

NRCS-AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE

HERITAGE MONTH

NOVEMBER 2016

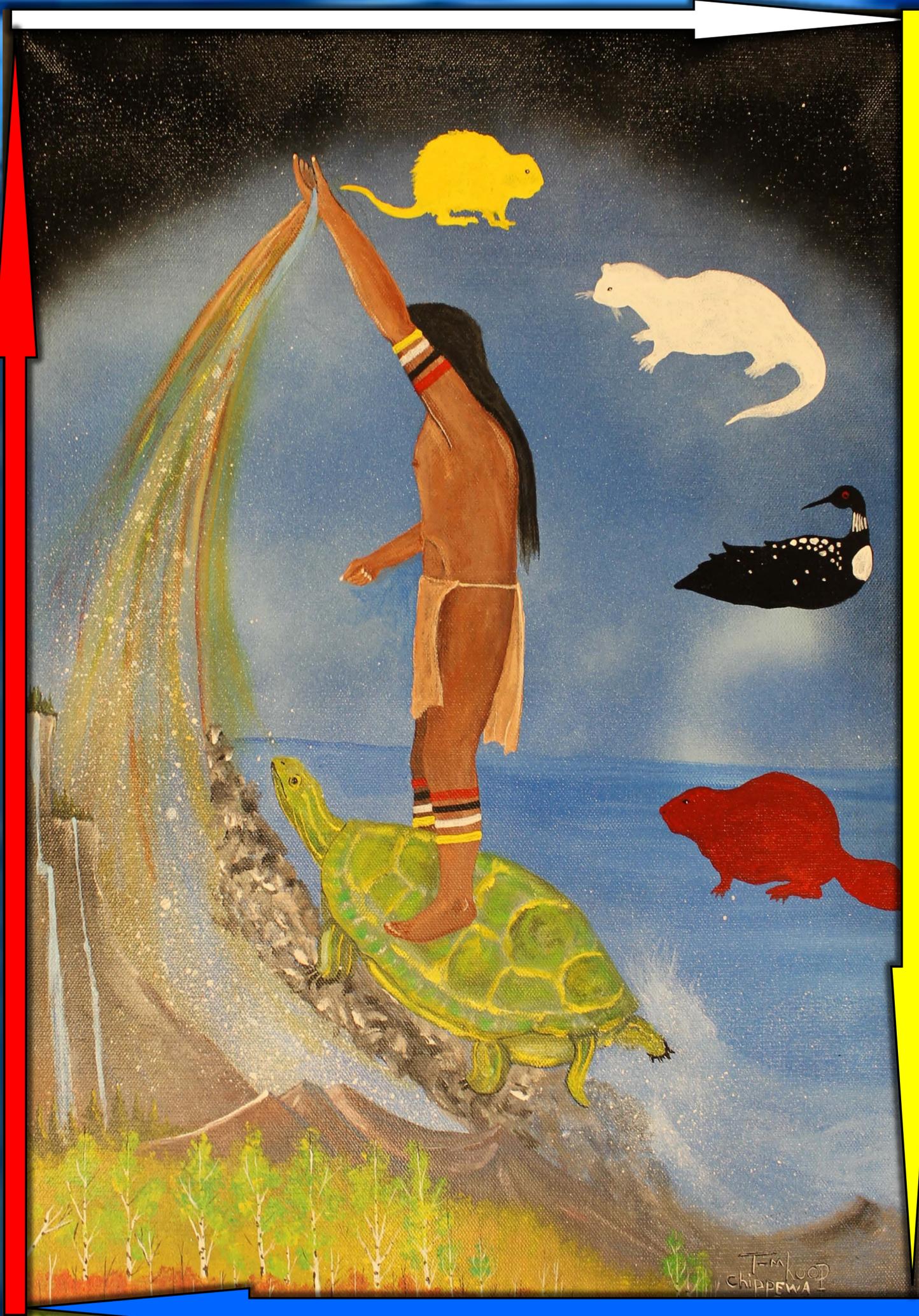
THE CREATOR OF LAND "NAPI"

“The Blackfoot Creator (iihtsi-paita-piiyo-pa) had twin boys—Napi and Natosi. Natosi went to live with his Father at the Sun. Natosi gave his name to Napi (Old Man) to help him in the creation of Napi’s World—traditional territory of the Blackfoot.” *By John Murray-Spiritual Leader and Tribal Historical Preservation Officer of the Blackfoot Tribe*

“In the beginning there was water everywhere; nothing else was to be seen. There was something floating on the water, and on this raft were Old Man and all the animals.

Old Man wished to make land, and he told the beaver to dive down to the bottom of the water and to try to bring up a little mud. The beaver dived and was under water for a long time, but he could not reach the bottom. Then the loon tried, and after the otter, but the water was too deep for them.

At last the muskrat was sent down, and he was gone for a long time; so long that the thought he must be drowned, but at last he came up and floated almost dead on the water,



and when they pulled him up on the raft and looked at his paws, they found a little mud in them.

When Old Man had dried this mud, he scattered it over the water and land was formed.”

Reviewed by Blackfoot Tribal Elders and story told

By George Bird Grinnell- pioneer for the creation of Glacier National Park.

Artist- In our Chippewa culture we also have a story similar to the Blackfoot version. In our Chippewa legend the Old Man rode on a back of a turtle. For helping Old Man, brothers Beaver, Loon, Otter and Muskrat were given gifts for their help. Each animal was given a sacred color and direction. This is the way it was told to me.

Theodore M Koop- enrolled member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation Montana

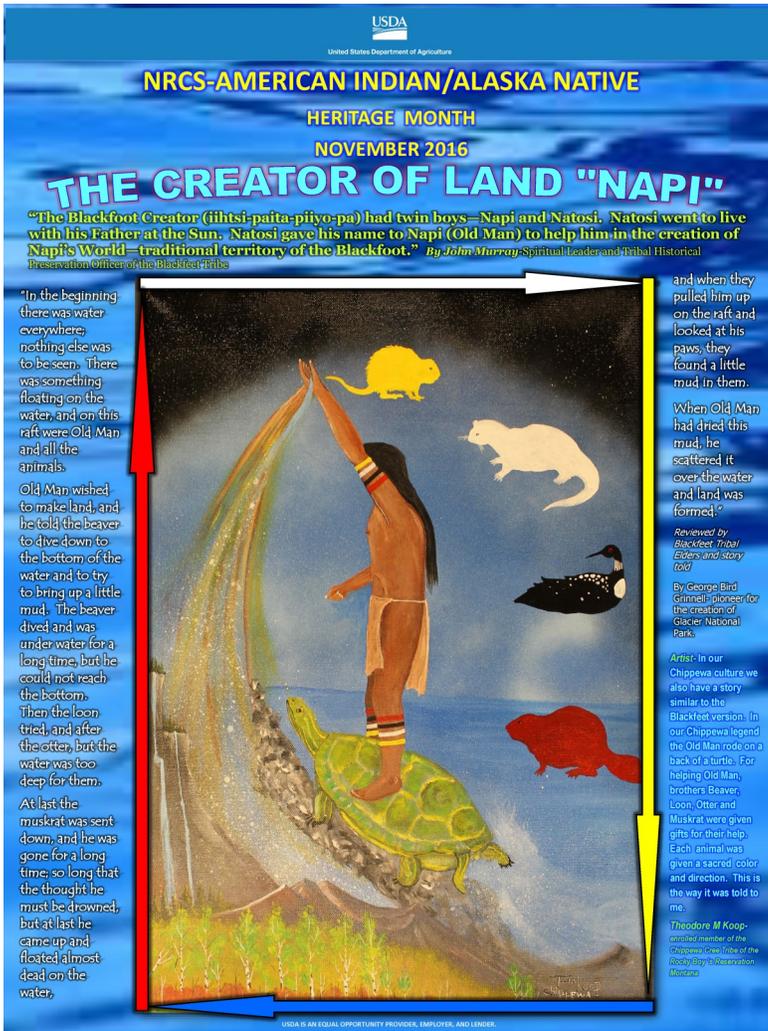


United States Department of Agriculture

2016 NRCS American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month Poster

The Creator of Land "Napi"

Understanding Cultural Traditions connecting all of us to the land!



Montana Big Sky Country- tribal communities and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) created a poster that represents the importance of land and a traditional tribal creation story of how land was formed.

Dezerae Lorash-Knoll -NRCS American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager (AIAN SEPM)/ Soil Conservationist, Montana's local Tribal District Conservationists, Montana Tribal Communities and Carol Murray-Blackfeet Tribal Elder, Lisa Coverdale- NRCS Montana State Conservationist, Lori Valadez -NRCS Montana Public Affairs Specialist (PAS), all NRCS State AIAN SEPM's, Deborah Clairmont-past NRCS National AIAN SEPM/present- Soil Conservationist and Drenda Williams- NRCS Workforce Diversity Division Acting Director collaborated together to create the 2016 American Indian/ Alaska Native Heritage Month Poster.

Each year, NRCS supports and reaches out to Tribes by creating the AIAN Heritage Month Poster for November's American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month to celebrate and recognize American Indian and Alaska Native culture.

NRCS opens the door for all states and tribes to participate. This year, the poster contest made its way to the Northwest Region where Montana was selected as the state to hold the contest.

Deborah Clairmont-National AIAN SEPM solicited Lorash-Knoll to find a creation story for the poster to help educate the general public on traditional culture and to show the connection American Indian/Alaska Natives have to the land.

Lorash-Knoll reached out throughout Montana's seven Tribal Reservations and Tribal Communities with the help of the local Tribal District Conservationists and Lori Valadez (PAS) to advertise the American Indian Native Heritage Month Poster Contest to Tribal Members and 1994 Land Grant Tribal Colleges.

"The Blackfoot Creator (iihtsi-paita-piiyo-pa) had twin boys- Napi and Natosi. ... John Murray-Blackfeet Spiritual Leader and Tribal Historical Preservation Officer explains how Napi received his name. The story "The Creator of Land "Napi" explains in the beginning when the world was nothing but water and how land was formed based on the Blackfeet Traditional teaching. These types of traditional teachings were always told orally and were never written; everything has significance with the environment and connected to the four directions. The four arrows on the poster represent the Blackfeet four directional colors. Some Creation stories were told only at certain times of the year and only certain tribal story tellers have permission to tell them.



Mr. Theodore M. Koop, 2016 AIAN Poster Contest Winner.

Six American Indian artists submitted their artwork to USDA for consideration. The selected artist for 2016 AIAN Heritage Month Poster, Theodore Koop, member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe from the Rocky Boy's Reservation in Montana was selected as the winner of the 2016 AIAN Heritage Month Poster Contest and received \$2,000 for his artwork.

Koop explained how the story of 'how land was formed' was similar to his traditional Chippewa Cree Tribe's teachings and he had to submit his artwork.

Blackfeet Elders approved this story "Creator of the Land "Napi" written by George Bird Grinnell who is renowned for the "crown of the continent" in 1910; creation of Glacier National Park and had a fond interest in nature and Tribal Cultures. Grinnell did not only care about the protection of wildlife being on the first advisory board for the Federal Migratory Bird Law, President of the National Parks Association, trustee of The American Museum of Natural History in New York City and on the advisory board of the American Game Protective Association (forerunner of the Wildlife Management Institute). George had a very deep interest in American Indian culture and wrote twenty-six books; The Cheyenne Indians, Their History and Ways of Life, Blackfoot Lodge Tales and Pawnees Hero Stories and Folk Tales to name a few.

In Summary, the 2016 AIAN Heritage Month Poster is the first of its kind to represent a true outreach effort with NRCS working with tribes showing a deep respect to tribal culture and understanding how land has a deep connection to tribes throughout their history. In addition, recognizing our forefathers who have paved the way for conservation through preserving National Parks and Wildlife like Glacier National Park by working with tribes.

The NRCS 2016 American Indian Alaska Native Heritage Month Poster will be printed and distributed November 2016. You can acquire additional copies of the poster through the NRCS Distribution Center or your local USDA/NRCS Service Center field office.