

Rocky Boy's Reservation

Location

The Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation is located in north central Montana, taking in portions of both Hill and Chouteau counties. The reservation lies 90 miles south of the United States-Canadian border near the boundary separating the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. The city of Havre (pop. 12,000) is located 26 miles to the north. U.S. Highway 87 between Havre and Great Falls intersects the reservation at Box Elder. Reservation roads total 216 miles with 62 providing well-paved, easy access to major points throughout the reservation. Airport facilities in Havre and Great Falls provide commercial airline services. Rail service, including Amtrak, is available in Havre on the main east/west line of the Burlington Northern Railroad; a south spur adjoins the reservation.

Mt. Baldy, Mt. Centennial and Haystack Mountain are the more prominent landmarks found within the boundaries of the reservation. All three maintain significance in one way or another for the Chippewa Cree. East Fork, and Bonneau Dams are also popular recreational areas.

There is no town site on the reservation. The community of Rocky Boy is truly rural in every sense of the word. Rocky Boy's Agency is the hub of all reservation activity and serves as headquarters for the Chippewa Cree Tribe. The Rocky Boy's Reservation is the smallest reservation in the state of Montana and the last to be established.



Population

The reservation's unusual name comes from the leader of a band of Chippewa Indians. Translated from the Chippewa language it means Stone Child, but the original translation was lost and the name Rocky Boy evolved. The reservation was established by Executive Order in April 1916, when Congress set aside 56,035 acres for the Chippewa and Cree Bands of Chief Rocky Boy. In 1947 the reservation was expanded by 45,523 acres, bringing it to nearly its current size. None of the land has been allotted, though some individual assignments have been made.

The ethnic origin of the residents of the Rocky Boy's Reservation has remained complex, with the reservation becoming home to a diverse group of Cree, Chippewa, Metis, and Assiniboine peoples. The Cree represent one of the largest Native American groups in North America. While primarily residing in Canada today, a group of Cree settled in northern Montana after the Riel Rebellion in 1885. Led by Little Bear, these Cree eventually, after some three decades, became associated with a band of landless Chippewa under the leadership of Stone Child or Rocky Boy.

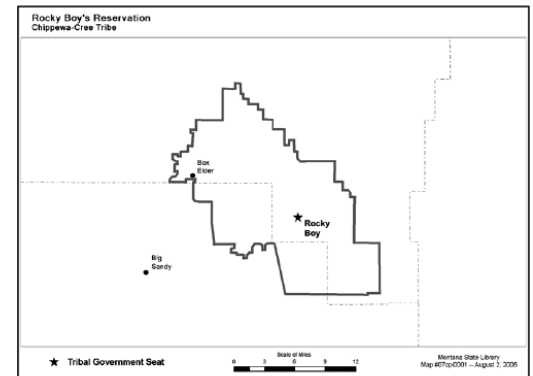
The principal use of lands within the reservation is grazing and dryland farming. There is no substantial industry with the exception of a few small family-owned businesses. Although the reservation is isolated from larger metropolitan areas, community residents are avid participants in church, community, and school related activities, such as basketball games. This extreme isolation also accounts for the rich cultural heritage continuing on the Rocky Boy's Reservation.

Land

Rocky Boy's Reservation was established by Executive Order in 1916. Along with the passage of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, the Chippewa Cree Tribe had the opportunity to acquire the remaining land base, which consisted of area farm operations that had been abandoned during the depression era, thereby bringing the reservation land base to the current 122,259 surface acres.

Rocky Boy's Reservation is unallotted and is held in trust for the entire tribe. The reservation's resource base consists of farm and range lands, minerals, timber stands, and the Bear Paw mountains which sustain wild game, fish, waterfowl, and springs and creeks that converge to form seven major drainages.

The reservation has three distinct topographic zones including the Bear Paw Mountains in the southeastern portion, central rolling foothills, and semi-arid plains in the north. The reservation is also split by Hill County covering the northeast and Choteau County covering the southwest portion of the reservation. Reservation topography is dissected, showing glacial plains and volcanic outcroppings. Small perennial streams arise in the Bear Paw Mountains, cutting steep sloped valleys. Elevation on the reservation ranges from 2,500 on the plains to 6,916 feet on top of Baldy Mountain. The average annual precipitation ranges from ten inches at the lower elevations to 20 plus inches at the higher elevations. Temperature extremes are commonly from 110 degrees to -35 degrees Fahrenheit. Winters are long and cold and the roads are narrow and treacherous, particularly in the winter months.



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Historical Background

Chippewa lived in bands on both sides of what now divides their aboriginal homelands, the Canadian border and the Great Lakes region. The Cree territory extended from eastern Canada into the Saskatchewan and Alberta provinces. The Tribes began their migrations in the 1700s and 1800s and by the early 1890s had united in a search for a permanent home - a place where children could be brought up in peace, where their religion would be uninterrupted and flourish.

Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation was named after Ah-se-ne-win, or Chief Stone Man; "Rocky Boy" evolved from the non-Indian misinterpretation. The reservation was established through the persistent efforts of Chief Rocky Boy (Chippewa) and Chief Little Bear (Cree). The two chiefs and their followers, numbering 450 at the time, had sought refuge in sizable Montana towns, cities, and even other Montana Indian reservations including the Blackfeet, Flathead, and Fort Belknap Reservations.

Three non-Indians were instrumental in assisting Chief Rocky Boy's and Little Bear's efforts: William Bole, editor of the Great Falls Tribune, Frank Linderman, and Charles Gibson, son of Montana Sen. Paris Gibson. Gibson also applied much political pressure in both Montana and Washington, D.C., and gained supporters for the establishment of a reservation on the Fort Assiniboine lands for Rocky Boy and Little Bear.

The first years on the reservation were difficult ones. There were few jobs and many people had to go off the reservation to find work. Those who stayed tried to garden, hunt, pick rock, and collect bones, wool, tin, and other metals.

The population of the Rocky Boy's Reservation is about 5,000 with 3,750 of the residents being enrolled members of the Chippewa Cree Tribe. By the year 2045, the reservation population is expected to reach 16,000 people. The birth rate for the community is three times that of the national average and over 60 percent of the tribal membership is under 25 years of age. The reservation resident population is comprised from approximately 450 families. There are 675 homes located in 11 low-income clustered housing sites and scattered housing sites throughout the 81,000 acres in the lower reservation elevations.

Government

The Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation was organized in accordance with the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934 (34 Stat. P. 984) as amended by the Act of June 15, 1935 (74th Congress, Pub. No. 147). The governing document is the Constitution and Bylaws of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation, Montana, which was signed in 1935 and amended in 1973; the Charter was ratified in 1936. The Chippewa Cree governing body is the Tribal Business Committee comprised of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and seven members who are elected at large by the tribal membership and serve four year staggered terms.

The Tribe entered into a Bureau of Indian Affairs Self-Governance Compact Agreement with the U.S. Department of the Interior in October 1993 and assumed all the functions, services, and activities that were previously a governmental function at the Rocky Boy's Bureau of Indian Affairs agency. The mission of the Chippewa Cree Tribe is to conduct all business in the best interest and understanding of the tribal members.

Tribal Business Committee members serve on 18 subcommittees that have direct oversight and decision-making authority for tribal departments and programs. The subcommittees include: Administration, Stone Child College, Water Resources, Health Board, Gaming, Housing, Social Services, Senior Citizens, Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance, Enrollment, Housing Improvement Program, Development Company, Imasees Land and Cattle, Self-Governance, Public Works, Public Safety & Law & Order, Risk Management, and Natural Resources.

In accordance with Ordinance No. 1-77, applications for new enrollment are presented with supporting documents and the necessary proof of tribal enrollment. The tribal Enrollment Committee then reviews applicants fulfilling the requirement of one-fourth Chippewa-Cree blood. Enrollment meetings are held throughout the year to review and approve any and all applications.

Education

The first school on Rocky Boy's Reservation was a small log building built by members of the local community in 1918. The school and teacher were provided by funds from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Children on the reservation were educated through the sixth grade. In 1926, the Rocky Boy school system expanded with the addition of a two-story brick school. Eventually the school system included four elementary schools across the reservation: Haystack, Parker, Sangrey, and the Agency school. The Indian Affairs Administration controlled all of the schools.

In June 1960, a new school opened near the agency. The new school was constructed under the jurisdiction of the Havre school board and designed for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. If they wished to continue



school beyond the 6th grade, the students were sent to Havre, Box Elder, BIA, or parochial boarding schools far from the reservation in South Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Kansas. In February 1970, a petition signed by 163 Chippewa-Cree to the Hill County Superintendent requested the creation of a new elementary school district for Rocky Boy's Reservation. In less than a month, a separate school district was approved for Rocky Boy's Reservation. Rocky Boy Elementary School became the second Indian-controlled school in the nation and the first in Montana.

Transporting school children from the many homes requires an extensive busing system. The total number of students in grades K-12 is 550. In addition, at least 200 attend off-reservation schools either in nearby Havre or Box Elder. The Rocky Boy's educational system is located in the Agency proper and includes Head Start, Kindergarten, Junior and Senior High School, and Stone Child College. Box Elder School, whose enrollment is nearly all Indian, is located 14 miles to the west of the Agency in the unincorporated town of Box Elder.

The Chippewa-Cree Business Committee chartered Stone Child College (SCC) on May 17, 1984. Operating as a satellite site for Dull Knife Community College and Salish-Kootenai College for many years thereafter, SCC finally was on its own in 1989. Stone Child College coordinates and regulates all higher education on Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation. SCC is authorized to develop and operate programs granting degrees and certificates and/or enters into agreements with public or private agencies to offer postsecondary education on the Rocky Boy Reservation. Degree programs are offered in the areas of: Associate of Arts, General Studies/Liberal Arts Option, Human Services Associate of Applied Science, Secretarial Science, Computer Science, Business Certification of Completion, and Building Trades. Construction of a new college campus in the Bonneau Area is a possibility, considering potential funding.

The accomplishments of all reservation educational institutions are critical in meeting a tremendous need for training to prepare our tribal members for employment to benefit the reservation and the membership.

Economics

Although substantial advances have been made in the area of education, Rocky Boy's Reservation continues to encounter economic distressed conditions. Unemployment averages 70 percent during the winter months when household expenses are the greatest. Virtually all available jobs are government related with most of the income generated at Rocky Boy's derived from federal government sources. This income is then spent in Havre, with little evidence of the recirculation of reservation dollars. The reservation's isolation and distance from major highways impedes gain from the state's tourism industry. The beauty of the reservation, while offering spiritual sustenance to the Chippewa Cree, goes unnoticed by the mainstream.

Major employers include the Chippewa-Cree Health Board, the Chippewa-Cree Tribal Office, Rocky Boy Schools, Stone Child College, and Box Elder Schools. In 1998, there were a total of 31 small businesses with active files at the Tribal Employment Rights Organization (TERO) office on Rocky Boy's Reservation. The Chippewa-Cree Tribe operates the 4C's Casino, Chippewa-Cree Meats, and a propane delivery service. Through the passage of tribal Ordinance No.1-91, the Chippewa-Cree Tribal Business Committee adopted the Enterprise Zone Act of 1991. The purpose of this act is to create employment and business growth on the Rocky Boy's Reservation. Through this Act, the tribal government is able to offer very flexible economic incentive packages to new businesses and industries that would like to locate on the Rocky Boy's Reservation.

The passage of the Self-Governance Act by Congress in 1994 empowered the Rocky Boy's Business Committee to place funds where they are most needed and increased the financial ability of the committee to deal with the

increase in population. Rocky Boy's negotiates yearly for a financial lump sum from the government that it is free to use as the business committee sees fit to meet the needs of the people.

Prior to the passage of the Self-Governance Act by Congress, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Services controlled the availability of service to Rocky Boy community members. The two agencies employed a total of about 120 government employees with 85 percent of all the money appropriated went to pay the salaries of the government employees. Only 15 percent of the funds were available for roads, forestry projects, or health services, or other reservation needs.

Rocky Boy's now employs about 210 people in Health Services instead of the 60 the government used to employ and about 160 in other areas of the reservation. This allows the reservation to decide what and how many health services will be offered with the capacity to offer treatments such as acupuncture and traditional Indian medicine.

Contemporary Issues

In the summer of 1998, Rocky Boy community programs and organizations met to discuss the current status of the tribe and the needs to be faced in the new millennium. Through a process of group discussion and data collection, the following issues were determined to be of greatest importance.



- Elders and Cultural Preservation
- Cultural Preservation Office
- Enforcement of codes and the Constitution
- Memorandum of Understanding between departments
- Self-sufficiency
- Tribal sovereignty
- Representation on county government and appropriate committees
- Trust land
- Code revision
- Financial management relevant to fees, leases, and loans
- Sacred site protection and the development of relevant tribal ordinances

Recreation

Many recreation areas are accessible on and near the reservation. Winter skiers are within a half-hour drive to the Bear Paw Ski Bowl on the Rocky Boy's Reservation. Camping is permitted on Beaver Creek, at the base of the scenic Bear Paw Mountains. Beaver Creek Park, a 10,000-acre strip of the Bear Paw Mountains, is the largest county park in the nation. Camping, fishing, swimming, and canoeing are enjoyed spring through fall. The Natural Resources Department has made considerable strides in promoting tourism through the development of campsites. These campsites are scattered throughout the accessible areas beginning near Mt. Baldy and continuing through the Mt. Centennial area.

Points of Interest

Major points of interest for outsiders include Chief Rocky Boy's gravesite, Mt. Baldy, Chief Kennawash's oratory hillside, the Bear Paw Ski Bowl, ceremonial grounds located three miles north of the Agency, Stone Child College, Rocky Boy Schools, and Box Elder Schools.

Calendar of Events

The more notable public events on Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation are the Annual Chippewa-Cree Pow Wow held during the first weekend in August, community-wide Native American Week events held during the fourth week in September, and the Christmas Pow Wow held during the Christmas season at the Stone Child College gym. The community prides itself in its respect of traditional ceremonies and thus limits the information related to their occurrence.

Chippewa-Cree Resources

The Rocky Boy Internet Co-Op E-Mail Addresses

<http://www.cct.rockyboy.org/email.html>

Rocky Boy Indian Reservation—Montana Online Highways

<http://www.lewisclark.org/r/rocboyir.htm>

HighWired.com: ROCKY BOY JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL

<http://highwired.com/School/0%2C2067%2C24171%2C00.html>

Rocky Boy School District 87-J Information

<http://www.nmp.umt.edu/netday/schools/rockyBoyDistrict.htm>

Geochemical, Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation, Montana

<http://snake1.cr.usgs.gov/demr/niemr/geochem/text/rockyboy.htm>

H.R. 3658—Settlement of the water rights claims of Rocky Boy's Reservation

http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/resources/hii51141.000/hii51141_0.htm

The Rocky Boy Area

<http://www.rbclinic.rockyboy.org/rbarea.html>

2000 Rocky Boy's Pow Wow—Havre Daily News

<http://www.havredailynews.com/powwow/powwow.html>

Stone Child College

<http://www.montana.edu/~wwwai/scc.html>

Boys & Girls Club of the Bear Paws—Rocky Boy Reservation History

<http://www.bearspaw.org/rbhist.html>

Chippewa-Cree Health Center Home Page

<http://www.rbclinic.rockyboy.org/>