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7209

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CHOCTAW INDIAN INTELLECT.

7209.

Pete W. Cole,
Field Worker,
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The Intellect of Choctaw Indians
Of the old Indian days.

From interviews with several
Indians and white persons.

There is not a Choctaw Indian living in the past or at present who has not an intelligent keen mind. He is quick to learn the different means or ways of other nationalities. He is quick to learn to talk the English language, fast in learning to take part in athletics and with a little training he may participate in any kind of game of sport. He is a fast runner, a good marksman with a rifle as well as skillful in using bows and arrows and what is called a squirrel club. This club is cut out of a hickory tree; the head of the club would be about the size of a teacup, the handle trimmed down to the size of a man's thumb and about eighteen inches long. A Choctaw would have two or three or more of these clubs and with two or three other boys with the same amount of ammunition, there were no rabbits, birds or other small

COLE, PETE W.

CHOCTAW INDIAN INTELLECT.

7209.

-2-

game able to get away alive, as these boys were so expert in shooting or throwing these clubs that it was impossible for any little game to get away after once being sighted. This game hunting was done mostly at some Indian Government School where one might be attending school and to pass away the time on Saturdays and Sundays. The gift that he possesses as a scribe cannot be excelled. There is not one living Choctaw who cannot write a nice hand with pen and ink if he can write at all.

An incident happened one time when an aged Choctaw Indian who had come to his attorney's office one day to sign his name to some legal documents, stated that he could not write his name but had always made an imprint by thumb mark. The attorney was satisfied that with a little practice he would be able to sign his name, so he printed the Indian's name on a piece of paper and told him to practice writing his name on that piece of paper. After a few minutes practice the Indian was able to sign his name. This gift that an Indian possesses seems to come to him as natural and easier to him than to some others. A Choctaw learns fast how to play the different kinds of

COLE, PETE W.

CHOCTAW INDIAN INTELLECT.

7209.

-3-

instruments and is as well a good singer, has a keen memory and remembers persons though they maybe strangers to him. He notices the kind of clothes a man wears, the color and kind of hat, the way he walks and notices everything about him or his actions which are so pictured in his mind, that if he meets this same man, he recollects at once that this man has been seen by him before.

A Choctaw is free hearted, willing to share or help those in need, to do service without cost; it was customary in the olden times when a Choctaw would go on an extended trip, or to some church, he would saddle his pony and take along with him a quilt or two, while the wife would roast a piece of fresh meat, make a few loaves of shuck bread or fermented beaten corn meal baked known as sour bread and some coffee and a small coffee pot to be used on the trip and ^{he} would proceed on his journey and travel until night would overtake him. He would camp at some creek or spring where there was clear water, stake his horse somewhere near-by or hobble the horse's two forefeet and put a small bell on the horse which he

COLE, PETE W.

CHOCTAW INDIAN INTELLECT.

7209.

-4-

usually brings along and turns him loose for the night. The horse would not stray off but will be somewhere near by next morning. Here he would kindle a fire, boil his coffee, warm the cold victuals and after enjoying the supper, he would retire for the night until the next morning then continue on his journey.

The Indians are not great kissers of wife relatives or close friends like some other races of people. One would feel insulted if he was to be kissed before a crowd or at a public gathering. He does not kiss his own baby, yet he loves it as well as any other parents. It is claimed that parents may be subject to some disease and that by continuous kissing, the offspring may inherit the disease from their parents.