

MONTANA

for Kids

THE STORY OF OUR STATE



Written and Illustrated by
Allen Morris Jones

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For Corey



This is Montana



It's a pretty awesome state. It's kind of a rectangle, but with a cool little squiggly line along the western edge.

We have a bunch of mountain ranges, mostly in the west, and open plains, mostly in the east. We have three major river systems and two national parks. We also have a Continental Divide, which means that the water in the western part of the state flows west and the water in the eastern part flows east.

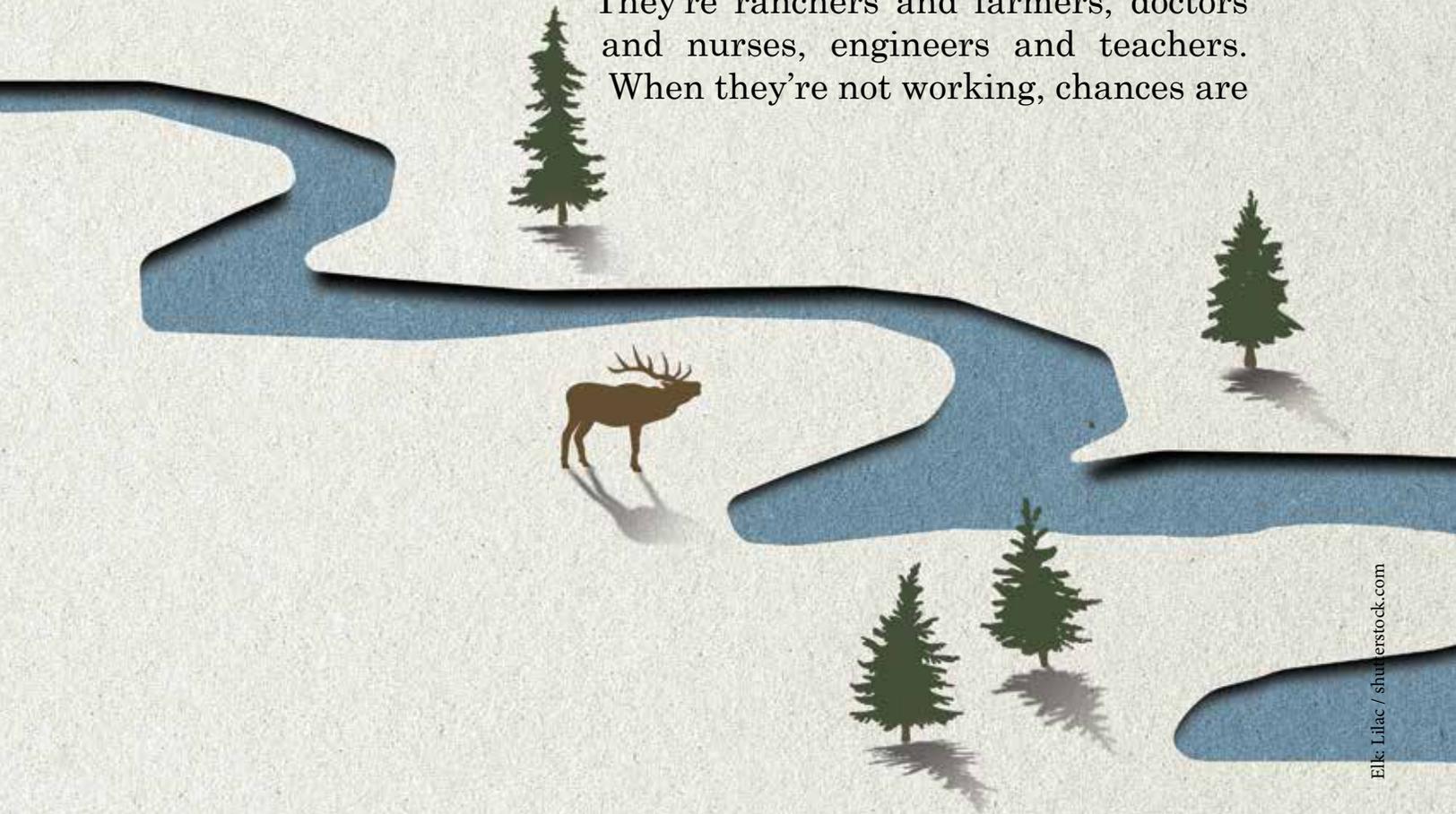
If you're reading this, it's probably because you either live here or are visiting or are planning a visit. Or maybe you're just curious.

In any case, I'm betting that we're on the same page, awesome-state wise.

Montana: Pre-You

If you already know a bit about Montana, you know that there are all sorts of things to see and do here. You can ski and hike, hunt and fish, camp and float. Or you can just take a drive with the grown-ups.

People who live in Montana have all sorts of different jobs. They're ranchers and farmers, doctors and nurses, engineers and teachers. When they're not working, chances are



they like to ski or hike or fish or camp or float.

It's all pretty cool. But the thing is, you can't *really* understand what a place is all about until you know what happened before you arrived.

That's what history really is. It's the story of a place before you came onto the scene.

And that's what this book is for: to tell you just a little bit about Montana, pre-you.



First Peoples

The story of Montana begins with the first peoples. For thousands of years before the rest of the world even knew a place like Montana existed, the area was inhabited by tribes of native peoples. Some of the tribes in Eastern Montana had names like the Cheyenne, Crow, Blackfeet, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Cree, and Chippewa. Other tribes with names like the Shoshone, Kootenai, Salish, and Pend d'Oreille lived in Western Montana.

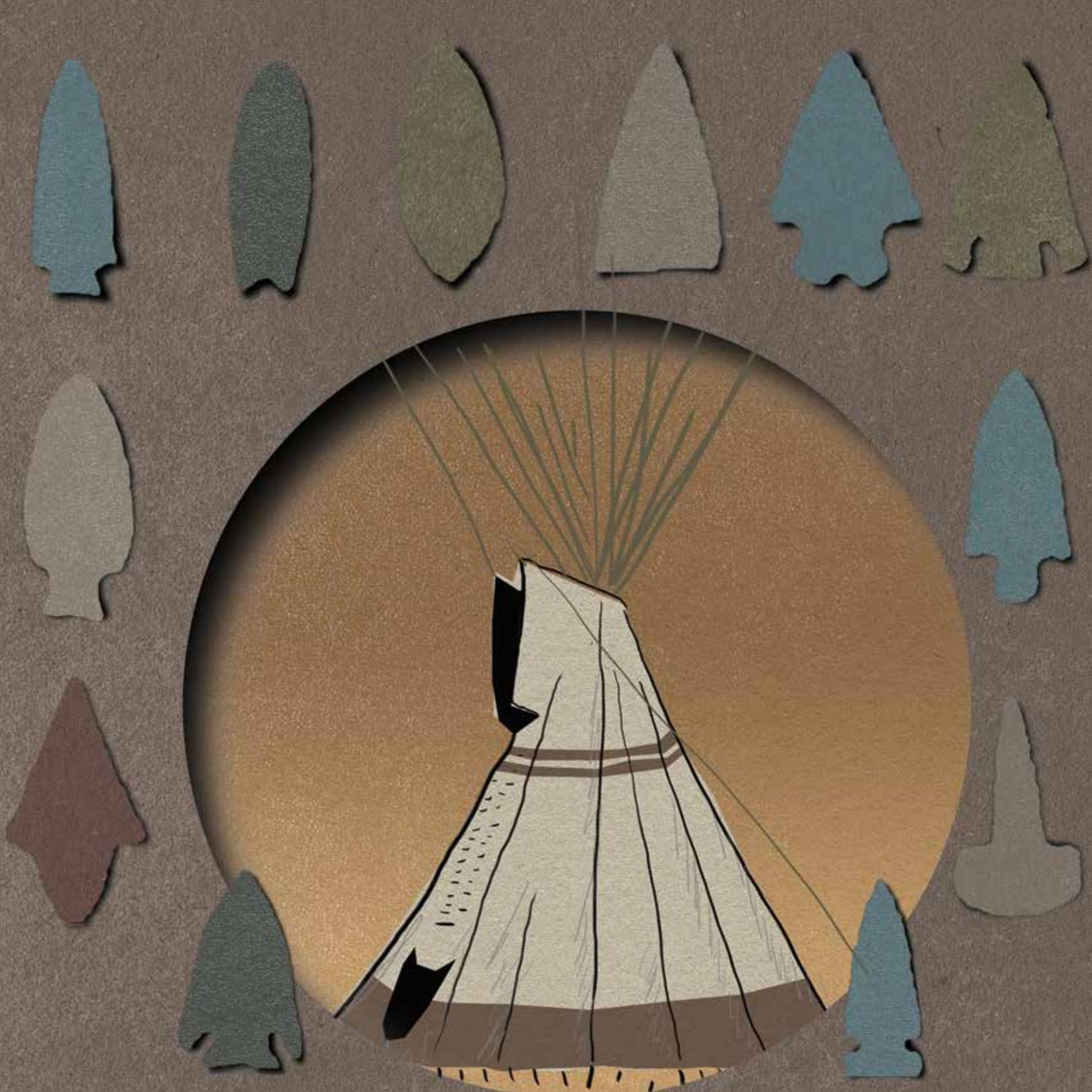
Each tribe had its own language, belief system, and tribal leaders. The tribes had their own names for themselves, too. The Crow called themselves the Apsáalooke, for instance, while the Blackfeet called themselves the Niitsitapi.

When immigrants arrived, they also brought new diseases with them. Between conflicts with the newcomers and disease, some of the tribes nearly disappeared. Some *did* disappear. It's one of the saddest stories you'll ever read.

Today, the languages and traditions of the remaining tribes continue on, kept alive by the heroes of their people.



“At the Water’s Edge, Piegan,”
by Edward S. Curtis



Horses

When most people hear the word Montana, they might think of the Old West, of cowboys and Indians and horses. But horses weren't always here. Horses came to America in the 1500s with the first Spanish explorers.

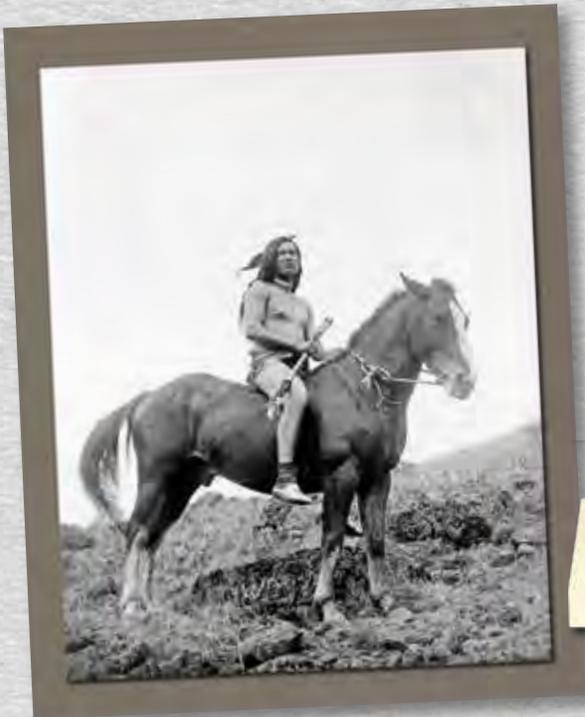
Trading and raiding between tribes gradually brought horses to Montana. Most tribes in the area had horses by the mid to late 1700s.

Horses changed everything for the first peoples. Before horses, Indians used dogs to help them carry their belongings.

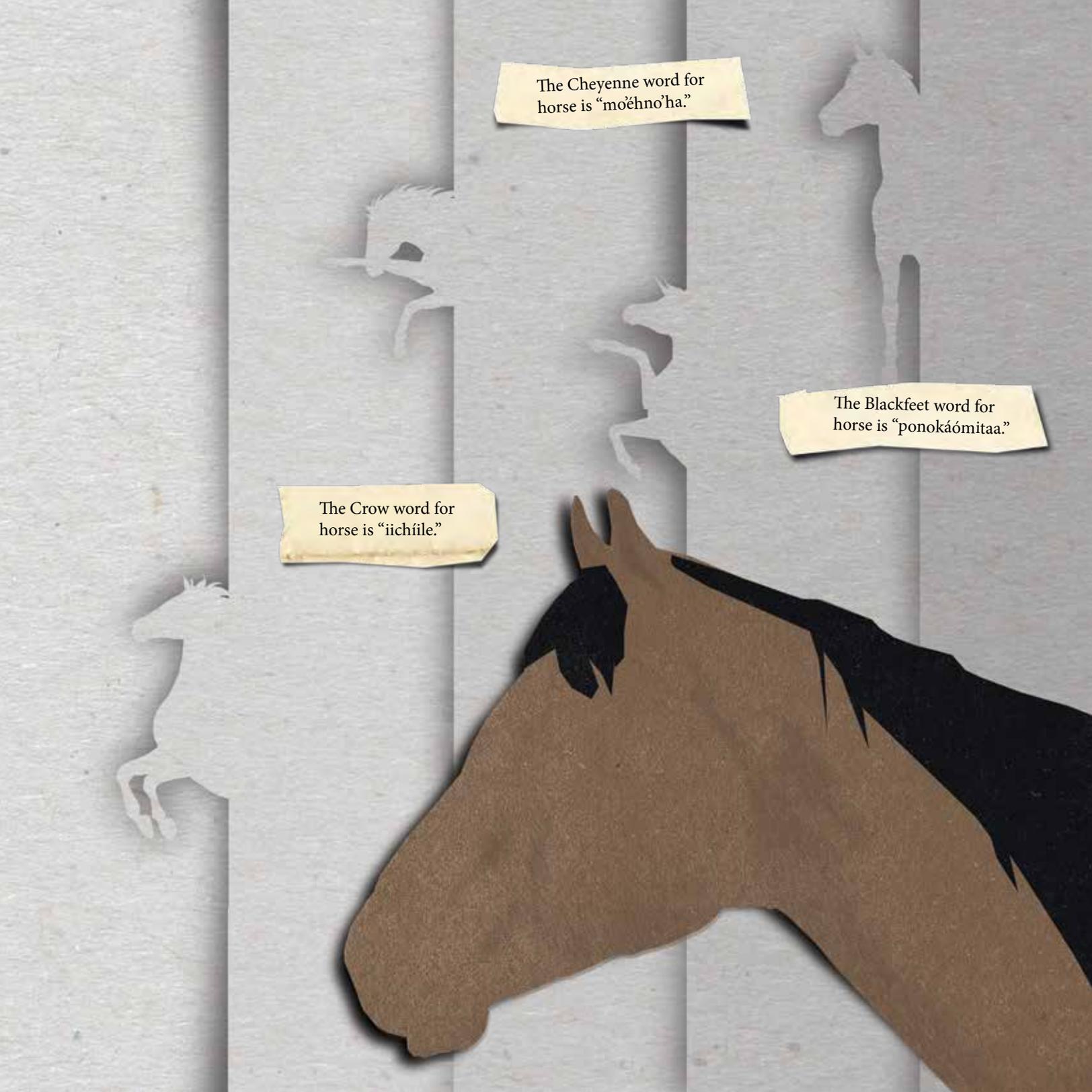
They would stack their items on a pole frame called a travois (truh-voy), and then a dog would pull the travois.

After horses arrived, the Indians could travel further and faster. They could also more easily hunt buffalo and other large animals.

Some tribes, like the Crow, became famous for their skill with horses.



“Nez Perce Warrior,” by
Edward S. Curtis



The Cheyenne word for horse is "mo'ehno'ha."

The Blackfeet word for horse is "ponoka'omitaa."

The Crow word for horse is "iichfile."

Bison



For Plains Indians, few animals were as important as bison, also called buffalo. In Montana, some tribes hunted bison from horseback with bows and arrows, and later with rifles. They also drove herds of them off of certain cliffs, called buffalo jumps.

When historians talk about bison, they can't help but mention all the ways the animals could be used. If you were Indian, you ate the meat, but you also used the skins for clothing and tepees. The bones could be made into knives and scrapers and clubs, and the hooves could be boiled into glue.





The horns became cups and spoons. For some tribes, a buffalo hunt must have been a little bit like a trip to the grocery store for us.

In the early 1800s, there were as many as 50 million buffalo in the West. But by the late 1800s, they were almost all gone. Small herds lived on in Yellowstone National Park and a few other places, including some Indian reservations in Montana. All of the thousands of bison living today are descended from these small herds.



Lewis and Clark

In 1804, President Thomas Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and a group of other brave men on an expedition. The group was called the Corps of Discovery. Their job was to explore the country from west of the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. The United States had just bought a huge portion of this territory from France, and very few Easterners had been there.

The trip took two-and-a-half years. At one point, the Corps had to carry their boats around the great falls of the Missouri.

A Shoshone woman named Sakajawea served as a guide, and later helped them trade for horses.

The Corps spent their second winter beside the Pacific Ocean. On the way home, Lewis and Clark went back through what would become Montana.



"Lewis and Clark at Three Forks," by Edgar S. Paxson

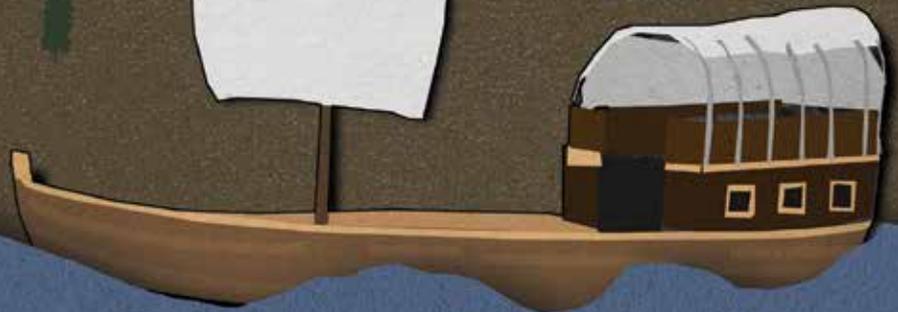
Lewis went north on the Missouri River while Clark went south along the Yellowstone River. Clark named a big rock formation on the Yellowstone after Sakajawea's baby. He called it "Pompey's Pillar."

Lewis and Clark covered more than 8,000 miles on their trip. They mostly walked or traveled in boats but sometimes they rode horses, too. The journals that Lewis and Clark wrote on their journey became very famous.

The route taken by the Corps of Discovery.



A keelboat similar to one used by Lewis and Clark.



Mountain Men

On their way home, Lewis and Clark met several groups of fur trappers traveling back up the Missouri River. These trappers, and others like them, are what we now call mountain men.

Most mountain men worked for one of a few different fur companies. They traveled all around the West, trapping beavers for their skins. Fashionable people in the East liked to wear hats that were made out of beaver skins.

The work to trap these beaver was quite hard. Think about standing all day long in ice-cold water, setting heavy iron traps. Plus, Indian tribes often didn't like it that trappers were in the area without their permission. It could be dangerous work, too.



“Mountain Man,”
by Alfred Jacob Miller

Once a year, mountain men would get together for a big party they called a rendezvous (rond-ay-vu). This was when they sold the beaver pelts they'd been collecting. They also bought everything they might need to live and work in the wilderness for another year.

When beaver skin hats went out of fashion, and when the beaver became scarce, mountain men found other ways to make their livings. Some even began to work as guides, helping others travel into Montana.



John Colter

One of the first mountain men was named John Colter. He traveled with Lewis and Clark, and later was the first Easterner to see what would become Yellowstone Park. He told wild stories about bubbling mudpots and shooting geysers. He was also known for escaping the Blackfeet near what's now Three Forks, Montana.

Colter and a friend were trapping beaver in the area, even though they knew the Indians probably wouldn't like it. When they were captured, Colter's friend was killed. Colter was given a second chance, though. The Indians took his shoes and clothes, then told him to start running.

He ran for a long way, outracing a crowd of warriors. He killed the fastest one, then hid in a beaver dam until the Blackfeet left. But now he was left naked and alone in the middle of Montana.

A week later, he walked into a fort on the Big Horn River, very hungry but still alive.

