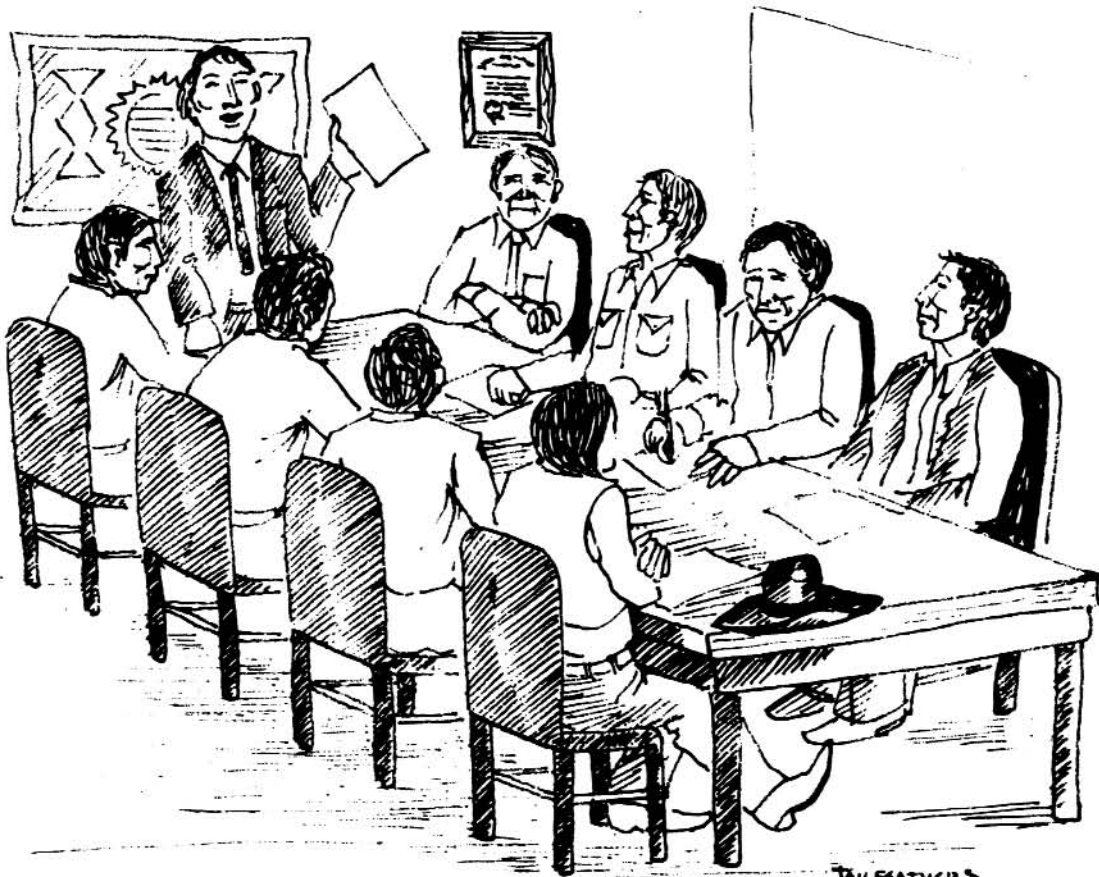
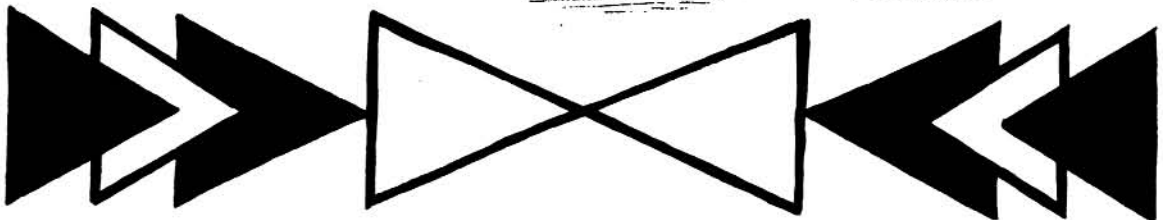


A CULTURAL CHANGE

(Blackfeet)



TAILFEATHERS



Developed by the Blackfeet Indians

Joan Bullshoe Kennerly
June Bullshoe Tatsey
Carmen Bullshoe Marceau
Doris Bullshoe Old Person
Patricia Tatsey Newman

Information Furnished by:

Joseph Old Chief
Blackfeet Historian and Elder

Illustrated by Melvin Tail Feathers

Critiqued by Earl Old Person, Chief of the Blackfeet Tribe

Joseph Coburn, Director
Pacific Northwest Indian Reading and Language Development Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Developed by the Pacific Northwest Indian Reading and Language
Development Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory,
300 Southwest Sixth Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97204

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The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to
Contract No. 400-80-0105 with the Educational Equity Group/Multi-
cultural/Bilingual Division of the National Institute of Education. It does
not, however, necessarily reflect the views of that agency.

Printed and bound in the United States of America

A CULTURAL CHANGE

(Blackfeet)

Our chiefs have been the leaders of the Blackfeet Tribe. These chiefs started training as small children. They performed many difficult tasks to prove themselves worthy before they held positions as chiefs. This took many years. They had to continue to maintain their positions, perform their duties and make decisions. They had to be in good physical condition and use sound judgment.

After the coming of the non-Indian people to Blackfeet country, a drastic change came about. This had a great effect on our cultural way of life. This new way was totally different from the ways of the past. Our living, decision making, type of administration and life style have all changed.

The Blackfeet people were placed under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs which long ago was a branch of the War Department. In 1851 the Blackfeet Reservation was established in Montana with the Treaty of Fort Laramie. At that time, the Blackfeet were placed under the supervision of the Department of the Interior. The Bureau of Indian Affairs had main control of government and decision making. The Blackfeet people essentially remained there until the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. This is also known as the Wheeler Howard Act. This act recognized tribes as nations. It spelled out that any tribe which became chartered and adopted a constitution would become a legally recognized corporation.

The Blackfeet wrote a charter and adopted a constitution which is still in effect. The tribe became a self-governing body in 1936. This move brought about an election of tribal members which is now known as the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council.

An election is held in June on even-numbered years. Blackfeet members are elected from four districts on the reservation. There used to be thirteen members, but now the council consists of nine. The council members are elected by a popular vote of the Blackfeet people. The election is supervised by the Bureau of Indian Affairs Superintendent of the Reservation. After the nine members have been elected, they have the power within their own group to elect a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and several different committees.

We do have an Honorary Council which is made up of elderly people, but they are not elected. They volunteer. They share their ideas and their knowledge and make suggestions and comments.

We also still have a traditional chief. This particular position has been handed down from one generation to another. This position follows in our traditional way rather than the contemporary way. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council has

become the main governing body with decision making power for the Reservation. They do, of course, work in conjunction with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the United States Government.