



## Relationship with the Land – Seasonal Round

*This instructional resource was developed by Rosalyn LaPier, Piegan Institute. Note that the How We Lived with the Land activity in the Virtual Exhibit is generalized for all of Niitsitapi, and physical and spiritual ecology.*

### **The Blackfeet Seasonal Round**

In the summer of 1911 ethnologist C.C. Uhlenbeck interviewed elders of the South Piegan in Montana regarding Blackfeet lifeways. The chapter “How the Ancient Peigans Lived,” as told by *Kainaikoan*, Blood Man<sup>1</sup>, and interpreted by *Istɣkyáɣtso*, Joseph Tatsey describes in detail the annual seasonal round of one Blackfeet band.<sup>2</sup> The *Aápaítapɛ* band moved 15 times in one year. These places are not permanently inhabited by the Blackfeet, but were used during their seasonal hunting, gathering and religious activities. They begin and end near where they start in a river valley, *Kainaikoan* describes their activities as follows:

1) They begin at *Itsipútsimaup*, Battle Coulee, on the *Kyúiesisaxtaii*, Bear River (Marias River), for winter camp. The band stays here until late spring when their horses are fat and have finished shedding their hair.



Horses in Winter



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2) and 3) They move within and between the *Katoyísiks*, Sweet Grass Hills, and the *Aiyx'kímmikuyĒu*, Cypress Hills, to hunt for buffalo bulls. The meat is dried and the hides are made into parfleche<sup>3</sup> containers.



*Otsiikin*, Buffalo bean, *Thermopsis rhombifolia*, when Buffalo Bean was in bloom it was time to go hunt buffalo



Buffalo, Image courtesy of David R. M. Beck



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Between the *Katoyísiks*, Sweet Grass Hills, and the *Aijx'kímmikuyΞu*, Cypress Hills

4) They move next to the *PaχkΞχkeyi*, Pakoki Lake, to look for buffalo for skins to make lodge covers.



*PaχkΞχkeyi*, Pakoki Lake is a large shallow lake, this photo is during a drought year and the majority of the lake was covered in prairie grass.





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A photo of buffalo on the Blackfeet reservation (next to a prairie lake), a representation of what Pakoki Lake may have looked like before the near extinction of the bison.

5) They move next to *Akaii'niskuy*ᑭ, Many Berries, to gather service berries, goose berries, red willow berries, and to start the processing of the buffalo hides into lodge covers.



*Akaii'niskuy*ᑭ, Many Berries, Alberta

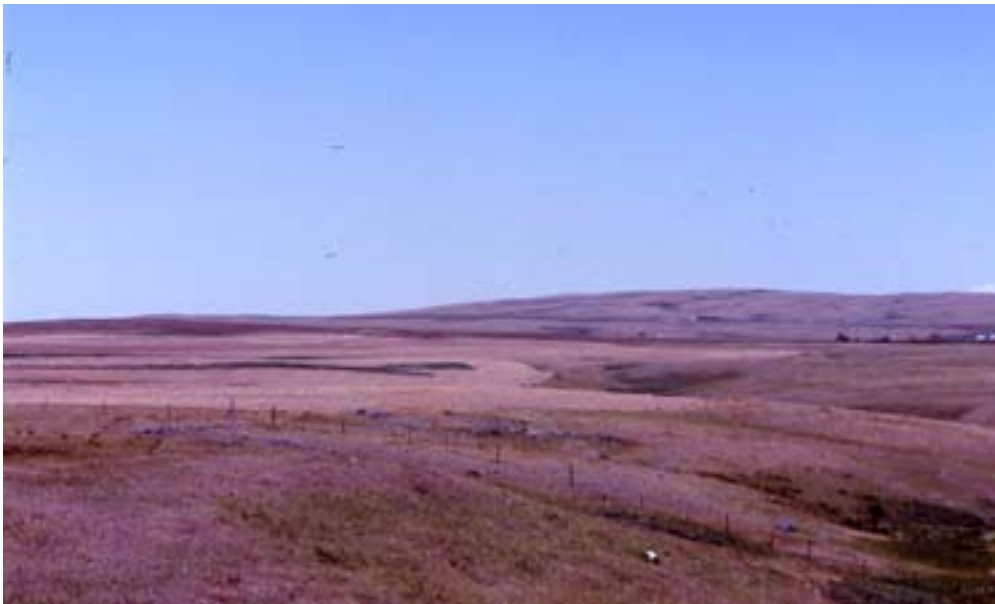


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*Miksinittsiim*, Buffalo Bull Berries, *Shepherdia canadensis*

6) They move next to *EiniótokĒnisi*, Buffalo-Bull's Head, to pick more berries, this time choke cherries, which they dry for winter use.



*EiniótokĒnisi*, Buffalo-Bull's Head, Alberta



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*Pakkiip*, Chokecherries, *Prunus virginiana*

7) They move next to *Ix'kitsíkitap̄iks*, Seven Persons, to hunt for elk and process the hides. (Elk hides were usually used for clothing.)



*Ix'kitsíkitap̄iks*, Seven Persons, Alberta





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8) The move back to the *Aiix'kimmikuyEu*, Cypress Hills, to cut lodge poles. (The only place on the Plains to find lodge pole pines.)



*Aiix'kimmikuyEu*, Cypress Hills



*Aiix'kimmikuyEu*, Cypress Hills



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9) They move next to *Inokímists*, Long Lake, but *Kainaikoan* does not record their activities. It is possible that they were religious.

10) They move next to *Mátokeks oma'nis t̥moai otsítskitaxpiaw*, Women's Society Left Their Lodge Pole, to “chase” stray buffalo bulls



On the Alberta prairies west of the Cypress Hills, *Mátokeks oma'nis t̥moai otsítskitaxpiaw*, Women's Society Left Their Lodge Pole, has not been identified but this region is representative of the area.





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11) They move next to *Ἐχκomono Ἐsiu*, Green Lake, to process the hides of the stray buffalo bulls. They make more parfleche containers, rawhide for their travois, string from the sinew, and robes from the hair on the buffalo's head.



In the area of Green Lake, it is possibly *Ἐχκomono Ἐsiu*, Green Lake, but this has never been identified for certain.



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12) They move next to *A'isinaixpɛ*, Writing On Stone on the Milk River, to collect more choke cherries and dry them for winter use.



To *A'isinaixpɛ*, Writing On Stone on the Milk River



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13) They move next to *A'kekoksistakskuyɛ*, Women's Point on the Milk River, to hunt antelope. (Antelope hides were used to make clothing.)



*Mátokeks oma'nis tɛmoai otsitskitaxpiau*, Women's Society Left Their Lodge Pole is also an area that has not been identified for certain, except that it is on the Milk river near Writing on Stone.





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14) They move next *Ponákiksi*, Cut Bank Creek in mountains, to cut more new lodge poles and complete the sewing of the buffalo lodge covers for winter use. They stay in the mountains until the first light snow.



*Ponákiksi*, Cut Bank Creek in mountains

15) They return to winter camp on *Lower Cut Bank Creek* near the Marias.



*The Kyúiesisqxtai*, Bear River (Marias River). Image courtesy of David R. M. Beck



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*Kainaikoan* reported that once the *Aápaítap* band set up their winter lodges, they built a corral for their horses and would hunt the local bison near the river valley. At this time of year they preferred to hunt 2-4 year old heifers. They dried the meat for winter use and made winter robes for their families. They augmented their preserved berries and meat with foods they found locally, which are usually collected in late autumn, such as; tree cambium, roots, black alkali, rosehips, kapsii, and bullberries. After the first big snow the women would collect all their winter wood. Once the band had all of its provisions for the winter – their horses corralled, meat, berries and other plant foods preserved, and wood collected – the men were allowed to return to the prairies to hunt buffalo for robes and other animal fur to trade.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Blood Man* is probably Jim Blood. Jim Blood was a full-blood Piegan born in 1859. His grandfather was *Chief-Mountain*, one of the leaders of the *Blood-people* band of the South Piegan. Conversation with Bill Farr and J.P. De Josselin De Jong. *Blackfoot Texts*. (Amsterdam, Johannes Muller, 1914), pg. 120-121. I will assume that the band movements that *Blood Man* discuss in his interview are the movements the *Blood-people* band.

<sup>2</sup> C.C. Uhlenback, *A New Series of Blackfoot Texts from the Southern Piegans Blackfoot Reservation Teton County Montana* (Verhandelingen Der Koninklijke Akademie Van Wetenschappen Te Amsterdam, 1912), pg. 1-38.

<sup>3</sup> *par•flech* – (in Native culture) a buffalo hide, dried by being stretched on a frame after the hair has been removed.

- an article, especially a bag, made from this.