

SAHAPTIN INDIAN LANGUAGE

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INTRODUCTION TO COLORS

Life would be dull without color. Imagine living in an environment where everything is grey color. The trees that cover the mountains would be different shades of grey, and grass would not be *mixishpyat* (green) at all.

I don't believe humans could live in an atmosphere like that. The people would experience so much stress they would die. Color is important to everyone and to everything. It teaches us to enjoy things. It teaches the wild creatures how to hunt and eat only those things that are good for them. The Sun, Earth and Water give our food color and it instills proper nutrients good for our body. Colors make it easier for us to identify them.

The Health experts tell us that *mixishpyat* and *mixish*, color food is good for us. These colors are in green vegetables and certain yellow fruits. Nature supplemented these with important nutritious proteins to give us the energy, and a healthy body to stay alive.

The other important role that color has in our life is; it gives humans and animals a feeling of well-being when the body responds to certain colors. There are also colors that influence feelings of sadness or anger..

The Indian people used natural herbal paint to decorate their face and the horse. A long time ago the Sahaptin people practiced this ritual:

Covered the entire body of a deceased person with *plash maxax*, (white clay).
The woman's face was painted with *mixixsh shapinchaash*(yellow paint)
The man's face was painted with *luts'a shapinchaash*(red paint)

The paint for the deceased covered the forehead down to the lower eyelid on the upper part of the cheekbones and spread to each ear. Their prophets who came back from the dead told them they were to do this. Everything they did followed the messages they were given by these prophets, because it came from God, *Tamanwila*.

The *tiinma* (people) have acquired the ability to give names and colors to things. We prefer one color over another. We can choose one color over another when we purchase things like a house, car, or clothing. Do you think color is important in our *wak'ishwit* (life)?