

3 From Dog Days to Horse Warriors: Montana's People — 1700–1820

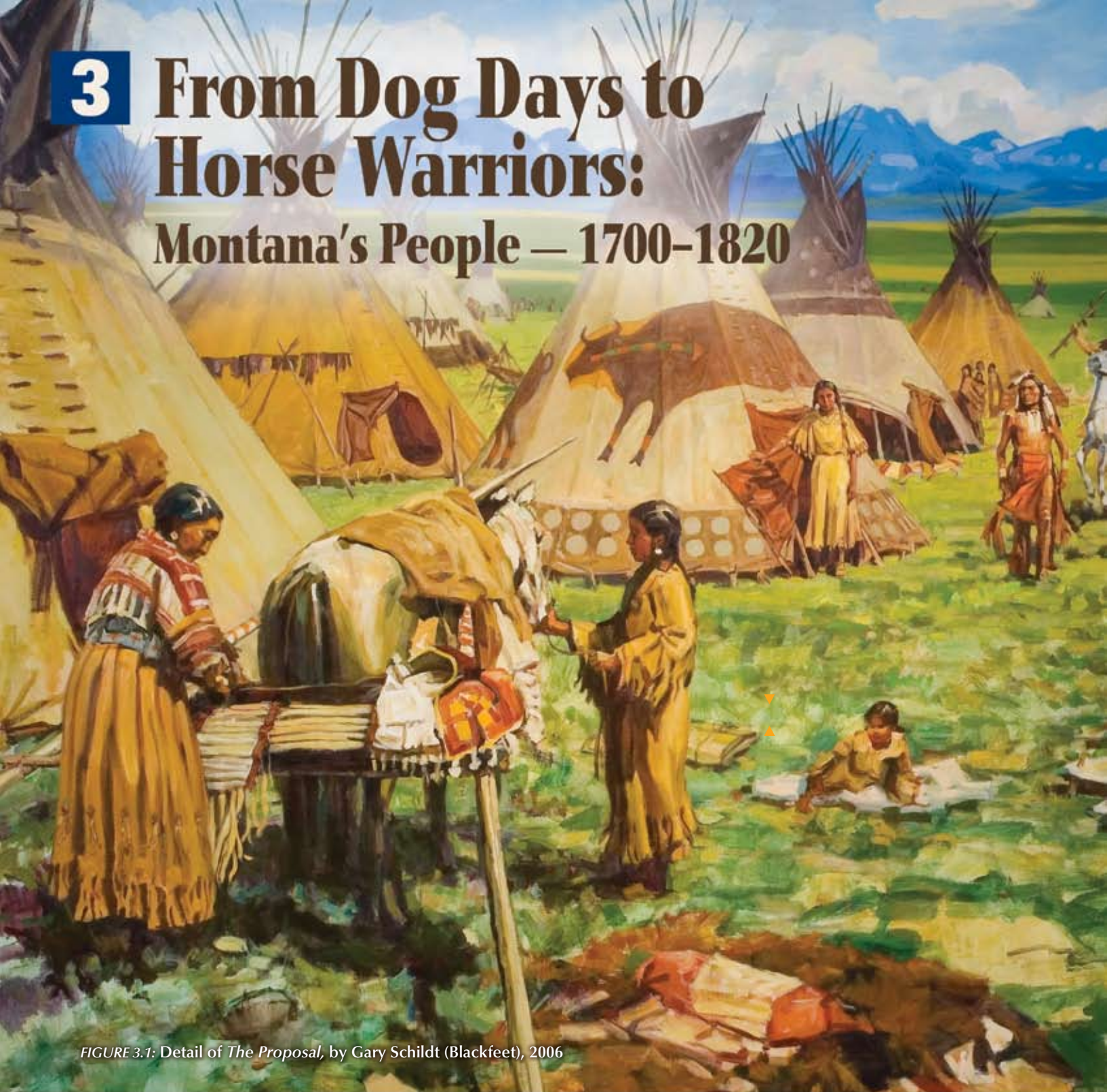
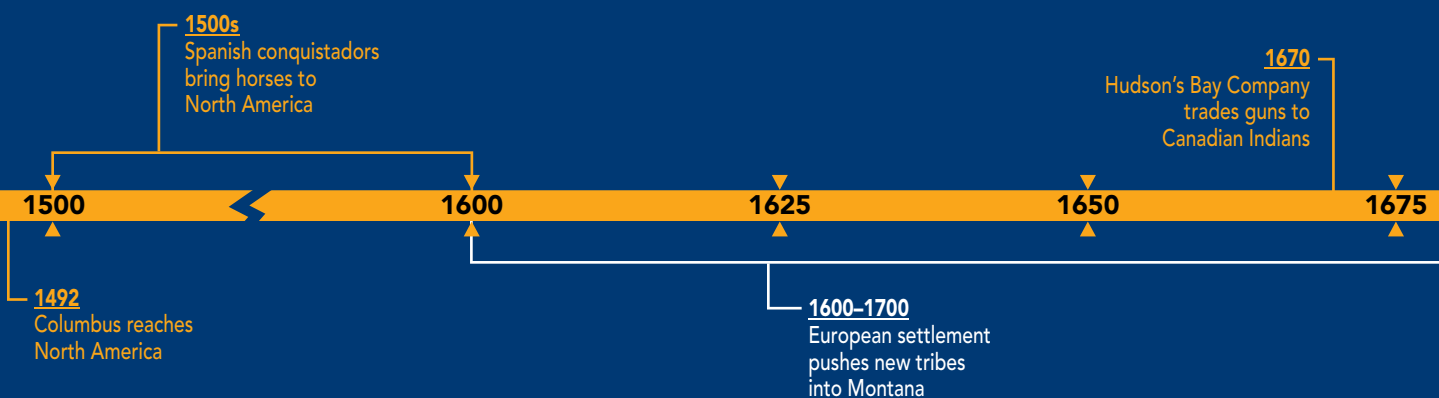


FIGURE 3.1: Detail of *The Proposal*, by Gary Schildt (Blackfeet), 2006





READ TO FIND OUT:

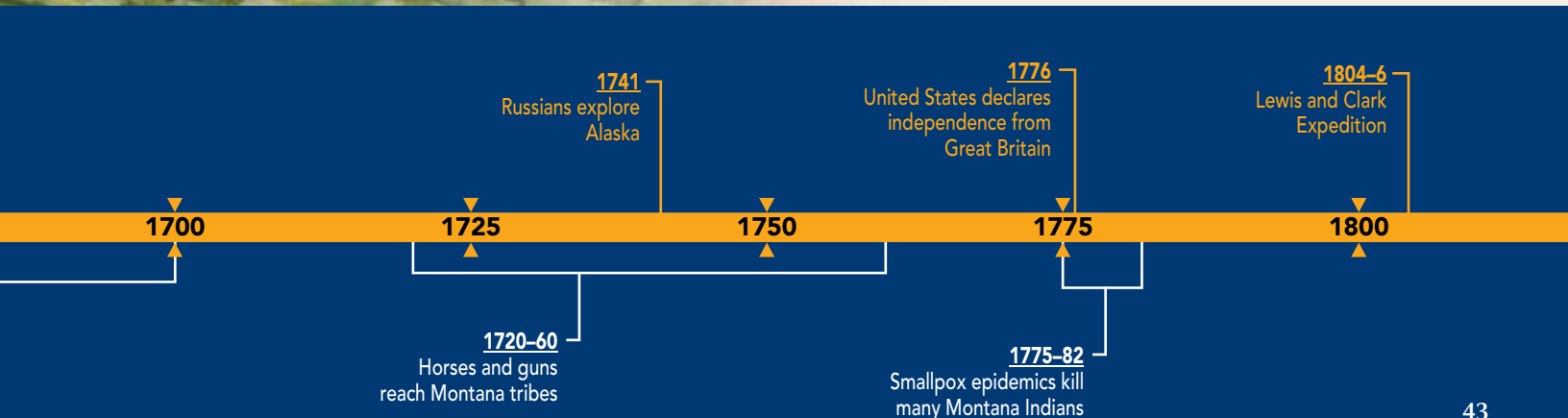
- Who lived here 300 years ago and what their lives were like
- How Europeans' arrival on the continent affected the people already here
- How horses and guns changed life dramatically
- The real names of Montana's Indian tribes

The Big Picture

The arrival of Europeans brought both pressures and opportunities to the American Indian societies of this region. As forces swirled around the continent, guns and horses brought Plains societies new power.

How does your everyday life differ from the life of your parents or grandparents when they were young? Do you spend your day the same way? Do you do the same kind of work and enjoy the same entertainments as they did?

Societies are always changing, and people's lives change with them. Many different forces can cause societies to change: environmental shifts, war, disease, new technologies, and new means of transportation. Exposure to new people and ideas also changes societies. When Europeans arrived on the shores of the American continent, life changed for everyone.



Why Are Indians Called Indians?

When Columbus sailed west in 1492, he expected to land in the East Indies, a series of islands off the coast of Asia. Even though he arrived in the Americas instead, he and the people who came after him still called the people who lived here “Indians.” Another theory suggests that Columbus and other Spanish explorers called the native people of America “Indios” from *In Dios*, which is Spanish for “in God.” These people never called themselves or one another Indians. Many called themselves “the people” in their own language. Today most American Indians prefer to be identified by their tribal name.

Societies and Cultures of the Northern Plains and Rockies

Human beings live in groups. Two main ways that we group people are by society and by culture. In its broad definition, a **society** is a large group of people who live in a particular place, speak a common language, and share interests, relationships, basic beliefs, and social identity.

A **culture** is a shared system of behaviors, attitudes, and understandings. A society’s culture includes all activities and beliefs that people teach one another, including ways of worshipping, of making art, of getting food, and of decorating their houses and clothes.

Many different societies have lived in this land over time—Blackfeet, Chinese, Assiniboine, Mexican, and Hutterite, to name only a few. These societies all share some cultural beliefs and practices with other societies. Almost all of these societies also have cultural characteristics that are theirs alone. One thing is true, though. All cultures change over time.

European Immigration Changes Life on This Continent

You might not think that a few European immigrants to the East Coast or to Central and South America would affect life here very much. Yet the **immigration** (moving to a new country) of Europeans after 1492 set off a series of **consequences** (important results) that washed like a tidal wave across the entire continent. The contact between Indian and European cultures changed life so much that scholars divide human history in the Americas into the **Pre-contact Period** (before many Indians came into contact with European cultures) and the **Post-contact Period** (after contact between European and American Indian cultures), which began about 1600.

Diseases Sweep across the Continent

Without even knowing it, the first immigrants carried European diseases like smallpox, cholera, and measles to the Americas. The **indigenous** (native to a particular land) people had never been exposed to these diseases before. Their bodies had no resistance to them. Smallpox was especially horrible: people suffered high fever, chills, and unbearable pain. It left terrible scars on those who survived. A person could catch it merely by touching the clothing or belongings of someone who had it. People infected one another before they even knew they were sick.

FIGURE 3.2: Winter counts (historical records created by American Indian tribes) recorded the devastating presence of smallpox. This detail of a Lakota winter count shows a man covered with spots. This represents a year in which tribal members were infected with the painful, disfiguring pockmarks caused by smallpox.



European diseases spread across the continent in waves, killing huge numbers of people. In some very populated areas, 90 percent of the Indian people may have died. Among smaller, more **mobile** (able to move) groups, death rates were lower. Some sources say that more Indian people died from disease between 1500 and 1600 than would be born in the next 400 years.

What does it mean for a civilization to lose 50 to 90 percent of its people? If so, many American Indians had not died so suddenly, the history of North America—and of Montana—might be very different.

These diseases upset the balance of power across the continent and changed the course of human history in the Americas. Survivors moved around and formed new communities in response to these enormous losses. Some tribes gained power over others simply by outnumbering them. These diseases had an enormous impact on the history of Montana tribes.

Immigrants Push Tribes Westward

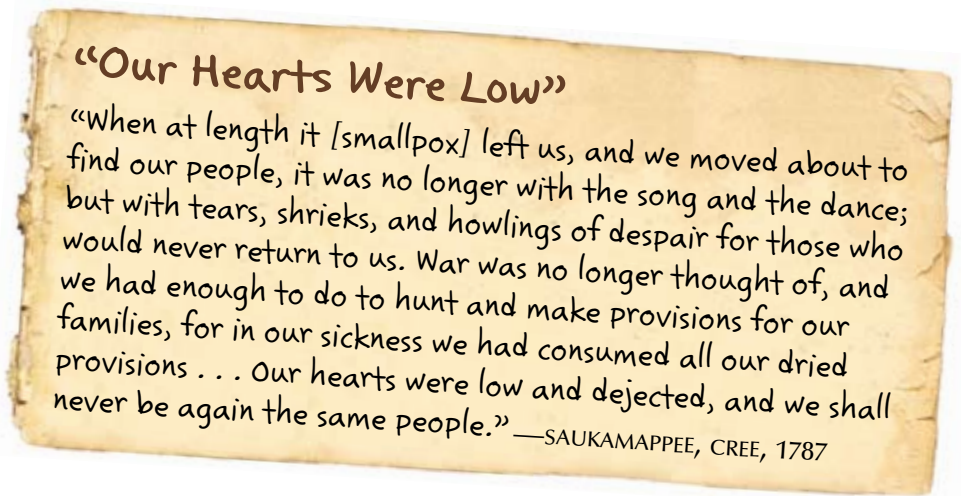
As the immigrants expanded their settlements, they pushed the remaining Indian people westward. American Indian groups in the East began invading others' territories as they fought to establish new homelands.

More bands moved onto the lightly populated Plains. Some tribes that had used this land for thousands of years now shifted their power centers and concentrated full-time in this region. Each tribe has its own way of telling about the changes during this period.

The Plateau Tribes: Salish, Kootenai, Pend d'Oreille

The **Kootenai**, **Salish**, and **Pend d'Oreille** people believe their ancestors have been present in this region forever. These tribes have cultural connections to bands farther to the west on the Columbia Plateau, so they are sometimes grouped with the Plateau Indians. But they used tipis and **travois** (a transport device made of two joined poles and drawn by an animal), just as Plains people did. These three tribes settled in what is now northwest and central Montana.

The Kootenai spread east to the Milk and Missouri Rivers. One group called themselves K'tanaxa (too-NAH-ha), which means "eating food plain." The French called them Kootenai, which has no meaning in the Kootenai language.



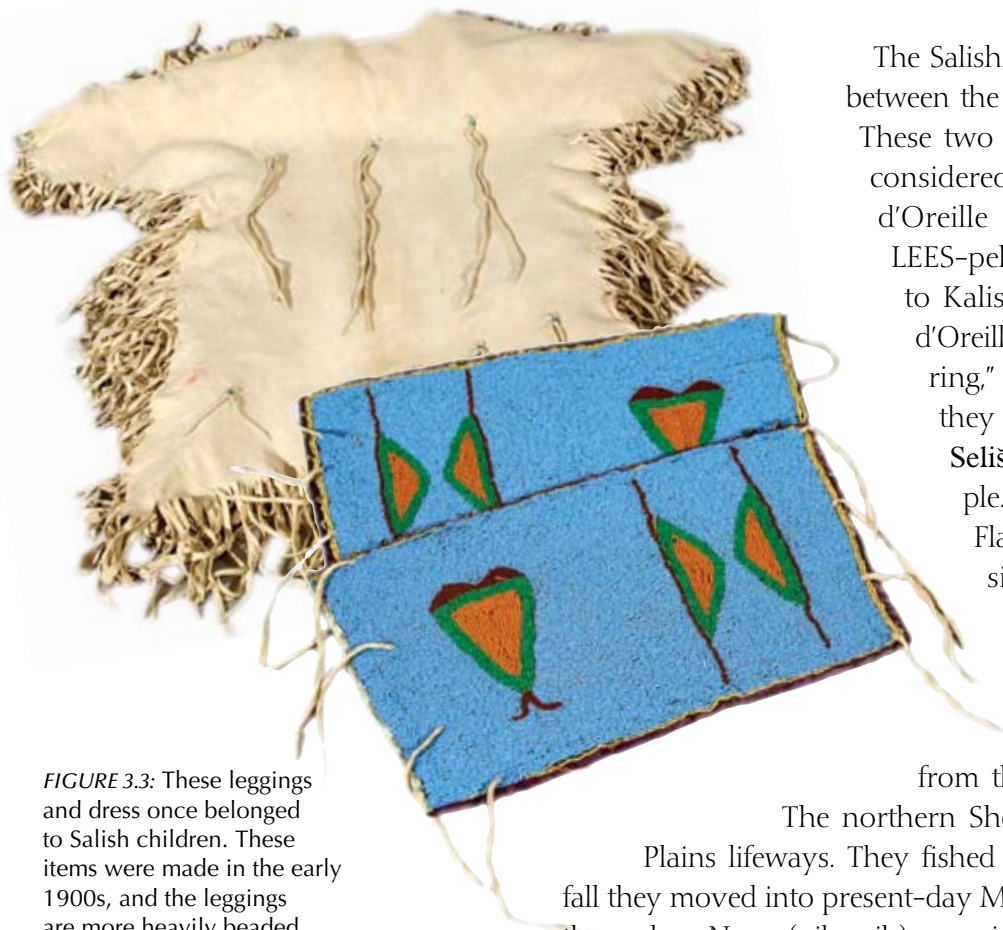


FIGURE 3.3: These leggings and dress once belonged to Salish children. These items were made in the early 1900s, and the leggings are more heavily beaded than Salish clothing of the 1700s. The Salish acquired European-made items like glass beads and wool cloth through trade networks long before Europeans themselves found their way here.

The Salish and the Pend d'Oreille tribes settled between the Rocky and the Bighorn Mountains. These two tribes spoke similar languages and considered one another relatives. The Pend d'Oreille called themselves **Q̓lispé** (kah-LEES-peh), which was later Americanized to Kalispell. The French called them Pend d'Oreille (Pon-de-RAY), which means "ear-ring," after the traditional shell earrings they wore. The Salish called themselves **Seliš** (SEH-leesh), which means "the people." European newcomers called them Flathead Indians, perhaps because the sign-language gesture for their tribe looked like the sign for "flat head."

Sometime before 1600 the **Shoshone**, or Snake Indians, spread into southwest Montana

from the Great Basin region to the south.

The northern Shoshone followed both Plateau and Plains lifeways. They fished for salmon at home. In spring and fall they moved into present-day Montana to hunt bison. Shoshone call themselves **Newe** (nih-wih), meaning "the people."

Two bands of Shoshone, the **Bannock**, or Panáti (bon-ock-QUOT), and the **Sheepeater**, or Tukudika (TOO-koo-dee-kah), lived throughout the West on both sides of the Rockies.

Woodland Tribes Move to the Plains

The **Crow** people arrived in Montana after a migration over many decades. They are relatives of the Hidatsa, now of North Dakota. Their ancestors lived in the woodlands near the Great Lakes. The Crow have several stories about what prompted them to move west.

Over many years they moved from Manitoba south to the Great Salt Lake and then north to the Dakotas, where they settled. Some people believe that in the early 1600s a band of perhaps 500 people broke away from the Hidatsa and moved farther west, over time establishing a homeland in northern Wyoming. Others believe this movement happened much earlier. Their relatives called these people Apsaalooke (ab-SAH-lah-gah), which means "children of the large-beaked bird." (Later, Europeans interpreted this to mean "crow.") Within a few decades they had spread out to dominate much of central and south-central Montana.

The **Blackfeet** people share language roots with Algonquian peoples farther east. Though Blackfeet people have inhabited the Northern Plains for thousands of years, it was in the early 1700s that some bands came to live permanently in present-day Montana. The three branches

of the Blackfeet peoples—the Northern Blackfeet (Siksika, pronounced sik-sik-AH), the Blood (Kainah, pronounced kie-NIE), and the Piegan (Pee-GAN), or Pikuni (pronounced pee-koo-NEE)—moved onto the Plains from the forestlands of central Canada. The Piegan Blackfeet moved southwest from the Saskatchewan region into Montana’s rich bison grounds. Blackfeet people call themselves the Niitsitape (nee-it-see-TAH-peh), meaning “the real people.”

Gros Ventre (grow VAHNT) people, also part of the Algonquian language group, are related to the Arapaho and the Cheyenne. They traveled the Northern Plains from the Red River to the Rockies. In the 1700s they separated from the Arapaho and allied with Blackfeet bands of present-day Montana. They called themselves A’aninin (ah-ha-NEE-nin), which means “white clay people” or “an upright person.” They lived in central and eastern Montana, at the edge of Blackfeet country.

The **Assiniboine** had traveled throughout the Northern Plains since the early 1600s. They wintered on bison grounds along the Missouri River and progressively moved westward to ally with the Cree and Chippewa against many bands of Sioux, Arikara, Cheyenne, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventre. The name Assiniboine (Assnipwan, pronounced ahs-nee-PWAN) means “stone cookers,” referring to their method of

FIGURE 3.4: This painting, *Preparing and Cooking Camas*, by Montana Blackfeet artist Gary Schildt (born 1938), shows women processing and cooking camas root, an edible bulb full of protein. The metal bucket and cloth scarf are trade items imported through trade routes.





FIGURE 3.5: Several tribes developed a Buffalo Dance ceremony to call a bison herd toward the people. William Standing (1904–1951), an Assiniboine artist from the Fort Peck Reservation, based this picture of a ceremony for a successful buffalo hunt on stories he heard from tribal elders.

cooking food with hot stones. They call themselves Nakoda (NAH-ko-da), meaning “generous people.”

As French and Scottish trappers moved through the central woodlands in pursuit of furs (after 1600), they had children with Indian women. These part-Indian, part-European people were called **Métis** (Meh-TEE, French for “mixed”). By the early 1700s Métis communities had spread from the Great Lakes area west to present-day Montana.

Cree and **Chippewa** people also hunted and traveled through these lands. By the end of this period of great change, they, too, had become a constant presence here. The Chippewa called themselves Anishanabe (AH-nish-ah-NAH-beh), meaning “original people.” Plains Cree people called one another Ne hiyawak (neh-high-YOE), meaning “those who speak the same language.”

By 1700 the land we call Montana was home to many societies and cultures. Some of them were descendants of people who had been here from time **immemorial** (beyond remembering). Some were drawn here by changes and opportunities.

Tribal Lifestyles around 1700

In 1700 the geography and climate of the region were like today’s, but the landscape was very different. The plains and foothills of the Rockies swarmed with wildlife. Grizzly bears, elk, deer, wolves, pronghorn antelope, beavers, rabbits, squirrels, fish in enormous numbers, birds of every sort, and vast herds of bison filled the land, rivers, and skies.

As people came together here, they adapted their lifestyles to the environment and climate. Each tribe retained its own traditions,

but like people everywhere they also shared tools, ideas, and ways of doing things. They may have farmed in wetter regions to the east, or may have fished for salmon west of the Rocky Mountains, but when they moved to the dry western Plains they became hunter-gatherers. They harvested plants, berries, and roots, and hunted. They lived in tipis that they could move easily.

For all people of the Northern Plains, life centered around the bison (see Chapter 2). The bison provided food, hides for lodges and blankets, sinew for making things, and supplies of every kind. Bison hunting was one of the most important activities in every community. Everyone participated on a mental, spiritual, and physical level. Some groups developed elaborate buffalo-calling **rituals** (ceremonial practices). The Blackfeet had the *iniskim* (in-NIS-kim), a buffalo stone that would help call the bison to the people.

“The buffalo was part of us, his flesh and blood being absorbed by us until it became our own flesh and blood. Our clothing, our tipis, everything we needed for life came from the buffalo’s body. It was hard to say where the animal ended and the man began.”

—JOHN (FIRE) LAME DEER (LAKOTA SIOUX)

The Seasonal Round: The Yearly Pattern of Life

People gathered food and medicinal plants according to an annual cycle called the **seasonal round** (the pattern of harvesting various foods according to the season). Salish storytellers tell how they dug roots in the spring—first the bitterroot, then camas bulbs, wild onions, “Indian potatoes” (a wild-flower whose root looks like a tiny potato), wild carrots, and other roots and bulbs. Strawberries and serviceberries were first to ripen in summer, followed by huckleberries, chokecherries, and hawthorn berries. People hunted bison on the open plains from spring until fall. In fall, men hunted deer and elk while women dried meat and prepared hides for robes and buckskins. Winter was the time for quieter activities: men trapped for furs and fished while women sewed and repaired clothing and robes. This was the time when the elders told stories, passing down wisdom and history to the younger generations.

For the Blackfeet, the seasonal round was similar. The first spring thunder marked the end of storytelling season. It was time to move camp from the sheltered valley where they had spent the winter onto the prairies for the late spring bison hunt. Just before leaving, the men planted tobacco seeds to grow until they returned. Children helped gather wood and haul water. After eating meat and berries all winter, the people feasted on duck eggs, prairie turnips, and roasted camas bulbs.

In summer they moved again to pick serviceberries, gooseberries, red willow berries, and bull cherries. The people dried and pounded chokecherries to mix with bison meat and fat for **pemmican** (a traditional food made of dried meat, fat, and berries), an important food for all Plains Indians.

When the geese flew south, the fall bison hunt began. Afterward the women processed meat and tanned the bison robes while men went into the hills to cut



FIGURE 3.6: American painter Maynard Dixon (1875–1946) drew this scene, which could have occurred any summer day in the past 10,000 years on the Northern Plains. Two women scrape a bison hide that is stretched out with stakes pounded into the ground. One woman uses a traditional hide scraper, while a little child plays beside her.

Assiniboine Calendar of Months

- January *Wicogandu* (wee-cho-gone-due) Center Moon
- February *Amhanska* (ahm-ha-ska) Long Dry Moon
- March *Wicinstayazan* (wee-cheen-shta-yah-zah) Sore Eye Moon
- April *Tabehatawi* (tah-bex-ah-tah-wee) Frog Moon
- May *Indiwiga* (een-due-wee-gah) Idle Moon
- June *Wahequosmewi* (wah-bah-whoa-shma-wee) Full Leaf Moon
- July *Wasasa* (wha-shaw-shaw) Red Berries Moon
- August *Capasapsaba* (cha-pa-sob-sob-ah) Black Cherries Moon
- September *Wahpegiwi* (wox-beh-xee-wee) Yellow Leaf Moon
- October *Tasnaheja-hagikta* (ta-shna-heh-jah hah-geek-da)
Striped Gopher Looks Back Moon
- November *Cuhotgawi* (chew-hote-gaw-wee) Frost Moon
- December *Wicogandu-sungagu* (wee-cho-gone-due sue-gha-goo)
Center Moon's Younger Brother



FIGURE 3.7: This Salish hide scraper has a blade made of obsidian, a hard, dark glass-like stone created by volcanoes. The blade is **hafted** (secured) with rawhide to the curved end of a handle made of antler. Women often notched the handle once for every hide they scraped. Well-made tools like this commonly lasted a lifetime.

lodge poles. They wintered in valleys protected from wind, near water, firewood, and bison wintering grounds. Bison hunting continued through January. In the cold months, the Blackfeet turned to sledding and snow play during the day and storytelling at night.

Cultural Differences: Many Poles Support the Lodge

With all their similarities, each tribe had its own identity and its own language. Each favored its own clothing and hairstyles, tipi designs, and ceremonial decorations. All Plains Indians wore moccasins made of tanned hide, but each tribe's design was so distinct that it is said a person's tribal identity could be determined by a single footprint. A traveler spotting a camp over a ridge immediately recognized whose tribe it was by the tipi designs.

Tribes also organized their societies differently. The longtime hunter-gatherers—the Blackfeet, for example—were organized into smaller bands led by men who had earned status by showing bravery in battle or great success in hunting. Each band might have several leaders with different strengths and skills. The band was a flexible structure. Individuals or families could leave one band and join another if they wanted to. Social structures remained flexible, and perhaps better able to adjust to the changes of a mobile lifestyle.

Tribes that grew out of **sedentary** (not moving around) societies—the Crow, for example—were divided into family-based clans. A person's clan was a big part of his or her identity. Clan members provided support no matter what the need. In turn, a person was expected to be loyal to the clan at all costs. This firm social system helped clan-type tribes remain strong and unified.

In some groups, women owned all the property, selected leaders, helped decide important issues, and held great influence. People cultivated courage, humility, and generosity in their children. A person gained respect by hosting a great feast and giving everything away—hides, blankets, food, ornaments, and pipes.

Almost all tribes had smaller societies—military societies for **intertribal** (between tribes) warfare, police societies to enforce tribal

Children Learned at Play

Like children everywhere, youngsters of the Northern Plains played many games and sports. By playing games, kids built strength and learned important skills for living. Boys staged mock hunts, bison jumps, and battles. Girls played kick-ball—similar to hackysack—kicking a skin ball stuffed with pronghorn hair as many times as they could without letting it touch the ground.

In wintertime men and boys played snow snake, using a carved stick about three feet long with one end shaped like a snake head. Contestants threw the snow snake as far as they could down a glazed ice track to see whose snake traveled the farthest. The hoop game was also popular. Participants tossed a hoop made of a bent willow branch laced with rawhide, and tried to throw a spear through the center of the hoop, earning different points for each hole in the rawhide web of the hoop. Kids and adults joined in ball games, stick games, races, games of **proWess** (skill), and games of chance as the air rang with laughter and cheering.

rules, young men's and women's societies to provide opportunities to serve the tribe. Each society had its own dances, style of dress, art, and songs.

Trade Networks Connected Them All

Throughout human history, people have traded what they have for what they need. Indian people of the Northern Rocky Mountain region traded widely. They supplied meat, hides, and **sweetgrass** (a plant used for ceremonies) from the plains; beargrass baskets, bitterroot, and camas from the high mountain valleys; obsidian from the Yellowstone region; red **ochre** (paint made from red clay) and sheephorn from the mountains; and **chert** (a stone used in tool-making) from many different places. They traded food, seeds, furs, salmon, medicines, and bison products.

In exchange, they received shells from the Pacific, Gulf, and Atlantic Coasts; **pipestone** (a reddish, clay-like stone used to make pipes) from Minnesota; **native copper** (naturally occurring copper found as nuggets) from the Great Lakes region; and Knife River **flint** (a glassy, brown stone used to make tools) from North Dakota. The Blackfeet sold pemmican to agricultural villages along the lower Missouri River nearly 1,000 miles away. The Salish imported elaborately decorated wooden bowls from tribes farther west. And everyone traded tobacco. Many of these trade items traveled thousands of miles along trade networks—all carried on foot.

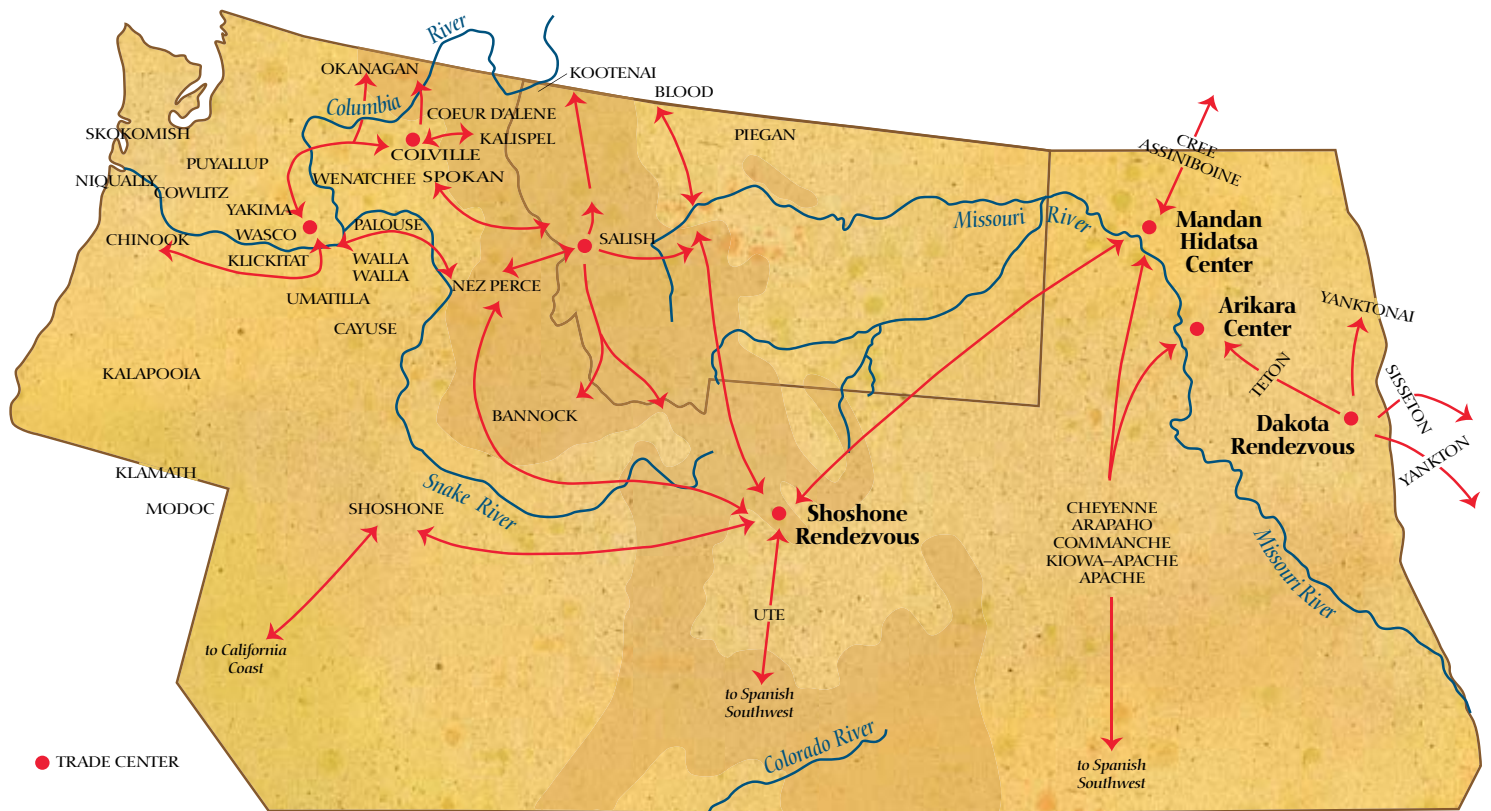
FIGURE 3.8: Cheyenne girls and women played double-ball, a game shared by many communities of the Plains. It was played with two stuffed buckskin balls joined by a leather thong. Players tried to hook the ball with the end of a forked stick, toss it to a teammate, and eventually pass the ball into one of the goals that stood at either end of the field. Double-ball required teamwork, endurance, and fearlessness. Players often crashed into opponents in midair.



The Cycle of Life: A Crow View

“All the parts of the tipi have notions of the things associated with life . . . The bison hide that covers the tipi represents the animal world. The tipi poles that hold up the bison hide represent the plant world. We place the fire in the middle because it is too fierce, it represents the elements. We, the humans, place ourselves at the outer edge of the tipi, in close proximity with the plant and animal worlds. We are all inter-dependent. We need oxygen and the plants need carbon dioxide, we eat roots and berries and so do the animals, we eat meat and so do the animals. When one component of the cycle of life is missing, there will be no more life.”

—THE CROW CULTURE COMMITTEE



Early Trade Networks

FIGURE 3.9: How many of your belongings were made in Montana? Just like the people of today, American Indians developed vast and active trade networks. As you can see in this map, the Mandan, the Shoshone, and several other tribes maintained commercial trade centers where traders gathered regularly to exchange goods.

New products traveled quickly. Manufactured European goods like knives, hatchets, metal pots, needles, beads, buttons, and cloth were traded into Montana as early as the 1600s—long before Europeans themselves arrived. European goods that were not as useful—breakable dishes, for example—did not survive in Indian country. What was useful was readily adapted to the practical lifestyle of the bison hunters.

Trade networks strengthened ties between tribes. To build a healthy trade system, people had to maintain solid relationships, have good communication, and make sure both sides got a fair deal. A successful trade often involved specific rules and rituals, through which both parties proved their trustworthiness.

To communicate across language barriers, people communicated with a sign language that used symbolic gestures and hand shapes. All across the continent, people could trade, make agreements, convey ideas, and exchange information even if they couldn't understand one another's language.

An Era of Enormous Change

In the 1700s two things appeared on the Plains that revolutionized life here: the horse and the gun. Horses and guns brought prosperity, mobility, and strength. They gave tribes access to more land, and brought them into contact—and conflict—more often. And the arrival of the horse brought an end to Plains people's dependence on dogs, which they had used for 10,000 years.

Guns moved into Montana from the northeast, where fur traders on



FIGURE 3.10: Trade networks were so vast that Indian people of the Northern Plains commonly acquired cowrie shells from the Atlantic or Gulf Coasts. This cowrie shell necklace was made in the mid-1800s by someone who lived on the Northern Plains.

Hudson's Bay traded them for furs. Horses came from the southwest, in present-day New Mexico. Guns and horses came together on the Plains, bringing power and mobility to Northern Plains tribes that many other groups never achieved.

The Horse: Vital Tool and Constant Companion

Spanish **conquistadors** (conquerors) brought the first modern horses to North America when they invaded present-day Mexico and the southwestern United States in the 1500s. But in 1680 the Pueblo Indians in northern New Mexico revolted against the Spanish. They chased the Spanish into Mexico—but kept many of their horses. After that, the Pueblo and Ute Indians began trading horses to other tribes to the north. By the middle of the 1700s, horses had spread throughout the Plains tribes.

The horse supported and improved Indian lifestyles in almost every way. Horses quickly became an important part of everyday life: hunting, transport, trade, ceremonies, gift-giving, marriage arrangements, and an individual's spiritual practices.

Horses allowed hunters to drive **game** (wild animals hunted for food) longer distances and to control more hunting ground. They developed a special short bow so they could hunt on horseback at full gallop with remarkable power and accuracy. They could now kill bison farther from camp and could haul large quantities of meat and hides on horses.

Hunting became less **communal** (shared) and more individual. Men raised and trained the horses, while women spent more time tanning hides and processing food. Because they did not have to spend so much time and energy gathering food, they had more time to develop their arts. They produced more elaborate beadwork on moccasins, clothing, headdresses, and personal implements.

People on horseback could travel great distances quickly, could transport more gear (and thus own more possessions), and could trade more widely. Increased trade brought new implements into people's lives. Iron and copper pots, knives, hatchets, and needles quickly became everyday necessities. People also made use of other new things like linen thread, cloth, glass and porcelain beads, and brass ornaments.



FIGURE 3.11: The horse travois allowed people to transport bigger tipis and more trade goods and personal belongings. American photographer Christian Barthelmess (1854–1906) took this photo of members of the Northern Cheyenne Stump Horn family using a horse travois in the 1890s.

A Cheyenne Girl Learns to Ride

“The first time I rode alone on horseback occurred when I was about ten years old. My father gave me a yearling colt. When we were traveling, my mother would put packs upon the colt with me. Usually I had two badger skins filled with dried chokecherries behind me, swinging down the colt’s sides. Boys teased me by riding up close and lashing my colt to make it jump. At first I was frightened and they laughed at me. But I soon got used to it, and after a little while I became a good rider.”

—IRON TEETH, A NORTHERN CHEYENNE WOMAN, REMEMBERS HER GIRLHOOD IN THE MID-1800S

The dog travois evolved into the horse travois—designed the same way but now large enough to carry sizable bison-hide tipis and many belongings. People began to measure their wealth in horses and considered them the most valuable gifts.

Capturing an enemy’s horses also became a great sport and a way to gain honor. A warrior sometimes took dangerous risks to steal horses. As people traveled more widely and encountered one another more often, they traded, raided, and fought more than they had when living farther apart and traveling on foot.

Horses Bring the End of the Dog Days

The horse brought the Dog Days—the era in which people depended on dogs for transportation—to an end. In the Dog Days, it took 15 dogs to support a family of five. A band of 70 families required more than 1,000 dogs—and they all had to eat every day. People spent more time hunting meat to feed their dogs than they did hunting for themselves—another reason for the large communal bison hunts of old.

Horses, however, grazed on their own. Freed from their dependence on dogs, increasingly mobile, and exposed to helpful new tools through trade, the people of the Plains entered a period of cultural strength and expansion that lasted over 100 years.

Guns: The “Thunder Stick” Brings Military Advantage

Up north on Hudson’s Bay, in Canada, a British-owned fur company called the Hudson’s Bay Company began trading **muskets** (long, smooth-bore rifles) to the Indians in 1670. Guns moved southeast through trade routes and entered the Northern Plains in the early 1700s. The mighty Plains Cree Indians, who lived in central Canada and traded widely, first introduced guns to Montana’s tribes.

Guns gave people military might they had never had before. For the next few decades, the tribes that had guns overpowered the tribes that did not. Power and territory shifted as different groups gained and lost the military advantage guns provided. Even warriors on foot with guns could win a battle over horse-soldiers without them.

The muskets of this period were much less efficient than guns are today. For the Indian hunter on horseback, a small hunting bow and arrow were much more effective. A good hunter could shoot 20 arrows in the time it took to reload a musket. The bow was always reliable; muskets misfired, failed, stampeded the bison, and were accurate only to about 50 yards. The value of the gun was its power in warfare.

As more tribes moved onto the Plains, they had to compete for power and territory. For example, the Shoshone had horses before most Montana

tribes. Mounted Shoshone warriors swept north on horseback to dominate much of Montana's territory. Then the Blackfeet, who obtained guns from the Cree and French traders, quickly turned the tide. With guns to help them, the Blackfeet pushed the Shoshone out of Montana to the south and west. They drove the Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai over the Rockies into western Montana. For the next 20 years, Blackfeet warriors would cross the Divide to torment the Salish. After 1810 the Salish gained access to rifles, and then they could fight back.

Guns Increased Intertribal Battles

Firearms increased intertribal warfare on the Plains. Guns required ammunition, so no tribe could afford to lose access to trade networks for very long. Tribes spent more energy protecting and expanding their trade routes. So warfare increased—and became more deadly because guns killed more warriors than other weapons did.

Still, warfare followed traditional patterns. Most battles were fought by small raiding parties trying to take territory, steal horses, or gain personal revenge. They seldom tried to wipe each other out. Even sworn enemies thought all-out war was dishonorable and wasteful. Instead, they followed a ritualized form of battle developed over thousands of years. It emphasized honor, bravery, and **counting coup**—earning respect by merely touching an enemy or taking his horse, usually without killing him.

The Source of All Power: Spiritual Strength

Through the vast changes of the 1700s, Montana's Indian people held fast to their spiritual beliefs. Each tribe had its own spiritual practices, yet many tribes also shared some spiritual beliefs. They experienced the sacred everywhere in nature and looked to spirits for help, protection, and wisdom.

For many people east of the Continental Divide, the Sun Dance was a religious celebration central to life—and is still practiced today. Whole tribes—sometimes thousands of people—gathered for fasting, prayer, and special rituals. Each tribe practiced its Sun Dance in its own way and for different reasons. To the Cheyenne, it was called the Medicine Lodge

FIGURE 3.12: Guns and horses changed the art of warfare for tribes of the Northern Plains. This 1885 colored pencil drawing by Cheyenne artist White Bear (c. 1867–1886) depicts an important battle between Cheyenne warriors who have guns and horses and another tribe fighting with guns on foot.



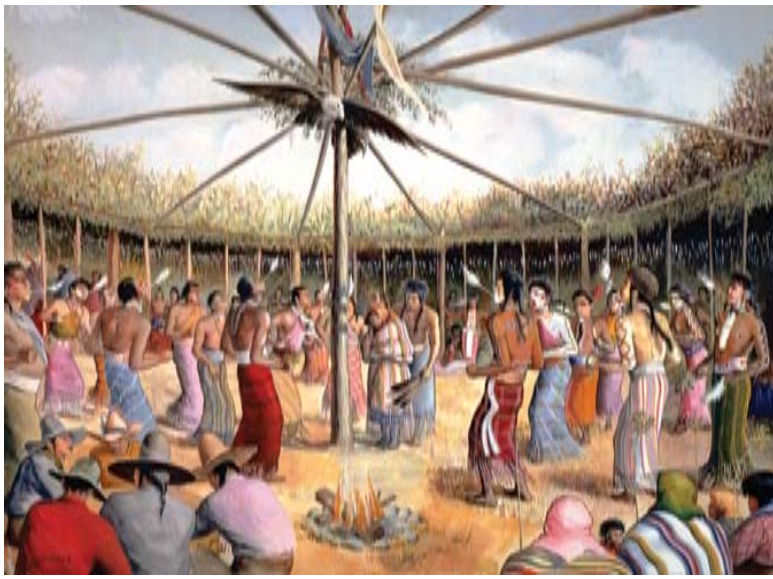


FIGURE 3.13: The Crow people depicted in this painting wear woolen blankets and shirts and cowboy hats—new clothing styles that people adopted after bison disappeared from the Northern Plains. Yet the ceremony itself is thousands of years old. American painter Elizabeth Lochrie (1890–1981) created this painting, titled *Crow Sun Dance*, in 1946.

ceremony and celebrated the renewal of the world. To the Crow, the Sun Dance helped prepare for warfare. To all tribes who practice it, the Sun Dance is a time of healing and power.

The Medicine Bundle was (and is) a focus of spiritual belief for many Plains Indian people. Carved bone and stone, feathers, charms, herbs, ceremonial pipes, and other sacred objects wrapped in soft hide are passed down by spiritual guides. They are only opened according to specific rituals. The opening of a Medicine Bundle is a powerful religious ceremony.

Many Plains people participated in **vision quests** (times of fasting and praying alone in a special place to gain spiritual understanding).

From their spiritual beliefs came the American Indian people’s **reverence** (respect) for the earth and all it sustained.

Tribal Life in 1820: Power in a Changing World

By the end of the 1700s, most of Montana’s people were gaining prosperity, mobility, and power. They had new tools and implements that made life easier and more leisure time to develop their arts and decorations. Battles between tribes increased as some fought to expand their territories and others fought to defend themselves.

By about 1820 nearly all of Montana’s current Indian tribes had carved out territory in present-day Montana.

The **Kootenai** people had been driven off the Plains by Shoshone and Blackfeet warriors. Now they lived in the rugged mountain valleys of far northwestern Montana. The **Salish** had been pushed off the Plains by the imbalance of tribal power that guns and horses brought to the region. They established themselves west of the Rockies, venturing east of the mountains only seasonally to hunt. Two major bands of **Pend d’Oreille** people lived between Flathead Lake and Idaho’s Lake Pend Oreille.

The **Shoshone** lived to the southwest of Montana. By the early 1800s they ventured into the Bitterroot Valley and onto the Plains only seasonally to hunt. The Lewis and Clark Expedition, in 1805, found the Shoshone near Lemhi Pass of the Bitterroot Range, on their way to hunt bison. The Sheepeater had been pushed out of Montana entirely.

The **Crow** people dominated the southeastern

“Going Without Water”: The Crow Vision Quest

“The Crow believed that by fasting he could obtain supernatural power through the animal emissaries of the First Maker (or Great Spirit). He believed that this power would make him a better warrior, more successful in performing war deeds, helping him to eventually become a chief with great wealth, high prestige and a large following . . . The Crow called this spiritual experience ‘Going Without Water.’”

—JOSEPH MEDICINE CROW,
FROM THE HEART OF CROW COUNTRY (2000)

region of Montana and beyond. The Crow divided into two major bands that totaled about 8,000 people. In just a few generations, the Crow had evolved from **horticultural** (plant-cultivating) communities to full-fledged Plains hunters. Surrounded by their enemies, the Blackfeet and the Sioux, they accepted Europeans as potential allies.

The **Piegian Blackfeet** had expanded to about 15,000 people by 1800. They dominated much of the northern and central Plains area of present-day Montana. Some stories tell of Blackfeet war parties harassing their enemies all the way to Oregon and Utah. The Piegian and their relatives, the Blood and Northern Blackfeet to the north, fiercely resisted European invaders until the late 1830s, when disease devastated the tribe.

Just to the east of the Piegian lived their allies the **Gros Ventre**—also determined warriors. Their defensive battle against Europeans shielded the Blackfeet for a time.

The **Assiniboine** people controlled northeastern Montana from the Missouri and Milk Rivers north into Canada. They were excellent horsemen and skilled traders. They had been among the first of Montana's Indians to trade with French fur buyers in their region—and to suffer the consequences. Smallpox swept through the Assiniboine tribes in 1780 and again in 1800, killing more than two-thirds of the Assiniboine people.

The **Métis** people spread across the Rocky Mountain region in camps and villages. The Métis were mixed-blood Cree, Chippewa, Assiniboine, French, and Scottish who banded together and spoke their own distinct language called Michif. Métis cultures bridged both Indian and European cultures.

Cree and **Chippewa** people were active in the fur trade throughout the Northern Plains. They have been present in the region since the late 1600s, though their main power centers were north and east of present-day Montana.

Some **Sioux** groups had moved into eastern Montana by the early 1800s. Westward pressure had pushed the Yanktonai band of the Nakota Sioux out of Minnesota. They settled across the Dakotas and, along with the Lakota and Dakota Sioux, pushed eastward into Crow country.

The **Northern Cheyenne** people, too, had ventured west from their Minnesota and North Dakota homelands and had shifted into Montana by about 1820. They quickly adapted to Plains life, and their relatives spread as far south as Texas. The name Cheyenne comes from the Sioux word *sha-hi'ye-na* (SHAH-hee-lee-yah), which means "people who speak a foreign language." The Cheyenne call themselves Tsetséhesta'hese (Tse-TSES-tas), which means "people like us."

People of these many cultures raised children, worshipped, fought, told jokes, and expressed themselves in different ways unique to their own cultures. They traveled widely, sometimes intermarried, and moved seasonally into different areas. They knew one another's

They Lived Everywhere

"[The Cheyennes] roamed all through that country. They did not stay close together in one bunch. They would starve that way, because too many would hunt over the same place. And they moved often. They say they never camped on one place more than five days. That kept them healthy."

—JOHN STANDS IN TIMBER,
CHEYENNE MEMORIES (1967)



FIGURE 3.14: One sign of a society's economic strength is the elegance of its art. Here you can see elaborate beadwork on clothing, harnesses, and headgear, and artful touches on tipis and personal belongings. Montana artist Charles M. Russell (1864–1926) painted this painting, titled *Indian Hunters' Return*, in 1900.

territorial boundaries. The tribes competed with one another, and with European traders, for wealth and power.

Galloping toward the New

For thousands of years the Plains had supported a small number of sparsely scattered people. By the early 1800s the population had become far more concentrated. Food and other resources—particularly bison—remained plentiful.

Tribes fought with their enemies and helped their allies, as they had done for thousands of years. All across the Northern Plains and Northern Plateau, American Indian people shared some important common values—a strong sense of personal honor, a deep belief in the presence of spirit-helpers, and a spiritual connection to the land and animals.

Like people everywhere, the people of the region welcomed new tools and opportunities. As French, Spanish, British, and American explorers made their way toward Montana, the people greeted them with a mixture of curiosity, helpfulness, and **wariness** (caution and watchfulness). The meeting of American Indian cultures and the European newcomers would alter life in Montana ever after.

“Soon there will come from the rising sun a different kind of man from any you have yet seen . . .”

—SPOKAN INDIAN PROPHECY

“Listen to me carefully. Listen to me carefully. Our great-grandfather spoke thus to me . . . He said to me that he had put people on this earth, all kinds of people. He made us, but also he made others. There are all kinds of people on earth that you will meet some day, toward the sunrise, by a big river. Some are black, but some day you will meet a people who are white—good-looking people with light hair and white skins . . . You will know them, for they will have long hair on their faces and will look different from you. They will wear things different from your things . . .

“They will try to change you from your way of living to theirs, and they will keep at what they try to do. They will work with their hands. They will tear up the earth, and at last you will do it with them. When you do, you will become crazy and forget all that I am now teaching you.”

—SWEET MEDICINE, NORTHERN CHEYENNE PROPHET WHO LIVED MANY GENERATIONS BEFORE THE FIRST CONTACT WITH WHITES

Expressions of the People

Interpreting a Winter Count

Every society has its own ways of recording the history of its people. Some Indian tribal historians painted winter counts—graphic calendars that reminded them of important events that happened in a year, or winter—in the life of a tribe.

A Dakota Sioux named Lone Dog, who lived near the Fort Peck Reservation in 1876, painted this winter count in black and red paint on a tanned bison robe. It covers 70 years, from the winter of 1800–1801 through the winter of 1870–71. Lone Dog, whose

Dakota name was Shunka-ishnala (SHUNK-ka-ish-nal-ah), later explained that old men of the tribe counseled him on what event or circumstance set each year apart and what picture best expressed that event. Then he drew the symbol for each of the 70 years, starting in the center and spiraling outward.

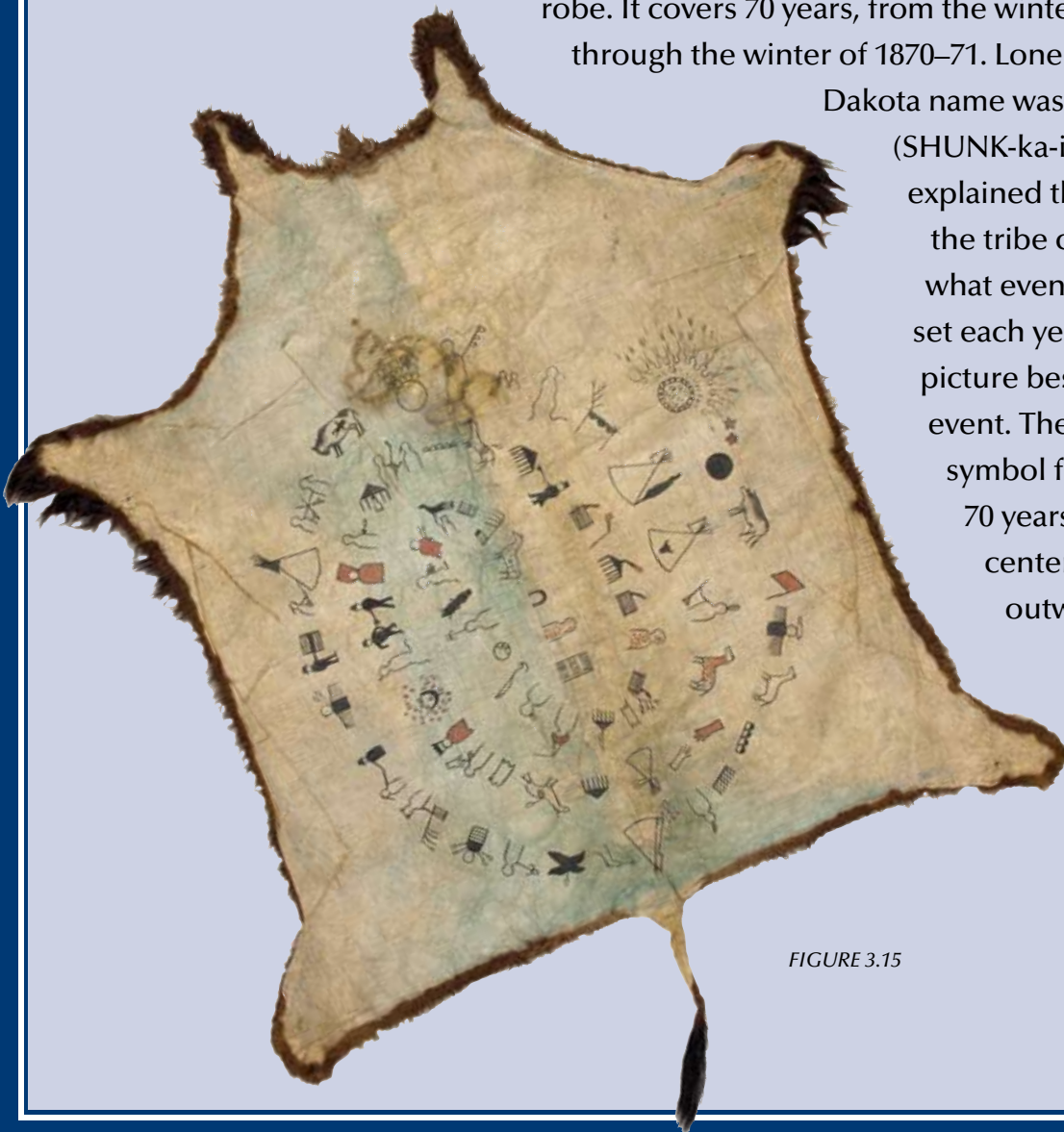


FIGURE 3.15

The first image, in the center (representing the winter of 1800–1801), is a block of 30 parallel black lines in three columns with the outer lines connected. This signifies that 30 Dakota Indians were killed by their enemies. The second image (1801–2) marks a year in which many Dakota died of smallpox, a disease that covers the victim with red blotches. In the third year (1802–3), marked with a horseshoe shape, a Dakota stole horses with shoes—presumably from whites, since Indians did not shoe their horses.

The images represent warriors killed in battle, new trading forts, meteor showers, treaties with other tribes, and years of plentiful buffalo. The last image, in the upper right, represents a large battle between the Sioux and the Crow, in 1870–71. These pictures may not represent the most important thing that happened in a year. Rather, they gave tribal members a way to remember each year, just as you might mentally organize your memories according to what grade you were in school.

Just as a special family photograph can bring back a flood of memories, each image on a winter count evokes many important stories about a tribe's history. We can learn only the bare details by interpreting the pictures. True understanding of a tribe's history comes only by hearing the stories told in the original language by traditional storytellers.

CHAPTER 3 REVIEW

► CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Define: (a) society; (b) culture; (c) seasonal round; (d) pemmican; (e) intertribal; (f) vision quest
2. What is the difference between a society and a culture? In what ways do people group themselves together?
3. Why did some tribes migrate into the Plains area from other regions in North America?
4. Describe the shared lifestyle of Indian people after they moved into the western plains.
5. What were some of the social, political, and economic structures that existed within the tribes?
6. What was the connection that tied different tribes of the Plains together?
7. What were the two changes that occurred in the 1700s that drastically altered the Plains Indians' way of life?
8. What were the two main reasons that horses were more useful than dogs for the Plains Indians?

► CRITICAL THINKING

1. What are the main reasons for dividing the history of the Americas into Pre-contact and Post-contact Periods?
2. What do you think was the most important shared cultural identity among Plains Indians? Why?
3. Why was trading such an important part of Plains Indian culture?
4. Why don't we know the exact number of Indian people who died from European disease? What are the short-term and long-term ramifications of the epidemics?
5. What are some of the pros and cons of the introduction of guns and horses to the Plains?

► PAST TO PRESENT

1. The horse and gun radically changed life for the people of Montana. What changes, if any, have occurred in our society with equal impact? How has our society adapted to these changes?
2. The smallpox epidemic devastated American Indians after 1492. Could something similar happen today? If there were a widespread epidemic, what effect do you think it would have?

► MAKE IT LOCAL

1. Locate your town on a map and find the nearest reservation headquarters. Research what tribes live there now and whether it is an area in which they formerly thrived before contact. What impact, if any, does the reservation have on the cultural life of your community?
2. Indians occupied your region for a long time, and each tribe had its own names for places important to them. Investigate tribal place names for local rivers, mountains, or other geographic features in your area.

► EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Make a winter count. First, study the photograph of the winter count by Lone Dog. Using brown paper, think of one significant event for each year of your life and draw a picture, in an outward spiraling pattern, representing each event. Remember that the event can be something that happened to you personally (for example, your first day of school), your family (for example, the arrival of a sibling or moving to another town), or to your town or country (for example, world events, new buildings).
2. Research some of the games played and toys made by Plains Indians and construct your own version of one, following the original as closely as possible.
3. In small groups, research the history of a tribe and present the information to the class, using visual tools such as poster boards, crafts, and food.
4. Write a creative story about a Plains Indian's reaction to his or her first gun or horse.
5. Make a large map of Montana and surrounding areas. Using different colors to represent the different tribes, map the routes into Montana and areas within Montana used by native people.

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

FIG. 3.13 *Crow Sun Dance*, Elizabeth Lochrie, MHS Mus.

FIG. 3.14 *Indian Hunters' Return*, C. M. Russell, MHS Mus.

FIG. 3.15 Lone Dog's Winter Count, photo by NMAI Photo Services Staff, courtesy NMAI, DO10617

Chapter 3

FIG. 3.1 *The Proposal*, Gary Schildt, MHS Mus.

FIG. 3.2 Detail from *Lakota Winter Count, 1857–1938*, courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Arts

FIG. 3.3 Salish leggings and dress, early 1900s, MHS Mus. X1975.18.12 and X1979.14.07

FIG. 3.4 *Preparing and Cooking Camas*, Gary Schildt, MHS Mus.

FIG. 3.5 *Ceremony for Successful Buffalo Hunt*, William Standing, MHS Mus.

FIG. 3.6 *Women Scraping Buffalo Hide*, Maynard Dixon, MHS Mus.

FIG. 3.7 Salish hide scraper with obsidian blade, MHS Mus. X1900.05.19

FIG. 3.8 "Double Ball," illustration from *North American Indians ... 1832–1839*, vol. 2, by George Catlin (Edinburgh, 1926), fig. 252, MHSL

FIG. 3.9 Early Trade Networks, map by MHS

FIG. 3.10 Cowrie shell necklace, MHS Mus. X1962.07.24

FIG. 3.11 Stump Horn children and horse travois, photo by Christian Barthelmeß, MHS PA 981-030

FIG. 3.12 Mounted warriors, drawing by White Bear, MHS Mus. X1961.16.05