

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribe


Stephanie Gillin
& Whisper Camel-Means

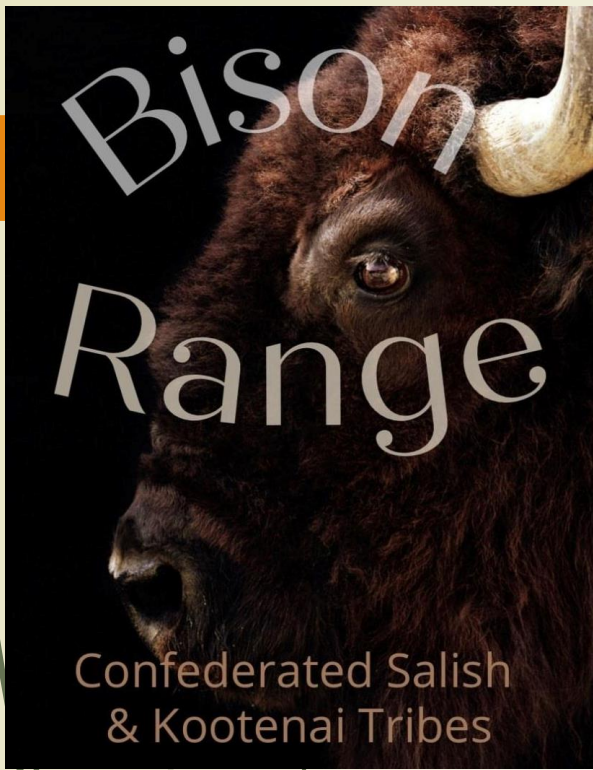
CS&KT Natural Resources Department

Photo: Colin Ruggiero



The Restoration of the Bison Range to the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

- On December 27, 2020, Congress, via Public Law 116-260, restored the Bison Range to federal trust ownership to the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CS&KT).
 - 2021 CSKT worked cooperatively with FWS during the Restoration Process.
 - January 2nd, 2022 the Bison Range was fully Restored back to the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes.
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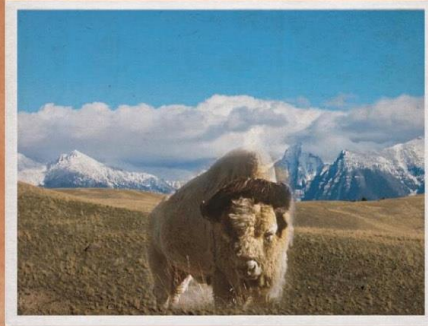
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Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Bison Range Restoration Celebration

May 20th Through May 22nd



POW-WOW – NATIVE GAMES – FILM – FOOD – CELEBRATION

Friday, May 20, 2022

At the Bison Range - Moiese, MT

Tribal Member/Community Opening Ceremony @ 10am

- Opening prayer, Honor Song, Honor Guard -
- Lunch provided from 11:30 am - 12:30 pm -
- Powwow 12-4 pm -
- Native Games -

Saturday, May 21, 2022

At the Salish Kootenai College - Pablo, MT

2:00 PM Film Screening: In the Spirit of Atatice
Johnny Arlee & Vic Charlo Theatre

2:30 PM Community Meal
Joe McDonald Health & Fitness Center

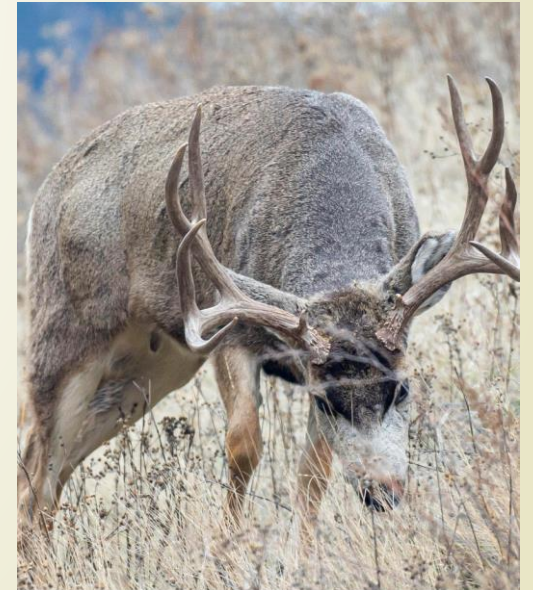
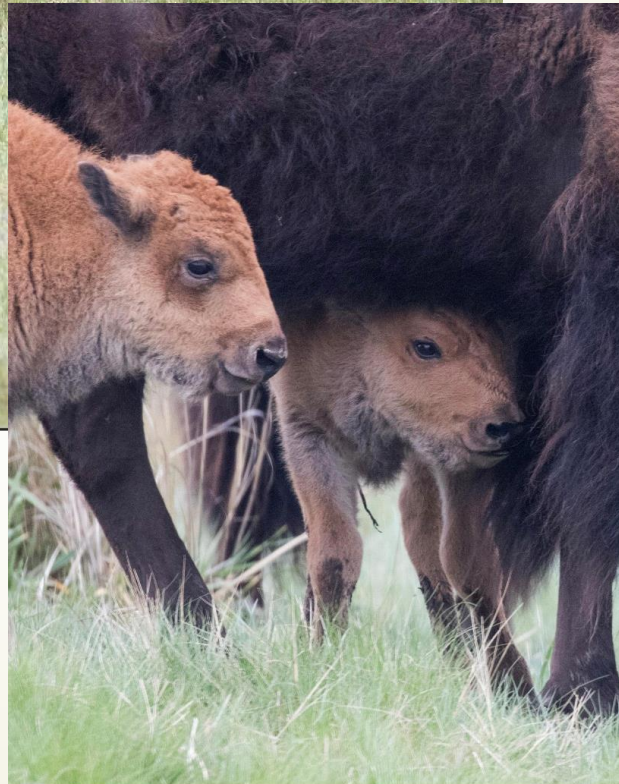
4:00 PM Community Celebration
Joe McDonald Health & Fitness Center

Sunday, May 22, 2022

At the Bison Range - Moiese, MT
Community Appreciation Day
Half price day passes available

More information @ www.BisonRange.org





Lemlmtš!

(Thank You!)

Hu sukiṭqukni!

(Thank You!)

Thank you to our Séliš, Q̄lispé, and Ksanka elders and ancestors who have cared for and passed on our cultural ways of life, our oral histories, and our languages for generations yet to come.



Słm̓xe Q̓w̓oxeqeys

Claw of the Small Grizzly Bear
known in English as Chief Charlo (c. 1830 -1910)



Chief of the Séliš

Słm̓xe Q̓w̓oxeqeys was born about 1830, the son of X̓'etx̓łc̓in (Many Horses) and R̓osale. Słm̓xe Q̓w̓oxeqeys became an accomplished warrior as a young man. His father, X̓'etx̓łc̓in, was chosen to be head chief of the Salish in 1854, upon the death of Ekw̓ł̓ Słm̓xe (Standing Grizzly Bear). In 1855, X̓'etx̓łc̓in, known in English as Chief Victor, served as the leader of the three confederated tribes during the Hellgate Treaty negotiations. He rebuffed the government's pressures to get the Salish to give up the Bitterroot Valley.

K̓upumqamik Kyaq̓nuka't

Kustata Big Knife
or Koostahtah (c. 1856 -1842)



Chief of the Ksanka

Chief Koostahtah, whose correct name was Koostatah Big Knife, followed his father and brother as Chief of the Ksanka when Chief Isaac Big Knife died in 1902. He was one of the signers of the Tribes' present constitution and by-laws and the last formal chief of the Kootenai tribe. He worked tirelessly to maintain traditional Ksanka culture.

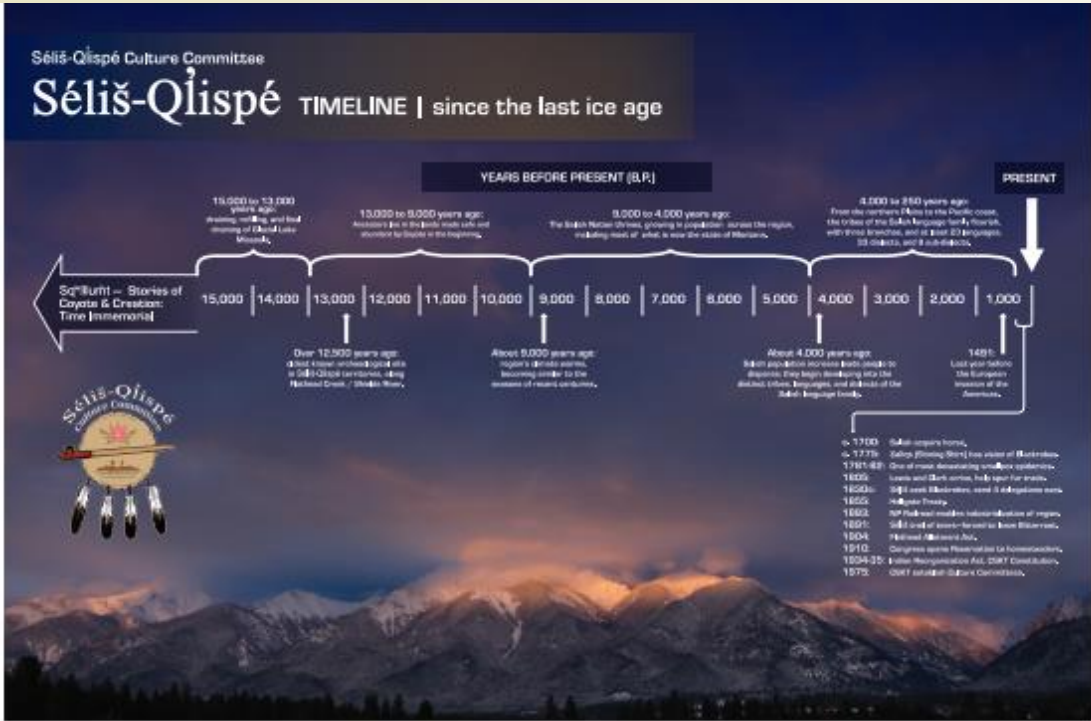
Tm̓łłc̓in

No Horses
known in English as Chief Alexander (c. 1810 -1868)



Chief of the Qlispé

Tm̓łłc̓in (No Horses) became a noted warrior as a young man. Sometime in the 1840s, the Qlispé chose him to serve as head chief. He allowed the Hudson's Bay Company to build establish a small trading center in 1847 at K'w̓okm̓q̓ (Waters of the Narrow Door — Post Creek), and in 1854, he gave permission to the Jesuits to establish the St. Ignace Mission. The following year, Tm̓łłc̓in (No Horses) led the Qlispé during the Hellgate Treaty negotiations.



The aboriginal territory of the Séliš, Qlispé people exceeded 22 million acres.

Extended into Eastern Washington, the Panhandle of Idaho, nearly all of Western & Central Montana.



Q^weyq^wáy
“Many Blacks” Séliš

Kamququkuᑦ ’yamu
“Black Cow” Ksanka

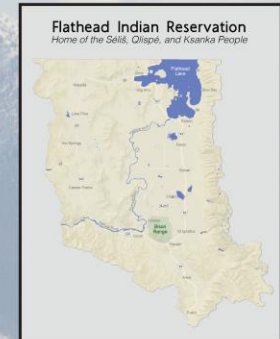
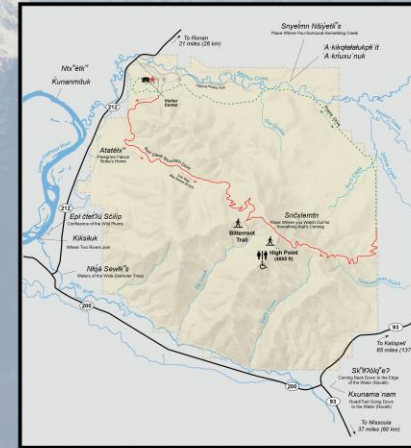
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
of the Flathead Reservation



Restoration of the Bison Range

The federal government established the National Bison Range in the middle of our treaty-reserved home, the Flathead Indian Reservation, on land taken without our consent. The bison herd there descends from a free-ranging Reservation herd started by Tribal members in the 1800's when plains bison were near extinction. Through Public Law 116-260, Congress has now restored the Bison Range to federal trust ownership for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes so that our award-winning natural resource managers can take over as stewards of the Range's buffalo, wildlife and land.

We, the Séliš, Qlispé, and Ksanka people, warmly welcome you to the Bison Range.



Just when the wild roses bloom,
our parents and ancestors moved
across the mountains to the plains country,
going after buffalo.

This is called “*es mšlwis*”.

Blind Mose Chouteh
Qlispé (1891 - 1987)

Our Long Histories Intertwine Like a Sweetgrass Braid

"A lot of hardships that the buffalo went through...their lives are just so parallel with ours. The buffalo are strong. They've survived for all these years. And so have we. We're still going. Tell your children that we were up here close to the buffalo, that we sang a song for him, to honor him for his many years yet to come and for our children, for our great great grandchildren, and all the generations yet to come, that they'll still have beauty around them."

— Johnny Arlee, Séliš Elder

For thousands of years, *q'eyq'áy* —bison — have fed our people. They are generous animals. A single bison can feed an entire family for months, providing a delicious source of protein and fat, not only to help us survive but thrive during our cold, long winters.

Bison have always stood at the heart of our spiritual lives. As Indian people, we learn as children of our indebtedness to the animals and how they must be treated with respect. When we hunt, we learn to always give thanks to the animal and the Creator — to give something in return. Through our stories, ceremonies, songs, prayers, and actions, we continually renew our commitment to take care of them, just as they have taken care of us from the beginning of time.

We are also taught to waste nothing — to never take more than what is needed, and to never waste what is taken. In our traditional way of life, we consumed all the meat. We used the hides to make our teepees and blankets, our dresses and winter robes, our straps and ropes, and our protective sheaths and coverings. We used their bones to make tools, saddle trees, sleds, hide scrapers, and toys for our children. We burned their dung for fuel. Bison have sustained us. They made our lives here possible.

In return, we nurtured the buffalo through our traditional use of fire to manage the land. Every year on the plains, we set fires across vast areas because that blackened ground would blossom with healthy young grass and forbs. The fires renewed the prairie and helped the buffalo. In the 1790s, trapper Peter Fidler wintered with the Pikani on the plains of what is now Alberta, and wrote about Ksanka-it fires he observed:

Every fall & spring, & even in the winter when there is no snow, these large plains either in one place or other is constantly on fire, & when the Grass happens to be long & the wind high, the sight is grand & awful, & it drives along with amazing swiftness... The flames roar along like the waves in the ocean in a storm... These fires burning off the old grass, in the ensuing Spring & Summer makes excellent fine sweet feed for the Horses & Buffalo.

In the words of Qlispé elder John Peter Paul, "That is why my elders — my father's father and beyond — that is why they would burn: for the animals and for the huckleberries and the medicines."

Photo by E. S. Lamb

Our Relationship with Bison



Nothing Should Be Wasted

A relationship lasting thousands of years

The respect our people hold for the buffalo is reflected in the way we used all parts of the animal. We always tried to ensure that nothing was wasted. This was central to the sustainability of our relationship with buffalo. It is difficult to find an account by the elders about buffalo hunting where the lack of waste is not emphasized.

In the time before horses, the people used their intimate knowledge of the buffalo and the land itself to herd them over cliffs at "buffalo jumps" such as those near Bozeman and Great Falls. In later times, we hunted from horseback using highly efficient and effective weapons, including lances, bows and arrows, and finally guns.



I. Treaty of Peace — or Instrument of Invasion?

A key turning point in the history of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and in the transformation of our region occurred in July 1855, when our leaders met with U.S. officials for ten days to negotiate the Hellgate Treaty at the place Salish speakers call Címé (Tree-Limb-Cut-Off, known in English as Council Grove).

Our Indigenous nations were led by head chiefs X^wéłxéin (Many Horses or Victor) of the Séliš (Salish or "Flathead"), Tmíxéin (No Horses or Alexander) of the upper Qlispé (Kalispel or "Pend d'Oreille"), and Michel of the Ksanka band of Kootenai. The U.S. was led by Isaac Stevens, the Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory.

Our leaders expected that the meeting's purpose was to formalize our long-standing peaceful relations with non-Indians and to pursue lasting peace between Indigenous nations. Instead, Stevens immediately announced his actual goal: taking ownership of most of our lands to clear the way for non-Indian control and settlement. Our leaders were shocked and outraged at this betrayal.

Síltúlix[™] s Séliš u Qlispé Territories of the Salish, Kalispel & Related Nations



The Treaty of Hellgate Signed at Címé July 16, 1855

The Flathead reservation is only a small portion of our vast homelands. Under the Hellgate Treaty, it was set aside for our "exclusive use and benefit" — not given by the government to our tribal nations, but rather land that we withheld from what we ceded to the government.

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But the chiefs realized they had to do their best in the negotiations to defend our own objectives: ensuring our sovereignty as tribal nations and the continuance of our traditional ways of life. They had to navigate an alien world of legal terms and paper documents, across formidable barriers of language. A Jesuit observer at the negotiations said translation was so poor that "not a tenth of it was actually understood by either party."



Gustavus Sobor's drawing of the treaty negotiations at Címé, July 1855.

II. Days of Disagreement — and then the Signing

As in his previous treaties, Stevens sought to place multiple tribal nations on a single reservation. Even through the fog of poor translation, our leaders understood the gist of Stevens' proposal — and they resisted. Chief Alexander refused to move the upper Qlispé from the Jocko and Mission Valleys, and Chief Victor and the Séliš refused to leave the cherished Bitterroot Valley. Stevens reacted furiously, but in the end accepted Victor's solution: adding to the treaty Article II, which designated the Bitterroot as a separate reservation for the Séliš. However, Stevens also inserted fine print stating that a Presidential-authorized survey would ultimately decide which reservation was "better adapted to the wants of the Flathead tribe." As with other details — including locations of reservation boundaries and allotment schemes — the translator failed to convey these specifics.

Most of our leaders decided to put their "x" marks to the paper. With Senate ratification in 1859, the Hellgate Treaty was duly enacted — defined in Article VI, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution as the "Supreme Law of the Land."

The treaty conveyed to the United States title to most of our lands west of the Continental Divide within what is now the state of Montana. (At Hellgate, Stevens did not address our vast territories east of the Continental Divide — which we had long defended against incursions by other tribes.) We reserved from cession the 1.3-million-acre Flathead Reservation (as well as the 1.7-million-acre Bitterroot Reservation) for our "exclusive use and benefit." On ceded lands, we also reserved rights to continue hunting, fishing, gathering plants, and pasturing livestock. Neither "reservation" lands nor off-reservation "reserved rights" were given to us by the United States, but rather were preexisting assets and rights that we "reserved" from what we ceded to the government. The treaty also stipulated that the U.S. would provide educational, medical, and other services.



Signature page of the Hellgate Treaty.



Salish in Steeplevick immediately prior to forced removal, 1891. Photo collected by Thomas C. Donnellson.

III. Montana's Trail of Tears

Over the next 15 years, the Government did nothing about the status of the Bitterroot, so the Séliš concluded the valley would remain our permanent home, even as illegal white settlement proliferated, especially after construction of the Mullan Road in 1860 and the first Montana gold rushes in 1862-1864.

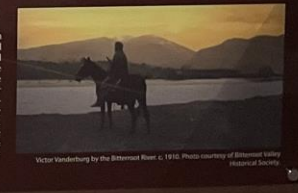
With the death in 1870 of our highly respected head chief, X^wéłxéin, many non-Indians saw an opportunity to achieve their long-sought goal of forcing the Séliš out of the Bitterroot. In 1872, future president James Garfield led a Congressional delegation to "negotiate" our removal. Despite threats of bloodshed, X^wéłxéin's son and successor as head chief, Sínixwé Q'oxoxox (Claw of the Little Grizzly) —

Chief Charlo) refused to sign. Garfield then had Chief Charlo's "x" mark forged onto the official published copies that were sent to the Senate for the vote on ratification. While two sub-chiefs did sign and moved with their families to the Flathead Reservation in 1873, most of the Séliš remained with Chief Charlo in the Bitterroot.

Conditions steadily worsened through the 1880s. Chief Charlo resisted government pressures until it became clear that for the well-being of the people, the Séliš had to move. In October 1891, troops marched the Séliš north to the reservation on Montana's "Trail of Tears." Séliš elder Mary Ann Combs likened the trip to a funeral march. Children riding behind their mothers wailed as they would be shot if they ran away. Years later, when Cíwáwáwáwáwá (Sophie Moiese) was an old woman, she suffered flashbacks, the hearing the women crying as the people rode slowly north toward the Jocko Valley. At the Jocko church, the upper Qlispé were the hearing to welcome the Séliš, our relations and allies. Before they rode out from Sillíyáwá (Plyano area), Chief Charlo had the people put on their best clothing, and had the young warriors ride out ahead, whooping and charging. The chief wanted his nation to arrive on the reservation not as defeated or pitiful, but as a proud and strong people. Despite the losses incurred in the removal and the Government reneging on promised resettlement aid, the Séliš gradually established successful family farms and ranches on the Flathead Reservation.

IV. The Meaning of the Treaty

The treaty marked the first major assertion of non-Indian control over what had been, until then, Séliš, Qlispé, and Ksanka lands and resources. This change in the political landscape enabled the transformation of the physical landscape — including destruction of the great herds of bison. Yet the treaty also established a legal and political foundation for our continued sovereignty, and ultimately contributed to the survival and revitalization of our cultures. Today, that is powerfully reflected in the restoration of the Buffalo Park to our people. We owe much to our leaders, who somehow foresaw the long-term benefit of putting their marks to the paper at Címé in 1855.



Victor Vanderburg by the Bitterroot River, c. 1910. Photo courtesy of Bitterroot Valley Historical Society.

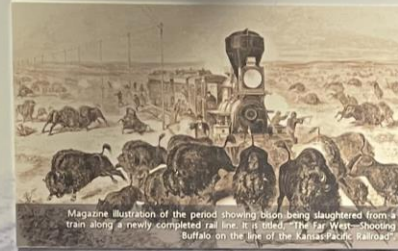
Railroads: Engines of Transformation

The coming of railroads was a turning point in our history, and in the history of buffalo.

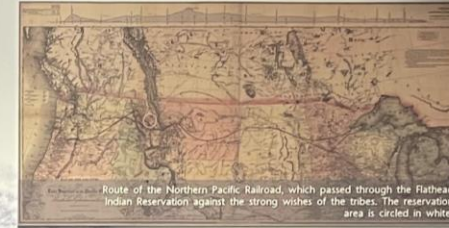
There was perhaps no more important turning point in that historical transformation than the construction of railroads into Montana, which began with the opening of the Utah & Northern Railroad into Butte in late December, 1881. In September 1883, railroad workers pounded home the last spike of the Northern Pacific at Gold Creek, Montana, marking the completion of the rail line across the northern tier of the United States—and through the Flathead Reservation itself, over the bitter objections of tribal leaders. The railroads decisively shifted the balance of power in Montana, and it was no coincidence that 1883 also marked the virtual extinction of wild bison.

With the completion of the transcontinental railroads across the U.S.—the first in 1869—the slaughter began in earnest. Hunters used the trains to kill buffalo by the hundreds of thousands, a campaign welcomed by many, especially within the military. General Sheridan, for example, stated in 1875, “These men have done more in the last two years, and will do more in the next year, to settle the vexed Indian question, than the entire regular army has done in the last forty years. They are destroying the Indians’ commissary...let them kill, skin and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated. Then your prairies can be covered with speckled cattle.”

In Montana, among the first mass exports on the trains were buffalo bones, shipped to eastern plants where they would be rendered into fertilizer and charcoal. It was the railroad, finally, that marginalized the Indian way of life that had defined the region for thousands of years. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the market economy’s presence in the Northern Rockies was limited to the fur trade—in part because transportation was limited to horses and canoes, which could only bring to market resources that were light in weight and small in size. The railroad changed all of that. Now size and weight posed no obstacle to the commodification of the natural world. The great trees of the forests, grain from the fields, and most of all, ore from the mountains could be developed on an industrial scale—and delivered to national and international markets.



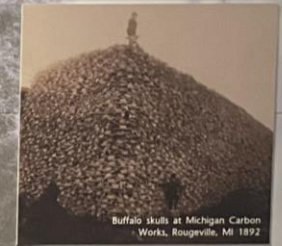
Magazine illustration of the period showing bison being slaughtered from a train along a newly completed rail line. It is titled, “The Far West—Shooting buffalo on the top of the Kansas Pacific railway.”



Route of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which passed through the Flathead Indian Reservation against the strong wishes of the tribes. The reservation area is circled in white.



Simsha Gitskopski (Crow of Small Gitszy—Chief Charlo). Very few men held the right to wear a igyagyn (buffalo headdress).



Buffalo skulls at Michigan Carbon Works, Rougeville, MI 1892



In the Spirit of Atatíçe?



Łatati (Little Falcon Robe)
Atatíçe's son, who brought bison to the Flathead Reservation

In the Spirit of Atatíçe?

In the Spirit of Atatíçe? shares the true story, long told by Flathead elders but not widely shared until now, of how buffalo first came to the Flathead Indian Reservation. In the nineteenth century, as Plains Indians struggled to bring their way of life into a new world, a young man named Atatíçe and his son Łatati (Little Falcon Robe) led the way by bringing buffalo across the Continental Divide and starting a herd on the Reservation. In the face of opposition, these men did what they could and made a world of difference for us. The film depicts the great Cheyenne and Kiowa peoples' ongoing struggles against the backdrop of seismic transitions to their communities and cultures, to provide in their efforts to care for the buffalo. Watch the full version of the film or one of two shorter versions by selecting from the links below.



In the Spirit of Atatíçe?
(29 minutes)

Full Video



Brief History of NBR
(4.5 minutes)

Video Short



The Buffalo's Importance
(2.5 minutes)

Video Short

Late 1870s

The son of Atatíçe, Łatati, carried out his father's vision and brought orphaned calves across the Continental Divide to the Flathead Reservation. Caring for the calves through the long journey west, he brought them to his family's home, just a few miles southwest of this area. This is where he kept the bison and where the herd began to grow.

Samuel Walking Coyote sold herd to Michel Pablo & Charles Allard

1904 Flathead Allotment Act ended open range (approx. 700 bison)

1908-1909 American Bison Society convinced Congress to seize 18,524 ac to for the National Bison Range ("Fenced in Place"). Bison came from the Conrad herd in Kalispell and the Canadian government (original herd)

Establishment of the National Bison Range



1880s - 1901

Latah's stepfather sold his herd to tribal members Michel Pablo and Charles Allard. They freeranged the buffalo along the lower Flathead River, where, supplemented by additional acquisitions from other herds, the buffalo quickly increased to hundreds of animals.

In 1896, Allard died. The majority of the buffalo remained with Michel Pablo on the Flathead Reservation, but in 1901 some of Allard's portion of the herd was sold to the Conrad family of Kalispell. Other bison went to Howard Eaton, a friend of Charles Russell. Eaton sold his animals to Yellowstone National Park — and thus the Yellowstone Park herd today is in part descended from the buffalo originally saved by Latah.



Late 1870s

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1904 - 1905

The 1904 Flathead Allotment Act ended open range on much of the reservation, and US Indian Agents forced Michel Pablo to dispose of the buffalo. Finding no American buyers, he sold the herd to the Canadian government. Beginning in 1907 and continuing for over five years, Pablo oversaw the nearly impossible task of rounding up nearly 700 wild bison.

Meanwhile, in New York, a group of wealthy non-Indians had formed the American Bison Society (ABS) to help save bison from extinction. In 1908-1909, the organization convinced Congress to seize 18,524 acres of the Flathead Reservation — the very place from which the tribal herd had just been evicted — in order to form a National Bison Range.



1905 - 1908

Tribal members opposed the taking of this land, but federal officials told them they had no choice in the matter. The government had only recently assigned individual allotments of land to tribal members, and five of those parcels were located within what became the Range's exterior boundaries. Officials forced those allottees to relocate.



1909 - 1910

Once the Range was established, it needed to be populated with bison — of which very few were left in North America. One of the enduring myths of the Range is that its initial bison herd consisted largely of animals that originated in the freshly evicted Pablo-Allard herd. The American Bison Society purchased bison for the Range from two sources: the Conrad Ranch near Kalispell (whose herd was started with buffalo from the Allard estate in 1901), and the Canadian government, which was still in the process of receiving buffalo it had bought from Michel Pablo in 1906. So there would be a herd in the middle of the reservation after all. However, it would not be under tribal control, but to the contrary, on land that Congress seized from the Tribes. Sali and Qispé people came to refer to the range by the Salish word Nto'x'ent, which connotes "Fenced-in Place." But the newly erected barbed-wire and hogwire border also had the effect of fencing Indian people out. With the return of the range to tribal ownership in 2020, that is no longer the case. Now the old place-name simply refers to the fence-line itself. The range is called Sná'eyq'aytn, meaning Place of Buffalo, Place of Buffalo — and the homeland of the Sali, Qispé, and Kanka people.



The Bison Range and the U.S. Government's "Allotment" Policy

In 1855, the Hellgate Treaty designated the Flathead Indian Reservation as a place set aside for "the exclusive use and benefit of said confederated tribes." Yet little more than half a century later, the US Government seized 18,524 acres near the very center of the reservation to establish a National Bison Range. How and why did this happen? The answers are rooted in the complex, fascinating, outrageous history of the "allotment" policy — a key part of the government's assault on tribal sovereignty and tribal ways of life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In the 1855 Hellgate Treaty, tribal leaders sought to retain our sovereign homelands and ensure the continuance of our way of life. But U.S. policymakers saw tribal ways of life, here and in other Indigenous communities, as standing in the way of "progress." They soon launched policies intended to destroy tribal cultures and socio-economic systems within reservations. The single most damaging law was the General Allotment Act of 1887, which established a process for forcing upon our people the Euro-American system of individual land ownership — and then transferring remaining lands to non-Indian ownership, in one of the greatest land grabs in American history.

To carry out the General Allotment Act, Congress had to pass specific bills tailored for each treaty. The Hellgate Treaty presented obstacles. Article 6 prohibited compulsory allotment, saying land parcels would only be provided to those tribal members who were "willing." The Treaty also prohibited non-Indian settlement, and for decades, our leaders had expressed unanimous opposition to selling or ceding any part of the Flathead Reservation. But the government dismissed our repeated appeals to honor the treaty, and in 1904 Congress unilaterally passed Rep. Joseph Dixon's Flathead Allotment Act. It was signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt. The Flathead Allotment Act transformed the reservation, with impacts felt in every facet of tribal life and culture.

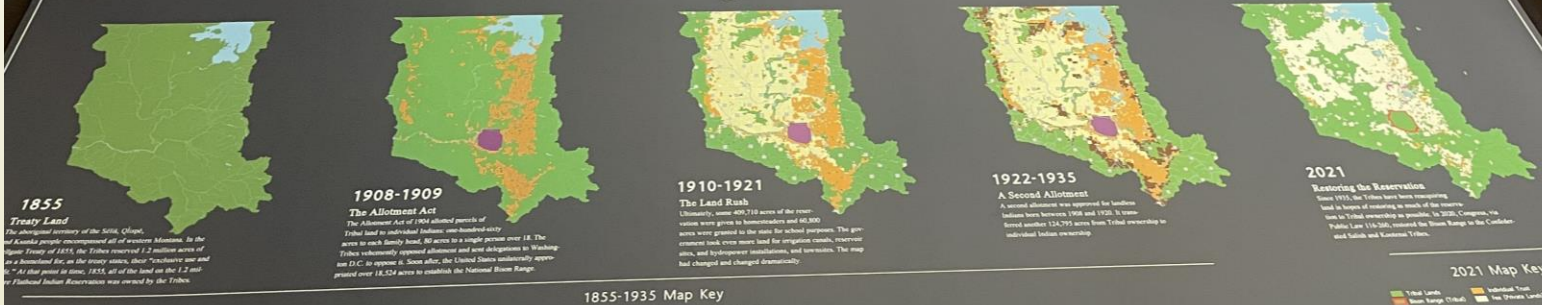
After passage of the act, government officials ignored tribal protests and proceeded, in a process marked by corruption, with the dismantling of our communal form of land ownership through the allotment of individual lands to individual tribal adults. The Act also opened the door for the government passing other laws to seize more lands — for irrigation canals, reservoir sites, hydropower installations, townsites, and even Flathead Lake "villa sites." Amidst all these takings, the American Bison Society and Prof. Morton Elrod of Montana State University prompted Congress to seize 18,524 acres from the heart of the reservation for a National Bison Range.

In 1910, officials designated many reservation lands as "surplus," making them available for non-Indian settlement. In May, the large-scale transformation of the reservation began with the arrival of homesteaders. In the two decades after 1910, homesteaders took 409,710 acres, and government pressure resulted in another 131,239 acres of tribal allotments being patented, with many then sold to settle small debts to store owners and the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project. In 1935, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes became the first tribe to reconstitute under terms of Franklin Roosevelt's Indian Reorganization Act, and we began the gradual process of rebuilding our land base, our sovereignty, and our governing capacity.

THE MISSION VALLEY WELCOMES NEW SETTLERS
ST. IGNATIUS, MONTANA

Opening of the Flathead Indian Reservation to homesteaders, April 1910. Courtesy Montana Historical Society Research Center

Restoring the Reservation

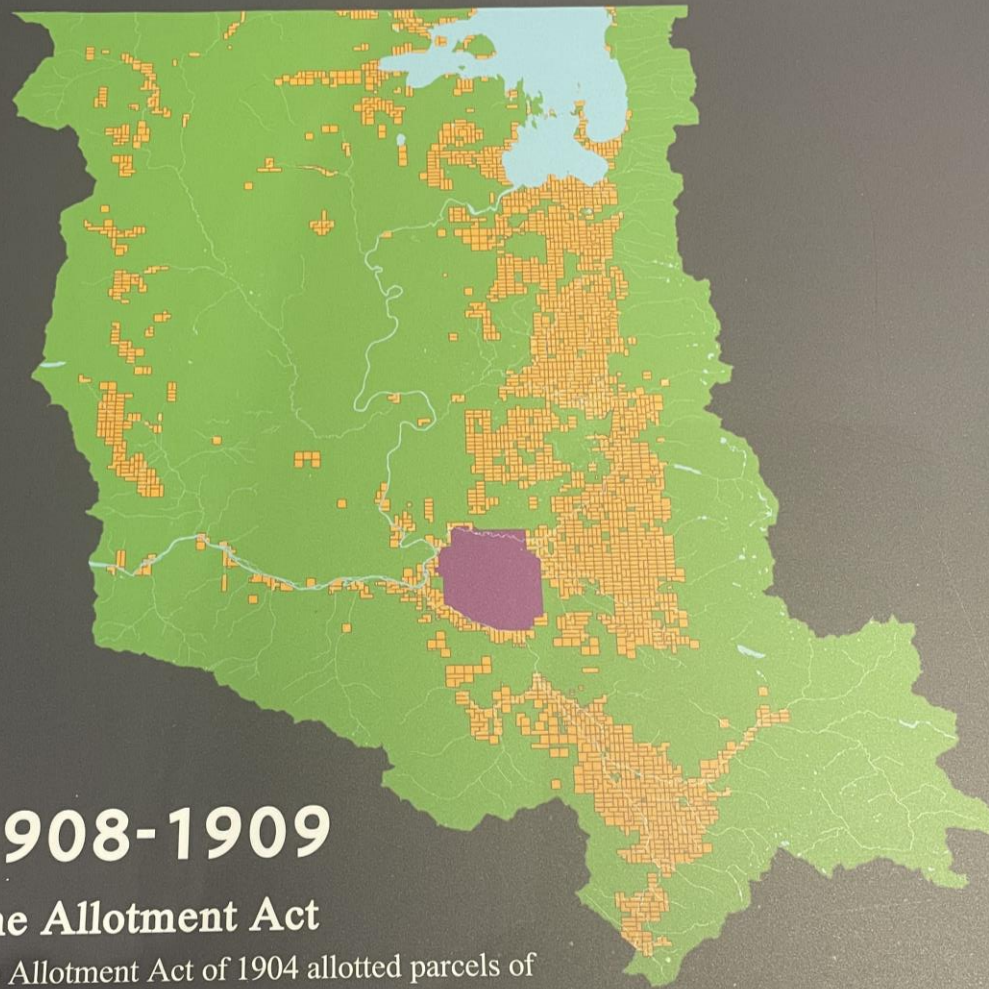




1855

Treaty Land

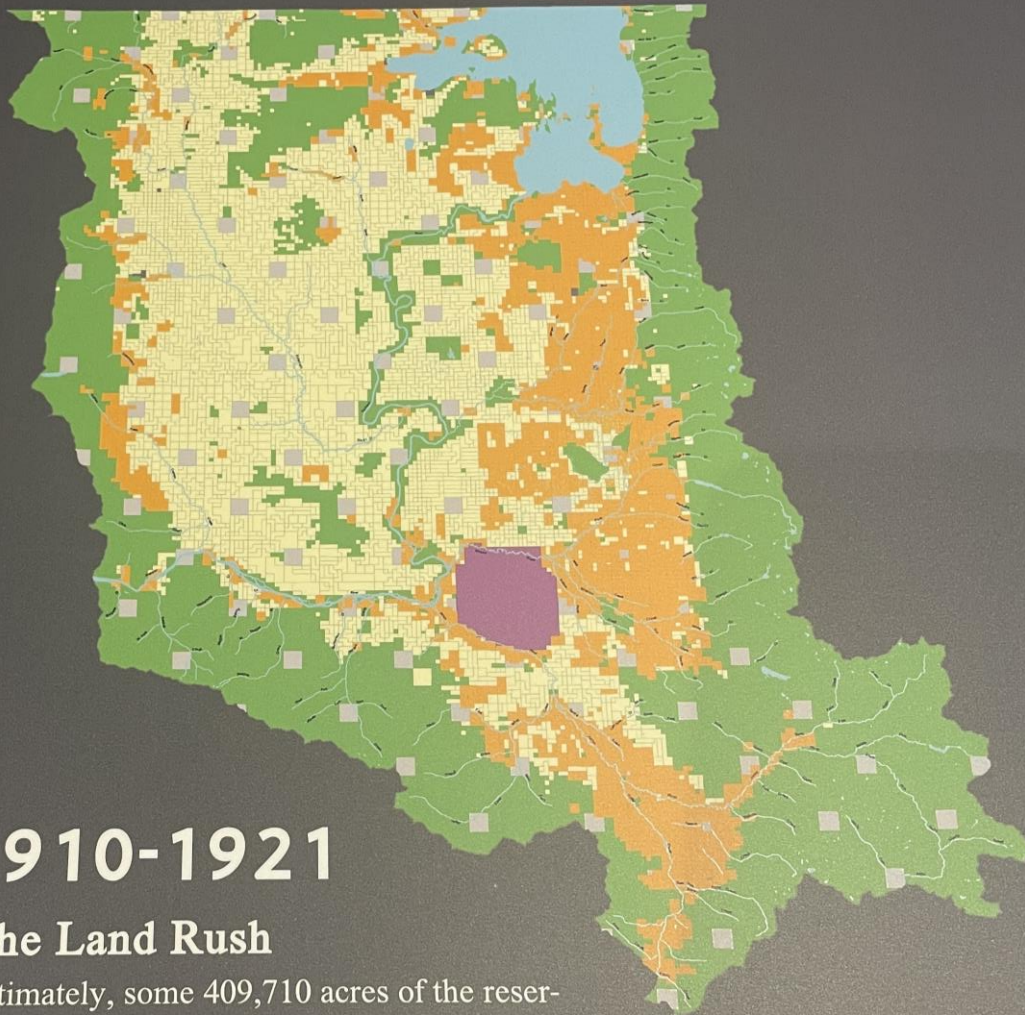
The aboriginal territory of the Séliš, Q̓ispé, and Ksanka people encompassed all of western Montana. In the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, the Tribes reserved 1.2 million acres of that as a homeland for, as the treaty states, their “exclusive use and benefit.” At that point in time, 1855, all of the land on the 1.2 million-acre Flathead Indian Reservation was owned by the Tribes.



1908-1909

The Allotment Act

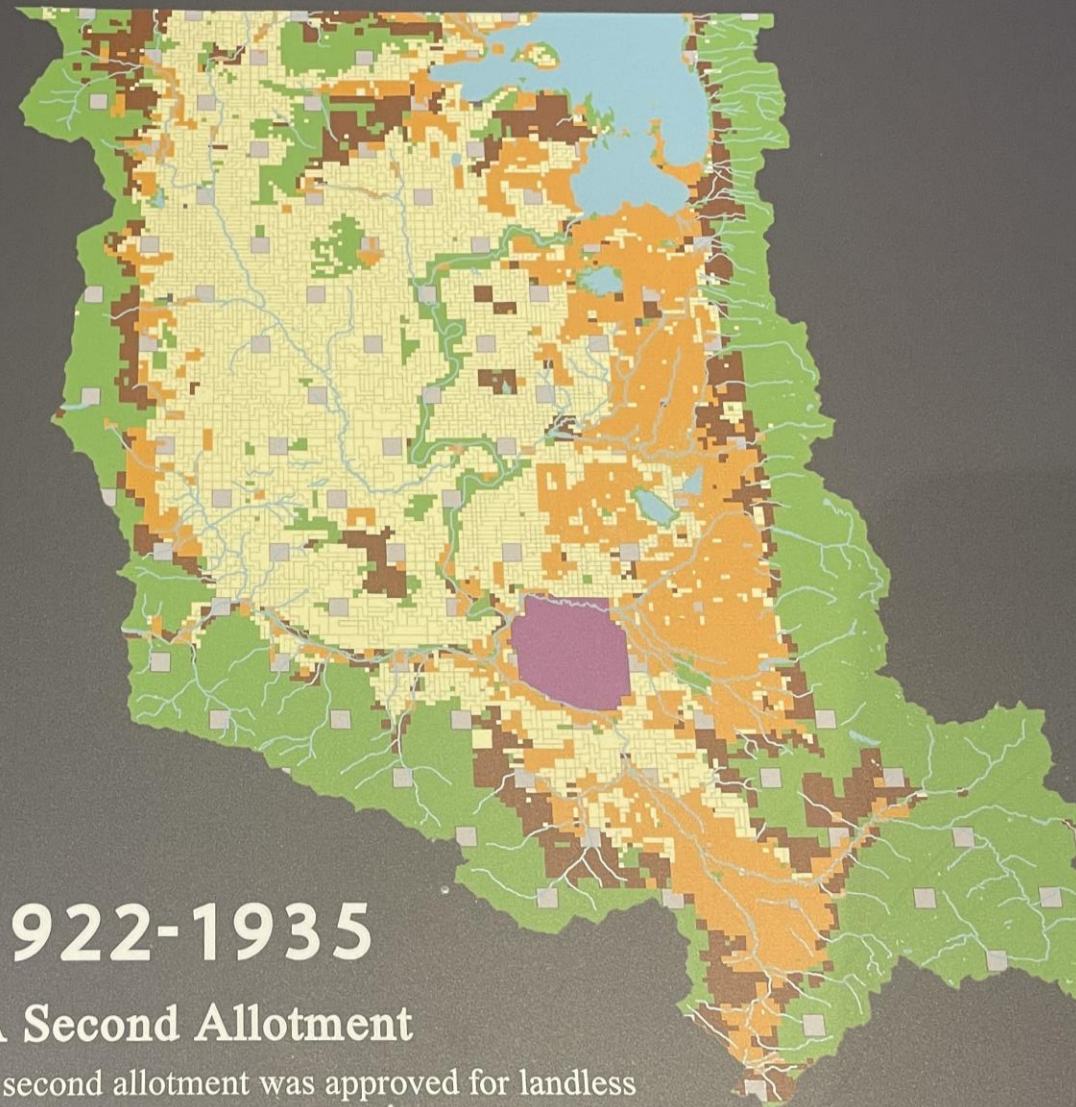
The Allotment Act of 1904 allotted parcels of Tribal land to individual Indians: one-hundred-sixty acres to each family head, 80 acres to a single person over 18. The Tribes vehemently opposed allotment and sent delegations to Washington D.C. to oppose it. Soon after, the United States unilaterally appropriated over 18,524 acres to establish the National Bison Range.



1910-1921

The Land Rush

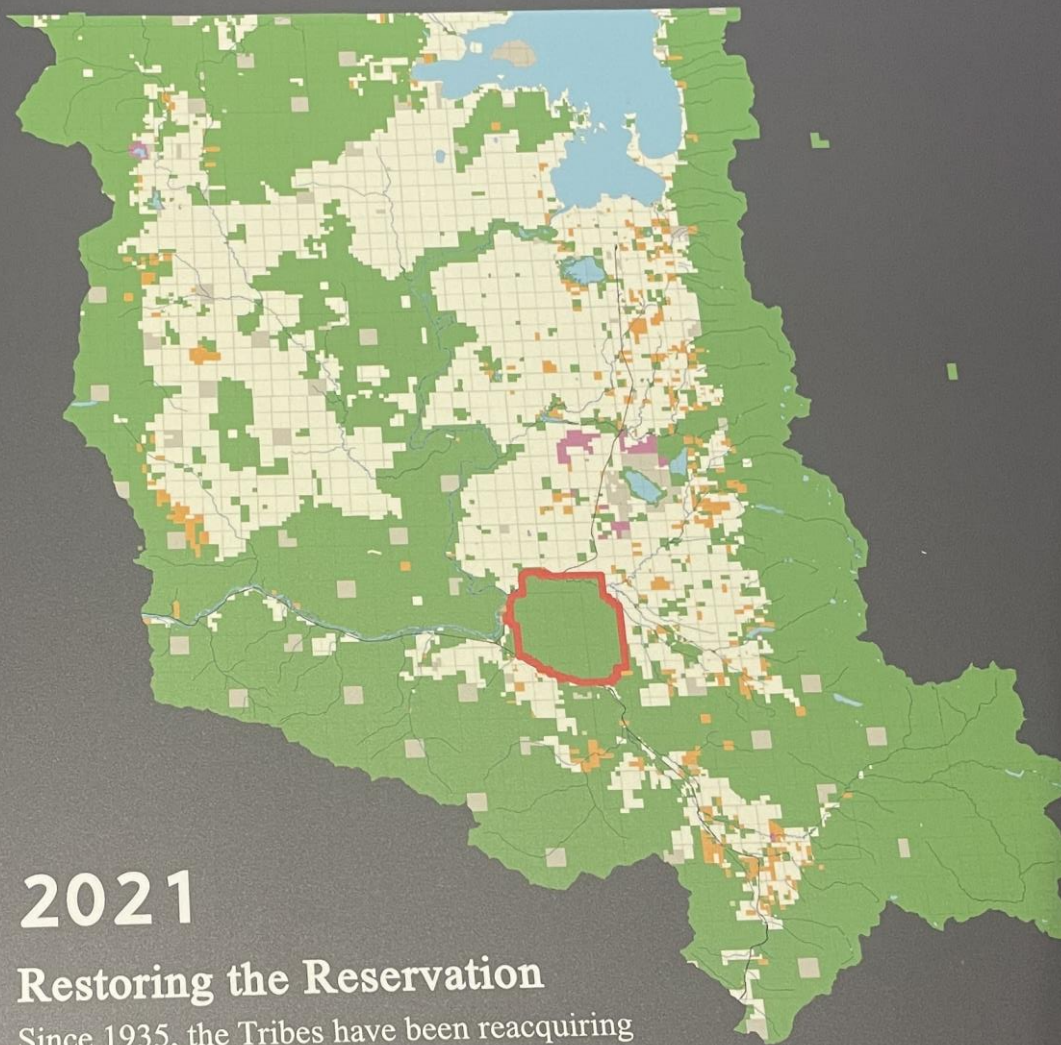
Ultimately, some 409,710 acres of the reservation were given to homesteaders and 60,800 acres were granted to the state for school purposes. The government took even more land for irrigation canals, reservoir sites, and hydropower installations, and townsites. The map had changed and changed dramatically.



1922-1935

A Second Allotment

A second allotment was approved for landless Indians born between 1908 and 1920. It transferred another 124,795 acres from Tribal ownership to individual Indian ownership.



2021

Restoring the Reservation

Since 1935, the Tribes have been reacquiring land in hopes of restoring as much of the reservation to Tribal ownership as possible. In 2020, Congress, via Public Law 116-260, restored the Bison Range to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

The Path to Restoration

Prior to the Bison Range being restored to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Tribes' had an extensive record of cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Given this background and the Tribes' ongoing connections to the bison on the range and the range itself, it is not surprising that they would seek meaningful involvement in management of the National Bison Range.

1994

That opportunity came in 1994 when the Congress passed the Tribal Self-Governance Act, a law that authorizes Indian tribes to contract for the operation of Department of Interior programs of specific significance to tribes. Soon after, Tribal Chairman Michael ("Mickey") T. Pablo requested negotiations with the Department of Interior and the FWS for a Tribal Self-Governance agreement at the National Bison Range.





MICHAEL T. "MICKEY" PABLO VISITOR CENTER 2022

Michael T. "Mickey" Pablo
1948-1999

The Michael T. "Mickey" Pablo Visitor Center honors the legacy of a highly respected tribal leader. Mickey's gentle manner, brilliant intellect and common sense were qualities he possessed as he served his people, his nation, and Indian people throughout the United States. A descendant of Chief Big Knife of the Ksanka and Chief Michel of the Qlispé, Mickey's grandfather was Michel Pablo, who helped save the American Bison from extinction. As Tribal Council Chairman, Mickey was a tireless advocate for Tribal Self Governance policies and was integral to the passage of the Federal Tribal Self-Governance Act. In the 1980s and 1990s, as Tribal Chairman, he initiated the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' efforts to partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the management of the National Bison Range. His efforts formed the foundation of the Tribes' successful efforts to restore the Bison Range to federal trust ownership for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Mickey Pablo was a fearless warrior in defense of his people, their lands and treaty rights.



2005

After ten years of difficult negotiations, the parties reached an agreement covering fiscal years 2005–2006 under which, the Tribes contracted portions of NBR visitor services, biology, maintenance, and fire control programs. The agreement placed Tribal staff at the National Bison Range to perform the work under a newly created Coordinator position, and it was extended in 2006 pending negotiation of a successor agreement.

Months later, however, it was abruptly canceled by FWS largely due to acrimony on the part of individual FWS employees who had opposed the agreement even before it had been signed. Recognizing this, DOI and FWS leadership immediately agreed to enter into a new agreement with CSKT in order to rectify the situation.

2008

Following extensive negotiations, a new agreement was signed in 2008 for 2009–2011. It involved tribal contracting of the entirety of most of visitor services, biology, maintenance, and fire control programs and the contracting of a Deputy Refuge Manager position. The Tribes and the FWS built a highly constructive partnership at both the field and policy levels over the course of the next few years. Despite the growing progress, opponents to the Tribes' participation filed suit in federal court, alleging it violated federal law. Almost two years into the 2008 agreement's term, the court rescinded it on strictly procedural grounds. The court did not rule on the plaintiffs' underlying claims.

In response to the court decision, The Tribes and the FWS negotiated a new Self-Governance agreement and the FWS agreed to prepare an environmental assessment. The FWS was in the final stages of preparing that assessment when Congress restored the Bison Range to the Tribes.

Animals You Might Also See

In addition to buffalo, hundreds of species — everything from trumpeter swans to hummingbirds and from meadow voles to grizzly bears — live on or visit the Bison Range. Below are some of the most common with notes about their cultural significance to our tribes.



Elk
Sulish: Tshé'laant'
Kootenai: Klyim' (Lant')

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for elk are wai'wai' (two elk) and wai'wai' (one elk). Elk have beautiful eyes with two rows of eyelashes. They stand tall, usually, upright. Sulish-Clappi: Other names for elk are wai'wai' (two elk) and wai'wai' (one elk). Elk have beautiful eyes with two rows of eyelashes. They stand tall, usually, upright.



Sulish-Clappi: Other names for elk are wai'wai' (two elk) and wai'wai' (one elk). Elk have beautiful eyes with two rows of eyelashes. They stand tall, usually, upright.



Pronghorn Antelope
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Ahshah'

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for pronghorn antelope are Sash' (Sash) and Ahshah' (Ahshah'). They are known for their speed and ability to survive in harsh conditions.

Porcupine
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Ahshah'

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for porcupine are Sash' (Sash) and Ahshah' (Ahshah'). They are known for their quills and ability to defend themselves.



Bighorn Sheep
Sulish: K'wonnai' (Sash) / K'wonnai' (Sash)
Kootenai: Kuysh'

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for bighorn sheep are K'wonnai' (Sash) and Kuysh' (Kuysh'). They are known for their large, curved horns.



Mule Deer **White-tailed Deer**
Sulish: M'wonnai' (Sash) / Sash' (Sash) / Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Kuysh' (Sash) / Kuysh' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for mule deer are M'wonnai' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their large antlers.



Coyote
Sulish: Sash' (Sash) / Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for coyote are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their intelligence and adaptability.



Wolf
Sulish: M'wonnai' (Sash)
Kootenai: Kuysh'

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for wolf are M'wonnai' (Sash) and Kuysh' (Kuysh'). They are known for their pack behavior.



Bobcat
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Kuysh' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for bobcat are Sash' (Sash) and Kuysh' (Kuysh'). They are known for their agility and hunting skills.



Mountain Lion
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for mountain lion are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their strength and hunting skills.



Beaver
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for beaver are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their dam-building skills.



River Otter
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for river otter are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their playful nature.

Red Fox
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)



Sulish-Clappi: Other names for red fox are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their intelligence and adaptability.



Western Meadowlark
Sulish: Sash' (Sash) / Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for western meadowlark are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their beautiful songs.



Trumpeter Swan
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for trumpeter swan are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their large size and beautiful calls.



Black Bear
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for black bear are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their strength and hunting skills.



Grizzly Bear
Sulish: Sash' (Sash) / Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for grizzly bear are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their size and strength.



Magpie
Sulish: Sash' (Sash) / Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for magpie are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their intelligence and adaptability.



Bald Eagle
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for bald eagle are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their power and majesty.



Ruffed Grouse
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for ruffed grouse are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their camouflage skills.



Dusky Grouse
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for dusky grouse are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their camouflage skills.



Golden Eagle
Sulish: Sash' (Sash)
Kootenai: Sash' (Sash)

Sulish-Clappi: Other names for golden eagle are Sash' (Sash) and Sash' (Sash). They are known for their speed and hunting skills.

Sulish and Kootenai names for the animals courtesy of the Sulish-Clappi and Kootenai Culture Committees.



Creation stories/ Coyote Stories

- ▶ These sacred stories that are only told in the winter months, explain how things came to be, and the nature of life on earth. They teach how we are meant to live in relations of respect with each other, with the lands and waters, and with the plants and animals.
- ▶ Some of these stories tell of much larger buffalo & beaver, describe a frozen world and great floods.
- ▶ Our oldest archeological site in our territories dates to almost 13,000 years ago, about the same time as the last draining of Glacial Lake Missoula.

Native Plants of the Bison Range

Many of the plants and animals have given themselves to human beings to be used for food, medicine, or materials. They are only to be harvested respectfully in ways that ensure their abundance for generations yet to come. On the Bison Range, the collection or disturbance of natural objects such as plants, animals, feathers, and antlers is not allowed, except by special permit.



Arrowleaf Balsamroot
Sulish: *Ashka*
Kootenai: *Kul*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shikwa* is an important plant to our people. In early spring, when offered in their soup, yellow flowers are pressed and eaten. One can eat only the central roots, central stem of stems, cut for gathered and also for those are used in the ground to harvest. The dried, crushed leaves are put in moccasins for insulation. *Shikwa* also has many medicinal uses. It provides structure to deer and elk, and used for a variety of other uses.



Ponderosa Pine
Sulish: *Shagay*
Kootenai: *Shay*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shagay* grows tall and it has long green needles in clusters of three. We use the inner bark to wrap as a good food and the seed. It is a way that animals harvest it for food.



Chinquerry
Sulish: *Shu*
Kootenai: *Shu*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shu* is an important plant. It is harvested in the fall and the seed is used for food. It is harvested in August and September. We use it to make a soup after the first frost. This soup is also mixed with other medicines and used to treat the chest in the fall and the chest. The bark and seed are important medicines, large amounts of medicinal herbs, roots, berries, flowers, seed, and their stems, and their leaves.



Elderberry
Sulish: *Shu*
Kootenai: *Shu*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shu* is an important plant. It is harvested in the fall and the seed is used for food. It is harvested in August and September. We use it to make a soup after the first frost. This soup is also mixed with other medicines and used to treat the chest in the fall and the chest. The bark and seed are important medicines, large amounts of medicinal herbs, roots, berries, flowers, seed, and their stems, and their leaves.



Rocky Mountain Juniper
Sulish: *Shu*
Kootenai: *Shu*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shu* is an important plant. It is harvested in the fall and the seed is used for food. It is harvested in August and September. We use it to make a soup after the first frost. This soup is also mixed with other medicines and used to treat the chest in the fall and the chest. The bark and seed are important medicines, large amounts of medicinal herbs, roots, berries, flowers, seed, and their stems, and their leaves.



Red Ox-eye Dogwood
Sulish: *Shu*
Kootenai: *Shu*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shu* is an important plant. It is harvested in the fall and the seed is used for food. It is harvested in August and September. We use it to make a soup after the first frost. This soup is also mixed with other medicines and used to treat the chest in the fall and the chest. The bark and seed are important medicines, large amounts of medicinal herbs, roots, berries, flowers, seed, and their stems, and their leaves.



Big Sunflower
Sulish: *Shu*
Kootenai: *Shu*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shu* is an important plant. It is harvested in the fall and the seed is used for food. It is harvested in August and September. We use it to make a soup after the first frost. This soup is also mixed with other medicines and used to treat the chest in the fall and the chest. The bark and seed are important medicines, large amounts of medicinal herbs, roots, berries, flowers, seed, and their stems, and their leaves.

Servicberry
Sulish: *Shu*
Kootenai: *Shu*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shu* is an important plant. It is harvested in the fall and the seed is used for food. It is harvested in August and September. We use it to make a soup after the first frost. This soup is also mixed with other medicines and used to treat the chest in the fall and the chest. The bark and seed are important medicines, large amounts of medicinal herbs, roots, berries, flowers, seed, and their stems, and their leaves.



Ponderosa Pine
Sulish: *Shagay*
Kootenai: *Shay*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shagay* grows tall and it has long green needles in clusters of three. We use the inner bark to wrap as a good food and the seed. It is a way that animals harvest it for food.



Rock Washbush
Sulish: *Shu*
Kootenai: *Shu*
Sulish-Clippe: *Shu* is an important plant. It is harvested in the fall and the seed is used for food. It is harvested in August and September. We use it to make a soup after the first frost. This soup is also mixed with other medicines and used to treat the chest in the fall and the chest. The bark and seed are important medicines, large amounts of medicinal herbs, roots, berries, flowers, seed, and their stems, and their leaves.

Sulish and Kootenai names for the plants courtesy of the Selti-Olispé and Kootenai Culture Committees.



Visit the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Online Educational Resources



<http://twronline.csktnrd.org/Fire/Index.html>



<http://twronline.csktnrd.org/Explore/Index.html>



<http://twronline.csktnrd.org/Map/Index.html>



<https://csktfwapps.org/AnimalFieldGuide/Index.html>

Ipiq Q^weyq^way: White Buffalo

On May 3, 1933, something rare occurred at the Bison Range: the birth of a white bison bull. Although not a true albino, he was almost completely white, save for a brown topknot and tan-colored hooves.

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal member and Range Rider John A. McDonald first discovered the calf, and the news spread quickly throughout the reservation. It is said that within days, Seliš-Qlispé people conducted a ceremony to welcome the white buffalo. Families made trips to go and see him. Elders today recall that he was respected as something important and unique — a special gift from the Creator and a sign of the Creator's power. For many Seliš and Qlispé people, Ipiq Q^weyq^way — White Buffalo — was like thunder or lightning, a reminder of our humble place as human beings in this world, and how we must give thanks to the animals for all that they provide.

Non-Indians also admired and gave special care to the buffalo called "Big Medicine" (in Salish, Sk^timliyemistn). A typical bison's lifespan is about twenty years, but Big Medicine lived to be 26, dying on August 25, 1959. During his lifetime on

the Range, he was sometimes referred to as the most photographed bison in America. Elders have long told how for spiritual reasons, buffalo of a "different color" were never killed or eaten, and when the white buffalo died, the meat was not taken by tribal members as was then the usual practice.

Tribal Council Chairman Walter McDonald immediately expressed the wishes of many tribal people in advocating for the white buffalo being preserved and kept on the Flathead Reservation. However, National Bison Range officials conveyed the white bison's hide to the Montana Historical Society, which enlisted the help of taxidermist Bob Scriver of Browning and his Blackfeet assistants. The MHS placed the buffalo on public display at the Society's museum in Helena, where he remains. The Tribes are working today to bring the white buffalo home to a place of honor here at the Bison Range.



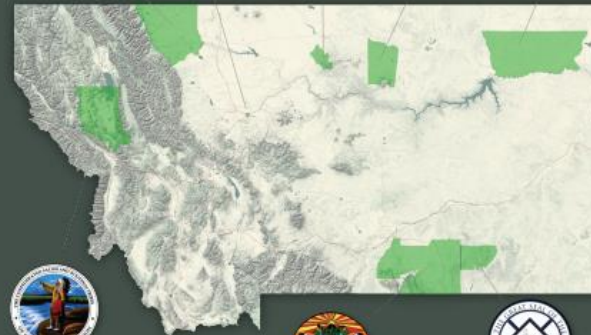
*Text courtesy of the Seliš-Qlispé Culture Committee.
Background Photo of Mission Mountains Courtesy of Dave Fitzpatrick.*

Indian Reservations of Montana

CSKT Honors all of Montana's Tribal Communities

The Flathead Indian Reservation is one of eight Reservations within the state of Montana. These reservations are, in turn, home to twelve distinct Indian tribes. Each tribe is recognized as a nation by the United States government as evidenced by the treaties and executive orders that established the reservations.

The twelve tribes may have similar values, but each has its own cultural traditions, language, identity, and history, many of which stretch back thousands of years. These unique cultural heritages continue to be important to each tribe's individual and collective identity today, and they are a large part of what makes Montana the special place it is.





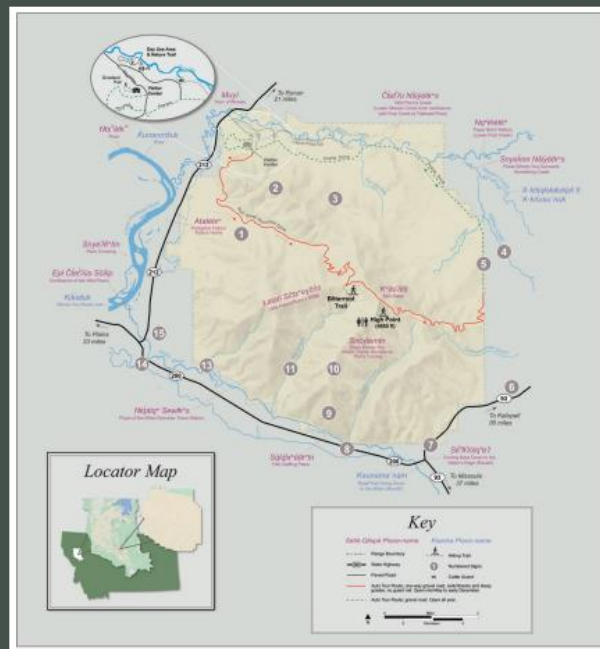
Finding Your Way

on the Bison Range



Snq̓'eyq̓'aytn
Place of Buffalo (Séliš-Qlišpé)

**Ya·qa·kiḥ Haqa'ki
Kamquḡukuḥ 'iyamu**
Where the Buffalo Live (Ksanka)



- 1 Čx̓'tpé(tk̓)
BOB-TAIL'S WATER
(Pauline Creek)
- 2 Čx̓'tpé Sč̓tx̓'eyč̓n̓s
BOB-TAIL'S RIDGE
(Headquarters Ridge)
- 3 Č̓us̓nič̓n̓
LONG RIDGETOP
(Ridge running north from Red Sleep)
- 4 Snyel̓m̓n̓ ʔestmoóp
PLACE-WHERE-YOU-SURROUND-SOMETHING BROOK
(Sabine Creek)
- 5 Ntoḡ'énč
FENCES ON SIDEHILLS
(Fence around CSKT Bison Range)
- 6 Nm̓q̓'ews
LONE HILL
(Hill southwest of St. Ignatius)
- 7 Szañétx̓'
MAGPIE HOUSE
(Near base of Ravalli Hill)
- 8 S̓q̓álx̓'ék̓'tn̓
FISH-GAFFING PLACE
(Jocko River from Ravalli to Dixon)
- 9 Nc̓q̓l̓tés̓n̓
SOMETHING LYING ON ITS BACK IN THE ROCKS
(Formation in talus slope north of Jocko River)
- 10 Nc̓q̓l̓tés̓n̓ Sč̓tx̓'eyč̓n̓s
SOMETHING-LYING-ON-ITS-BACK-IN-THE-ROCKS'S RIDGE
(Ridge from Nc̓q̓l̓tés̓n̓ to Red Sleep)
- 11 Nc̓q̓l̓tés̓n̓ N̓l̓yétk̓'s
SOMETHING-LYING-ON-ITS-BACK-IN-THE-ROCKS'S CREEK
(Elk Creek)
- 12 Siló Moq̓'s
SILO'S MOUNTAIN
(Wild Horse Mountain)
- 13 Qaw̓m̓i Es Toq̓'s
BREAKING-SOMETHING'S GULCH
(Fire Hole Canyon / Kaumi Gulch)
- 14 Ep Sk̓'k̓'lane?
HAS WESTERN PEARLSHELL MUSSELS
(Selow Creek)
- 15 Sn̓č̓l̓al̓q̓'tn̓
GAMBLING PLACE
(Hewankorn stickgame grounds)

Salish place-names courtesy of the Séliš-Qlišpé Culture Committee.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

A People of Vision

Our tribes are widely viewed as progressive and forward-looking, known for our cooperative efforts with numerous governments and organizations, our enterprise, and our stewardship of the land — all in accordance with our traditional cultural values. Here are a few of our accomplishments:

- ✔ We were the first Indian tribal government to adopt a federally approved constitution pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.
- ✔ In 1936, our Council voted to set aside 100,000 acres of the Mission Mountains as a Tribal national park—the first of its kind. The Department of Interior rejected the proposal.
- ✔ In the 1970s the Council established the Séliš-Qlispé and Ksanka Culture Committees, which helped restore traditional cultural values of respect for the environment to the center of tribal governance.
- ✔ In the 1970s, we successfully obtained from the EPA a pristine Class 1 airshed designation rating from the EPA. The designation provides the highest level of federal air quality protection.
- ✔ We have established two primitive natural areas totaling some 98,000 acres. In the 1980s, we became the first tribe to establish a designated wilderness, the 92,000-acre Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness, which includes a 10,000-acre Grizzly Bear Conservation Area.
- ✔ In 1988, the Tribes assumed control of the electric utility that serves the Flathead Reservation. Mission Valley Power is the largest public utility in Montana and the only Federally owned, tribally managed utility in the nation.
- ✔ We manage large herds of wild elk and bighorn sheep and have set aside tens of thousands of acres as conservation areas for them.
- ✔ In the 1990s, we worked to achieve mitigation and habitat replacement to offset the impacts of Kerr Dam on fish and wildlife, and in 2015, we purchased the dam, becoming the first tribe to own and operate a major hydroelectric facility. We now manage the dam to minimize the environmental impacts of its operations.
- ✔ In the reconstruction of US Highway 93, we blocked the building of an undivided four- and five-lane strip highway and successfully advocated for a safer "super-two" design with extensive mitigation for cultural and wildlife impacts, including tribal place-name signs and an unprecedented number of wildlife crossing structures. In the process, we garnered major awards for "context-sensitive design" of transportation systems.
- ✔ We have re-established once locally extinct native species — trumpeter swans, peregrine falcons and leopard frogs!
- ✔ Our restoration efforts on the Jocko and Flathead Rivers and our acquisition and restoration of thousands of acres of fish and wildlife habitat are models cited nationwide.
- ✔ In 2021, we adopted the Cultural Waterways Ordinance, a unique tribal version of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and conferred the protective designation on the lower Flathead River, thereby preventing the building of additional dams.

Photo courtesy of Tom Bauer and the Missoulian

STEWARDSHIP IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR CULTURAL VALUES

The land, air, and water do not belong to us, we belong to them.

We are working hard to protect the land, water, air, and native fish and wildlife and their habitats. We have reintroduced species that once thrived here but were absent for decades. We are restoring fire to the land and striving to keep non-native invasive species at bay. We have worked in collaboration with the Highway Department to make our roads safer for wildlife and people.

Our management decisions integrate traditional cultural knowledge and the best current science. We strive to honor our elders and ancestors by respecting what they have taught us and by passing their wisdom on to our children, teaching them the importance of caring for this beautiful place, our homeland.



We will carry on for the generations yet to come our ancient relationship of respect and reverence for q^weyq^wáy (buffalo).

We, the Séliš, Qlispé and Ksanka people, warmly welcome you to the Bison Range.

Enjoy your visit! Good day!
Xest Sxlxalt, Ki[?]su[?]k kyukyit! –



**THE
BISON
RANGE**

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
of the Northern Shoshone



Thank You!!

Lemlmts

Any Questions???

