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The Changing Relationship Between the Blackfeet Tribe
and the Land of Glacier National Park Between the Years 1880 and 1930.

The state of Montana was originally both the territory of the Piikáni and the K'tunaxa Native American tribes. The principal group being the Piikáni (also called Piegan). The South Piikáni resided on the east side of Montana and would eventually become the Blackfoot Confederacy. This paper will focus solely on the Blackfeet tribe and how the tribe interacted with westernization and the designation of the area known as Glacier National Park. The Blackfeet tribe had originally been a nomadic tribe who relied on hunting, fishing and gathering berries for food supply. The use of land played a huge role in the lifestyle of the tribe and certain areas in Montana were considered sacred. With the development of transportation, white settlers began to move into the area and western influences shifted the relationship between the tribe and the land by bringing in tourism, railroads, miners and natural conservationists into the area. The designation of this area in Montana as a national park changed the dynamic between the land and the tribe. This paper will focus on answering the question: what was the relationship between the Blackfeet Tribe and the environment of Glacier National Park, and how did that role change once the park was established and tourism in the area became popular?

Spanning over a million acres and composed of many different landscapes, the area now known as Glacier National Park was once one of the least explored areas in the United States. Originally, the Blackfeet Nation (Blackfeet specifically refers to the Pikuni or Piegan tribe) used the area to sustain the culture and lifestyle of the tribe. While the Blackfeet Nation was not the only native tribe that used the area, archaeological studies suggest that the tribe's use of the park

dated back thousands of years. According to a Blackfeet tribe descendant (whose grandmother passed down the tales of the tribe) Rosalyn LaPier,¹ the Blackfeet Tribe believed that the land was divided into three worlds: the Above world, the Water world and the Below world. The Above world had the most supernatural power, then the Water world and finally the Below world had the least amount of supernatural power.

According to the tribe, humans had no supernatural power by themselves, but could work to obtain the power from other supernatural beings. The Above world consisted of celestial bodies and the sky. The Above world also housed what was considered the Holy Trinity of the Blackfeet tribe: the Sun (named Naató'si), the Moon (the wife of the Sun, named Ko'komiki'somm) and the son of the Sun and the Moon, the Morning Star (named Ipsówaahs). The Above world controlled thunder, lightning and rain. Animals such as geese and eagles who lived on Earth were also considered to be creatures living in the Above world. The Water world housed underwater beings (called Soyitapi). Both the Above world and the Water world had their own economic and environmental infrastructures, with villages and different plants and animals. Wind Maker (a personified force of nature who controlled the wind) resided in the Water world as well as various underwater monsters and aquatic animals. Finally, the Below world contained the original people (called Niitsitapi). The Below world also had its own villages and animals. Earth beings (such as the Ksahkomitapi) resided in the Below world as well as the Cold Maker (who was another personified force who controlled the snow, and winter).

These worlds were believed to be parallel dimensions that co-existed but were separate. These dimensions were also permeable. Because of this belief in the various worlds running parallel to the physical world, tribe members respected the earth and the landscape, and many

¹ Rosalyn R. LaPier. *Invisible Reality : Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the Blackfeet*. New Visions in Native American and Indigenous Studies. Page 23

told stories of supernatural experiences (in one a man encountered singing beavers and named his family after the experience)² that shaped their future. By reading and collecting stories from past generations of Blackfeet Tribe members, it can be understood that their relationship with the land was a spiritual experience. The Blackfeet Tribe had a sacred relationship with the land, and believed they had the authority to control it. Before the extinction of the bison in 1883, the Blackfeet tribe hunted the bison and used all the elements of the bison to help feed and clothe the tribe. Deer and elk were also commonly hunted but the Blackfeet respected the animals and did not let any of the animal parts go to waste. Some animals were believed to live in both the physical and the religious world (Above world, Water world and Below world) and tribe members were not allowed to hunt them because they were thought to be sacred. The Blackfeet lived harmoniously with the land to create an area that benefited both the tribe by providing resources for shelter and food and the land by the reduction of grazing animals (such as deer and elk) and harvesting berries.

The religious relationship between the tribe and the land changed as pressures from hunters, miners and other white settlers to the Blackfeet to sell land increased. The last bison hunt that the Blackfeet tribe conducted was in the 1880s. Because of the eventual extinction of bison in the northern Great Plains in the 1880s, the Blackfeet tribe experienced extreme amounts of food loss and the period between 1883 and 1884 became known as “starvation winter”³ as hundreds of tribe members were dying from lack of food. The following graph shows the decline of the population of the Blackfeet tribe between the years 1881 and 1885.

² Rosalyn R. LaPier. *Invisible Reality : Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the Blackfeet*. New Visions in Native American and Indigenous Studies. Page 23

³ West, Helen B. 1960. *The starvation winter of the Piegan Indians, 1883-84*. Browning, Mont: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Year	Blackfeet Population	Amount Appropriated	Number of Acres Cultivated by Govt. by Indians		Stock Owned by Indians		Value of robes and Furs Sold	Percent of Subsistence Obtained By		
								Indian Labor in Civilized Pursuits	Hunting, Fishing, etc.	Issue of Gov't Rations
1881	7,500	\$40,000	90	85	4,000	80	\$12,500	25	50	25
1882	6,000	50,000	100	155	2,000	65	12,000	15	10	75
1883	4,500	35,000	80	195	1,000*	20	900	13	12	75
1884	2,300	35,000	51	10	1,100	----	500	18	15	67
1885	2,000	50,000	54	20	1,100	----	200	12	8	80

* Half of the Indian horses died of "cutaneous disease".

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Figure 1. Graph published to *Annual Report* by agent of the Blackfeet Tribe⁴

This lack of food weakened family infrastructure and the tribe as whole, as families were being torn apart by the loss of family members. Disease amongst the tribe became more common too, as different groups of white settlers began moving throughout the area. In the Blackfeet religion, disease was "caused by evil spirits, ghosts of slain enemies who, in a modern context, can be thought of as equivalent to those who would contribute to ecological degradation and create environmental waste of wildlands. Indeed, because of the religion's ecological orientation, if the sacred "lands" are desecrated, the entire religion is lost or devoid of its most significant locus of value."⁵ For the Blackfeet tribe, the rapid spread of diseases and starvation would be the first of many tragedies the tribe would suffer.

While previous legislation signed in the early-mid 19th century between the United States government and the Blackfeet Tribe stated that the land on which the Blackfeet tribe resided was completely and totally owned by the tribe, rumors about mineral riches in the area spread

⁴ West, Helen B. 1960. *The starvation winter of the Piegan Indians, 1883-84*. Browning, Mont: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs

⁵ Vest, Jay Hansford C.. "Traditional Blackfeet Religion and the Sacred Badger-Two Medicine Wildlands." *Journal of Law and Religion* 6, no. 2. Page 469.

throughout the country and attracted many miners to illegally reside on the property. After gold and copper was discovered, settlers began to illegally mine. These miners were met with hostility by the Blackfoot tribe as they were using the resources of the land without paying or asking the tribe. The lack of food coupled with the push from miners and the discovery of gold on the land, encouraged the United States government to push for the relinquishment of the eastern portion of the land owned by the tribe. The tribe once owned incredible amounts of land in Montana and Canada, but after the treaty in 1888 (named the Sweet Grass Hills Treaty), the tribe became confined to the area between the east of the Sweet Grass Hills and the west of Cut Bank Creek. The area the Blackfoot tribe resided in was now reduced to a shrunken land base in north-central Montana. Because of ill relations between white settlers and the tribe, the United States was asked to create a treaty that would end violence and give the white settlers more areas to mine. The Stevens Treaty of 1895 was created.

The Stevens Treaty of 1895 was signed between the United States Government and the Blackfoot Tribe and stated that for the price of 1.5 million dollars, the Blackfoot Tribe would release their right to over 800,000 acres of land in order to allow mining. The purpose of the treaty was to solely allow mining and the Blackfoot Tribe stipulated they would have hunting, fishing and rights to cut down wood on the land but were no longer owners and that the land belonged to the government. The treaty outlined the boundaries that were designated as the land of the Blackfeet.⁶ Miners flooded the newly available land but found little success. Members of the Blackfoot tribe were wary of miners regardless of the treaty that allowed them to mine and tensions between white settlers and the Native Americans arose as settlers began to live close to the Blackfeet reservation. In some cases, white settlers would disregard the boundaries between

⁶ Spence, Mark David. 1999. *Dispossessing the Wilderness : Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Cary: Oxford University Press. Page. 120

the tribe reservation and the land the government owned and settled on the reservation land. Settlers would also travel through the reservation in order to get to other areas of Montana.

While the Blackfeet tribe had previously used the land to sustain their entire livelihood, as more treaties were signed with the United States government and more land was given, the Blackfeet tribe began to depend less on the land and more on the federal government. Another stipulation of each treaty that was signed (while only the Sweet Grass Hills Treaty and Stevens Treaty were mentioned in this text, many other treaties had been signed before) was that the government would pay the Blackfeet tribe each year for ten years with goods and services following the signing of the treaty. Meaning that after the Stevens Treaty of 1895 was signed, the government was to provide for the tribe every year following until 1905 (10 years after). But as each treaty was signed and more land was lost, the economic stability of the Blackfeet tribe became more precarious and by the early 20th century, the tribe was depending on these payments to survive. The tribe was no longer self-sufficient, and the reliance of the land became minimal.

As the reliance on the government's payments grew, the sacred and religious relationship between the tribe and the land diminished as well. Because bison (which were a huge part of the Blackfeet culture) were extinct, the religious aspect of hunting essentially disappeared. Instead of having a ceremonial hunt in order to prepare for the winter, the tribe now had to travel to the outpost to receive payments. The government did not pay the tribe in monetary values, but instead in goods (such as fabric, blankets or services). By increasing the Blackfeet tribe's reliance on the government, the government had more control over the culture and lifestyle of the tribe. Instead of giving the tribe food in order to survive, the government instead gave them teachers in order to teach the Native American children history lessons in United States history.

Blackfeet children were also sent to schools in order to learn a westernized version of American history. The government believed that if children were taught at a young age the beliefs enforced in regular American society, a change could occur within Native American societies to assimilate to “civilized ways.” As author Roslyn LaPier describes in her book⁷, families had some very traditional older members, and some younger members who wanted to assimilate to western American culture. Some families spoke the native tongue while others solely spoke English. As with the food shortage in 1883 and 1884, this weakened the family unit as members were essentially living in different cultures. A lot of younger generations at the time pushed for the education of members so that the tribe could function in American society, while the older generations continued the sacred traditions of the tribe and refused to change their ways. As the tribes' infrastructure weakened, the opportunity for western influence increased, this became incredibly clear with the creation of the Great Northern Railway.

The land that the Blackfoot tribe had been living on was a remote area but rich with natural resources and white settlers who attempted to move to the area encountered issues relocating; however, this changed with the creation of the Great Northern Railway in 1889. Running its trunk line between Minneapolis and Seattle, the railway was conveniently located in Glacier National Park. The Great Northern Railway took advantage of the scenic views located along the railway line and created a campaign in order to promote tourism along the line to garner more revenue for the company. As more rail lines increased along the west, so did tourism. Previously inaccessible areas, like Glacier National Park, were now open to the public. These rail lines were vital in creating the quintessential image of travel in the west and promoted ideas that National Parks and travel was patriotic. The Great Northern Railway was created

⁷ Rosalyn R. LaPier. *Invisible Reality: Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the Blackfeet*. New Visions in Native American and Indigenous Studies.

before Glacier was designated as a national park and was vital in advertising the park and helping the park garner enough attention to be designated.

While the Great Northern Railway was created in the 1890s, promotional imagery by the company was not prevalent until 1907, when a man named Louis Hill became the president of the company. For Hill, “Glacier would be a sanctuary where overworked Americans could revive their spirits and sample the amenities of western living in a pristine, natural setting.”⁸ As more people began traveling west, so did the fascination with the natural beauty of Montana. Tourism in Montana grew, and hotels were built to accommodate the public and the Blackfeet tribe had to change their way of life in order to accommodate the influx of people. After many different attempts at designating the area, the park finally became a national park in 1910.

By 1903 nearly all mining had died out in the area and many preservationists began to push the designation of the land as a national park. Preservationists made the case that because mining was unsuccessful in the area that the area would be best served as a national park, so it could be preserved for future generations. George Bird Grinnell, a man who is synonymous with the creation of Glacier National Park, wrote a wildly popular article called “Crown of the Continent” that was published in Century Magazine in 1901. Grinnell had firmly supported the designation of other national parks, such as Yellowstone and Yosemite and firmly believed that “the best way to preserve America’s scenic wonders was to lock them up in national parks outside the hungry reach of a booming market economy built on natural resources.”⁹ Grinnell visited the Blackfeet tribe and the region of the potential park many times and was well received by the tribe.

⁸ Dilsaver, Lary M. and Wyckoff, William. “Promotional Imagery of Glacier National Park.” *Geographical Review* 87, no. 1. Page 4

⁹ Harper, Andrew C. “Conceiving Nature: The Creation of Montana’s Glacier National Park.” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 60, no. 2. Page. 5

Regardless of the friendship the tribe and Grinnell shared, it was apparent that the only way to designate the park and acquire the scenic area would be to push the Blackfeet out. Because of this Grinnell played a part in the Stevens Treaty of 1895. While Grinnell helped negotiate the price of the 800,000 acres sold on behalf of the tribe, he only succeeded in gathering half the original asking price (the Blackfeet asked for \$3 million and received \$1.5 million). Grinnell straddled the line between helping the tribe and hurting them, as he pushed for the designation of the park and thus the removal of the tribe from the land, while also supporting the tribe and arguing on their behalf.

In 1903 a vital court case, called *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*¹⁰ ruled that Native American treaties were political treaties and not legal ones, thus Congress could overturn previous treaties written between the U.S. government and the Blackfeet tribe if they saw fit. This meant that Congress could potentially open the area to white settlers who wanted the land for industrial purposes. Grinnell believed that if white settlers gained a footing in the areas surrounding the Blackfeet, there would be more resistance to creating the park as it would ban all development. Grinnell's task "was twofold: while working to convince the locals that a national park was in their best interest, he had to convince their representatives in Congress that the same locals had already signed on to the plan."¹¹ Grinnell also used his many connections, such as politicians, presidents, tycoons of various industries and famous newspaper editors, to further push the public to support the designation of the park.

Generally, the history of the National Parks portrays the designation to be a relatively straightforward process, but some locals and the Blackfeet tribe resisted, as the quick flood of

¹⁰ Harper, Andrew C. "Conceiving Nature: The Creation of Montana's Glacier National Park." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 60, no. 2.

¹¹ Harper, Andrew C. "Conceiving Nature: The Creation of Montana's Glacier National Park." Page. 12

publicity and rapidly increasing numbers of people that migrated to Montana created issues in the area. Between the time that

The push from other preservationists such as John Muir (known as the “Father of the National Parks”), Gifford Pinchot (the first head of the United States Forest Service and the fourth chief of the U.S. Division of Forestry) as well as James Willard Schultz (Glacier Park tour guide and naturalist) helped move legislation into Congress. Another man responsible for quickening the designation process for Glacier was Louis Hill, president of the Great Northern Railway. His influence with the railway company and his financial contributions made it possible for the park to be designated. Through lobbying efforts Hill was able to push for public favor for the bill.

The original bill for the designation of Glacier National Park was introduced to the Senate in 1907 by Montana State Senator T.H. Carter. The bill was found to have “several undesirable claims”¹² and was sent back to senator Carter to rewrite. In the years 1908 and 1909 two more revised bills were sent to the Senate; however, they both failed. On May 11, 1910 the bill was finally passed by both the House and the Senate and with President Taft’s signature, Glacier Park was created. By the time of signing, Glacier Park consisted of 915,000 acres of land “comprised of huge forests of cedar and pine; 60 glaciers, 250 lakes, countless streams, an incredible variety of plants and animals...and mountains ranging in elevation from 6,000 to 10,000 feet high.”¹³

The popularity of Montana only increased when the area was designated by President Taft in 1910 to become a national park. Shortly following the official designation of the park, the

¹² Robinson, Donald H. “*Through the Years in Glacier National Park: An Administrative History*” Glacier Natural History Association, Inc. National Park Service. Chapter 2.

¹³ Urion, Celeste. “*Construction of Wilderness in the Formation of Glacier National Park, Montana.*” National Library of Canada. Page. 86.

federal government had little money to spend on its development. Once again, the Great Northern Railway played a large role in furthering the development of the park after its designation. Louis Hill and the Great Northern Railway Company spent ten dollars for every one dollar the federal government invested in creating roads and trails. With this investment Hill created luxury hotels and worked with the Department of Interior to make the park more accessible. While the Great Northern Railway was already created by the time the park was designated and cut straight through the park, other roads were paved to make the entire area easier for tourists.

It seemed that Louis Hill had almost complete control over the development of the park, as he was contributing the most money. Hill advertised heavily for the Great Northern Railway and Glacier National Park itself. Representing the Glacier National Park as the ideal American West, Hill hired photographers and led expeditions in order to promote the park. This campaign was called “See America First”¹⁴ and included images of deer, elk and other animals to showcase the landscape of Glacier. While the “See America First” Campaign had been used by other companies in other areas to promote western imagery, Hill coined the term and became incredibly successful with this campaign.

Another way Hill appealed to audiences was by hiring the Blackfeet Tribe to work in the park as tour guides, hotel staff and entertainers. The American public had fascination with the Native Americans and when Hill created an atmosphere where tourists would see Native Americans in a controlled and westernized way, the public was eager to buy in. By 1910 the Blackfoot tribe was conducting business and life solely on the reservation. Because of these economic hardships facing the Blackfeet Tribe due to the land loss previously mentioned,

¹⁴ Dilsaver, Lary M. and Wyckoff, William. “Promotional Imagery of Glacier National Park.” *Geographical Review* 87, no. 1.

members of the tribe were desperate for any way to make money, even if it meant working for the company that helped take the tribe's land away.¹⁵ Tourists would be able to get off the train when they arrived at Glacier and their luggage would be carried by tribe members. Tours of the park were also by tribe members, who discussed the history and ecology of the land (land which had previously belonged to the tribe but had been taken by the federal government) with visitors.

For park guests drawn to the ruggedness of the terrain, "The outpouring of imagery was reinforced in the park itself: Great Northern concessionaires and guides greeted tourists with the same Blackfeet Indians that were highlighted in advertising brochures; park chalets and hotel interiors emphasized local scenery and wildlife; and horse-trail tours offered visitors and unending panorama of wilderness experiences, all in a carefully controlled, safe environment."¹⁶ Louis Hill also insisted that if tribe members wanted a job at the park, they had to wear "Sioux-style headdress in which the feathers were swept back instead of the 'straight-up,' traditional feathered headdress of the Blackfeet."¹⁷ The religious and ceremonial practice of fire dances was also displayed in the park for entertainment for park guests and tribe members commonly took pictures wearing Sioux-style headdresses with tourists to promote the park.

¹⁵ Spence, Mark David. 1999. *Dispossessing the Wilderness : Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Cary: Oxford University Press

¹⁶ Dilsaver, Lary M. and Wyckoff, William. "Promotional Imagery of Glacier National Park." *Geographical Review* 87, no. 1. Page 6.

¹⁷ McCormack, Eileen R. and Young, Biloine W. "He Had a Great Flair for the Colorful" Louis W. Hill and Glacier National Park. page. 8



Figure 2. Blackfoot Tribe performing fire dance ceremony¹⁸

In order to make money working for the park, the Blackfoot Tribe relinquished sacred traditions for the sake of tourism. The use of fire dances as a ceremonial and religious practice changed to a tourist attraction. Blackfoot Tribe members were not even allowed to wear their traditional headdress, but instead were made to wear the headdress of a different tribe for aesthetic purposes. The land which was originally the center of the Blackfoot lifestyle was now used for tours and hikes. Blackfoot members were not allowed to give their history of Glacier National Park, but instead gave the history provided for them by the railway company. The “See America First” Campaign was largely successful, and “more than any other national park, Glacier became synonymous with Indians, an image largely associated with Hill’s tireless publicity efforts.”¹⁹

Because of the successful images used by Louis Hill, many tourists had high expectations to see all that Glacier National Park had to offer. Park officials faced multiple issues in fulfilling

¹⁸ Camp Fire Dance at Night. Glacier Nat'l. Park. Montana, Keystone-Mast Collection, UC Riverside, California Museum of Photography

¹⁹ Dilsaver, Lary M. and Wyckoff, William. “Promotional Imagery of Glacier National Park.” *Geographical Review* 87, no. 1. Page. 9

these expectations. Because the wild nature of the park garnered much attention and tourism from the wealthy upper class in America at the time, many tourists visiting the area had expectations to see wildlife. Animals such as deer and elk were considered the “preferred”²⁰ animals to see. In order to make sure visitors saw these animals and not more predatory ones, those working at Glacier would hunt coyotes, mountain lions, wolves and eagles to make sure that the population of deer and elk would increase so sightings would be more frequent. A lot of the animals hunted by the park managers were considered scared of the Blackfeet Tribe. Park workers would also place salt licks and soy hayseed near popular tourism spots to attract more animals. The elimination of predators from the ecosystem caused the population of deer and elk to explode and changed the ecosystem within the park. Grazing animals became overwhelming and the grass of the park became almost non-existent.

Another issue facing park managers was other parties hunting in the park. While the park managers themselves could hunt predatory animals for the sake of benefiting the park, other groups, such as the Blackfeet tribe were not allowed to hunt any animals. Park managers argued that by allowing the tribe to hunt on park lands, the image of the park as an untouchable wilderness would be tarnished. When the Steven Treaty of 1895 was signed, it allowed the Blackfeet Tribe to hunt, fish and cut timber on the land. These rights were to remain in place as long as the ceded area was public land. In 1910, when the park was designated as a national park, the land was no longer considered public and the rights of the Blackfeet tribe to the land were terminated. However, the Blackfeet tribe continued to hunt and fish, thus tension between the tribe and the park managers increased. The Glacier officials were not the only party attempting to remove the Blackfeet tribe’s hunting rights. National preservation leaders were also calling for an

²⁰ Spence, Mark David. 1999. *Dispossessing the Wilderness : Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Cary: Oxford University Press. Page. 130

end to the “wanton slaughter” of elk in Glacier. Interestingly, these preservation leaders did not address the killing of hundreds of other animals by the Glacier officials when they demanded an end to the killing of the animals in the park.

In 1917, in an effort to stop the Blackfeet tribe from hunting, the park managers attempted to implement legal restrictions on the tribe.²¹ The Glacier officials proposed that the tribe would cease all hunting of animals that “originated” in the park, such as deer or elk. The managers appealed to the Bureau of Indian Affairs but were denied support and the legislation was not implemented. Hunting by any other party would undermine the efforts that the park rangers made to increase the sightings of animals. Park managers put forth a lot of effort in trying to stop the Blackfeet tribe from hunting on the lands in Glacier National Park, even though the tribe technically had full rights to hunt on the land (as outlined in a 1895 treaty between the Blackfeet and the federal government). The Blackfeet tribe actively relied on resources gathered in the park, therefore while continuing hunting on the land was a matter of pride, it also negatively impacted the tribe because they would lose important resources. While the Blackfeet hunting on the grounds created direct tension between the tribe and the park managers, there was the implication that the hunting on the land by the Blackfeet overall undermined the Department of Interior’s power to completely control the park.

With efforts to end hunting of all private parties, the Department of Interior also aimed to eliminate any private land holdings within the bounds of Glacier National Park. By the 1930s most of these private holdings had been bought by the federal government, but the Blackfeet tribe continued to push for their rights to keep the land. The Blackfeet tribe held their claim to the eastern half of the park, even though they had originally inhabited the entire area. The

²¹ Spence, Mark David. 1999. *Dispossessing the Wilderness : Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Cary: Oxford University Press. Page. 132.

Blackfeet were only welcomed into the park if they had converted to the western lifestyle. The idea that the Blackfeet tribe was inhabiting part of the land did not fit the wild wilderness image that the Department of the Interior was trying to portray. To the Department of Interior, “the Blackfeet may have used the Glacier area in the past, but tourists and park managers believed that only the citizens of an emerging world power could experience the mountains with appropriate awe and reverence.”²² On one side Blackfeet were welcomed because they brought about tourism; however, once they began showing behavior not considered civilized (such as hunting or not adhering to arbitrary guidelines brought about by the park managers) they were considered a hindrance to the natural beauty of Glacier.

The creation of the Glacier National Park in 1910 brought about many changes to Montana’s (and America’s) cultural and environmental landscape. Because of legislation leading up to the designation of the park that lessened the land area that the Blackfeet tribe could reside on, and white settlers began to encroach on Blackfeet territory and hunt the resource once solely available to the tribe, the infrastructure of the tribe’s lifestyle and culture changed. The harmonious relationship between the tribe and bison was destroyed as white settlers killed the bison to almost extinction. Because of this, the tribe turned towards other meat sources such as elk and deer. This source of food also became difficult to obtain after the park was designated, as park managers fought the tribe for hunting rights. Religious practices changed too, as tribe members were employed by the railroad for tourism purposes. Tribe members wore incorrect traditional dress that belonged to another tribe and used religious ceremonies to attract white tourists. The land became a way to make money instead of a religion. Unfortunately, the Blackfeet tribe had little choice in the transition of how land was used. Because the tribe became

²² Spence, Mark David. 1999. *Dispossessing the Wilderness : Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Cary: Oxford University Press. Page. 128.

more reliant on the government, the only way to survive was to give up these sacred religious ceremonies and work for companies that took away the land.

Through the process of designating Glacier National Park, the Blackfeet tribe lost everything. Ironically, the people who had kept the area in Montana that became a national park beautiful were the ones who suffered the most loss in its designation. The relationship between the tribe and the natural environment was irrevocably tarnished, as the natural landscape was manipulated by westernized ideals. Interestingly, Glacier National Park is seen as one of the wildest places in the United States; however, through research, it is apparent that the land in Glacier National Park is one of the most manipulated in the country. In an effort to make the park more like a wilderness, the National Park Service destroyed the natural landscape. Perhaps the occupation of the land by solely the Blackfeet tribe was the closest the land had come to actually being a wilderness as the tribe thought the more natural the land, the more sacred. Overall, the westernization of the area of Glacier National Park not only tarnished the relationship between the Native Americans and the land, but also completely destroyed the natural wilderness that was in existence.

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