

Northern Cheyenne Reservation Timeline

Northern Cheyenne Tribe

2017

The Montana Tribal Histories Reservation Timelines are collections of significant events as referenced by tribal representatives, in existing texts, and in the Montana tribal colleges' history projects. While not all-encompassing, they serve as instructional tools that accompany the text of both the history projects and the *Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide*. The largest and oldest histories of Montana Tribes are still very much oral histories and remain in the collective memories of individuals. Some of that history has been lost, but much remains vibrant within community stories and narratives that have yet to be documented.

Time Immemorial Creation – *How the Earth (HO'E) was Made*

Long, long ago, before there were people, water was everywhere. *Ma'heo'o*, the Creator, was floating on the water. All of the water birds were swimming nearby – the ducks, geese, swans, and other birds that swim. *Ma'heo'o* called to them and asked them to bring him some earth....

Traditional Life & Homelands – The Cheyenne had a fishing economy while they lived around Hudson Bay and the Great Lakes.

1600s – Moving from Cheyenne homelands southwest to Minnesota, the Cheyenne developed permanent earth lodge villages and began an agricultural economy, planting corn and other crops.

1680 – The Cheyenne traveled 300 miles to La Salle's Fort to try and secure guns from French traders.

1700 – The Cheyenne moved northwest to the Sheyenne River in North Dakota, and continued to grow corn, beans, and squash; they also began hunting buffalo.

1750 – The Cheyenne acquired horses and began to use buffalo hide tipis.

1750 – 1790 – The Cheyenne migrated to the Missouri River country. The Tsitsistas met the So'taeo'o in the Missouri River country. Cheyenne developed a friendship with Arikaras and Mandans. They moved to the west side of the Missouri, and built another earth lodge village near Porcupine Creek (present-day Fort Yates, North Dakota.)

1780 – The Cheyenne moved to the game lands of the Black Hills. Here they allied with the Arapaho. This period marked the beginning of life on the Plains as hunters and followers of the buffalo.

1770-1790 – Conflict with the Chippewa. The Chippewa destroyed the Cheyenne village on the Sheyenne River. In 1799, the Chippewa Chief related this event to David Thompson.

1819 – Cheyenne united with the Oglala against the Crow.

1825 – Friendship Treaty. This treaty was a pledge of peace between the Cheyenne and the United States.

1849 –Cholera epidemic among the Cheyenne.

1851 – First Treaty at Fort Laramie with the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Oglala, Brule Sioux, Crow, Shoshone, Assiniboines, Gros Ventre, Mandans, Arikaras and Minnitarées; 10,000 Indians were at the treaty negotiations. Cheyenne and Arapaho territory was established, spanning lands in Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado and Kansas. Two years before the Fort Laramie Treaty, Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Medill suggested offering compensation to the Plains Tribes in recognition of the destruction of the buffalo.

“Under these circumstances, whatever may be the nature and extent of their title to the lands, I think it would be sound policy to make them some annual compensation for the right of way through the county, and in consideration of the destruction of the buffalo therein.” (Prucha, Francis Paul. *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly*. University of California Press, 1997. p. 237)

1856 – Platte Bridge Incident. After a false accusation of horse stealing was made against a party of Cheyennes, one of the Cheyenne was shot and killed, another captured, and a third wounded. The horses in question actually belonged to Two Tails, who was later to become the famed Chief Little Wolf.

1861 – Treaty of Fort Wise. Six leaders of the Southern Cheyenne and four Arapaho bands signed the Fort Wise treaty, establishing a reservation in Colorado. Many Cheyenne opposed the treaty.

1864 – Sand Creek Massacre. Colonel Chivington and 700 Colorado Volunteers attacked a camp of Southern Cheyennes and a small number of Arapahoes; two-thirds of the camp were women and children. One hundred thirty-seven people, mostly Southern Cheyennes were brutally massacred. Major E. W. Wynkoop investigated the “incident,” interviewing the Volunteer soldiers. This statement was part of his report:

The affidavits which become a portion of this report will show more particularly than I can state the full particulars of that massacre. Every one of whom I have spoken to, either officers or soldier, agree in the relation that the most fearful atrocities were committed that ever was heard of. Women and children were killed and scalped, children shot at their mothers’ breasts ... Numerous eye-witnesses have described scenes to me coming under the eye of Colonel Chivington of the most disgusting and horrible character. (United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I Volume XLI, Part I, pp. 959-962. U.S. Government Printing Office)

1865 – One thousand Cheyenne warriors struck the town of Julesburg. The ensuing raids by the Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho were in response to the Sand Creek Massacre.



1865 - Powder River Expedition - \$40-million-dollar failure. The Powder River Expedition was intended to crush the “hostile” Northern Plains tribes – in particular, the Cheyenne, Sioux and Arapaho. Inexperience, poor equipment, and little knowledge of the territory (one group got lost in the badlands) all contributed to a failed effort.

1865 – Treaty with the Southern Cheyenne and Southern Arapaho, made at the Little Arkansas River, established a new reservation spanning the borders of Kansas and Oklahoma. Article 6 acknowledged the grievous violence committed against the Cheyenne at Sand Creek and made an attempt at reparations.

1868 – The Fort Laramie Treaty established the Great Sioux Reservation in South Dakota that includes the sacred Black Hills. Article 16 describes unceded Indian Territory: “The United States hereby agrees and stipulates that the country north of the North Platte River and east of the summits of the Big Horn Mountains shall be held and considered to be unceded Indian territory, and also stipulates and agrees that no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy any portion of the same....” This “unceded Indian territory” was land occupied by the Northern Cheyenne. Treaty stipulations included “undisturbed travel” for settlers and “withdrawal of opposition to the construction of the railroads now being built on the plains.” (Article 11)

1875 – Gold discovered in Black Hills. An attempt was made to purchase the Black Hills and then later the mineral rights. Tribes had no intention of selling the land or the minerals.

1875 – Indian agents were directed to order off-reservation Indians to report to their agencies. This included many Northern Cheyenne. When only a few complied, the matter was turned over to the military and the course was set for violent conflict.

1876 – Where the Girl Saved Her Brother – Battle of the Rosebud. Thirteen hundred soldiers under General Crook moved up the Bozeman Trail to Rosebud Creek, meeting about the same number of Cheyenne and Hunkpapa (a Lakota band). The Cheyenne warrior, Comes in Sight, had his horse shot out from under him and was about to be killed when his sister, Buffalo Calf Road Woman, rode to him, under fire, and saved him. Eleven Warriors were killed in the battle and five wounded. The cavalry suffered 57 killed and wounded.

1876 - Battle of the Little Big Horn. The famed battle that took place nine days after the Battle of the Rosebud. Custer made the ill-fated decision to divide his regiment of 600 men into four battalions. Custer and 264 of his men were killed.

1876 – The Cheyenne were pursued by cavalry during the winter months.

1876 – Many Cheyenne were forced to move to forts and agencies.

1877 – Nine hundred and seventy-two Cheyenne were moved from Red Cloud’s Agency south to Oklahoma to live with Southern Cheyenne. After arrival, many people contracted malaria.

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1878 – The poor conditions of the Cheyenne in Oklahoma resulted in Northern Cheyenne leaders Morning Star, Little Wolf, Wild Hog, and Old Crow making the decision to move their people north. Two hundred and ninety- seven Cheyenne began the march north. The group split into two bands, one led by Little Wolf and the other by Morning Star. Morning Star’s band got caught and sent to Fort Robinson in Nebraska.

1879 – Fort Robinson Outbreak. In an effort to force the Cheyenne to agree to move back to Oklahoma, the soldiers deprived them of food, water, and heat. People were scraping ice off of the windows to get moisture. In a desperate attempt to escape, 61 of the 149 imprisoned Cheyenne were killed. During their return to their Tongue River country, Little Wolf’s band met with Cheyenne and Sioux scouts traveling with Lieutenant W. P. Clark, and agreed to go to Fort Keogh.

1880 – Due to overcrowding of Sioux and Cheyenne at Fort Keogh, Colonel Nelson Miles allowed Cheyenne families to settle along the Tongue River and encouraged the Cheyenne to homestead their lands.

1882 – Cheyenne families remaining at Fort Keogh moved south to the Rosebud and Muddy Creeks, building houses and planting crops.

1884 – Executive Order created the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in southeast Montana on the Tongue River.

1884 – Ursuline nuns arrived and set up a mission.

1889 – Bureau of Indian Affairs began a 30-year suppression of the Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance.

1890 – The Bureau of Indian Affairs opposed General Miles’ recommendation to move the White River Cheyenne to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana. Despite the Bureau’s opposition, the White River Cheyenne were united with their people on their own reservation. The Cheyenne reservation population totaled around 1200.

1890 – The last Northern Cheyenne engagement with the US Cavalry. After being accused of killing a white man, Head Chief and Young Mule faced their accusers in a traditional manner of bravery and were killed.

1904 – A boarding school at Busby was built.

1918 – Spanish influenza outbreak on the reservation

1919 – In order to increase a tribal cattle herd, the Bureau of Indian Affairs implemented a plan to reduce the Cheyenne horse herd, numbering 15,000. One hundred horses a month were killed, giving the owner \$6.55 per hide.

1924 – The Bureau of Indian Affairs discontinued the tribal cattle herd that was a dismal failure under its management.

1926 – Northern Cheyenne tribal members voted in favor of allotting their reservation lands.

1929 – After the Bureau’s intentional slaughter, only 3,000 horses were left on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

1930-1932 – All 1,457 Northern Cheyenne enrolled tribal members received an allotment of 160 acres.

1936 – The Northern Cheyenne approved a tribal constitution under the Indian Reorganization Act.

1950 – During the winter, 50 children and older people died during an epidemic of German measles.

1963 – Northern Cheyenne received a \$4,200,000 settlement in the Court of Claims for lands taken from them by violation of the 1851 and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaties.

1966, 1969, 1971 – The Northern Cheyenne gave three coal permit sales. This action resulted in over 56 percent of the reservation being leased to energy companies and speculators.

1972 – The Northern Cheyenne were offered millions of dollars from Consolidation Coal to build four plants to gasify Cheyenne coal. The plants were said to be needed during the country’s national “Energy Crisis.” Included with the offer was a much needed \$1.5 million health center. Cultural leader Ted Rising Sun responded “I think I would rather be poor in my own country, with my own people, with our way of life than be rich in a torn-up land where I am outnumbered 10 to one by strangers.”

1973 – The Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council voted to cancel all the permits and leases.

1974 – Interior Secretary Morton refused to cancel the leases and instead placed them on indefinite hold.

1976 – Northern Cheyenne Tribe v. Hollowbreast et al. A provision in the 1926 Northern Cheyenne Allotment Act would have conveyed mineral rights to allottees and their heirs after 50 years. The Northern Cheyenne Tribe took the case to court to determine if the Act had indeed given the allottees vested rights in the mineral rights of their allotments. After a decision and a reversal, the case went to the Supreme Court. It was determined that the coal and mineral rights were “reserved for the benefit of the tribe.”

1976 – The Northern Cheyenne opposed the expansion at Colstrip, based on recent regulations in the Clean Air Act. The courts agreed with the Northern Cheyenne and stated that the tribe’s Class I Air Standards would be applied to the new generators at Colstrip. Engineers had designed

generator 3 & 4 for Class II standards. The EPA shut down construction for three years. The company was forced to install better pollution control equipment. Air monitoring stations are set up on the reservation and monitored by tribal employees.

1979 – Dull Knife Memorial College was established at Lame Deer, Montana. The name was later changed to Chief Dull Knife College.

1980 – A Congressional act canceled the coal leases and permits.

1990 – William Tall Bull, Northern Cheyenne elder, helped Senator Melcher write the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act.

1993 – The Northern Cheyenne Tribe repatriated the human remains of 26 relatives. Nineteen were returned for burial home from the Smithsonian Institution. Seven were men, women and children of Chief Morning Star's band that had been killed in the Fort Robinson massacre in 1879.

2000 – President Clinton signed the Sand Creek National Historic Site Establishment Act, setting aside 12,000 acres in Colorado.

2008 – The Northern Cheyenne successfully petitioned to have the Rosebud Battle Field site and the Wolf Mountain Battle site listed as National Historic Landmarks.