



## Overview

Found among most Plains Indians, *okhólakičhiye*, or “war societies,” are fraternal organizations that focus on personal honor, bravery in battle, and the promotion of general tribal welfare. They often represent the elite warriors of the tribe, and are tapped by the chief to perform special duties. Although the Black Ghost Nation does not recognize a special class of *akíchita* warriors, members of its war societies still perform similar functions.

## Organization

Each society has its own regalia, code of behavior, and initiation rituals; but all follow a similar organizational structure—“ranks” consisting of pairs. In most societies, the most important pair are known as the “Lance Bearers.” The ranked pair beneath this are called “Bonnet Bearers” in some societies, or “Pipe Holders” in others. Together these two highest-ranking pairs are known as the “Four Chiefs” of the society, although larger tribes may actually have more than two pairs of Lance Bearers and Bonnet Bearers. Below the Four Chiefs are the “Whip Bearers,” although there is, again, societal variation, such as “Rattle Bearers,” “Short-Lance Bearers,” and so on. The lowest ranks are generally pairs of “Drum Bearers,” “Singers,” and sometimes a single “Herald” or “Crier.” The common rank-and-file “lay members” are usually composed of initiates.

## Note on Cultural Sensitivity

*Deadlands* is a “Weird West” milieu of dark fantasy and apocalyptic horror, and the Black Ghost Nation reflects this twisted atmosphere. Although they have laudable goals, the *Shikshichela* practice dark magic, engage in human sacrifice, and adopt a terrorist ideology. They are basically an “evil cult” of Indians, just as the Ku Klux Klan, the

Mormon Salamanders, and the New Atlanteans are “evil cults” of whites. (As one of my former *Vampire: The Masquerade* players perfectly put it, “The Black Ghost Nation is the Indian version of the Sabbat.”) The bizarre war societies described in this section are shockingly lurid and irredeemably wicked, and are meant to serve as terrifying adversaries in a world of darkness. No offense or disrespect to the Lakota people is intended, whose historical war societies are more faithfully described in “*Deadlands Organizations—Sioux Societies*.” Additionally, a potentially offended reader is encouraged to note that my *Deadlands 1876* campaign treats the U.S. government as an inherently destructive force, engaged in a genocidal war against the continent’s indigenous people in the mad pursuit of Manifest Destiny. The U.S. Cavalry is depicted as an extension of this rapacious greed; while Chivington’s Colorado Rangers and the Confederacy’s Dragoons are little more than crusaders and brownshirts, conducting state-sponsored terrorism in the name of white supremacy and twisted notions of Christian imperialism.

# Crazy Dog Society

## Shungmánitu G'nashkiyan

### **Shungmánitu G'nashkiyan: Crazy Dogs ♠**

AGL d8, SMT d6, SPT d10, STR d12, VIG d10, PAR 8, TGH 7. Rank: Heroic, Wounds S/3/I. [+1 Free Soak from Medicine Bundle]. Guardian spirit: Wolf, Coyote, Dog. Hindrance: Old Ways. Edges: Brave, Fleet-Footed, Stake-Down, Woodsman. Knacks: Medicine Bundle. Skills: Archery d10, Counting Coup d8, Fighting d12, Intimidate d10, Notice d8, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d8, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Bow & arrow, 1d6+d12 STR; Various revolvers, Cal .36, Cap 6, RoF 1, DAM 2d6; Fang club, 1d6+d12 STR.

### **Description**

A Shikshichela version of Cheyenne Dog Soldiers and the Crazy Dog society of the Crow, the Shungmánitu G'nashkiyan is one of the few Black Ghost societies rooted in traditional Plains societies. A brotherhood of mad berserkers, the Crazy Dogs adopt the mannerisms of wolves, coyotes, and wild dogs. Their warpaint is a reflection of this feral nature, with a bloody slash of red across their mouths suggesting the jaws of a hungry wolf. They go into battle shirtless, often wearing capes made from wolf hides, necklaces bedecked with canine teeth, and elaborate head-dresses exploding with hundreds of black feathers. Crazy Dogs fight with suicidal abandon, growling and barking as they attack, and sometimes foaming at the mouth. Crazy Dogs are highly skilled with bow and arrow, and each carries a special “Fang Club” topped by three sharp knives.

Clark Wissler describes the Crow Crazy Dog society in [\*Societies of the Plains Indians\*](#):

Butterfly says that the Crazy Dogs befriended the young boys who had not yet acquired membership in any society and would invite them to their feasts. From these accounts it appears that the ritual of the dog society contained several interesting peculiarities: thus, the members must not eat dog flesh, nor any meat cooked in a kettle. During a ceremony, no one not a member may enter the tipi or even touch their food; at the feast no one passes the food, each one helping himself. They have the privilege of entering any tipi and taking such food as they may desire; at such times they growl and otherwise act like dogs.

The four lance and banner bearers upon being installed must go to war toting the power of their office. They wore no shirts. All members carried small bags of medicine on the back of the head. The lay members had nothing else of distinction, except bone whistles. When on the warpath, they used the coyote painting, a broad red band across the mouth and cheeks, and a vertical red mark across each eye. The idea is the bloody mouth of the coyote when feeding.

The four coyote skin bearers paint the face over with blue and scratch it down with the fingertips. These marks are said to denote that their medicine is strong; they are also credited with power to induce storms and fogs to conceal them from enemies. In the dance, they stand in one place and move the body up and down, not lifting the feet, but holding whistles in their mouths and continually sounding them. There were many songs, referring chiefly to deeds of war; each ending with a peculiar wolf call.

An important requirement was that no one should ever turn back in a fight but all fight to the bitter end. They were regarded as well-nigh invincible and became very famous. Another interesting feature is the giving of definite names to certain members. It is stated that no one could have these names, except as officially conferred by the society.

## **Battle Tactics**

### *Crazy Dog Vow*

Each Crazy Dog carries a ten-foot “dog rope” affixed to his breech clout which terminates in a decorated dog skull. By anchoring the skull to the ground, the dismounted warrior remains within his proscribed circle until he is victorious or slain. Unlike most stake-down rituals, no other warrior may release a Crazy Dog from his vow.

### *Bone Whistles*

Crazy Dogs often fight with bone whistles clenched in their mouths, which they blow in between fits of howling and yelping. This unnerving cacophony forces inexperienced opponents to make a Gut check before engaging them in combat.

## **Coyote Skin Bearers**

The Crazy Dogs accept shamans into their ranks. Known as Coyote Skin Bearers, these medicine men wear coyote furs and paint their faces and chests with long blue scratches. A Coyote Skin Bearer possesses the same stats as a standard Crazy Dog warrior, but has the Arcane Background (Shaman) Edge, 12 Power Points, and a d8 Medicine Skill. He usually knows the following Powers: Beast Friend, Boost/Lower Trait, Call Weather, Wilderness Ally.

### *Call Weather*

Rank: Veteran, Power Points 1–12, Range: 5 miles/PP, Duration: Variable.  
This Power is adapted from *Ghost Dancers*, and is described in the *Deadlands 1876* Grimoire.

### *Wilderness Ally*

Rank: Veteran, Power Points 1/medicine rock, Range: Immediate, Duration: Daily.  
This Power is adapted from *Ghost Dancers*, and is described in the *Deadlands 1876* Grimoire.

## **Tribal Responsibilities**

Considered too deranged to attend to general communal functions, the Crazy Dogs have been appointed the “privilege” of “fighting the thunder.” Whenever an unwelcome storm looms on the horizon, the Crazy Dog society gathers on the highest ground with an array of special whistles and drums. While their musicians play a frantic, whirling dance, their fiercest warriors pierce the clouds with special jagged-tipped arrows. Of course, this approach has been known to backfire, and more than one Crazy Dog has been slain by lightning. Such a death is considered a great honor; and rather than suggesting that shaking iron-tipped lances at a storm is a bad idea, it’s seen as vindication that their method is effective enough to anger the hostile thunder beings!

# Cheshka Maza

## Metal Chests

### **Cheshká Máza: Metal Chests ♠**

AGL d8, SMT d10, SPT d8, STR d10, VIG d10, PAR 8, TGH 7. Rank: Heroic, Wounds S/3/I. [+2 Free Soak from Medicine Bundle]. Guardian spirit: Any, but often Thunder Beings. Hindrance: Heyókha. Edges: Born on Horseback, Brave, Fleet-Footed, Woodsman. Knacks: Improved Medicine Bundle. Skills: Archery d6, Counting Coup d8, Fighting d12, Healing d8, Intimidate d12, Notice d8, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d8, Tracking d8+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d8+2. Attack: Mázachánpí, d8+d10 STR; Any rifle or carbine, but preferably a Winchester, Cal .44, Cap 16, RoF 1, DAM 2d6.

### **Description**

In 1873, a heyókha named Sing-Down-The-Sky insulted a Brulé policeman at the Spotted Tail Agency. In the altercation that followed, the “contrary” killed the policeman. After a moment of reflection, the heyókha swapped his buckskins for the dead man’s westernized clothing. Plucking off the policeman’s metal badge, Sing-Down-The-Sky pinned the star to his own chest. With a joyous whoop, the heyókha announced that he had traded places with the dead man, and now existed in a “mirror-image” spirit world. Evidently, jail time did not factor into this new afterlife, as Sing-Down-The-Sky quickly departed the Agency to seek out and join the Black Ghost Nation.

Fully accepted by his Shikshichela brothers, the heyókha was given permission to establish a new okhólakichiye. Called the Cheshká Máza—Lakota for “Metal Chest,” the slang term for an Agency policeman—the society is dedicated to using “contrary medicine” to reflect and transform white culture into a powerful spiritual attack. Although most Cheshká Máza are not actually heyókha, they must follow strict customs and rituals, and may only dress in apparel looted from their enemies. As such, they form a motley crew in battle, each warrior wearing a piecemeal arrangement of European clothing, put together with little rhyme or reason: frock coats, top hats, wedding dresses, mismatched boots, military uniforms, duckcloth trousers, priestly vestments, nun wimples, Confederate kepis, ladies’ stockings, Union flags, broken spectacles, and so on.

### *The Medicine Badge*

The one thing all Cheshká Máza share is the token of authority which gives the society its satirical name. Each Cheshká Máza warrior boasts a metallic badge of office such as a sheriff’s star, a deputy’s badge, a military medal, an officer’s insignia, or an Agency police badge. This fetish embodies more than their namesake; in order to be admitted into the Cheshká Máza, a candidate must kill a soldier or lawman. The victim’s plundered badge represents the warrior’s most powerful medicine, acting as an Improved Medicine Bundle and giving him two free Soak rolls. The moment this medicine badge is pinned to his chest, the warrior becomes a Cheshká Máza, and enters the “mirror world.” If this badge is ever lost or stolen, the Cheshká Máza warrior is disgraced, and is shunned until he can earn a new badge. Being “lost between the world of the living and dead,” a shunned warrior must go through life naked and silent until he has atoned for his transgression.

## **Battle Tactics**

### *Mázachánkhpí*

Every Cheshká Máza proudly carries a firearm into battle, and a warrior's gun is a source of tremendous pride. In melee, however, a Cheshká Máza uses a club called a "mázachánkhpí," or "metal war club." Each mázachánkhpí is a unique creation, formed from a broken rifle or musket that has been garishly painted and adorned with scalps. The mázachánkhpí is usually battered into grotesque shapes, and the stock is often decorated with jewelry.

### *Sing the Poison River*

When in battle against washíchus, the Cheshká Máza are not permitted to speak their native tongue. Rather, they "sing the poison river," which constitutes a continuous babble of "white" words, phrases, and quotations. Anything the warrior has learned or memorized is considered potent medicine: Shakespearean sonnets, a catalog of American companies, French swear words, phrases borrowed from ammunition cases, Swedish cries for mercy, even mathematical equations. Although it may sound frivolous on paper, in practice the effect is terrifying. Finding oneself in the path of an enraged Shikshichela warrior, dressed in a tattered artillery officer's uniform and wearing a bridal veil, sporting a Texas Ranger badge on his chest and a bloody crown of thorns on his head; mounted on a cavalry horse and screaming, "Equity Insurance Company! Touch the pen! Jesus Christ, General Sherman, Holy Fuck! *Close cover before striking!*" as he swings a cheerfully-painted musket at one's skull... A Guts check just may be required.

## **Tribal Responsibilities**

Having sworn an oath to care for the Shikshichela sick and hungry, the Cheshká Máza match their uncompromising hatred of washíchus and turncoats with an astonishing generosity toward their Shikshichela brothers. As such, they are skilled in the arts of healing, and will never eat food themselves unless they have offered a share to a less fortunate comrade.

# Rattlesnake Veterans

## Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka

### **Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka: Rattlesnake Veterans** ♠

AGL d12, SMT d8, SPT d10, STR d10, VIG d12, PAR 9, TGH 8 [+4d10 Bodyguard from Improved Medicine Shield]. Rank: Heroic, Wounds S/3/I [+2 Free Soak from Improved Medicine Bundle]. Guardian spirit: Snake. Hindrance: Arrogant. Edges: Ambidextrous, Brave, Florentine, Improved First Strike, Quick, Two-Fisted, Weapon Master. Knacks: Improved Medicine Bundle, Improved Medicine Shield. Skills: Archery d8, Counting Coup d10, Fighting d12, Intimidate d12, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d10, Throw d6, Tracking d6, Stealth d10, Survival d8. Attack: Winchester rifles, Cal .44, Cap 16, RoF 1, DAM 2d6; Bow & arrow, d6+d10 STR + poison; Two knives, d4+d10 STR + poison.

### **Description**

Only the most fearless warriors of the Black Ghost Nation are tapped for the Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka, a prestigious war society whose name best translates as “Rattlesnake Veterans.” These men are a strange combination of berserker and holy warrior, and are steeped in the dark energies of sex, drugs, and self-mutilation. Consisting of a fixed number of twenty-eight warriors, the ranks of the Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka are closed until a current member dies, retires, or is forced out because of injury or dishonor. A new candidate discovers his eligibility by finding a rattlesnake in his teepee; in order to signal his acceptance, he must seize the living serpent with his bare hands and carry it back to the Sintékh'la lodge.

Upon being initiated into the society, the new member undergoes a personal Sun Dance in which he is poisoned with a hallucinogen made from a mixture of rattlesnake venom, wild mushrooms, and crushed toads. This Sun Dance is performed in front of his twenty-seven potential brothers, who shake rattles and beat drums as their collective “Snake Wives” sing the Song of the Feathered Serpent. If the candidate survives this ordeal, he is granted full membership and provided with a special “medicine paint” he may use to decorate his teepee. The new Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka is also given a new wife as well; his Zuzécha Th'awíchu, or “Snake Wife,” who is described below.

### **Battle Tactics**

When on the warpath, a Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka presents a fearsome sight, wearing an elaborate war shirt and decorated with snakeskins, fangs, and rattles—some even carry live snakes into battle! They paint their faces black, and rather than wearing headgear, they contort their hair into grotesque shapes using pine resin and a special black clay containing a mixture of bufotoxins and powerful stimulants. Although they wear breech clouts and leggings, it is customary for a Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka to coat his penis in this black clay before battle. The stimulants have certain priapic properties as well, bestowing “good medicine” and offering a fast-acting entry point for the hallucinogen.

### *Poison*

When fighting against white opponents, a Sintékh'la poisons his knives and arrows using a concoction brewed by his Snake Wife. A mixture of rattlesnake venom and toxic herbs, the poison is fairly weak—Venomous (+2)—but has powerful hallucinogenic qualities, adding a Fear check to the usual results of failure. This hallucinogen makes the Sintékh'la appear even more phantasmagorical, and some survivors of a Sintékh'la attack have reported seeing the warriors “transforming into hideous gorgons.” This poison is never used against fellow Indians.

### *Rattles*

The Sintékh'la do not issue war cries before charging into battle. Instead, they shake rattles, often dozens of them affixed to a large stick, while making a hissing noise through their clenched teeth. When there is a large group of Sintékh'la, the sound is distinctly unnerving, and triggers a Gut check in their opponents.

### **Tribal Responsibilities**

The Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka have few peacetime responsibilities—they are considered the elite of the elite, and are expected to use their free time to sharpen their combat skills. Indeed, even their fellow Shikshichela fear the Sintékh'la, and they tend to operate within a certain “holy aura” best described as a semi-religious blend of fear and awe.

### **Zuzécha Th'awíchu**

When a new warrior is initiated into the Sintékh'la Th'ógtéka, he is paired with a “Snake Wife” who is expected to integrate fluidly into his existing family structure. Unlike the warrior's other wives, a Zuzécha Th'awíchu is not expected to bear children, prepare food, or perform other domestic chores. A Zuzécha Th'awíchu is responsible for creating and maintaining the warrior's elaborate gear, for preparing the hallucinogenic clay used for his warpaint, and for brewing the poison used to coat his knives. She learns the songs and prayers that bestow power and good fortune to her husband and his fellow warriors. She is also responsible for keeping his medicine bundle empowered with protective energy; this is done through frequent sexual relations, and a Zuzécha Th'awíchu must match her husband's near-psychotic state of hyper-aggression.

Being trained in the art of combat, a Zuzécha Th'awíchu is also charged with protecting her husband's teepee when he is away, and as such, occupies a *berdache* position among his other wives. Indeed, a Zuzécha Th'awíchu is expected to treat her husband's other wives as her own, a rare breaking of the Sioux taboo on lesbianism that is rarely discussed among the other Shikshichela.

# Skull Dancers

## Wichánata Wachípi Wínyan

### **Wichánata Wachípi Wínyan: Skull Dancers ♠**

AGL d12, SMT d8, SPT d10, STR d6, VIG d10, PAR 6, TGH 8. Rank: Heroic, Wounds S/3/I. [+2 Free Soak from Improved Medicine Bundle]. Guardian spirit: Various. Edges: Born on Horseback, Brave, Fleet-Footed, Frenzied Archer (2 arrows/round), Improved Medicine Bundle, Improved Trademark Weapon (Moon Bow), Quick. Skills: Archery d12\*, Counting Coup d8, Fighting d10, Intimidate d8, Notice d8, Riding d10, Shooting d10, Throw d6, Tracking d4, Stealth d8, Survival d6. Attack: 2x Moon Bow (+2), 1d6+d6 STR+2; 2x Moon Knives, 1d4+d6 STR.

### **Description**

Once an Indian becomes “untribed” and joins the Black Ghost Nation, many traditional conventions must be set aside. Among all the Plains Indians, the Shikshichela are the most egalitarian, as Chief Snake Biting Hawk is surprisingly modern in his views of meritocracy. In the Black Ghost Nation, women have more opportunities than allowed under traditional Lakota culture, and may become warriors if they prove their mettle.

A small but elite band of Amazons, the Skull Dancers are a society of female warriors—not quite *berdache*, but nevertheless afforded the same respect as male warriors. Established by the Cheyenne *hetaneman* Immookalee, the Wichánata Wachípi Wínyan accept any candidate who has proven herself by counting coup on the battlefield. After a period of rigorous training with bow and arrow, the candidate must signify her readiness by killing a white man in battle. Her victim is beheaded, and his skull is boiled, bleached, and painted with medicine symbols. This trophy becomes a part of her initiation ritual, which takes the form of a grueling Sun Dance. Immookalee herself acts as the medicine woman, piercing the candidate’s back with three bone hooks. These hooks are used to anchor three skulls, attached by trailing lengths of rawhide: a buffalo skull, a dog skull, and the skull of the slain washíchu. After ingesting a special medicine broth made from hallucinogenic mushrooms, the candidate dances under the blazing sun until the hooks tear through the muscles of her back.

### **Battle Tactics**

A Skull Dancer rides into battle wearing only a loincloth, her naked body covered with white warpaint and sporting black designs that resemble a charred skeleton. Each carries a medicine bundle contained inside her medicine skull. This is usually fixed to her loincloth, but some Skull Dancers lash their skull-bundles to their backs using bone needles and rawhide straps. A Skull Dancer’s hair is stiffened with the same hallucinogenic black clay used by the Sintékh’la Th’ógtéka, and is frequently fixed into Hopi-style “butterfly whorls.” During combat, a Skull Dancer is not permitted to open her mouth, and fights with an unnerving silence.

### *Moon Bow*

Known for their quickness and ferocity, the Skull Dancers are the Shikshichela's best archers, and are able to fire arrows with inhuman quickness and precision. Every Skull Dancer carries a special "Moon Bow," crafted under the full moon and consecrated during her menstrual cycle while sweating in a moon lodge. This bow is painted in black and white to resemble human vertebrae, and is decorated with raven feathers, one for every enemy slain by a single arrow. No male warrior is allowed to touch a Skull Dancer's Moon Bow, and if it falls into enemy hands, the unfortunate warrior must recapture it or commit suicide.

### *Moon Knives*

Each Skull Dancer carries a special pair of bone knives—short, narrow, and curved, these "Moon Knives" must be personally crafted, and are usually made from buffalo bone. The twinned set is always concealed somewhere on her person, whether serving as hair accessories, strapped to her thighs, or tucked into her moccasins. Some Skull Dancers carry Moon Knives hidden inside their sex. These are usually smaller versions, paired in a single sheath and used as a last resort to prevent capture on the battlefield. A Skull Dancer's knives do not carry the same significance as her Moon Bow, and may be lost, broken, or replaced with impunity. Many Skull Dancers possess several sets, and have grown quite skilled at concealing multiple blades upon their person!

### **Tribal Responsibilities**

Skull Dancers do not have peacetime tribal responsibilities; like the Rattlesnake Veterans, they are expected to spend their free time honing their skills. Although most Skull Dancers are unmarried women, they are permitted to marry any warrior except a Rattlesnake Veteran. (However, a widowed Snake Wife may choose to become a Skull Dancer.) If a Skull Dancer becomes pregnant, she must forfeit her place in the society. The departing warrior is celebrated during a special feast, where she is allowed to recount her triumphs and bid farewell to her sister Amazons. The feast concludes when the pregnant Skull Dancer accepts her new role as tribal mother by symbolically burning her Moon Bow and stripping herself of war paint.

# Black Spiral Dancers

## Yugmú Sapa

### **Yugmú Sapa: Black Spiral Dancer (Shaman) ♠**

AGL d8, SMT d8, SPT d12, STR d10, VIG d8, PAR 6, TGH 6, Power Points 16. Rank: Heroic, Wounds S/3/I. Guardian spirit: Wolf or Coyote. Edges: Arcane Background (Shaman), Brave, Frenzy, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d6, Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidate d10, Medicine d12, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d8, Throw d6, Tracking d10+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d10+2. Powers: Beast Friend, Burrow, Call Weather, Shape Change, Walk the Ghost Roads, Wilderness Ally. Attack: Various revolvers, Cal .36, Cap 6, RoF 1, DAM 2d6; Tomahawks, 1d6+d12+2 STR; Beast form: Claws x2, 1d6+d10 STR; Bite, 1d6+d10 STR.

### **Description**

The Black Spiral Dancers are a close-knit society of warriors who have given themselves over to their animal natures—literally. With origins outside the Shikshichela, the Yugmú Sapa have been around for centuries, usually living semi-private lives on the fringes of Indian society. Some believe them to be shamans who have mastered the magic of shape-changing, while others claim they are something darker, a species of inhuman being cursed by the moon and stranded in a twilight world between man and beast.

### *Dual Nature*

This confusion reflects the dual nature of the society itself. Five of the nine Shikshichela who call themselves Black Spiral Dancers are shamans who have mastered the powerful medicine of shape-shifting. The other four are actual lycanthropes. The chief of the society is a Hopi were-coyote named Istaqa. He is served by two Blackfoot Sioux brothers, werewolves named Black-Dog-Runs-At-Night and White-Dog-Howls-At-Moon. The society's only female is a were-jaguar named Silvia Nana-tha-thtith, an Apache who claims to have been married to Geronimo.

### **Yugmú Sapa: Black Spiral Dancer (Lycanthrope) ☼**

AGL d10, SMT d6, SPT d8, STR d12+2, VIG d12, PAR 9, TGH 8\*. Rank: Heroic, Wounds 4/I, Fate Chips: 2. Guardian spirit: Varies. Hindrance: Lycanthropy. Edges: Berserk, Brave, Frenzy, Woodsman. Skills: Archery d6, Climbing d10, Fighting d12+2, Intimidate d12, Notice d10, Riding d4, Shooting d6, Throw d6, Tracking d12+2, Stealth d10+2, Survival d10+2. Attack: Various revolvers, Cal .36, Cap 6, RoF 1, DAM 2d6; Tomahawks, 1d6+d12+2 STR; Beast form: Claws x2, 1d6+d12+2 STR; Bite, 1d6+d12+2 STR + Lycanthropy\*. Special Abilities: Consume Enemy, Heat vision, Immune to Shaken, Suffer only half damage from nonmagical and/or non-silver weapons.

### *Consume Enemy*

If a lycanthrope in bestial form kills a human victim, he can spend an action round devouring that victim's internal organs. The lycanthrope then makes a Vigor roll vs. TN-6, healing one Wound Level for every success and raise.

### *Heat Vision*

The vision of a lycanthrope extends into the infrared range, and a lycanthrope may detect heat sources in the dark. This ability only operates at distances up to 40 yards, and is affected by natural conditions such as temperature and weather. This predatory eyesight only operates above 80° Fahrenheit, so even in the best conditions, a lycanthrope cannot “see” footprints or discarded items of clothing.

### *Lycanthropy*

A human being who is Incapacitated by the attack of a lycanthrope has a chance of becoming a lycanthrope himself. The target must roll his Spirit vs. TN-6; a success results in the natural progression towards bleeding out, injury, and death; but a failure results in a miraculous “recovery,” with the symptoms of lycanthropy manifesting the next full moon. A *willing* victim may voluntarily raise the Target Number to 12, but lycanthropy is not automatically infectious.

**Marshal’s Note:** The Black Spiral Dancers have been borrowed from White Wolf’s “World of Darkness” milieu. A clan of Wyrms-worshipping werewolves, they featured prominently in my old “New York By Night” *Vampire: The Masquerade* setting, and have been repurposed here for the nineteenth century. *Deadlands* purists are free to discard this society, or simply given them a different name. Not everyone needs to be on Team Jacob!

# Black-Handed Widows

## Chatká Sapa

### **Chatká Sapa: Black Left Hand ♠**

AGL d6, SMT d6, SPT d8, STR d6, VIG d8, PAR 5, TGH 6. Rank: Veteran, Wounds S/3/I. Edges: Healer. Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d8 (+2), Intimidate d8, Notice d10, Riding d8, Talent (Mutilation) d8, Tracking d6, Stealth d10, Survival d8. Attack: Knife, DAM 1d4+d6 STR.

### **Description**

The widows of the Shikshichela are treated with respect, and are quickly re-absorbed into the tribe, whether remarried to another warrior or assimilated into the family of an older patriarch. Some, however, opt to join the Chatká Sapa. A female society composed entirely of widows, the Black Left Hand is charged with securing, mutilating, and/or finishing off the Shikshichela's wounded enemies. Generally known as "Black-Handed Widows," they mark this deed by leaving a black handprint across their victim's face.

In order to join this grim society, a woman must first be widowed—but only through battle, and her husband must have died bravely. She is expected to spend one week by her husband's burial scaffold, after which she removes his heart and brings it to the leader of the Chatká Sapa, an Itázipcho named Wiwázicha Chatká, or "Left-Handed Widow." If Wiwázicha Chatká accepts the heart, the candidate is instructed by the Chatká Sapa to undergo a week of fasting, sweating, and praying. After this period of purification, the candidate must perform a special ritual. Younger widows are expected to cut strips of flesh from their shoulders, while older women scar their arms and thighs with knives. No matter the age of the widow, she is expected to stitch eagle feathers into her arms before her ordeal. If the ritual is successful, the widow becomes a member of the Chatká Sapa, where she is free to channel her vengeance on the enemies of the Shikshichela.

### *Wiwázicha Chatká*

A middle-aged woman who has taken a vow of silence, the mysterious Wiwázicha Chatká has accompanied Snake Biting Hawk since his days as an Itázipcho visionary. He is the only person who knows her origin, her true name, and the identity of her slain husband. Some believe that Wiwázicha Chatká is the chief's mother; while others whisper that she's actually his first wife, a widow in perpetual mourning for the "death" of her first husband, Burning Arrow.

### *Zuzécha Th'awíchu*

If a Rattlesnake Veteran's Snake Wife becomes widowed, it becomes her responsibility to recruit and guide the slain warrior's traditional wives through the process of joining the Chatká Sapa. She herself is given the choice of joining the Chatká Sapa or becoming a Skull Dancer. If she joins the Chatká Sapa, she immediately assumes the position of "Paint Keeper," an officer in charge of mixing the black paint used to mark their victims. As this paint is the same used by the Rattlesnake Veterans, when the paint is applied to the widows' hands, it produces a strange tingling that often leads to a mild, euphoric state.

### *Cries-At-Thunder*

One of the most unusual members of the Chatká Sapa is Cries-At-Thunder, a young *winkte* who was the third “wife” of the slain Rattlesnake Veteran, Four Fangs. An expert craftsman, Cries-At-Thunder is believed to possess special powers, and medicine bags featuring his exquisite quillwork are in great demand among the Shikshichela. Newly-inducted into the Chatká Sapa, Cries-At-Thunder has proven to be particularly savage, and often incorporates trophies from his slain victims into his work—teeth, scalps, even human flesh. While not to everyone’s liking, these macabre bundles have become popular among the Sintékh’la Th’ógtéka, who believe they confer immunity to bullets.

### **Cries-At-Thunder Medicine Bundle**

Made from human skin stitched with beautiful quillwork and ornate beads, these medicine bags often contain human teeth, scalps, and carved bone totems. They convey a unique single-use power. Any single bullet that Incapacitates the carrier strikes the medicine bundle instead, negating the bullet’s damage but destroying the bundle permanently. A warrior may only carry one such bundle at a time.

### **Tribal Responsibilities**

Along with their responsibility to “purify” the battlefield, the Chatká Sapa are charged with tending to the wounded, and are trained in the arts of healing. In peacetime, they serve as a professional caste of “wise women,” offering instruction and guidance to the young women of the tribe. The Chatká Sapa maintain the Shikshichela’s moon lodges, and frequently act as matchmakers, healers, and midwives. A name conferred by a Black-Handed Widow is considered a great honor.

# White Bow Carriers

## Itázipaska'yuhá

### **Itázipaska'yuhá: White Bow Carrier ♠**

AGL d6, SMT d10, SPT d10, STR d6, VIG d8, PAR 5, TGH 6. Rank: Heroic, Wounds S/3/I. Guardian spirit: Any. Edges: Inspire, Scholar. Skills: Archery d8, Counting Coup d6, Fighting d6, Intimidate d6, Notice d10, Riding d10, Shooting d8, Throw d6, Tracking d10, Stealth d6, Survival d8. Attack: Bow & arrow, 1d6+d6 STR; War clubs, knives, & tomahawks, 1d6+d6 STR.

### **Description**

The White Bow Carriers are another Shikshichela society patterned on an existing Plains okhólakičhiye. The Itázipaska'yuhá are made up of aging veterans who have grown too old to fight, but have abstained from political roles that would make them “Big Bellies.” Membership to the Itázipaska'yuhá does not require any special ritual or Sun Dance, but the candidate must be a respected veteran and remain able-bodied. In the Black Ghost Nation, the Itázipaska'yuhá act as tribal policemen, fulfilling a role somewhere between akíchita and military police. They carry white-painted bows as a symbol of their office, and their authority is derived from a common respect. Indeed, even the most hot-headed warriors obey the Itázipaska'yuhá, many of whom are revered as war heroes.

### **Tribal Responsibilities**

No longer serving as warriors, the duties of the Itázipaska'yuhá are based on peacetime activities. They adjudicate most minor disputes, they distribute tribal resources, and they manage the buffalo hunts. Clark Wissler describes this latter function in his description of the Ponca Indians:

The police, or soldiers, on the buffalo hunt were called pde!wánucê. They had their own lodge, placed near that of the chief and caretaker. In it they kept a bundle of sticks, painted red or yellow, one for each man in the camp. If they wanted anyone to furnish a feast, they sent him a stick, or they could have one of their two heralds call to him, from their tent, even though his lodge were far off, and order him to prepare a meal. Only the wealthy and generous were then summoned. The soldiers kept order in camp and held back the line so that all charged at once, when on the buffalo hunt. Those who disobeyed were punished by a “soldier-killing.” The man was called out and each wánucê [warrior] would count a coup, saying: “I once hit a man as hard as this,” etc., dealing a blow with whip or gun butt. The culprit’s tent might be destroyed and his horses and dogs shot. He might even forfeit his life if he resisted. If he took it in good part, sometime within the next four days he would be sent for, and led into the soldier’s tent where each one would ask “Where did I hit you?” On being shown the soldier would make him a present.

The Itázipaska'yuhá perform this “soldier” role as described above, along with various other duties and rites that evolve as the Shikshichela continue to grow larger and stronger.

## Sources & Notes

### Sources

The Black Ghost Nation is my own creation, while the Raven Cult and their apocalyptic visions are part of the official *Deadlands* milieu. The Cheshká Máza are inspired in part by the astonishing “legion of horrors” scene in Cormac McCarthy’s epic novel *Blood Meridian*. I’m not certain that the slang “cheska maza” existed before the 1890s, but that’s a potential anachronism I’m willing to bear! The idea of the Rattlesnake Veterans was sparked by photographs of the famous Hopi Snake Dancers; while the Skull Dancers have their origin in my version of Sera from *Dragon Age: Inquisition*—dressed in Avaar body paint and happily whirling through her enemies with twin knives! As mentioned in their descriptions, the Crazy Dogs and White Bow Carriers are loosely modeled on historical Indian societies. The Black Spiral Dancers are borrowed from *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*. A part of White Wolf’s “World of Darkness” gaming milieu, they played a role in my former “New York By Night” campaign for *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

### Language

I am greatly indebted to the [Lakota Language Consortium](#), whose [Lakota 1.0](#) software has been a tremendous resource for my *Deadlands* campaign. This is simply one of the best dictionary programs one could wish for, and it’s helped me considerably with this beautiful but difficult language. Many of the Lakota names found in this section are authentic, however I made a few occasional leaps of faith, particularly with “Zuzécha Th’awíchu,” “Wichánata Wachípi Wínyan,” and “Yugmú Sapa.” If any gamer reading this has fluency in Lakota, please feel free to email me corrections or suggestions!

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**Author:** A. Buell Ruch

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**Email:** quail (at) shipwrecklibrary (dot) com

**Online Version:** <http://shipwrecklibrary.com/deadlands/black-ghost-societies>