

## **Ohkotoki'aahkkoiyiiniimaan - "Stone Pipe"**

Pipes are used in sacred ceremonies of the Blackfoot people to make an offering to *lihtsipaatapi'op*, the Source of Life. The pipe kept and keeps the Blackfoot people at peace.

The offering of a pipe can occur between a person and *lihtsipaatapi'op*, between two people, or among two groups of people. It is a promise or a peace bond made with the honesty and integrity needed to fulfill the commitment. During the offering of the pipe, everyone involved must uphold and carry out the promises made.

It is not certain where or how the first pipe of the Blackfoot people came to be. Oral stories refer to a dream in which direction was given of which materials to use and where to find them. One of the places the stone used in the pipe is found is near the land where Lethbridge College sits, within the coulees and along the river bottoms that flow into the Old Man and Bow rivers.

In this coulee, a chunk of the ground would be dug up and then broken up on a nearby hard rock to get to the raw stone material within. Once the raw stone was revealed, it would be shaped to a likened form without any cracks. Next, the stone would be baked and painted with crushed red willow. The pipe stem would be made from ashwood, which is found in Crow territory and is similar to a chokecherry branch.

In a process that requires patience, these two raw materials were then shaped into one. The stone starts out rough and becomes refined. The pipe stem must be made straight and unbreakable, for when formed correctly, it represents a straight path – a good path. Once dry, it is unbreakable.

These two pieces together form the pipe, which is a connection to *lihtsipaatapi'op* and a promise that keeps us together.