

Name: _____

Medicine Woman

By Patricia McCord

Susan La Flesche Picotte was the first Native American woman to earn a medical degree. She was born on the Omaha reservation in northeastern Nebraska on June 17, 1865. She lived during a time when a lot of change was happening in the United States as a whole, and among the Native American and Omaha tribe she was a part of.

Susan's father, Joseph La Flesche, was also known as Iron Eyes and was the last recognized Chief of Omaha. Susan was the youngest of four girls. Her father encouraged all of his daughters to value education. They attended a mission school that was run by the Presbyterians and later the Quakers where they were taught the culture and habits of whites. Susan and her sisters all became leaders and followed in their father's footsteps of helping the Omaha make the painful change to white society while still trying to hold on to their own culture.

Susan was only 8 years old when she became inspired to become a physician as she watched an Indian woman die because a white doctor refused to give her care. In 1886, she entered the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. Not only did Susan do well but she graduated a year early and 1st in her class!

After earning her degree, Susan went back to the Omaha Reservation where she was the only doctor and cared for more than 1,000 people. She helped her people understand that they needed to make changes to protect their health. Susan bought her own medical supplies, and she earned only \$500 a year for her work.

In 1894, Susan married and had two sons. She settled in Nebraska with her family and set up her own private practice. She later built the first hospital on a reservation that was not funded by government money. She broke the stereotype of women staying at home to raise their children. Susan treated both Native and white Americans in her medical practice.

Susan La Flesche Picotte spent her entire life learning about health and bringing her knowledge to the Omaha tribe through education and health care for her people. Although Susan spent her life helping people with health issues, she had many health battles of her own. She died when she was only 50 years old on September 18, 1915 after an illness of 3 years.



Susan La Flesche Picotte and her two children, Caryl and Pierre.

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1. What is the author's purpose for writing this article?
 - a. to persuade readers to pursue a career in medicine
 - b. to teach readers how to become a successful doctor
 - c. to entertain readers with an amusing story in Native American history
 - d. to inform readers about a historical figure

2. The fact below is **not** true.

Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte was the first woman to earn a medical degree.

Re-write the sentence above. Change the underlined words to make the sentence true.

3. Which statement is an opinion?
 - a. Susan La Flesche Picotte's father was chief of the Omaha.
 - b. La Flesche Picotte worked as the only doctor on the Omaha Reservation.
 - c. In the 1880s, Dr. La Flesche Picotte was the best doctor in America.
 - d. Susan La Flesche was the youngest of four girls in her family.

4. Use your math skills to complete the sentence below.

Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte died _____ years ago.

5. What event inspired Susan La Flesche to become a doctor?

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Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

_____ 1. degree

a. gave support to someone

_____ 2. reservation

b. academic rank for finishing college

_____ 3. chief

c. group of Native American families

_____ 4. encouraged

d. medical doctor

_____ 5. tribe

e. leader of a Native American tribe

_____ 6. culture

f. commonly held, but oversimplified view of a group of peoples

_____ 7. physician

g. sickness

_____ 8. stereotype

h. behaviors, attitudes, and customs of a group of people

_____ 9. illness

i. area of land set aside for Native Americans to live