

WHAT  
HAPPENED

Big Chief Allison 'Tottie' Montana died on June 27, 2005, while addressing the New Orleans City Council.

## Big Chief Allison "Tottie" Montana oversaw the change of the Mardi Gras Indians from a violent culture to a revered heritage.



Tottie Montana introduced bright colors and prettier beads, feathers and sequins into the Indians' costumes.

Montana, Big Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas Mardi Gras Indian Tribe, was known for his skill with the needle and thread, and was considered perennially the "prettiest" of the Mardi Gras Indians. He was also a talented singer and dancer.

In 1987, Montana was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts for his skill as a folk artist.

Montana's father, Alfred Montana, was the Big Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas from the 1920s until 1941. Montana joined the Monogram Hunters after the war, becoming their Big Chief in 1947. He returned as Big Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas in the late 1950s, and served as Big Chief until 1998, when his son Darryl Montana replaced him.

Montana worked much of his life to preserve and celebrate the Mardi Gras Indians, though he pushed to eliminate the violence of his youth when Mardi Gras Indians went after one another with hatchets and guns.

Montana died at age 82 in 2005 while addressing the New Orleans City Council about the city's treatment of Mardi Gras Indians.



Tottie Montana at the Tambourine and Fan parade at Super Sunday in 1990



Tottie Montana's son Darryl Montana succeeded his father as Big Chief after the elder Montana stepped down in 1998.



Children honor 'Chief of Chiefs' Tottie Montana and other civil rights icons in front of Montana's statue in Armstrong Park.



THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

Allison 'Tottie' Montana was the great nephew of Big Chief Becate Batiste, the first African-American Mardi Gras Indian.

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THE NEW ORLEANS ADVOCATE

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