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“Two young men went out to hunt. Along the way, the two men met a beautiful young woman dressed in white who floated as she walked. One man had bad desires for the woman and tried to touch her, but was consumed by a cloud and turned into a pile of bones.

The woman spoke to the second young man and said, ‘Return to your people and tell them I am coming.’ This holy woman brought a wrapped bundle to the people. She unwrapped the bundle giving to the people a sacred pipe and teaching them how to use it to pray. ‘With this holy pipe, you will walk like a living prayer,’ she said. The holy woman told the Sioux about the value of the buffalo, the women and the children. ‘You are from Mother Earth,’ she told the women, ‘What you are doing is as great as the warriors do.’

Before she left, she told the people she would return. As she walked away, she rolled over four times, turning into a white female buffalo calf. It is said after that day the Lakota honored their pipe, and buffalo were plentiful.”

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The white buffalo calf holds special significance to many American Indians—including the Oceti Sakowin, also known as the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota, or the “Sioux.”

According to oral history, the White Buffalo Calf Woman was holy and visited the Oceti Sakowin over a four-day period about 2000 years ago. There are several versions of the story, each conveying the same essential details.

This version of the story was told by John Lame Deer in 1967.