

Sacagawea – Guide to Lewis & Clark

Sacagawea belonged to the Shoshone tribe. In 1800, when she was 12 years old, Hidatsa warriors raided her tribe and captured many young people, including Sacagawea. The Hidatsa, an American Plains Indian tribe related to the Sioux, were traditionally a sedentary people, meaning they established villages rather than travel around from place to place. They lived in earthen lodges and traded with other Plains tribes and English and French traders. Hidatsa men and women each had clearly defined tasks and responsibilities. Men hunted bison and other game and went to war. Along with maintaining the lodges, women did most of the farming and grew corn, squash, and beans. During the 19th century, Hidatsa warriors often went on raiding parties like the one where they captured Sacagawea.

Sacagawea lived with the Hidatsa for a few years, but, by 1804, she had been sold or gambled away to a French-Canadian trapper and trader, Toussaint Charbonneau. Sacagawea became one of Charbonneau's wives and gave birth to their son, Jean Baptiste. When explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark passed through what is now North Dakota in 1805, Charbonneau and Sacagawea joined their expedition. Sacagawea went on to become the explorers' celebrated guide and interpreter on their journey to the Pacific Ocean.

