

## Some basic meanings of the Niitoyis (Blackfoot Lodge) designs

*“A beautiful tipi is like a good mother: she hugs her children and protects them from heat and cold, snow and rain. ~Lakota saying~*

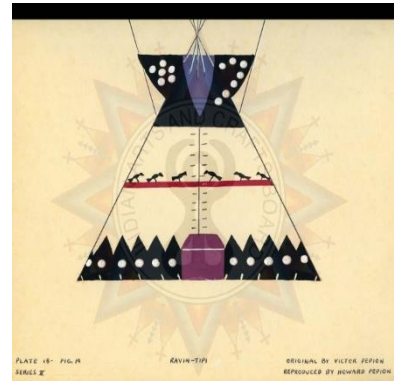
Poles are the pathways for our prayers to reach Creator. Sky and earth meet where the poles join.

Top of the lodge is the sky where Creator gets help from the sun, rain and lightning that brings life to the earth.

The painted top is the day or night sky. On this example, the round circles represent seven stars (Big Dipper) usually on the north smoke flap/ear and the Bunched Stars, Lost Children (Pleiades) on the South.



The cross at the back represents Apaani (butterfly who brings good dreams or the Morning Star)



Bands below the top may be clouds, rainbows, spirit trails (usually Innii) or ripples of water.

The bottom border is the Earth (some refer to Earth as Mother) with level plains (flat line), rounded hills or pointed mountains. (These designs indicate the area where that band or family may live).

Within the earth border are round circles or “dusty or fallen stars.”

The main area of the Niitoyis between the sky and earth border is the world of the spirit birds and animals who gifted the lodge design to the dreamer/owner. Some of these designs are transferred to others and have been around for many hundreds of years passed to each new generation. Each design has a story that one must seek out from the owner of the tipi.

Parent Resource:

An explanation of the lodge designs from Blackfoot Crossing:  
<https://youtu.be/p1HWHZx731s>

A collage of designs:  
<https://www.pinterest.ca/michaelt0595/niits%C3%ADtapi-blackfoot-lodgetipi-designs/>

Lethbridge Library YouTube page: Niitoyis (Emily Fox “Miisaminskiaki” demonstrates how to create a small lodge: “Niitoyis” for her classes. Emily is the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Support Worker at Catholic Central High School.

The Niitsitipi people (Real People/Blackfoot) say lodge: “Niitoyis” instead of tipi (a Sioux word)

**Blackfoot words**

**Oki:** Hello/Welcome (Oak-key)

**Niitsitapi:** Real People/Blackfoot (Neet-sit-tah-be)

**Niitoyis:** Lodge (knee-tow-yee)

**linni:** Bison/Buffalo (Ee-new or Ee-knee)

**Imitaa:** Dog (Ee-mi-dah)

**Ponokaomitaa:** Horse: (Boo-noo-gah-mee-da)

**Piita:** Eagle: (Bee-daa)

**Earth:** Ksahkomm

**Moon:** Kokomikiisom (Go-go-meek-ee-soom)

**Stars:** Kakatosiiks (Gah-gah-tow-siks)

**Some designs**

Note: Not all lodges are painted. There is usually a story as to why the lodge has a certain design.



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