2 People of the Dog Days

FIGURE 2.1: The Journey, by Gary Schildt (Blackfeet), 1988

READ TO FIND OUT:

- How your life is similar to a teenager's in the Ice Age
- The different ways we learn about the past
- The three periods of the ancient past and how people lived in each period
- Where you can see signs today of Montana's ancient people

The Big Picture

Montana's first people lived by the land and knew its rhythms intimately. As the land changed, the people changed with it.

You have more in common with an Ice Age teenager than you might think.

You probably live in a family group of fewer than 20 people. You adapt your activities to your environment in many ways—like skiing, fishing, or drinking hot chocolate in wintertime. You exchange what you have (money, for example) for other things you would like to have (like a book or CD). You travel to pick up supplies and sometimes just to get together to visit. You probably have met someone from far away who has introduced you to a new song, a new food, or a new way of doing something. And when you get together with your parents or grandparents on a long winter's night, you probably engage in another universal human activity: storytelling.

Life has changed quite a bit since the last Ice Age about 13,000 years ago. But people everywhere engage in the same basic human activities. We organize our societies into groups small and large. We adapt to the land and its climate. We trade and travel. We borrow ideas and technologies from other cultures. And we learn about our world and who we are by exchanging information and telling stories.

The study of history looks at these aspects of human activity:

- Social organization, government, and politics
- How people adapt to their environment
- Trade and economics
- Travel, transportation, and exploration
- Cultural influences and interaction among cultures
- Religion, beliefs, worldviews, and traditions

These six aspects of human activity create a "big picture" of a **culture** (a shared system of behaviors, attitudes, and understandings). Over thousands of years people of many different cultures have lived in this place now called Montana. They all participated in the six aspects of human activity outlined above. Like you and your family, they laughed and struggled, made friends, competed with rivals, and figured out how to make a living. They used the resources available to them, tried new ways of doing things, and did the best they could when big changes affected their way of life.

The history of Montana is their story. And you are a part of it.

Ways of Learning about the Past

Who were the first people in Montana? Where did they come from, and when? Montana's story begins with a mystery no one yet completely understands.

Many scientists believe that the first humans moved into North America between 30,000 and 13,000 years ago. Others believe humans have not been here that long. Many Indian people believe that their ancestors were created here and have always lived on this land. We are constantly discovering new information about the ancient past that changes our ideas about North America's first inhabitants.

There are currently two primary ways we learn about the ancient human past: through oral histories—traditional stories passed down over many generations—and through the science of archaeology.

Oral Histories: News from the Beginning of Time

Oral histories are important stories that people pass down from generation to generation. Oral histories mix wisdom and information together to express what the world was like for the ancestors of a certain family or society. When your parents or grandparents tell stories about what

FIGURE 2.2: Many Plains people recorded important events on "winter counts"—hides painted with symbols marking events that happened to a group during the course of a year or "winter." American artist Maynard Dixon (1875–1946) painted this scene, called *Blackfeet Historians*.

happened to them when they were young, they are sharing oral history with you.

Creation stories (traditional stories that tell about the creation of the world) are oral histories, too. Every culture in the world has creation stories. Some American Indian creation stories tell about things that may have happened during the last Ice Age. For example, some Indian creation stories say that animals, who reigned over the earth in ancient times, created the first summer. This may be a cultural memory of the rapid warming at the end of the last Ice Age.

Some Indian stories feature enormous monsters and giant birds. Surely the giant mammals and birds of early human history must have been fearsome creatures to the comparatively small human with a handheld spear.

Many cultures worldwide tell stories about a giant flood deep in their early history. The end of the most recent Ice Age could have brought worldwide flooding as glaciers melted and ice sheets broke off into the sea.

From the Salish: The Creator Makes the World

"Our story begins when the Creator put the animal people on the earth. He sent Coyote ahead, as the world was full of evils and not yet fit for mankind. Coyote came with his brother Fox to this big island, as the elders call this land, to free it of these evils. They were responsible for creating many geographical formations and providing good and special skills and knowledge for people to use. Coyote, however, left many faults such as greed, hunger, envy, anger and many other imperfections that we know of today.

"The elders tell us that Coyote and his brother are at the edge of this island waiting. If we do not live and respect each other as one, who are interconnected to the earth Mother, they will come back through here, and it will be the end of time, the end of this part of the universe. We must always work for a time when there will be no evil, no racial **prejudices** [pre-formed negative opinions], no pollution, when once again everything will be clean and all will be beautiful for the eye to behold, a time when spiritual, physical, mental and social values are interconnected to form a complete circle."

—CLARENCE WOODCOCK, *A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SALISH AND PEND D'OREILLE TRIBES (1982)*

For many people, creation is too important to be told in just one way. Every story from every culture has something to teach about the human experience. The many American Indian creation stories reveal important clues about how people who lived here thousands of years ago experienced their world.

Archaeologists: Detectives of the Past

Archaeology (the scientific study of human cultures by analyzing the physical clues that people have left behind) is another way to understand the ancient past. Just as people leave a record of their lives behind them through the stories that they tell, they also leave a physical record of their activities. For example, if you look at your lunch tray after lunch, you might see an empty milk carton, a sandwich wrapper, and a napkin with cookie crumbs on it. This physical record tells a lot about what you ate for lunch. It might even reveal the year or era in which you ate it.

All people leave traces of their lives behind them as **artifacts** (objects produced or shaped by human activity). Artifacts could be things people discarded, like garbage, an old glove, or parts of broken tools or toys.

They could be ceremonial objects buried in graves or parts of building foundations. Anything that shows that human beings once inhabited a particular location is an artifact.

Archaeologists (scientists who study archaeology) investigate the physical remains of human activity to learn about how people lived in previous times. By piecing together the evidence they find, archaeologists learn about what people did in a particular spot and when they did it.

Archaeologists ask questions of the evidence they find. What is it? What is it made of, and where did that material come from? What was each artifact used for? When was it used?

Almost all the artifacts from Montana's ancient people are either remains of cooking (fire-broken rock, seeds, and ashes) or remnants of tools, like those used for hunting, digging, processing food, or manufacturing other tools. Pollen and burned seeds indicate what kinds of plants were available for the people to use, and plant diversity tells about the climate. Tool artifacts tell a little bit about what animals the people hunted and what technologies they used—like a bow and arrow or a spear.

Animal bones and teeth are also commonly found artifacts. Archaeologists can estimate how old bones and teeth are by a process called **carbon-dating** (a scientific method of determining the age of something that was once alive). Teeth reveal the age of an animal and sometimes even the season in which it was killed.

FIGURE 2.3: Archaeologists spend a lot of time carefully examining a site and recording artifacts with painstaking accuracy. This photo shows noted Montana archaeologist Oscar Lewis working at Pictograph Cave in about 1937.

Table: People and Tools of Montana's Past

One way archaeologists determine the age of a site is by the kind of stone points and tools they find. Point styles and other tools changed over time as people developed new hunting techniques. Archaeologists also look at where artifacts are found. Artifacts found deep underground are generally older than artifacts found on the surface. The panel at right shows layers at a dig.

Historic Period — Many Cultures New people of many cultures enter Montana. The economy shifts from bison to other natural resources. New technologies change life, transportation, and trade.	**200 Years Ago To Present**
Protohistoric Period — Mounted Bison Hunters The coming of Europeans changes everything. Europeans **reintroduce** (bring back) horses to North America and bring guns to the continent, revolutionizing Plains Indian life. This marks the end of the Bison Era. The climate is wetter and cooler than today.	**300–200 Years Ago** Horses and Guns
Late Period — Bison Hunters This period is called "the Dog Days" because domesticated dogs pull travois, making travel easier. Bow-and-arrow technology (which uses narrower points) is invented. Bison cover the continent. The climate shifts from warm/wet to warm/dry, and then to cooler and drier than today.  Avonlea	**1,500–300 Years Ago** Bow and Arrow, Dog Travois
Middle Period — Hunter-Gatherers The climate shifts from warm to cool and then turns hotter and drier. Plains turn to grassland steppes. Ice Age mammals have disappeared, replaced by mammals of the Plains. People hunt with the atlatl, using smaller points than they did with spears.  Bitterroot	**8,000–1,500 Years Ago** Atlatl
Early Period — Big Game Hunters Nomadic hunter-gatherers live mostly on the Plains and hunt large Ice Age mammals using spears with large, heavy points. They use stone, wood, and bone tools. The climate shifts several times between warm and cool.  Clovis	**14,000–8,000 Years Ago** Spear

Studying the material evidence, archaeologists develop **theories** (sets of logically connected ideas) about the lives and habits of the people who created or used the artifacts. These theories change as new evidence is discovered.

How Theories Change: The Bering Land Bridge Controversy

Scientists often have to change their theories when someone discovers new information. The Bering Land Bridge theory is a good example.

In the late 1950s scientists began to theorize that people may have moved into the Americas across a broad region of land that connected North America and Asia. During the Ice Ages (2 million to 10,000 years ago), sea levels fell by about 300 feet because so much of the world's water was taken up in ice sheets. When this happened, the Bering Strait between Alaska and Siberia, which now lies under a very shallow sea, became a broad region of dry land 700 miles wide—wider than Montana. Even though people call it a land bridge, it actually formed a large territory in which many animal and plant species flourished.

Mammoths, bison, elk, and people spread across this territory. Many archaeologists believe that as glaciers shifted and retreated, people moved southward into North America, eventually spreading throughout Central and South America.

For nearly 70 years archaeologists thought that all humans in North and South America must have arrived in the Americas over the Bering Land Bridge. Many American Indians disagreed with this theory, because their oral histories said that their people had always been here.

Then, a few years ago, new archaeological discoveries began turning up possible evidence that people lived in North America many thousands of years before the last Ice Age created the land bridge. For example, in 2004, archaeologists in South Carolina discovered pieces of charcoal from an ancient hearth that some think is 50,000 years old.

Now scientists are expanding their theories. Some believe that different groups of people may have moved to the Americas in several waves

FIGURE 2.4: Just like you, the people of 12,000 years ago used tools appropriate to their environment. They lived in small family groups, moved around to gather supplies, and adapted to changes in their world. This illustration shows one artist's idea of what Ice Age Montanans might have looked like.

and from many different directions—including the Bering Strait—throughout human history.

For now, no one has the complete answer to the question, "Where did Montana's first people come from, and how did they get here?" People keep discovering new evidence to help answer this question. Meanwhile, it is important to recognize the value in using both oral histories and archaeology to better understand the past.

FIGURE 2.5: How would you bring down a woolly mammoth? Hunters of the Early Period killed giant mammals 10 or 20 times their weight with handheld spears at close range. Sometimes they lured the animals into swamps, bogs, or snowdrifts, where the giant mammals were **immobilized** (could not move).

Life at the End of the Ice Age

The earliest archaeological evidence of human activity in Montana dates back about 12,000 years to the end of the last Ice Age. This ancient time has many names but is commonly called the Early Period. The climate shifted several times from wet and cold to warm and dry and back again.

The region we call Montana looked very different 12,000 years ago. A vast ice sheet up to two miles thick covered most of northern Montana during the Ice Age. When it retreated, it left a flat plain of **glacial till** (sediment left behind by glaciers) where few plants could grow. Much of northern Montana was sheared flat as a driveway with just a few scattered hills.

River valleys had not begun to form. Water from the melting ice sheet would have covered this flat plain, **saturating** (soaking) the sediments and washing fine soils out of the gravel. In some places great glacial lakes with icebergs floating in them still covered the land. Some of these lakes drained slowly, creating outwashes of gravel.

In northwest Montana, in the Yellowstone Park area, and in other scattered regions, alpine glaciers covered the mountain ranges and filled mountain valleys. In other areas the land was **tundra** (semi-frozen shallow soil where plants grow low to the ground) or **muskeg** (a swampy bog too wet to grow many kinds of plants). Where the glaciers had reached their farthest point and retreated, they left behind piled-up mounds of gravel.

Over time the glacial till developed a little topsoil. Wind and water **erosion** (wearing away) carved rivers, buttes, and benches onto the flat plain. Birches and willows began growing in the river valleys and grassland on the upland benches. The glacial lakes broke through their ice dams and drained, leaving dry sand that eventually blew into big dunes. Alpine glaciers became much smaller, and the tundra and muskeg dried out and began to grow dryland trees, shrubs, and grasses.

FIGURE 2.6: Archaeologists at the MacHaffie Site, near Helena, carefully hand-dug a trench with trowels to expose layers of soil. They recovered pollen from different soil layers and charcoal from cooking hearths, which told them what kinds of plants grew there during different periods of time. From that we can learn about climate changes in this place over the past 9,000 years.

Imagine the landscape of the time as a giant puzzle pattern of many different pieces: gravel mounds, tundra, muskeg swamp, sand dune, alpine glacier, forest, and grassland. All those areas have existed in Montana since the last Ice Age—and are here still. They simply shift around, expand, and contract as the climate changes.

Big Game Hunters of 14,000 to 8,000 Years Ago

The first people who lived in this land moved in after the ice sheet retreated. Since there were so few plants here, they ate mostly **game** (wild animals hunted for food). They hunted the mastodon, mammoth, and ancient bison, using short, heavy spears. For their spears, these hunters crafted stone points 6 to 12 inches long, which archaeologists now call Clovis points. These handheld spears with long points would have been useless against fast-running game but were amazingly effective when thrust just right into the abdomen of a large animal.

The people lived in small, family-based groups and traveled widely during the year to get food and supplies. They moved when the animals moved, and they adapted their lifestyle to take advantage of all the opportunities the land provided. Their belongings were simple and few because they carried everything they owned with them. They made tools of stone, wood, and bone. They made small homes of tusk or wood poles covered with animal hides. The people could easily build and dismantle these shelters, taking the hides with them if they chose.

The Changing World of the Middle Period

About 8,000 years ago, after many centuries of slow climate change, the Northern Plains suddenly grew warmer and dryer. This warm, dry period lasted about 3,000 years and drastically changed life here.

FIGURE 2.7: This is one artist's idea of a small family group processing a deer for its meat, skin, and other materials, while a herd of bison grazes in the far distance.

In most of Montana, average temperatures rose only 5°F, and **precipitation** (rain and snow) decreased by only two to three inches per year. But that slight difference was enough to shrink the wetlands of central and eastern Montana and broaden open grasslands. In the mountainous west, the grasses, forests, and tundra responded to the heat by moving up in elevation.

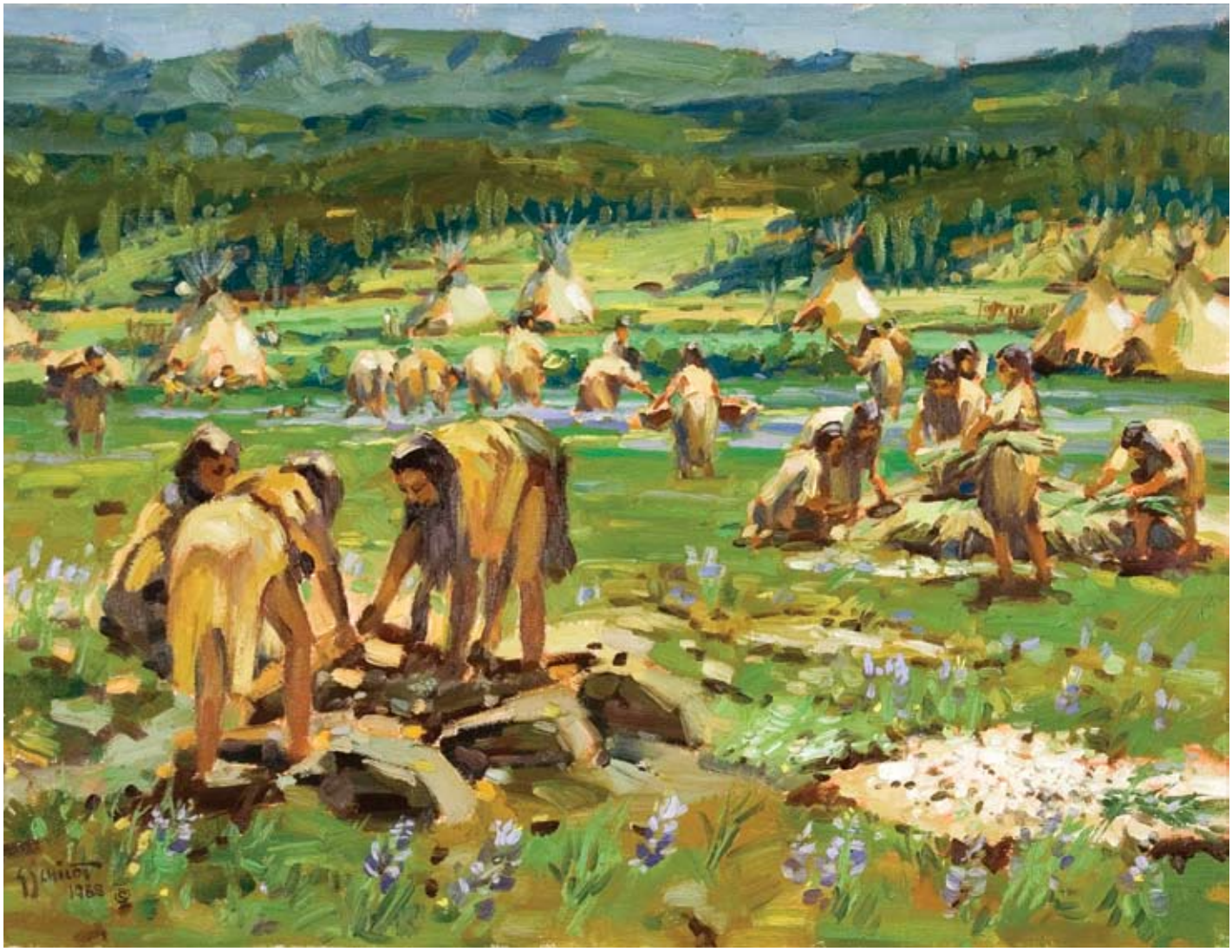


FIGURE 2.8: As the climate changed during the Middle Period, people began harvesting and cultivating more plants. Blackfeet artist Gary Schildt (born 1938) imagined this scene of **indigenous** (native) people in western Montana gathering camas, a starchy bulb that was an important food source.

Alpine glaciers melted or contracted—although as of 2007 there were still approximately 60 named glaciers in Montana.

Giant beavers, mammoths, mastodons, and other ancient mammals already were declining and were likely wiped out as their environment changed. Over time bison became smaller, and the grasslands filled with animals more suited to the dry plains, such as deer, antelope, and rabbits.

Hunter–Gatherers of 8,000 to 1,500 Years Ago

People's activities changed with their environment. As the large mammals disappeared, people focused more on smaller mammals. As plant **diversity** (variety) increased, people expanded their plant use. As the open plains grew hotter, they spent more time in the foothills and river bottoms.

Their tools changed with their activities. People began to use more plant-processing tools like grinding implements and baking hearths for camas and bitterroot. They also needed new technology to hunt the fast-moving mammals of the open plains. They began using smaller, notched stone points attached to a long spear. They could throw the spear, or—even better—propel it with an **atlatl** (a very effective throwing stick for killing animals at a distance).

FIGURE 2.9: This reproduction of a pictograph depicts a man wearing a horned mask headdress and carrying a bow with a spear-like weapon attached to it. In his right hand, he holds an arrow, and his arm is decorated with personal power images. The original pictograph was painted at Pictograph Cave some time in the deep past.

The people adapted to their changing world and thrived. Though each band remained small (about 25 people), the overall population increased. Eight thousand years ago the population was probably very small—one person to every 100 to 200 square miles.

By 1,500 years ago people had multiplied to one person every five square miles. The people shared information with neighboring groups, experimented with new technology, and constantly refined their knowledge of plants, animals, rivers, and weather.

The Late Period: Era of the Bison

Two important things happened about 1,500 years ago (perhaps even earlier) to usher in a new way of life on the High Plains: bison greatly increased in number, and people began to use a powerful new hunting tool, the bow and arrow.

Over time the climate turned cooler and slightly wetter again, nurturing the vast grasslands of the Northern Plains. Bison thrived in this lush, open environment and spread out across the Plains, the Midwest, and even as far south as present-day Alabama.

The Bison Hunters of the Northern Plains (1,500 to 300 Years Ago)

Bison had been important to the hunters of the Northern Plains since the Early Period, but now they were so plentiful—and the entire animal was so useful—that they became the primary focus of people's hunting and traveling, much of their social life, and many of their ceremonies.

FIGURE 2.10: The buffalo provided the very stuff of life to the native people of the Plains and Plateau regions. Every part of the bison was useful.

The bison was so important to the Plains people that they often called him "grandfather." Bison supplied food, tools, and the materials of life. In addition to the meat and hides, the people fashioned bison bones and horns into cooking utensils and tools, used the brains to soften hides, burned the chips for cooking fires, braided the hair into ropes and halters, boiled the hooves to make glue, and even used dried bison tails for flyswatters.

The **sinew** (animal tendon) made effective twine. Hair and tails decorated tipis. The hair on the hump made medicine balls. Bladders became water containers. And the hide of the bison was made into clothes, tipi covers, pouches, pipe bags, bedding, shields, splints, and perhaps hundreds of other household items.

The bison was present in every part of an Indian's life. For the people of this period, life on the High Plains would have been unimaginable without it.

Each tribe has several names for bison to reflect its importance as the center of life. *Esevone* (pronounced ESS-seh-vohn), meaning "the sound from within," is the Cheyenne word for bison when it is referred to as a sacred being.

Pipes: Powerful Symbols of the Plains

The pipe has been central to the spiritual life of Plains people since ancient times. Pipes are present in the earliest archaeological record and in the most ancient stories. They are still a vital part of life for many of the descendants of those early people.

The pipe is the center of an important **ritual** (ceremonial practice). Each part of the pipe smoking ceremony, from the design of the pipe to the kinds of prayers offered, is rich in symbolic meaning. When used ceremonially, the pipe is usually passed around in a circle and shared. To many Plains people, the pipe was originally a gift directly from the Creator. The smoke from the pipe symbolizes the presence of the sacred in their lives.

The tobacco plant, which has several varieties, was native to the Americas. Seeds and plants were widely traded. When tobacco was not available, people sometimes smoked other plants such as kinnikinnick. After Europeans arrived in Central and North America, the use of tobacco spread throughout the world.

Ways of Life

The resourceful hunters of the Late Period were always refining their tools. At some point hunters developed a strung bow to help propel their points. The bow was so effective for hunting that, as with any helpful new technology, others wanted to adopt it, too. Use of the bow spread quickly across the Plains. It helped hunters become more accurate and efficient. With plentiful bison and powerful hunting tools, the people of the Plains prospered.

At some time in the ancient past, dogs became an important part of life on the Plains. Dogs have been helpful companions to people all over the world for at least 12,000 to 14,000 years—and for at least 10,000 years in the Americas. People sometimes call the Late Period "the Dog Days" because dogs were such an important part of everyday life.

Dogs helped transport gear using a **travois** (a transport device made of two joined poles and drawn by an animal). With dogs' help, people could transport larger shelters. They developed tipis, which

FIGURE 2.11: People throughout the world have used pipes for thousands of years. Early Plains people made pipes from bison bones, wood, and stone in a variety of designs. This ancient pipe was made from catlinite—also called pipestone—which is native to present-day Minnesota and was traded widely.

were waterproof, could withstand the roughest weather, and with a few adjustments stayed warm in winter and cool in summer. The scraped-hide walls let in plenty of light, and a lifted wall let in breezes.

The edges of tipi linings were held down by stones that encircled the inside of the tipi. People often left these stones in place when they left a campsite, and today the Northern Plains are dotted with hundreds of **tipi rings** (stone circles left after tipi encampments) marking where people camped at different times.

The people wore clothing of soft animal skin—loose, straight dresses for women and leggings, shirts, and short coverings over the hips for men. Their moccasins were made of bison or deer hide. They used bison hide robes and furs of beaver, ermine, rabbit, and other animals to keep warm in winter. Women carried their babies in **cradleboards** (baby carriers with wooden frames) on their backs.

The Land Lives with Memories

For thousands of years many groups of people have lived in and moved through the land we call Montana. They spoke different languages and followed their own traditions. Some of them were the ancestors of the tribal people who live here today.

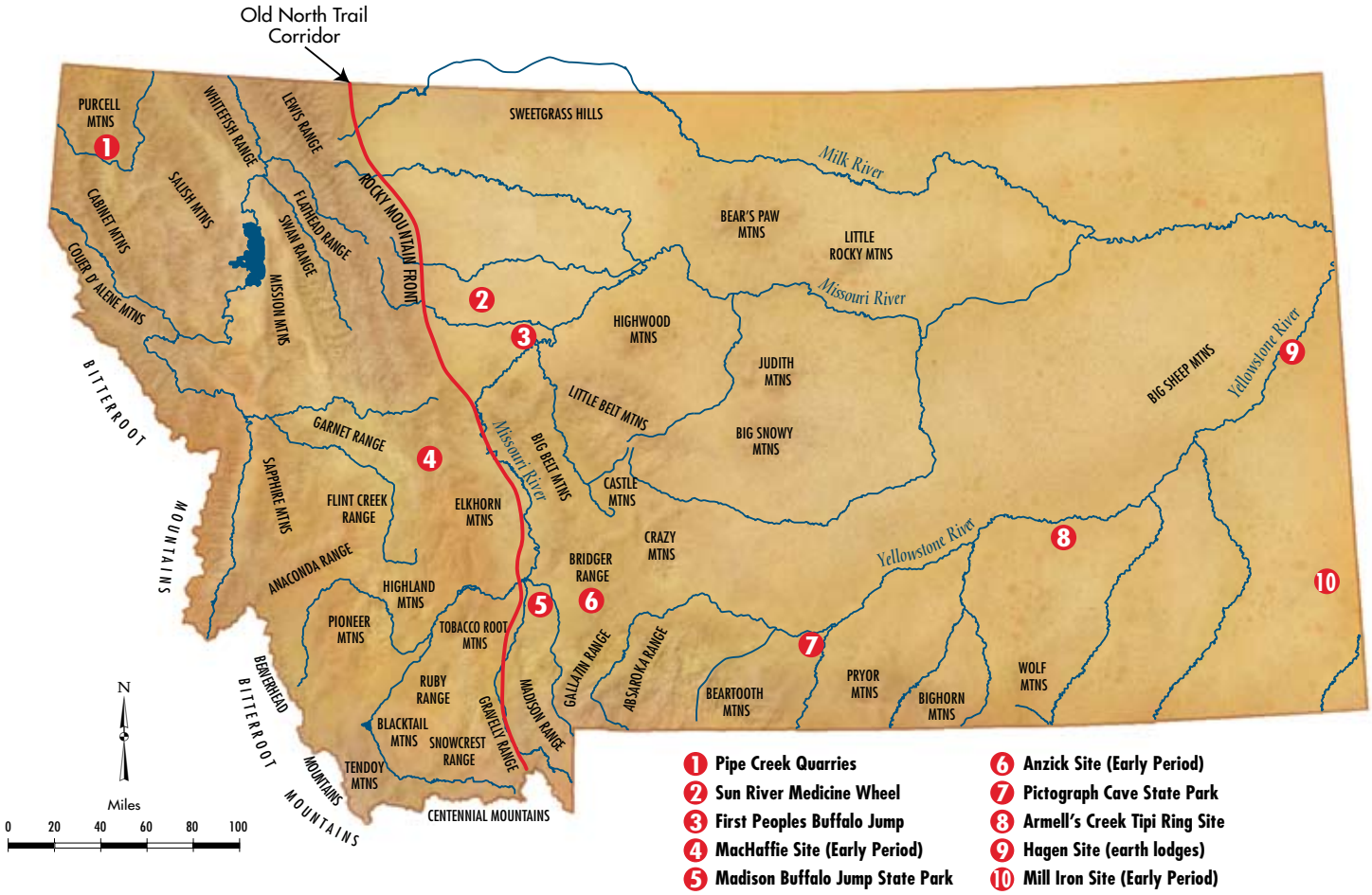


FIGURE 2.12: Almost every part of Montana has important archaeological sites that have revealed physical information about the lifeways of people throughout prehistory.

Selected Archaeological Sites and the Old North Trail

Over time the people probably visited or crossed every spot in Montana. They used some places many times over generations. The land connects today's Indian people to their ancestors as vividly as any family photo. Tribal place names reflect the people's spiritual connection to the sacred nature of the earth.

There are many places in Montana where the ancient people left signs of their presence—in the trails they followed, the stone features they built, and the art they created on rock. These are some of Montana's most special places today.

A Great Trek Long before Lewis and Clark

"My father once told me of an expedition from the Blackfeet that went south by the Old Trail to visit the people with dark skins . . . They were absent four years. It took them twelve moons of steady traveling to reach the country of the dark skinned people, and eighteen months to come north again."

—BRINGS-DOWN-THE-SUN, BLACKFEET, 1910

Along the Ancient Interstate: The Old North Trail

The people developed a complex network of trails and transportation corridors. One of the most important was a footpath that threads along the eastern foothills of the Rockies all the way from the Canadian Arctic south to the Mexican deserts. The Blackfeet know it as the Old North Trail.

The Old North Trail winds through gullies, over hills, around buttes, and across streambeds. It detours to meet up with good springs, hunting spots, and campsites. It intersects with other major trails that crisscross the continent. It is the oldest human migration trail in the Western Hemisphere.

FIGURE 2.13: No one knows who first built this rock cairn on the Lolo Trail or when they built it. By the nineteenth century, it had become so widely recognized that some people began calling it the Indian Post Office—though it is doubtful any Indians ever called it that.

In Montana, the Old North Trail runs just west of Browning, down through Augusta and the Helena Valley to Three Forks. Here it splits to run east, west, and south. In some places stone directional markers and ceremonial structures mark the trail.

Many artifacts have been found along the Old North Trail. One interesting artifact was a crusty bronze Roman coin dated 138 AD, found at an ancient tipi ring near Choteau. This kind of artifact is called an **anomaly** (something peculiar or unexpected).

Cairns and Medicine Wheels

People sometimes stacked rocks into a **cairn** (a pile of stones used as a marker) to mark a trail, a symbolic spot, or other landmark. Sometimes the purpose of an ancient cairn is clear—when used as a grave marker, for example. But the original purpose of many stone cairns is hard to determine. Some cairns are incorporated into larger features, such as medicine wheels, tipi rings, and other structures.

Medicine wheels (structures made of stones arrayed in a circle) are some of the most intriguing mysteries of the High Plains. Medicine wheels are stones set in a circle, with lines radiating out for many yards like spokes. The oldest of these wheels have been in place for perhaps

FIGURE 2.14: This medicine wheel site, near the Montana-Wyoming border, marks where spiritually important events have happened for many hundreds of years.

4,000 years. Stories from several Indian tribes attach slightly different meanings to the wheels. Some of them seem to be oriented to point to certain constellations in the sky at summer and winter solstice. Experts say there are about 170 medicine wheels left in the region around Montana, where perhaps many hundreds more used to be.

Art and Other Creations

Art has always been an important way people all over the world record events, express themselves, and share information. One of the earliest art forms is rock art—painting or carving on boulders, cliffs, and cave walls. Like people of many ancient cultures, Montana's early people created **pictographs** (images painted on rock) and **petroglyphs** (images carved into rock), which still can be seen in many places.

Pictograph Cave, a National Historic Landmark outside of Billings, is one of the most important cave painting sites in Montana. Three natural caves in the sandstone cliffs offered shelter for rest and a place for ceremonies over thousands of years. The cave walls bore more than 100 pictographs depicting hunting, ceremonial, and social scenes as well as marking locations and events. The ground also held the graves of nine young people from the Late Period.

When this site was first studied, between 1937 and 1941, archaeologists found more than 30,000 artifacts. Many of them were personal belongings from people who used the caves between 4,500 and 200 years ago. People warmed themselves at small fires, sharpening stone points and tools. They shared meals of rabbit, antelope, deer, bison, and shellfish from the Yellowstone River. They also ate wild birds, wild turnips, and other plants. The first people there hunted with the atlatl, while later visitors used bows and arrows. They slept on beds of grass, leaves, and sagebrush laid over warm, buried embers.

Remnants of leather clothing, fine bone **awls** (sewing tools used to punch holes), delicate beads, and bone decorations reveal something about the ancient people's craftsmanship and appreciation for artfulness. Game pieces, whistles, and carved figures tell us a little more about how they spent their

Sitting Mysteries and Sacred Ground

Artifacts and ancient features are visible all across Montana—on ranches, near hiking trails, at mine sites, and even in your own back yard. All artifacts, stone cairns, medicine wheels—even the stray arrowhead kicked up along a riverbank—are part of some family's personal history and all of Montana's cultural history.

When people destroy or remove them, all Montanans lose a link in the chain that connects them to their past. Each little artifact may be the only remaining trace of a long-forgotten people. It might also be the single clue to a new discovery.

It is very important to leave all artifacts where you find them and to help protect these precious links to Montana's early ancestors. If you find an artifact, contact the local tribal office or the State Historic Preservation Office in Helena (406-444-7715).

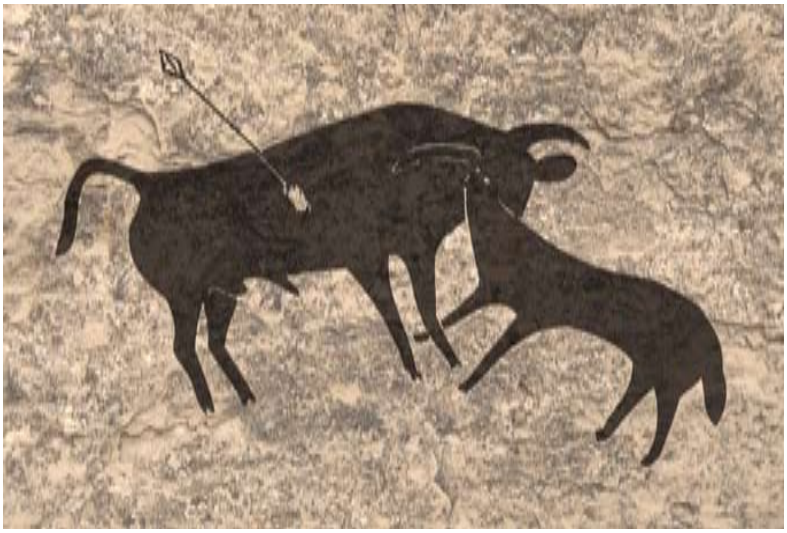
FIGURE 2.15: Six important petroglyphs, including this one, were found at Ellison Rock, near Colstrip in southeastern Montana. All were removed from the site and preserved before Ellison Rock was mined for coal in the 1980s. This one, now at the Montana Historical Society museum in Helena, shows three shield-bearing warriors.

FIGURE 2.16: This pictograph, from Pictograph Cave near Billings, shows a V-necked warrior with an early form of a rifle, and another warrior with an older-style weapon. Some interpret this scene as a record of a battle between people who had firearms and others who did not.

recreational time. Some Montanans believe Pictograph Cave is the single most significant archaeological site in Montana because it has such a rich history of human activity.

Life on the Edge of Great Change

By about 500 years ago, 350 different languages were spoken in North America. People of many different bands and traditions thrived in a variety of landscapes, from coastline to mountaintops, from forests to high prairies. They had adapted to many changes over thousands of years. The arrival of Europeans was about to transform their world again.



FIGURES 2.17 (left) and 2.18 (above): Not all pictographs are beautiful works of art, but some are. Archaeologists carefully reproduced all of the rock art they found at Pictograph Cave to preserve them for further study.

How It Worked

Buffalo Jumps and Bison Drives

One spectacular event in the lives of the later bison hunters was the bison drive. Many people would work together to drive or lure a herd of bison into a natural trap or over a cliff. Different groups organized bison drives differently. They would often take days to prepare.

If a good buffalo jump was available, people set piles of stones in a large V-shape to create a **drive line** (a stone formation like a runway) toward the cliff. Often a "buffalo runner," wearing the hide of a bison calf, would draw the lead cow toward the jump by bleating like a distressed calf. Others would startle the herd from behind, getting them moving toward the cliff. When the bison drew near the cliff, the people

FIGURE 2.19: The First Peoples Buffalo Jump, south of Great Falls, made a perfect bison kill site. Hunters drove the bison down a gentle slope and over this cliff. Bison did not have to plunge too far to be disabled. Hunters hid in the rocks below to finish the kill. The people butchered the bison at the bottom of the cliff, then processed the meat on the grassy area below.

Like Herding an Avalanche: One Story of the Bison Drive

"The pis-kun was built at the end of a long, flat land that ended with a steep bank at a creek canyon, or just a bluff. The buffalo are kept within a wide, V-shaped pile of rocks, with the point of the V ending at the cliff. A man hides behind about every third or fourth piles of these rocks, to scare the lead buffalo on into a faster run. If the buffalo runs to the other side of the V, the man on that side jumps up to scare the lead buffalo on. As the man jumps, he has both hands on a large robe, waving it up and down before him to scare the buffalo. The stampeding herd of buffalo goes faster and faster. As the leader reaches the edge of the cliff they are unable to stop. Even if they did, the herd in back would push them on over to their deaths. Those in the rear of the buffalo herd follow them on over to their death.

"Not all the buffalo get killed as they fall over the cliff. Many of them survive the fall because those that went over before them cushion their fall. Those that . . . are unable to run much are killed with stone mallets or the Native large hammer. After all the buffalo are killed, then the women and children come into the corral to help dress out the kill."

—PERCY BULLCHILD, BLACKFEET

FIGURE 2.20: There are 360 recorded bison jump sites in Montana (plus about 50 natural traps and other kinds of kill sites) where people returned again and again to harvest and process bison. Here at Wahkpa Chu'gn in Havre, archaeologists have excavated the soil beneath the cliff to reveal many layers of artifacts and bison bones.

frightened them into a stampede. As the animals tumbled over the cliff, hunters at the bottom would kill any still alive. Others waiting alongside the cliff would move in for butchering and processing.

If a good jump site was not available, the people would build a **bison pound** (a corral-like enclosure used to trap bison) of brush, rock, and large bones. They again piled stones to create a drive line toward the pound. As the animals neared the enclosure, hidden hunters jumped up and shouted to stampede the bison into the trap. Once the animals were in the pound, the hunters were able to kill the bison relatively safely and easily.

The **communal** (shared) bison drive must be one of the more remarkable hunting methods ever devised. It was technically difficult: bison are huge, unpredictable, and flighty. Yet the people could somehow make whole herds move many miles. In addition to their tools and techniques developed over time, the people also used spiritual offerings, prayers, and ceremonial knowledge to bring the animals to the people.

FIGURE 2.21: Horses changed the way Plains Indians hunted bison. Now they could go to the herd instead of moving the herd to a buffalo jump or a pound. American painter George Catlin (1796–1872) painted this scene of a bison hunt after visiting the Northern Plains in the 1830s.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Define: (a) archaeology; (b) carbon-dating; (c) tundra; (d) muskeg; (e) travois; (f) cairn; (g) medicine wheel; (h) awl; (i) bison pound; (j) artifact
2. What sort of physical clues do archaeologists use to uncover information about the past?
3. For more than 50 years, many scientists have believed that people migrated to North America using the Bering Land Bridge. What new evidence calls this theory into question?
4. What climate change occurred about 8,000 years ago that drastically changed the way people lived?
5. Why did bison thrive in the Late Period?
6. What is the Old North Trail?
7. What is the difference between a pictograph and a petroglyph?
8. Describe how a buffalo jump worked.

CRITICAL THINKING

1. What are some of the differences between oral histories and archaeology? Why is it important to learn about all theories and beliefs when studying history?
2. What do you think were some of the most important events to change the lives of the people who lived in this area in ancient times? Why? Which events happened over a long period of time to affect change and which happened more quickly?
3. Analyze the reasons we can still see remnants of the Old North Trail. Are old trails like this evident in other parts of the country?

PAST TO PRESENT

1. Compare the artifacts and features that someone might find around your home 400 years in the future with those that might have been found around your home 400 years ago.
2. Compare a day in your life with a day in the life of a person living in Montana 8,000 years ago. Then think about how your days differ depending on the time of year or the day of the week. How does that compare with the way people living here long ago experienced the same differences?
3. How did climate change affect the lives of the people who lived here in ancient times? Compare that to how climate change might affect our lives.

MAKE IT LOCAL

1. Is there any evidence that people lived or traveled through your region during Montana's earliest history? Describe that evidence.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Make a list of the historical state parks in Montana. Discover how many recognize events that took place within the past 200 years and how many recognize earlier events. Write a paragraph explaining your findings.
2. Make a diorama or drawing of a buffalo jump. Write a caption explaining the process.
3. Make a poster illustrating some of the important symbols that define the culture of the early Plains Indians.
4. Research creation stories from other North American tribes as well as from cultures around the world. Compare and contrast the prominent themes.

Credits

The following abbreviations are used in the credits:

BBHC Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming
GNPA Glacier National Park Archives
LOC Library of Congress
MAC Montana Arts Council, Helena
MDEQ Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Helena
MDT Montana Department of Transportation, Helena
MFWP Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Helena
MHS Montana Historical Society, Helena
MHSA Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena
MHSL Montana Historical Society Library, Helena
MHS Mus. Montana Historical Society Museum, Helena
MHS PA Montana Historical Society Photograph Archives, Helena
MSU COT Montana State University College of Technology, Billings
NMAI National Museum American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
MSU Billings Special Collections, Montana State University Billings Library
NARA National Archives and Records Administration
NPS National Park Service
NRIS Natural Resource Information System, Montana State Library, Helena
SHPO State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena
TM Travel Montana, Helena
UM Missoula Archives & Special Collections, The University of Montana–Missoula
USDA United States Department of Agriculture
USFS United States Forest Service
WMM World Museum of Mining, Butte

Chapter 2

FIG. 2.1 *The Journey,* Gary Schildt, MHS Mus.

FIG. 2.2 *Blackfeet Historians,* Maynard Dixon, MHS Mus.

FIG. 2.3 Oscar Lewis at Pictograph Cave, photo by Bill Browne, MHS PA PAc 90-96 Sheet 1, #7

TABLE, PAGE 27 Projectile points, courtesy Troy Helmick, and stratigraphic layers, courtesy MDT

FIG. 2.4 Ice Age people, courtesy MDT

FIG. 2.5 Prehistoric mammal next to human, courtesy Geoffrey Wyatt, Helena

FIG. 2.6 MacHaffie Site, Jefferson County, courtesy SHPO

FIG. 2.7 Middle Period people processing food and hides, courtesy MDT

FIG. 2.8 *Camas Gathering,* Gary Schildt, MHS Mus.

FIG. 2.9 Warrior with bow and arrow from Pictograph Cave, courtesy FWP and MSU COT

FIG. 2.10 Various uses of the bison, MHS Mus.

FIG. 2.11 Sitting Bull's catlinite pipe, MHS Mus. 1990.85.01

FIG. 2.12 Selected Archaeological Sites and the Old North Trail, map by MHS, base map courtesy NRIS

FIG. 2.13 "Indian Post Office" along the Lolo Trail–Rock Cairns, 1988, photo by John Smart, MHS PA

FIG. 2.14 Bighorn Medicine Wheel National Register Site, courtesy SHPO

FIG. 2.15 Petroglyph from Ellison Rock, MHS Mus. 1988.14.10

FIG. 2.16 Pictograph Cave, late 1920s, photo by Fred C. Krieg, MHS PA PAc 91-75

FIG. 2.17 Red Elk from Pictograph Cave, courtesy FWP and MSU COT

FIG. 2.18 Bison with wolf and arrow from Pictograph Cave, courtesy FWP and MSU COT

FIG. 2.19 Ulm Pishkun State Park [now First Peoples Buffalo Jump], 1988, photo by John Smart, MHS PA

FIG. 2.20 Wahkpa Chu'gn Buffalo Jump Archaeological Site, Havre

FIG. 2.21 *Buffalo Hunt Surround,* George Catlin, MHS Mus.