



Amazing Montanans—Biography

Running Eagle (Pi'tamaka), Blackfeet (Piegan) Woman Warrior

Running Eagle grew up a typical Blackfeet girl named Brown Weasel Woman. She had two brothers and two sisters, her mother was a well-respected homemaker and her father was a well-known warrior. Brown Weasel Woman's education included learning about how to take care of the household, raise children, cook and make clothes.

However, Brown Weasel Woman's life began to change when she asked her father to make

her a bow and arrow and to teach her how to shoot it. She loved learning the ways of a warrior and soon gave up the work of the household in exchange for hunting buffalo with her father. During one of these buffalo hunts, the group of hunters encountered an enemy war party and when they retreated at top speed to escape their enemies, her father had his horse shot out from under him and he was injured. Although it was very

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Putting up tipi poles, Blackfeet Indians, no date, unidentified photographer.

Lifeways of Montana's First People

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dangerous, Brown Weasel Woman turned back, picked up her father and escaped. One of the bravest deeds a warrior could perform was to face the enemy while riding back to rescue someone who was left behind. So when she returned to camp, the people honored her for being courageous.

Soon after, her mother became very ill and, because she was the oldest child, Brown Weasel Woman took over the chores of the household to help her mother. Although she was an excellent home maker, she did not have any interest in doing any of it. She enjoyed the men's activities of hunting and war much more. Although many of the men took an interest in her, she did not have any interest in having a boyfriend or becoming married.

The turning point of Brown Weasel Woman's life came when her father was killed during a war party and her mother died soon afterwards. Brown Weasel Woman suddenly became responsible for her brothers and sisters. She took on the role as the head of the family which meant that she hunted for and protected her family. Because of this new responsibility, a widowed woman moved in to help with the household chores and to help teach her brothers and sisters.

Brown Weasel Woman's first war adventure was against the Crows who had stolen some Blackfeet horses. It took the war party several days to get to Crow country, but when they arrived, the Blackfeet were successful at stealing many of the Crow's horses. Brown Weasel Woman stole eleven horses by herself. Although the Crows chased them for a while, the Blackfeet got safely back to their camp.

On the way back to the camp, Brown Weasel Woman was on watch duty from the top of a butte, while the others rested in a hidden

location. She saw two enemies approaching, and before she could reach the men to warn them of the danger, the enemies were ready to round up and steal their horses. Brown Weasel Woman ran down the butte with her rifle and grabbed the rope of the herd's lead horse to keep the rest from running away. The enemies saw that she was a woman and began to close in on her because they did not expect any trouble from her. Brown Weasel Woman shot the enemy who carried a rifle and forced the other one to turn and run. She grabbed the fallen enemy's rifle and shot at the one running away but missed him. The men were very impressed by her courage of saving the horses and killing an enemy.

Her second adventure was against the Pend d'Oreille, who lived across the mountains. This time they captured over 600 horses. Although she was shot at when they were retreating, the two arrows both struck her shield and she was not injured.

During the summer, when all of the Blackfeet gathered to visit and celebrate with each other, Brown Weasel Woman was asked to get up with the other warriors and tell the people about her adventures. She was one of the very few women to actually go on war parties and hunt buffalo so the people were excited to hear her stories and they applauded loudly after hearing her. Then Lone Walker, the head chief, honored her in a way that was never done before for a woman. He gave her a new name – Running Eagle – a name carried by several famous warriors before her.

Running Eagle became very successful at the men's activities and went on to become a powerful warrior. She has become one of the most famous women in Blackfeet history.