

Sx^wúytis Sm̓xe Nx̌lews | GRIZZLY BEAR TRACKS BRIDGE

BEARTRACKS BRIDGE

Historical Background



Seliš-Qlispé Culture Committee
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

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Séliš-Q̓lispé Culture Committee | Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes | 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Beartracks is a name steeped in the history and culture of the Séliš (pronounced SEH-leesh, Salish or “Flathead”) people. It is also of direct relevance to the site of the bridge on Higgins Avenue in downtown Missoula that has now been officially named Beartracks Bridge.

The bridge—and the city as a whole—sit at the heart of the overlapping territories of the Séliš and Q̓lispé (pronounced Kah-lee-SPEH, upper Kalispel or “Pend d’Oreille”).

In this brief historical paper, we offer an overview of the Beartracks name and its importance in the history of this place.

“Beartracks” is a shortened translation of the Salish name Sxʷúytis Sm̓xe, which means Grizzly Bear Tracks. From the mid-nineteenth century on, English speakers have often referred to members of the family by the simplified name “Beartrack” or “Beartracks.” As we explain below, Beartracks is the “Indian name” for the Vanderburgs, a prominent and respected Séliš family.

This official naming of the bridge began in 2020, when the Missoula County Commissioners, led by Commissioner David Strohmaier, approached the CSKT Tribal Council and the Séliš-Q̓lispé Culture Committee (SQCC) to discuss the possibility of renaming the bridge, which was then in the process of being reconstructed. The Commission’s consultation was welcomed by the Tribal Council and Culture Committee. After careful research and several meetings, the Séliš-Q̓lispé Elders Cultural

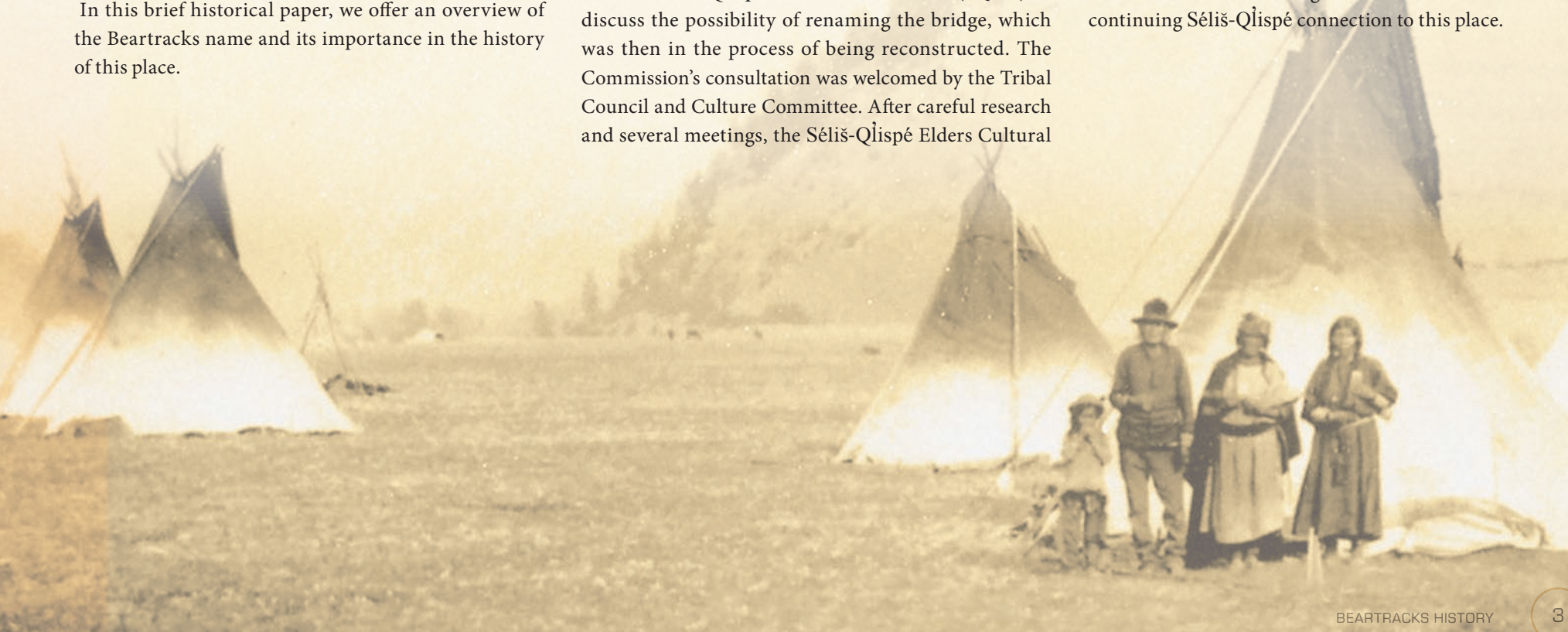
Advisory Council reached consensus on the new name, which was given support by many family members and endorsed by the Tribal Council. The Missoula County Commission and City Council then formally proposed the name to the Montana Transportation Commission, which unanimously approved the name on April 22, 2021.

Whether we use the name Beartracks Bridge, Sxʷúytis Sm̓xe N̓xleʷs, or Grizzly Bear Tracks Bridge, we are honoring the Beartracks / Vanderburg family, the many other descendants of Sxʷúytis Sm̓xe, and the Séliš people as a whole—and reminding ourselves of the ancient and continuing Séliš-Q̓lispé connection to this place.

Cover: *Sxʷúytis Sm̓xe—Grizzly Bear Tracks, 1854.*
(from Gustavus Sohon portrait, National Anthropological Archives)

Following page: *Séliš encampment to dig bitterroot by Es Moq̓ʷ*
(*Mount Sentinel*), 1890s. (Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman)

design = SQCC / joanna yardley | my-design.net



AN ANCIENT AND CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS PLACE

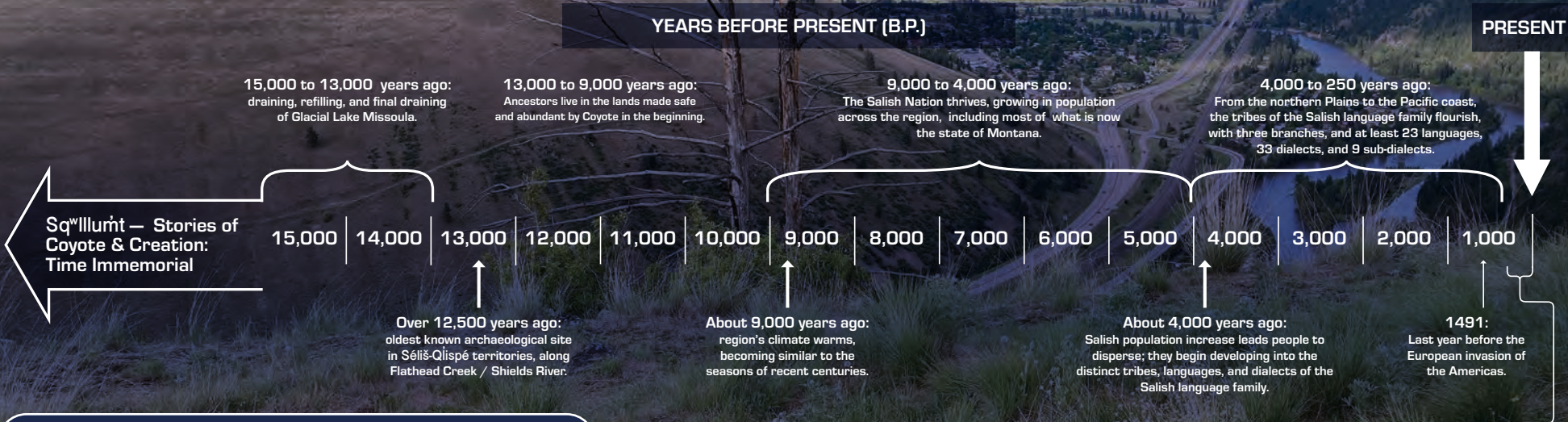
From the beginning of human time, the area now occupied by the city of Missoula has stood at the heart of the aboriginal territories of the Séliš and upper Q̓lispé Nations, the two easternmost tribes of the Salish language family. Both tribal oral traditions and archaeological evidence indicate a presence here—and a rich and beautiful cultural heritage—reaching back to the end of the last ice age, and continuing to the present day. The timeline on the following page reflects the depth of the Indigenous relationship with this place.



- 1 Séliš encampment to dig bitterroot by Nm̓q̓w̓é (Mount Jumbo), c. 1890. (Mansfield Library, University of Montana)
- 2 Along Reserve Street in Missoula, Q̓lispé elder Stephen Smallsalmon leads Return to the Homeland walk from Arlee to Stevensville, commemorating 125th anniversary of forced removal of the Séliš from the Bitterroot Valley, October 2016. (SQCC)
- 3 At Nt̓ʔayc̓stm (Place of Small Bull Trout—confluence of Rattlesnake Creek and Clark Fork River), Matiya Nenemay (Q̓lispé), Alyssa Kelly (Q̓lispé), and Ali Kelly (Q̓lispé / Blackfeet), Oct. 2020. (SQCC)



Séliš-Q̓lispé Timeline | since the last ice age



The vast tenure of Séliš and Q̓lispé people in this place is documented in many ways and in many sources.

If the most recent 10,000 years of tribal history — just two-thirds of this timeline — were condensed into one 24-hour day, the city of Missoula would not be established until 11:38 p.m.

- c. 1700: Salish acquire horse.
- c. 1775: Xallqs (Shining Shirt) has vision of Blackrobies.
- 1781-82: One of most devastating smallpox epidemics.
- 1805: Lewis and Clark arrive, help spur fur trade.
- 1830s: Séliš seek Blackrobies, send 4 delegations east.
- 1855: Hellgate Treaty.
- 1883: NP Railroad enables industrialization of region.
- 1891: Séliš trail of tears—forced to leave Bitterroot.
- 1904: Flathead Allotment Act.
- 1910: Congress opens Reservation to homesteaders.
- 1934-35: Indian Reorganization Act, CSKT Constitution.
- 1975: CSKT establish Culture Committees.



The Salish place-names on the maps on pages 6 and 7 help us understand both the depth of the Indigenous relationship with the place known in English as Missoula, and how it sits at the heart of far larger tribal territories.

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THE FIRST SX^wÚYTIS SMXE

The first person known to bear the name Sx^wúytis Smxe (Grizzly Bear Tracks) served as a sub-chief beginning in the late eighteenth century. This was during the time of Séliš head chief K^wtít ʔaá (Gyr Falcon). K^wtít ʔaá was killed in about 1795 in an incident in which Sx^wúytis Smxe showed remarkable bravery and loyalty. The evidence indicates that Sx^wúytis Smxe then continued to serve as a sub-chief under K^wtít ʔaá's successor, Čeł Sqey^{mi} (Three Eagles).¹

Three Eagles was still the head chief in 1805, when Lewis and Clark met the Séliš at K^wtít ʔup^łm̃ (Big Open—Ross's

Hole). When scouts spotted the approaching group of strangers, Čeł Sqey^{mi} instructed his warriors to do no harm to the visitors and instead welcome them into the camp. Chief Three Eagle's decision set the precedent for Salish diplomatic and strategic policy ever since: a disciplined commitment to peace and non-violence toward non-Indians—and also a determined and fierce insistence on tribal sovereignty and tribal rights.

The following decades of Séliš history were marked by ever-increasing pressures of economic transformation, dislocation, and dispossession. It was extremely difficult

for the nation to remain unified behind the policy of peaceful resistance to the non-Indian invasion. The chiefs relied upon the support, loyalty, and assistance of the sub-chiefs. From the first Sx^wúytis Smxe to the Vanderburg elders today, leaders from the Beartracks / Vanderburg family have served in that crucial and honorable role—defending tribal sovereignty, maintaining unity, and sustaining Séliš cultural knowledge and identity.

Charles M. Russell, "Lewis and Clark Meeting the Indians at Ross' Hole," September 4, 1805. Among the Séliš people in the scene portrayed by Russell was the head chief of the Séliš, Čeł Sqey^{mi} (Three Eagles), and one of his sub-chiefs, the first known Sx^wúytis Smxe (Grizzly Bear Tracks).

(Photo by Don Beatty, courtesy Montana Historical Society.)



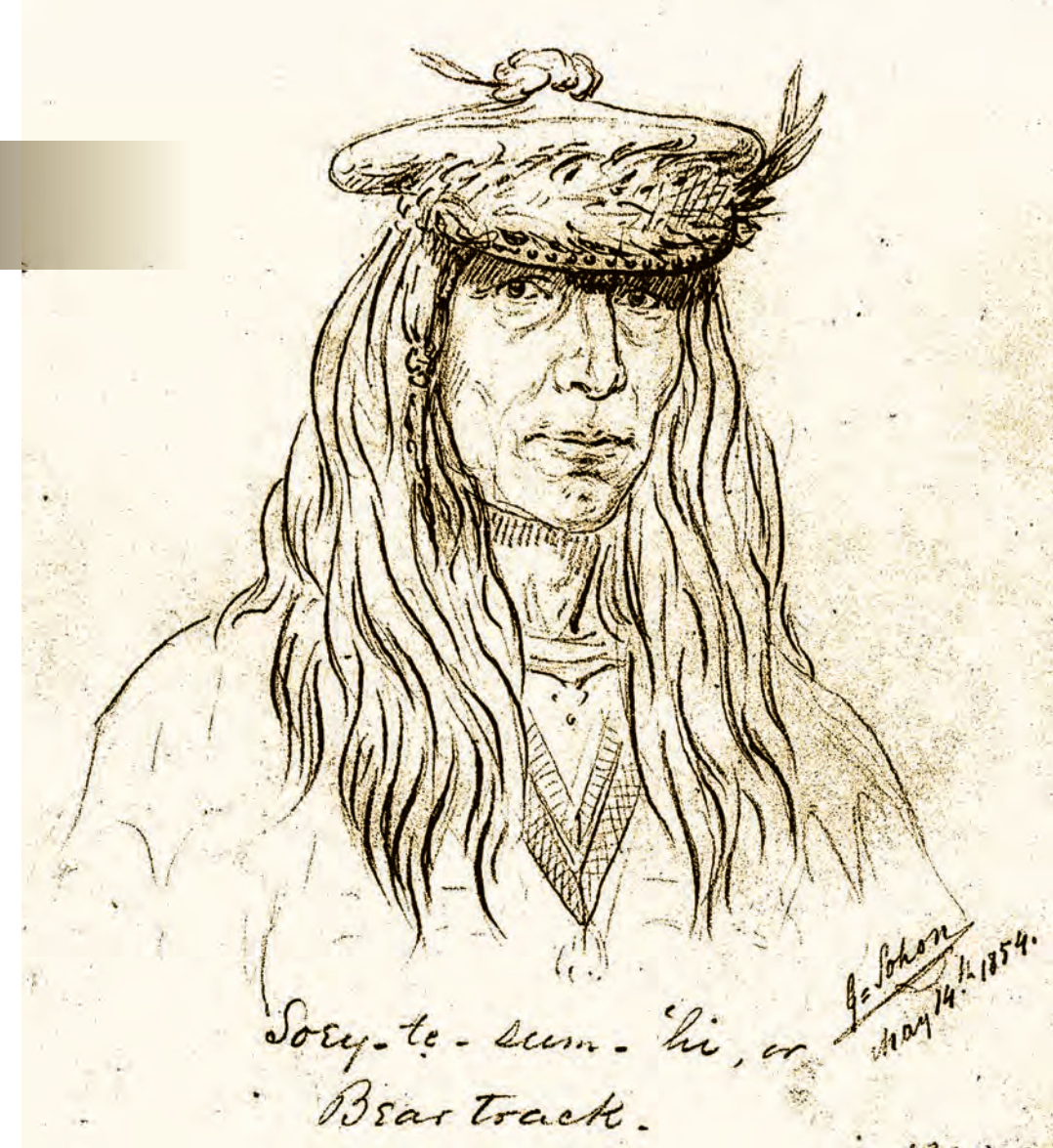
ALEXANDER BEARTRACKS

The apparent son of Sx^wúytis Smxe (Grizzly Bear Tracks), born about 1790, carried the same name as his father. In 1841, Jesuit missionaries—at the invitation of the Séliš—established a mission at our main winter camp at Łqétm̃łš (Wide Cottonwoods—now the Stevensville area). The Jesuits began giving Séliš people Christian first names. The second known Sx^wúytis Smxe thus became known in English as Alexander Beartracks or Alexander Beartrack.

Like the elder Sx^wúytis Smxe, Alexander Beartracks served as a sub-chief. He served in this role under X^wełx^łcín (Many Horses—Chief Victor), the famed leader of the Confederated Salish, upper Kalispel, and Kootenai tribes in the 1855 Hellgate Treaty negotiations. Sx^wúytis Smxe himself signed both the Hellgate Treaty in July 1855, where his remarks were documented in the official minutes of the negotiations, and the Judith River or Lame Bull Treaty in October 1855.²

Gustavus Sohon, an artist and translator during the treaty negotiations, noted that Sx^wúytis Smxe was “a very brave and daring man.” Sohon wrote that “decision is written in every line of his countenance.”³

Both the written record and also extensive recorded oral traditions told by tribal elders help us understand and appreciate Alexander Beartracks. He was a great spiritual leader whose powers were of crucial importance to the Salish people in both hunting and in battles with enemy tribes. This became even more important after the mid-nineteenth century, as the numbers of buffalo began to decline rapidly, and as conflict with tribal enemies



intensified. His powers were so great, and came to be so widely known and respected among all tribes, that if an enemy was considering attacking a Salish camp but discovered that Sx^wúytis Smxe was present, they would abandon their plans.⁴

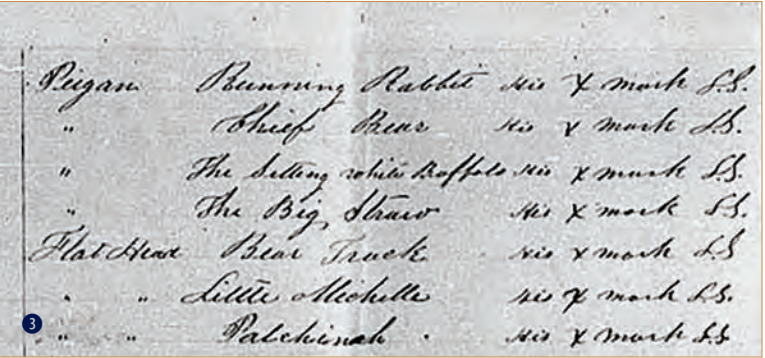
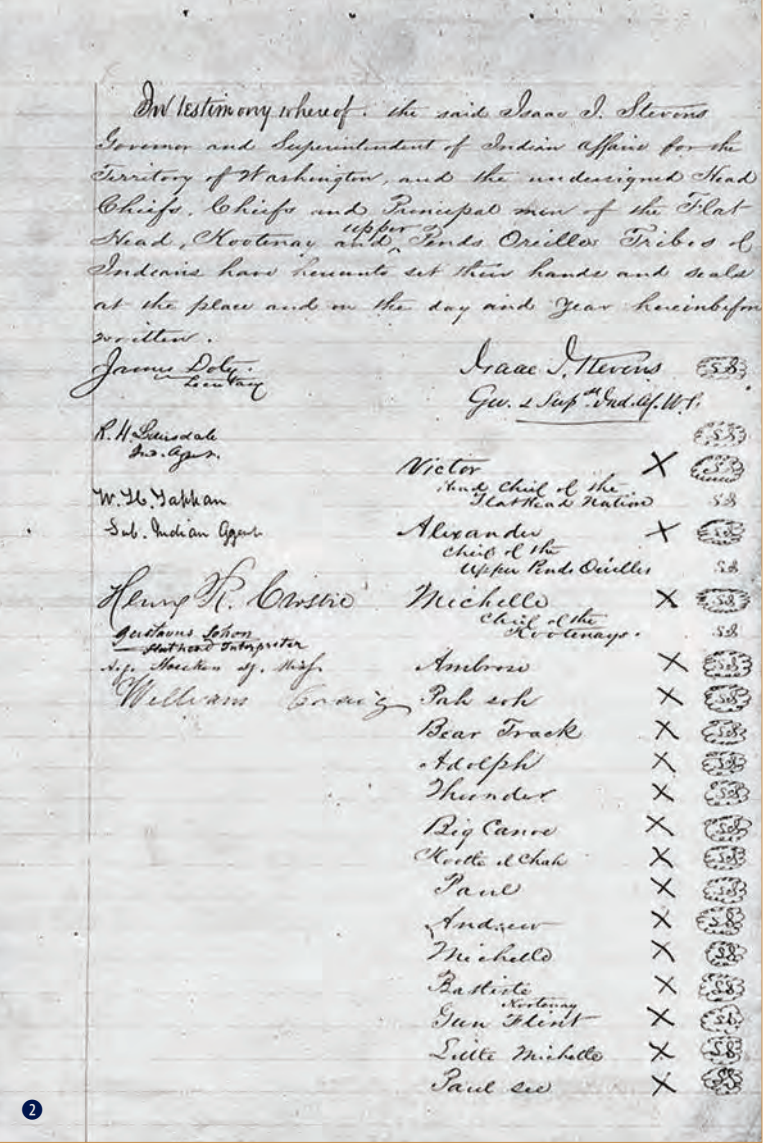
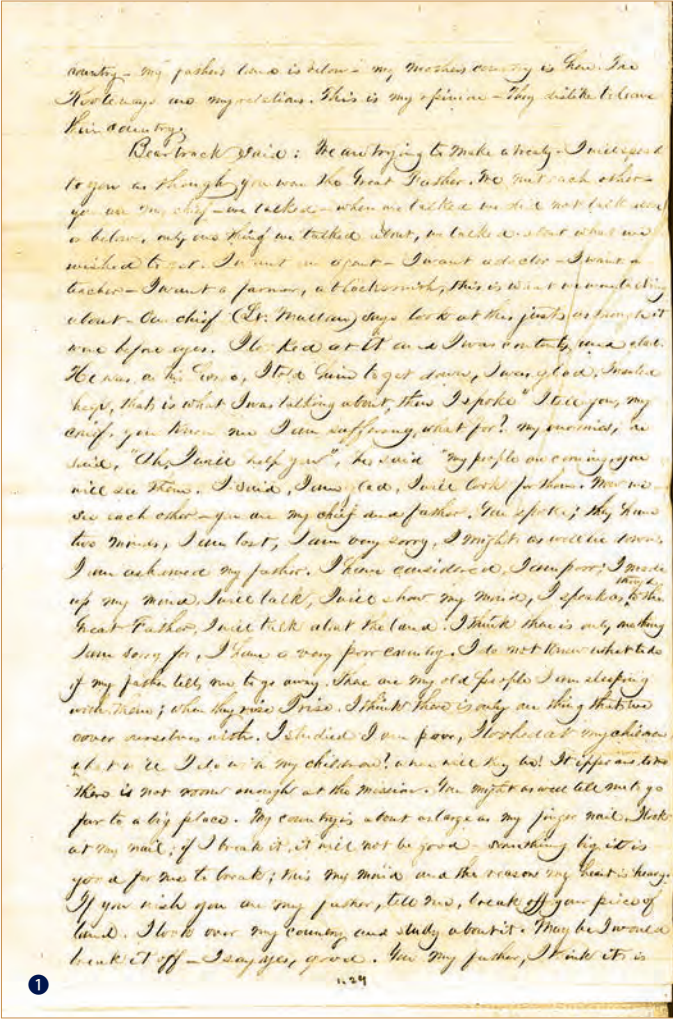
Alexander Beartracks died in the 1880s, when he was over 90 years old.⁵

Sx^wúytis Smxe—Grizzly Bear Tracks, 1854.
(Gustavus Sohon portrait, National Anthropological Archives)

TREATY RECORDS BEARING THE BEARTRACK(S) NAME

From University of Wisconsin websites providing treaty documents, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.IT1855no295> and <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.IT1855no299>, both accessed 2021-05-27.

- 1 page from original field transcripts of Hellgate Treaty negotiations, July 13, 1855 with translation of remarks by Sxʷúytis Sm̓xe (Alexander Beartracks).
- 2 signatory page, Treaty of Hellgate, July 16, 1855, including the x mark of “Bear Track.”
- 3 part of signatory page, Judith River or Lame Bull Treaty, October 17, 1855., including “Bear Track.”



MARY BEARTRACKS AND LKʷUT SM̓XE (FAR-AWAY GRIZZLY — LOUIS VANDERBURG)

In 1870, Xʷet̓x̓čín (Many Horses—Chief Victor) died. He was succeeded as head chief by his son, S̓m̓xe Q̓ʷox̓ʷqeys (Claw of the Small Grizzly—Chief Charlo). By that time, Alexander Beartracks was over 80 years old, and probably serving in another important traditional role, as one of the elder advisors to the chief.

Many years before, Alexander Beartracks’s daughter, Mary Beartrack(s), had married a man named Lkʷut Sm̓xe (Far-Away Grizzly).⁶ Born about 1815,⁷ Lkʷut Sm̓xe was later given the Christian name of Louis Vanderburg by the Jesuits. For the many descendants of Mary’s marriage to Louis—the many Vanderburgs as well as other Séliš people down to the present day—Beartracks has been the family’s Indian name.

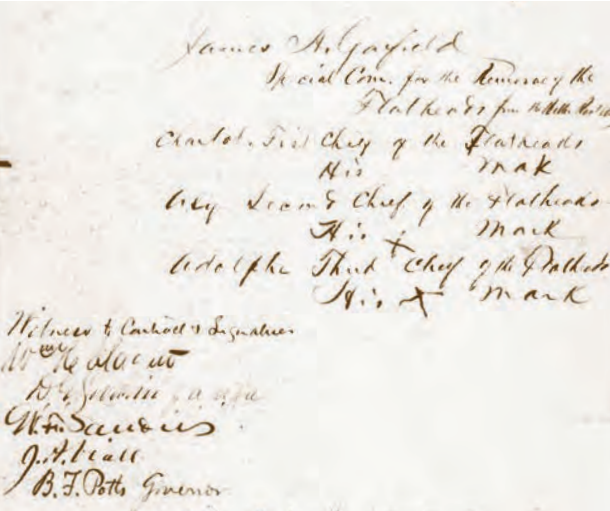
Like his father-in-law, Alexander Beartracks, and his grandfather-in-law, the earliest known Sxʷúytis Sm̓xe, Lkʷut Sm̓xe served as a trusted sub-chief. Mr. Vanderburg was a key figure alongside S̓m̓xe Q̓ʷox̓ʷqeys throughout the often difficult struggles of the Séliš during the late nineteenth century. He played an important role in numerous negotiations with the government, in delegations to Washington and Helena, and in other efforts to protect and defend the sovereignty, homelands, and cultural continuance of the Séliš nation.

Throughout that time, the Séliš were resisting attempts by government officials at all levels to force our people out of the Bitterroot Valley homeland. We thought the valley would remain ours after the Hellgate Treaty, when Xʷet̓x̓čín (Many Horses—Chief Victor) refused to bow to the demands of the U.S. delegation that the Séliš move north to the Flathead Reservation. Chief Victor’s resistance forced Isaac Stevens, the governor of Washington Territory, to insert an article into the treaty that designated the Bitterroot Valley as a reservation for the Séliš. However, the article contained fine print saying the final determination would be made by the President based on a duly authorized survey.

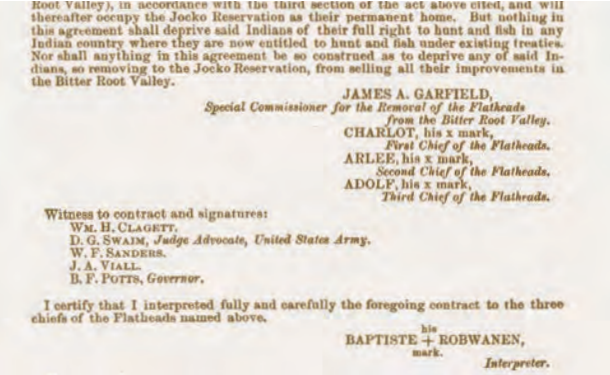


Séliš delegation to Washington, 1884.
Back row: Hand Shot Off (John Hill), Peter Ronan, N̓kʷuʷ Sxʷí (One Man Walking—Michel Revais).
Middle row: S̓q̓leps Skʷals̓í (Sandhill Crane’s Necklace—Antoine Moiese), S̓m̓xe Q̓ʷox̓ʷqeys (Claw of Little Grizzly—Chief Charlo), Lkʷut Sm̓xe (Far-Away Grizzly—Louis Vanderburg).
Front: Reddish Beard or Red Arm (Thomas Abel Adams).

(MHS, photo 954-526).



Original field copy of 1872 Garfield “agreement,” showing no “x” by Chief Charlo’s name. (NARA)



Signatory lines of printed version of 1872 Garfield “agreement” given to U.S. Senators for the vote on ratification, with an “x” mark falsely placed by Chief Charlo’s name. (NARA)

1 Detail from map of Montana Territory accompanying the Annual Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, 1869. Note that the Bitterroot Valley is designated “Conditional Reserve for the Flathead Tribe.” (National Archives & Records Administration)

In November 1871, under pressure from settlers and Montana officials, President Ulysses S. Grant issued an executive order falsely stating that the survey specified in the treaty had been conducted, and that it had determined that the Jocko Reservation was better suited to the “wants and needs” of the “Flathead” people—and that the Séliš were, therefore, ordered to leave the Bitterroot. In 1872, Congress sent out a delegation led by future President James Garfield to “negotiate” the deportation. Chief Charlo, backed by Louis Vanderburg and other Séliš leaders and warriors, steadfastly refused to put his hand to the paper, despite threats of violence from the Garfield contingent that were later described by Charlo’s son and successor as head chief, Martin Charlo.⁸ In response, Garfield carried out one of the most notorious acts of forgery in the history of U.S. treaty-making with Indigenous peoples. Before departing for Washington, Garfield wrote to the Montana Superintendent of Indian Affairs, J.A. Viall, saying “I have concluded, after full consultation with you, to proceed...as though Charlot, the first chief, has signed.” When the Commissioner of Indian Affairs published the agreement for official review by the U.S. Senate for the vote on ratification, an “x” mark was placed next to Chief Charlo’s name. Chief Charlo denied signing, and was vilified in Montana’s press as a liar and treaty breaker. The forgery was finally confirmed in 1883 by Senator G.G. Vest, who had the Secretary of the Interior track down the original field copy, on which, as Vest wrote, “there was no signature by Charlo...it was manifest that the signature of Charlo had been forged to the instrument.”⁹

Chief Charlo refused to leave. Louis Vanderburg and the majority of the Séliš people stood with their chief and

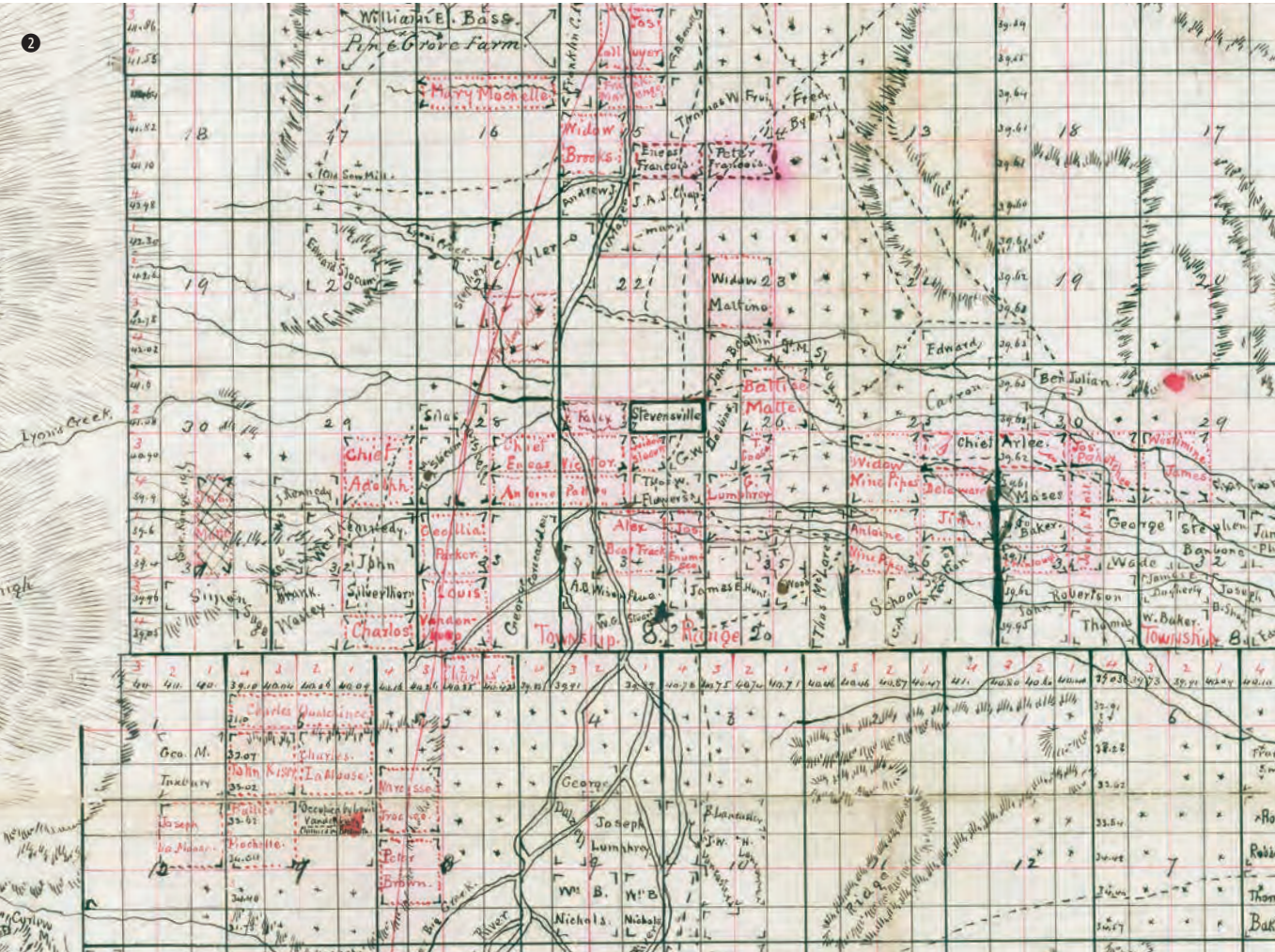
remained in the Bitterroot Valley. The Séliš were assigned individual allotments of land, while the government designated much of the rest of the valley available to non-Indian settlement. Conditions worsened through the 1870s and 1880s, especially after completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad, the decimation of buffalo, and the explosion of industrial mining in Séliš-Qlispé territories. According to a Missoulian article in 1876, Chief Charlo recalled how, from the time Lewis and Clark first arrived in the Bitterroot, the Salish “did not refuse him in his weakness. In his poverty we fed, we cherished him—yes, befriended him, and showed the fords and defiles of our lands.” Now, Chief Charlo noted, he “wants us to pay him. . . for the things we have from our God and our forefathers; for things he never owned and never gave us.”¹⁰

Recognizing the importance of the Salish remaining unified, Mr. Vanderburg stood against entreaties from some tribal members that would have divided the people and undermined Chief Charlo. As Louis’s son Čicnmtú (Passing Someone on the Trail—Victor Vanderburg) later related, “Several of the Indians made offers to my father, Louis Vanderberg [sic], to lead the people over to the Jocko. He turned them all down and said that Charlot was the chief of the Bitterroot Salish and that he [Louis] would not go until Charlo went.”¹¹

By 1889, conditions for the Séliš had become truly dire following construction of the Missoula & Bitterroot Valley Railroad (in many places directly through Séliš allotments), and as a severe drought severely affected tribal food sources.¹² US Army General Henry Carrington arrived to force the issue. Louis Vanderburg finally offered his respectful advice to Chief Charlo. Mr. Vanderburg told the Chief that for the survival of the

people and the nation, they should now consent to move north to the Flathead Reservation. As Chief Charlo’s son and successor as head chief, Martin Charlo, later related, “One of the leaders of the Salish, Vanderberg [sic], asked my father to take us over [to the Jocko]. He said that the time had come for us to go.” So highly did Chief Charlo value and respect Louis Vanderburg’s counsel that Martin Charlo recalled it was only at that point, after decades of steadfast resistance, that “My father sent word that we would move.”¹³

2 Detail from 1889 map of Bitterroot Valley allotments assigned to Salish by the U.S. government in 1872. Note “Alex Bear Track” allotment just south-southwest of Stevensville. (NARA)



THE SÉLIŠ TRAIL OF TEARS AND THE CROSSING AT BEARTRACKS BRIDGE

In October 1891, the government finally forced the Séliš to leave the Bitterroot. On the morning of Thursday, October 15, Chief Charlo gathered the people together. He led the people in the Catholic prayers, and then announced that he and the people would go. The nation trailed through Stevensville before the silent gaze of non-Indians. A survivor of the removal, Mary Ann Combs, likened the three-day journey to a funeral march.

Elders have told that the soldiers did not allow people to go to the brush to relieve themselves, warning them they would be shot if they ran away. Children riding behind their mothers wondered why the grownups were crying. As an old woman, Sophie Moiese suffered flashbacks, still hearing the women crying as the people rode slowly north toward the Jocko Valley.

The forced march from the Bitterroot to the Jocko became known as the Séliš Trail of Tears.

To keep the journey as safe and well-ordered as possible, Chief Charlo organized the people into three groups, one of which he led, one which he placed under the command of one of the LaMooses, and one that he put under the command of sub-chief Louis Vanderburg.



Łqetmłš (Wide Cottonwoods—Stevensville area), October 1891, just before and during the government’s deportation of the Séliš from the Bitterroot Valley homeland.

- 1 Stm̓xe Q̓ox̓wq̓eys (Claw of the Small Grizzly—Chief Charlo), head translator Nk̓wu Sx̓wí (One Man Walking—Michel Revais), and other Séliš people with General Henry Carrington and U.S. Indian Agent Peter Ronan at St. Mary’s Mission.
- 2 Séliš camp near Łqetmłš (Wide Cottonwoods—Stevensville area). (Thomas Donaldson photo, University of Pennsylvania Museum)
- 3 The Séliš gather in Stevensville at the start of the forced removal. (Thomas Donaldson photo, University of Pennsylvania Museum)



The people came back together to camp that night near Tmsm̓í (No Salmon—Lolo) on land owned by a non-Indian friend, David Maclay.

On the second day, Friday, October 16, the Séliš passed through the Missoula area, crossing the river at different places.¹⁴

Lkʷút Sm̓xe—Far-Away Grizzly or Louis Vanderburg—led his group, including his wife Mary Beartracks, across the Clark Fork River at Higgins Avenue, on or adjacent to the bridge. At the time, the bridge was a rickety, hazardous structure. A newer bridge would not be completed until 1892 or 1893. So while some of the Séliš under Vanderburg’s command may have crossed the bridge, others forded the river, a skill for which the Séliš were renowned.¹⁵

The Séliš camped that night west of the city, near the old DeSmet school. On Saturday, October 17, the people made their way up Evaro hill, and then made a brief encampment to clean up, put on their finest clothing, and ride into the Jocko Valley not as a grieving people, but as a proud nation looking to the future.

On the Flathead Reservation, the government did not fulfill its promises of providing each Séliš family with a cabin, household and farming equipment, and livestock. By the late 1890s, Congressional delegations were appearing to seek the purchase of the entire western half of the reservation. Chief Charlo, with Louis Vanderburg by his side, told the officials, “You all know that I won’t sell a foot of land...the reservation has been set aside for the Indians forever.” He reiterated the consistent Séliš policy of non-violent resistance, reaching back to the time of the first Sxʷúytis Sm̓xe, saying the Séliš “have always been

a peaceful tribe. There is no white men’s blood on their [our] hands. We saw the first white man in my grandfather’s time and have always treated them right... Our tribes and other tribes have been deceived by the Government, and for this reason we have no confidence that we will be treated right, judging by the past.”¹⁶ In response to the fierce opposition of tribal leaders to selling any reservation lands, the government, led by Missoula Congressman Joseph Dixon, then unilaterally passed the Flathead Allotment Act of 1904, which in direct violation of the Hellgate Treaty made reservation lands available to non-Indian homesteaders.¹⁷

① *Higgins Bridge, n.d. Evidence indicates that this undated image shows the bridge at the time of its collapse in 1889, just two years before the Salish Trail of Tears. (Mansfield Library, University of Montana)*

② *This blurry photograph is the only known image of some of the Séliš Nation fording the Bitterroot River during the forced removal in October 1891. (Donaldson photo, Penn Museum)*



Louis Vanderburg died in August 1923 at the age of 108. The previous month, he attended the Čulay Esyapqéyni—the July celebration or powwow in Arlee—where he and many members of the Vanderburg / Beartracks family gathered for a large multi-generational family photograph.

Beartracks / Vanderburg family at Arlee Esyapqéyni (Celebration or Powwow), July 1923.

Lkʷút Sm̓xe (Far-Away Grizzly—Louis Vanderburg), aged 108, reclines on cot in middle. He died in August. Standing, left to right: John Vanderburg, Mose Vanderburg, Victor Vanderburg, Pelasowe (Francis) Vanderburg Pierre (Qʷnpí), Martine Vanderburg Siwasah, Ellen Bigsam, Cecille Stevens, possibly John Stevens, unknown. Seated, left to right: Mary Ann Combs, Abel Combs, Margaret Combs, Susan Irvine, Stanley Irvine, Joe Bigsam, Margaret Stevens, Noel Combs, Elsie Stevens. (Courtesy Beartracks / Vanderburg family. SQCC)



THE BEARTRACKS / VANDERBURG FAMILY

During the 1891 Trail of Tears, as we have noted, Louis Vanderburg and his wife Mary Beartracks led a large contingent of the Séliš across the Clark Fork River at or adjacent to Higgins Avenue. Among the group were their son, Čicnmtú (Passing Someone on the Trail—Victor Vanderburg), his wife Rosalie, and their infant son, Jerome. All of these members of the Beartracks family played prominent roles in the Séliš community.

Victor, like his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, served as a sub-chief. Under head chief Martin Charlo, Victor helped the people navigate through the aftermath of the government allowing non-Indian settlement of the Flathead Reservation. Victor participated in numerous delegations to Washington, D.C. that helped bring an end to the Allotment Act and began the long rebuilding of tribal sovereignty. Later in life, Victor married prominent Séliš cultural leader Č x^wm̄x^wm̄šña (Sophie Moiese), for whom the Missoula County Commissioners named the public hearing room in the county courthouse in 2018.

Victor and Rosalie's son Jerome married Agnes Adams. They became two of the most highly respected and beloved cultural leaders in the community, and renowned as cultural teachers across the nation and the world. Agnes was a founding member of the Séliš-Ŧłispé Culture Committee's Elders Advisory Council.

Right: 1906 photo of Čicnmtú (Passing Someone on the Trail—Victor Vanderburg, 1868-1939). (MHS)

Facing page: Jerome and Agnes Vanderburg peeling m̄tčwé (arrowleaf balsamroot), 1960s. (SQCC)



Jerome and Agnes’s children—Eneas, Joseph, Annie, Victor, and Lucy—have also been prominent members of the Salish community and important cultural teachers. Eneas (1926-2019) and Joe (1937-2020) both served as members of the Séliš-Q̓lispé Elders Cultural Advisory Council, and also served our nation’s military; Eneas was a paratrooper in the Army during World War II, and Joe served in the Navy during the 1950s. Their sister, Lucy Vanderburg, served for many years as the Director of the Peoples’ Center Museum in Pablo and also serves today as a member of the Séliš-Q̓lispé Elders Cultural Advisory Council. In January, Lucy was herself part of the Elders

Cultural Advisory Council discussions that led to strong consensus on the name Beartracks Bridge.

Just as the Vanderburgs and many other descendants of Sx̣ẉúytis Sṃxe have long stood at the center of Séliš history and culture, so the site of the bridge and the surrounding area also sit at the center of Séliš-Q̓lispé territories. In renaming this structure Beartracks Bridge, we offer something to remind all travelers of the rich history of this place, and its continuing importance to the people of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

- 1 Lucy and Joe Vanderburg, Jocko Valley, October 2018.
- 2 Bottom right: Salish language apprentice Malia Vanderburg learns from her grandfather Joe, 2018.
- 3 Eneas Vanderburg, Musselshell Valley, 2005.
(All SQCC images.)



From bridge of tears to bridge of respect: elders Agness Oshanee Kenmille (Séliš) and John Peter Paul (Q̓lispé) on what is now Beartracks Bridge, 1990s.
(Tony Incashola, Sr. photograph, SQCC)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lemlmtš—thank you—to members of the Séliš-Q̓lispé Elders Advisory Council for their careful consideration of this issue and for the cultural, historical, and linguistic information that is the foundation of the name Beartracks Bridge. Current members who helped in this include Lucy Vanderburg, Sophie Haines, Stephen Smallsalmon, Mary Jane Charlo, Vi Trahan, Max McDonald, and Rita Adams. Thanks also to Annie Vanderburg, Frances Vanderburg and many members of the Vanderburg / Beartracks family for their support of the new name for the bridge.

Members of the Beartracks - Vanderburg family gather at the bridge with Séliš-Q̓lispé Culture Committee elders, staff, and language students, 2022.

Seated at the center of the bench are sisters Annie and Lucy Vanderburg. (SQCC)



SQCC also thanks Bob Bigart for his publication of many relevant documents in recent books from Salish Kootenai College Press, and Troy Felsman for information relating to family genealogy.

And lemlmtš to Dave Strohmaier and the Missoula County Commission, and the Missoula City Council, for providing this opportunity to restore to the landscape and to the community of Missoula a recognition of the Salish people. Thanks also to the Montana Transportation Commission for its approval of the name.

Most of all, lemlmtš to the Beartracks / Vanderburg ancestors and all the many Séliš and Q̓lispé ancestors and elders whose wisdom, sacrifice, generosity, and courage have made it possible for our people, our cultural ways, our history, and our language to still be here today, and for all the generations to come.

ENDNOTES

1 James Teit, “The Flathead Group,” part of Teit’s larger report, “The Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus,” ed. Franz Boas, in 45th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1927-28 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930), p. 362. Teit’s ethnography of the Séliš and Q̓lispé was based on interviews with tribal elders beginning in 1909. Teit’s most important source of information was Nk̓w̓u Sx̓w̓í (One Man Walking—Michel Revais, 1837-1911), who served for many years as head translator for St̓m̓xe Q̓w̓ox̓w̓ qeys (Chief Charlo, 1830-1910), and was closely related to Tm̓ł̓x̓ł̓cín (No Horses, or Chief Alexander), the head chief of the upper Q̓lispé at the time of the Hellgate Treaty.

2 For original documents relating to the July 1855 Treaty of Hellgate, see <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.IT1855no295> ; for the October 1855 Judith River or Lame Bull treaty, see <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.IT1855no299>

3 Robert Bigart and Clarence Woodcock, eds., In the Name of the Salish and Kootenai Nation: The 1855 Hell Gate Treaty and the Origin of the Flathead Indian Reservation (Pablo, Mont.: Salish Kootenai College Press, 1996), p. 88.

4 Teit, p. 384-385; Bigart & Woodcock, eds., p. 89; Eneas Pierre, SQCC OHCA tape 39, side 1, and tape 65, side 1 (1975).

5 Teit, “The Flathead Group,” p. 362.

6 Lucy Vanderburg, phone 27 Jan. 2021; “Returned from Washington,” The Weekly Missoulian, 14 Mar. 1884, p. 1; “A Great Banquet,” The Helena Journal, 6 Nov. 1889, p. 2; Peter Ronan, Historical Sketch of the Flathead Nation (Minneapolis, MN: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1890), p. 71.

7 Some genealogical records indicate that Louis Vanderburg was born in 1832. This is almost certainly in error; the family retains extensive documentation that he was 108 years old when he died in 1923. See photograph on page 14.

8 Martin Charlo in J. Verne Dusenberry, “Samples of Pend d’Oreille Oral Literature and Salish Narratives,” in Leslie B. Davis, Lifeways of Intermontane and Plains Montana Indians: In Honor of J. Verne Dusenberry, Occasional Papers of the Museum of the Rockies, No. 1 (Bozeman: Montana State Univ., 1979), 118-119.

9 1872 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indians Affairs, p. 115; G.G. Vest, “Charlot: Chief of the Flathead Indians: A True Story,” Washington Post, 26 Jul. 1903, p. A11.

10 Weekly Missoulian, April 26, 1876.

11 Victor Vanderburg in Dusenberry, op. cit., 116.

12 Documents relating to the Missoula and Bitterroot Valley Railway and its impact on Séliš lands and resources can be found at the National Archives in Record Group 75 (Bureau of Indian Affairs), Special Case 55. Robert Bigart, in Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870-1891, omits mention of the railroad, and gives greater weight to the drought. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 190-192.

13 Martin Charlo in Dusenberry, op. cit., 119. Chief Charlo signed General Carrington’s “agreement” in November 1889, after having secured guarantees of housing and other material help for the Salish once they relocated to the reservation. Since our people expected to move in the spring of 1890, tribal farmers planted no crops. But Congress failed to appropriate the small amount of funding necessary for the move. The same thing happened the next year, forcing the Salish to sell their few household belongings to non-Indians in exchange

for a little food. As bad as the situation was in 1889, by 1891, many of our people were in even worse condition.

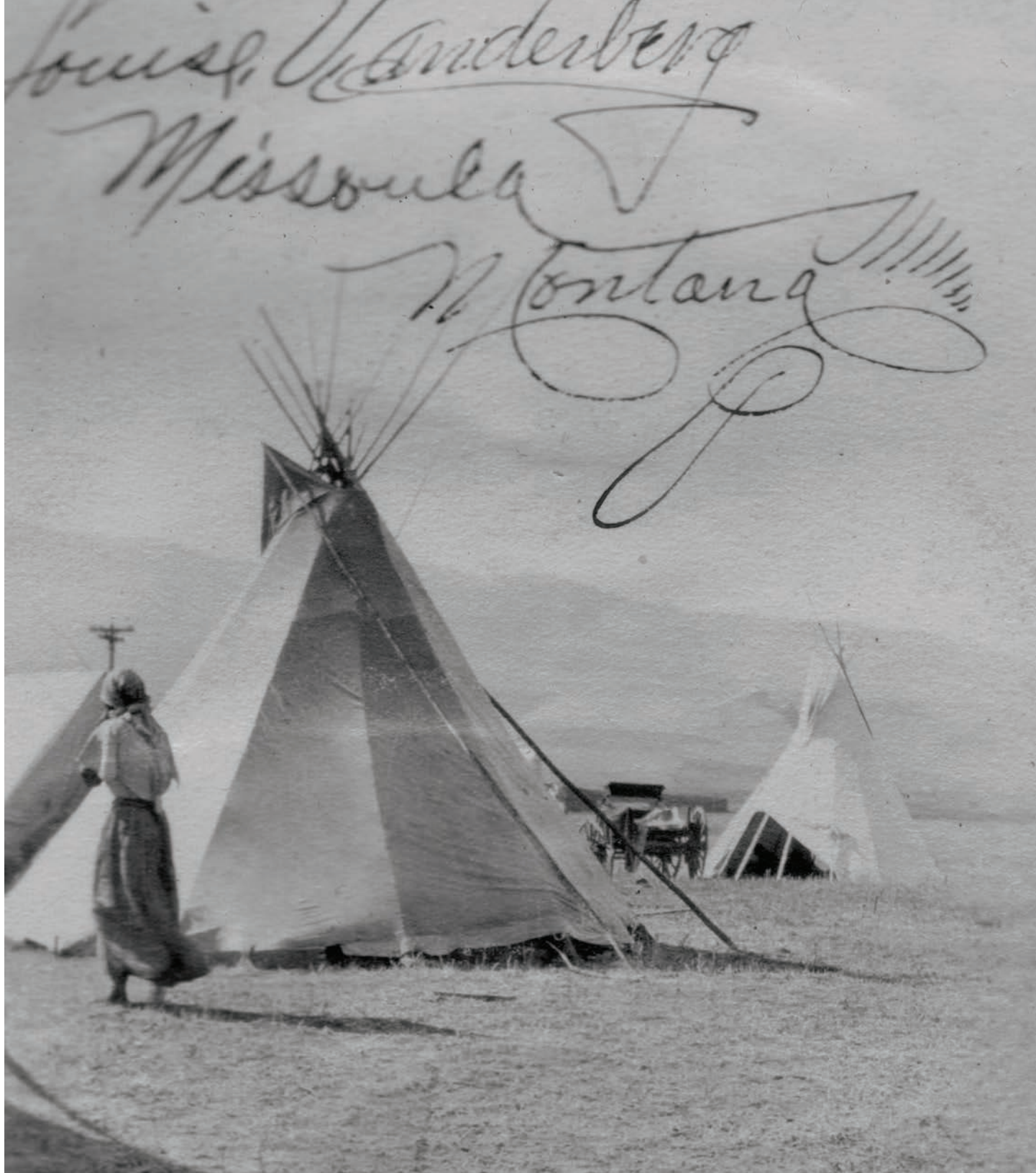
14 Robert Bigart, Getting Good Crops: Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870-1891 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 211.

15 Séliš and Q̓lispé elders have provided many vivid descriptions of parties skillfully crossing rivers from the buffalo-hunting days to their own lifetimes; for example, Eneas “Tom Puss” Pierre, SQCC OHCA tapes 39, side 2, 58, side 1, and 65, side 1 (all 1975); Louie Adams and Michael Louis Durglo, video interview, 17 Nov. 2006; John Peter Paul, written interview, 1998-12-06; Louie Adams, written interview, 1997-04-21. For one among countless examples of non-Indian parties struggling with crossing rivers in the Northern Region while describing the ability of large Séliš and Q̓lispé parties, including elders and children, doing so efficiently and safely, see Hazard Stvens, The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens, Vol. II (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1901), 75-77.

16 National Archives, Record Group 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs Letters Received 1881-1907, document 1901-24033.

17 Article 2 of the Treaty of Hellgate flatly states that the reservation is “set apart... for the exclusive use and benefit of said confederated tribes.” See <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/History.IT1855no295>

Back cover image: Louise Vanderburg at family camp, Missoula area, c. 1920. SQCC.



Seliš-Qlispé Culture Committee
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes