



History of Native American Flags & Chiefs

Overview

This presentation was put together to show the importance and history behind our tribal flags and chiefs that represent our reservations today.

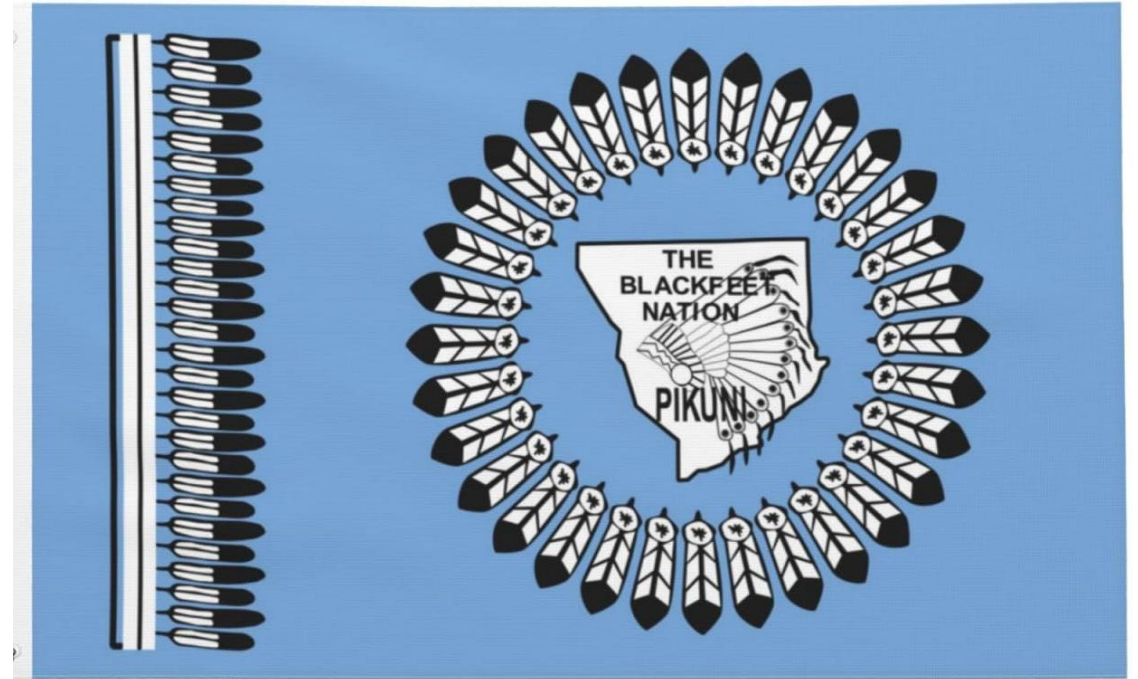
Blackfeet Tribe

In 1980, the Blackfeet Media Dept. sponsored a design contest for the tribal flag. The winning design was selected by a group of judges that consisted of artists, elders, and community members.

The design is black and white on blue sky. The circle represents the never-ending cycle of life and is created with single eagle feathers (represents the many bands of the Blackfeet). The colors and design represent the earth, the cosmos, the elements, the plants, the animals, and as well as the people. The sun rises in the East and circles to the West. The moon rises and sets in this circular motion, as does the cosmos. Blackfeet people pitch their lodges with the doors to the east, knowing that they start life with the circle in mind. The feathers represent the majesty and mysticism of the eagle. Eagle feathers represent long life, energy, power, and accomplishment or coup. The way the eagle feathers are arranged on the traditional staff represents the buffalo's boss ribs.

Buffalo are the staff of life to the Blackfeet. The current land base of the Blackfeet Reservation is inside the circle. The traditional flag and the Eagle Feather staff, is on the left-hand side.

[The war bonnet was to be changed to a Blackfeet-style, straight up war bonnet; however, the creator of the seal, Lawrence Tailfeather, passed away before he had a chance to change the drawing.]



The Last Chief



Mountain Chief

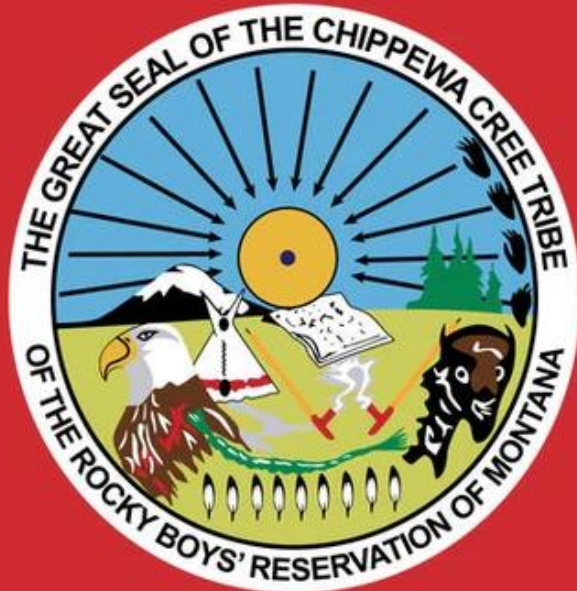
B. 1848 – D. 2-2-1943 (94)

The last hereditary
Chieftain of the Blackfoot
Nation

These pictures were taken
at the Indian Congress of
1898 in Omaha, Nebraska.



Chippewa Cree of Rocky Boy Tribe



The creation of the flag does not have an exact date of when it was created, but the seal was completed in late 1991 by Lloyd C. Top Sky, then was approved by the Tribal Council in 1992.

The seal on the flag represents the circle of life on the reservation. In the center, Baldy Butte is the sacred mountain. The sun symbolizing life, the sun spirit from the East and the Sacred Grass Dance Drum of the tribe. The sun rays represent the 15 sacred Grass Dance Chiefs.

Below the sun, “The Sacred Four Bodies text” reflects the tribe’s desire for good health and fortune so they can prosper in customs and education that are integrated in the Rocky Boy’s schools. The eagle symbolizes strength, wisdom, bravery, and honor, all the elements that are represented from the thunder and lightning of the sacred sky. The buffalo, a historical source of life, food, shelter, and a Sundance element. Bear paw tracks symbolize the Bear Paw Mountains and the sacred bear.

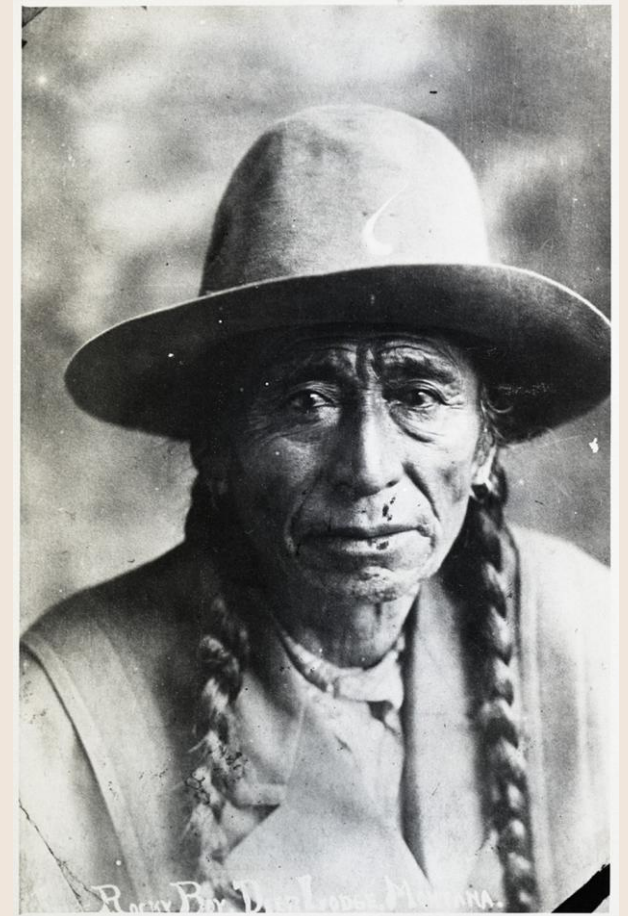
The tipi is where all values and traditions are derived as well as life. The sacred pipes, were held by the last official chiefs, Chief Rocky Boy and Chief Little Bear. The sweetgrass braid is an element of communication to the Creator and Spirits. The nine eagle feathers represent the nine elected chiefs of the Chippewa Cree Business Committee.



The Last Chiefs

Little Bear is known for his participation in the 1885 North-West Rebellion.

Rocky Boy's advocacy for his people helped gain establishment of the reservation.



Chief Little Bear

B. Unknown - D. 9/12/1921

Chief Rocky Boy

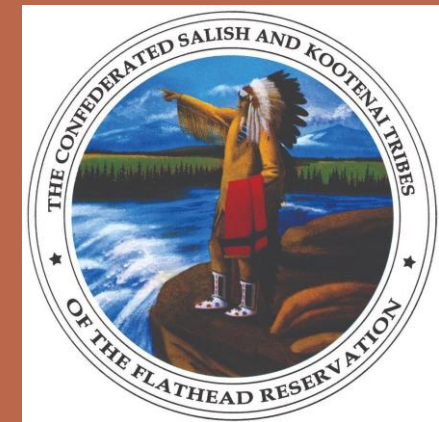
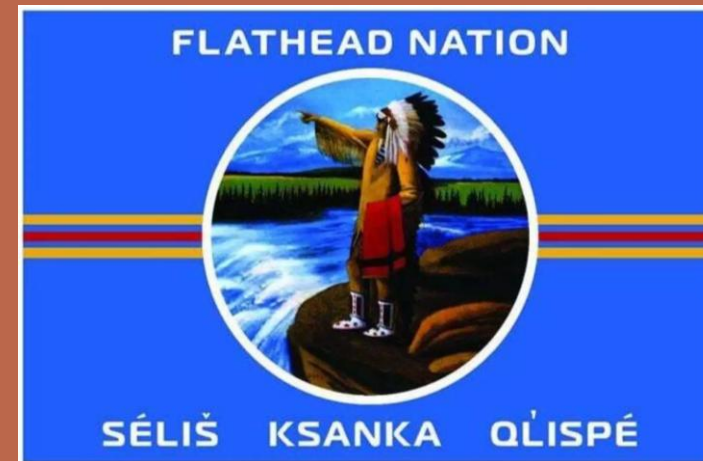
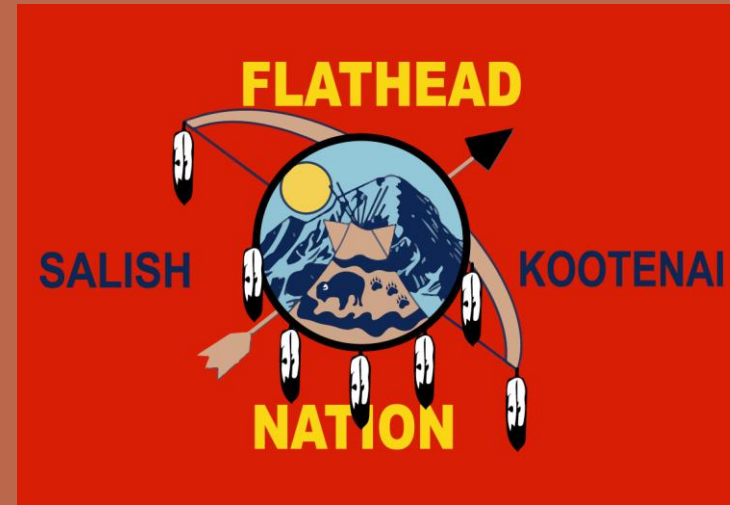
B. Unknown - D. 4/18/1916

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribe

The flag was created by Karen Hale, a 25-yr old veteran employee at CSKT, in response to a content in 1978. The design shows the natural resources, along with the buffalo and tipi. Behind the tipi is the outline of Flathead Lake. The mountain represents the Mission Range. The tipi, bow, arrow, shield, and eagle feathers were chosen because of their historical importance.

The official seal of the CSKT shows one of the last chiefs, Chief Koostatah, standing on a rock outcropping that overlooks the roaring white water. In the early 60's, it was inspired by a young artist, Corky Clairmont who hadn't at the time reached high school. The original work was revamped in the early 1980's, and his hand was raised more to a pointing gesture.

In an article that was posted on Aug 28, 2025. Tribal council wants to make the flag more inclusive by adding Qlispe. After several months of consideration, council has settled on a new design for a potentially new flag.



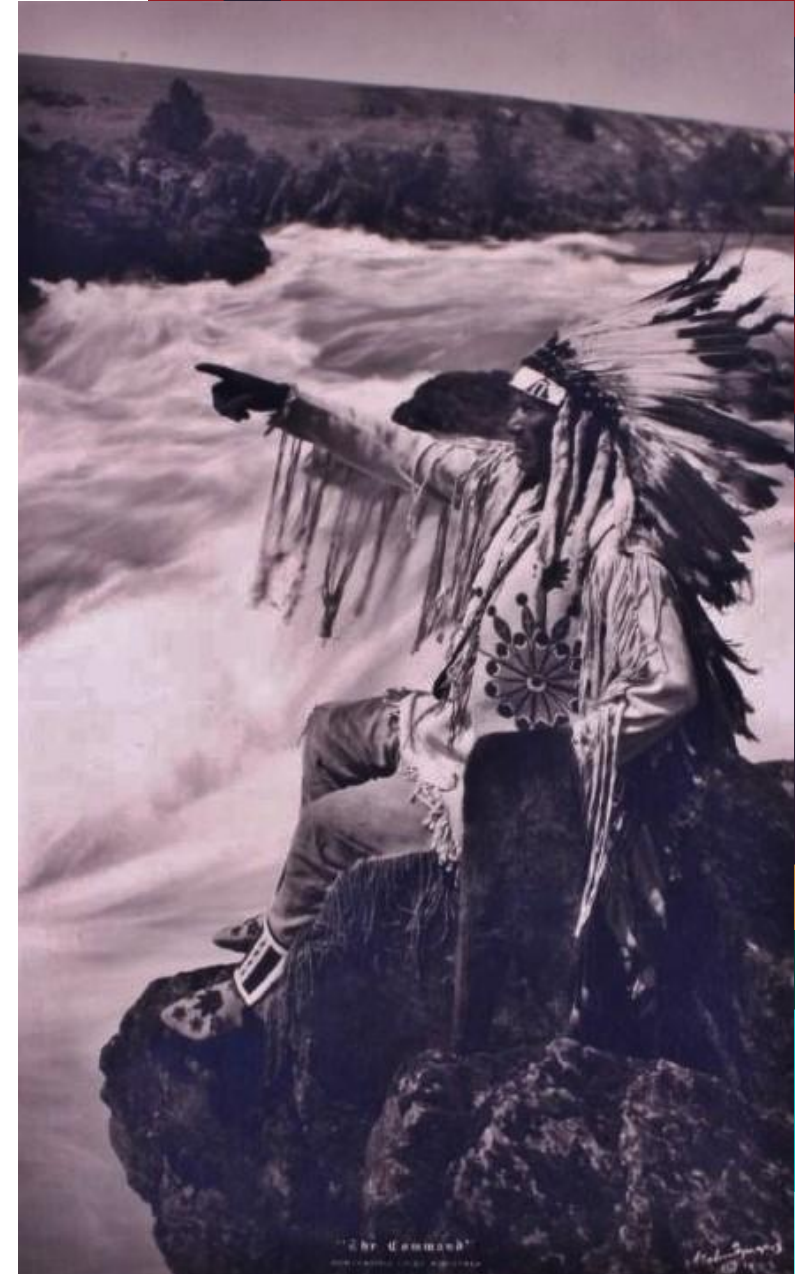
The Last Chief

Chief Koostatah Big Knife

B. 1856 - D. 1942

the last formally recognized chief of the
Flathead Nation due to the Indian
Reorganization Act in 1934.

He continued his father, Chief Aeneas
Paul, and his brother, Chief Isaac Big
Knife leaderships.



Crow Tribe

The tribal emblem and flag was designed by the Crow Cultural Commission and Lawrence Big Hair designed the graphic illustration.

The emblem is encircled and represents the Path of All things. It is trimmed with gold, symbolizing the horns and hooves of the Seven Sacred Rams. The background is blue representing the belief when the sky and the waters are clear, everything between them is good and peaceful.

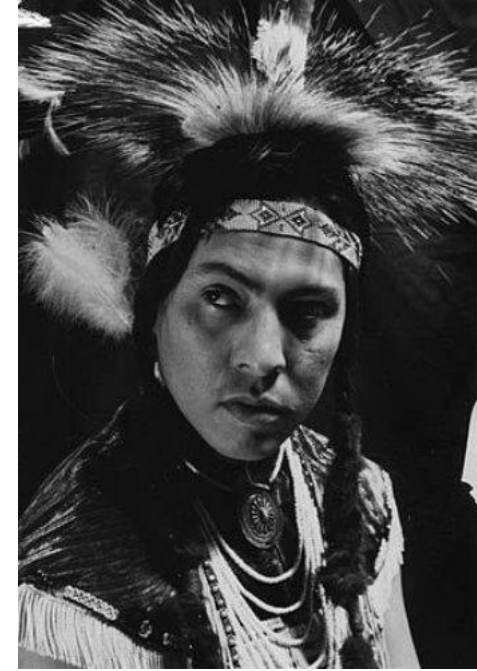
The sun and rays, represent the clans of the Crow. The three mountains are the three sacred mountains on the present-day Crow Reservation – the Wolf Teeth, the Pryor, and the Big Horn. The two rivers are the Big Horn and the Little Big Horn.

The white tipi represents purity and good, nothing evil or bad comes to the home when the tipi is white. The four base poles represent the never-ending cycle of the seasons. The two smoke flap poles represent the Spirit of the Coyote (right) and the Spirit of the Owl (left). The stakes are a gift from the badger who said, "Stakes have the strength of claw when embedded in the ground and no force on Earth can move him from his home."

"The two war bonnets represent the Clan (mother's clan) and the Clan of our Fathers (their mother's clan). The sweat lodge – gift from Creator, the sacred tobacco bundle – the foundation of the religion of the Crows, and the pipe – spiritual gift from the Seven Sacred Buffalo Bulls and Buffalo Woman. All of these represent the four major beliefs and religious foundations of the Apsaalooke.



The Last Chief



Joseph Medicine Crow

B. 10/27/1913 – D. 4/3/2016

He was the last Crow member to become a traditional war chief.

While serving in the U.S. Army, during WWII, he stole 50 horses

from a Nazi Encampment in Germany.

Eastern Shoshone Tribe

The buffalo's head is in the center with a golden yellow background. It symbolizes the buffalo's historical importance to the tribe's way of life, like other Plains tribes. The inclusion of the buffalo may be a tribute to Chief Washakie, whose name means "Shoots the Buffalo." It is flanked by depictions of the prairie rose. Along with coupsticks, on each side which are ceremonial weapons representing a warrior's bravery. Each stick trailing six eagle feathers symbolizing the six members of the tribal council. Above the buffalo head is a peace pipe with an eagle with outstretched wings.





The Last Chief

Chief Washakie

B. Unknown - D. 1900

The last formally recognized chief of the Eastern Shoshone. He was a respected leader who secured a better future for his people and signed the 1868 Treaty of Fort Bridger. He advocated for education and health care for the tribe. At the time of his death, he was buried at Fort Washakie with full military honors.



Fort Belknap Tribe



The shield was created by George "Sonny" Shields, the emblem is a traditional seal symbolizing the shield's protection of the two tribes, the Gros Ventre & Assiniboine in the past, present, and future.

The circular shape symbolizes the constant cycle of life. The colors symbolize the four directions and seasons, red for summer, yellow for fall, white for winter, green for spring. The buffalo skull symbolizes the two tribes functioning as a whole. Even though the colors divide it, the skull remains as one.

The skull has a jagged line from horn to horn representing the Milk River, a major tributary of the Missouri, and Snake Butte is illustrated above the skull. The two-arrowheads facing each other emphasize the strong traditional ties with the past. The seven feathers that hang from the shield represent six of the twelve council members and the center feather represents the tribal chairperson.

The Last Chiefs

Chief Crazy Bear

B. 1785 – D. 1856

was the last known formally recognized Chief of the Assiniboine. He was given the name after he fiercely fought like a "Crazy Bear" to protect the women and children of his camp during an attack by the Gros Ventre tribe. He was a key representative for his people at the Fort Laramie Treaty Council and was appointed as a Supreme Chief by the U.S. Government.

Chief White Eagle

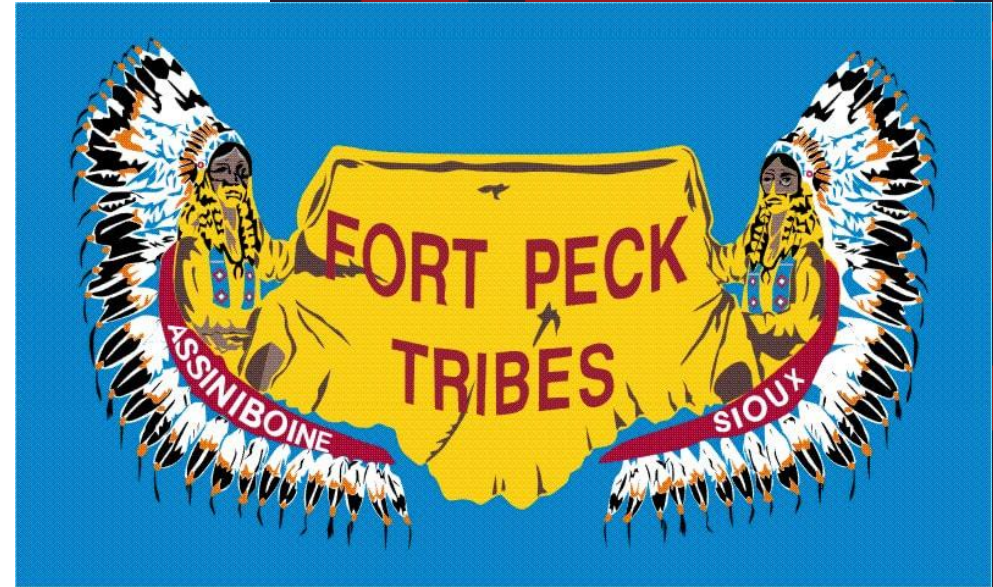
B. Unknown – D. 1881

was the last major recognized Chief of the Assiniboine. At the time of his death, he was respected as a friend of the white settlers. He is recognized as a major chief in the history of the Gros Ventre people.



Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribe

The tribal flag was sketched by an artist Roscoe White Eagle and adopted in 1965. The background represents the blue sky that represents the Creator. The two chiefs displaying the robe of the prairie buffalo represents the Assiniboine and Sioux who reside on the same reservation. The goldenrod-yellow hide is the sacred robe of the buffalo and symbolizes the tight, lasting bond of friendship and understanding.



The seal was created in the 1980's. The TERO (Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance) office received a request from the oil companies to purchase water. They requested a map that was created by TERO, they discovered that the water ways resembled the outline of a buffalo in the middle of the reservation boundaries. Center of the seal includes this representation of the buffalo, and the reservation boundaries were added to the hide.

The Last Chiefs

When looking into the last recognized chiefs for both tribes, there wasn't a clear answer. However, the names below were the Sioux & Assiniboine leaders who negotiated the 1886 agreement for the Fort Peck Reservation.

Sioux Leader

Medicine Bear - Mato Wakan

B. 1838 – D. 1905



Assiniboine Leader

- E-ah-sha

Information and Picture
is Unknown

Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa



The seal and flag was designed by then Tribal Vice-Chairman James Parker Shield. The buffalo was central to the survival and economy of the Pembina Chippewa and the Metis people. The buffalo faces west to symbolize the migration of the Little Shell and Metis from the Great Lakes Region in Minnesota to what is now North Dakota and Montana.

Years ago, tribal spiritual leader Hendry Anderson was presented with a single feather by a Chippewa man from Wisconsin. The eagle feather is very old and now hangs from the “crook” in the eagle staff that is behind the buffalo. The eagle staff represents the full-blood, traditional heritage of the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe. The eagle staff was made by a Henry Anderson and presented to the tribe.

The red and white background colors of the “Assiniboia” flag used by the Metis people represent the mixed blood heritage of the tribe. The yellow “feur de lis” represents the French heritage of the mixed blood Chippewa while the green shamrock represents the Scots/Irish heritage. The yellow background on the little shell flag depicts the color of the sun.

The Little Shell received federal recognition in December of 2019.

The Last Chief

Chief Little Shell III

B. 1830 - D. 1903

served as the last line of the hereditary chiefs from 1872 until his death in 1903. He is noted for his refusal to accept the McCumber Agreement. He did not agree with its terms and refused to sign it.



Northern Arapaho Tribe

The Arapaho Flag was created in 1936 as a sign of respect and remembrance for the Arapaho War Veterans. The three colors each have a different meaning and symbolism: Red is for the People. Black so the People will be strong and unfearingly of death. White represents knowledge to be passed on to the young.

The seven stripes each represent one of the Seven Medicines of Life. The White triangle signifies the way one begins a prayer. "Hey-so-no-ne-hoe-....," "Great Spirit, that's the way I want it." The circle in the exact center of the triangle is Black on the left, because that's where the heart is. The right side of the circle is Red representing the human side, for our happiness, strength and sorrowful ways. The White line dividing the two spheres represents the Great Spirit so we will not forget who created us.

The entire circle represents the world, the center of our lives. The Arapaho People approved and adopted the flag in 1956.



The Last Chief



Chief Black Coal

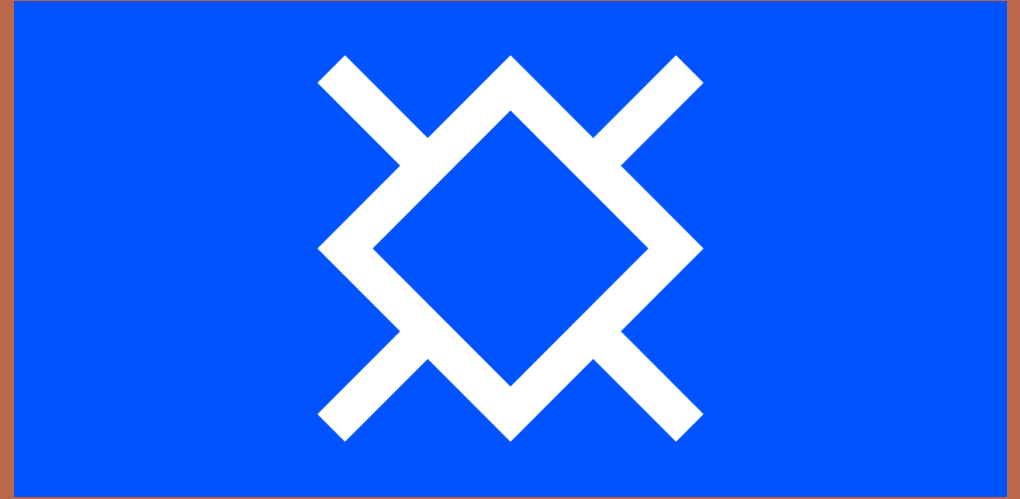
B. 1840 - D. 1893

He was the last formally recognized Chief of the Northern Arapaho. He was an influential leader and a respected intermediary who sought peace between his people and the U.S. military after they were forced onto the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming.

Northern Cheyenne Tribe

The flag was established during the administration of Chairman John Wooden Legs. The diamond shape represents the Morning Star, which is another name for Chief Dull Knife. The Morning Star represents the past and present survival of the people. The Northern Cheyenne identify themselves as the people of Chief Morning Star and Little Wolf, who led their people on a heartbreaking journey back from their forced placement in Oklahoma to their homelands in the great Northern Plains.

Chief Dull knife and Chief
Little Wolf are in the center of
the seal.



The Last Chief

Chief Two Moons

B. 1847 - D. 1917

He was a key participant in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. Chief Two Moons was the last formally recognized chief who was appointed by Colonel Nelson Miles after his band surrendered in 1877.



Piikani Nation



The Piikani Nation flag was originally made by a native artist, Wesley Harry. The red background represents the Piikani people. The shield symbolizes protection. The buffalo that is featured in the center of the flag represents the chief. The 12 feathers signify the 12 council members. The 3 hooves represent the three governments: Piikani Nation, Federal, and Provincial. The flag is a representation of the Piikani Nation, a tribe that is part of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The Last Chief



Chief John Two Guns White Calf

B. 1872 – D. 1934

He was the adopted son of White Calf who was a warrior chief and responsible for many of the Tribe's treaties. Two guns became the leader after his death in 1902. His portrait appears on a coin, the Indian head nickel and became a fixture for Glacier National Park.

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes



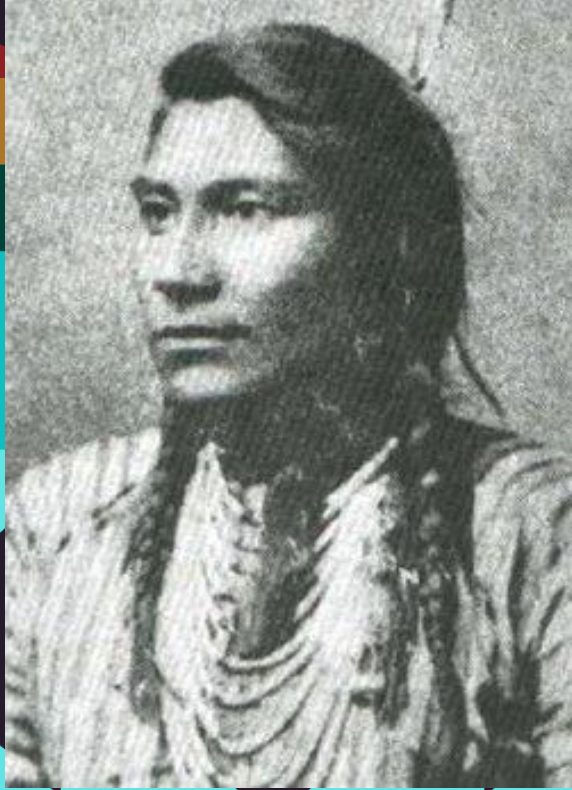
Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868

The flag's design represents the union of the Shoshone and Bannock tribes on the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho.

The snake symbol represents the Shoshone people because of the association with the Snake River. The dragonfly symbol represents the Bannock people as fierce fighters and sign of good luck. The Sun holds spiritual significance related to visions, the spirit world, and the importance of nature in Shoshone religion. The field symbolizes the Earth and the traditional territories. The Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 was a peace agreement between the U.S. government, the Eastern Shoshone and Bannock tribes.

It established the Wind River Reservation in what is now Wyoming and the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho.

The Last Chiefs



Chief Buffalo Horn

B. Unknown - 1878

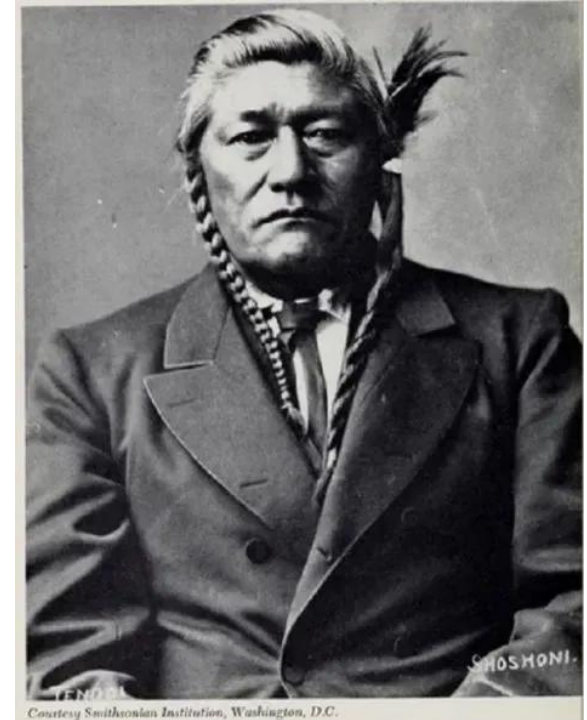
Chief Egan

B. Unknown – D.1878

Egan was his American name, but his real name is “**Pony Blanket.**” There is no known picture of Chief Egan, but there are many stories about his wisdom, loyalty and bravery. It made him the prime choice to act as leader over the course of the rebellion in the Bannock War of 1878.

Chief Tendoy

B. 1834 – D.1907



Chief Buffalo Horn was injured in the Bannock War and died later of his injuries. The leadership was then appointed to Chief Egan, but in the same year he was killed by the Umatilla people who posed as allies to collect a bounty reward that was offered by the U.S.

Leadership then fell to Chief Tendoy (Tin doi). He was known as the “peacemaker.” He kept members of his tribe from joining other tribes in war against the white settlers, instead he chose a path of peace. He led his people for over 40 years.

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**Tribal Opioid Response
Program**