by Carl Sweezy] (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1966), p. 11-12.

Setting Up The Lodge Poles

This photo shows an Indian woman putting in place the first four poles of the tepee she is setting up.



Lodge poles

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The women have tied four poles together and have set them up. This was the first step for Utes in building a tipi. The Cheyenne, Arapaho and other plains tribes used three poles to make a tripod instead of four.

Their Own Words

"First, four of the best and longest poles were selected and then bound together by a rawhide rope....Two of the women would take these poles and raise them to a vertical position....A little at a time, one woman would open them out to full diameter excepting two of the poles would be left about two feet apart to form the entrance, facing east."

Source: Horace S. Poley, quoted in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1990), p. 19.

Covering The Lodge Poles

The women have finished putting up the tepee poles. The woman on the right is beginning to cover the poles with canvas cloth.



Covering lodge poles

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

There was no required number of poles used to make a tipi. Most tipis had from 8 to 12 poles.

Their Own Words

"Directly opposite these would be raised a pole to which the top of the canvas had been firmly fashioned. The rest of the poles were then placed in position, being supported by the crotches formed by the tied poles."

Source: Horace S. Poley, quoted in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1990), p. 19.

Finishing Touches

The woman in this photo has covered the poles with canvas and is using poles to stretch the two flaps that will point upward above the tepee door. The flaps are left open to let smoke out of the tepee and to let fresh air in.



Finishing tepee

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By 1913, when this photo was taken, Indians covered their tipis with cloth. Most of the buffalo had been killed off by then. The tipi in this photo is covered with canvas cloth, which is water-proof.

Their Own Words

"The canvas was then deftly brought over the poles, being stretched from both sides toward the entrance; and fastened to the poles at the sides of the entrance so as to leave enough to overlap the opening when the tepee was closed. Just above the entrance are two triangular shaped flaps or wings used for ventilation and to let the smoke out. The size and direction of this opening being regulated by two long poles reaching the ground at the back of the tepee."

Source: Horace S. Poley, quoted in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1990), p. 20.

Stretching The Cover Tight

The last step is to stretch the canvas tight and to use wooden pegs to fasten the canvas to the ground. The woman in this photo is pegging down the bottom of the canvas.



Covering tepee

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The canvas was stretched from inside the tipi. The builder went inside and pushed the poles outward at the bottom until the cover was tight. Holes were made in hide covers to place the stakes. The stakes were driven through loops sewn onto the canvas covers.

Their Own Words

"Having adjusted the entrance to her satisfaction, she entered the tepee and moved the poles outward until the canvas was stretched tightly over them. The lower edge was next securely fastened to the ground with wooden pegs."

Source: Horace S. Poley, quoted in Jan Pettit, Utes: The Mountain People (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1990), p. 20.