

Flathead Reservation Timeline

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

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 – The Creation and time of the animal people. Coyote and Fox traveled the earth preparing the world for human beings.

Traditional Life – The Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai flourished in their aboriginal territory that included most of Montana and portions of Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, and Canada. The Salish Tribe grew, becoming so large that the people had to divide into smaller bands.

Pre-1700 – A Salish prophet, Xalıqs, Shining Shirt foresaw the coming of the “Black Robes” (Catholic Jesuits).

1650 – 1700 – The Salish and Pend d'Oreille acquired horses from the Shoshone.

1775 – Blackfeet gained continued access to firearms through Hudson's Bay Company in Canada, leading to an uneven power struggle with area tribes over a rapidly decreasing land base.

1780s – A smallpox outbreak reached a group of Salish camped in the Missoula area. The camp divided – families with smallpox and those without. One group went to the Bitterroot Valley while the other moved to the Drummond area. Only one boy in the Bitterroot camp survived the epidemic. By 1782, small pox had killed an estimated one-half to three-quarters of the Salish and Pend d' Oreille bands. The combination of the introduction of disease, firearms, and horses led to massive changes in intertribal territories. Blackfeet expansion caused eastern bands of the Salish and Pend d' Oreille to move their winter camps west of the continental divide. The Salishian people called the Tuńáxn, who occupied the Rocky Mountain front, were decimated. The survivors scattered to the west and merged with other tribes, bringing about the near extinction of a native people.

1790s – The first French and British fur traders appeared in what is now western Montana and the Flathead Indian Reservation.

1803 – In the Louisiana Purchase the United States purchased from France the *right* to be the only purchaser of tribal lands when and if Indians ever chose to sell any land, and



the sovereign and commercial rights to be the only government to trade and engage in diplomatic relationships with the tribal nations in the Louisiana Territory.

1805 – The Salish allowed Lewis and Clark to enter Salish territory in the Bitterroot Valley near Darby, opening the door to fur trade in Salish territory. Kʷtít Púpłm - Salish place name meaning “Great Clearing” was located at Ross’s Hole.

1809 – The Salish gained regular access to firearms through the establishment of fur trade in western Montana by David Thompson. Saleesh House, at Sqeyt kʷm - Salish placename in reference to “the Sound of Falling Water” located at Thompson Falls along with Kullyspell House at Lake Pend Oreille in present day North Idaho established fur posts in Salish and Pend’ Oreille aboriginal territory.

1811 – 1830 – The peak years of the Fur Trade in the Northwest which had far-reaching impacts on the ecology, economy, and culture of the people of this region. The Iroquois people arrived among the Salish people.

1811 – Kullyspell House having been built off the main travel ways was abandoned.

1831, 1835, 1837, 1839 – Years the Salish sent delegations to St. Louis to bring back the “Black Robes,” the Catholic Jesuit Priests.

1841 – Father De Smet and the first Jesuit missionaries arrived in Montana, establishing St. Mary’s, a mission near present day Stevensville in the Bitterroot. The Salish placename for St. Mary’s is Łqét młš meaning wide cottonwoods.

1846 – The Oregon Treaty between the United States and Great Britain divided aboriginal territory along the current Canadian border on the 49th parallel. Millions of acres of aboriginal lands in current Canada were lost. Kootenai bands along with tribes in the Salish language family were now placed in separate jurisdictions.

1848 – The United States organized Oregon Territory, exerting jurisdiction over tribal aboriginal lands west of the continental divide.

1851 – The Fort Laramie Treaty impacted aboriginal territory east of the Rocky Mountains. The treaty failed to recognize use of Salish, Pend d’Oreille, and Kootenai aboriginal lands east of the Continental Divide.

1853 – Isaac Stevens surveyed a route for Northern Pacific Railroad.

1855 – Tribal leaders and US officials signed the Treaty of Hell Gate. Under terms of the treaty, tribal leaders ceded to the United States “title” to the vast majority of their lands west of the continental divide. Tribal leaders reserved 1.25 million acres for the Flathead Reservation, along with the “Conditional Bitterroot Reservation” for what the treaty said was to be for the tribes “exclusive use and benefit.” In the treaty, the tribes also reserved rights on their ceded lands, including the right to hunt, fish, gather plants, and pasture livestock on “open and unclaimed lands.” Tribal understanding of the boundaries of the Flathead Reservation was considerably different from what was actually written in the treaty, particularly the east, west, and northern boundaries.

1855 – Lame Bull/Judith River Treaty with the “Blackfoot Nation” (Piegan, Blood, Blackfoot, and Gros Ventre), the “Flathead Nation” (Flathead – Salish, Upper Pend d’Oreille, Kootenai), and Nez Perce. In an effort to establish peace among warring tribes, the US government convened treaty negotiations to establish a “Common Hunting Ground” that would be acknowledged and honored by all of the tribes. At these negotiations, Pend d’Oreille Chief Alexander told all the other Indian leaders present that the Sweetgrass Hills country “was an old road for our people. A long time ago our people belonged to this land.” Alexander’s statement documented tribal homelands east of the Rocky Mountains – as other tribes moved into Montana, the Salish, Pend d’Oreille, and Kootenai were forced to concentrate their populations on the west side of the mountains.

1859 – Hell Gate Treaty of 1855 was ratified by US Senate and signed by the President.

1864 – First major gold rush in Montana Territory brought thousands of non-Indian people with it.

1870 – *ǂw'eł xłcin* - Many Horses, Chief Victor, died out in buffalo country. His son, *Sł m̄xe Q̄woxqey*s – Claws of the Small Grizzly, or Chief Charlo, succeeded him as head chief of the Bitterroot Salish.

1870s – Six buffalo calves survived a journey west to the Flathead Reservation. *łatałi*, - Little Falcon Robe, brought the calves to the reservation. These calves eventually became the Pablo-Allard herd. Remnants of this herd sold to Canada made their way back to the reservation when the National Bison Range was formed.

1871 – President Grant signed an Executive Order, requiring the Salish to leave the Bitterroot Valley and go the “Jocko” reservation. The president’s action was not based on any survey or examination of the Bitterroot for a suitable place (reservation) for the Salish, as required by the 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate. Representative James Garfield was appointed by President Grant to secure the Salish removal to the Jocko Reservation.

1872 – Representative Garfield met with the Salish near present-day Stevensville to secure their approval and signature on an agreement for their removal to the Jocko Reservation. Chief Charlo refused to sign. Under the terms of the agreement, the Salish were to move from the Bitterroot Valley to the Jocko Reservation (Flathead Reservation) in exchange for \$55,000, new log houses, a side of beef for every family, and plots of land designated specifically for the Salish. Salish sub-chiefs Arlee and Adolph signed the contract, but head chief Charlo, son of Victor, refused to sign, therefore making the contract invalid. When the agreement was officially presented upon Garfield’s return, a signature mark, which was a forgery, appeared on the contract by Chief Charlo’s typed name. Chief Charlo was enraged when he found out about this deception. The senate approved the agreement for ratification.

1873 – Chief Arlee and a few families moved to the reservation and settle near the Jocko Agency.

1875 – By fall of this year, 123 Salish had moved from the Bitterroot Valley to the reservation. The North American bison population had dwindled to about one million, due to a deliberate campaign to exterminate them. “The elders say that in the second to last year of the traditional Pend d’Oreille buffalo hunts, the hunters were able to kill only 27. The following year they killed only seven.” “Going to buffalo” was becoming only a memory.

1877 – Fort Missoula established in the Bitterroot in large part due to the Nez Perce war. The non-Indians in Montana Territory feared all Indians were going to rebel against the federal government and demanded protection.

1882 – Tribal leaders were pressured into signing an agreement to allow a railroad right-of-way through the reservation, relinquishing 1,430 acres of reservation lands.

1883 – Railroad tracks were laid across the Flathead Reservation. Tribal leaders expressed their anger and resentment at the continuing loss of tribal homelands. “The country we gave the government is very valuable. Lots of white men made independent fortunes in my country ... We don’t want the railroad to go through the reservation ... When we heard that you were coming, we made up our minds what to say to you. You seem to like your money, and we like our country; it is like our parents.” Kootenai leader Eneas said, “I would like to get the Flathead Lake country back. There are things that the government promised me in that treaty that I have never seen ... We had a big country, and under those conditions we signed the treaty. Seven years after that we learned that the line of the reservation ran across the middle of Flathead Lake.... I do not wish the road to pass through the reservation. This reservation is a small country and yet you want five depots upon it ... My country was like a flower and I gave you its best part....”

1884 – Sisters of Providence boarding school was built in St. Ignatius.

1887 – The Dawes General Allotment Act was passed, mandating the breaking up of communal tribal homelands and setting a course for catastrophic land loss on reservations.

1888 – Boys boarding school was completed in St. Ignatius.

1890 – The Ursuline nuns arrived in St. Ignatius and began a kindergarten, which eventually expanded into a grade school and high school that operated until 1972.

1891 – Chief Charlo and the Salish were forcibly removed to the Jocko Reservation after 36 years of resisting removal, in the conviction that the 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate had guaranteed the Bitterroot Valley for their reservation.

1893 – Flathead Reservation Indian Agent Peter Ronan died. Indian agents that succeeded Ronan were proponents of allotment and homesteading the Flathead Indian reservation.

1895 – Congress appointed “Crow, Flathead Commission” to negotiate cession of reservation lands. Tribal leaders refused to cede any lands at any price.

1898 – The first Arlee July celebration was held in spite of the protests from the priests and Indian Agents. William Smead was appointed as the US Indian Agent for the Flathead Indian Reservation. Smead, as a state representative, had previously advocated for opening up the reservation to white settlement.

1901 – A small delegation of representatives of the US Government, led by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Hoyt, met with tribal leaders on the reservation to discuss an offer to buy part of the northern end of the reservation. Tribal leaders refused to sell. Chief Charlo stated, “I will not sell a foot (of land).” Kootenai Chief Isaac responded, “My body is full of your people’s lies. You told me I was poor and needed money, but I am not poor. What is valuable to a person is land, the earth, water, trees ... and all these belong to us ... We haven’t any more land than we need, so you had better buy from somebody else.”

1901 – 1904 – Agricultural production statistics of 1902 recorded there were 25,000 cultivated acres with 120,000 bushels of grain, 25,000 tons of hay, and 20,900 bushels of vegetables produced by tribal members. There were 25,000 horses, 27,000 cattle, and 600 bison owned by tribal members.

1901 – Last documented small pox outbreak among the Salish. A quarantine camp was set up near Mission Creek.

1903 – Montana Congressman Joseph Dixon introduced a bill to Congress to impose the Allotment Act on the Indians of the Flathead Indian Reservation.

1904 – Congress passed the Flathead Allotment Act, setting the course for the loss of over 60% of the reservation land base. Heads of household were assigned 160 acres, while single adults received 80 acres. Two rounds of allotments were held. An enrollment and census were done to assign allotments. At this time, many names were altered, as the census workers insisted on each individual having two names. Upon completion of the census, 2,390 tribal members were eligible to receive allotments. Of the 1,245,000 acres, only 245,000 were secured by allotments. The remaining grazing and agricultural lands were opened up to homesteading. Amendments to the act seized additional lands for town sites, the Indian agency, churches, reservoirs, and power sites, along with 61,000 acres for Montana school lands. The 16th and 36th section of each township were set aside for school support. Immediately following allotment, Indian owned cattle dropped to 5,000 head and the horse herd was reduced to 4,000.

1905 – Chief Charlo traveled to Washington, D.C., to try to persuade the President to halt the allotment process on the Flathead Reservation.

1906 – Chief Charlo sent tribal leaders Antoine Moiese and Alicot to Washington, D.C., to make another allotment protest to the President, Congress, or anyone who would listen. Indian Agent Smead forced Michel Pablo to sell buffalo. Between 1906 and 1913, buffalo were gradually rounded up and shipped to Canada, the sole purchaser.

1906 – Congress passed the Burke Act that allowed Indian allotments to be taken out of federal trust if the allottee was deemed “competent.”

1908 – The first round of allotment of lands to tribal members was completed. After 2,400 allotments were issued, covering 228,434 acres, the remaining land was declared “surplus.” The Salish, Pend d’Oreille, and Kootenai Tribes suffered another loss of reservation lands as a Congressional Act passed in 1908 took 16,000+ acres for a National Bison Range. The Flathead Irrigation Project bill passed, justified as aiding Indians in transition to agriculture. The project actually benefited non-Indian farmers and ranchers and harmed many native subsistence operations. Many Indians lacked the money to pay the irrigation charges, which led to allotments being seized for settlement of debts. A state game warden killed four members of a Pend d’Oreille family hunting party in Swan Valley. The game warden was killed by one of the tribal women who acted in self-defense.

1910 – Chief Charlo died on January 10. In April the Flathead Reservation was officially opened up to non- Indian settlement. “Surplus” reservation lands were sold to homesteaders.

1911 – Public schools began to open to serve the non-Indian homesteaders.

1911 – 1934 – By 1930, most of the Indian allotments were now in non-Indian ownership.

1917 – 1919 – The United States participation in World War I included many American Indian soldiers, among them members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

1920 – A second round of allotments transferred 124,795 acres from communal Tribal ownership to individual tribal member ownership.

1924 – Congress granted citizenship to American Indians.

1927 – After learning of plans to construct a massive hydroelectric power plant and dam on the lower Flathead River, a coalition of non-Indian reservation residents, the Rocky Mountain Power Company, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other profiteers attempted to take ownership of the proposed dam site.

1928 – Congress affirmed the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes’ ownership of the proposed dam site.

1930 – Rocky Mountain Power Company secured a license from the FPC to build the hydroelectric power plant on the proposed reservation site.

1933 – Sixty percent of the original tribal allotments were lost. This land became fee land owned by non-Indians.

1933 – 1942 – The Civilian Conservation Corps was funded during these years employing tribal members building trails and roads on the reservation.

1934 – Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act. This Act repealed the Dawes Act and enabled tribes to voluntarily organize and adopt federally approved constitutions and by-laws.

1935 – The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes organized under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, ratified a tribal constitution and created an elected government of ten tribal council representatives and the last two federally recognized head chiefs, Chiefs Charlo and Koostahtah. The first Tribal Council meeting was held at the Flathead Agency in Dixon. The Council representatives were Edwin Dupuis, Alexander Clairmont, Louis Tellier, Eneas Conko, Nicolai Lassaw, Duncan (Charlie) McDonald, William Gingras, Louis Adams Sr., Louis Couture, and Joseph Blodgett. Chief Martin Charlo and Chief Koostahtah were life members and active members of all committees. The first committees established were Land, Finance, Law and Order, Health, Labor, and Education. The council made a recommendation to designate an area of the Mission Mountains for management similar to the National Parks, keeping it undeveloped and allowing only foot and horse trails.

1936 – The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) adopted a corporate charter. A first order of business was to address issues with Montana Power Company and their license at Kerr Dam. This included appropriate rental fees, preference hiring of tribal members in the construction work. The original annual rental fee was \$140,000.

1936-1938 – Kerr Dam was built.

1941 – 1945 – Years of World War II, during which 25,000 American Indians served in the military, including many Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribal members. Indian people also worked in defense-related industries. According to late tribal elder Margaret Finley, life changed very rapidly for Indian people, “...when we got in the war with the Japanese, Pearl Harbor, right after that. Everything changed very fast, very, very fast ... how we do things together, happiness, all that. It all changed.” American Indian people left their home communities – many for the first time – to serve in the war or work in defense projects. People who still held the collective memory of an old tribal world were exposed to a global world that would forever change the country their world was now situated in.

1951 – 1953 – Tribal members again enlisted in the military and served during the Korean War.

1953 – House Concurrent Resolution 108, the Termination Act, targeted the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Termination ended a tribe’s sovereign status and relationship with the federal government as a political entity. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes were at the top of the list of tribes to be terminated. Termination was considered “voluntary” and required tribal member consent, although pressure and coercion were not uncommon.

1954 – The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes successfully resisted the US government’s attempt to terminate their tribes and reservation.

1960 – The Tribal Constitution was amended to change the blood quantum requirement for membership to one-quarter degree Salish or Kootenai or both combined. The change was not retroactive, and only applied to people born after the amendment was approved.

1961 – The tribes entered into a Public Law 83-280 agreement with the state of Montana. This law allowed the state to assume criminal and civil jurisdiction on the reservation. Five states were mandated to this jurisdiction change and Alaska became the sixth mandatory state in 1958. Montana was not one of the mandatory states; however, the remaining 44 states, including Montana, had the option to assume jurisdiction in Indian Country. PL83-280 was amended between 1953 and 1968, allowing states to assume jurisdiction unilaterally. In response, after tribal opposition, Congress amended PL 83-280 to include a requirement for tribal consent for the jurisdiction change, and also to allow acceptance of “retrocession” of the state’s assumption of jurisdiction. In 1963 the state of Montana passed legislation to allow the state to assume jurisdiction on reservations. However, by this time the law had been amended to require tribal consent. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes were the only tribe in the state to agree to PL 83-280.

1965 – The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes passed a Tribal Ordinance defining the terms under which they would come under PL 83-280.

1965 – The Indian Claims Commission determined that Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes had not been compensated for the lands ceded in the 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate. “...the Tribes had surrendered 12, 005,000 acres to the government which were worth \$5,300,000. The total payment to the tribes, however, had only been \$593,377.82.” After fees were taken out, the tribes received \$4,016,293.29 in 1967. The compensation was determined in 1855 land values. No interest was paid for the 112 years the Tribes had been deprived of the money.

1971 – The US Court of Claims found that the Flathead Allotment Act was a breach of the 1855 Treaty of Hell Gate. Compensation to the Tribes was determined in 1912 land values, totaling \$7,410,000, of which only \$1,783,549 had been paid. The balance of \$5,626,451 was paid a few years later.

1974 – Tribal elders Christine Woodcock, Louise McDonald, and Annie Pierre protested the Ashley timber sale in the Mission Mountains, successfully stopping it.

1975 – Two Eagle River School was founded, serving high school students with a dominant focus on cultural studies.

1975 – The Culture Committee was formed and then divided into the Salish-Pend d’Oreille Culture Committee and the Kootenai Culture Committee. The Indian Self-Determination and Education Act passed, which recognized the right of Indian tribes to self-government “as domestic dependent nations, Indian tribes exercise inherent sovereign powers over their members and territory.”

1976 – Salish Kootenai College was founded. Prior to 1976, only 41 tribal members had college degrees, compared to 423 from 1976 to 1995.

1978 – The Supreme Court ruled that Tribal Courts do not have criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians, and that tribal courts DO have jurisdiction over non-Indians in matters such as permits, licensing, and environmental protection.

1981 – The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes’ Natural Resources Department was established.

1982 – The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council approved Tribal Ordinance 79A, setting aside approximately 91,778 acres of the Mission Range as the Mission Mountain Wilderness.

1984 – The Tribes negotiated re-licensing of Kerr Dam, which secured the option to take control of the dam in 2015, and raised the fee from \$2.6 million to \$9 million annually, along with annual adjustments for inflation.

1985 – The Tribes secured minimum stream flows to protect fisheries.

1997 – The National Trust for Historic Preservation named “the Flathead Indian Reservation one of 11 Most Endangered Places in the United States” due to the proposed radical expansion of US Highway 93.

1998 – The Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) agreed as part of a legal settlement to pay the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes \$18.3 million to restore, replace, and/or acquire the equivalent of Tribal treaty- protected resources that were injured by the release of hazardous substances in the Clark Fork River through mining and smelting in Butte and Anaconda.

1999 – The “Squaw” word bill passed Montana State Legislation. The Salish and Pend d’ Oreille Culture Committee begin work to rename over 20 “S” word sites with Salish place names. By 2009, 19 proposed Salish place names were approved by the US Board of Geographic Names to replace “S” word sites across Montana.

2002 – Nkwusm, the Salish Language Immersion School, opened in Arlee.

2015 – Kerr Dam administration reverted to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and was renamed Salish Kootenai Dam.