

The Lakota Legend of the End of the World

<http://aktalakota.stjo.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=8684>

Lakota story told by Jenny Leading Cloud of the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota to [Richard Erdoes](#) in 1967.

Somewhere at a place where the prairie and the **Maka Sicha** - *the Badlands* - meet there is a hidden cave. Not for a long, long time has anyone been able to find it.

Even now, with so many highways, cars and tourists, no one has discovered this cave. In it lives a woman so old that her face looks like a shriveled-up walnut. She is dressed in rawhide ... the way people used to before the white man came. She has been sitting there for a thousand years or more, working on a blanket strip for her buffalo robe. She is making the strip out of dyed porcupine quills, the way ancestors did before the white traders brought glass beads to this turtle continent.

Resting beside her, licking his paws, watching her all the time is **Shunka Sapa** - *a huge black dog*. His eyes never wander from the old woman, whose teeth are worn flat - down to little stumps because she has used them to flatten so many porcupine quills.

A few steps from where the old woman sits working on her blanket strip, a huge fire is kept going. She lit this fire a thousand or more years ago and has kept it alive ever since.

Over the fire hangs a big earthen pot, the kind some Indian peoples used to design before the white man came with his kettles of iron. Inside the pot, **wojapi** is boiling and bubbling. **Wojapi** is *berry soup*, good and sweet and red. That soup has been boiling in the pot for a long time, ever since the fire was lit.

Every now and then the old woman gets up to stir the **wojapi** in the huge earthen pot.

She is so old and feeble that it takes a while to get up and hobble over to the fire. The moment her back is turned, **Shunka Sapa** - *a huge black dog* - starts pulling the porcupine quills out of her blanket strip. This way she never makes any progress, and her quillwork remains forever unfinished.

The Sioux people used to say if the old woman ever finishes her blanket strip, then at the very moment that she threads the last porcupine quill to complete the design, the world will come to an end.

Source:

Erdoes, Richard and Ortiz, Alfonso. [American Indian Myths and Legends](#), Pantheon Books, New York, 1984.