

# Blackfeet Reservation Timeline

## Blackfeet 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** - "Napi," Old Man, created the Rocky Mountain Range, the Sweetgrass Hills, and other geographic features in Montana and Canada.

**1700** – The Blackfeet acquired the horse and rifle.

**1700s** – The Blackfeet traveled south along the Rocky Mountains.

**1780** – A band of Blackfeet raided a Shoshone camp not knowing the Shoshone had small pox. The raid resulted in a smallpox epidemic among the Blackfeet band. One third of the band died.

**1818** – The US and Canadian border was established. The 49th parallel would figure prominently in Blackfeet geography.

**1837** – A second smallpox epidemic struck the Blackfeet.

**1851** – The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. While an estimated 10,000 Indians attended this treaty negotiation, the Blackfeet did not. Though they were not present, Article 5 defined their territory, using the Musselshell, Missouri, and Yellowstone Rivers and the Rocky Mountain Range as markers.

**1855** - Lame Bull Treaty/Judith River Treaty. This treaty took place at the mouth of the Judith River with the Blackfeet, Nez Perce, and the Salish and Pend d'Oreille (language in treaty also refers to *Flathead* tribe). To make way for the railroad, Isaac Stevens was charged with negotiating a peace between the Blackfeet and the allied tribes - the Nez Perce, Salish, and Pend d'Oreille. A common hunting ground was recognized and designated for a period of 99 years. Lands reserved exclusively for the Blackfeet were identified and described. The treaty was ratified in 1856.

**1865** – Unratified Treaty with Montana Governor Meagher and Blackfeet Indian Agent Gad Upson. Though this treaty that identified Blackfeet land cessions was not ratified, settlers began moving into the areas that would have been ceded had the treaty been ratified.

**1870** – The Blackfoot Massacre, often called the Bear River Massacre, the Baker Massacre, or the Marias Massacre. The Heavy Runner Band was camped on the Bear River during cold winter weather on January 23. A column of cavalry and infantry under the command of Major Eugene Baker attacked the sleeping camp early in the morning. The attack was purportedly to be in response to the killing of an influential rancher, Malcom Clark. Clark had been in several conflicts with Owl Child, a Piegan, who was not camped with Heavy Runner, but with Mountain Chief. By the end of the attack, 217 people had been killed. The largest numbers of victims were women and children. The army gave the death count at 173. While some political leaders were outraged, no disciplinary actions were taken against Clark or any of the soldiers.



**1873 and 1874** – President Grant issued Executive Orders diminishing reservation lands. The 1873 Executive Order diminished 1851 and 1855 treaty lands and established an undivided reservation for the Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, and Sioux. This territory spanned land north of the Missouri and Sun River east to the Dakota border. The 1874 Executive Order moved the southern boundary north from the Sun River to the Marias River.

**1875** – Under pressure, President Grant restored some of the lands taken by the 1873 and 1874 Executive Orders.

**1880** – President Rutherford B. Hays issued an Executive Order taking back the land that President Grant had restored in 1875.

**1883-84** – Starvation Winter – Over 500 Blackfeet people died.

**1887**– A Code of Laws was enforced by three tribally elected leaders, along with Indian Agent Wood.

**1888**– Sweet Grass Hills Agreement

**1896** – A 20-mile wide strip of Blackfeet Reservation was ceded. This “ceded strip” is known today as Glacier National Park. The Blackfeet claimed the land was only provided for a 99-year lease.

**1898** – Forty percent of the Blackfeet tribal cattle herd was lost.

**1905** – Cut Bank Boarding School opened. Today it is still operating as a boarding dormitory. Children that live there do not attend school at the site; they are bussed to Browning Public Schools.

**1907 – 1908** – The first allotments were made on the Blackfeet Reservation. Approximately 2,656 individual Blackfeet tribal members received allotments.

**1911** – Surplus lands to be opened for sale were estimated at 156,000 acres.

**1911** – Children born after the middle of the year were allotted 80 acres.

**1934** – Of the 1,785 eligible voters, 994 voted in favor of tribal organization under the Wheeler-Howard Act, commonly known as the Indian Reorganization Act. Under this legislation, the Blackfeet Tribal Constitution and By-Laws were ratified in 1935, creating a representative form of government through elected tribal council representatives. Originally numbering 13, tribal council representatives now number nine.

**1962** – Article II of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Blackfeet Tribe, defining tribal membership, was amended.

**1974** – The Blackfeet Tribe chartered Blackfeet Community College.

**1978** – Percy DeWolfe elected to State Senate.

**1978** – Earl Old Person became Chief of the Blackfeet Tribe.

**1983** – Piegan Institute established.

**1987** – Blackfeet National Bank, first tribally-owned, federally chartered bank on an Indian Reservation established. The American Museum of Natural History returned Blackfeet human remains taken from Old Agency on Badger Creek.

**1994** – Tribally controlled community colleges received Land Grant Status. Heart Butte High School completed.

**2001** – 15,441 enrolled Blackfeet members.

**2005** – Charging Home Park opened.

**2006** – Glacier Peaks Casino opened.

**2009** – New Browning High School opened.