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# THE ASSINIBOINE GALLERY

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in the Legislative Building  
of Saskatchewan



Treaty Medal  
Canadian Encyclopedia

## FOREWORD

Some Indigenous leaders featured in the Gallery have less available information than others. Language barriers in original communication with the artist, Edmund Morris, the history of oral history keeping, and colonial cultural suppression mean that a lot of information may be lost to us. However, if you have any further information or corrections on any individual in the Gallery, please reach out to us at [guides@legassembly.sk.ca](mailto:guides@legassembly.sk.ca). We would love to hear from you!





# HISTORY

Portraits done from 1908-1911

The Assiniboine Gallery displays portraits of Indigenous Chiefs and leaders from Saskatchewan.

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They were drawn in pastels on sandpaper by Edmund Montague Morris, the son of former Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, Alexander Morris.

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Saskatchewan's first premier, Walter Scott, commissioned 15 portraits from Morris to document the history of First Peoples who remembered a life before Europeans.



## **CHIEF PIAPOT**

Payipwat  
Cree, Assiniboine

Chief Piapot became Chief of the Cree-Assiniboine band in 1846. He was not present at Treaty 4 negotiations in 1874, but signed an adherence to the Treaty in 1875.

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Piapot's name means "one who knows the secrets of the Sioux." As a child, Piapot and his grandmother were captured by a group then called the Sioux. After being immersed in Sioux culture, he was captured back by the Plains Cree and was given the name "Payipwat".





# WALTER OCHAPOWACE

Cree

Walter was from the Ochapowace Nation, a signatory to Treaty 4.

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Walter became the hereditary Chief of his band in 1912, after Morris completed his portrait.

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Walter was well known as a man who followed the old traditions. For example, when he proposed marriage, he first asked his future wife's parents, as well as the elders of the community, and asked the Great Spirit to protect them.



# BIG DARKNESS

Opazatonka

Assiniboine

Big Darkness was a leader on the Carry the Kettle First Nation, along with Chief Carry the Kettle and The Runner, who are also featured in the gallery.

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Unfortunately, he lost his position of prominence after leaving the reserve and crossing the border without permission from the Indian Agent, which was illegal at the time.





# THE RUNNER

Assiniboine

The Runner is the Brother of Chief Carry the Kettle.

While we do not have information on his prominence in the community otherwise, this could be why he was included in Morris' portraits.

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There was some controversy around The Runner's personal life: one unconfirmed story claimed that he shot another member of his band over a love affair.



# THUNDER BEAR

Peeaysen Musquah

Algonquin, Ojibway, Saulteaux

Thunder Bear was the father in law of Walter Ochapowace, who is also featured in this gallery. This may be why his portrait was also done.

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Thunder Bear's babyhood nickname was Shee Sheep, which translates to Little Duck.





# PAHNAP

Sitting White Eagle  
Cree

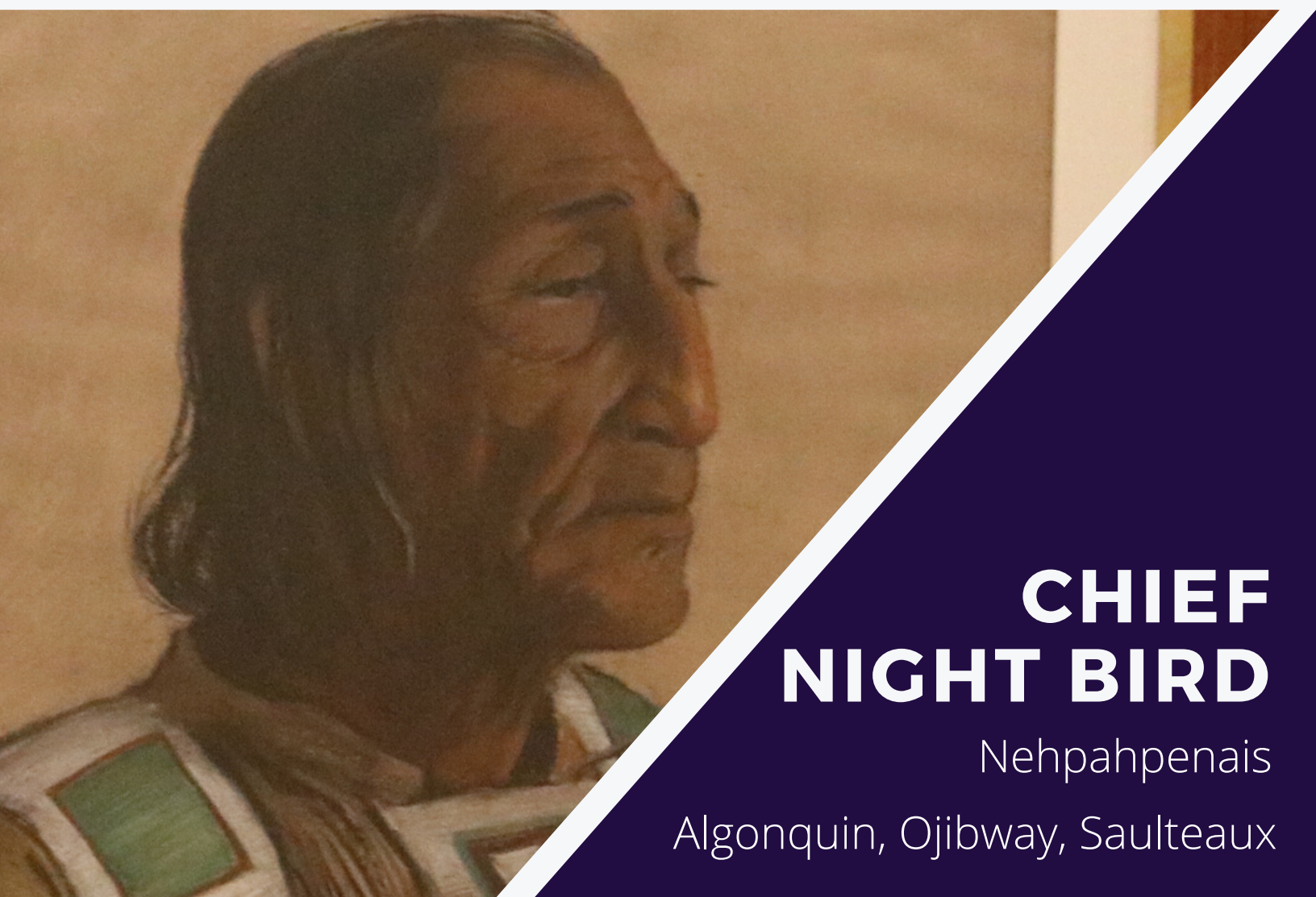
Pahnnap was a highly regarded Medicine Person who was sought out for cures by people from all over.

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"Pahnnap" means "clean sitting", a name he earned by leading an exemplary, traditional life.

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Born in 1840, Pahnnap experienced the drastic transition from a nomadic life following bison to a more sedentary life on a reserve after the treaties were signed.



# CHIEF NIGHT BIRD

Nehpahpenais

Algonquin, Ojibway, Saulteaux

Chief Night Bird's portrait was drawn by Morris in 1910, when Night Bird was 72.

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He was a Chief of the Saulteaux peoples in Saskatchewan.

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Chief Night Bird was well-known, and highly regarded as one of the best bison hunters of the prairies.





# CHIEF POUNDMAKER

Pitikwahanapiwiyin Plains Cree

Chief Poundmaker's name refers to his expertise in building pounds, a way to trap bison by corralling them.

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He was known for being a peacekeeper during the North-West Resistance. He is credited with saving many Indigenous and militia lives.

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Despite this, Poundmaker was wrongfully tried for treason stemming from the Resistance in 1885, and jailed. In 2019, he was exonerated of all charges and given a federal apology.



# HE TIES THE KNOT

Kahtokopecthamakasis

Cree

He Ties the Knot was a leader and head man of the Plains Cree.

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He Ties the Knot did not speak English, and Edmund Morris did not speak Cree, so they used sign language to communicate during his portrait sitting.

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He did not originally want to participate: he was concerned about Morris' intentions. However, he agreed once he understood that it was to document and preserve their history.





# SAMUEL ACOOSE

Man Standing Above Ground

Saulteaux

Acoose was known for his running ability: It was said that he ran so quickly that his feet didn't touch the ground!

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Acoose was known for once hunting antelope without any weapons: He chased a group of antelope for 96 km until the the antelope tired and he was able to kill them, providing bountiful food for his family.

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Acoose's son, Paul, is in the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame for marathon running.



# CHIEF BIG BEAR

Mistahimaskwa  
Cree

Chief Big Bear initially refused to sign Treaty 6, as he had concerns about the true intentions of the treaty. In 1882, he signed on as his people faced starvation.

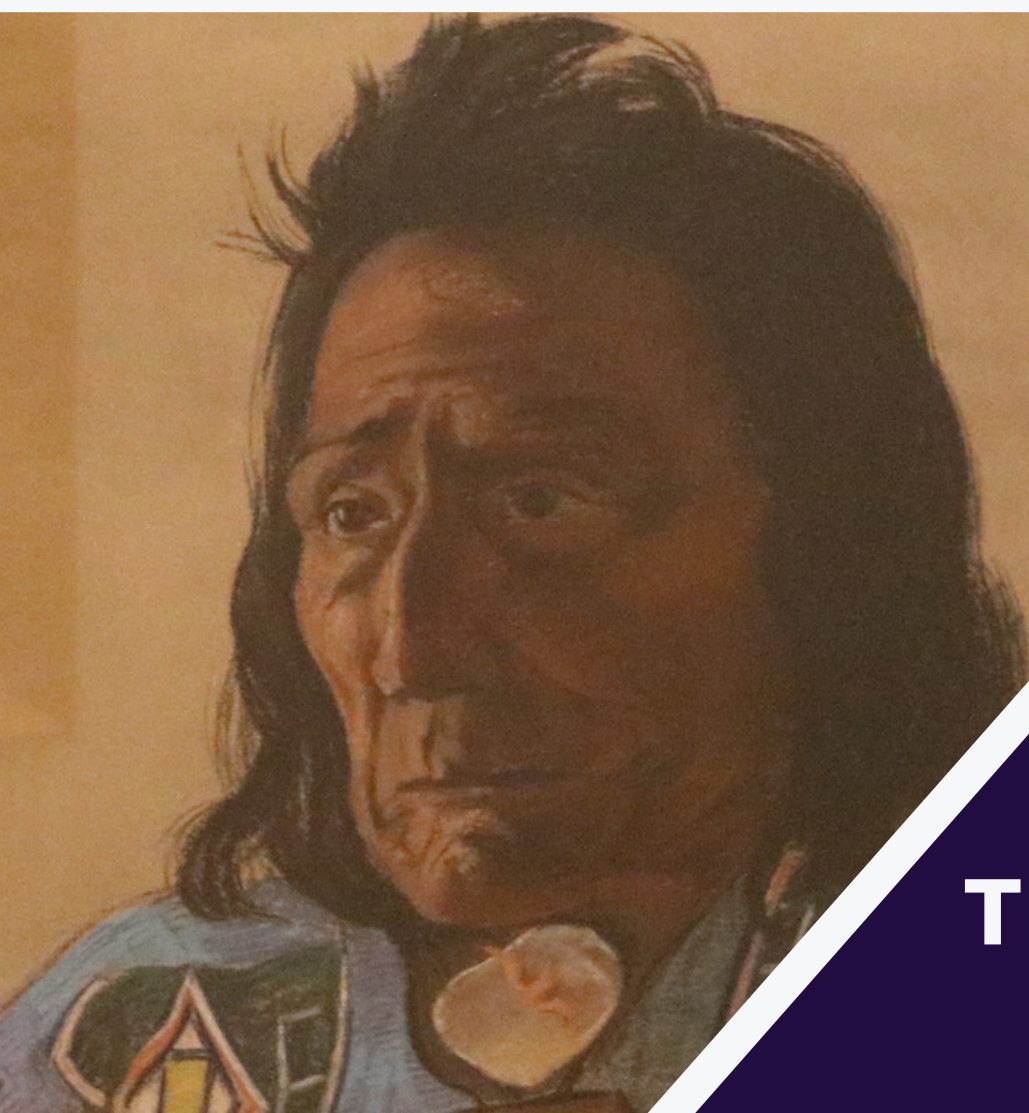
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Members of Big Bear's nation, including his son Little Bear, were involved in the North-West Resistance. As chief, Big Bear was arrested and jailed.

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Big Bear received his name on a vision quest, where the Great Parent of the Bear came to him. It is said that the spirit stayed with and helped him.





# CHIEF CARRY THE KETTLE

Assiniboine

Chief Carry the Kettle became chief in 1891. Big Darkness and the Runner were also leaders of their community. Carry the Kettle First Nation is a Treaty 4 signatory.

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Carry the Kettle's name comes from a childhood event. When he was small, he wandered and got lost. When his family found him, he had a copper kettle around his neck for water and cooking!



# MOSES OLD BULL

Lakota, Hunkpapa

Moses Old Bull may have been an aide-de-camp for Chief Sitting Bull. He would have checked on the conditions of reserves and given reports to Sitting Bull.

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Old Bull was known to have an amazing memory, carrying on and sharing his family's history. He was known as the "living repository" of their tribal history.





# THE WALKER

Pimotat

File Hills Cree

The Walker was the younger brother of Chief Star Blanket, and lived on Star Blanket First Nation. This may be why his portrait was done by Morris.

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Chief Star Blanket was the son of a Plains Cree Chief who signed Treaty 4 in 1874. His father died after the treaty was signed, and Star Blanket succeeded him.



# THE GAMBLER

Ometoway  
Saulteaux

Gambler was from the Muscowpetung reserve.  
His prominence within his community is  
unknown.

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Chief of the Muscowpetung reserve, Chief  
Cheekuk, signed on to Treaty 4 in 1874.