



MONTANA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Revised 12/1/2024

Title: Recognized at Last: The Little Shell Chippewa

Grade Level: 5-12 grades

Subject(s): Social Studies/Montana State History

Duration: 30-50 minutes

Description: This PowerPoint lesson provides an introduction to the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe.

Goals: Student will be able to explain the history of the Little Shell.

Content Standards:

EU 1. There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana...

EU 5. There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and continue to shape who they are today.

SS.CG.6-8.5. Identify events and leaders that ensure that key United States principles of equality and civil rights are applied to various groups, including American Indians.

SS.H.6-8.5. Explain how Montana has changed over time and how this history impacts the present.

SS.H.9-12.3. Identify ways in which people and groups exercise agency in difficult historical, contemporary, and tribal contexts.

Materials:

- [PowerPoint](#) (which you can download from <https://mhs.mt.gov/education/IEFA/LittleShell.pptx> or find here as a [Google Slide](#) Presentation)
- PowerPoint script, below
- Laptop and projector
- Exit tickets, below

Pre-lesson Preparation:

- Review the script and PowerPoint.
- Print out exit tickets.

Procedure:

1. Create a K/W/L (know/want to know/learn) chart with your students.
2. Share the PowerPoint.
3. Return to the K/W/L chart. If there are still things students want to know, brainstorm where they could find more information.
4. Have students complete the exit ticket.

Recognized at Last: The Little Shell Chippewa PowerPoint Script

Slide 1. Title slide.

Slide 2. For decades, the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe had no federal legal status. That changed in December 2019, when Congress granted federal recognition to the tribe's 5,400 members. Montana's bipartisan congressional delegation shepherded Little Shell recognition through Congress. Why did it take a century for the tribe to receive federal recognition?

Slide 3. In 1863, the Pembina Chippewa signed the Treaty of Old Crossing with the US, surrendering rights to land in Minnesota and a strip of land in North Dakota along the Red River. The Chippewa believed that they had only ceded the right of settlers and the railroad to cross through their land and that the tribe had reserved the right to hunt and occupy the land. However, according to the text of the treaty, the tribe had ceded ownership of the territory to the United States. In return the U.S. promised annual payments of \$20,000, which were never issued.

Slide 4. The Little Shell Band of Chippewa, led by Chief Little Shell, were part of the historical Pembina Band of Chippewa (also known as the Ojibwe) in Minnesota. The Ojibwe traditionally journeyed across their entire native homeland, not staying in one place long. These passages took them from Minnesota to Montana and covered both the US and Canada.

Click on slide to play 5-minute video introducing Chief Little Shell.

Slide 5. Chief Little Shell was one of fourteen tribal leaders who signed the Old Crossing Treaty. In 1864 Chippewa advocate Bishop Henry Whipple argued that Little Shell and the other signers did not know or understand what they had signed. Whipple asked that the tribe be paid \$500,000.00 for their land (5 cents per acre). The U.S. refused, saying it was "too generous." They sent back a supplemental treaty that demanded that the Chippewa relinquish their lands and created an option for "half-breeds" to homestead on 160 acres on the ceded lands for five years. Many of the Pembina Chippewa had European ancestors, so they qualified for homestead land; they were the descendants of French-Canadian traders and trappers and many identified as Métis. Only five of the original tribal leaders who signed the 1863 treaty signed the supplemental treaty.

Slide 6. Chief Little Shell walked out of the negotiations and refused to sign the supplemental treaty. In 1892, after many hard years, Chief Little Shell sent word to Washington, D.C., that he would exchange 52 million acres of land and the treaty rights of the Old Crossing Treaty in exchange for a large reservation, which would include the entire Turtle Mountain area, at the price of \$1.00 per acre.

Slide 7. North Dakota Senator Porter McCumber was sent to negotiate. He made a counteroffer of 10 cents per acre. Tribal representatives walked out of the negotiations in disgust; they knew that the government had paid \$1.00 per acre for less valuable land near Fort Berthold. After the walk-out, the local Indian agent, John Waugh, brought thirty-two Chippewa down from Canada and had them sign the treaty. Even though the McCumber Agreement, or the Ten Cent Treaty as it became known, was proven to be a fraud, the U.S. Senate ratified it in 1905.

Slide 8. The agreement established the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota. Some Little Shell band members did eventually settle there; however, many refused and migrated north and west into Canada and Montana, seeking refuge with relatives in those areas. Because there was no formal enrollment procedure at the time, there was no written documentation that the Little Shell Band of Chippewa even existed. They received no compensation for their land and no assistance from the government.

Slide 9. In 1916 some Little Shell band descendants, members of Rocky Boy's band, received federal recognition and a reservation in Montana known as the Rocky Boy Reservation. At least 200 Little Shell descendants were left off the enrollment list.

Slide 10. In 1921, Joe Dussome and others created a formal organization, "The Landless Indians of Montana" (LIM), to advocate for the still landless and unrecognized Little Shell people. Throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, LIM lobbied the state and federal government for reservation land.

Slide 11. The Little Shell also petitioned the Indian Claims Commission, arguing that they had aboriginal titles to lands included within the 1855 Stevens Blackfoot Treaty in present day Montana. That claim was denied.

Slide 12. The tribe never gave up; members continued to gather and maintain their cultural traditions and they continued to press for their rights. It was a long fight. In 2003, the state of Montana recognized the Little Shell tribe. The tribe received federal recognition in 2019. Their rights are finally now recognized.