**buffalo painted lodges.**

**From blackfeet indian stories by george bird grinnell.
Age Rating 8 Plus.**

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**The old lodges of the Piegans were made of buffalo skin and were painted with pictures of different kinds--birds, or animals, or trees, or mountains. It is believed that in most cases the first painter of any lodge was taught how he should paint it in a dream, but this was not always the case. Two of the most important lodges in the Blackfeet camp are known as the [=I]n[)i]s´k[)i]m lodges. Both are painted with figures of buffalo, one with black buffalo, and the other with yellow buffalo. Certain of the Inis´kim are kept in these lodges and can be kept in no others. This story tells how these two lodges came to be made. The painters were told what to do long, long ago, "in about the second generation after the first people." In those days the old Piegans lived in the north, close to the Red Deer River. The camp moved, and the lodges were pitched on the river. One day two old men who were close friends had gone out from the camp to find some straight cherry shoots with which to make arrows. After they had gathered their shafts, they sat down on a high bank by the river and began to peel the bark from the shoots. The river was high. One of these men was named Weasel Heart and the other Fisher. As they sat there, Weasel Heart chanced to look down into the water and saw something. He said to his comrade, "Friend, do you not see something down there where the water goes around?" Fisher said, "No; I see nothing except buffalo," for he was looking across the river to the other side, and not down into the water. "No," said Weasel Heart; "I do not mean over there on the prairie. Look down into that deep hole in the river, and you will see a lodge there." Fisher looked as he had been told, and saw the lodge. Weasel Heart said, "There is a lodge painted with black buffalo." As he spoke thus, Fisher said, "I see another lodge, standing in front of it." Weasel Heart saw that lodge too--the yellow-painted-buffalo lodge.**

**The two men wondered at this and could not understand how it could be, but they were both men of strong hearts, and presently Weasel Heart said, "Friend, I shall go down to enter that lodge. Do you sit here and tell me when I get to the place." Then Weasel Heart went up the river and found a drift-log to support him and pushed it out into the water, and floated down toward the cut bank. When he had reached the place where the lodge stood Fisher told him, and he let go the log and dived down into the water and entered the lodge. In it he found two persons who owned the lodge, a man and his wife. The man said to him, "You are welcome," and Weasel Heart sat down. Then spoke the owner of the lodge saying, "My son, this is my lodge, and I give it to you. Look well at it inside and outside; and make your lodge like this. If you do that, it may be a help to you." Fisher sat a long time waiting for his friend, but at last he looked down the stream and saw a man on the shore walking toward him. He came along the bank until he had reached his friend. It was Weasel Heart. Fisher said to him, "I have been waiting a long time, and I was afraid that something bad had happened to you." Weasel Heart asked him, "Did you see me?" "I saw you," said Fisher, "when you went into that lodge. Did you, when you came out of the lodge, see there in the water another lodge painted with yellow buffalo? Is it still there?" Weasel Heart said, "I saw it; it is there. Go you into the water as I did." Then Fisher went up the stream as his friend had gone and entered the water at the same place and swam down as Weasel Heart had done, and when Weasel Heart showed him the place he dived down and disappeared as Weasel Heart had disappeared. He entered the yellow-painted-buffalo lodge, and his friend saw him go into it. In the lodge were two persons, a man and his wife. The man said to him, "You are welcome; sit there." He spoke further, saying, "My son, you have seen this lodge of mine; I give it to you. Look carefully at it, inside and outside, and fix up your lodge in that way. It may be a help to you hereafter." Then Fisher went out.**

**Weasel Heart waited for his friend as long as Fisher had waited for him, and when Fisher came out of the water it was at the place where Weasel Heart had come out. Then the two friends went home to the camp. When the two had come to a hill near the camp they met a young man, and by him sent word that the people should make a sweat-house for them. After the sweat-house had been made, word was sent to them, and they entered the camp and went into the sweat-house and took a sweat, and all the time while they were sweating, sand was falling from their bodies. Some time after that the people moved camp and went out and killed buffalo, and these two men made two lodges, and painted them just as the lodges were painted that they had seen in the river. These two men had strong power which came to them from the Under-water People. Once the people wished to cross the river, but the stream was deep and it was always hard for them to get across. Often the dogs and the travois were swept away and the people lost many of their things. At this time the tribe wished to cross, and Fisher and Weasel Heart said to each other, "The people want to cross the river, but it is high and they cannot do so. Let us try to make a crossing, so that it will be easier for them." So Weasel Heart alone crossed the river and sat on the bank on the other side, and Fisher sat opposite to him on the bank where the camp was. Then Fisher said to the people, "Pack up your things now and get ready to cross. I will make a place where you can cross easily." Weasel Heart and Fisher filled their pipes and smoked, and then each started to cross the river. As each stepped into the water, the river began to go down and the crossing grew more and more shallow. The people with all their dogs followed close behind Fisher, as he had told them to do. Fisher and Weasel Heart met in the middle of the river, and when they met they stepped to one side up the stream and let the people pass them. Ever since that day this has been a shallow crossing. These lodges came from the Under-water People--S[=u]´y[=e]-t[)u]p´p[)i]. They were those who had owned them and who had been kind to Weasel Heart and Fisher.**