

Jackson Sundown - a composite

In the Pacific Northwest in 1863

By Chalk Courchane, November 1, 2012



[http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2010/09/round-up\\_then\\_and\\_now\\_jackson\\_sundown.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2010/09/round-up_then_and_now_jackson_sundown.html)

Jackson Sundown aka George Jackson, "We-ah-te-nato-ots-ha", Allotted Flathead # 2311

“Jackson Sundown, a Nez Perce Indian, who was the first Native American to win the World Saddle Bronc Championship at the 1916 Pendleton Round-Up. George Fletcher, an African American, competed in the 1911 controversial Saddle Bronc finals for the World Title at the

Pendleton Round-Up. Sundown and Fletcher were two legendary cowboys who broke the color barriers in the rodeo arena at the turn of the 20th Century.

Jackson Sundown and George Fletcher are not myths. They are real men, two of the greatest horsemen of their time, who challenged the social barriers of the new century and became legends. Before we move into the new millennium, it is important to recognize the impact of men like Sundown and Fletcher—icons of the 20th century who deserve recognition for overcoming the obstacles of race during their lifetimes.” April 6, 2006, Screening of "American Cowboys": A Documentary about Jackson Sundown and George Fletcher

Jackson Sundown (1863–December 18, 1923), born Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn (meaning Blanket of the Sun, or "Earth Left by the Setting Sun.), he was a member of Chief Joseph's Wallowa band of Nez Perce Indians. He is said to be Chief Joseph's nephew. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

“The horse became a very important part of the Nez Perce people. Not only for hunting in buffalo country, but the horse was a warrior. Nez Perce learned to breed and work with horses. Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn (Jackson Sundown) from an early age worked and cared for horses. Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn was a famous all-around cowboy, horseman, and excellent rider and breeder of horses.” References: 1983, Jackson Sundown, Nez Perce Horseman, in *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, vol. 33, no. 4 1994, Rodeo's Sundown, in *Wild West Idaho County Free Press Lewiston Morning Tribune*.

“The Nez Perce War of 1877 began and Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn was 14 years old. Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn and Sam Tilden (Suhm-Keen) both were assigned to attend to the horses in the evening and herd the horses while the tribe decamped. After the Nez Perce war ended Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn retreated to Canada with a small band of cold, hungry and injured Nez Perce. It is believed that Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn stayed with the Sioux (Sitting Bull's camp in Canada) about two years, then crossed the border into Washington. He then went into Montana, married and had two daughters. References: 1983, Jackson Sundown, Nez Perce Horseman, in *Montana, the Magazine of Western History*, vol. 33, no. 4 1994, Rodeo's Sundown, in *Wild West Idaho County Free Press Lewiston Morning Tribune*. Olive C. Wehr adds this “He lived through the famed Nez Perce War and as an 11 year old boy hid under a buffalo robe as his mother's tipi was set afire and burned down around him at the "Big Hole".” From "To Live on a Reservation", edited and compiled by Olive C. Wehr, May 1976., *Mission Valley News*, page 6. ‘He was painfully burned when the U.S. Cavalry torched the teepee where he was sleeping during the ambush at the Big Hole on Aug. 9, 1877. Joseph's followers were on their 1,300-mile death march fleeing the Idaho battle at White Bird Pass. When Joseph surrendered to General Miles in the Bears Paw of Montana that September, Sundown escaped with rifle wounds and made his way to Sitting Bull's Sioux camp in Canada. After two years, he stealthily rode to Nespelem, Wash., where Joseph and his surviving followers were confined to a small reservation away from their beloved hills of Wallowa. Joseph warned him not to go there, so Sundown went instead to the Flathead Reservation, trained horses, married a Salish woman and raised two daughters.”

“Unlike Joseph and many of his tribesmen, Sundown escaped the US Cavalry during the Nez Perce Retreat of 1877 and fled to Canada with a small group of wounded warriors. Legend holds that Sundown stayed for two years with a group of Sioux, including the iconic Sitting Bull. He

was considered to be a war criminal and lived in hiding with Sitting Bull and those that defeated General George Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn.” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

“In 1879, Sundown returned to the US and lived with a family on the Flathead Reservation in secrecy, then moved to Washington briefly before settling back in Montana with Cecilia Wapshela, whose ranch was located at Jacques Spur, six miles east of Lapwai, Idaho.

All the while, Sundown made his living by breeding, raising, 'breaking' and selling horses. To make additional money, Sundown entered into rodeos and dominated his opponents, many of whom would withdraw after learning that he would participate. Jackson Sundown won many all-around cash pots, which takes the highest average scores from all events, though he was best known for bareback and saddle bronc horse riding. His appearance differed greatly from other rodeo riders as he wore bright colored shirts, large and elegant woolen chaps and tied his long braids under his chin. Sundown entered into rodeos across the west and in Canada until his early 50s.” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



ANNIE SUN DOWN, THE WIFE OF JACKSON SUN DOWN, TAKEN 1915.

“In 1892 he moved to the Flathead Reservation where his wife, called by some Pewlosap, had two daughters, Adeline and Josephine.” From "To Live on a Reservation", edited and compiled by Olive C. Wehr, May 1976., Mission Valley News, page 6.

Adaline Redsky Sundown was born May 26, 1896 near Ronan, in then Missoula County and died in August of 1977 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Polson. She had married four times: Louie Hammer, Michel Parker (they had a son Joseph Larry "Itsteenicnukt" Parker, a brother of Joe Parker of Camas Prairie: He could speak Salish; Nez Perce, German, Spanish, Russian, and Kootenai.), Pierre Isadore "Peter" Woodcock and Pierre Adams (they had a son Patrick Adams, who was a hoop dancer on the Bicentennial Train trip to Washington, D.C.).

A story from Pete Woodcock:

From The Mission Valley News, September 23, 1981, page 6:

"Early Days By Miss Beaver Was it really a ghost rider?"

We may laugh when a young man says that he saw a ghost. But it is a different story when a whole group of people, both young and old, declare they were frightened by a ghost; and a noisy ghost at that.

This happened a long time ago but there is no other explanation.

Pete Woodcock tells the story: "My mother was still alive, all of my brothers and sisters were alive. At that time we lived at Catama, the camping place near Dog Lake now called Rainbow Lake. Ploassie Incashola and Red Horns were also there. Massaley and his family lived near Crow Creek.

"My brother Joe Woodcock lived at Camas. He had told our mother that he and his family were going to Ncurve. They were going to live there between Revais Creek and Perma.

"We all wanted to go up in the mountains near the Pend d'Oreille River looking for deer and hoping that we might kill meat for the winter. We agreed that we would all meet at Dixon.

We got ready for camping and hunting, loaded our wagons with food, teepee coverings and extra blankets.

"We started out with Polassie Incashola's big wagon leading the way. Then single file the other wagons followed. At that time there was no road, just a trail, and the wagons traveled slowly up the rough, rocky path.

"After traveling along all day my mother said that it was time to stop. We were near the railroad bridge over the river. Polassie Incashola parked his big wagon back toward the mountains. We all parked in line with him leaving plenty of room between wagons and river to set up camp.

"Right away Mother got busy. She sent me, Polassie, and Joe Red to cut teepee poles. We cut and brought them back, and the tepees was set up. Mother fixed the fire and put the coffee pot on to boil.

"By the time the meal was ready the sun had gone down behind the mountains. I and everyone else was just sitting down when we heard the clop, clop sound a horse makes as he travels over rock. The sound was loud as if there were several horses coming. The sound seemed to get nearer and plainer until we all turned toward the parked wagons expecting to see a rider appear behind them. Then the clop, clop sound stopped, just stopped as if the rider had pulled his horse up behind the wagons.

"My mother said, "Pete go tell Joe that we are eating. Tell him to come in and have his supper. Then he can take care of the horses."

"I answered, "Okay," and hurried over to where I could see in back of the wagons. There was nothing there. No one there, no horses, no man. Yet we had all heard the sound. Not just me. We all heard it. It came to the wagon and stopped.

"I ran back and dropped between my mother and Adeline. My mother said, "What's wrong with you?"

Shivering I answered, "There's no one out there!"

Disgusted she scolded, "You big liar. You're afraid of the dark so you lie."

"Defending myself I told Massahleh, Polassie and my younger brother Tomak to go and see. Christine ran with them.

"They came back at once. There was no one there, no man, no horses. We all got very still and stared into the blackness. All of us had heard a rider coming, had heard a horse go clop, clop, clop.

"That was when we were sure that a ghost horse and rider had ridden right up to the parked wagons and then disappeared without a trace.

"No one has ever come up with a better explanation."

From her obituary in the Mission Valley News, 10 Aug. 1977: "Ronan - Adaline Redsky Adams, 81, Ronan, died last Wednesday in St. Joseph Hospital in Polson after a brief illness. Mrs. Adams was born May 23, 1896, near Ronan. She married Pierre Adams in 1929 in St. Ignatius. He preceded her in death. Survivors include two sons, Joseph Larry Parker and Patrick Adams, both of Ronan; a stepson, Francis J. Adams, Worley, Idaho; a step-daughter, Mrs. Louise Conko, Ronan, 11 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. The funeral was held last Saturday at 10 a.m. in the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Ronan with the Rev. Thomas Fenlon officiating. Burial was in Calvary Cemetery in Ronan. Shrider's Mortuary was in charge of arrangements."

Notes from Bob Bigart: File 69,971/1908 Flathead 056, NA CIA CCF.

Oct. 14, 1908, correspondence relating to the unauthorized visit of Baptiste Ka-ka-she to Washington, D.C.

Ka-ka-she and Jackson Sundown complained that the land north of Flathead Reservation was not ceded to the U.S. government; the tribe had not consented to the allotment and opening of the reservation; [and that] William Q. Ranft was charging to get people enrolled; the Joe Dixon has forged the consent of tribal leaders on a petition to open the reservation. BIA: treaty provides to cession of all land claims except reservation; ...that the matter of making allotments and providing for the future support of the Indians has been frequently investigated by officials of the Department, and that it was thought to be best for the welfare of the Indians. BIA has no information on charges for enrollment, and will continue to protect the Indians.

The Dixon allotment law: The law was not passed on the petition of the Indians. Congress had the power to make the law and did not ask the consent of the Indians. [The trip to Washington.] D.C. was not needed and normally the BIA does not recognize unauthorized delegations but ...I have made an exception in your case out of respect to the advanced age of Baptiste, who has traveled this long distance at much discomfort to himself, no doubt.

St. Ignatius Mission House Diary, Dec. 9, 1908, PNTMC, reel 3, fr. 302.

The new Indian Agent Fred Morgan announced to Father Taelman that Baptist KaKaeshe is no more judge, in punishment for having gone to Washington against the will of the former Agent.

Jerome D'Aste, S.J., diaries, Dec. 9, 1908, PNTMC, reel 30, fr. 273.

The new Agent Fred Morgan announced to the Father that Baptist is no more [a] judge and asks the Father to propose another Indian as judge.

St. Ignatius Mission House Diary, Jan. 6, 1909, PNTMC, reel 3, fr. 303.

Some Nez Percés who are living like beasts have been ordered out of the Reservation, or to get married.



Jerome D'Aste, S.J., diaries, Jan. 6, 1909, PNTMC, reel 30, fr. 276.

The agent ordered the Nez Perce Long Hair either to quit the woman he lives with or to go out of the Reservation and he led him to the Agency.

St. Ignatius Mission House Diary, Feb. 12, 1909, PNTMC, reel 3, fr. 304.

Baptist Kakaeshin went to Washington and took for companion and interpreter a proud Nez Perce, against the order of the Indian agent; this trip, as it was to be foreseen was a failure.

Jerome D'Aste, S.J., diaries, Feb. 12, 1909, PNTMC, reel 30, fr. 280.

The agent forbade Baptist Ka Kaeshin to take with him to Washington the Nez Perce Jackson, because a stranger and living in adultery.

File 12,042/1909 Flathead 056, NA CIA CCF.

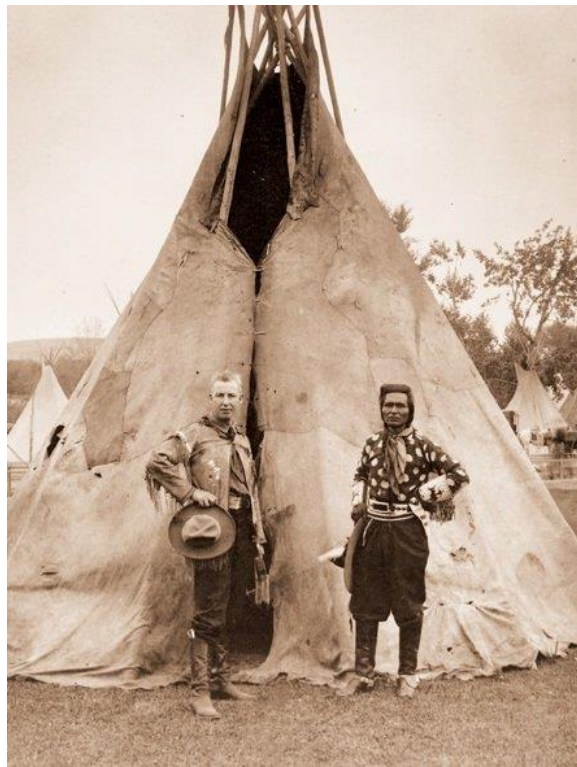
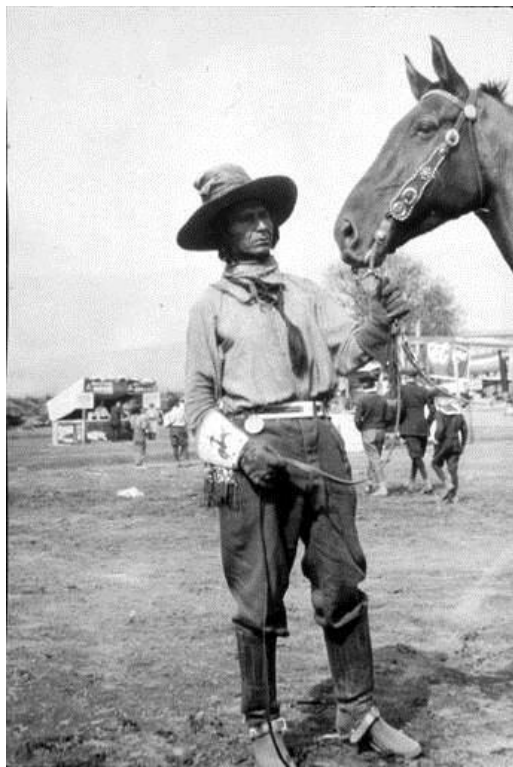
Feb. 14, 1909, Morgan requested that BIA not recognize Kakashe as representing Flathead Reservation has traveled to Washington ,D.C. with Jackson Sundown as interpreter who is not legally married. Kakashe agreed to have Joe Pierre interpret but when they got to Missoula, Pierre returned to the reservation and Sundown went with Kakashe. Morgan: Should this delegation be received by your Office I feel that it would be a serious set-back to the discipline I am trying to establish.....BIA and President refused to meet with Kakashee and he returned to reservation

Jerome D'Aste, S.J., diaries, Feb. 28, 1909, PNTMC, reel 30, fr. 281.

Baptist KaKaeshin came back last night from Washington colle piva rel sacco!

St. Ignatius Mission House Diary, Feb. 28, 1909, PNTMC, reel 3, fr. 304.

Last night Baptist Kakaeshin came back from Washington and had the pleasure to make use for himself of the 300 dol that were collected on the Reservation.



“In 1910, Sundown rejoined his tribe on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation in Lapwai, Idaho, where he took an allotment of land and built a cabin. He later married Cecelia Wapshela in 1912, and they built a home at Jacques Spur, Idaho.” He risked returning to the Nez Perce Reservation established for Chief Lawyer and his followers, who were not involved at White Bird. On dares during a rodeo at Culdesac, Idaho, Sundown rode a notorious bronc, did a standing dismount and them calmly dusted off his blue serge suit.

“In 1911, Sundown made the Saddle Bronc Finals for the World Championship at the Pendleton Round-Up, which ended in controversy and protest. He competed with George Fletcher, an African American, and John Spain, a European American.”

“In 1912 it is recorded that Jackson Sundown (at the age of 49) entered rodeo events in Canada and Idaho (Culdesac, Orofino, Kamiah and Grangeville). Sundown became a favorite at these rodeos because he was tall, lean and handsome, he wore his hair in braids tied under his chin, and he always wore bright colored shirts. In 1914, Sundown was having much success as an all-around rodeo rider. Other contestants pulled out of rodeos because Sundown was riding and they knew he would win. As a result the rodeo managers decided to hire Sundown to exhibition ride for \$50.00 a day to entertain the crowds. In 1915, Sundown (at age 52) went to Pendleton Oregon and placed third. Sundown decided to retire from rodeo after the Pendleton Roundup.”

“In 1915 at age 52, he took third place in the all-around at the Pendleton Roundup and decided to retire from rodeo, which had wrecked his body. The following year, an artist who was doing a sculpture of Sundown convinced him to enter the Roundup one last time, an offer that Sundown only accepted after the artist agreed to pay the entry fee.”

“Sundown was twice the age of the other semi-finalists but advanced after high scores in the saddle bronc and bareback horse riding competitions. His final ride is an event of great mythology to this day among American Indians and rodeo aficionados. It is told that Sundown drew a very fierce horse named Angel and that the horse bucked so furiously that Sundown removed his cowboy hat and fanned the horse to get it to cool off, at which time he and the horse merged into one being. Sundown won the all-around event and became immortalized as a hero of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, which includes the Nez Perce.

“During the 1916 Pendleton Roundup he was the first full blood Indian to win the Bronco Bucking Championship of the World. He was 50 years old and wearing his hair in traditional Nez Perce pompadour and braid style with a traditional high crown "Indian Hat" and wearing bright orange "woolies" (chaps) with large black spots. He rode his bronc, "Angel", to become one of America's greatest bronc busters. Amid chaps, shouts, whistles, and thunderous stomping applause the crowd cheered, "Ride'em Sundown! When the ride was over the cowboys rushed up to Sundown and grasped his hand, and he tossed his hat in the air with joy. He was given a horse with a beautiful handmade saddle and circled the quarter-mile track as the crowd shouted, waved their hats and hands and cheered wildly.” From "To Live on a Reservation", edited and compiled by Olive C. Wehr, May 1976., Mission Valley News, page 6. He was largely popularized by Ken Kesey's novel "The Last Go 'Round." Sundown rode in the Saddle Bronc Finals against Rufus Rollen and Bob Hall, both European American cowboys. Sundown would make his final ride on "Angel", who twisted in circles before exploding into the air several times and the judges signaled to end the ride. A quiet hush overtook the thousands in the grandstands and bleachers, until the Round-Up judges announced, "Jackson Sundown, first place!"

“In 1916 a sculptor, Alexander Phimister Proctor (who was sculpting Sundown at the time), persuaded Sundown to enter the 1916 Roundup in Pendleton, Oregon and paid his entrance fee. Sundown made it to the saddle bronc semi-final round and then rode "Casey Jones" to move into

the finals with two other cowboys (Rufus Rollen and Bob Hall). Rollen and Hall both had excellent rides. As Sundown eased onto Angel's back for his final ride, the blindfold was removed from Angel. Angel tried to whirl and leap to throw Sundown off. All Sundown's years as a child in the Wallowa's riding, and his career in Montana as a horseman, and his rodeo experience showed that day. It is said that Sundown became one with the horse. As Angel tried one last attempt at throwing Sundown off, Sundown fanned his hat at the horse. And then the signal of the end of the ride.” References: 1983, Jackson Sundown, Nez Perce Horseman, in Montana, the Magazine of Western History, vol. 33, no. 4 1994, Rodeo's Sundown, in Wild West Idaho County Free Press Lewiston Morning Tribune. Also this: “A. Phimister Proctor, a nationally famous sculptor, did a statue of Jackson Sundown in 1919 and exhibited it several times in European shows. It is now on permanent display in the RCA building in Radio City, New York City. <http://www.nezperce.org/Official/jacksonsundown.htm>

“Jackson Sundown, Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn, was the 1916 World Champion Bronc Rider. Sundown made his last public appearance in 1917 for Governor Moses Alexander.



<http://angelaswedberg.blogspot.com/2009/11/jackson-sundown-rides-raven.html>



<http://www.nezperce.org/History/Jacksonsundown.htm>

In 1923, Jackson Sundown died of pneumonia, he was buried at Slickpoo Mission Cemetery near Jacques Spur. Later a stone monument was placed there to remember the Nez Perce warrior and horseman Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn.” References: 1983, Jackson Sundown, Nez Perce Horseman, in Montana, the Magazine of Western History, vol. 33, no. 4 1994, Rodeo's Sundown, in Wild West Idaho County Free Press Lewiston Morning Tribune Rodeo Idaho! Louise Shadduck. At the time of his death, the US Government did not consider Native Americans to be American Citizens.

The memorial reads: Jackson Sundown Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn Nez Perce Born in Montana 1863 Died at Jacques Spur, December 18, 1923 at the age of 60 years. Jackson Sundown rode with Chief Joseph in 1877. He performed in many rodeos in the Northwest and Canada. In 1916 he won the World's Championship at Pendleton and an ovation never before equaled.”

<http://www.nezperce.org/History/Jacksonsundown.htm> .

“He was voted into the Pendleton Round-Up Hall of Fame in 1972. His daughter, Adeline Adams of Ronan, Montana, was present and honored to receive his award. A metal plaque with



a description of his contributions and a photo etched on it is displayed in the Fame Room at the Pendleton Round-Up Pavilion. Jackson Sundown will always be remembered as the World's Greatest Indian Bronc-Buster." From "To Live on a Reservation", edited and compiled by Olive C. Wehr, May 1976., Mission Valley News, page 6. He was a 2006 Hall of Fame Inductee as well.

“A large gathering of Native Americans continues at the Pendleton Roundup in Pendleton, Oregon where a pow-wow is held during the Round-up in late September. Stories of Waaya-Tonah-Toesits-Kaun continue to fill the air at this event among the drumming, fry bread, gambling and rodeoing.”

From The Ronan Pioneer, Apr. 16, 1931, p2:

"St. Ignatius

Anne Sundown, an old Nez Perce Indian, a resident of North Crow Creek, was buried at the Catholic cemetery last Wednesday afternoon."

References: Roadside History of Oregon, Gulick, Bill, 9780878422524, Mountain Press Publishing, 1991; National Cowboys of Color Museum and Hall of Fame - Dallas/Ft. Worth, <http://www.cowboysofcolor.org/profile.php?ID=17> at [www.cowboysofcolor.org](http://www.cowboysofcolor.org); 1983, Alcorn, R.L. and Alcorn, G.D. (1983), "Jackson Sundown, Nez Perce Horseman" in From Montana: the magazine of western history; v. 33, no. 4; Fixico, D.L. (2006), Daily Life of Native Americans in the 20th Century; <http://www.cowboysofcolor.org/profile.php?ID=17>; [http://www.flatheadnewsgroup.com/bigforkeagle/columns/article\\_8db11d1e-e60a-55a2-b189-34656e4e5774.html](http://www.flatheadnewsgroup.com/bigforkeagle/columns/article_8db11d1e-e60a-55a2-b189-34656e4e5774.html) , The Trailwatcher, G. George Ostrom; [http://www.myspace.com/jackson\\_sundown](http://www.myspace.com/jackson_sundown); Rowena L. and Gordon D. Alcorn, "Jackson Sundown, Nez Perce Horseman," Montana: The Magazine of Western History, vol. 33, no. 4, Aut. 1983, p. 46-51; PNTMC = Robert C. Carriker and Eleanor R. Carriker, eds. Microfilm Edition of the Pacific Northwest Tribes Missions Collection of the Oregon Province Archives of the Society of Jesus. Wilmington Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1987; See: David Courchane Scrapebook #2 - page 94 - for story on Jackson Sundown - Mission Valley News, 13 Jun 1984, p6 - Early Days By Miss Beaver - Horse Racing In The Jocko Valley".  
<http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.lclark.edu/org/orcenter/objects/sundown.jpg>



Waay a-Tonah-Toesits-Kahn  
 Jackson Sundown  
 courtesy of the Slickpoo Collection.

## Jackson Sundown inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame

RONAN — Larry Parker was escorted to Albuquerque, N.M., by Lloyd Ewing April 29 to receive a plaque marking the induction of Parker's grandfather, Jackson Sundown, into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame.

Sundown was born in 1863 among the Nez Perce in Idaho. At the age of 14, he was a horse herder for Sam Tildon, and for Chief Joseph's band during its flight to Canada. Among his many experiences, according to Lucille Otter of Ronan, was the time was protected by a buffalo robe when his tepee was burnt at the Bighole.

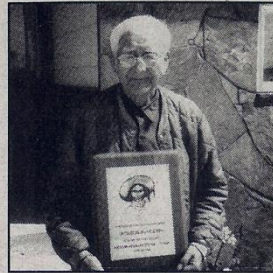
Sundown was inducted for winning the saddle bronc competition at the Pendleton Rodeo in 1916, at the age of 53.

The American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame represents the enshrinement of outstanding American Indian heroes in amateur or profes-

sional sports of any type recognized by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) or the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Every athlete honored by induction is selected on the basis of an outstanding, colorful and action-punctuated record of performance.

A new class of enshrinees is elected each year by a 12-person Board of Trustees, a constituency of all principal Indian areas in the United States. Eligibility for membership in the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame requires that the athlete possess special qualifications, including membership in a tribe recognized by the federal government (or have one-fourth quantum Indian blood), participation at a post-high school level in an amateur or professional sport recognized by AAU or NCAA, and dem-

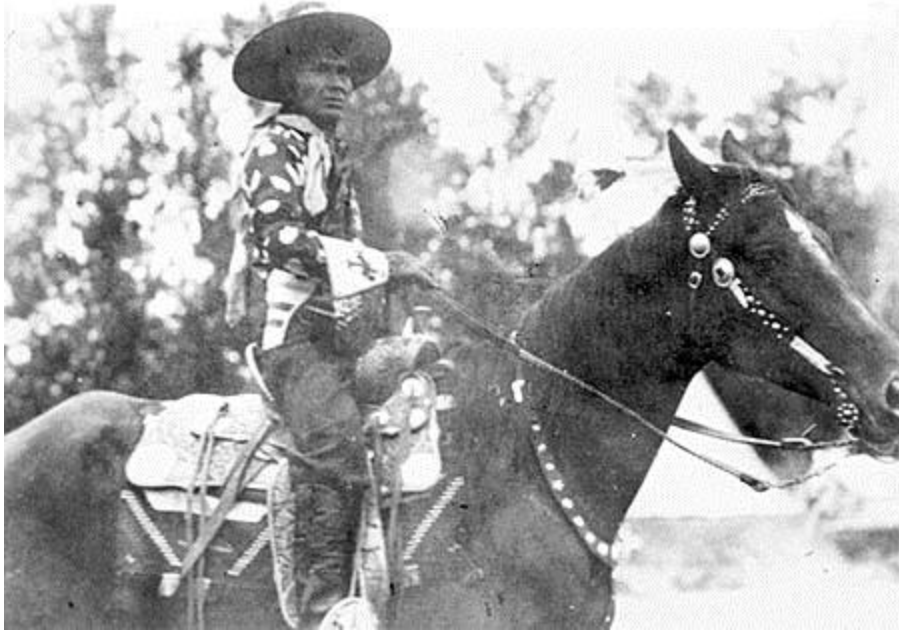


LARRY PARKER OF RONAN holds a plaque marking the induction of Parker's grandfather, Jackson Sundown, into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame.

onstrated playing ability, integrity, sportsmanship, character, contribution to the team and sports in general.

In Montana, the Indian Athletic Hall of Fame Board of Trustees member for the Billings area is Thurman Troser of Ronan.

*Chau-Kousta May 6, 1964*



Jackson Sundown

Photograph courtesy of Thain White <http://www.civilization.ca/cmcc/exhibitions/aborig/rodeo/rodeo99e.shtml>