



Sacagawea

Lewis and Clark set off from the city of St. Louis on May 14, 1804. While wintering with the Mandan nation, they met a French-Canadian fur trapper named Toussaint Charbonneau and his wife, Sacagawea. As a child, Sacagawea had been captured as a slave by the Hidatsa tribe after they attacked her Shoshone village, and the Hidatsa sold her to the trapper while she was still a young teenager.

When Lewis and Clark began traveling again, Sacagawea, her baby son in tow, went with them. She acted as an interpreter. She showed them what native plants were edible and helped them to get along and trade with other Native American tribes. When a boat they were traveling in capsized in river in what is today the state of Montana, Sacagawea saved some supplies and important documents, so Lewis and Clark named the river after her.

When the expedition found the Shoshone tribe, the chief was Sacagawea's brother. He traded them some horses and gave them a guide to take them through the Rocky Mountains.

They reached the Pacific Ocean in November of 1805, and there is little record of Sacagawea from that point on. Historians disagree about how she died. Some say she died in 1812 of a fever, while others think she lived until 1884.

What was Sacagawea's contribution to the Lewis and Clark expedition?
