

2022 INDUCTEES

THE THREE YAYAS:

ANNIE PIERRE 1900-1975

LOUISE MCDONALD 1904-1994

CHRISTINE WOODCOCK 1910-1986

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Mission Mountains Wilderness stands alone as the first tribally designated wilderness in the United States and still the only alpine wilderness on an American Indian reservation.

It may never have happened were it not for three persuasive Salish grandmothers—forever known as the Three Yayas—who stood up to stand as one.

In 1974, the Bureau of Indian Affairs proposed a timber sale that would have clearcut some 2,000 acres in the heart of the Missions near Ashley Lakes.

When the CSKT met to consider the potentially lucrative plan, Tribal Council member Thomas “Bearhead” Swaney (MOHF 2016) invited the three highly respected tribal elders to speak: Annie Pierre, Louise McDonald, and Christine Woodcock, known to the community as the Three Yayas, or grandmothers. According to Char-Koosta News, the Three Yayas “reportedly told the Council and the BIA foresters in no uncertain terms to forget about ever logging in the Missions.”

Council members thanked the Yayas and expected the Salish women to depart the meeting. Instead, the matriarchs stood fast, saying

they would wait for the Council to vote.

By a 6-2 margin, the Council took the unprecedented action of tabling the timber sale.

The Three Yayas' action played a key role in what was already a widespread movement on the Flathead Reservation to strengthen protection of the environment—a movement that included Bearhead Swaney. In bringing their message to Tribal Council, Annie Pierre, Louise McDonald, and Christine Woodcock lent cultural authority to that movement and helped ensure new, long-lasting policies that reflected fundamental tribal cultural values.

Within eight years, the CSKT Tribal Council would pass the historic ordinance that gave wilderness protection to nearly 90,000 acres of the Mission Mountains.

More broadly, the Three Yayas contributed to renewed, wider respect for the tribe's cultural wisdom, helping foster an array of tribal policies that have established the CSKT as leaders in environmental protection, including: protecting the lower 72 miles of the Flathead River from old-growth logging; creating a 10,000-acre Grizzly Bear Management Zone on McDonald Peak and the surrounding areas within the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness; restoring endangered species such as trumpeter swans;





securing in-stream flows in reservation streams; restoring the Jocko River corridor; and in 2021 passing the CSKT Cultural Waterways Ordinance, under which the lower Flathead River is now protected as a free-flowing, undammed cultural and ecological treasure for all the generations to come.

These and other Flathead Reservation achievements rest upon the foundation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes as a people and as an Indigenous nation.

That foundation—the cultural and spiritual wisdom handed down from the ancestors—was restored in the 1970s by the keepers of those traditions: Elders such as Annie Pierre, Louise McDonald, and Christine Woodcock.



**CONGRATULATIONS
2022 INDUCTEES!**