

# **Gros Ventre/White Clay Place Names**

**Second Edition, 2013**

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## Introduction:

This is a list of Gros Ventre/White Clay/A'ani place names. Specifically, it includes all names in the Gros Ventre language that we have been able to find. The places are listed in alphabetical order by their English name, and then the Gros Ventre name(s) are given, in italics. After the italic entries, the Gros Ventre names are separated into segments to show the meanings of the different parts of the word. The linguistic abbreviations used are explained at the end of this publication. There are also references to the sources where the original name was documented in many cases. The list of these sources is also at the end of the paper. The majority of these names were documented by Allan Taylor, professor of Linguistics, University of Colorado, during his work with the Gros Ventre Tribe from the 1960s through the 1990s (abbreviation of the form T II.164 refer to Taylor's Dictionary, Volume II, page 164). Terry Brockie and Andrew Cowell (also a professor at the University of Colorado) worked to find other names no longer known by the Gros Ventre people, but which were recorded by people such as Fred Gone (who gathered the story of the "Seven Visions of Bull Lodge") and George Bird Grinnell, an early naturalist who lived in the late 1800s and early 1900s and worked with several Plains Indian tribes. There were once no doubt many other names, which have now been lost. If you know of names which are not on this list, contact Terry Brockie of the Gros Ventre tribe or Andrew Cowell at [cowellj@colorado.edu](mailto:cowellj@colorado.edu). We hope you enjoy this documentation of Gros Ventre history, culture and landscape, and we hope that you will try and use these place names when you can.



The first name seems to be an extension of the name for Saddle Butte, within the mountains, to the entire set of mountains. See entries #3, 5, 16, 20, 28, 49 and 80 for locations within the Bear Paw Mts.

**5) Bear Paw Mts, MT, location within, east side near Cleveland, MT:** *ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠵᠤᠰᠢᠶᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢ* = ‘rim rock all around’ (T II.164); *ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠵᠤᠰᠢᠶᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢ*-h = IC.around-be rim rock(II)-0S.

**6) Beaver Creek, MT** (east of Ft. Belknap, flows into Milk River): *ᠷᠠᠪᠢᠰᠢᠬᠤᠰᠢᠶᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢ* = ‘beaver creek’; *ᠷᠠᠪᠢᠰᠢᠬᠤᠰᠢᠶᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢ* = beaver creek.

**7) Beaver Creek, MT** (west of Ft. Belknap, flows from the Bear Paw Mts into Milk River): “Grows Tallest Creek” (Horse Capture 1992:44). The Gros Ventre form would be something like *ᠬᠤᠰᠢᠶᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢ* *ᠬᠤᠰᠢᠶᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢ*. Horse Capture (1992:44) says that the creek was named after Grows Tallest Butte, since it starts at the foot of that butte.

**8) Belly River, Sask.** (flows into South Saskatchewan River): *ᠷᠢᠨᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢ* = ‘belly river’; *ᠷᠢᠨᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢ* = 3SPOSS-belly-river. Note that Grinnell reports this same name was used for the South Saskatchewan River itself.

**9) Belt Butte, MT** (near the town of Belt): *ᠬᠠᠶᠤᠵᠤᠲᠡᠢᠬ* = ‘(woman’s) belt.’

**10) Belt Mountains, MT:** no name documented, but see note below for Belt River. Possibly *ᠬᠠᠶᠤᠵᠤᠲᠡᠢᠬ* (*ᠷᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢ*); *ᠬᠠᠶᠤᠵᠤᠲᠡᠢᠬ* (*ᠷᠠᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢᠨᠢ*) = belt (mountain-PL). Grinnell says that the Belt River (whose name he gives – see following entry) was named from the Belt Mountains. The above from would be the Gros Ventre translation of ‘belt (mountains),’ based on Grinnell’s attested name for the Belt River.

**11) Belt River, MT** (flows into Judith River?): Grinnell 1913 *Ka ya ti hi ni tseh* ‘Belt River’ =



**17) Big Snowy Mts, MT:** neet che beck = ‘snowy mounts rock’ (Beatie 1985-86 (Fidler));

*núitchʔiibííkʔa*; *niit-cihʔii-biike-ʔ* = where.IMPERF-NEG-summer(II)-0S. The exact same name was used by the Arapaho for the Never Summer Mountains of Colorado (which are named based on the Arapaho): *niiciibiicei’i* (in Arapaho).

**18) Big Spring Creek, MT** (flows into Judith River): in ne thaw ow = ‘warm water river’

(Beatie 1985-86 (Fidler)). *ʔiniíθóɔwuh* = ‘warm water’; *ʔiniiθ-ɔɔwu-h* = IC.warm-water(II)-0S.

This is the same location referred to as “Warm Spring” (Horse Capture 1992:62): “[Missouri] River, opposite [Bear Paw] Mts. A small creek called Warm Spring empties into the [Missouri] River from the south at this place, where a trading post run by a white man [named ‘Foot Cut Off’] was then located.”

**19) Bighorn Mountains, WY/MT** (?); see see ah cha or = ‘snake mountains’ (Beatie 1985-86

(Fidler)); *síisíyaacyɔʔó[tɔyɔɔh]*? = ‘snake ridge’(?); *siisiisyaa-cyɔʔɔtoyɔɔ-h* = snake-

hill/mtn(II)-0S. The Fidler map labels mountains east of the Bighorn River with this name. Two other possible ranges are the much lower Rosebud Mountains and Wolf Mountains, but the Bighorn Mountains would be the most likely range, since they are much larger and higher than the other two.

**20) Bighorn River, WY/MT:** Grinnell 1913 Ot te i ni tseh ‘Wild Sheep River’ = *ʔtééíníicááh*;

*ʔoteei-niicaah* = mountain sheep-river. The same name is recorded on the 1801 Fidler map as well.

**21) Billings, MT:** *ʔóhuutébiθonóónh* = ‘where lumber is sawed’; *ʔoh-uu-tebiθonɔɔni-h* = where-

IMPERF-saw(II.IMPERS)-0S.

**22) Bird Tail Butte, Bear Paw Mts, MT:** no name recorded, but the name here may be a translation from Gros Ventre. It is mentioned in Cooper 1957:145 and 170. The Gros Ventre form would be *nɔkɔθɔhʔánʔi* = bird tail mountain. It is unknown if the ‘butte’ element was part of the original Gros Ventre name. This spot was noted for having sub-alpine fir (used as incense) growing on it (Cooper and Flannery 145), and also as being the spot where one of the most important Gros Ventre ceremonial pipes was obtained (Cooper 1957:170).

**23) Black Butte, eastern end of Judith Mts, nr. Lewiston, MT:** “black butte” (Horse Capture 1992:28). The Gros Ventre form would be *wɔʔtáánɔhʔánʔi*; *wɔʔɔtaan-ɔhʔanʔi* = black-mountain. “Black Butte was a well-known place for war parties going through. They all wanted to go up and look around” (Horse Capture 1992:37). Bull Lodge himself fasted at this butte (34-37).

**24) Bozeman, MT:** *tɔwɔ́nnéihibiθɔ́kyaanítáanʔɔ* = ‘bobcat tribe/town’; *tɔw-ɔ́nin-eihii-biθɔ́kyaan-iitaanʔɔ* = short-tail-one-mountain lion-tribe/town. This is a new or incipient place name. It is used by Gros Ventre language teachers in the various schools on the Ft. Belknap Reservation (who are in close contact with each other) and their students. It is based on the fact that the Montana State University is in Bozeman, and the team mascot is the bobcat. See the entry for Bozeman, MT.

**25) Browning, MT:** *ɔ́ɔsíítaanʔɔ* = ‘Blackfoot/enemy Tribe’; *ɔ́ɔsi-iitaanʔɔ* = Blackfoot/enemy-tribe/town. This name can also be used more generally for the Blackfoot Reservation.

**26) Butte, MT:** *ʔínʔ ʔóhuunɔkyɔ́hɔ́kkih* = ‘that place where they mine’; *ʔini ʔ ʔoh-uu-nɔkyɔ́hɔ́k-iini-h* = that where-IMPERF-mine(AI.PART)-IMPERS(II)-OS.

**27) Canada:** Name #1: *ə́aciiʔ* = ‘in the pines’; *əaaci-iʔ* = pine-LOC. Name #2:

*ninibííh* = ‘north’; *ninib-iih* = north-ADV.PART.

**28) Canada, exact location unknown:** “Broken Grass” (Cooper 1957:85). The Gros Ventre form would perhaps be something like *təwəsiʔ*; *təw-əsiʔ* = ‘broken-grass.’ “There was a plot of ground in the forested area of Canada on which nothing grew and which the Gros Ventrers called “Broken Grass.” In Lame Bull’s time [first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century] they used to leave offerings there whenever they passed nearby. The Boy and other old men and women believe that this was the site on which the original tobacco was planted under instruction from the Supreme Being.” (Cooper 1957:85).

**29) Cheyenne (Northern) Reservation, MT:** *ʔtisííneníítaanʔ* = ‘Cheyenne tribe.’ This name could also be used more specifically for Lame Deer, MT, the main town on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

**30) Chief Mountain, MT:** *naakyóóóhʔánʔ* = ‘chief mountain’; *neekyee-əhʔan-iʔ* = chief-mountain. This location was considered impossible to fast at: “no one has ever been able to spend the first night on Chief Mountain in Glacier National Park.” (Cooper 1957:279).

**31) Chinook, MT:** *ʔaasícóóútaanʔ* = ‘thinker town’; *ʔaas-icicəə-iitaanʔ* = what/how-think-town. Taylor 1.151 reports that it was named for a half-Assiniboine/half-White man who operated a general store in the town. His Indian name was ‘Thinker,’ while his English name was Tom O’Manlin.

**32) Cow Creek, MT** (flows into the Missouri River from the north): “*Big Coulee*” (Horse Capture 1992:63). The Gros Ventre form would be *báasikóhʔówuh* = big gulch.



mountain’; *beih-iiθɔɔʔ ʔɔhʔaniʔ* = betraying/tricky-child mountain. This was a fasting site (Cooper 1957:276, 278). Taylor I.255 reports that it was named for a man called Eagle Child in English, who died around 1923.

**42) Eagle Creek, MT** (flows south from Bear Paw Mts to Missouri River): *niiʔihihkɔhʔɔwuh* = ‘bird gulch/creek/coulee’; *niiʔihih-kɔhʔɔwuh* = bird-gulch/creek/coulee. This was a favorite camping spot of the Gros Ventres. In Arapaho, the word *nii’éhii* is used for both ‘bird’ and ‘eagle.’ This is no longer the case for modern Gros Ventre, but that appears to be the origin of this name.

**43) Electric Butte, Ft. Belknap Reservation, MT:** “electric butte” (Cooper 1957: 276). The Gros Ventre form would be *ʔiisɔɔnɔhʔánʔi* = lightning mountain. One Gros Ventre named Stiffarm “used to tell all kinds of stories about that place and used to say that no one could sleep there for power because electricity came out of the rock(s) there.” He tried many times to fast there, but could not stay. Another Gros Ventre reported “there were....marks of electricity on the rock like at night when it storms” and that “during electric storms flashes come out of it.” (Cooper 1957:276). This small, bare, chalky butte is north of Hays, MT school, and on the northwest-most extension of the Little Rocky Mts. It is at 48 degrees, 00’ 36.24” latitude and 108 degrees, 40’ 45.29” longitude.

**44) Flat Willow Creek, MT** (flows into Box Elder Creek, then into Musselshell River): *niiicɔɔsnícaáh* = ‘willow river,’ *niiicɔɔsi-niicaah* = willow-river.

**45) Flathead Indian Reservation, MT:** *kɔkɔʔaahítaanʔɔ* = Flathead tribe.’

**46) Fort Belknap, MT.** See Milk River Agency. In addition, Gros Ventres in the more

mountainous southern half of the reservation will jokingly refer to the inhabitants on the northern half, along the Milk River lowlands, as *kokóáhiinénnoh*, ‘frog men.’

**47) Fort Benton, MT:** Name #1: ἱῶw(ῶ)hubaayéθouἱ = ‘many houses.’; ἱowohu-beeyeθooἱ-u = many-house-PL; this name could be used for any fort, but at least today is prototypically used for Fort Benton. Name #2: ἱohuuθῶnóóúἱῶh = ‘where [smoke] goes straight up’; ἱoh-uu-θῶnouuἱῶh = where-IMPERF-smokes(II)-0S; the name may be a reference to the use of chimneys.

**48) Fort Berthold Reservation, ND:** Name #1: nῶῶtééih = ‘at the river.’ The reservation is located on the Missouri River.

**49) Fort Peck Reservation, MT:** nῶῶkinéihiiitaanἱῶ = ‘Assiniboine tribe.’

**50) France:** báaswῶῶθhiítaanἱῶ = ‘big knife tribe.’ baasi-wῶῶθh=iitaanἱῶ = big-knife-tribe.

**51) Frenchman Creek, MT** (flows into Milk River from the north): níhἱῶῶtóóúnícaáh = ‘white person river’; nihἱῶῶtooun-niicaah = white person-river. The first white people that the Gros Ventres met were French trappers and traders, so the name *nihἱῶῶtῶh* was first applied to them, then later extended to all English-speaking white people.

**52) Gold Butte, Sweet Grass Hills, MT:** “three buttes” (Horse Capture 1992:51). The Gros Ventre form would be *nináathé ἱ ἱῶhἱániih*; ninaaθe-ἱ ἱῶhἱan-iih = three(II)-0S mountain-PL. This is the more general name for the Sweet Grass Hills, so it is ambiguous whether the name should really be applied just to Gold Butte. According to Bull Lodge (51) it was specifically the middle of the three buttes which was later named Gold Butte due to a gold strike there. This was

a fasting spot, and Bull Lodge obtained a vision there (51-55).

**53) Gray Bull River, WY** (flows into Bighorn River): Grinnell 1913 I nat si ni tseh ‘Bull’s

River’ = *ʔanáákyaanítcááh*; ʔanaakyaa-niicaah = buffalo bull-river.

**54) Great Falls, MT:** *ʔhkiníəʔa* = ‘where there is a waterfall’; ʔh-kin-iəa-ʔ = where-down-

go(II)-0S. OR: *ʔhʔkiniəénnh* = ‘where water falls’; ʔh-ʔo-kin-iəenini-h = where-?-down-

go(II)-0S. OR: *ʔhbáaskiniəéninh* = ‘where there is a big waterfall’; ʔh-baasi-kin-iəenini-h =

where-big-down-go(II)-0S.

**55) Hardin, MT:** *báátʔoʔh* = ‘it is stiff, hard’; baataʔoʔ-h = IC.stiff(II)-0S.

This name is based on an interlingual pun on the word ‘hard.’

**56) Harlem, MT:** Name #1: *baʔéiʔééítaanʔ* = ‘red face town’; beʔ-eeiʔ-iitaanʔ = red-face-

town. OR *beʔeeiʔaah ʔínʔ ʔhʔoʔtʔónaakʔi* = ‘where Red Face traded’; beʔeeiʔaah ʔiniʔ ʔh-

ʔoʔoʔnaaa-kʔi = Red Face that [place] where-trade(AI)-3S. Name #2: *ʔósiikʔa* = ‘across the

river, on the other side’; ʔósiik-eʔ = across-LOC. The first name derives from Charlie Smith

(‘Red Face’), who ran the general store in Harlem after the Nez Perce War in 1877 (T I.383).

The second name is because it is across the Milk River from the Fort Belknap Reservation.

**57) Havre, MT:** (*ʔanáákyaaʔ*) *ʔhʔoʔəʔhoʔ* = ‘where (the bull) hooked it’; ʔanaakyaaʔ ʔh-

ʔoʔh-oʔ = buffalo bull where-hook with horn(TI)-3S. This is a reference to a traditional

narrative. The reference is to the mountains to the south of the city, which have a notch in them

(T I.387), and which are now known in English as “Saddle Butte.”

**58) Havre, MT, nearby:** ‘where the thunderbird drove the Sioux away.’ This is a reference to a 19<sup>th</sup>-century battle against the Sioux, in which superhuman intervention won the battle for the Gros Ventres.

**59) Hays area, MT:** 1<sup>st</sup> name: *ᠯᠠᠯᠠᠳᠠᠨᠢᠰᠢᠨᠠᠨᠲᠤ* = ‘Gros Ventre/White Clay tribe/village’; 2<sup>nd</sup> name: *ᠯᠠᠭᠠᠨᠢᠰᠢᠨ* = ‘mountains.’ There is no actual name for the town of Hays, on the Fort Belknap Reservation. When on the north end of the reservation, speakers generally say they are heading south “to the mountains” and the Hays area is understood. If more specificity is desired, speakers can say “Gros Ventre area” to distinguish from the community of Lodgepole (also on the south end of the reservation in the mountain area east of Hays). Lodgepole is occupied primarily by Assiniboines, while Hays is occupied primarily by Gros Ventres. Within the Hays area, people refer to the upper area where the mission is located and above the area known in English as “Fisher’s Brush” as “upstream” (*ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠨ*) and the lower area (called “downtown” in English) as “downstream/south” (*ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠨ*). The most southerly part of the area, called “Old Hays” in English, was called *ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠨ*, ‘at the river.’

**60) Heart Butte, MT:** *ᠪᠢᠲᠠᠭᠠ* = ‘heart.’

**61) Helena, MT:** *ᠯᠢᠨᠲᠤᠬᠡᠰᠢᠪᠢᠢᠲᠤᠨᠠᠨᠢ* = ‘the place where they give orders’; *ᠯᠢᠨᠲᠤᠬᠡᠰᠢᠪᠢᠢᠲᠤᠨᠠᠨᠢ* = that [place] where-command/order(AI.PART)-IMPERS(II)-OS.

**62) Judith Mts, MT:** *ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠨᠠᠨᠢᠰᠢᠨ* = ‘antelope mountains’; *ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠨᠠᠨᠢᠰᠢᠨ* = antelope-mountain-PL. This name is used by Rufus Warrior (with male pronunciation, č replacing ky) in a war story recorded in the 1960s.

**63) Judith River, MT** (flows into Missouri River): Grinnell 1913 Nahts ni tseh ‘White River’ = *ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠨ*; *ᠨᠠᠨᠠᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠰᠢᠨ* = white-river. “It is related that in very early times a party of people

who were traveling came to this stream to cross it. It was high – bank full, – and the water, colored by clay, was white; hence the name.” (Grinnell 1913:329).

**64) Judith River, MT, exact location unknown:** “Cliffs” (Bull Lodge 34-35). The Gros Ventre form would be *ᠵ᠔᠗᠐ᠲᠠᠳᠦᠨᠠᠵᠠᠭᠤᠰᠢ* = cliffs/cut banks. “Near [Judith] River...on south side of the [Missouri] River, near the Belt Mountains.” (Horse Capture 1992:34-35).

**65) Knee Buttes, MT:** “knees” (Grinnell 1913: 328). The Gros Ventre form would be *ᠵᠠᠵᠢᠨᠢᠶᠠᠨᠠᠵᠤ* = ‘knees’; *ᠵᠠᠵᠢᠨᠢᠶᠠᠨᠠᠵᠤ* = knee-PL. This name is not directly attested, but based on Grinnell’s remark about the Teton River (see that entry), this would appear to be the name of the butte in question.

**66) Landusky, MT:** *ᠠᠯᠠᠳᠤᠰᠢᠬᠤ* = ‘over the mountain; the other side’; *ᠠᠯᠠᠳᠤᠰᠢᠬᠤ* = other side/over hill-ADV. Relative to the Fort Belknap Reservation, Landusky is on the other side of the Little Rocky Mountains. (T I.468)

**67) Larb Hills, MT** (east of Ft. Belknap): *ᠠᠷᠢᠪᠢᠷᠢᠨᠠᠵᠤᠰᠢᠬᠤ* = ‘larb berry bushes/plants’; *ᠠᠷᠢᠪᠢᠷᠢᠨᠠᠵᠤᠰᠢᠬᠤ* = larb berry-bush/plant-PL. Larb berries are also known as ‘bearberry’ or ‘kinnikinnick’ – *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* and also *Cornus stolonifera*.

**68) Lewiston, MT:** *ᠵᠠᠵᠢᠰᠠᠵᠤᠰᠢᠬᠤ* = ‘warm water’; *ᠵᠠᠵᠢᠰᠠᠵᠤᠰᠢᠬᠤ* = warm-water(II)-OS. This name is connected to the existence of the warm spring at Lewiston – the name of the water feature has been extended to the town at the same location. C.f #18.

**69) Lewiston, MT area:** “Big Springs” (Horse Capture 1992:63). The Gros Ventre form of this name would be *ᠵᠠᠵᠢᠰᠢᠬᠤᠵᠠᠵᠢᠰᠢᠬᠤ* = ‘big spring.’

A spring at this location was known by the above name; the town of Lewiston now occupies the site; the name is not actually used for Lewiston itself (Horse Capture 1992:63). This was probably a traditional camping site of the Gros Ventre.

**70) Little Bighorn River, MT:** Grinnell 1913 Ets ot te i ni tseh ‘Little Sheep River’ =

*ʔakisóteeiníicááh*; ʔakis-óteei-niicaah = little-mountain sheep-river.

**71) Little People’s Creek, Ft. Belknap Res, MT** (flows into South Fork of People’s Creek):

*ʔákisinnítaaʔ kóhʔówuh* = ‘little people gulch’; ʔakis-inenitaaʔ kóhʔówuh = little-person gulch/creek/coulee. The little people referred to are non-human/mythological dwarfs.

**72) Little Rocky Mountains, MT:** *bíi ʔótóʔ* = ‘fur hat’; *bii ʔ-ótóʔ* = hair/fur-hat. See entries #29 and 54 for locations within the Little Rocky Mountains.

**73) Lodgepole, MT:** Name #1: *títáábííh* = ‘hillside’; *titaab-iih* = on hillside-ADV. Name #2:

(*ʔákisin*)*ókóósiiníicááh* = ‘(little) tepee pole river’; ʔakisin-ókóósi-niicaah = little-tepee pole-river. Name #3: *nóókinéíhiitaanʔi* = Assiniboine town.

**74) Lodgepole Creek, MT** (on Fort Belknap Reservation): Grinnell 1913 Bu ah in i ni tseh ‘Red Mountain River’ = *bóʔh ʔániniicááh*; *bóʔ-óhʔani-niicaah* = red-mountain-river. “So called because it comes down from a red hill in the Little Rocky Mountains” (Grinnell 1913: 329). **75)**

**Lonesome Lake, west side of Bear Paw Mts, nr. Big Sandy, MT:** “bull grunt” (Horse Capture 1992:47, 51). The Gros Ventre form would be *ʔanáákyaaʔ ʔakyóuʔukʔi*; *ʔanaakyyaaʔ ʔekyouʔu-kʔi* = buffalo bull grunt(AI)-3S. “One of the habitual camping areas of the Gros Ventre tribe.” (Bull Lodge 47).

**76) Malta, MT:** *bináascíitóóh* = ‘it is a big bend in a river’; *binaasi-ciitóó-h* = IC.big-bend in river(II)-0S. OR: *ʔóhbáasicíitóónih* = ‘where there is a big bend in the river’; ʔóh-baasi-ciitóóni-h = where-big-bend in river(II)-0S. The name specifically refers to a large bend in the Milk River.

(T II.4)

**77) Marias River, MT** (flows into Missouri River): *wəsníicááh* = ‘bear river’; *wəsi-niicaah* = bear-river.

**78) McCann Butte, Bear Paw Mts, MT**: “last butte” (Horse Capture 1992:42). The Gros Ventre form would be *ʔitóóshʔánʔi* ; *ʔitəəs-əhʔani* = last-mountain. This was a traditional fasting site, where Bull Lodge obtained a vision (Bull Lodge 42-44). Many other Gros Ventres fasted there as well (Cooper 1957:275), and “powerful” events were reported to occur there, such as the magical appearance of white horses from within the mountain (Cooper 1957:299).

**79) Milk River, MT** (flows into Missouri river from north): *ʔakisníicááh* = ‘little river’; *ʔakisi-niicaah* = little-river. “Because on the prairie at its head it is a small stream.” (G328)

**80) Milk River Agency/Fort Belknap, MT**: *nəʔtééh* = ‘at the river’; *nəʔtee-ih* = at river-LOC. The agency is located on the south side of the Milk River.

**81) Milk River, MT, exact location unknown**: “Snake Weeds” (Bull Lodge 63). The Gros Ventre form would be *súisíyaa-bíisiʔ* = snake-weed/plant. On the Milk River, “above the present location of Havre [MT]” (Horse Capture 1992:63).

**82) Milk River, MT, exact location unknown**: “White Hill” (Horse Capture 1992:62). The Gros Ventre form would *nənóóckyoʔəʔəyóóh*; *nənəəci-kyəʔəʔəyəə-h* = IC.white-hill(II)-0S. “On the [Milk] River, above Havre... a human statue now stands on the spot” (Horse Capture 1992:62).

**83) Mission Canyon, Little Rocky Mts, MT**: *ʔákisinnítaaʔ ʔóhkhʔóóúʔa* = ‘little people canyon’; *ʔakis-inenitaaʔ ʔoh-kəhʔ-ouuta-ʔ* = little-person split-landform(II)-0S. The little people referred to are non-human dwarfs. Little People’s Creek flows through the canyon. This name looks like a modern, English-syntax-influenced collocation of ‘little people’ and ‘canyon,’ and

does not match standard Gros Ventre or Arapaho word-formation patterns.

**84) Mission Canyon, natural bridge within, MT:** ‘where they drove Sioux off the cliffs.’ This refers to a battle in the 1870s in which the Gros Ventre noticed some Sioux warriors sneaking up on a raid, and turned the tables on them, catching them by surprise.

**85) Mission Peak, Little Rocky Mts, MT:** *bátaannóhʔánʔi* = ‘holy mountain’; *bataan-óhʔanʔi* = holy-mountain. The site was noted for having Sub-alpine Fir growing on the summit – otherwise hard to get in the local Gros Ventre area, and used for ceremonial incense (Cooper 1957:145).

**86) Missoula, MT:** *nóccíúkéθʔoníítaanʔó* = ‘grizzly bear tribe/town’; *nócc-iikeθʔon-iitaanʔó* = white-shoulder-tribe/town. This is a new or incipient place name. It is used by Gros Ventre language teachers in the various schools on the Ft. Belknap Reservation (who are in close contact with each other) and their students. It is based on the fact that the University of Montana is in Missoula, and the team mascot is the grizzly bear. See the entry for Bozeman, MT.

**87) Missouri River, MT/ND etc.:** *báasnícááh* = ‘big river’; *baasi-niicaah* = big-river. The same name is recorded on the 1801 Fidler map as well.

**88) Missouri River, MT, Big Bend of:** *báascíitóh* = ‘big bend [in a river]’; *baasi-ciitóh* = big-bend in river. OR: *bináascíitóóh* = ‘big bend [in a river]’; *binaasi-ciitóó-h* = IC.big-bend in river(II)-OS.

**89) Missouri River, MT, exact location unknown:** “Magpie Tail” (Kroeber 216). The Gros Ventre surface form would be *wouʔúhʔéeih ʔi-kíhiiʔ* = magpie 3POSS-tail. Along the Missouri River, “where there are steep hills” (Kroeber, 216).

**90) Missouri River, MT, exact location unknown:** “Many Mounds of Rock” (Bull Lodge 59). “On the north side of the [Missouri] River...just below old Fort Benton” (Horse Capture 1992:59).

**91) Moccasin Mts/Buttes, MT:** *nihwɔnɔɔbéhʔi ʔəhʔániih* = ‘gold mountains’; *nihwɔn-ɔɔbeh-iʔ ʔəhʔan-iih* = yellow-earth-LOC mountain-PL. This name is used by Rufus Warrior in a war story recorded in the 1960s. He crosses the Missouri River, then reaches these mountains to the south, before reaching the Judith Mts. The name apparently refers to gold mining.

**92) Musselshell River, MT** (flows into Missouri River): *byéi ʔnícááh* = ‘shell river’; *byeeiʔi-niicaah* = shell-river. “It is not known how the river received its name. The moonshell is a polished marine shell received in trade and worn at the throat or on the head. It is possible that before the traders came, and before they knew the moonshell, they may have polished the shells of freshwater mussels (genus *Unio*), and used these in the same way that they afterward used the trade shells.” (Grinnell 1913:329) There was also a noted petroglyph site near the mouth of this river (Cooper 1957: 418). The same name is recorded on the 1801 Fidler map as well.

**93) North Platte River, WY/NB:** Same as Platte River: “Big Shell River.”

**94) Owl Creek, MT** (flows into Bighorn River): Grinnell 1913 *Bya te ni tseh* ‘Owls’ River’ = *byóʔtaaníicááh*; *byóʔtaa-niicaah* = owl-river.

**95) People’s Creek, MT** (flows into Milk River). Name #1: *ʔinnitééikəhʔəwúuʔ* = ‘person creek’; *ʔineniteei-kəhʔəwu-uʔ* = person-creek-LOC. Name #2: Grinnell 1913 *Ja a a ka’ auhk* ‘Grove Creek’ = *čəwʔəwʔəwəh kəhʔəwuh*; *kyəwʔəwʔəwəh* -h *kəhʔəwuh* = IC.there is brush(II)-OS creek. “Long ago, on this stream, a mare had a colt which had the head of a human being. The people used to speak of this colt as a person, and from the fact that it ranged on the stream they called this Person’s creek. Previous to that time, it had been called Grove creek: *Ja a a ka’ auhk*” (Grinnell 1913:329). Note: the form *čəwʔəwʔəwəh* is not attested in modern Gros Ventre, but the equivalent form (*coo’oo’oe*) is still common in Arapaho, so the Gros Ventre here is based on

the Arapaho model.

**96) Platte River, NB:** Grinnell 1913 Ab its wi i ni tseh ‘Big Moonshell River’ =

*ʔáábikibyéei ʔniicááh*; ʔaabiki-byeeiʔi-niicaah = big-shell-river.

**97) Powder River, WY/MT** (flows into Yellowstone River): Grinnell 1913 I te ni tseh ‘Powder

River’ = *kʔitaaniicááh*; kʔitaa-niicaah = powder/ashes-river. “The name no doubt refers to the

black dust from the seams of lignite found along this stream.” (Grinnell 1913: 330)

**98) Pryor Creek, MT** (flows into Yellowstone River): Grinnell 1913 Ot su ni tseh ‘Arrow

River’ = *ʔciniicááh*; ʔoci-niicaah = arrow-river. “Near the head of this stream, close to the

mountains, is a little butte, and once when the Gros Ventres were passing this butte they saw

many arrows stuck in the crevices of the rock; hence the name.” (Grinnell 1913: 329). Note that

in modern Gros Ventre, this older independent word for ‘arrow’ used here has been replaced by

*núkyah*, which originally meant ‘my (obligatorily possessed) arrow.’

**99) Rocky Boy Reservation, MT:** *nəcíhiitaanʔ* = ‘Cree/Rabbit Tribe/village’; *nəcici-hiitaanʔ*

= Cree-town/tribe.

**100) Rosebud River, MT** (flows into Yellowstone River): Ya ni ni tseh ‘Roseberry River’ =

*yáaniniicááh*; yaani-niicaah = rose hip-river. “Named from the abundance of rose-bushes

growing in the stream” (G330).

**101) St. Louis, MO:** there is no documented Gros Ventre name, but ‘Mexican’ is currently

*kyəʔcə́niinénʔi* ‘bread man’ in Gros Ventre, and this name is likely a transference from the

earlier name for Spaniards, based in St. Louis in the later eighteenth century (see Taylor 1996).

St. Louis could well have been *kyəʔcə́niitaanʔi* ‘Spanish tribe/town,’ and that name is

documented for Arapaho.

**102) St. Paul’s Mission, Ft. Belknap Res., MT:** *ʔínʔ ʔóhuubiibithiitwónh* = ‘place where people pray’: *ʔiniʔ ʔoh-uu-biibitihit-wóni-h* = that where-IMPERF-pray(AI.PART)-IMPERS(II)-OS.

**103) Saddle Butte, MT (south of the town of Havre):** (*ʔanáákyaaʔ ʔóhtwóhohʔ*) = ‘where (the bull) hooked it’; *ʔanaakyaaʔ ʔoh-twóh-ohʔ* = buffalo bull where-hook with horn(TI)-3S. This is a reference to a traditional narrative. The reference is to the mountains to the south of the city, which have a notch in them (T I.387).

**104) Saddle Butte/Square Butte, MT (nw. of the Bear Paw Mts, one mile east of the town of Box Elder):** *wosʔ ʔiikekʔi* = ‘bear paw.’ Note that in Bull Lodge (p. 47) a translation of ‘bear paw butte’ is given, but the word ‘butte’ is not part of the original Gros Ventre name. This butte was apparently a traditional fasting site; at least it was one of the buttes where the celebrated chief Bull Lodge fasted and obtained a vision (Horse Capture 1992:47-51). It is called ‘Square Butte’ in the Bull Lodge text, but is better known by Gros Ventres at least as ‘Saddle Butte’ in English. There is a town called Square Butte (MT), but this is a separate location.

**105) Sand Hills:** *nóóóbéʔ* = ‘sand/sandy area.’ This is an alternate name for the mythological location which is the abode of the dead.

**106) Saskatchewan River, main branch, Sask.:** Grinnell 1913 I was si’ ni tseh ‘Elk River’ = *ʔiwósih-niicááh; ʔiwósih-niicaah* = elk-river. “Because many elk were found along this stream” (Grinnell 1913:328).

**107) Saskatchewan River, north branch, Sask.:** Grinnell A yah ta non ‘Tall Trees’ = *ʔaay-wóót-wón(?)*-. “So named because along that stream (?) were many large cottonwoods.” (Grinnell 1913:328). The initial element is *ʔeey*- ‘long/tall’ and the second element may be *-wóót*- ‘tree.’ The rest of the form is unclear.

**108) Saskatchewan River, south branch, Sask.:** Grinnell 1913 Nut ni tseh ‘Belly River’ =

*ʔinótóníicááh*; ʔinótón-niicaah = belly-river.

**109) Seattle, WA:** *niniibííth* = ‘in the north’; niniib-iiih = north-ADV.PART.

**110) Shelby, MT:** *ʔahnəəkə̀̀siinóckʔ* = ‘where the cross sits’; ʔəh-nəəkə̀̀siin-əci-kʔi = where-cross(roads)-sit(AI)-3S. The town is at the junction/crossroads of two roads, Highway 2 and I-15 (T II.212).

**111) Shield River, MT** (flows into the Yellowstone River?): *ʔitə̀̀kə̀̀hʔiniicááh* = ‘shield river’; ʔit-ə̀̀kehʔi-niicaah = 3POSS-shield-river.

**112) Snake Butte, Ft. Belknap Res, MT:** see see ah = ‘snake mound’ (Beatie 1985-86 (Fidler)); *síisíyaaʔ* = ‘snake.’ An older Gros Ventre named Singer reported “near the head of Snake Butte there is a big cleft which runs all the way to the bottom. The cleft is said to have been made by lightning striking there. My husband Ax Handle was there and looked. He thought he saw something and looked again. It was a great big snake with a horn on the top of its head. He was scared and ran away (Cooper 1957:15). This seems to be a reference to the mythological water monster, rather than a commonplace snake. Fossilized tracks were also known to exist on the top of this butte (Cooper 1957: 418).

**113) South Dakota:** *kénhúʔ* = ‘south’; *kenih-uʔ* = south/downhill-LOC. OR: *kénihúúúh* = ‘in the south’; *kenih-uuuh* = south/downhill-ADV. Note that this word can be used for ‘east’ as well, and that is its normal meaning in Arapaho.

**114) South Platte River, CO/NB:** Grinnell Ets wi i ni tseh ‘Little Moonshell River’=

*ʔakisbyéiʔiniicááh*; ʔakisi-byeeiʔi-niicaah = little-shell-river.

**115) Studhorse Butte, Bear Paw Mts, MT:** “scraper butte” (Horse Capture 1992:44). The Gros



ʔikeʔiitiyaa-niicaah = knee-river. “Named from a neighboring butte, which is so called from its supposed resemblance to a pair of bent knees” (G328). These are the two buttes known as the Knees.

**120) Three Buttes, Ft. Belknap Res, MT:** ʔákisbúitʔʔóhnɔh = ‘little plain/ordinary mocassins’;

ʔakisi-biitɔʔ-ɔʔɔhɔ-nɔh = little-plain/ordinary-moccasin-PL. This form is translated as ‘little bare moccasins’ by Gros Ventre speakers using English.

**121) Three Buttes, Sweet Grass Hills, MT:** náaθ kɔʔʔɔyóouh = ‘three buttes’; naaθ

kɔʔʔɔyɔɔ-uh; three IC.hill/butte(II)-OPL. This is also, for at least some speakers, a more general names for the entirety of the Sweet Grass Hills.

**122) Timber Ridge (west of Ft. Belknap Res.), MT:** ʔówuhɔhóókíín ʔ = ‘many trees’;

ʔɔwuh-ɔhɔkiini-ʔ = IC.many-be trees(II)-OS. OR: ʔówuhubisính = ‘much vegetation’;

ʔɔwuhu-bisiini-h = IC.many-be brush(II)-OS. OR: ʔwuhubéθʔa = ‘many sticks/trees’; ʔɔwuhu-beθ-aʔ = many-stick-LOC.

**123) Tongue River, WY/MT** (flows into Yellowstone River): ʔníitɔnníícááh = ‘tongue river’;

ʔiniitɔni-niicaah = tongue-river.

**124) Two Capture Canyon, Little Rocky Mts, MT** (next canyon to the west of Mission

Canyon): nííθ ʔuw ʔɔk ʔ ʔhkh ʔóóútʔa = ‘two capture canyon’; nííθɔʔu-wɔʔɔɔ-kʔi ʔɔh-

kɔhʔouuta-ʔ = two-captive(AI)-3S where-canyon(II)-OS. This canyon is named after the Gros Ventre individual Two Capture.

**125) Two Medicine River, MT:** *nííθ(a)h λuwsí? níícááh* = ‘two medicine river’; *nííθah?u-wosi? níicaah* = two-medicine river. The form for ‘two’ in this word is an alternate form.

**126) Washington, DC:** *níínówsibíítaan?ó* = ‘command town’; *nííi-nówsibíi-iitaan?ó* = IMPERF-command/order-town/tribe.

**127) White Cow/Pine Grove, MT:** *nóóci?bíih* = ‘white buffalo cow’; *nóóci-bíih* = white-buffalo cow. This housing area near Hays on the Ft. Belknap Reservation is named for the Gros Ventre individual White Cow, though some people call the area Pine Grove instead. The actual name of the individual was Three White Cows.

**128) White Cow Canyon (near Hays), MT:** *nóóci?bíih ?óhkh?óóút?á* = ‘white buffalo cow canyon’; *nóóci-bíih ?óh-kóh?óóute-?ó* = white-buffalo cow where-canyon(II)-OS. This area in the mountains above White Cow/Pine Grove is named for the Gros Ventre individual White Cow. See preceding entry.

**129) White River, NB?:** *?ó?óók?ó* = ‘white clay; *?ó?óókiniicaah* = ‘white clay river.’ The exact location of the ‘White Clay River’ is unknown. According to Brockie, Gros Ventre oral traditions recount that part of the tribe moved south to this river at one point in the nineteenth century, in an area near the Black Hills, and most likely south of the Black Hills according to accounts.

**130) Wild Horse Butte, Sweet Grass Hills, MT:** *?ákiswó?ó?óhnéh?é?ó* = ‘small moccasin (butte)’; *?ákisi-wó?ó?óhóh-eh?é?ó* = small-worn out-shoe/moccasin-DIM. This is one of the “three buttes” of the Sweet Grass Hills.

**131) Wind River, WY:** Grinnell Ni tseh wa se bya ‘River Smells Bad’ = *niicááh wəsi-byóóʔ*;

*niicaah wəsi-byóóʔ* = river bad-smell(II). “This name is usually explained as referring to the

odor of sulphuretted hydrogen gas emitted by the hot springs on the river [likely around

Thermopolis, WY]. The Gros Ventres, however, have another story which says that long, long

ago, a great party of Gros Ventres on the warpath fought with the Shoshoni on the head of the

Stinking Water and about sixty people were killed. The Gros Ventres kept on their way south,

and on their return, when they passed the place where the bodies of the dead lay, the odor of

decaying flesh was so offensive that they called the stream by this name” (G330).

**132) Wolf Creek, MT** (flows into Judith River from the west): “wolf creek” (Bull Lodge 61).

The Gros Ventre form would be *kyáakiθaakóhʔówuh*; *kyaakiθaa-kohʔowuh* = wolf-creek.

**133) Wyoming:** *ʔinónʔééítaanʔ* = Arapaho Tribe; *ʔinónʔei-iítaanʔ* = Arapaho-tribe.

**134) Yellowstone area, WY:** *ʔóhuuθóóʔʔóh* = ‘where it smokes’; *ʔoh-uu-θoouʔóh-h* = where-

IMPERF-smoke(II)-0S.

**135) Yellowstone River, WY/MT:** *ʔiwósiinítcááh* = ‘elk river’; *ʔiwəsii-niicaah* = elk-river. The

same name is recorded on the 1801 Fidler map as well.

**136) Zortmann, MT:** *ʔínʔ ʔóhuunəkyóhóókiinh* = ‘that place where they mine’; *ʔiniʔ ʔoh-uu-*

*nəkyóhóóki-iini-h* = that where-IMPERF-mine(AI.PART)-IMPERS(II)-0S

**137) Exact Location Unknown, MT:** “Needle Nest” (Kroeber 219), The Gros Ventre would be

*béihnohúuθʔ* = *needle-nest*. Between Sweet Grass Hills and Cow Creek (Kroeber, 219).

**138) Exact Location Unknown, MT:** “Large Rock” (Kroeber 219). The Gros Ventre would

likely be *ʔáábikəhʔənáákyaaʔ*; *ʔaabik-əhʔənaakyaʔ* = big/large-rock. Another possible form would be *ʔəhʔənáákyaaʔ báaθéit* = rock large/big-bodied(AI). Between Sweet Grass Hills and Cow Creek, closer to Cow Creek than “Needle Nest” (Kroeber, 219).

**139) Exact Location Unknown, MT:** "White Wolf" (Kroeber 219). The Gros Ventre form would be *kyáakíθaa ʔ nókékəh* or *nókəikyáakíθaaʔ* = wolf white(AI) or white wolf. Between Sweet Grass Hills and Cow Creek, closer to Cow Creek than either “Needle Nest” or “Large Rock.” (Kroeber, 219)

### Linguistic Abbreviations

0	inanimate person inflection; means ‘it’
3	third person; means ‘he’ or ‘she,’ ‘him’ or ‘her’
ADV	adverbial; makes words similar to English adverbs
AI	means verb that has animate subject
IC	initial change: the first syllable of the verb is lengthened when no prefix occurs
II	means verb that has inanimate subject
IMPERF	imperfective; means something is done regularly, habitually – vs. just one time
IMPERS	impersonal verb ending; means that ‘people do it’ – no definite person mentioned
LOC	locative; means that something is located at the place or on the thing in question
PART	participle; like English ‘running’ ‘seeing’
PASS	passive; means for I example ‘I have been hit, I was hit by someone’ – vs. ‘I (actively) hit someone else.’

PL	plural; means more than one person or thing
S	singular; means one person or thing
TA	transitive verb (action affects subject and object), object is animate
TI	transitive verb (action affects subject and object), object is inanimate

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