

## Assiniboine

The Assiniboine Indians originally came from the upper Mississippi River and the plains of Canada. They were once part of the Yanktonai Sioux tribe, but split from them, and by 1820 had settled in northeastern Montana along the Missouri and Milk Rivers. They adapted to plains life and were excellent horsemen and buffalo hunters. Their name means "Stone Sioux" referring to their method of cooking food with hot stones and boiling water. In 1837, many of the tribe died from smallpox. After that they were a very small tribe and not very powerful among the plains Indians.

In 1851, the Assiniboine agreed to the Fort Laramie Treaty which meant they were recognized as a tribe by the United States government and were given territory in which to hunt buffalo. They spent the next years hunting buffalo in northern Montana. After 1865, they were part of the huge Blackfeet Reservation with the Blackfeet, Sioux, and Gros Ventres. They were often at the Fort Belknap Agency trading buffalo robes and accepting annuities from the government.

In 1869, there were two bands of Assiniboine, the Upper Assiniboine and the Lower Assiniboine, who hunted the lower portions of the Missouri River. A smallpox epidemic in 1869 killed many of the Upper Assiniboine at

the Gros Ventres, but the Lower Assiniboine were not affected by the smallpox and moved with their chief to live with the Sioux in northeastern Montana.

In 1887, the Gros Ventres and the Upper Assiniboine tribes sold the rights to much of their land to the U.S. government in exchange for the 840,000 acres of the Fort Belknap Reservation. In 1895, they were forced to give up all but 600,000 of their land when gold was discovered on the reservation.