

# TRIBES OF THE WEST

Pioneers traveling to the West might encounter many different Native American groups.



# SIGN LANGUAGE

**Sign language evolved out of necessity. The Plains Indian tribes spoke many different languages; sign language allowed them all to communicate. Captain Marcy describes sign language as “exceedingly graceful and significant.”**

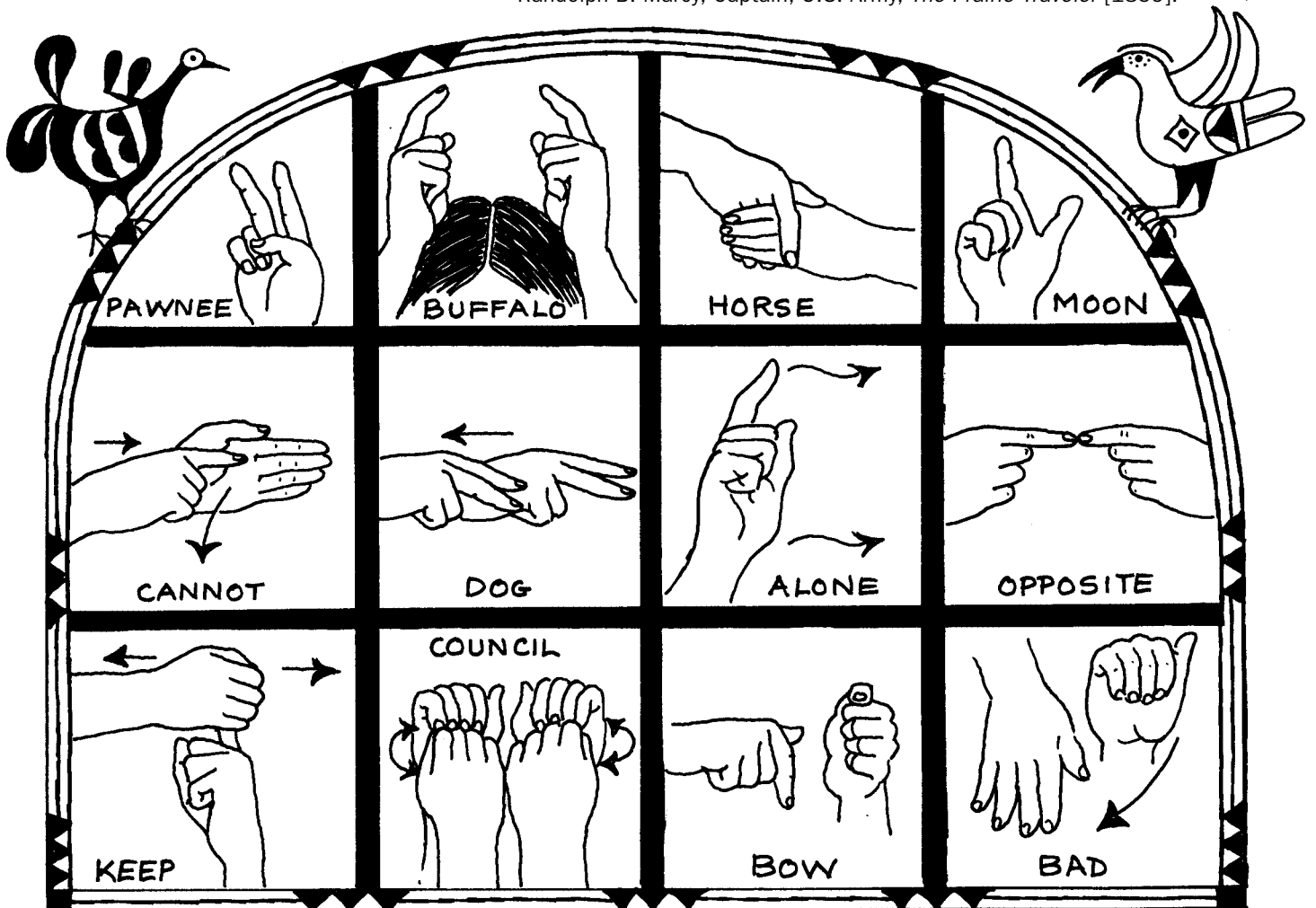
[On meeting Indians who are strangers to you] they may be asked if they are friends by raising both hands grasped in the manner of shaking hands, or by locking the two forefingers firmly when the hands are held up. If friendly they will respond with the same signal....The pantomimic [sign] vocabulary is understood by all the Prairie Indians....

The Comanche is represented by making with the hand a waving motion in imitation of the crawling of a snake.

The Cheyenne or “Cut-arm,” by drawing the hand across the arm, to imitate cutting it with a knife....

The Sioux [Dakota], or “Cut-throats,” by drawing the hand across the throat.

—Randolph B. Marcy, Captain, U.S. Army, *The Prairie Traveler* [1859].



# PARFLECHE PATTERN

Follow the steps below to make your own parfleche.

1. Cut out the pattern along the solid lines.
2. Fold the long sides on the dotted lines so the ends meet in the middle.
3. Fold the two ends in to meet in the middle.

