

# The Swan Massacre

## A Brief History

Séliš-Qłispé Culture Committee  
and Elders Cultural Advisory Council  
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

***The Swan Massacre: A Brief History***

by the Séliš-Qłispé Culture Committee,  
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, 2018, rev. 2023.

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Cover image: unidentified Séliš-Qłispé riders in Snyelmn area (St. Ignatius), 1906, superimposed on photo of Čusšní trail, 2006.

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2023

## Introductory Note

The following account draws from the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee's forthcoming book, *The Swan Massacre: A Story of the Qlispé People*.

For many years, tribal elders did not want this story told due to its great sensitivity. In the years before he passed away, however, the last survivor of the Swan Massacre, John Peter Paul (Ćnpnō, meaning Holds on Tight to the Enemy), decided it was time to tell what happened. John's mother, Kłolí (Clarice Paul), was pregnant with him at the time of the massacre. He was born three months later, in January 1909. In the 1990s, he traveled to the site for the first time with the Culture Committee. He later recorded what he knew about the incident, and gave permission to the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee to work on our book. With that permission came the responsibility for us to tell the story accurately and wisely.

We draw upon many sources. First and foremost are the oral histories provided by tribal elders, recorded, translated, and transcribed by Culture Committee staff members over many decades. Among these is a recording in the Salish language by Mitch Smallsalmon (1900-1981), one of the great keepers of tribal history. Mr. Smallsalmon was taped on October 5, 1977. It is the single most complete account of the massacre. We have also conducted exhaustive research in the archival record, which has brought to light several accounts by survivors of the massacre, including Kłolí (Clarice Paul), Ťapal (Mary Scwī), and Malí (Little Mary Scwī). Other accounts come from elders who were told the story by the survivors.

We remind readers that the following account is a condensed rendering of the story. We hope to bring our book on the subject to completion in the near future.

Dedicated to  
**John Peter Paul**

**Ćnpnó – Holds on Tight to the Enemy**



**January 19, 1909-January 25, 2001**

# **The Swan Massacre: A Brief History**

by the Séliš-Qłispé Culture Committee

**Łi?e ?iqsmeye?m—tu nččx<sup>w</sup>éple?tis tu píq sqélix<sup>w</sup> tu x<sup>w</sup>Í nčtptín, u tu sqélix<sup>w</sup> nččx<sup>w</sup>éple?tis tu x<sup>w</sup>Í nčtptín. . . U tu ti?x<sup>w</sup> suyapi. . . u ti?x<sup>w</sup>† nččx<sup>w</sup>éple?tn tu x<sup>w</sup>Í sčtíp. K<sup>w</sup>em̄t k<sup>w</sup>úln̄tm tu sqélix<sup>w</sup> nem iše čtqeȳmín m še čtíp.**

***I'm going to tell about this—about the white man laws for hunting, and about the Indian laws for hunting. . . When there came to be white people. . . then there came to be laws for hunting. Then the Indian people were made to get hunting licenses.***

**—Mitch Smallsalmon, 1977**

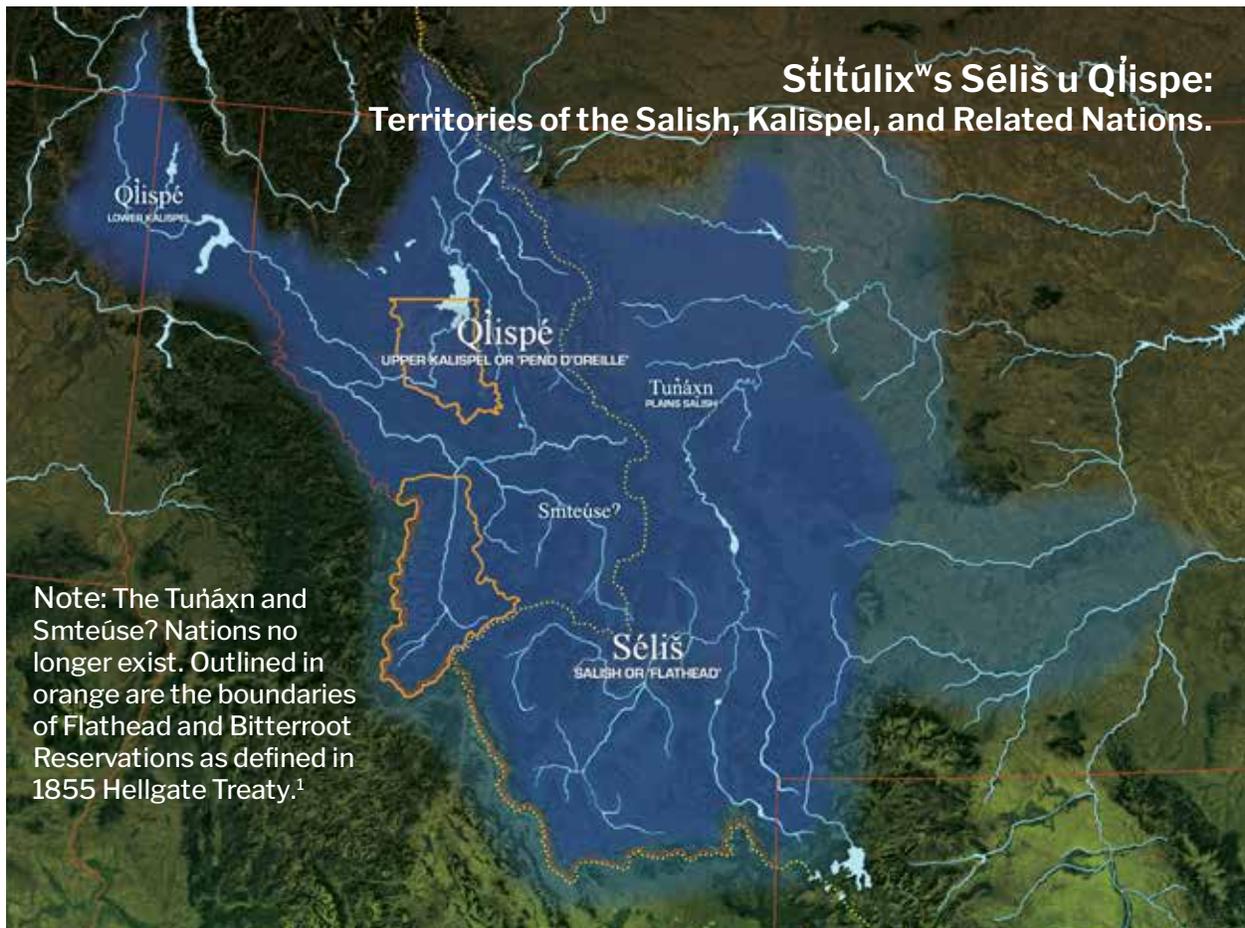
In the early morning of Sunday, October 18, 1908, in the upper reaches of Montana's Swan Valley, a small family hunting party was packing up their horses, preparing to ride home to the adjacent Flathead Indian Reservation. Almost a month before, the tribal group of eight men, women, and children had crossed the Mission Mountains to gather their winter meat, as countless ancestors had before them. For four weeks, they had hunted and fished through the area, an ancient and important part of our traditional territories. Under the terms of the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, which had established the Flathead Reservation, the people of the Confederated Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai Tribes retained the right to hunt in the lands we had ceded to the United States.

But that morning was to have a shocking and tragic ending. A state game warden and a deputized civilian rushed into the camp, and after a brief exchange of words, shot and killed the four male members of the party, including an elder and a boy of thirteen. The warden tried to shoot down the women as well. As he was reloading his rifle, one of the women—Kloí (Clarice Paul)—used her slain husband's rifle to kill the warden.

From the time of Lewis and Clark's arrival in the region in 1805, our people were famed for maintaining peaceable relations with non-Indians. Yet elders describe the Swan massacre as one of the defining stories in tribal history at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although it was the only known instance of a mass killing in the history of non-Indian relations with our people, the massacre was the bloody expression of another kind of violence, one that had been unfolding for a long time:

the ongoing attempt by state and federal authorities to eliminate our traditional way of life. In one sense, this is a story of the government’s failure to honor the promises made in the Hellgate Treaty a half-century earlier. Yet in the elders’ telling, this is also a story of survival and cultural continuance—of our determined efforts to exercise our treaty rights and maintain our cultural ways.

To understand the history of the massacre, we must also understand the tribal way of life, and the central importance of the Swan Valley to our people. We call ourselves the *Qlispé* —a word, roughly pronounced Kah-lee-SPEH, that has been Anglicized as “Kalispel.” Our homelands extend from the upper reaches of the Flathead drainage system of western Montana down to the Pend Oreille River and nearby areas in what is now eastern Washington. We were organized in at least 27 bands based in locations throughout that vast region.<sup>1</sup> But over the course of the 1700s, our populations were dramatically reduced by epidemics of smallpox and other non-native diseases, as well as increasingly frequent and lethal intertribal conflict. In response, our bands consolidated into fewer groups. Some were based in more upstream areas, others in more downstream areas. Non-Indians have therefore referred to us as the “Upper” and “Lower” Kalispel, or the “Upper”



and “Lower” Pend d’Oreille (a term introduced by French-speaking fur traders, referring to the round shell earrings worn by both men and women). Today, the upstream people, centered around the Flathead Reservation, are commonly known in English as the Pend d’Oreille, while the downstream people, based today on the Kalispel Reservation in eastern Washington state, are known as the Kalispel. In this document, we will use our own name, Qłispé.<sup>2</sup>

The Qłispé and our close relations and allies, the Séliš (Salish or “Flathead”), are the easternmost tribes of the Salish language family, which reaches from Montana west to the Pacific Coast, mostly to the north of the Columbia River.

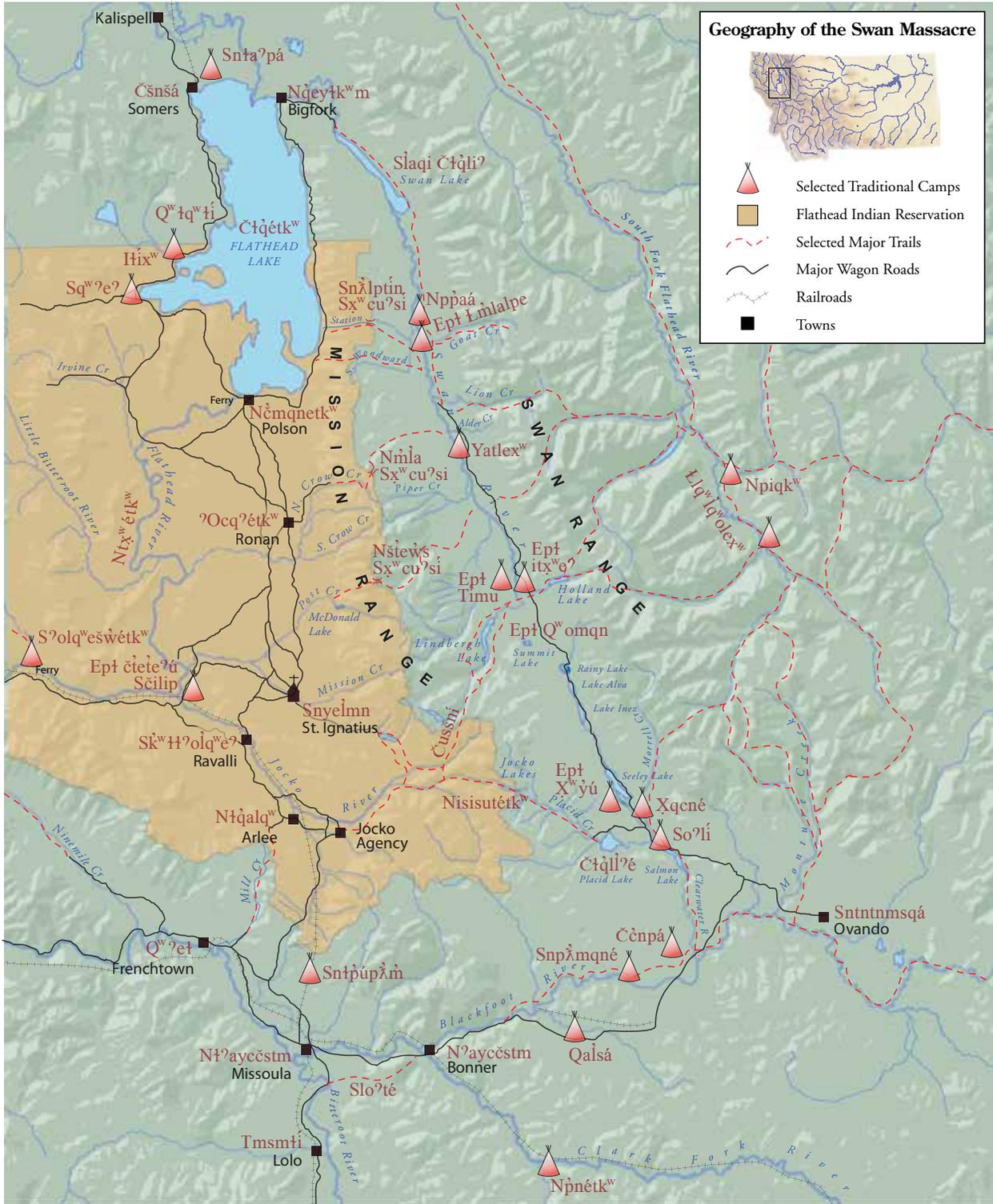
The name for the Qłispé band based in the Flathead Lake and Mission Valley area is *Słqetk<sup>w</sup>msčínł*, which means People Living along the Shore of the Broad Water (Flathead Lake). The neighboring Swan Valley is known to us by place-names that reflect its great importance to us. Swan Lake is called *Snlaqí Čłqłí* (Sweathouse Lake). The river is *Snlaqí Sewłk<sup>w</sup>s* (Sweathouse’s Waters).<sup>3</sup>

Other place-names give further indication of the importance of this cultural landscape. The bogs and fens of the Salmon Prairie area are called *Yatlex<sup>w</sup>* (Spongy or Quivering Ground). An area near there, where the land would dry out in late summer or early fall, is known as *Puylex<sup>w</sup>* (Wrinkled Land). Further downstream, Goat Creek is called *Ept Łmłalpe* (Has Small Wavy-Leaved Thistle). One traditional Qłispé place-name, which appears in the elders’ accounts of the Swan Massacre, has recently been incorporated into non-Indian maps: In-pa-ah Creek, nine miles south of Swan Lake, takes its name from the Qłispé place-name for the area, *Npłpaá* (Place that Was Repeatedly Burned).

For millennia, the Qłispé traveled between the Swan Valley and adjoining parts of tribal territories over an extensive and sophisticated network of trails. A heavily used north-south path followed the general route of today’s Highway 83. To the east, major routes led into the South Fork of the Flathead and beyond, through many of the passes still used today, including Gordon Pass, Pyramid Pass, and Lion Creek Pass. And to the west, numerous trails crossed the Mission Mountains. The most commonly used passes were those near Finley Point, Blue Bay, at *Nmłá Sł<sup>w</sup>cułsı* (Raven Pass, near today’s Piper-Crow Pass), *Mulmn* or *Stıłpú Sł<sup>w</sup>cułsı* (Mollman Pass), and *Nštewłs Sł<sup>w</sup>cułsı* (Standing-in-the-Middle Pass, known in English as Eagle Pass).

Perhaps the easiest and most traveled path was the one taken in 1908 by the Qłispé family hunting party at the center of this story: *Čusšni(čń)*, meaning “Long Ridge.” This trail climbs out of the Jocko drainage and then descends gradually in a northeasterly direction for some ten miles on the unusually straight ridge that parallels the upper Swan River and *Ept Čłene* (Has Longnose Sucker—Lindbergh Lake).

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On all of these paths, from all four directions, the *Qlispé* moved in and out of the Swan Valley in the regular, disciplined, efficient seasonal round that provided our ancestors with dependable and varied sustenance for millennia.

The traditional subsistence cycle is infused with spiritual and ceremonial meaning. The arrival of the first major food of the year—*spełm*, bitterroot—is a time of prayer and thanks. The bitterroot ceremony helps ensure the abundance of this first visitor and all the other roots and berries, the foods and medicines, that follow over the rest of the year. Séliš elder Agnes Vanderburg told us, *Ne tas puté?ntx<sup>w</sup>, nem eł n?ósne*. “If you don’t do everything right or have respect for it, it will disappear back into the ground.”

In late spring and early summer, after the bitterroot digs, we came to places such as the Potomac Valley and Holland Prairie to harvest camas, which the women pit-bake in a careful and precise process, in combination with other foods such as tree lichen. The area’s importance for these foods is reflected in the name of Holland Prairie, called *Ept ?itx<sup>w</sup>e* (Has Camas), and nearby Summit Lake, called *Ept Q<sup>w</sup>omqn*, after one of the names for tree lichen (*Snčlé Q<sup>w</sup>omqeys*, “Coyote’s Hair”). During the summer, in the Swan Valley and surrounding mountains we gathered a profusion of berries, from *słaq* (serviceberries) to *stša* (huckleberries) to *tx<sup>w</sup>to* (chokecherries), among others. Throughout the year, but especially in fall, we hunted the great abundance of deer, elk, and other animals. We nurtured and augmented all of those plants and animals with the careful and highly skilled use of fire, which had many beneficial effects, including increasing forage for game and revitalizing berry patches and camas fields.<sup>4</sup>

Most of our foods came and went with the seasons, and we harvested, dried, and stored them to support us through the long winters. Yet our diet also included a reliable nutritional safety net that supplemented all of those other fluctuating food sources: at all times of year, we were able to draw upon the abundant fisheries of the Swan River drainage system and other parts of our aboriginal territories.<sup>5</sup> The numbers of fish teeming in almost every water body astonished many of the early non-Indian explorers, fur trappers, missionaries, and other visitors to our homelands. Fish ensured that we were rarely without a fresh supply of high-quality protein, even in the heart of winter. There were dependable supplies of many species, including *aay* (bull trout), *pisl* (cutthroat trout), *x<sup>w</sup>yú* (mountain whitefish), *čléne?* (longnose sucker), *sláws* (large-scale sucker), and *q<sup>w</sup>q<sup>w</sup>é* (northern pikeminnow). We caught them by many methods, including hook and line, fish traps, gaffing hooks, and fish spears.

Qlispé elder Pete Beaverhead said that our spirituality lay at the foundation of our way of life: *Tma ye l stulix<sup>w</sup> tu a snčawmn tu k<sup>w</sup> sqélix<sup>w</sup>*. “The earth, the land, is your church, your place of prayer—you, the Indian people.” At the heart of our prayers in



Čłx<sup>w</sup> řmx<sup>w</sup> řšńá (Sophie Moiese)  
drying meat, 1910.

the sweathouse and other tribal ceremonies is gratitude to the animals and plants. Séliš elder Felicite “Jim” Sapiye McDonald said that in the beginning, “It was the animals who decided there would be human beings.” In return, people need to be careful to always treat the animals with respect. Qłispé elder Michael Louis Durglo, Sr. warned, “If you kill animals for nothing, they will turn against you.” They must not be abused or wasted. Many elders emphasize that when hunters would bring in game, the people therefore tried at all times to make full use of the animal. We strove to waste nothing—in part because the tribe could not afford to waste food, but also because this honored the animal, the one who gave its life so that the people might live.

In the Swan Valley and surrounding areas, for many centuries, our people lived by these ways, in a relationship of respect with the lands and waters, and the plants and animals. By 1908, non-Indian development in western Montana had already changed some aspects of tribal life. Most tribal families had taken to raising gardens to supplement their diets. But we were still obtaining the majority of our

food from hunting, fishing, and gathering roots and berries. We were still living by the spiritual and cultural ways of our ancestors. We still depended on hunting in places like the Swan Valley to gather our winter meat.

Séliš, Qłispé, and *Ksanka* or Kootenai<sup>6</sup> people were continuing these cultural practices in spite of a political landscape that had changed dramatically over the preceding half-century. In July 1855, tribal leaders met with U.S. officials at a place called *Člmé* (Tree Limb Cut Off), west of present-day Missoula, to negotiate the Treaty of Hellgate. Under the terms of the treaty, the chiefs ceded title to the United States for the majority of tribal territories west of the Continental Divide. We reserved portions, including the Flathead Reservation, for our own “exclusive use and benefit.” We also reserved the right to continue living by our traditional ways on ceded lands. Article 3 established the tribes’ “right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places, in common with citizens of the Territory... together with the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land.”

In the late nineteenth century, however, many non-Indians dismissed or minimized the treaty as outdated or irrelevant to the future they envisioned for the new state of Montana. With each succeeding decade after 1855, this tension increased, from the gold rush of the 1860s to the emerging urban and agricultural operations



of the 1870s. But in many respects, throughout that period, the region was still shaped and defined by tribal cultures and economies. We were able to continue living by our traditional ways.

This state of affairs changed with the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883. The railroads fueled the extermination of the once-vast herds of buffalo on the prairies. The great trees of the forests, grain from the fields, and ore from the mountains were now extracted on an industrial scale, and delivered to national and international markets. After 1883, Indian people, and Indian ways of life, were pushed to the margins of Montana society. Our people found there were fewer places still available for traditional cultural and subsistence uses.

When Montana gained statehood in 1889, the legislature established new hunting and fishing regulations and appointed game wardens to enforce the new laws. The first state legislature authorized counties to appoint their own game wardens. Only four of the 24 counties did so. However, the government soon began to strengthen its control. In 1895, the governor signed into law an act creating the Montana Fish and Game Board. In 1901, the legislature authorized the governor to appoint the first eight state game wardens. In 1905, the state also began requiring resident Montana hunters to buy game licenses, at a cost of \$1 per family.<sup>7</sup>

Now, in areas where Qlispé and Séliš people had always hunted, government officers began trying to exercise control. Even in places like the Swan Valley, one of the least developed places in our ceded territories, Indian people found increasing obstacles to continuing the ways of the ancestors. Our hunters had always been honored and respected for their skill and success in providing food for their families and communities. Now, non-Indian authorities classified those same actions as “depredations,” and began arresting our hunters.<sup>8</sup>

The state hunting laws applied to all Montanans, but they were coupled with statutes and policy positions targeting tribal people in particular, fed by often unsupported allegations of Indian overhunting and waste.<sup>9</sup> The 1903 Montana legislature even passed a law prohibiting Indians from venturing outside their reservations with arms and ammunition. While the law was often not enforced,<sup>10</sup> it was representative of long efforts by state authorities—and, after a while, federal officials as well—to prevent tribal people from leaving the Flathead Reservation to hunt, fish, and gather traditional foods, or for other purposes.

During this period, however, some federal officials did defend tribal hunting rights. In 1885, for example, Peter Ronan, the long-serving U.S. Indian Agent for the Flathead Reservation, protested instructions given to him by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Ronan asked how he could justify “holding peaceable Indians upon their reservations who claim the right to hunt and fish ‘according to the treaty’ of

the same, and against whom there is no authenticated complaint of committing any crime save to cross the boundary of their reserve line to hunt and fish for a few weeks after the harvesting of their crops.”<sup>11</sup> In 1897, a state game warden arrested 15 tribal members who had deer loaded onto pack horses near *Ncćk’wí* (Place of Elderberries—Plains, Montana). U.S. Indian Agent Joseph Carter, however, blocked the state’s prosecution because of the Hellgate Treaty’s guarantee of hunting rights.<sup>12</sup> And in 1900, Flathead Reservation Superintendent William Smead—despite his long record of hostility to tribal culture and tribal sovereignty—told officials in Washington that he found “great difficulty in trying to prevent the Indians from peaceably leaving the reservation, as their treaty of 1855 (12 Stats., 975), gives them a right to leave the reservation at will.”<sup>13</sup>

While our people sometimes were able to convince federal Indian agents and superintendents assigned to the Flathead Reservation to advocate for our treaty rights, most officials in Washington, as well as many Montana-based federal officials in other agencies, shared the state’s objective of repressing those same rights. In 1903, J.H. Fimple, the Acting Secretary of the General Land Office, recounted the government’s efforts over the previous few years in trying to exclude Indian people from the newly established national forests:

“On November 18, 1898, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs advised the agents of these [Séliš and Qłispé] and other Indians in Montana that it was his desire that the Indians ‘refrain altogether from entering forest reservations for the purpose of hunting at any season of the year’, and that they be advised of the rules and laws and be cautioned as to fires. On June 22, 1899, their [the agents’] attention was again called to the matter [by the Commissioner], and they were directed to again call the Indians together to advise them to ‘refrain from entering the said reserves and wantonly killing game and causing forest fires’. The question is not, therefore, a new one to the Indians.”<sup>14</sup>

This passage raises another important aspect of the rising tensions during this period. State, federal, and local officials not only sought to ban or severely limit our off-reservation rights to hunt, fish, gather plants, and pasture livestock. They also tried to stop our traditional use of fire to manage the land, maintain open forests, and nurture certain plants.<sup>15</sup> Very few non-Indians understood the beneficial effects of fire, or knew much about the specific ways in which Séliš and Qłispé people applied fire. And in some ways, the officials’ reactions to tribal fire practices were even more extreme than their reactions to off-reservation hunting. Just as our use of fire, and our relationships with animals, were deeply interwoven, so the government’s own records also reveal the how the suppression of both was fueled by racist disrespect for these twinned aspects of our way of life.

By the turn of the century, the east side of the Mission Mountains—the Swan Valley side—was part of the newly established Lewis and Clark Forest Reserve; the west side, as today, was part of the Flathead Reservation. Tribal people continued to use fire to manage the landscape on both sides of the range, taking care of the whole ecosystem as we always had. On July 23, 1900, the Forest Superintendent, J.B. Collins, wrote to Flathead Superintendent Smead, saying that the post office in Ronan had informed him that a “fire was set out by Indians who were picking huckleberries.”<sup>16</sup> The next day, Collins wrote to Smead with reports that “your Indians are in the Swan Lake country slaughtering game and setting fire to the country.” Although no major forest fires had been documented as having been caused by tribal people, Collins told Smead that the National Forest’s “force of Forest Rangers are instructed to use every means in their power to see that the law is obeyed.”

The increasingly rigid stances of the state and federal governments against tribal practices were in part a response to private interests, which were demanding protection of the timber that they now viewed as a commodity. Through the railroad land grants allocated by Congress, the Northern Pacific Railroad owned thousands of acres in the Swan Valley. Now the company was making preparations to exploit that resource. The *Helena Semi-Weekly Herald* reported on September 25, 1900 that George F. Henry of the Northern Pacific land department had returned from “examining land” in “what is called the Swan lake country.” Henry was traveling with, among others, “B.P. Holland, who is one of the forest service rangers, as well as [a] deputy game warden,” who were “at the same time looking after the parties suspected of starting fires that raged in the latter part of July and the early part of August.” Henry claimed that “Flathead Indians...started the fires on the Lewis and Clarke forest reservation.”<sup>17</sup> Henry described encounters in which “saucy” tribal hunting parties would not accept being arrested by his party. On receiving reports of these incidents from the National Forest, the Commissioner of the General Land Office, Binger Herman, wrote in revealing terms to the Secretary of the Interior: “It is an infernal shame that these red devils are allowed to roam all over this country, killing game out of season, setting fire to the country, and going about as they please.”<sup>18</sup>

In a number of ways, Qlispé and Séliš people, while consistently avoiding physical conflict, also consistently resisted the government’s attempts to undermine and abandon the treaty and its promise of cultural and political coexistence. For example, in September 1903, under the new state law prohibiting armed Indians from leaving reservations, Montana Deputy Game Warden Arthur Higgins arrested Alex Big Knife in Missoula. Big Knife was a tribal policeman employed by the Flathead Agency. According to some sources, he was in Missoula to carry out a mission ordered by Agency Superintendent William Smead. The *Missoulian*, on the other hand, said Big Knife was buying supplies for his fall hunt. Tribal leaders and elders met in council to develop their response to Big Knife’s arrest, along with the

Bitterroot National Forest's attempts to severely limit Indian packhorses. Pooling their meager financial resources, they collected a reported \$1,000<sup>19</sup> with which to retain H.H. Parsons of Missoula as their attorney. The chiefs also proposed denying hunting permits on the Flathead Reservation to non-Indians. This response was effective, at least for the time being. The arms and ammunition that had been confiscated from Big Knife were returned, and the Forest Service's issuance of grazing permits to tribal parties became little more than a routine formality.<sup>20</sup>

Government officials in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not simply concerned with the conservation of wildlife or stopping forest fires. They more broadly sought the elimination of tribal ways of life.<sup>21</sup> Qłispé and Séliš often people encountered the same antagonism from citizens. In 1884, for example, 45 settlers in Selish, Montana—a sparsely populated area on the Flathead River a couple of miles upstream from where it empties into Flathead Lake—signed a letter to the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, saying “we wish the Indians of the Flathead Reservation would be retained on said reservation. They are braking [sic] our fences, trespass on our lands and destroy our crops and otherwise annoy our families.”<sup>22</sup>

Some reactions to our continuing presence were even more extreme. In October 1885, U.S. Indian Agent Peter Ronan received the following letter from a resident of *Nńq<sup>w</sup>ołš Ntχ<sup>w</sup>étk<sup>w</sup>s* (Animals-Running-through-the-Woods's River, an area north of Noxon, Montana):

to Magor Ronen Esq

Dear Sir. i beg leafe to ask you to be kind anuf to keep your indians at home and on the Resevasion as they are a bothering some here at the present there is a gang of them Camped Now at bull river 2 miles West of here and they are a stealing game out of our traps and a takeing the traps also and if there Cant be a Stop put to it Riote away i wil for my part put 2 Winchester Rifels and 2 .45 Armeý Revolvos to work at them and i will make Short Work of uncle Sams pets — i have plenty of firearms and plenty amonnishion and i wil Shote an indian as Soon as i would a Wolf or kiotey if they Dont keep out of here and let the traps and game alone that is in them and i wont be alone in the mater as there is 5 more trapers that are fighting mad by ther acshions here but i told them that i would Write to you to Day and See What Could be Dun about it before we Commenced on them but if we Do have to Drive them out with fire arms take my Word for it it wil Cost the goverment something for lumber to box them up With after We get through With them or the Wolvs wil have a feast for a couple of months to Come

Hopeing to hear from you Soon on the Subject,  
Thomas H. Smith Noxon

i Remain yours  
montana Ty.<sup>23</sup>

Agent Ronan dismissed Smith's remarks as so much bluff, motivated by a desire to monopolize trap lines in that area. But for tribal members, the violent racism of the letter was realized all too often in the late nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

Archival records also reflect the prevalence of such threats in areas closer to the Swan Valley itself. In September 1902, two ranchers named Shoup and Howard wrote to Flathead Superintendent Smead from the Monture Creek area near Ovando. It is a place known to Q̄lispé and Séliš people as *Sntntnmsqa*—Place Where You Rein Back Your Horse. It lies near the very center of our aboriginal territories, along one of the most ancient and important of the trails that connected the buffalo country with the valleys west of the mountains. “For years the Indians of your reservation have been traveling through the country poaching and trespassing on others rights,” Shoup and Howard wrote, reflecting the view common among non-Indians that it was tribal people who were the intruders:

Keep these Indians where they belong...and if you don't do it we have a law in Montana that allows a person in the possession of real or personal property to use force to protect it from trespass and if it becomes necessary to make some good Indians out of your bad ones the law will allow it. Now this will be our last request to you about this matter, and if any more of them show up on Monture Creek they will do so at their own peril.<sup>25</sup>

Local newspapers frequently stoked the increasingly threatening climate. In the fall of 1897, a large tribal party—reportedly, thirty or forty lodges—was encamped near Horse Plains. The *Missoulian* reported citizens complaining of “the redman and butcher,” and opined, “Something ought to be done and done quickly to prevent the Indians from destroying this valuable game country or it is more than likely that the settlers will take the law into their own hands.”<sup>26</sup> In 1899, the *Libby News* editorialized that “the state ought to offer a bounty on these worthless Indians that infest this part of the country.”<sup>27</sup>

Yet tribal oral histories also note that there were always non-Indian friends in our aboriginal territories who understood and respected our ways. Séliš elder Louie Adams (1933-2016) recalled that when he was growing up, Čłx<sup>w</sup>m̄x<sup>w</sup>m̄šńá (Sophie Moiese, 1864-1960) often told him that Indian people survived because there were always more good people than bad.

Most Indian families continued to exercise our treaty rights to hunt, gather, fish, and pasture animals on ceded lands outside of the reservation. Places closer to the Flathead Reservation, such as the Seeley Lake area and the Swan Valley, which adjoin the reservation on the east, were of particular importance. And in the early twentieth century, the non-Indian presence in the Swan Valley remained sparse. There was more room there for peaceful coexistence. A popular map of the area, published in 1908, shows the Flathead Valley, and the Flathead Reservation, in

great detail, including township and range, sectional numbers, towns, major roads and railroads. The Seeley-Swan, by contrast, appears as a great blank area, with nothing marked except major rivers and lakes.<sup>28</sup>

And so, in late September, 1908, the party of eight Qłispé people made its way into the ancient hunting grounds of the Swan Valley.

The group was led by *Atwen* (Antoine) *Scwi*, age 49. *Scwi*'s wife was *Malí* (Mary) *Ŧapał*, 44. They had with them their two children— a son, *Plaswé* (Francis or Frank), 13, and a six-year-old daughter, *Malí* (Little Mary). They were joined by their friends, *Łkkaméł* (Little Camille Paul), 46, and his wife, *Kłolí* (Clarice), 36, who was six months pregnant. Also in the party were two elders, who went along to help



out in camp with chores—Camille’s aunt, *Malí* (Mary) *Saʔpšřmá*, and her husband, *Maltá K<sup>w</sup>alíʔ X<sup>w</sup>čũ* (Martin Yellow Mountain).

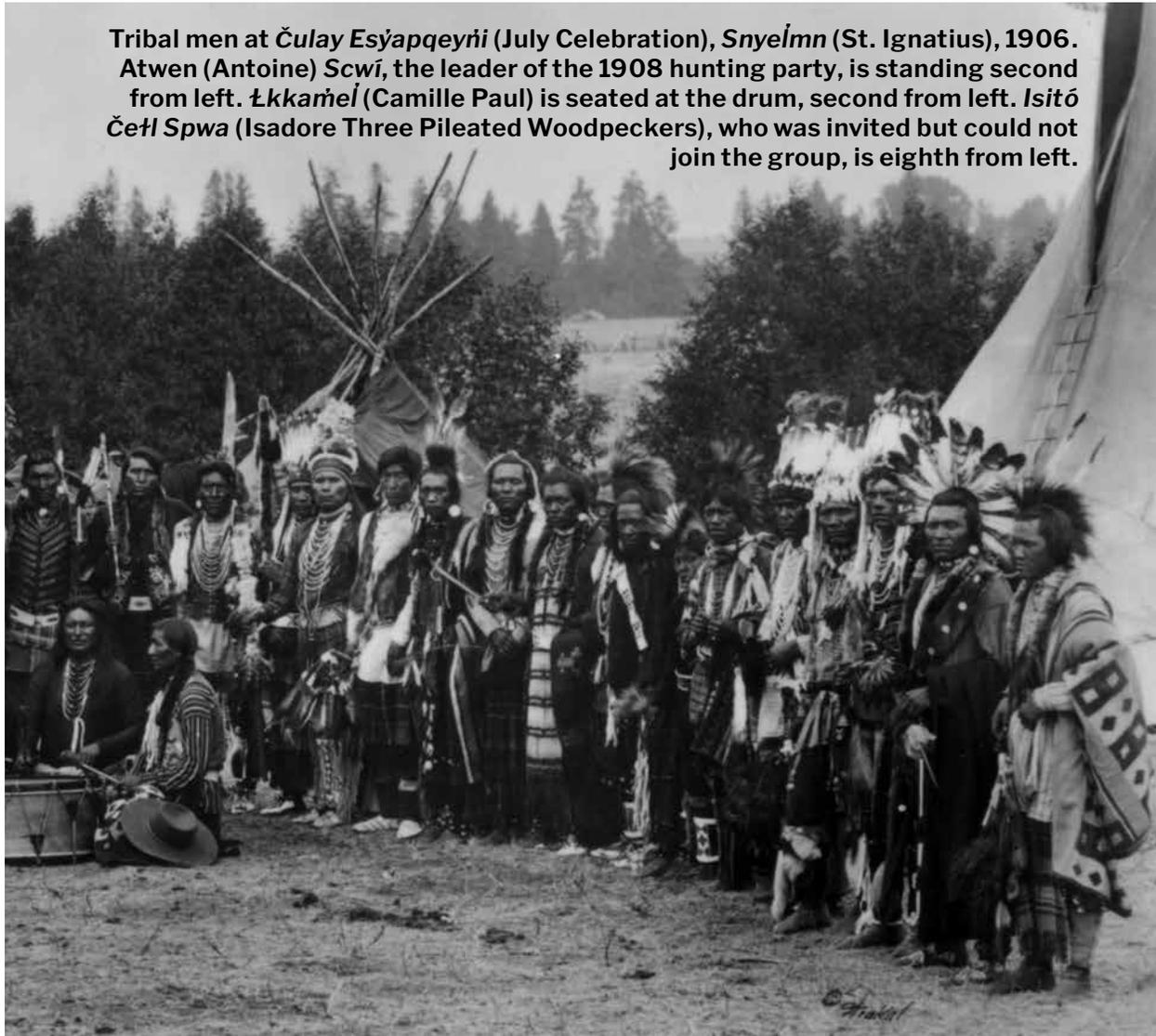
Qlispé elder Mitch Smallsalmon recalled the character of the tribal party:

*Scwi, ǰ xest sqltmix<sup>w</sup>.*

Scwi, well, he was a good man.

*Ta es sust. Ta es q<sup>w</sup>ewu. Tam řem sewneʔ tu sqelix<sup>w</sup> tʔe ečšeni es tiyaq<sup>w</sup>ti ečšni, ta.*

He did not drink. He did not get drunk. The people never did hear of him getting into fights or anything, no.





**Atwen (Antoine) Scwí.**

*Łu č snunx<sup>w</sup>ene?tn u es nunnx<sup>w</sup>e Łu č K<sup>w</sup>łncutn.*

He believed in having faith in the Creator.

*K<sup>w</sup>emłt ye Łkkameł nex<sup>w</sup> l še u ?ečxey.*

It was the same with Little Camille.

*K<sup>w</sup>emłt ye K<sup>w</sup>alı? X<sup>w</sup>ču nex<sup>w</sup> l še u ?ečxey.*

And it was the same with Yellow Mountain.



**Łkkameł (Camille Paul).**



**Klolf (Clarice Paul).**

In affidavits and letters produced after the massacre, non-Indians who knew the members of the tribal party also testified to their character. G.W. Beckwith and D.D. Hull, who both were U.S.-licensed traders on the Flathead Reservation, noted Scwí's work ethic, relatively prosperous farm, and law-abiding record. Hull said the same of Camille Paul, and said neither of the men were known to ever use alcohol, then emerging as a destructive force in the tribal community. Beckwith noted how Paul was regarded as a leader in the community. He was

someone whose fairness and level-headedness led others to seek his help in resolving disputes. Beckwith noted that Paul's elderly parents were both blind, and depended entirely on him for food and support. Beckwith also knew Martin Yellow Mountain, and said he was a traditional elder who associated with others who practiced the old ways. He mostly stayed with his wife Sa?pšńmá at his home, a few miles southwest of the St. Ignatius Mission, and rarely ventured into town. Information about Scwí's thirteen-year-old son, Plaswe, was provided by another licensed Indian trader, Andrew Beckwith, who was also a deputy game warden for the state of Montana. He noted that Plaswe was "considered by his teachers and Father [Louis] Taelman [head Jesuit priest at the St. Ignatius mission] to be one of the best, if not the best boy, in the school," and was apparently obedient and studious."<sup>29</sup>

The men in the party correctly felt that the Hellgate Treaty's guarantees of hunting rights in tribal aboriginal territories made it unnecessary for them to purchase state hunting permits. But they also felt it was wise to make every effort to avoid trouble, given the increasingly hostile behavior toward tribal hunting parties by

government officials and other non-Indians—and given the presence on the trip of their wives, children, and elders. So before leaving, the two men and the boy purchased state hunting permits from the state deputy warden, Andrew Beckwith of St. Ignatius. They did this in spite of having almost no money.

Perhaps even more striking were the measures taken by Martin Yellow Mountain to make sure game wardens would have no objection to his presence in the camp. Though he was too old to hunt, Yellow Mountain insisted on securing written permission from the U.S. Indian Agent merely to accompany the group on the off-reservation trip. The elder asked the group to delay their departure an extra day to allow him to ride horseback twenty miles each way to the Flathead Indian Agency in Arlee, where he obtained the note from Agent Samuel Bellew.<sup>30</sup> The rest of the group remained at Scwi's allotment east of St. Ignatius until Yellow Mountain returned.



**Maltá Kʷalíʔ Xʷćú (Martin Yellow Mountain).**

On September 20, the party of eight, along with their packhorses, began their trip. They headed up the North Fork of the Jocko and traveled around the south end of the Mission Range on the trail known as Čusšńí (Long Ridge), which reaches the valley floor near the outlet of *Ept Člene* (Has Longnose Sucker—Lindbergh Lake). For several weeks, the group then made its way north along the old trails paralleling *Snlaqi Sewtkʷs* (Sweathouse's Waters—Swan River). From the Swan they headed east over the mountains and into *Ept Nxléws Sewtkʷs* (Bridge's Waters—South Fork of Flathead River.) Then they made their way upstream—south—and finally west, back over the Swan Range and into the upper Swan Valley.



**Malí (Mary) Ȧpal**



**Malí (Little Mary) Scwí Finley at NȦqā Esýapqeyńí (Arlee celebration), 1920s.**

It is said it was a good trip. They enjoyed themselves, taking their time. As always, the Qĭispē people in this party abided by the central cultural ethic of respect for what they killed, striving to make use of everything and to waste nothing.

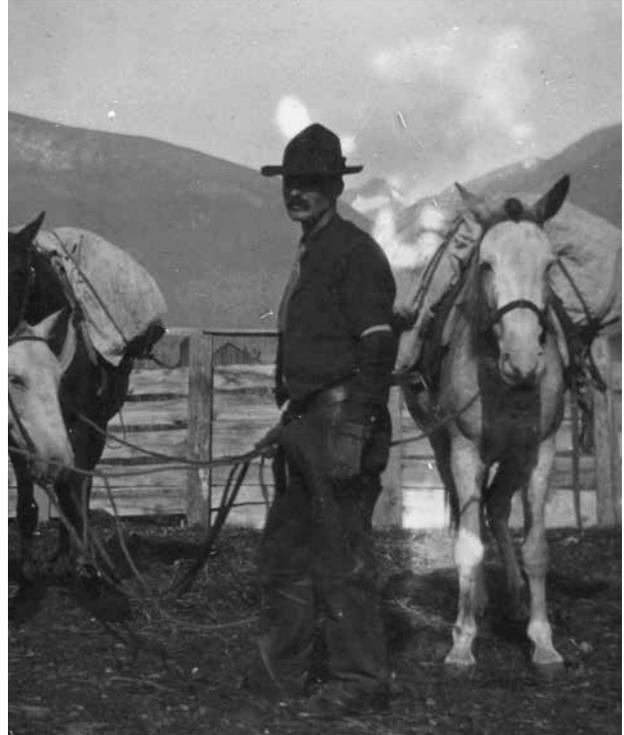
The group decided they would make one last camp to gather a little more winter meat before returning to the reservation. About October 14, they arrived at a clearing along a small tributary of the upper Swan River, a place called *Ept Tĭmu*, “It Has Skunk Cabbage.” They put their horses in the fenced pasture of a local non-Indian friend, Virgil Woods, a forest ranger known in Salish as *Salk’wā* (‘Roman Nose’).

Shortly before this time, the state of Montana had assigned a new game warden to live in Ovando and enforce the hunting laws in the Seeley-Swan and Blackfoot areas. His name was Charles Peyton, a former hunting guide from the Bitterroot Valley. Many people, both Indians and non-Indians, knew him as a rigid, overzealous officer. Like other wardens during that time, Peyton would often stay in the homes

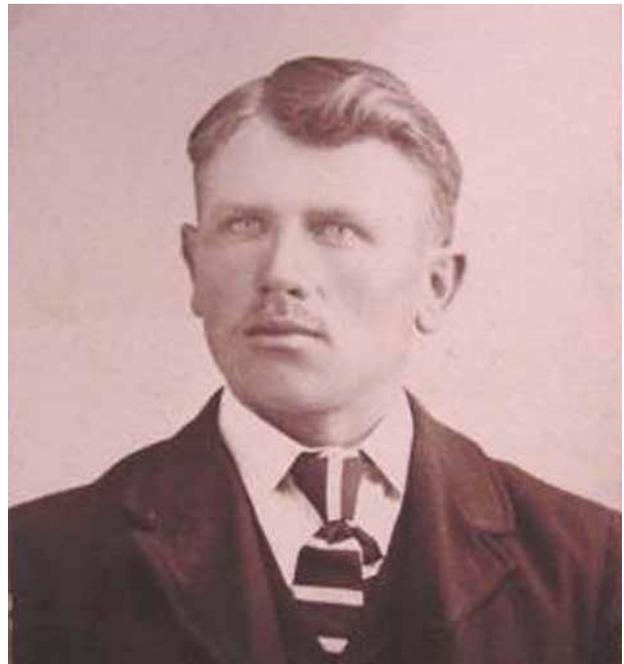
of area residents while making his rounds. The caretakers of the nearby Gordon Ranch were the Waldbilligs. Their son, Joe Waldbillig, would later recount how his mother hated Peyton for his rough and disrespectful manner. He would run his dirty hands through her prized, pristine flour bin, searching for poached meat that the warden thought the Waldbilligs might be hiding.

Montana historian Olga Johnson said that Indian people regarded him as “an Indian hater, a venomous bully.” He had already had several confrontations with tribal hunting parties in the Swan. The Qłispé thought he harbored a vendetta against Indian hunting parties. John Peter Paul said that in 1907, Peyton had a physical altercation with a tribal party that nearly escalated to bloodshed. Paul recalled the old people saying that “this game warden had a grudge [because of] what happened. . . the year before.” Mitch Smallsalmon put it bluntly: *Tam xmenčs tu sqélix*<sup>w</sup>. “He didn’t like Indians.”

Over the two days leading up to the massacre—Friday and Saturday, October 16 and 17—Peyton came into the tribal camp three times. Each time, he brought with him a deputized civilian from the nearby Gordon Ranch—on Friday, ranch caretaker Joseph Waldbillig, and twice on Saturday, Herman Rudolph, a 32-year-old laborer. (Rudolph was a German who had lived in Russia and immigrated to the U.S. from the latter country.)



Charles Peyton



Herman Rudolph

On the first two visits, the men were out hunting, leaving the women alone in camp with the boy, Plaswé, and old man Yellow Mountain. Peyton demanded to see their licenses. He then entered the tipis, where he overturned packs, looking for evidence of game. He acknowledged that the men had not yet hunted their limits, but then laughed at Yellow Mountain's permit from Agent Bellew, allowing the elder to leave the reservation and accompany the party. Peyton declared the paper "no good" and tossed it to the ground. This would be his sole official pretext for continued harassment of the camp.

During Peyton's first visit to the camp, something else happened—an additional factor in this story that only came to light the year after the massacre. In the spring of 1909, three of Peyton's close friends from the Bitterroot Valley traveled to the Swan, intent on gathering evidence to help prosecute the Indian women for the death of the warden. According to one member of the fact-finding party, Hans Bay of Corvallis,<sup>31</sup> the three men quickly abandoned their quest. Joseph Waldbillig informed them that on Peyton's first visit to the camp, the warden had made "indecent sexual advances" upon Kłolí, who, Waldbillig told the group, "was pregnant but not showing." According to Bay, when Kłolí responded to Peyton with "furious rejection and utter disdain," the warden went into a "state of white-hot rage," which further fueled his actions over the following two days.

On Saturday evening, October 17, Peyton and Rudolph returned at dusk. It was Peyton's third appearance in the camp. He stormed into the tipi where most of the group was gathered. Little Camille sat silently, not even pausing the game of solitaire he was playing on a blanket. But when the warden grabbed his rifle, Camille rose and wrested it away from him. The enraged Peyton drew a pistol on Camille. For a moment, in the tight confines of the tipi, it appeared that the warden would erupt in violence right then. But Peyton abruptly decided to leave.

On his way out, Peyton muttered something to Rudolph. Plaswé, who knew a little English from attending the Catholic boarding school in St. Ignatius for about a year, overheard Peyton's threatening words and relayed them to the adults. According to some accounts related by tribal elders, the warden said they had all better be gone when he returned in the morning. But in the single most detailed recording telling of the story, Mitch Smallsalmon said Peyton had actually issued a more explicit warning:

*Cu es cuti tici? sx<sup>w</sup>čštím,*  
He [Plaswé] said that the game warden said,

*“Ñe čñet ck<sup>w</sup>tči ye l?e ñe xli, ñe l?e ml?e?e,*  
“When I arrive back here tomorrow, if they are still here,

*“ñem esya? m q<sup>w</sup>omnte?en.*  
“I will kill all of them.

*“Ñem nta?ape?ewstn.”*  
“I will shoot them all.”

The group was deeply concerned about what the warden had said. They sat up all night, anguishing over what to do. Some felt they had no reason to move, as they had done nothing wrong. They were also concerned about the danger of trying to move at night, especially with a pregnant woman in the party.

They finally decided to leave anyway. They began packing up. But when they went to retrieve their horses from Virgil Woods’ fenced pasture, they discovered that someone had opened the gate and deliberately driven out two of the horses. The group surmised it was Peyton, in an attempt to forestall their departure. Scwí and his son Plaswé found the horses far down the rough track heading south toward *Ept Čix<sup>w</sup>čx<sup>w</sup>t* (Has Ospreys—Seeley Lake). By the time they brought the horses back, the rest of the camp was packed and ready to leave.

Yellow Mountain was just helping his arthritic wife, Sa?pšnmá, onto her horse when they heard a gunshot and realized they had not left in time. Smelling of alcohol, Peyton charged into the camp almost at a run, Rudolph at his side.

After a brief exchange of words, the warden began firing. He shot Camille Paul, whose rifle was still scabbarded. He then gunned down the unarmed Scwi. The elderly Yellow Mountain tried to lift a gun, but he was very slow, and Peyton shot him dead. The women fled toward the brush, Peyton firing after them. Bullets from the warden’s gun whistled just over their heads and ricocheted off nearby rocks.

The boy, Plaswé, was on the opposite side of the melee, watching as his father, Little Camille, and Yellow Mountain were murdered. He saw the warden shooting at his mother, his little sister, and Klolí. From under the belly of a horse, Plaswé then shot Peyton in the abdomen, knocking him down. Almost at the same moment, Rudolph, standing behind two large trees at the edge of the encampment, shot and killed the boy.

The women slowly reemerged from the brush. Ĥapal looked at her son and saw him smile at her just as he died. As Klolí and Ĥapal held their dying husbands, Ĥapal saw the wounded Peyton rising up on one knee, reloading his gun. The two devout church-goers briefly argued about what to do. Klolí told Ĥapal they weren’t allowed to kill—it was against the ten commandments. But Ĥapal said if she didn’t, they would all be killed. Klolí retrieved her husband’s rifle, ran in a zigzag towards Peyton, and shot him point-blank in the chest.

**Joe Eneas (1896-1997)**  
holding the jacket that his  
friend Plaswé was wearing  
when he was killed.



Moments later, as the women tended to the bodies, Peyton began to get back up. Klolí ran back and shot him again, this time in the other side of the chest, killing him instantly.

Ťapal had to care for her six-year-old daughter Malí, and Saʔpšńmá was too elderly, so Klolí then rode for help. She narrowly escaping Rudolph, who had waited in the woods. Six months pregnant, having just witnessed the murder of her husband, she rode all day, for a while drifting into a state of shock. After some 35 miles, she finally came to an encampment at a place called *Npáá* (Place Repeatedly Burned—In-pa-ah Creek and Flats). The camp leaders was the highly respected *Nx<sup>w</sup>eʔsk<sup>w</sup>e* (Many Names, or Louie Mollman), The people there tended to Klolí, gave her dry clothes and warm food, and then had her lead them back to the site of the massacre.

Nearing midnight, the group could hear in the distance the baying of Łkkaŋel's dog, guarding the body. They made camp. At first light, they warily made their way into the camp. They rescued Saʔpsŋma, ʔapał, and little Malí. They then discovered that there were bullet holes with no blood in the bodies of the three men and the boy: evidence that someone had shot them as they lay dead, even as they lay fir boughs over the face of the warden.

They packed up the bodies of Scwí, Łkkaŋel, Kwali X<sup>w</sup>ćú, and Plaswé. Some of the young Qlispé men, outraged at what had happened, wanted to attack any non-Indians who showed up. But Nx<sup>w</sup>eʔsk<sup>w</sup>e stopped them, reminding them that this was the act of one deranged person—that not all *suyapis* were that way. Just as the group was leaving with the bodies, some non-Indians approached the camp. Upon seeing the tribal party, however, the non-Indians fled.



Nx<sup>w</sup>eʔsk<sup>w</sup>e (Many Names) — Louie Mollman

Fearing that they might be pursued, Nx<sup>w</sup>eʔsk<sup>w</sup>e's group decided to temporarily bury the dead a few miles from Epł ʔímu, so that they could then proceed more quickly back to the Flathead Reservation. In 1910, a party of tribal men rode from St. Ignatius back over the Čusšní trail into the Swan Valley to retrieve the bodies. The group brought the bodies back to the St. Ignatius Catholic cemetery for burial. In 1972, a stone monument was finally erected in the cemetery.

## The Swan Massacre: A Brief History



Non-Indians at site of massacre, late October 1908.

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Montana newspapers, relying on sensationalized, self-serving accounts from Herman Rudolph, at first portrayed Peyton as a murdered hero. Tribal accounts then began to emerge, including affidavits from the surviving women. Growing numbers of people began raising questions about the actions of both the warden and Rudolph, whose affidavit was full of inconsistencies. Rudolph vanished just before his scheduled appearance at a coroner's inquest in Missoula. Papers to support the prosecution of Rudolph were sent by the Flathead Superintendent to the Missoula County Attorney's office. Months later, the office reported back to the superintendent that the papers had been "misplaced" and could not be located. Flathead Superintendent Frederick Morgan wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in March 1909, saying, "Something should be done [to find and prosecute Herman Rudolph], as the Indians as a whole are very much wrought up over the affair, since they understand that the Stevens' treaty gives them a right to hunt off the reservation without securing a hunting license."<sup>32</sup> For many years, tribal leaders continued to raise the issue with federal officials, demanding that Rudolph be tracked down.<sup>33</sup> The government took no action. Other measures of justice were also not forthcoming. No restitution was ever provided by the state of Montana to the families of those killed by the warden and his deputy.

Three months after the incident, Klolí gave birth to John Peter Paul (Ćnɩnó - Holds on Tight to the Enemy). He lived to the age of 92, becoming a respected elder and cultural leader. In 1997-1999, the Séliš-Qłispé Culture Committee traveled with John to the site of the massacre several times. As we noted in the introduction to this essay, during those years before his passing in 2001, he decided it was time to tell the story. He recorded his knowledge of what had happened, and gave his blessing to the efforts of the Culture Committee to write about the incident.



**John Peter Paul (1909-2001) at Epł Timu?, the site of the Swan Massacre. In the 1940s, a small irrigation dam was built that flooded the site.**

In the wake of the Swan massacre, tribal people were forced to wonder if other wardens would act like Peyton, and maybe shoot them for doing nothing more than gathering their winter meat, or perhaps for taking care of the land with fire. Like many other elders, Harriet Whitworth (1918-2008) and Felicite McDonald (1922-2017) told of incidents when they were small children and their family hunting camps were visited—and sometimes threatened—by wardens. Tribal elders have told countless stories of how their hunting parties were constantly haunted by the fear that at any moment, the same kind of violence could erupt again. As Séliš elder Louie Adams said,

“In some cases, [in the view of] the dominant society, the Indian’s life was pretty cheap . . . He could kill an Indian and not get in trouble for it. So naturally they didn’t want to cause any ripples, or whatever, didn’t want to go out and do things like such as burn a place off. They might get in trouble. Just like the Swan thing . . . Indians were always doing what they have done for thousands of years, hunting, yet they were killed over that and nobody got in trouble. So from these kinds of things it didn’t take much for Indians not to do something, because they were afraid.”

Certainly, after 1908 more families did stop making their old hunting trips, out of concern for their safety. But others felt that if they abandoned their hunting rights, it would be surrendering to the injustice of these killings. So many did continue to hunt—some with a conscious sense of defiance. They saw the state’s imposition of its laws as an infringement of the Hellgate Treaty’s guarantees of hunting rights, and even of the Tribe’s rights as a sovereign nation. On a number of occasions, traditional tribal people like Eneas Granjo made a point of defying what they saw as unjust laws. Granjo’s non-Indian friend Bob Manchester remembered how Granjo, on his way home from hunts in the Seeley-Swan area in the 1930s and 1940s, enjoyed hauling his deer right through the middle of Missoula in the back of an open pickup truck, in effect daring anyone to arrest him.

Tribal leaders such as Granjo, who was elected to the Tribal Council and served for a time as Chairman in the 1940s, worked with many non-Indian allies and attorneys to change the legal environment around hunting rights. Their diligent and disciplined efforts bore fruit. By the mid-twentieth century, repeated court rulings finally affirmed that the rights reserved by the Séliš, Qlispé, and Ksanka tribes in the Hellgate Treaty did indeed guarantee our right to hunt, fish, and gather foods and other materials throughout “open and unclaimed” parts of our ceded territories, without permission or licensure from the state.

It is also true that both before and after the Swan Massacre, Séliš and Qłispé people have had close non-Indian friends in the Seeley-Swan—from the Chaffins at Seeley Lake to Jan Bossevain and Bob Manchester at the Double Arrow Ranch, to others who have befriended us in more recent years, such as Smoke Elser, Bud Moore, and the long-time owner of the site where the Swan massacre occurred, Warner Lundberg. Further back, there were old timers such as Wilbur Vaughn, who every year welcomed the many hunting camps of Séliš-Qłispé people in the big meadow by Placid Lake. Vaughn's friendship with Indian people was reflected in the name that Lomeh and Susan Adams would choose for their son when he was born in 1933: Louis Wilbur Adams, who became one of the most prominent and active tribal elders. Until his passing in 2016, Louie worked tirelessly to teach our language, culture, and history to countless Indian and non-Indian students.

One of the wardens who succeeded Charles Peyton in the Swan district, Harry Morgan, was known as a good friend of the Séliš people, who called him *Čmolqn*. Morgan, who was partly of Native American ancestry, understood that our people hunted in a sustainable way, taking no more than needed. On numerous occasions when he ran across family hunting parties, he declined to strictly enforce game laws.<sup>34</sup> He understood that peaceful coexistence between differing cultures required flexibility. Morgan was part of a culture in the Swan Valley, in the early years of white settlement, in which Indians and non-Indians often got along well, in part because of their shared dependence on game, fish, and berries for food.

In recent decades, Indian and non-Indian people have also been largely united in their view of the Swan massacre. In 2001, when Charles Peyton's name was submitted to the National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial (NLEOM), Dave Walter (1943-2006), research historian for the Montana Historical Society, wrote a letter to Montana Senator Max Baucus. In his letter, Walter said, "This is not a case of a Montana game warden giving his life in the line of duty, but a case of a game warden committing murder."<sup>35</sup> Partly on the strength of the letter, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks withdrew the nomination, and the NLEOM removed Peyton's name from its indices and website. In October 2008, at the centennial commemoration of the massacre held at Holland Lake, Governor Brian Schweitzer echoed Mr. Walter's assessment. Governor Schweitzer's Department of Transportation worked with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to develop a historical marker about the massacre, dedicated at the centennial. And in 2015, the Missoula Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial declined to include the warden in its honor roll of fallen officers. Previously, the Montana Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial had rejected Peyton three separate times because of the overwhelming evidence that Peyton, unlike the honorable men and women included in the memorial, had not died in carrying out his necessary and appropriate duties, but rather in the commission of a grave injustice.

## The Swan Massacre: A Brief History

The tragedy of the Swan massacre extended even beyond the murders of Camille Paul, Atwen Scwi, Plaswé Scwi, and Martin Yellow Mountain. It was an injury to our way of life. But the story of the Swan massacre is also a story of cultural survival. We are still here. We have relationships of mutual respect, honor, and friendship with many non-Indian people. We are continuing to work together toward a society of justice, in which cultural coexistence is not only possible, but celebrated.



Yamncut Drum sings the Honor Song during Swan massacre centennial commemoration, Holland Lake, October 2008. At the podium is SQCC Director Antoine Incashola, Sr., accompanied by John Peter Paul's daughter Josephine Quequesah, CSKT Chairman James Steele, Jr. and other CSKT and Montana representatives.

## ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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Unidentified Séliš-Qłispé riders in St. Ignatius area, 1906, by Sumner Matteson, courtesy Milwaukee Public Museum. Background photo, Čusšní trail, 2006, photo by Thompson R. Smith. Photoshop work by David Rockwell. © Séliš-Qłispé Culture Committee (SQCC).

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Sophie Moiese and unidentified elder woman drying meat, 1910. Edward S. Curtis photograph, Library of Congress.

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Tribal men at July celebration, 1906, SQCC.

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Atwen Scwi and Camille Paul, SQCC.

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Maltá K<sup>w</sup>ali? X<sup>w</sup>ču—Martin Yellow Mountain., University of Montana, Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections, 78-0223.

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## Endnotes

- 1 For documentation of tribal names and territories, “Stłtúlix<sup>w</sup> Séliš u Qlispé: Territories of the Salish, Kalispel, and Related Nations,” available as a PDF at the following URL: <http://www.csktsalish.org/index.php/component/rsfiles/download?path=2023%2BSelis%2Bu%2BQlispe%2B-%2BNations%2BNames%2BTerritories%2B6.pdf&Itemid=101>.” For the correct pronunciation of “Séliš” and “Qlispé,” go to the home page of the Séliš-Qlispé Culture Committee and scroll down ([www.csktsalish.org](http://www.csktsalish.org)). For the correct pronunciation of “Seliš” and “Qlispé,” see the MPEGs recorded by fluent speakers, available [www.csktsalish.org](http://www.csktsalish.org) (scroll to the bottom of the page).
- 2 Additional information on tribal history and culture can be found in Salish-Pend d’Oreille Culture Committee and Elders Advisory Council, *The Salish People and the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Lincoln: the University of Nebraska Press, rev. ed. 2018). Extensive background information is in Thompson R. Smith, “Aay u Sqélix<sup>w</sup>: A History of Bull Trout and the Salish and Pend d’Oreille People,” published as part of interactive DVD *Explore the River: Bull Trout, Tribal People, and the Jocko River*, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (University of Nebraska Press, 2011), now available online at the following URL: <http://www.csktsalish.org/index.php/component/rsfiles/download?path=Aay%2Bu%2BSqelix%2B-%2BBull%2BTrout%2Bhistory.pdf&Itemid=101>. See also Deward E. Walker, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 12: Plateau* (Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1998).
- 3 These place-names were recorded by elders in our oral history archives, and are also marked on many of the earliest maps of the region, such as those charted by Jesuit missionaries in the 1840s. That work was conducted as part of the Séliš-Qlispé Ethnogeography Project. For an introduction to the project, its methodology and sources, and its objectives, go to: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/128gYD15nDt3uyEbiPj9JkcGOJRSvSt8\\_/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/128gYD15nDt3uyEbiPj9JkcGOJRSvSt8_/view)
- 4 The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes produced an in-depth series of 40 essays on the culture and history of the tribal relationship with fire in the Northern Rockies, published in the interactive DVD *Fire on the Land: Native Peoples and Fire in the Northern Rockies* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2007), now available online at the following URL: <http://fwrconline.csktnrd.org/Fire/FireOnTheLand/History/>
- 5 See Smith, “Aay u Sqélix<sup>w</sup>.”
- 6 The Salish name for the Kootenai is Sqłsé; the tribe’s name in Kootenai is Ktunaxa, and their name for the band based on the Flathead Reservation is Ksanka.
- 7 “Now You Know: A Collection of facts and figures about Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.” Pamphlet. Helena: Montana FW&P, 2001. “A Century of Conservation: Special edition of *Montana Outdoors*,” vol. 31, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 2000). Joan Louise Brownell, “The Genesis of Wildlife Conservation in Montana,” M.A. thesis, Dept. of History, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, May 1987.

8 Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior, August 23, 1900, NARA RG 75, Commissioner of Indian Affairs outgoing correspondence, 1900 Lands Letter Book 450, pp. 68-69.

9 The national movement of “progressive conservation” during the period, which heavily influenced the Montana agencies, found its expression in publications such as Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell, eds., *Hunting in Many Lands: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York: Forest and Stream Publishing Company, 1905), which asserted (in a passage that was quoted in the one of the early biennial reports of the Montana Fish and Game Commission), “Laws for the preservation of wild animals are a product of civilization. The more civilized a nation, the broader and more humane will be these laws. Our ancestors of the flint age were lawless... All savage nations are still ruthless and wasteful in their destruction of animal life.” Pp. 358-359, from the chapter entitled “Game Laws,” by Charles E. Whitehead. Whitehead was a member of the Boone and Crockett Club as well as a lawyer for the New York Association for the Protection of Game (NYAPG), founded by Robert B. Roosevelt (Theodore Roosevelt’s uncle). Whitehead continues with the following sentence: “An example is found on the plains, where a thousand buffalo were driven over the walls of a canon that a tribe might have a feast, although the tribe might, and often did, starve during the coming winter.” This was written at the very moment that the same group of men were forming, in New York, the American Bison Society, which was trying to save the buffalo from extinction, the primary cause of which was market-based hunting. To accomplish their objective, the Bison Society helped arrange for Congress to expropriate of some 16,000 acres from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for the establishment of a National Bison Range.

10 According to historian John Fahey, “The Montana legislature prohibited Indians from bearing arms off the reservation, but the state game warden agreed with the agent that he would not prosecute violators.” John Fahey, *The Flathead Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), p. 270. For the law itself, see Montana Legislative Assembly, *Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana Passed at the Eighth Regular Session* (Helena, MT: State Publishing Company, 1903), pp. 157-158. Thanks to Bob Bigart for the citation.

11 Ronan to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 14, 1885, National Archives, D.C., Record Group 75 (Bureau of Indian Affairs), BIA Letters Received 1881-1907, 1885-24767.

12 Fahey, p. 267. Account is from *Missoulian*, October 1, 1897.

13 Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of the Interior, August 23, 1900, Commissioner of Indian Affairs outgoing correspondence, 1900 Lands Letter Book 450, pp. 68-69. OIA officials in Washington, apparently wanting to deliver the strongest message possible, instructed Smead by letter, telegram, and telephone, telling him to “take action immediately to have [Indians] returned to reservation” and to “take prompt and energetic action in putting a stop to this state of affairs.” Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to William H. Smead, U.S. Indian Agent, Flathead Agency, August 4, 1900. Commissioner of Indian Affairs outgoing correspondence, 1900 Lands Letter Book 448, p. 312 and pp. 326-327.

14 National Archives, RG 75, OIA/BIA Letters Received, 1903-62224. Similarly, in July 1903, the Superintendent of the Bitterroot National Forest wrote to Flathead Superintendent Smead, complaining that Indians would come there for up to eight weeks at a time. He proposed to require grazing permits for any animals in excess of one saddle horse and one pack horse per person. He also wanted to reduce the number of deer each person was allowed to kill.

15 For a detailed exploration of the culture and history of the tribal relationship with fire in the Northern Rockies, see “Fire on the Land: Native Peoples and Fire in the Northern Rockies” (above endnote 2).

16 Collins correspondence is from National Archives Rocky Mountain Regional Branch (Denver), Record Group 75 (BIA), Flathead Indian Agency, Misc letters received, Box 68, folder “WHSmead—Incoming Correspondence—Unarranged—1899-1900(1) FRC56168.”

17 “Bad Indians on Reserve,” *Helena Semi-Weekly Herald*, Sept. 25, 1900. Thanks to Mike Korn of Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks and Brian Shovers of the Montana Historical Society for this citation.

18 Herman to Sec. of the Int., Aug. 1, 1900, NARA, OIA/BIA Letters Received, 1900-37818. Quoted and cited in Fahey, p. 270.

19 According to measuringworth.com, \$1000 in 1903 would be worth \$31,800 in simple purchasing power in 2021; to buy the same amount of labor in 2021, it would cost between \$154,000 and \$217,000.

20 Dusenberry papers, Glenbow Institute, Calgary, and *Missoulian*, Sept. 1903.

21 Officials during that time often expressed their goals and policies of cultural and political genocide in straightforward ways. Countless examples can be found in the *Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*. In the 1888 report (p. LXXXVIII), for example, Commissioner John H. Oberly wrote,

“the Indian... must be imbued with the exalting egotism of American civilization, so that he will say ‘I’ instead of ‘We,’ and “This is mine,’ instead of ‘This is ours.’ But if he will not learn? If he shall continue to persist in saying, ‘I am content; let me alone?’ Then the Guardian must act for the Ward, and do for him the good service he protests... The Government must then... compel the Indian to come... into the civilized way that he does not desire to enter.”

In the 1891 report (p. 6), Commissioner Thomas Jefferson Morgan articulated the federal government’s deep hostility to tribal sovereignty: “There is no place within our borders for independent, alien governments, and the Indians must of necessity surrender their autonomy.” Morgan, like many other policy makers of the time, imagined that the policy of destroying tribal nations was actually altruistic:

“in requiring this, we do not ask that they concede anything of real value to themselves, but only that for their highest welfare they abandon their tribal organization... By this great transformation they are the gainers, rather than we ourselves.”

22 National Archives, RG 75, OIA/BIA Letters Received, 1884-13494. Similar letters from the same time period can be found coming from virtually every corner of Séliš-Qłispé aboriginal territories. In 1900, for example, citizens from St. Regis and Plains, two widely separated towns west of the Flathead Reservation, wrote to Smead demanding that he prevent tribal people from hunting or even traveling off-reservation. See National Archives Rocky Mountain Regional Branch (Denver), Record Group 75 (BIA), Flathead Indian Agency, Misc. letters received, Box 68, folder “WH Smead – Incoming Correspondence – Unarranged – 1899-1900 (2) FRC 56168.”

23 National Archives, RG 75, OIA/BIA Letters Received, 1885-24767.

24 See, for example, NARA RG 75, OIA/BIA Letters Received, 1881-2130 (Superior), 1881-18997 (three Salish killed in Stevensville), 1884-9330 (two Salish murdered near Bozeman).

25 NARA, RG 75 (Office of Indian Affairs), OIA/BIA Letters Received, 1902-54475.

26 *Missoulian*, October 1, 1897. Quoted and cited in Fahey, p. 267.

27 *Libby News*, Jan. 20, 1899. Quoted and cited in Fahey, p. 270.

28 “Jaqueth and Walters’ Map of Flathead County and Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana.” 1908. Montana Historical Society cartographic collections, A-344. Indeed, just at this time, Joseph Waldbillig was working on the first detailed survey of the Seeley-Swan, on behalf of the U.S. Forest Service and the Northern Pacific Railroad. The first automobile didn’t make its way into the Swan valley until 1912, and even south at Clearwater Junction, in the 1930’s and ‘40’s, the main road to Bonner was only open in the summer months. The *WPA Guide to 1930’s Montana* said that in even in those years, “north of Holland Lake, State 31 runs through the heavy Flathead National Forest of the Swan Valley, a wild land with fish and game, rude trails, and lookout stations. The road is poor with an average of 20 curves to the mile...the forest silence is broken only by the calls of wild things, the splash and gurgle of tumbling streams, and the sound, like surf on a far shore, of wind flowing smoothly through the tops of tamaracks and firs. Nevertheless occasional cabins beside the road indicate that a few hardy human beings attempt to live here....the road intersects an old Indian trail that crossed the mountains between the Flathead Valley and the Great Plains.” *The WPA Guide to 1930’s Montana* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1994; originally published as *Montana: A State Guide Book*, Montana Dept. of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, 1939), pp. 304 and 310. Original General Land Office maps of the Swan Valley, most created in the 1910s, reveal a place in which the primary routes of travel were simply “blazed trails,” such as the “Ronan to Swan River Blazed Trail,” which followed today’s trail over Piper-Crow Pass.

29 As we might expect, the phrasings in the letters and affidavits of these non-Indians reflect the pervasive paternalism of the time. We cite these records, however, because they also contain important information, including some details about the members of the party that cannot be found elsewhere. Excerpts from the documents:

- G.W. Beckwith, a U.S.-licensed trader on the Flathead Reservation, wrote in 1909 that Scwī was “a progressive and intelligent Indian” who “had a good farm, well improved,” and that “by thrift and industry, he had accumulated about forty head of

cattle and the same number of horses.” Trader D.D. Hull similarly described Scwí as “honorable and law-abiding.”

- Hull said “neither [Scwí nor Camille Paul] used liquor and during my 5 years in office I never had a complaint made against either of them.” G.W. Beckwith said that “Camille Paul was a leader among the Indians...and was considered the best man they had to settle disputes in regard to ownership of unbranded or disputed horses. He was the sole support of his aged father and mother, who are both blind, and unable to care for themselves.”
- G.W. Beckwith further said that Martin Yellow Mountain “was an old man that could see but a short distance on account of poor eyesight and belonged to the old school of Indians...He never mingled with the rough element on the Reservation, but lived with his wife quietly at home and was not seen much in public places.”
- Another trader, Andrew Beckwith, who was also a deputy game warden for the state of Montana, said that Scwí’s son Plaswé was “considered by his teachers and Father [Louis] Taelman [head Jesuit priest at the St. Ignatius mission] to be one of the best, if not the best boy, in the school, giving them no trouble whatever.”

30 The practice of tribal members securing written “permission” from the federal agent or superintendent to leave the reservation extended back at least to the tenure of William Smead, who in response to demands from National Forest supervisors, announced a system of passes that “will name or enumerate any women or children entitled to be with the person with the permit.” Part of Smead’s objective was to block what he saw as the traditional people’s efforts to prevent the acculturation of their children: “the full bloods have, in order to keep their children from school, left the reservation before the beginning of the school year and remained away until late in the fall simply to keep their children out of school.” From Fahey, pp. 269- 270, cited as Smead to JB Weber, 8-27-1903 (FRC).

31 Russell Bay, “Was It Murder or Massacre?,” ms submitted to *True West* magazine, May 1, 1990. Russell Bay was told the story by his father, Hans Bay. The ms was provided to SQCC in 2008 by Carol Bay Junkert, Russell Bay’s daughter.

32 Flathead Agency Supt. Frederick Morgan to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, NARA, RG 75, Central Classified Files 72298- 08-Flathead-175. The families of Camille, Scwí and Plaswé, and Yellow Mountain were utterly forgotten by the press, which lavished its attention on the family of the warden, organizing charity drives for them that raised thousands of dollars. The state legislature entertained motions to give more support.

33 The Culture Committee has found evidence of Rudolph’s subsequent presence in both Butte and in Canada, which we will include in our forthcoming book.

34 Swan Ecosystem Center, Condon, Montana, interview with Joe Waldbillig, Jr., Nov. 5, 1999, p. 11. Waldbillig noted, however, that if people flaunted their violations of the law, even Harry Morgan “would lean on them pretty heavy.”

35 In 1997, Walter published an account of the Swan Massacre in his book *Montana Campfire Tales*. Walter ended his account with a question. He was unsure, at that point, whether the killings represented a clear act of injustice. But in succeeding years, as he saw more of the stories and reviewed more of the evidence about the Swan Massacre, Walter had the courage and integrity to reach his clear verdict on the incident.



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