

The Blackfoot Confederacy

The Blackfoot Confederacy or the Niitsitapi, is a group made up of three first nation communities, who were united by their shared language, customs and religious faiths. These three peoples are the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Kainai (Many Chiefs), and the Northern and Southern Piikani, also known as Peigan (Spotchy Robe).



Key Points

- Religious societies, made up of shamans, medicine men and medicine women, as pictured left.
- A vast and fascinating mythology, with multiple creation stories. The most commonly known is that of Old Man, the creator of the Blackfoot, and the turtle, who brought the mud for the earth to be created.
- The most well-known and revered ritual of the Blackfeet people was the Sun dance, taking place in summer over multiple days. This ceremony carried prayers to the creator for their wellbeing and the continual presence of buffalo, as well as those for sick relatives. An amendment of the 1876 Indian Act led to a ban of all festivals, dances and ceremonies in 1895, which led to these rituals taking place in secret only to be reinstated officially in 1951.

Significance in the 21st century

- Modern versions of ceremonies, such as the Sun dance and North American Indian Days.
- New traditions, Elbow River Camp at Calgary Stampede.
- Preservation of language to ensure oral traditions can be passed down.
- Protection of sacred land (Badger-Two Medicine Area) from government drilling.
- Signing of buffalo treaty, restoration of bison.
- Education and preservation of knowledge.
- Instilled pride in Blackfoot heritage.



References

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