



Historically, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikira tribes lived in earth lodges located along the Missouri River. They planted and grew tremendous gardens with corn, beans, squash, pumpkin, sunflowers, and watermelon. The three sisters of corn, beans and squash were important foods harvested from large fields using advanced agricultural systems including irrigation and seed saving.

Many tribes planted the three sisters and have stories they share to pass on knowledge.

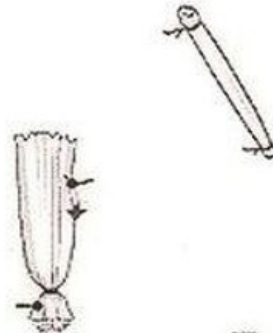
Read the story about the three sisters (on the back of this page) as shared by Robert Fox then watch and learn how to make corn husk dolls from Darla Pikyavit, UTTC Tribal Arts Instructor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VY74B799rCE&feature=youtu.be>

Make a corn husk doll

1. Soak four corn husks for at least a half hour in warm water. Remove from the water.

2. Trim one corn husk to about 5" in length. Roll up and tie on each end.



3. Tie two large corn husks together.

4. Separate the husks and pull them over the tied end. Tie again. This makes the head of your doll.



5. Part the husks in the center and slide the rolled corn husk between them and as close to the head as you can.



6. Tie the loose husks below the rolled husks to make the doll's waist and skirt.



7. Fold the last corn husk and drape it over the doll's shoulders and tie at the waist to make a shawl. Trim the bottom of the skirt, the shawl, and the loose strings.



A Haudenosaunee Legend: "The Three Sisters"

Once upon a time very long ago, there were three sisters who lived together in a field. These sisters were quite different from one another in their size and also in their way of dressing. One of the three was a little sister, so young that she could only crawl at first, and she was dressed in green. The second of the three wore a frock of bright yellow, and she had a way of running off by herself when the sun shone and the soft wind blew in her face. The third was the eldest sister, standing always very straight and tall above the other sisters and trying to guard them. She wore a pale green shawl, and she had long, yellow hair that tossed about her head in the breezes.

There was only one way in which the three sisters were alike. They loved one another very dearly, and they were never separated. They were sure that they would not be able to live apart.

After awhile a stranger came to the field of the three sisters, a little Indian boy. He was as straight as an arrow and as fearless as the eagle that circled the sky above his head. He knew the way of talking to the birds and the small brothers of the earth, the shrew, the chipmunk, and the young foxes. And the three sisters, the one who was just able to crawl, the one in the yellow frock, and the one with the flowing hair, were very much interested in the little Indian boy. They watched him fit his arrow in his bow, saw him carve a bowl with his stone knife, and wondered where he went at night.

Late in the summer of the first coming of the Indian boy to their field, one of the three sisters disappeared. This was the youngest sister in green, the sister who could only creep. She was scarcely able to stand alone in the field unless she had a stick to which she clung. Her sisters mourned for her until the fall, but she did not return.

Once more the Indian boy came to the field of the three sisters. He came to gather reeds at the edge of a stream nearby to make arrow shafts. The two sisters who were left watched him and gazed with wonder at the prints of his moccasins in the earth that marked his trail.

That night the second of the sisters left, the one who was dressed in yellow and who always wanted to run away. She left no mark of her going, but it may have been that she set her feet in the moccasin tracks of the little Indian boy.

Now there was but one of the sisters left. Tall and straight she stood in the field not once bowing her head with sorrow, but it seemed to her that she could not live there alone. The days grew shorter and the nights were colder. Her green shawl faded and grew thin and old. Her hair, once long and golden, was tangled by the wind. Day and night she sighed for her sisters to return to her, but they did not hear her. Her voice when she tried to call to them was low and plaintive like the wind.

But one day when it was the season of the harvest, the little Indian boy heard the crying of the third sister who had been left to mourn there in the field. He felt sorry for her, and he took her in his arms and carried her to the lodge of his father and mother. Oh what a surprise awaited here there! Her two lost sisters were there in the lodge of the little Indian boy, safe and very glad to see her. They had been curious about the Indian boy, and they had gone home with him to see how and where he lived. They had liked his warm cave so well that they had decided now that winter was coming on to stay with him. And they were doing all they could to be useful.

Why are the Corn Husk Dolls Faceless?

As Shared by Robert Fox

Corn husk dolls have to do with the Corn Spirit, which is one of the “three sisters” or “sustainers of life” – corn, beans, and squash. If you ever look at a traditional cornhusk doll, you will notice they do not have faces!

The creator of everything was concerned because it saw that the children of the world were sad because they did not know how to be children—how to laugh, play games, dance, tell stories and sing. Creator sent a cornhusk doll to teach the children how to be children. It worked, and one of the children told the doll how beautiful it was.

When the thirsty doll went to a stream, it was mesmerized by its own image and stopped visiting children. Spending less time with the children and more time staring at itself. Though the doll promised the creator not to let that happen again, it happened over and over. Therefore, the creator punished her by taking away her face so that she could neither look at herself nor converse with the children ever again!

These faceless dolls continue to serve as a reminder never to think you are better than someone else.

The Science Behind the Three Sisters

<https://www.chickasaw.tv/videos/three-sisters-working-with-nature>

Other Tribes also planted the three sisters together. Watch this video from the Chickasaw to learn how to plant the three plants together and how they work together to grow.



The Three Sisters Soup

The Iroquois also cultivated and used the Three Sisters (corn, squash and beans) in their diet. This is a recipe passed down by Iroquois relatives and shared by Darla Pikyavit. You may use regular corn instead of hominy, but hominy is more traditional.

Prep:

15 mins

Cook:

30 mins

Total:

45 mins

Servings:

6

Ingredient Checklist

- 2 cups canned white or yellow hominy, drained
- 2 cups fresh green beans, trimmed and snapped
- 2 cups peeled and cubed butternut squash
- 1 ½ cups diced peeled potatoes
- 5 cups water
- 1 ½ tablespoons chicken bouillon granules
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Directions:

Place the hominy, green beans, squash, and potatoes into a pot, and pour in water and chicken bouillon. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, and simmer until vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes. Blend flour into the butter, then stir into the soup. Increase heat to medium, and cook for 5 more minutes, or until soup thickens. Season with pepper, and serve.

Nutrition Facts

Per Serving:

149.5 calories; protein 3.3g 7% DV; carbohydrates 25g 8% DV; fat 4.7g 7% DV; cholesterol 10.4mg 4% DV; sodium 436.3mg 18% DV.

