Jerry Potts

Jerry Potts was a culture bridge. Part Kainai and part Scottish American, he had a foot in two worlds.

By the time the Mounties had straggled down to Fort Benton, Montana, for supplies in 1874, they knew they needed help more than flour and flea powder. They hired Potts, a skilled hunter and tracker, as a scout and guide. He found them fresh water, killed bison for meat, taught them where to take shelter and led them to Fort Whoop-Up (near what is now Lethbridge, Alberta). He helped secure permission from one of the Apatohsipiikani leaders for

Jerry Potts (centre), interpreter with the North-West Mounted Police and First Nations People
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the Mounties to build their fort. He translated between the First Peoples and introduced the police to the different tribes. Without Potts, the Great March West would have been a failure.

Some claim he was a good translator. Others say he failed his people at Treaty 7 because he could not explain the nature of the agreement they were signing.

After a life witnessing loss and violence, Potts wanted peace and order. During the Northwest Resistance of 1885, he worked with the Niitsitapi leaders to prevent the young men from joining the uprising, probably preventing bloodshed and reprisals.

Born: 1840 – Died: July 14, 1896

Additional Resources

- **Dictionary of Canadian Biography**
  http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/potts_jerry_12E.html

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- **The Canadian Encyclopedia**
  https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/jerry-potts

Our Collections

Glenbow Museum

https://www.glenbow.org

Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives

https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives

Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection

https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1

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