A Review of the Literature on Blackfoot Use and Occupancy of the Crowsnest Pass & East Kootenays

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Prepared for Blood Tribe/Káínai and Siksika Nation

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Introduction & Rationale

The freedom of the Blackfoot people to move through the plains, foothills and mountains of their traditional territory has been increasingly constrained by the privatization of lands for farming, ranching, urban development, coal mining and transportation since the 1870s (Blood Tribe/Káínai, 2018). The remaining tracts of available land where Blackfoot people can freely exercise their Indigenous rights are being reduced in size by the effects of forestry, mining, oil and gas extraction and protective notations. To protect Blackfoot culture, rights, sacred sites and traditional lands, *Káínai, Siksika* and *Piikani* have become progressively more active in consultation processes with industrial project proponents and the provincial and federal governments in the last 30 years (Chambers and Blood, 2009; Vest, 2005; Lanno, 2016; Blood Tribe/Káínai, 2018; Riversdale/Benga Mining, 2016).

While the Blackfoot (including Káínai, Siksika and Piikani) have had success ensuring they are consulted on developments within the Alberta portion of their territory, the Blackfoot have been collectively excluded from consultation processes surrounding large scale coal mine developments on the British Columbia side of the Crowsnest Pass. Káínai, Siksika and Piikani are noticeably absent from consultation records for several large-scale coal mine Projects in the East Kootenay District within the last ten years:

- Káínai, Piikani, and Siksika were absent from the list of potentially-affected Indigenous groups identified by Teck in its Engagement Plan for the Castle Project, Fording River Operations, although one Alberta-based First Nation, Stoney-Nakoda, was included (Teck Coal Ltd., 2020, 22).
- Only the Ktunaxa Nation Council was included in North Coal's Public Consultation Report for its Michel Coal Project (North Coal, 2020, 2; North Coal, 2019, 3). The Michel Coal Project includes coal license applications for Loop Ridge, Tent Mountain and Michel Head.
- The 2015 Project Description for the Michel Creek Coking Project (Loop Ridge Mine) contained only information on potential Project effects to Knutaxa, although the Proponent indicated that the Project could be of interest to the Piikani (but did not mention Káínai or Siksika) (CanAus, 2015, 4).
- The Ktunaxa Nation Council and the Shuswap Indian Band were identified as potentially affected Aboriginal groups in the Bingay Main Coal Project environmental assessment process, but the Blackfoot Nations were excluded (Centermount Coal Ltd, 2017, 3).
- Piikani, Káínai and Siksika were excluded from the engagement process for Coal Mountain (Phase 2) (Teck, 2014, 4-5).
- The First Nations Consultation Report for Teck's Fording River Operations Swift Project does not contain evidence of consultation with Siksika, Piikani or Káínai, although it does contain one map depicting the location of the Piikani and Blood reserves in relation to the Project (Teck Coal Ltd., 2015, Appendix 4.2-2, 1-5).
- Only the Ktunaxa Nation was included as a potentially affected group in the 2014 Project Description for the Crown Mountain Coking Coal Project and was provided the opportunity to conduct a traditional use study (NWP Coal Canada Ltd., 2014, 17).

> However, on a map depicting First Nations within 100 km of the Project, the Proponent displayed the reserve boundaries of the Blood, Piikani and Siksika (see Figure 5, NWP Coal Canada Ltd, 2014, p. 18). The Proponent states: "First Nations communities located within a 100 km radius of the Project are illustrated in Figure 5. It is expected that some lands locally within the Project area may be used for traditional purposes such as fishing, hunting, and collection of plants for food and medicine…"(NWP Coal Canada Ltd, 2014, 17). Yet, there was no indication that the Proponent had consulted or engaged with Piikani, Káínai or Siksika.

The purpose of this document is to investigate the historical and anthropological literature on Blackfoot history, culture and territory to determine whether there is evidence of Blackfoot traditional use and occupancy of the Crowsnest Pass and East Kootenay District of British Columbia, with a focus on the Old Man, Crowsnest and Elk River valleys.

The literature review included previously published impact assessments for industrial projects in the Crowsnest and East Kootenay Districts, historical documents (journals of fur traders), academic works on Blackfoot history, anthropological studies of the Blackfoot, and recent oral history accounts of Blackfoot use and occupancy. These oral history accounts include previously published documents as well as interviews by the author with Blackfoot Elders from Káínai and Siksika from 2018 to the Present.

Blackfoot Traditional Territory

The Blackfoot Confederacy consists of four tribes (each with their own First Nation or governance structure) and include the *Siksika* (Blackfoot), *Káínai* (Bloods), *Piikani* (in Canada the North Peigans or *Aputoksi-pikuni*), and the Montana Blackfeet (South Peigans or *Amiskapi-pikuni)* (Dempsey, 2015, 11; Crop Eared Wolf, 2007; Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 10). The tribes of the Blackfoot "share a common language and culture" and "intermarried and fought to keep enemies from [their] territory" (Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 10). In this document, "Blackfoot" is used to refer to the shared history, language, culture and way of life of the Piikani, Siksika and Káínai.

Most recent accounts of Blackfoot traditional territory agree that it encompasses a large area from the North Saskatchewan River to the Missouri River basin and from the Rocky Mountains to the Eagle Hills in modern-day Saskatchewan (although some mention the Great Sand Hills further south or the Cypress Hills) (Crop Eared Wolf, 2007, 1; Dempsey, 2015, 11; Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 10; Hall, 2020, 3). Ryan Hall writes that "the three Blackfoot nations – the Káínai, Piikani, and Siksika – had already lived on the northwest plains for more than a millennium. …Knowledge of this region, its history, its natural features, and its religious connotations defined Blackfoot identity. Starting in the early decades of the eighteenth century, this ancient homeland became subject to extraordinary transformations" (Hall, 2020, 3).

Although there is a general consensus in the literature that Blackfoot traditional territory refers to the area between the North Saskatchewan and Missouri River basins, from the Rocky Mountains to the Eagle Hills, the boundaries, frontiers, borders or liminal areas of this territory were somewhat fluid and dynamic between 1700 and 1877. This was due to the "extraordinary transformations" including the influence of equestrianism, virgin soil epidemics, the direct and indirect effects of the fur trade on patterns of trade and war-making with other Indigenous groups, and the Treaty process prior to settler colonialism (Lewis, 1942; Daschuk, 2019; Hall,

2020; Dempsey, 2015). All of these factors resulted in shifting patterns of occupancy and movement of Blackfoot people. The focus of this report is on the effects of these historical processes (Equestrianism, the fur trade, virgin soil epidemics and diplomacy/treaty-making) on Blackfoot occupancy and use of the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains, particularly the Crowsnest Pass, the upper headwaters of the Old Man River and the Elk River Valley in southwestern British Columbia.

The Blackfoot know the Rocky Mountains as *Mistâkistsi* which means "the backbone of the world" (Chambers and Blood, 2009, 254). While the mountains are central to the symbology, folklore and creation stories of the Blackfoot, they are often viewed as the limit of Blackfoot territory. "The Blackfoot drew physical and cultural boundaries, though they also mingled frequently with their neighbors. Although outsiders often assumed that Native borders were less fixed than those of Europeans, the Blackfoot clearly marked their boundaries, often using painted and carved images on rocks and along well-known trails and mountain passes to clearly identify Blackfoot territory to travelers as a distinct and sovereign space"(Hall, 2020, 23). The placement of the limits of Blackfoot territory along the front range or base of the Rocky Mountains has been reinforced by the location of the British Columbia and Alberta border, the boundaries of Treaty 7 and the Great Divide or Continental Divide.

While the front range of the Rocky Mountains might seem like a natural limit to Blackfoot territory, the longer-term historical evidence suggests that this boundary was relatively porous and there was a significant amount of movement by both Blackfoot groups and their neighbours across the front range of the Rockies. "The traditional circles drawn on maps representing tribal boundaries may be fine for a single point in time, but totally inappropriate for viewing life on the northern Plains" (Brink, 1986, 60). Further, the dramatic changes experienced by the Blackfoot and their neighbours in the century and a half prior to Treaty 7 suggest that the limits of Blackfoot territory were shifting along the western front. "Although the western limits of the Blackfoot are not clearly defined for this early period, a review of the literature enables us to reconstruct a general picture of tribal locations in this area in the pre-white period" (Lewis, 1942, 11).

Rather than a border or limit, the evidence in the literature suggests that the front-ranges of the Rocky Mountains along what is now the Alberta-British Columbia border were overlapping spaces of trade, war, and peace-making between the Blackfoot tribes and their neighbours, the Ktunaxa and Flathead peoples. Further, the mountainous areas of the Crowsnest Pass, Elk Valley and Old Man River have remained valued sites for seasonal occupancy, subsistence harvesting of plants, hunting and traditional cultural expression and spirituality.

The Ancient Blackfoot Way of Life

The Blackfoot are considered by many as the epitome of northwestern plains bison hunting cultures (Lewis, 1942; Daschuk, 2019; Peck, 2011; Hall, 2020). Certainly, the bison hunt was the pillar of traditional food production, social organization and environmental management. Blackfoot tribes moved seasonally through the territory following the bison herds. "In winter they sought shelter in the foothills or along the banks of the Bow, Old Man, Marias, and other rivers that fell within their domain" (Dempsey, 2015, 11). The bison was one of the key resources of the traditional Blackfoot economy and culture, providing meat and hides for subsistence, barter and trade. However, bison were not the only animals that were important. Domestication of canines and trapping and management of wolves and coyotes were parallel

to bison conservation and range management, as was conservation of the beaver. George Colpitts writes:

> for humans on foot to drive sometimes thousands of bison hundreds of miles is more than impressive. … [T]his "science" was most likely inspired by observing wolf behaviour in packs, and wolves have remained integral to Blackfoot cosmology ever since. The Siksika (Blackfoot), Piikani (Peigan, or Piegan), and Káínai (Blood) likewise esteemed beaver as one of the underwater grandfather creatures and maintained taboos against their hunting and trapping. This "conservation" had much to do with the animal's capacity to store water in otherwise parching plains streams and rivers, helping direct bison herds more predictably toward watering holes well known by humans. The bison-human-beaver nexus was complete in the Blackfoot beaver bundle ceremonies that aided buffalo callers – men and women – to direct and anticipate the bison herds in their midst (Colpitts, 2015, 64).

Through range management, controlled burns and wildlife conservation practices informed by local environmental knowledge, the Blackfoot created "parks" long before the arrival of Europeans. They managed, protected and conserved traditional resources such as bison through the creation of meadows, grasslands and pastures (Oetelaar and Oetelaar, 2008). The creation and maintenance of grasslands in upper foothills and lower mountain valleys was key to the bison range management of Indigenous peoples (Pickard 1981:56-58; White 1985:22-23, 97).

In the Crowsnest Pass, the Blackfoot were responsible for the extensive meadows that supported bison and provided fodder for horses in winter camps. "In this case, low intensity controlled burns apparently were used to remove the litter and shrubs thereby reducing the chances of a serious crown fire. At the same time, these grassland extensions created ideal pastures for the bison populations, especially during severe winters with substantial accumulations of snow" (Oetelaar and Oetelaar, 2008, 20). The Blackfoot actively created conditions for their own success as bison hunters, creating suitable habitat and driving live bison long distances, at first on foot, and later on horseback, so they could kill and butcher them close to home.

In addition to subsistence hunting, the Blackfoot participated in long-distance Indigenous trade networks. "Blackfoot people relied on exchange with outsiders and hosted frequent visitors. … [G]oods made their way to the northwest plains after passing through a series of regional trade centers and rendezvous. The margins of Blackfoot territory hosted several of these meeting places. Located at the junction of mountains, plains, and forest environments, Blackfoot territory often served as a meeting ground for peoples with radically different lifestyles and interests" (Hall, 2020, 23). Teit's Salish informants circa 1902 described pre-European contact trade routes through the Crowsnest pass: "There was considerable intercourse across the Rockies between the Upper Kutenai and the Kutenai-Tuna'xe, probably by the Crow's Nest Pass in British Columbia. …According to some informants the Salish-Tuna'xe were the chief traders east of the Rockies. Most of the trade from the west of the Rockies, and that from the Shoshoni and Flathead south of them, passed through their hands en route to the Kutenai and Blackfoot" (Teit, 1928, 357-358).

While goods from the Salish speaking peoples of the interior may have passed through the hands of the Ktnuxa on the way to the Blackfoot, there is ample reason to believe that trade went both ways. "Blackfoot people traded frequently with the diverse Native peoples in the mountains and foothills to their west. Kootenai, or Ktunaxa, people lived in the lands surrounding the Kootenai River drainage… The Kootenais shared many cultural similarities to

plains groups, especially in their ceremonies and clothing, but most lived in the grassy plateaus west of the continental divide" (Hall, 2020, 23). Kutenai, Flathead and Nez Percé from the Columbia River basin crossed "an enormous sweep of mountainous and broken terrain" through "multiple thoroughfares, interconnected trails, pathways and passages" to access the Blackfoot territory on the foothills and plains for yearly bison hunting (Farr, 2003, 4). However, Farr points out that travel went both ways as Kutenai were vulnerable to raids by the Blackfoot coming west over the Rocky Mountains (Farr, 2003, 11).

The quality of stone in the *Niitawahsin-nanni* (Blackfoot lands) is unsuitable for making arrow heads so it was necessary for the Blackfoot to acquire stone for arrowheads, axes and other tools from the Rocky Mountains or through trade with neighbouring tribes (see the Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 66). In addition, the Blackfoot on the eastern slopes of the Rockies traded pemmican with Indigenous groups to the west for sinew-backed bows and quilted leather armour (Lewis, 1942, 9). Trade required customs and protocols including treaties and peace pipe ceremonies which established the terms of trade and mutual obligations between the parties (ibid).

In addition to trade, the Blackfoot also engaged in war and peace-making with their neighbours, often in the form of raids or excursions west of the front ranges of the Rockies, but also on the northern, southern and eastern limits of their territory. Blackfoot were successful in managing their traditional territory through the organization of the defence of their lands from the "Kootenays to the west, the Crees to the north, the Assiniboines to the east, and the Crows and Shoshonis to the south" (Dempsey, 2015, 11).

Trade, warfare, incursions onto Blackfoot bison hunting grounds and natural resource management required diplomacy. As part of traditional territorial management, Blackfoot tribes made various forms of peace treaties with contending tribes on the frontiers of their territory, and later, with fur traders. These treaties could be between particular bands from different tribes occupying the same area, for example, between bands of Piikani and Ktunaxa that did not extend to all bands of both tribes or nations. "On occasions when full tribe-to-tribe treaties were made, the likelihood they would last was much better" (Dempsey, 2015, 17). Treaties between Indigenous bands and nations prior to the numbered Treaties with the Crown varied in geographic scope, formality and level of commitment. However, the existence of clear protocols and norms for peace and treaty-making, particular between the Blackfoot and Ktunaxa indicates some degree of contiguity of their traditional territories.

The Indigenous patterns of subsistence, trade, diplomacy and warfare across the front range of the Rockies changed dramatically in the 1700 to 1877 period due to the direct and indirect repercussions of encounters between Spanish, French and English-speaking conquerors, explorers and traders on the Blackfoot people and their neighbours.

Chronology of Blackfoot Use & Occupancy of the Rocky Mountains

This section consists of a chronology of Blackfoot historic use and occupancy of the East Kootenays and Crowsnest Pass region from publicly available sources, previous Project-specific reports and transcripts of interviews with Blackfoot (Káínai and Siksika Elders). The focus is on the upper Old Man River, Crowsnest River and pass and the Elk River Valley. However, the geographic focus is expanded where it is necessary to understand the historical forces that have shaped Blackfoot occupancy and use of these areas. The focus of this document

on the foothills and front ranges of the Rockies should not be taken to mean that other areas within the Blackfoot's traditional territory were less important. The chronology begins with pre-historic or pre-contact evidence, beginning with an overview of the main archaeological evidence which is supplemented by Blackfoot oral historical accounts of pre-contact life in the Crowsnest Pass.

Pre-historic/Pre-Contact/Archaeological Evidence

Archaeologists Brian O.K. Reeves and Jonathan Driver have published extensively on the archaeology, material culture, and 'pre-contact' history of the Crowsnest Pass (see for example Driver, 1985, 129; Reeves, 1974; Reeves, 2015 [1990]). Their work suggests that the Crowsnest Pass has been continuously occupied for more than 10,000 years by groups of nomadic hunters that moved between the mountains and the plains. According to Driver: "I would postulate that the Pass was occupied intermittently by groups of people who ranged widely along the western margins of the Plains, throughout the foothills and mountains, and into the Rocky Mountain trench and the eastern edge of the Plateau. Analysis of lithic material certainly supports this view, with cherts from Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Montana and obsidian from Wyoming confirming a view of wide-ranging contacts and movements" (Driver, 1985, 126). However, as Driver noted in 1985, the archaeological literature contains little information on the identity of the groups that hunted in the Crowsnest Pass in pre-contact times (1985, 112).

In order to link archaeological evidence of occupation with particular Indigenous groups, a review of historical literature provides clues. As Brink puts it: "Research may yet show that aspects of prehistoric Plains culture with preservable material correlates can be confidently linked with specific tribal groups. …. I am convinced that the historical records of Plains peoples remain the very best source of information on tribal identities and territories. Problem oriented consultation of these records will likely provide fruitful results. …This is especially true in comparisons between these records and the archaeological record" (Brink, 1986, 55). This section briefly explores links between the archaeological and cultural models of pre-contact Crowsnest Pass and Elk Valley with oral history traditions.

The existing archaeological and heritage resource conditions for Teck's Elkview Operations, Baldy Ridge Extension Project suggest the presence of tool flakes and projectile points similar to those found in Alberta. "The final established period, beginning around 2,500 BP, is characterized by a predominance of the use of chert and other cryptocrystalline material, and evidence of communal hunting strategies, particularly for bison as well as elk and sheep. Settlements begin to be associated almost exclusively with alluvial terraces that characteristically contain large amounts of fire-broken rock and burned and calcined bone. Small flake tools are common, as well as small side- and corner-notched projectile points similar to those found in Alberta …Top of the World Chert is well represented in this period" (Teck Coal Ltd., 2015a, B5-17).

The Heritage Effects Assessment conducted in 2011 for the Line Creek Operations Phase II Project included a literature review that suggests that "2,000 years ago, human presence in the Elk Valley correlated with travel between the more populous Rocky Mountain Trench and the foothills to the east of the Rocky Mountains. Within the last 2,000 years a semi-resident community was established which relied on the local flora, fauna and lithic resources of the middle Elk River drainage" (Choquette 2008 in Teck Coal Ltd, 2011, B5-10).

While Teck most strongly links the semi-resident community with Ktunaxa traditional occupancy and use of the Elk River valley, there is evidence that the Elk River valley was an important travel and trade route for Indigenous groups from the eastern side of the Rockies: "A network of trails extended up the Elk Valley, and are reported to have passed through the Project area (Line Creek and Dry Creek) extending to Tornado Pass to the west, as well as passes to the north. These passes were also used by groups from east of the Rockies visiting Ktunaxa territory, with the Elk Valley reportedly being an important location for trade and interaction between Ktunaxa and groups including the Stoney (Nakoda) and Pikani (Peigan) of the Blackfoot Confederacy"(Teck Coal Ltd., 2011, B5-12).

Some additional perspective on the potential cultural identity of the people who left these heritage artifacts is provided in Teck's 2015 assessment which drew on input from Ktunaxa Nation: "It is also reported that there were important camping or settlement locations at Grave Prairie, near Elkford, as well as elsewhere along the Elk River. These passes may also have been used by groups from east of the Rockies visiting Ktunaxa territory, with the Elk Valley being an important location for trade and interaction between Ktunaxa and groups including the Stoney (Nakoda) and Pikani (Peigan) of the Blackfoot Confederacy into the 20th century"(Teck Coal Ltd, 2015a, B5-5).

The archaeological record and the interpretation of the Ktunaxa Elders are consistent with the oral history account offered by Blackfoot Elders on the pre-historic or pre-contact patterns of occupancy and use of the Crowsnest area. Oral history accounts of Blackfoot Elders recount how their ancestors occupied the Crowsnest pass and the trails between the Crowsnest River and the Old Man River for spring and summer bison hunting. The higher elevations offered stone that they quarried for tool and weapon-making. They used the pass to travel through the mountains to trade with the Ktunaxa. Many traditional stories are told within Blackfoot oral history that relate to the Crowsnest Pass and surrounding area.

During interviews about the Crowsnest Pass and surrounding area in 2018, Blood Tribe Elders described the area as "ómahkai'stoowa" which means "Crow's Nest" or possibly "Crow's lodge." Grassy Mountain is "matóyihkoistsi" (Ray Black Plume and Martin Heavy Head, 2018). Crowsnest Mountain, Thunder Mountain, Racehorse Creek and Napiw's Gambling Place all have traditional stories, spiritual and cultural significance associated with them (Striped Wolf, 2018).

Káínai Elder David Striped Wolf states that the Crowsnest Pass area "is a very sensitive area" and that the area between Thunder Mountain (Livingston Range), Crowsnest Mountain, Turtle Mountain and Grassy Mountain are the geographic sources of a Blackfoot origin story (David Striped Wolf, Interview, October 12, 2018). This story, he tells us, is summarized in the Blackfoot Gallery Committee Book (2013):

> *Ksiistsi-komm* (Thunder) was jealous of a man and wanted his wife. He struck their tipi, knocked them unconscious and stole the woman. When the man recovered, he wandered all over, asking many animals to help him find his wife. All were afraid of the power of Thunder. Finally, *Omahkai-stow* (Raven) agreed to help. He flew to Thunder's home and challenged him. *Ksiistsi-komm* shot lighting bolts at *Omahkai-stow*, trying to kill him. But *Ohmahkai-stow* used his own power and, by flapping his wings, brought on the cold north wind and snow. Gradually, the cold slowed down *Ksiistsi-komm* until he could no longer send out the dangerous bolts of lightning. It was a long battle, but eventually *Ksiistsi-komm* gave up and returned the man's wife. *Omahkai-stow* insisted that he and *Ksiistsi-komm* divide the year into two parts: winter, which is Omahkai-

> stow's season, and summer, which is *Ksiistsi-komm*'s time. *Omahkai-stow* also ordered *Ksiistsi-komm* to make a peace treaty with the man and to give our people his pipe as a sign of this agreement. From that day onward we have opened our Thunder Medicine Pipe Bundles each spring at the first sound of thunder. We ask for good weather, good crops and good luck for the coming year. *Omahkai-stow* lived at the place now called Crowsnest Mountain"(Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 23-25).

After telling this story, David indicated that it refers to the area that includes Crowsnest Pass, Turtle Mountain, Thunder Mountain and the Old Man River Valley. The objects that compose the Thunder Pipe and Medicine Bundles are found in these areas. In Blackfoot religious practices, *Naa-to-yi-ta-piiksi* (spiritual beings) took on human forms and gave the Blackfoot ceremonies, songs and physical objects that taught them how to cooperate with others to live, work and provide food to each other. These objects are kept together in sacred bundles (Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 20-21). While the contents of the sacred bundles, including the Thunder Pipe and Medicine Bundle are secret, the Crowsnest Pass remains especially important to the present as a destination to harvest the items for the Thunder Medicine Pipe bundle.

Another sacred object that has its origins in the Rocky Mountains is the Bear Spear. According to McClintock who visited the Blackfoot in 1886 and again in 1903:

> Many of the Blackfeet legends relate to the origin of their medicines, and the manner in which supernatural power was transmitted to men by the Sun. When an Indian desired to know the future course of his life, or to receive knowledge, that would be of value to his tribe, he went off alone upon the plains, or to a remote region among the Rocky Mountains, to fast and pray, sometimes for many days, that he might receive a dream or vision. If he was worthy, a message would be transmitted to him from the Sun, through some animal, or supernatural being, whose compassion had been excited by his fasting and exhausted condition. The revelation, and with it the gift of power, generally came in a dream through the medium of one of the more powerful animals, such as the buffalo, beaver, wolf or grizzly bear, which were believed to have supernatural attributes, or through one of the personified natural forces, such as the Thunder Chief, the Wind Maker, or Es-to-ne-a-pesta,—Maker of Storms and Blizzards. The Blackfeet believed that this power was conferred upon the animals by the Sun, and they in turn were able to transmit it to men. If, for instance, the grizzly bear bestowed his power upon a man, that man would attain the nature of a grizzly. It would be difficult to kill him in battle, because of his wonderful vitality, or life force, and like the bear, he would inspire fear among his enemies. At the death of the owner of this power, or medicine, it was handed down to his son, or someone worthy to possess it, along with the ceremonial and the story of its origin, which became one of the most valuable of his possessions and was made known only upon special occasions (McClintock, 1910, 352-353).

One of these sacred powers is the Bear Spear. The story of its origin near the Rocky Mountains was told to McClintock by Onesta, who had the Bear Spear in his possession circa 1903. The events in the story "happened at the time when the Blackfeet used dogs, instead of horses, as beasts of burden" (McClintock, 1910, 354). A young man named Sokumapi, son of a chief, sought to retrieve some valuable items that were taken from his parents at their fall camp. He went alone to search for these items and was taken into the cave of a Grizzly Bear where he spent the winter in the shelter of the bear.

> But, before they left the cave, the Medicine Grizzly bestowed upon Sokumapi his supernatural power. He brought forth a long stick and, raising himself upon his hind legs, stretched out his arms and extended his claws. Throwing up his head, he snorted and rolled back his lips, showing his long sharp teeth. He said, 'Behold my nose, with its keen scent, and my claws and teeth which are my weapons! Everything fears the grizzly bear. There is nothing living upon the earth that

> dares to defy my power. When you return again to your people make a Bear Spear. Secure a long stick like this I am holding. To one end of it attach a sharp point, to represent my tusks. Tie bear's teeth to the staff and a bear's nose, which must always go with the teeth. Fasten eagle feathers to the handle and cover the staff with bear skin painted with sacred red paint. Grizzly claws should also be tied to the handle, so that they rattle like the noise a grizzly makes when he runs. When you go into battle, always wear a grizzly claw in your hair, and my power will go with you. Whenever you attack, imitate the noise a grizzly makes when he charges, so that your enemy will be afraid and will run away, just as everything that lives on earth runs from a grizzly.' The bear taught him the chants to be used in healing the sick. He also showed him how to paint his face and body, so that he would not be struck in battle, red over his body, black across the forehead, and two curved black lines at either side of his mouth, to represent bear's tusks. The bear warned him that the Spear must be kept sacred. Its supernatural power must be used, only in battle and for healing the sick. When anyone is near death, a relative can make a vow to purchase the Bear Spear, and the sick will then be restored to health by the supernatural power that goes with it (McClintock, 1910, 358-59).

Sokumapi indeed made the Bear Spear and it was said to give him strength and power in battle and was used to heal the sick. The songs and origin story of the Bear Spear were passed down for generations of worthy Blackfoot men including Onesta. Today the Bear Spear is in the possession of Richard Right Hand. Richard acknowledges that the origin of the Bear Spear and its components are from the Rocky Mountains. This material connection between pre-contact Blackfoot occupancy of the Rocky Mountains and its continuity with oral history and culture signal the profound importance of the remaining Grizzly Bear habitats in the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains to the Blackfoot people (Right Hand, 2020).

The Crowsnest Pass and surrounding areas were also strategically important for the Blackfoot in pre-contact times as it was at the western edge of their territory and was along a trading route with the Ktunaxa who were at times trading partners and at times enemies (Martin Heavy Head, Interview October 12, 2018). Traditional territorial management involved both defense but also diplomacy with the neighbouring Ktunaxa and protocols were put in place to govern access to border areas. David Striped Wolf explained it as follows: "When the Ktunaxa come out and ask for permission to harvest at the back of our traditional territory, they come up with a stick tied together with grass. They come out and they sit in the higher ground where you could see them and they make a sign of peace and ask for permission to come and harvest and hunt the buffalo. And we said ok. And also the Blackfoot people would go to the Ktunaxa territory to harvest and hunt and kill mule deer, they would go there to get things that you don't get on the prairie like sweet pines"(David Striped Wolf, Interview, October 12, 2018).

Pre-contact occupancy of the area is still reflected in Blackfoot folklore. Ray Black Plume speaks about the significance of the Crowsnest Pass area: "There is a legend, a story, about that Crowsnest, right beside it there is a mountain. That is where [the ancestors] chased up these enemies a long time ago. And it was winter and it was very cold. So these enemies they were frozen up on that mountain. But it in the morning as their spirits came down the mountain, the Blackfoot heard them singing" (Ray Black Plume, Interview October 12, 2018). David Striped Wolf elaborated on what Ray said. "You can see on the Crowsnest Mountain the gravesites and where they killed enemies. When Ray talked about the battle, where the enemy was killed they built a fireplace. And Ray told us that you hear them singing on the way back down. [David sings the song]. The next morning they went up the trail but they were only spirits. And that song is used to mark that site. And I cannot tell you exactly where the tipi ring was, but

his dad and my grandpa they told us these stories and sang us these songs" (David Striped Wolf, Interview, October 12, 2018).

Traditional resource management of Blackfoot territory involved the use and control of fire. "And in fact when we went into the [Crowsnest] pass, we cut trees to keep the fire back. And sometimes those fires would go out in the prairies so there would be new growth in the springtime and then the buffalo would go in there and we would head them into the buffalo jumps. So all the buffalo jumps those are all Blackfoot" (Martin Heavy Head, Interview October 12, 2018). The use of fire management and bison jumps in the pre-contact hunt is one important aspect of pre-contact use of the area. Consistent with the oral history account of fire management and creation of pastures in the Crowsnest Pass, Dawson's 1884 maps of grassy areas show tracts of grasslands that reach up the Crowsnest River to the foot of Crowsnest Mountain (Dawson, 1884). Oetelaar and Oetelaar note that this is "Crowsnest Mountain, the home of Raven in the world of the Blackfoot" and they attribute the presence of this meadow - suitable for bison and horse pasture - to the use of fire as an environmental management practice by the Blackfoot (2008, 20).

Finally, archeological evidence of bison jumps, tipi rings and medicine wheels are, according to Martin Heavy Head, *de facto* signs of Blackfoot occupancy: "There is no other group that made Buffalo jumps. And also a tipi rings. There's no other group that made tipi rings. The Blackfoot were the only ones that made tipi rings. And also the medicine wheels. Those are all Blackfoot medicine wheels" (Martin Heavy Head, Interview October 12, 2018).

The oral history accounts provide some insight on the identity of the Indigenous groups associated with the material record of pre-contact occupancy of the Crowsnest Pass and Elk Valley. Ktunaxa and the Blackfoot Elders concur that the area was a transitional space of encounter for hunting, trade, diplomacy and in some cases war. This interpretation is further supported by a review of the historical and anthropological literature on Indigenous use and occupancy of the Crowsnest Pass, Old Man River and Elk Valley between the early stages of contact with Europeans and the time of Treaty 7.

Historical Perspectives on Early Contact– 1690 to 1780

There is a great deal of debate within the historical literature on the movements, territorial occupation and tribal boundaries in the period immediately preceding contact with European fur traders (Brink, 1986; Daschuk, 2019; Far, 2003; Dempsey, 2015; Lewis, 1942). On the one hand, Brink suggests that Indigenous peoples may not have held shared concepts of territorial boundaries and sovereignty so common to Euro-centric worldviews and therefore the Blackfoot and Ktunaxa may have shared some degree of territorial overlap (Brink, 1986, 60). On the other hand, Hall argues that the Blackfoot clearly marked and defended their territorial boundaries to alert outsiders that they were entering "a distinct and sovereign space" (Hall, 2020, 23). This would suggest that the Blackfoot actively defended and asserted their political domination over their territory and resisted attempts by outsiders to access their resources.

The review of the literature presented in this section suggests that the Blackfoot had established patterns of occupancy all along the front ranges of the Rockies and plains between the North Saskatchewan and Missouri rivers for at least 1000 years (Hall, 2020, 14). Many references in Blackfoot oral history collected by early ethnographers such as Walter McClintock refer to the pre-equestrian or "dog days" when Blackfoot people travelled on foot and carried goods with the help of dog travois, traveling into the mountains on a network of trails (McClintock, 1910,

39; 352). McClintock's informants often provided accounts of the origins of Blackfoot sacred objects such as medicine bundles, pipes, or the use of the sacred Bear Spear which originated in the Rocky Mountains. Many of these materials are still in the possession of Blackfoot people today and attest to the unique ancient connection between the Blackfoot people and the Rocky Mountain portion of their traditional territory (Right Hand, 2020).

Sometime between 1700 and 1730, a few bands of Ktunaxa established themselves in the Elk Valley and hunted east of the Rockies, sometimes staying on the plains year round (Schaeffer, 1982; Lewis, 1942). Meanwhile, the Shoshone (or Snake) moved into the southern portion of Blackfoot territory and may have pushed the Blackfoot north in the early eighteenth century. However, the Blackfoot succeeded in containing the Ktunuxa to the west side of the Rockies and the Shoshone south of the Missouri River on a semi-permanent basis with the help of smallpox epidemics, due to mounted attacks, or a combination of both. By some estimates, this occurred from the 1730s to 1745 (Daschuk, 2019; Lewis, 1942; Teit, 1928). Others argue that the Ktunaxa were not permanently pushed over the mountains by the Blackfoot, and if they were decimated by smallpox, this did not occur until the 1780s (Hall, 2020). From the 1780s to about 1807, fur trade records are much clearers: the Ktunaxa were subject to Blackfoot control of the flow of goods from fur trade posts on the North Saskatchewan River and the Rockies (ibid).

While the Blackfoot regularly entered into the Elk River, Kutenai and Flathead River valleys west of the front ranges, to trade, raid, hunt and possibly camp seasonally, they did not assert political authority over these valleys in the 1690 to 1877 period. They did, however, claim political supremacy over their traditional territory along the base of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains from the North Saskatchewan River to the Missouri which lasted, though occasionally contested, until the 1870s. The Crowsnest Pass, Elk Valley and headwaters of the upper Old Man River, therefore, were zones of encounter between the Blackfoot and their Ktunaxa neighbours which were used by both for subsistence, trade, diplomacy and war.

The written historical record of the location and movements of the Blackfoot just prior to contact with Europeans is limited by the narrow, biased or fragmented observations made by outsiders of the Blackfoot, usually from afar. Fur traders such as Henry Kelsey who made it to the eastern edge of Blackfoot territory in 1690 had very little knowledge of Blackfoot identity, culture, language or even whereabouts (see Lewis, 1942, 10; Brink, 1986). Further, the focus of European fur traders, whether French or English, in the early phase of the fur trade saw them confined to the distant posts on the Bay while Cree and Assiniboine middlemen took the trade inland to the frontiers of the Blackfoot territory. "[S]ince the traditions of the Blackfoot, Assiniboine, and Cree all agree that the Blackfoot were the most westerly group, it seems certain that the Blackfoot were on the Plains west of the South Saskatchewan by 1690-91 and most probably a good deal earlier"(Lewis, 1942, 10).

The predominant interpretation of historical and anthropological sources suggests that the Ktunaxa, Flatheads and Shoshone (also known as the Snakes) had acquired horses that were descended from those brought by Spanish conquistadores on their conquest of Mexico (Dempsey, 2015, 12; Goodstriker, 1996, 5). Now more mobile out on the plains and more formidable in battle, the Shoshone from south of the Missouri and the Ktunaxa from the Rocky Mountain trench surged onto the plains east of the Rockies and pushed the pre-horse Blackfoot north and eastward into the North Saskatchewan River valley, likely between 1700 and 1730 (Teit, 1928, 110; Lewis, 1942, 11; Daschuk, 2019, 23; Brink, 1986, 17-19). This account was

informed by David Thompson's journals of his early voyages (in 1786-88) when he spent time with the Piikani between the Old Man and Bow Rivers along the foothills. On that trip, Thompson received an oral account of Blackfoot history between the 1730s and 1780s from a Cree man named Saukamappee who had lived among Thompson's Piikani hosts and served as his interpreter (Brink, 1986-17).

The northward surge by the Shoshone (and eastern ventures onto the plains by the Ktunaxa) prompted the Blackfoot to retaliate by raiding Ktunaxa, Flathead and Shoshone camps for horses or acquiring them through trade. From his research among the Salishan speaking peoples of the interior of what is now British Columbia, James Teit confirms that the Blackfoot acquired horses through trade and warfare with the Flathead and Shoshoni who had horses before they did (1928, 110). By about 1730, the Blackfoot were mounted and quickly adapted their hunting, migration, trade and warfare patterns to equestrianism. From there, they went on the counter-attack south and westward.

Contemporaneous to the acquisition of horses from the Ktunaxa and Shoshone, the Blackfoot traded with the Cree and Assiniboine for guns, ammunition and iron-tipped arrows. "The Blackfoot received their first horses from the Shoshone in 1730, and at about the same time obtained firearms and iron from the Cree and Assiniboine. Thus armed with the gun and iron for their arrows, and aided by a small-pox epidemic among the Shoshone, the Blackfoot, with the aid of the Assiniboine and Cree, defeated the Shoshone at about 1733, and initiated a period of great expansion to the west and southwest"(Lewis, 1942, 11). Around the same time that they pushed the Shoshone southward, the Blackfoot pushed the Ktunaxa westward into the mountains.

Claude Schaeffer disagreed that the theory that the Blackfoot forced the Ktunaxa off the plains and over the Rockies (1982). Schaeffer's Ktunaxa informants described the location of a Plains Kutenai band – the Michel Prairie Band whose main campsite was on a tributary of the Elk River (1982, 4). This band frequented the Crowsnest Pass and hunted on both sides of the Great Divide, occasionally venturing into the Waterton Lakes or to the confluence of the Bow and Old Man Rivers. Although this group ventured more frequently onto the plains, Schaeffer believes, after they first acquired the horse, they never permanently abandoned their ties to the Elk Valley (1982, 5). Schaeffer hypothesized that there was a smallpox epidemic in the 1730s that killed most of the Michel Prairie band, scattering the survivors to other Ktuxana groups. Rather than Blackfoot aggression, it was smallpox that triggered the Ktunaxa to abandon the Elk Valley from which they made their forays onto the plains (see Brink, 1986, 32-33).

According to informants of James Teit's, there was a band of Salish-Tunaxe known as Kakwagemetu'lcenik who "spoke the same dialect as the Upper Kutenai of Tobacco Plains and Fort Steele. They are said to have had their headquarters in the heart of the Rockies in the Crow's Nest Pass near Michel, British Columbia, and to have hunted on both sides of the divide. They are reported to have been killed off by an epidemic and the few survivors scattered. A very few of them settled among other bands of Kutenai as far north as Windermere" (Teit, 1928, 311). When exactly this epidemic occurred or whether it was Blackfoot aggression or the epidemic that pushed the Ktunaxa west of the Great Divide is up for debate (Teit, 1928; Brink, 1986, Daschuk, 2015; Hall, 2020). Schaeffer, Teit and Daschuk suggest the epidemic occurred in the 1730s, but Hall assumes it was in 1781-2 (2020, 59).

Daschuk's argument is that the adoption of the horse as a mode of transportation greatly enhanced the capacity of the Blackfoot for long distance trade, migration and war-making but it also facilitated the spread of smallpox and other diseases. "Kutenai tradition maintains that the Kutenai were driven from the western margins of the plains and into the mountains after their infection with smallpox in the 1730s"(Daschuk, 2019, 23). Daschuk therefore links the retreat of the Kutenai into the mountains with Blackfoot expansion (or reconquest of its traditional territory), virgin soil epidemics and the adoption of the horse.

In Blackfoot oral tradition, there is a spiritual explanation for the division of territory between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot, suggesting that it was not simply the military might of the Blackfoot that pushed the Ktunaxa westward, but rather negotiation, diplomacy, or perhaps fate. Piikani Elder Tom Yellowhorn described how the Blackfoot and the Ktunaxa divided up the hunting grounds along the Great Divide. "Napi was interested in the land east of the Great Divide because he wanted land that was rich in fish, deer, elk, and buffalo. But Napi lost the land west of the mountains when he was defeated by the Kootenay in the ring game, but he was able to save the land east of the [Rockies]. After he lost the game, the Kootenay people never came across the mountains" (Elders of Treaty 7, 1996, 101). Napi's loss of the land to the west and the consolidation of land to the east of the mountains has an element of fate or chance in Tom Yellowhorn's version, possibly smallpox, which played into the establishment of a boundary between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot.

Whether due to Blackfoot aggression or smallpox, or a combination of both, the surviving Ktunaxa of the Elk Valley (Michel Band) who had occupied the plains, possibly on a semi-permanent basis between 1700 and 1730, were now confined to the west of the front ranges as the Blackfoot reconquered their territory south of the Bow River along the foothills between 1730 and 1745 (Lewis, 1942, 14). It was thus the combined effects of equestrianism, virgin soil epidemics (smallpox), and the adoption of firearms that the Blackfoot managed to reconquer control over lands up to the Crowsnest Pass and the headwaters of the Old Man River from 1730 to 1745. From there, the Blackfoot extended their range along the eastern edge of the Rockies south as far as the Missouri River from about 1750 to 1770 (Lewis, 1942, 14). Daschuk writes: "the epidemic undermined the Kutenai presence on the western plains and contributed to their retreat to the mountains in the face of Niitsitapi expansion. For the Snakes, the epidemic began their long retreat from the Canadian plains, though conflict persisted until the end of the eighteenth century" (Daschuk, 2019, 25).

Toward the latter quarter of the eighteenth century, "the whole country along the eastern foot of the Rockies, north of Yellowstone, was in possession of the Blackfoot and had become very dangerous ground" (Teit 1930, 318). By the time Thompson encounters the Piikani in 1787, the "whole country along the eastern foot of the Rockies north of the Yellowstone was now in the possession of the Blackfoot, who extended their war expeditions west of the Divide, penetrating far into Flathead, Nez Percé and even Kalispel country"(Lewis, 1942, 14). With firm political control over the eastern slope of the Rockies, the Blackfoot were able to extend their trade, war and hunting activities into the Elk River valley and beyond into the Rocky Mountain trench between 1730 and 1780.

Meanwhile, in the mid-1700s, the attempts by fur traders to set up posts in Blackfoot territory were unsuccessful. French traders such as La Verendrye tried to establish direct trade with the Blackfoot to cut-off trade routes to the Hudson's Bay Company which expected Indigenous peoples to take furs and meat to the post in exchange for goods. Still, La Verendrye's French-

régime period trading posts were all east of the forks of the Saskatchewan River and therefore, according to Lewis, outside the territory controlled by the Blackfoot at the time. These included Fort Paskoyac (1750), La Jonquiere (1751) and Fort St. Louis (1753) (Lewis, 1942, 16).

Anthony Henday's visit with the Blackfoot on the plains near present-day Red Deer in 1754 was intended to encourage them to come to the Hudson's Bay Posts at distant For York to trade. The Blackfoot, likely the Bloods, refused on account of their dislike of long canoe journeys, fish and fowl, the only food of the voyageur, and preferred to stay within reach of the plains and the bison herds (ibid, 17). The Hudson's Bay Company's reliance on Indigenous travel to its posts made it vulnerable to middlemen. "Beginning in 1763, the Hudson's Bay Company was met by a new threat, - independent French and English traders from Montreal who went inland and carried their trade goods to the very doors of the Indians. They were derisively named Pedlers by the Hudson's Bay Company servants. To meet this competition, the Company sent Matthew Cocking west in 1772. He visited the Blackfoot in 1773, and again attempted to induce them to trade at Fort York on Hudson Bay but he received the same reply given to Henday twenty-one years earlier"(Lewis, 1942, 17). To face the threats of the traders and in attempt to compete, the Hudson's Bay Company established posts further west in the North Saskatchewan basin but remained removed from Blackfoot territory and could not entice the Blackfoot to regularly trade beaver at the post (Lewis, 1942, 18). This would change after a definitive epidemic of smallpox in 1781-82.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot occupied overlapping territories along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains from about 1700 to 1730. Through a combination of equestrian prowess and horse-raiding, ironically on horses acquired through the Ktunaxa and Shoshone, the Blackfoot succeeded in regaining the foothills from their adversaries. This enabled them to extend their territory for hunting, trade and warfare further west into the Elk River and Kootenay River watersheds. They were aided in this by the acquisition of firearms and the effects of virgin soil epidemics on their adversaries, although they too suffered from epidemics. The dynamics of warfare, trade, rivalry and virgin soil epidemics become much clearer in the 1781 to 1877 period, in part due to more detailed fur trade records.

Blackfoot Use and Occupancy of the Rocky Mountains – 1781 to 1877

A smallpox epidemic in 1781-82 devastated the Blackfoot and shifted the patterns of occupancy, trade and war between the Blackfoot and their neighbours to the west (Brink, 1986, 19; Daschuk, 2019, 25). The smallpox epidemic of 1781-82 killed approximately one third of the Piikani, Káínai and Siksika by Hall's estimate (2020, 44). "Smallpox robbed bands of key political leaders, hunters, healers, and warriors, which forced some bands to merge together for protection and stability" (Hall, 2020, 45). One of the consequences of the epidemic was an intensification of Blackfoot involvement in the fur trade.

Hall remarks that survivors of smallpox after 1782 began to visit fur trade posts on the North Saskatchewan River in attempt to re-establish their material wealth and security. They began to hunt more in order to trade directly for knives, metal tools and firearms at the fur trade posts rather than relying on Cree or Assiniboine middlemen, as they had prior to the 1781 epidemic. This marked the formal entry of the Blackfoot into the fur trade. Mainly they offered pelts of foxes, wolves, lynxes, bears and bison robes (although fewer beaver due to taboos on beaver kills). Since these items were less in demand, it was not until the demand for pemmican began

to flourish in the 1790s that the Blackfoot found their niche in the continental fur trade (Hall, 2020, 48-49).

By the end of the eighteenth century, Blackfoot hunters had become the principal providers of pemmican and horses to the fur trade. "In 1785, near Waterton Lakes, the Kootenay brought horses to the Blackfoot in trade for guns which the Cree had acquired for the Blackfoot from traders on the Saskatchewan River. The Kootenays were unable to acquire guns from their Spanish trade contacts, as it was a that time against the law for Spanish traders to provide guns to the Indians"(Goodstriker, 1996, 6). The Blackfoot continued to acquire horses from the Shoshones, Flatheads and Ktunaxa which they also traded at the posts or used as currency in trade with other groups (Hall, 2020, 56-57). Thus, the fur trade prompted the expansion of trade, horse raids and war-making on neighbouring tribes after 1781. Between the expansion of market for pemmican and an increase in trapping, hunting and horse-raiding to support trade, the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82 accelerated the Blackfoot peoples' entry into the fur trade and intercontinental commerce.

Despite the intensification of Blackfoot trading activities after 1782, the Blackfoot remained intent on keeping fur traders out of their traditional territory and continued to deny fur traders opportunities to set up posts within Blackfoot country. The Blackfoot preferred to travel to the posts rather than allowing the fur traders into their lands. David Thompson was unable to establish trading posts following his visits to the Piikani in 1787 (Lewis, 1942, 20).

Peter Fidler followed Thompson's footsteps and over-wintered with the Piikani in 1792 to 1793 but he was unable to convince the Blackfoot to let him build a fort in their country. Fidler's journals provide some clue about the usual patterns of occupancy of the Old Man River valley and by inference the Crowsnest and Elk River valleys. Brink writes: "Fidler decided to winter with the Peigan - or Muddy River Indians (Pekanow) as he called them - in southwestern Alberta, departing from Buckingham House on the North Saskatchewan River in November. The trip eventually took him to the Porcupine Hills and Oldman River valley, which Fidler noted (entry for Nov. 8, 1792) …. Indian groups frequently encountered by Fidler's entourage included the Blackfoot, Blood and Sarsi (Sessuew he called them), and their comings and goings seemed so commonplace as to barely rate notice"(Brink, 1986, 21). Clearly the Piikani, Siksika and Kainai bands were deeply inter-connected and shared their traditional territory on the east side of the Rockies.

Further, the Ktunaxa appeared to be held beyond the Rockies, although travel and trade between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot are described. Peter Fidler's journal entry for December 31, 1792 when he was among the Piikani in the Old Man River valley "mentions that a trail made by the Kutenai through the mountains at the headwaters of the Saskatchewan was the northernmost trail of these Indians. A Kutenai home west of the Rockies is indicated…. The river referred to is probably Racehorse Creek, a southwest tributary of the Oldman River just inside the Gap"(Brink, 1986, 27). From Fidler's 1792-93 observations, Brink figures that "Blackfoot were specifically located on the Red Deer River, and Peigan were implied to reside along the foothills of the Rockies. … Blood Indians were mentioned and encountered by Fidler, but were never designated a specific territory. …We learn that Kutenai were commonly encountered in the mountains and foothills of southwestern Alberta, and a home just west of the mountains was indicated" (Brink, 1986, 27).

Descriptions of the relations between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot are generally characterized as hostile in the 1781 to 1807 period. "Fidler provides ample documentation for the intentional actions of the Blackfoot to prevent the acquisition of European items by the Kutenai (entry for Dec. 31, 1792). This enabled the Blackfoot to maintain superiority over the Kutenai and to trade with the Kutenai on their own terms"(Brink, 1986, 28). Hall argues that the Blackfoot strategically blockaded the Ktunaxa from trading directly with Europeans.

> Blocking their neighbours' access to trade yielded ancillary benefits as well, and some Blackfoot people profited by shuttling goods between the North Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains at a substantial markup. … More than other mountain nations to the south, the nearby Kootenais relied entirely on Blackfoot middlemen for European goods, and the NWC's David Thompson remarked that the Piikanis held them in 'dependence' through trade. Positioning themselves as intermediaries also allowed the Blackfoot to control exactly what European technologies their neighbors could acquire, though they did provide some guns to the Kootenais (Hall, 2020, 59).

The intensification of Blackfoot trade at the posts along the North Saskatchewan River after 1781 empowered the Blackfoot militarily and they were determined to keep their western neighbours away from the posts by force if necessary. Hall therefore dates the Ktunaxa retreat into the mountains as a consequence of Blackfoot expansion and enhanced capacity for warfare through their strategic control of the flow of European goods through their territory.

> By 1800, Kootenai bands largely retreated from the western plains and foothills and chose to take refuge year-round in the Kootenay River region west of the mountains. The move ended a long Kootenai tradition of living and hunting on the plains for at least part of the year. Blackfoot raids had a similar impact farther south along the Rockies. … Their access to the fur trade therefore allowed the Blackfoot to assert their control over key bison hunting grounds, and by the end of the century Blackfoot raids had forced most of the mountain nations to abandon their hunting expeditions and retreat into the mountains year-round(Hall, 2020, 59).

It is important to note here that Hall puts the retreat of the Kutenai due to Blackfoot assertion of territorial power after 1780s but Daschuk argues that the retreat of the Ktunaxa can be traced to the smallpox epidemics of the 1730s. The middle position would be that there was a period of overlapping use and occupancy of the Rocky Mountains and foothills in places like the Crowsnest Pass. This created opportunities for war and raiding but also diplomacy and trade between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot.

The mountain tribes were able to resume their escapades onto the Plains to hunt after 1807 when the trade through Kootenae House on the Columbia, established by Thompson, enabled them to acquire weapons to rival the Blackfoot (Hall, 2020, 85). Rather than a definitive retreat from the plains due to smallpox or Blackfoot military power in the 1730 to 1745 period, Hall asserts that the Ktunaxa continued to make excursions onto the plains throughout the 1700s but were only definitively pushed into the mountains in the 1780 to 1807 period.

Thompson managed to establish a post in Ktunaxa territory in 1807. This enabled him trade ammunition and guns for fur with the Ktunaxa who would thereafter be better equipped to challenge Blackfoot authority over the plains. This threat prompted the formation of a war party of Piikani who set to destroy Ktunaxa House. Thompson's efforts to defuse the situation were only successful after he offered large gifts of tobacco and pipes to the Chief of the Piikani war party (Lewis, 1942, 20). After 1810, the empowered Ktunaxa and Flatheads were better equipped to confront the Piikani and began to make further incursions east of the Rockies into Piikani territory where confrontations occurred (Lewis, 1942, 20).

Northwest Company Fur trader Alexander Henry the Younger provided descriptions of the Blood, Blackfoot and Piikani he encountered on his journeys over the Great Divide in 1811. Henry's description suggests that the Blackfoot frequently journeyed "beyond the Rocky Mountains" to harvest ochre. He wrote that they "daub their bodies, robes, and garments profusely with red earth…. They have another favorite pigment, which they procure on their excursions beyond the Rocky mountains, of a glossy lead color, which is used to daub their faces after red earth has been applied"(Henry, 1897, 525). Henry claims that the Ktunaxa "being driven into the mountains by the different tribes who lived E. of them, with whom they were perpetually at war" were pushed from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains to the upper Kootenay River watershed (Henry, 1897, 704-706).

Blackfoot territorial management in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century involved the use of military power to manage trade with its Ktunaxa neighbours. By keeping fur traders and Cree and Assiniboine people on their northern flank, they managed the bison ranges and controlled the flow of goods to the Ktunaxa. "In the early part of the nineteenth century, Siksikàitapiiksi (Blackfoot) protected their territory and resources fiercely. In spite of continuous attempts to encroach on their territory, Siksikàitapiiksi kept fur traders and missionaries at bay as long as they could"(Chambers and Blood, 2009, 258). After the establishment of a fur trade post at Kootenae House, Blackfoot control over trade with the Ktunaxa was effectively undermined.

While the emphasis in the literature is on warfare between the Blackfoot and the Ktunaxa, there is also a long tradition of trade and diplomacy. Blackfoot Elders have described a long tradition of treaty-making with other Indigenous groups prior to Treaty 7. The concept of treaty making is known in the Blackfoot language as *innaihtsiini* (The Elders of Treaty 7, 1996, 67). Louise Crop Eared Wolf explains that this "concept of treaty is one of creating a good and lasting relationship between two nations who at one time were at war with one another" (The Elders of Treaty 7, 1996, 68).

Frequent contact between the people from east of the Columbia River basin including the Flatheads, Ktunaxa and Blackfoot led to the development of a sign language that was universally understood by all the tribes with some local variations (Teit, 1928, 136-148). These signs were useful when encountering a potentially hostile enemy at a distance but could also be used to signal a willingness to trade or parley (ibid). The existence of a common sign language used by all of the tribes that inhabited the borderlands between the Rocky Mountains and the plains suggests that they were in frequent contact with one another. Further, it suggests that these portions of their territories mutually overlapped or that there was a frontier zone where they encountered one another, such as in the Elk Valley and Crowsnest Pass.

These frontier or liminal areas are described by Hall as follows: "Liminal areas between nations' territories often became de facto neutral grounds, where no nation's bands could feel comfortable enough to camp without being attacked, but where hunters of various stripes could visit temporarily in search of bison. Neutral grounds surrounding Blackfoot country had begun to shrink as other nations encroached during the 1840s and 1850s, leading to increased conflicts" (Hall, 2020, 127). These conflicts prompted the need for treaty making between the various Blackfoot, Blood, Piikani, Ktnuxa and Flathead bands occupying the foothills and front ranges of the Rockies.

Evidence of peace treaties between Ktunaxa and Blackfoot tribes support the idea of liminal or frontier zones. Recorded in the Blackfoot winter counts In 1825, "Bad Head, a Blood, recorded as 'many/when they made a peace treaty,' commemorating a treaty that included the Bloods, Gros Ventres, Flat Heads, Kootenays, and Nez Percés" (Dempsey, 2015, 30). This treaty was also recorded by Peter Skene Ogden of the Hudson's Bay Company who said "the tribes met near Sun River, and on September 22, 'after a long parley they parted good friends'" (Rich, 1950 Dempsey, 2015, 30).

The American Fur Company built Fort Mackenzie in the Montana country on the Missouri River near the mouth of the Marias River in 1834 in attempt to trade with the Blood and Piikani. In 1837, a smallpox epidemic broke out on the company's steamship which subsequently delivered a load of goods to the Piikani and Blood. Over the following two months, up to 6000 members of the Piikani, Blood and Siksika had died as the disease spread among the Blackfoot lodges north of the 49th parallel (Lewis, 1942, 25). In the small pox epidemic of 1837, the winter counts suggest that between one quarter and a half of the Blackfoot died (Chambers and Blood, 2009, 256).

The combined effects of smallpox, the looming extirpation of the bison and the imminent threat of mass settlement prompted treaties between the Blackfoot and Ktunaxa. Demspey cites an account of a treaty between the Piikani and the Ktunaxa/Flathead in 1871 provided by a surveyor who witnessed the peace procession, drumming and pipe-ceremony that brought peace between the bands. Another peace treaty was made between Ktunaxa and Piikani south of Fort Macleod in 1874 (Dempsey, 2015, 28).

Even in the early years after Treaty 7, prior patterns of trade and diplomacy between Blackfoot and Ktunaxa continued. In an interview with Reverend Wilson in 1887, Chief Crowfoot stated that the Blackfoot crossed the mountains to trade with who were presumably Ktunaxa people, although he indicated that they were not related to the Blackfoot and spoke a different language (Wilson 1887, 12). In the early 1900s, Wissler and Duvall wrote "for many years the Blackfoot and Kutenai Indians visited each other and exchanged a few ceremonies. The most important one acquired by the Blackfoot seems to have been the Black-Tail-Deer Dance, a ceremony to aid in hunting deer" (Wissler and Duvall, 1995 [1908], 157). These would be mule deer.

The patterns of trade and diplomacy between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot peoples were heavily influenced by virgin soil epidemics and the decimation of the plains bison herds which factored into treaty making with the Crown. These events had implications for both Blackfoot and Ktunaxa traditional use and occupancy of the Crowsnest, Elk and Old Man River valleys.

> Epidemic and famine can sound innocuous, as if there were no perpetrator, as if the near decimation of a people is the inevitable result of natural events, perhaps even fated. This was especially true for the Niitsitapiiksi, where historical and ethnographic accounts written by Nââpiikoaiksi (the newcomers) almost normalize famine, as if it were a natural part of life for a "primitive nomadic" people, "subsisting" on a single, unpredictable food source, the "migrating" buffalo herds. So when the bison, whose numbers were estimated to be anywhere from thirty to seventy million prior to European contact, were deliberately and violently decimated within a few short decades, the resulting famine was naturalized. Sayings such as the buffalo "vanished" or "disappeared" are part of everyday English discourse. These euphemisms are taken for granted in curriculum, textbooks, trade books and popular culture, and go unnoticed. Better to say the buffalo "vanished," as if by magic,

> than to admit they were massacred without regard for the effect on all the Niitsitapiiksi. While loss of the buffalo was devastating for the people, the ecosystem and landscape of the entire Great Plains were irrevocably altered: the wolves, vultures, and grizzly bear lost their source of food and abandoned the Prairies; the grasslands were no longer grazed, as only the buffalo could graze them; the people no longer set fire to the grass to force new growth and attract the herds (Chambers and Blood, 2009, 257).

The cumulative effects of the extirpation of the bison, settler colonization, agricultural expansion and industrial development on crownlands including in the Crowsnest Pass and the front ranges of the Rockies have dramatically altered the traditional way of life of the Blackfoot people.

The findings from the historical literature review suggest that the Elk River Valley, the Crowsnest Pass and the headwaters of the Old Man River were frontier zones of overlapping territory between Ktunaxa lands west of the Great Divide and Blackfoot territory east of what is now the Alberta-British Columbia border. Ryan Hall argues that "[f]rom the late eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth century, the Blackfoot were among the most powerful, prosperous, and geographically expansive polities in all of North America. The Blackfoot accomplished this in large part by recognizing and mastering the transnational dimensions of their homeland. They stifled and rerouted early Canadian, British, and American exploration, and controlled the flow of European technologies like guns and metal weaponry into the trans-Rocky Mountain West for more than a generation" (Hall, 2020, 5).

Bands of Ktunaxa and Blackfoot, whether Piikani, Kainai or Siksika, regularly traversed the Great Divide to trade, hunt, or raid between 1807 and 1877. The pursuit of traditional hunting, diplomacy and trade between the Blackfoot and Ktunaxa took place in the Elk River Valley and the Crowsnest Pass as these were transition zones between lands both groups controlled and occupied on a permanent basis. Further, relations between the Blackfoot and Ktunaxa in this frontier area were shaped by subsistence strategies, trade and diplomacy including alliance formation, virgin soil epidemics and the actions and interests of fur traders. With the signing of Treaty 7, relations between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot in this frontier area were further shaped by the arrival of settlers, ranchers, farmers, coal miners and railway crews.

Cultural Significance of the Crowsnest Pass Area

As the original inhabitants of what is now southern Alberta, Blackfoot culture, spirituality and territory are tightly connected. "Relationships with the land and all of the other living forms are characterized by respect and reciprocity. The identity and culture of the people is closely linked to their relationship with the land. The origin stories located the people on the land, defined relationships and gave instructions concerning the people's responsibilities" (Crop Eared Wolf, 2007, 15). The link between the Blackfoot and their traditional territory is well documented. Central to the material and cultural heritage of the Blackfoot people is the Crowsnest Pass area.

Wissler and Duvall noted that Blackfoot creation stories are well defined and feature Napi (Old Man). Napi has had a role in explaining the "origins for many aspects of material culture, such as the buffalo-drive, the making of weapons, methods of dressing skins, etc." (Wissler and Duvall, 1995[1908], 9). Further, the places associated with Napi are real places that can be identified, many of which are in the Crowsnest Pass and Old Man River headwaters. "A considerable number of places and topographical features were associated with his adventures;

as Old Man's River, Tongue Flag River, Old Man's Gambling Place, Old Man's Sliding-Place, Rolling-Stone Creek, etc. In fact, there seems to be a tendency to give all of his adventures a definite location in what is now Alberta" (Wissler & Duvall, 1995[1908], 9).

Blackfoot sacred sites in the Crowsnest Pass area and elsewhere are being reclaimed from the effects of colonialism, restrictions on movement, private enclosure of land and the loss of traditional ways of life. This includes reclamation of significant cultural and heritage sites or Blackfoot cultural properties. Chambers and Blood describe the importance of particular places to the Blackfoot: "Some places mark events of significance: vision quests, burials, effigies (human and animal), offerings, rock cairns, and battles. Some were places of sustenance: buffalo jumps and pounds, root and berry picking spots, campsites, tipi rings, trails, and river crossings. Others are sites of creation (Sun and Moon and coming of light): the antics of creator and trickster, Nââpi; … Other places are the origin of the bundles and spiritual societies"(Chambers and Blood, 2009, 261).

The sacredness of the Crowsnest Pass and surrounding areas to the Blackfoot, therefore, must not be overlooked or understated since the Pass contains all of these elements; spiritual sites, bison pounds, camps, trails, river crossings, significant mountains, stone features and sites of the most famous Napi stories. "In Blackfoot, it is said about such places, 'There is a holy presence there;' and in English, *kitâôowahsinnoon* has been called a sacred landscape" (Chambers and Blood, 2009, 261).

Blackfoot sacred places continue to be celebrated for their role in creation stories and moral or education tales. "Our sacred sites are places where significant things happened to our ancestors. This is where the ancient stories took place. These sites are uniquely important to us. They tell us that our ancient stories are true. They tell us that we belong to this place in a way that no other human being can" (Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 63).

Restrictions put on Blackfoot people from leaving the reserve after Treaty 7, the effects of residential school and colonization and settlement of Blackfoot territory made some of the most important sites for Blackfoot spirituality inaccessible for generations. These places are now being reclaimed. "A few years ago, one of our researchers started inviting the Elders to visit the sacred places that were in our stories. Many of them were affected emotionally as they arrived at those places that they had only heard about in our stories. Many of the Elders were moved to tears as they realized that there was an actual place on earth where this story took place" (Fox, 2014, 30).

Fox notes that many people from Blood tribe make regular visits to sacred sites such as those in the Crowsnest Pass area. "Each year many of my people visit the sacred sites, remembering the stories, making offerings, giving thanks to the Creator, *Ihtsipaitapiyopa,* for giving us the gift of being in that special, significant sacred place. Visiting these sacred places, remembering their significance, remembering the stories and why these places are sacred to the *Káinai* Blood Nation is critical to the survival of many aspects of our spiritual, cultural ways of knowing and ways of being" (Fox, 2014, 30). The sustainability of Blackfoot culture and ways of knowing are tied to the opportunity to access Blackfoot heritage sites.

The destruction of sacred Blackfoot sites in the Crowsnest Pass and the Elk River Valley for open pit mining endangers the transmission of traditional knowledge, culture and spirituality because it threatens destruction of Indigenous material culture. Chambers and Blood state:

> For Siksikâitapiiksi, these places are not simply piles of rocks, cliffs, or glacial erratics; they are places imbued with meaning and history. These places are the equivalent of books, encyclopedias, libraries, archives, crypts, monuments, historical markers, and grottos; these are destinations for pilgrims; places of sacrifice, revelation and apparition; and sources of knowledge and wisdom. For Siksikâitapiiksi, these places are repositories for the knowledge left by the ancestors. … Siksikâitapiiksi have played their part in keeping the memory and knowledge these animate beings bear alive through the continual enactment of the songs, ceremonies and stories. In this way, much knowledge has survived the onslaught of colonialism (Chambers and Blood, 2009, 261).

Dempsey writes that "one of the most significant ways in which [Indigenous people] have left a permanent imprint has been in their choice of place names" (Dempsey, 1987, 3). There are several Blackfoot names for communities in the Crowsnest Pass area. Beaver Mines is called *Estay-sukta*, meaning "where we get paint" because of the deposits of red ochre in the area (ibid, 6). Blairmore is known as *nitay-stato-ksistokyopi* meaning where they cut logs, referring to a sawmill in the town (ibid). The Crowsnest is called *Mai-stow-kowa*, literally meaning crow's nest or crow's lodge (ibid, 9). The original name for Frank was *Nato-o-siskoom* meaning "holy springs" but this name was changed to *A-wawa-kai* after the avalanche destroyed the village in 1903 (ibid, 11).

Blackfoot culture, knowledge, wisdom and folklore has survived colonialism and the destruction of much of the traditional way of life including the local bison herds. However, large scale mining developments within the most sacred portions of Blackfoot territory now threaten culturally significant landscapes. "To these people then, the resources are there because their ancestors visited the places created by their heroes, and they must continue this tradition so that future generations can enjoy the homeland and its resources. It is this conservation ethic which is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of parks and protected areas within the homeland of the Blackfoot before the arrival of Europeans" (Oetelaar and Oetelaar, 2008, 6).

The conservation ethic and the centrality of the Crowsnest Pass area to Blackfoot cultural sustainability and traditional knowledge transmission indicates the need for in-depth consultation with Blackfoot people in the face of large-scale natural resource developments. These developments, on both the British Columbia and Alberta sides of the border, could dramatically alter the Indigenous landscape of the Crowsnest Pass and East Kootenays. This is not only a historical frontier region of interaction between the Ktunaxa and Blackfoot, but is the geographic source of Blackfoot creation, culture, spirituality and knowledge.

Current Use and Occupancy of the East Kootenays and Crowsnest Pass

The enclosure of lands within Blackfoot traditional territory for ranching, farming, urban development and coal mining and the loss of available crown land to oil and gas extraction, forestry and protective notations has reinforced the historic importance of the foothills and front ranges of the Rocky Mountains for traditional purposes. The few remaining landscapes within Blackfoot territory where the Kainai, Siksika and Piikani can still hunt, gather, trap, fish and camp include the Crowsnest Pass and Elk River valleys, although these are at risk of destruction from large scale coal mine projects.

Although the bison are long gone from the Crowsnest Pass, Blackfoot people continue to hunt for elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, moose and occasionally bear in the foothills and front slopes

of the Rocky Mountains. Ray Black Plume stated in an interview: "We want to keep these crown lands. We still hunt there. It provides us with food. I am still hunting. We need these crown lands. We want to keep our traditional way, we want to keep it, we don't want to let it go. And that is where we want the government to still allow us to use these crown lands. And what used to be our traditional lands in the mountains, we want to keep them"(Ray Black Plume, Interview, October 12, 2018).

Restrictions on access to public lands in the foothills have already impeded Blackfoot hunting activity. As Mike Oka put it: "I know a lot of hunters used to get in there and do a lot of hunting but they cannot do that anymore because of the gates that are locked. And those are the concerns that we have. Our traditional lands are shrinking daily. So it is impacting our treaty rights – hunting, fishing gathering and aboriginal rights - to be able to go out there and harvest what we need and make an offering" (Mike Oka, Interview, October 12, 2018). The additional loss of available public land for hunting and potential access restrictions due to mining activity in the Elk River Valley will contribute to the cumulative effects of land loss in the foothills and in the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains.

David Striped Wolf used to hunt big horn sheep and elk in the Crowsnest Pass and the front ranges of the Rockies. "I used to hunt a lot over there. I would climb all the mountain right there …. Elk, big horn sheep"(David Striped Wolf, Interview, October 12, 2018). Due to oil and gas extraction, forestry and ranching as well as private settlement of lands, David's current level of access to the area to hunt has been constrained. This is in stark contrast to his experience hunting in the area in the 1940s and 1950s as a boy with his father and grandfather: "That is where my Grandfather was telling me they would go. My father went hunting and they taught me to hunt, the sacredness of life, and I would go there. We hunted to put food on the table. And I started trapping mostly beavers and muskrats. I would skin them and I would get $20 for one pelt of beaver. At that time it was a lot of money. It helped to put food on the table. … Then of course you have the story about the Beaver Bundles, they hunted, just where we went there. They went all over there. And in these places, they found what they needed" (David Striped Wolf, Interview, October 12, 2018).

Hunting remains an important part of Blackfoot traditional culture; however due to the extirpation of the Bison from Blackfoot territory, alternative species are now hunted. "While the Káínai and other Siksikaitsitapi traditionally hunted buffalo more than any other game, today Mule Deer and White-tailed Deer are by far the most commonly sought game. Other species that people mentioned hunting for food include elk, pronghorn, … ring-necked pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, and waterfowl" (Lanno, 2016, 49). These hunts are motivated by the need to acquire food for subsistence or materials for ceremonial use for pow-wows and medicine bundles (ibid). Since much of Blackfoot territory has now been taken up for agriculture, forestry, mining and oil and gas extraction, Blackfoot people must travel further to hunt, usually into the Rocky Mountains. "Just as people must journey to the Rocky Mountains if they need certain plants or tipi poles, people who hunt elk must also leave the reserve" (Lanno, 2016, 49).

The main species hunted today by Blackfoot harvesters in the Crowsnest Pass and East Kootenays are elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep. "We hunt sheep in there and then there are things for the ceremony. And also the elk. We go hunting mule deer. They have mule deer there"(David Striped Wolf, Interview, October 12, 2018). The mule deer in the mountains taste

better than the grain-fed deer on the prairies, according to Ray (Ray Black Plume, October 12, 2018). Occasionally Blackfoot Elders will hunt bears to use the hide in one of the bundles.

In addition to hunting, the Crowsnest Pass and East Kootenays are currently used by Blackfoot people to harvest a variety of food and medicinal plants. Blackfoot people continue to travel through the Crowsnest Pass, Sparwood and Fernie areas to pick a variety of plants for food and medicinal purposes including roots, stems, leaves and berries (Lanno, 2016, 36-37). "Knowing when to find certain plants is also a major factor to consider by anyone who picks. This body of knowledge is not relegated to simply knowing what time of year to look for a specific plant, but also how variations in weather (primarily rainfall or lack thereof) throughout Blackfoot Country impact those plants. [This] also engages the annual cycle of Blackfoot movement, which often switched between mountain, foothill, and prairie environments throughout the year in order to most efficiently gather resources (including plants)" (Lanno, 2016, 39). The foothills of the Rocky Mountains were important as sources of Lodgepole pine used to make tipi poles (Blackfoot Gallery Committee, 2013, 61).

Gathering plants for food, for medicines, to use as fuel or for building materials brings Blackfoot people in touch with sacred sites. "Occasionally, picking brings people close to sacred and historical sites, in which case it presents an opportunity to engage with them. …While these landmarks are significant in pinpointing picking locations and by personal engagement, the sites at which people pick also take on significance and become landmarks themselves, used to identify the place that other events have taken place or locate other places"(Lanno, 2016, 40). Aspects of the seasonal rounds that saw Blackfoot people move between mountain and prairie depending on the availability of resources are maintained today. "Similarly to the manner in which time of year engages the meta-geography of Blackfoot Country, so does the locating of specific plants. Certain plants, such as a type of camas root, rat root, and the lodgepole pine (Pinus contorta), can only be found in the Rocky Mountains, the eastern slopes of which lie in Blackfoot territory and are still visited by people in search of these mountain plants"(Lanno, 2016, 40).

The historic practices of bison hunting, trade and diplomacy between the Blackfoot and Ktunaxa in the East Kootenays and Crowsnest Pass have been dramatically altered over the last 330 years by the cumulative effects of contact with Europeans including the acquisition of horses, virgin soil epidemics, adoption of steel, firearms and the expansion of commerce. In the latter part of this history of contact, confinement to reserves, enclosure of land and the loss of the bison have dramatically altered the way of life of the Blackfoot. However, many aspects of the traditional way of life have been maintained including hunting and gathering food and medicinal plants. Further, the central place of the Crowsnest Pass in Blackfoot culture, spirituality and traditional knowledge has been maintained by Blackfoot people as demonstrated by the pilgrimages and gathering expeditions to sacred sites.

Conclusion: Towards a Cumulative Effects Assessment of Industrial Mining on Blackfoot Culture in the Crowsnest Pass and East Kootenay Region

The evidence discussed in this report indicates that the Blackfoot people (*Kainai, Siksika* and *Piikani*) have occupied the territory that includes the Crowsnest Pass and the front ranges of the Rockies for at least 1,000 years, possibly longer. Oral history accounts of both Ktunaxa and Blackfoot Elders concur that the Crowsnest Pass was a zone of encounter (trade, diplomacy and war) in pre-contact times.

The historical accounts of fur traders suggest that since the early eighteenth century, encounters between these Indigenous peoples in the East Kootenays and the Crowsnest Pass became more intense; new motives for trade and warfare appeared. The arrival of European traders (Spanish and Americans to the south) and French and British to the east introduced foreign elements to Indigenous life that were quickly adapted and embraced by both Ktunaxa and Blackfoot. However, these forces created new dynamics that played out along the frontier in the front slopes of the Rockies involving horses, firearms and virgin soil epidemics. More recent anthropological accounts of Indigenous history indicate movement between the mountains and plains for bison hunting, trade and warfare. However, these movements went both directions with Blackfoot expanding their range of hunting, trade and diplomacy into the Elk River, Kutenai, Flathead and Columbia watersheds as Ktunaxa ventured onto the plains to hunt bison.

Clearly the historic zone of encounter between Blackfoot and Ktunaxa did not stop at the Great Divide or the location of the current Alberta-British Columbia border. Today, Blackfoot people continue to travel into the Crowsnest Pass and Elk River valleys to hunt, camp, gather food and medicinal plants and visit sites of historic, cultural and spiritual importance. These sites are at risk of destruction from coal mining on both sides of the Great Divide. However, the jurisdictional boundaries for regulation and environmental impact assessment follow the provincial boundaries. It appears that industrial mining proponents have interpreted the provincial border as the limit of consultation. This is not warranted by the historical evidence discussed here.

Rather, it appears that the Blackfoot people have ancient connections to the lands on both sides of the Great Divide. Further, Blackfoot historical patterns of use and occupancy indicate the importance of the Crowsnest and Elk River valley as zones of encounters with the Ktunaxa. Finally, the Elk River, Crowsnest River and Old Man River valleys continue to be used by *Kainai, Piikani* and *Siksika* for traditional purposes such as hunting, gathering plants, camping, ceremonies and traditional knowledge transfer. These factors suggest that the Blackfoot would be equally impacted by open pit coal mining activities on either side of the Great Divide, whether the project is regulated by the government of Alberta or British Columbia.

In short, the East Kootenays and Crowsnest Pass are sensitive areas for the exercise of Blackfoot rights. The fact that there are multiple, large scale open pit coal mines planned in close proximity to one another puts Blackfoot rights, traditional use and cultural heritage at risk. In order to fully understand how mining on both sides of the Great Divide would impact the Blackfoot Confederacy, a regional cumulative effects and cultural impact assessment is warranted. Such an assessment would recognize that impacts to rights, culture and traditional territory are not limited by the location of the provincial border.

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