

Park Renaming Recommendations and Discussion

Bible Camp Lands

Recommended New Park Name: **“li to pa to pa”** Blackfoot-Interpreted as “a place where we return often”, the interpretation means is it not a long-term camp, such as a wintering camp, but rather a summer camp that is non-permanent.

This name was provided by Piikani Elder, Shirlee Crow Shoe, Misamiinisikim (Ancient Buffalo Stone). Shirlee is a member of several traditional Blackfoot Societies and she is a well known and highly respected Blackfoot Elder. She is one of three Elders-In-Residence at the University of Lethbridge. She learned Blackfoot from her grandmother and is a fluent speaker and an accomplished writer of Blackfoot. She serves or has served as a language consultant for Piikani Nation, The Nitsipowahsin School on the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning, Montana, the University of Missoula Linguistics Department, Fort Whoop-Up Interpretative Centre in Lethbridge, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Fort Macleod Mental Health Services and Crossroad Campus in Fort Macleod. She served on the Bow Valley Aboriginal Council and with the Livingstone School Division. She has authored and/or co-authored articles and papers on Blackfoot language, culture and history in association with the Smithsonian Institution, the Glenbow Museum, the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles and the Denver Museum. She has been a consulting Elder for Piikani Nation many years and has worked with Arrow Archaeology for approximately 12 years.

Shirlee visited the Bible Camp lands with the Blackfoot assessment team and after examining the area, its environmental context and general location in Blackfoot Territory, Shirlee and the team concluded that it would have been a favoured warm-season habitation site. Since there is no longer any evidence (known archaeological or other ancient remains at the site), the team could not conclude that it was a long-term habitation site such as some that occur near favoured bison acquisition areas or a wintering camp site. The team, including Shirlee did note that it was near the river ford/crossing used by travellers along the North Trail (now more commonly, the Old North Trail), and that major river fords are often favoured stopping places. What are now the Bible Camp Lands and surrounding area would probably have been used repeatedly over the millennia because it provided shelter, easy access to good water, numerous plants used for food, medicine and ceremony by Blackfoot and other First Nations.

Given Shirlee’s depth and breadth of knowledge of Blackfoot language, history and culture, her continuing work as highly respected Blackfoot language expert in both oral and written Blackfoot and her position of the Blackfoot Confederacy’s most highly-respected Elder, she was asked to recommend a name. Based on discussions and her knowledge of the site setting and general area she chose the above-reference recommended name.

While the Park will honour all First Nations history and culture, the fact that the Okotoks area, most specifically the Big Rock plays a fundamentally important position in the story of Creation in Blackfoot history, myth and origin, a Blackfoot name for this Park is recommended. We hope

and trust that both Tsuut'ina and Stoney-Nakoda languages will be acknowledged in some manner in the Park, however we believe Park should bear a Blackfoot name.

Dewdney Park

Recommended New Name "**Pisttoo**" (Blackfoot for Nighthawk)

This name was first suggested by Scotty Many Guns-Onistaomahka (Running Calf).

Scotty is a Consultation Officer and Elder with Siksika Nation and a fluent Blackfoot speaker and accomplished writer of Blackfoot. He is a former Band Council member at Siksika and has served in the Siksika Consultation Office for over a decade. He is highly respected for his leadership in the field of Blackfoot consultation and has worked with Arrow Archaeology for approximately 12 years. The name was suggested for the role the Nighthawk (common nighthawk-*Chordeiles minor*, member of the nightjar family) plays in the story of Napi and the Big Rock (Okohatok). This is a central story of Creation for the Blackfoot.

Napi, sometimes referred to as Old Man, is a central figure in Blackfoot story and legend. He is understood as a well-intentioned, but mischievous trickster figure who often makes trouble for himself. He is regarded as god-like being largely responsible for shaping the world the Blackfoot and all First Nations people live in. The following is a shortened version of the story, a longer version is included in the Final Report. Briefly the story is as follows:

Napi was travelling south to north with his companion Coyote. On one hot day, Napi and Coyote stopped to rest by a big rock. Napi always wore a large buffalo robe but on this day and its warmth he took off the robe lay down on the rock and rested. After Napi and Coyote were refreshed and were ready to move on, Napi told the rock he could keep the robe in return for letting Napi rest there. As Napi and Coyote moved on, a cold wind picked up and Napi needed his robe. He told Coyote he was returning to get his robe. Coyote objected saying he could not take something back he had given, but Napi ignored the advice and went back and collected his robe. As Napi and Coyote continued north, they heard a loud rumbling behind them and Big Rock was rolling after them. Napi and Coyote started to run and ran as hard as they could but they both tired and Napi, seeing some of his animal friends, asked them to help him escape. Some animals remembered Napi's past tricks and refused to help, others such as gopher, beaver, elk and deer tried, but failed to stop the rock. Coyote saw things were going badly for Napi and abandoned him. As Napi ran on he, as a last-ditch attempt, called on Pisttoo (nighthawks) to help and they agreed. The nighthawks, who were natural highly capable flyers attacked Big Rock from the air and their bombardment started to break up and Big Rock finally stopped in the place where it is today, Napi survived this adventure thanks to the help of Pisttoo.

Other comments re the story and Pisttoo: The Common nighthawk occurs in Alberta and was well-known to the Blackfoot. Nighthawks are not often seen during the day, but they hunt as an aerial insectivore in mornings and evenings and is often seen swooping and diving, turning

sharply in mid flight in the evening and early night. It has a very short bill and so has what appears to be slightly flattened face. Its appearance and behaviour in flight may have played a role in the Blackfoot story, where its face was flattened after colliding with Big Rock. The name “bull bat” and the Blackfoot version of that name have applied to the nighthawk, possibly because of its evening/night hunting and flattened face, somewhat like a bat’s turned up nose. The Napi and Big Rock story play a role in explaining the appearance of other animals as well.

In some versions of the story, other birds and bats were named as the animal responsible for stopping Big Rock, but as Stan Knowlton, a Piikani Elder stated when asked about other variations of the story stated:

“I asked my elders and the old chiefs about why there were different versions of the stories was told that the stories were like grass. ‘Grass looks like it has a lot of different leaves on it, but when you get to the bottom it’s the meaning that is in the root. As long as you tell the story to the best of your ability, in the end it all comes out to mean the same thing.”

The most common version of the story on the basis of a non-scientific survey indicates that most Blackfoot people have heard the version that features Pistoo.

It is also worth noting the natural habitat around Okotoks and the Big Rock would have supported a healthy nighthawk population. Like many bird species it is not as common as it once was in the area, but still occurs in the area.

Trail Ride

We are awaiting an update on the Trail Ride, but the newest information is that the ride is planned for the last week in June and while the length of the trail ride has been shortened, the intent is for it to arrive at the outskirts of Okotoks on Thursday, Friday or Saturday, June 22, 23 or 24. June 23 is currently the preferred day. There are still significant logistical issues to resolve such as finding a viable route to Okotoks that can be used by a significant number of riders and support vehicles without causing major disruption and an overnight camp location prior to arrival in Okotoks. The organizers have visited the Bible Camp lands and that is a favoured end point if possible, but getting horses and riders from the edge of Town to the Park is a significant obstacle and may not be possible, given the disruption to traffic and even using horse that might not be used to walking on pavement.

The posited deadline for the trail ride to go ahead was the end of February, but there has been a significant positive response from possible sponsors and participants and so the deadline has been extended. We are trying to tie down a new date as a deadline. There is concern that it is too large an undertaking at this point for it to work well and there is some discussion of an even more abbreviated ride occur. That plan would start the ride a short distance out of town and either end at the edge of the town in some suitable location if one can be found or trailering some horses to say the east side of town on the north side of the Sheep River and riding to the Park from there.

I suggest that, if possible, we arrange a specific online meeting to discuss towards the end of next week for first of the week after and make some final decisions after that meeting.