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Indian Education for All
Montana State Parks Lesson Plan
Madison Buffalo Jump State Park

January 2010 (revised)

Title

Buffalo Past and Present

Content Areas

Social Studies; Writing

Grade Level

9th-12th

Duration

5 class periods and 5 homework assignments

Overview and Objectives

This lesson focuses on the historical and contemporary significance of bison to Montana's tribes and the indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains region. Using Madison Buffalo Jump State Park to begin the discussion of bison's importance to tribes, this lesson builds upon the purposes bison fulfilled in historical tribal economies, cosmologies, social organization, spiritual practices/beliefs, and relations with other tribes. Understanding these purposes, students will briefly examine the impact of the first "buffalo war," when in a few decades' time, Americans facilitated the near extermination of the bison and, in effect, crippled the economies of many tribes and robbed them of this vital component of their cultures and way of life. Students will learn that in spite of profound cultural, economic and spiritual changes that have affected tribes over the last 200 years, bison still remain an important—even essential—aspect of many tribal cultures today. The tribal cultural renaissance of the last few decades has strengthened not only the traditional cultural and spiritual value of bison to these tribes, but has also assisted tribes in their efforts to address some of their current economic, nutritional/health, and societal needs. This lesson seeks to enable students to look at contemporary tribal perspectives on bison, bison management, and cultural continuity. Students will learn that:

- traditional indigenous value systems and worldviews are still held by many tribal people today;
- bison are a fundamental component of many American Indian people's cultural and spiritual identity—historically and in the present;
- bison preservation is not just a biological, economic, or management issue, but an issue of sovereignty, cultural preservation, and physical survival;
- tribal definitions of "cultural resource" differ from those of the academic, political and legal entities who presently determine bison status, management and preservation (or demise);
- tribes have a vested interest in the past, present and future of American bison; and,

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- understanding the historical and current values placed by tribes on bison is important to the process of determining long-term management policies and survival strategies for wild bison in the United States.

Montana Education Standards and Benchmarks

Indian Education for All

Essential Understanding 1: There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

Essential Understanding 2: There is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined and redefined by [various] entities, organizations, and people. A continuum of Indian identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional. There is not a generic American Indian.

Essential Understanding 3: The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persists into modern day as tribal cultures, traditions and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral history beginning with their origins that are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the "discovery" of North America. *Background: Tribal languages, cultures, and traditions are alive and well throughout Indian Country. Indigenous languages are still spoken, sacred songs are still sung, and rituals are still performed… These histories and traditions may be private, to be used and understood only by members of that particular tribe. Educators should be aware of this issue when asking students about their histories, ceremonies and stories. Educators should also be consistent with policies surrounding "religious/spiritual activities" and ensure that Native traditions and spirituality are treated with the same respect as other religious traditions and spirituality.*

Essential Understanding 6: History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

Essential Understanding 7: Under the American legal system, Indian tribes have sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, the extent and breadth of tribal sovereignty is not the same for each tribe.

Montana Content Standards

Social Studies Content Standard 1: Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations. *Rationale: Every discipline has a process by which knowledge is gained or inquiry made. In the social studies, the information inquiry process is applied to locate and evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources of information [which is then used] to draw conclusions in order to make decisions, solve problems and negotiate conflicts. Finally, as individuals who participate in self-governance, the decision-making process needs to be understood and practiced by students as they prepare to take on civic responsibilities.*

Benchmark 1.2 Students will apply criteria to evaluate information (e.g., origin, authority, accuracy, bias, and distortion of information and ideas).

Benchmark 1.3 Students will synthesize and apply information to formulate and support reasonable personal convictions within groups and participate in negotiations to arrive at solutions to differences.

Social Studies Content Standard 2: Students analyze how people create and change structures of power, authority and governance to understand the operation of government and to demonstrate civic responsibility. *Rationale: The vitality and continuation of a democratic republic depends upon the education and participation of informed citizens.*

Benchmark 2.4 Students will relate the concept of tribal sovereignty to the unique powers of tribal governments as they interact with local, state and federal governments.
Benchmark 2.6 Students will analyze and evaluate conditions, actions and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among groups and nations.

Social Studies Content Standard 3: Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement and regions. *Rationale: Students gain geographical perspectives on Montana and the world by studying the Earth and how people interact with places. Knowledge of geography helps students address cultural, economic, social and civic implications of living in various environments.*

Benchmark 3.4 Students will analyze how human settlement patterns create cooperation and conflict which influence the division and control of the Earth (e.g., treaties, economics, exploration, borders, religion, exploitation, water rights, etc.)
Benchmark 3.7 Students will describe and compare how people create places that reflect culture, human needs, government policy, and current values and ideas.

Social Studies Content Standard 4: Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships. *Rationale: Students need to understand their historical roots and how events shape the past, present and future of the world. In developing these insights, students must know what life was like in the past and how things change and develop over time. Students gain historical understanding through inquiry of history by researching and interpreting historical events affecting personal, local, tribal, Montana, Untied States, and world history.*

Benchmark 4.2 Students will interpret how selected cultures, historical events, periods and patterns of change influence each other.
Benchmark 4.3 Students will apply ideas, theories, and methods of inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to formulate and defend reasoned decisions on public policy issues.
Benchmark 4.4b Students will analyze issues, using historical evidence, to form and support a reasoned position.
Benchmark 4.6 Students will investigate, interpret and analyze the impact(s) of multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints concerning events within and across cultures…and political systems.
Benchmark 4.7 Students will analyze and illustrate the major issues concerning [the] history, culture, tribal sovereignty and current status of the American Indian tribes and bands in Montana and the United States.

Social Studies Content Standard 6: Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interactions and cultural diversity on societies. *Rationale: Culture helps us understand ourselves both as individuals and as members of various groups. In a multicultural society, students need to understand multiple perspectives that derive from different cultural vantage points. As citizens, students need to know how institutions are maintained or changed and how they influence individuals, cultures and societies. This understanding allows students to relate to people in Montana, American Indian tribes, the United States and throughout the world.*

Benchmark 6.1 Students will analyze and evaluate the ways various groups meet human needs and concerns and contribute to personal identity.
Benchmark 6.3 Students will analyze the impact of ethnic, cultural, national and global influences on specific situations or events.
Benchmark 6.4 Students will evaluate how the unique characteristics of American Indian tribes and other cultural groups have contributed to Montana's history and contemporary life (e.g., legal and political relationships between and among tribal, state and federal governments).

Writing Content Standard 6: Students use the inquiry process, problem solving strategies and resources to synthesize and communicate information. *Rationale: As lifelong learners, individuals initiate their own inquiries, find solutions to real problems, and use current and emerging technologies and information sources. Writing enables individuals to analyze and synthesize information, as well as to present solutions using traditional and technological media.*

Benchmark 6.1 Students will pose questions or identify problems.

Benchmark 6.3 Students will identify and investigate alternative explanations or solutions, and use criteria to draw and defend conclusions based on their analysis and evaluation of the information.

Materials and Resources Needed

Attachment A: List of Student Reading and Homework Assignments per class. *(Note: Teacher, please see the end of this section for books you will need to have on hand or copy selections from for students' research assignment.)*

"The Descent of Civilization: The Extermination of the American Buffalo" (Article) by Christopher W. Czajka. Online at: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/frontierlife/essay8.html *(Note: This essay is three pages long, and you will have to click on the next page number or "next" at the bottom of each page to access the next one. Printer friendly option.)*

Buffalo War (DVD)—2001 Buffalo Jump Pictures, Inc., available online at http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/buff.html or by calling 1-510-848-6700. This DVD is 57 minutes long.

Attachment F-1: "Viewer's Guide to *Buffalo War*," from the PBS educational website at http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/buffalowarviewersguide.html

Attachment F-2, Discussion Questions for Buffalo War movie.

American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation (DVD) — PBS "Nature" series episode, distributed by WNET Video at http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/shop/buffalo.html 1-800-336-1917. ***See also*** the related online **Introduction** at: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/introduction/2183/ and the brief essay "**Troubled Herds"** at: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/troubled-herds/2181/

Intertribal Bison Cooperative (Website): http://www.itbcbison.com See "Who We Are."

"Where the Buffalo Now Roam" (Article) Douglas Chadwick, reprinted 2009 at http://www.itbcbison.com/featured_tribe.php?id=266 (Story on Montana tribes with bison herds)

Attachment B: Native American commentary on the Intertribal Bison Cooperative (Source: **"A Symbol of Strength"** (Essay) from http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/a-symbol-of-strength/2185/)

Attachment C: Traditional Tribal Uses of Bison (diagram) (Used with permission from the Montana Historical Society, Helena.) A similar, but more thorough, diagram is online at http://itbcbuffalo.com/itbc_main_files/buffalo_uses_poster_0.pdf

Attachment D: Bison Profile and Status from http://fieldguide.mt.gov/detail_AMALE01010.aspx (Also includes definitions of "Species of Concern" and Global/State Rankings.)

Attachment E-1: Arvol Looking Horse (Lakota) Statement on Bison, cited from the webpage http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/bisonhonoring.html Retrieved August 12, 2009.)

Attachment E-2: Discussion Questions for Arvol Looking Horse's Statement

Attachment G: "Bi'Shee: For American Indians, the Return of the Buffalo Brings Healing to Both Body and Spirit" (Article) Richard Peterson (Assiniboine-Sioux) in *American Indian*, Summer 2001. Online at: http://yeoldeconsciousnessshoppe.com/art79.html

"How It Worked" (a description of buffalo jump components and process) in *Montana, Stories of the Land*, by Krys Holmes. Montana Historical Society Press, 2008. You will only need pages 38-39. Available online at: http://www.mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/Chapter2/Chapter2.pdf

The following resources will be needed for students' preparation for presentations:

***** See class periods 1 and 2 for assignment description and exact page numbers. **** (Pages may be copied for use, as multiple students will need to read these materials. Some of these books are available at your school library or through Interlibrary Loan. All of them are available through online new/used booksellers.)

- ✓ ***I Will Be Meat for My Salish*** **(Book)** by Ron I., Whealdon, et al, Robert Bigart, Editor. Pablo, Montana: Salish Kootenai College Press; and Helena, Montana: Montana Historical Society Press, 2001.
- ✓ ***From the Heart of Crow Country*** **(Book)** by Joe Medicine Crow. University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- ✓ ***Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crows,*** by Frank Linderman, 1962 edition. (ISBN 0-8032-5121-1) This is the version most school libraries have already. If you want to use the Second Edition (2002) you will need to make a quick comparison with the earlier version to make sure that you are assigning the correct page numbers. A quick look in the index will help you locate the buffalo-related pages.)
- ✓ ***Blackfoot Lodge Tales—The Story of a Prairie People,*** by George Bird Grinnell. University of Nebraska Press, 1962. This is available in many school and public libraries.
- ✓ Blackfeet history and culture: http://www.trailtribes.org/greatfalls/home.htm
- ✓ ***Land of Nakoda***, by James Larpenteur Long, (originally published in 1942, part of the U.S. Federal Writers Project) republished by Riverbend Publishing, 2004.

Introduction to Madison Buffalo Jump and Bison in American Indian Cultures

> *Sun Buffalo Cow ran very fast along the other trail to the top of the cliff. She said, "I go into [change to] the form of earth buffalo. I will be meat for my Salish." She jumped headlong from the high rock to the foot of the cliff.*
>
> *The people came and saw the dead buffalo. They said: "Our Mother spoke true words. Here is herd buffalo fallen from the rock. It is warm meat. It is good."*
>
> —*From* "Sun Buffalo Cow Sacrificed Her Life" as told by Lassaw Redhorn, Francois Skyenna, Dominic Michell, in *I Will be Meat for My Salish*, opposite inside title page.

Madison Buffalo State Park, located near the headwaters of the Missouri River, is the site of a buffalo jump used by numerous tribes for at least 2,000 years (approximately from 500 B.C. to 1750 A.D). During and after the era when the Madison Buffalo Jump was used, this river valley drew diverse tribes from throughout the West for a common purpose: buffalo hunting.

Although bison were central to northern Plans tribal economies and cultures, many tribes from the Plateau and Great Basin regions also made annual journey to hunt bison and/or traded with Plains tribes for bison products. Some of the tribes who used the Missouri headwaters region to hunt bison include the Shoshone, Nez Perce, Bannock, Salish, Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Cree, Crow, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Dakota, Lakota and Hidatsa. To these tribes, bison fulfilled a range of physical, cultural, spiritual and economic purposes. Annual bison hunts both facilitated intertribal cooperation and alliances and generated intertribal competition and warfare. In many ways, bison defined and shaped many of these cultures and a way of life for many tribes.

Each tribe had its own specific cultural protocols, often defined by the tribe's cosmology, that determined the proper course of action regarding buffalo hunting, including distribution of labor, ceremonies and rituals that were part of the hunting process, and uses of various parts of the bison by tribal members for ceremonial purposes. Within the oral traditions of these tribes are buffalo stories, including stories about the origins of bison, how tribes were taught to hunt using the buffalo jump, and tribal-bison relationships. Although the cultures and oral traditions of buffalo-hunting tribes differ, there are some similarities underlining their relationship to the bison, notably the principle of respect for the bison, who are perceived as relatives, and an acknowledgement of the interrelated well-being of humans and bison.

In the mid-1800s came the first of the "buffalo wars"—an effort by the United States to facilitate white settlement of the West and American control over tribally-occupied lands. Hide-harvesting sharp-shooters reduced the bison population from over 20,000,000 in the 1840s to less than 2000 by 1882, effectively debilitating indigenous peoples who so greatly relied on this resource for survival and cultural identity. For the tribes, the near extinction of the bison meant a radical and painful plunge into poverty and suffering and a sudden bewildering dependence on the very nation that had stripped them of their livelihood and sought to divest them of their cultures as well.

But is this situation the end of the story? Have tribes who once revered and relied on the bison as the core of their economies and an essential component of their spiritual practices completely severed their cultural, economic or spiritual reliance on bison in the present era? Or are bison still relevant to tribal identities and important to tribes' cultural survival? How is the present situation regarding the bison of Yellowstone National Park an ethical issue, an issue of sovereignty, and an issue of cultural continuity for many tribal people? Finally, what can be learned from the past and present that may be useful for improving the management of America's last wild bison herd and ensuring its survival into the future?

Activities and Procedures

Teacher Preparation: Two of the activities in this lesson are movies (DVDs) which have some accompanying documents (viewing guides, introductory articles, etc.) Preview these DVDs, so that you can pinpoint the information students will be expected to acquire from each of them.

It is important that the teacher be mindful of the intent of this lesson: to discover and understand traditional tribal perspectives regarding bison (historically, presently, and into the future). For many Montanans, the situation of the Yellowstone Park Bison in particular is a contentious and emotional one; therefore, it is imperative that the teacher maintain the focus of this lesson (tribe' perspectives) for their students' academic benefit and not let them slip into a battle of opposing tribal positions.

Furthermore, the teacher and the students need to be aware that not all American Indians follow traditional spiritual or cultural ways—yet in spite of this, many American Indians acknowledge the *ongoing* importance of bison to tribal identities today. That bison remain an important aspect of the cultures of several tribes is essential to this lesson. Equally important is the fact that the "bison issue" is intrinsically linked to issues of traditional tribal cultural-spiritual survival, tribal sovereignty, and the identities of many tribal people.

Review the Materials list and Activities/Procedures and obtain all of the needed materials. Print paper copies of needed materials (attachments, articles, book excerpts, etc…) and organize according to when you will be in need of them. Print the diagram as a poster or individually, or arrange to view the online version with a computer and projector. It is recommended that you read each of the articles before or along with your class, so that you are familiar with their contents.

Finally, teacher should preview all maps (see Materials and Resources) and be familiar with locations of tribes in Montana, including tribes who made bison hunting forays into Central and Eastern Montana.

<u>Class Period 1: Madison Buffalo Jump, History of Bison and Tribes, Uses of Bison</u>

For this period, you will need the Introduction (provided in lesson) to use as a lecture, the maps of tribal territories between 1700 and 1855, the Traditional Uses of Bison diagram, and the Bison Status information from the FWP website listed above. Teacher will need internet access or a hard copy of the "How It Worked" description of a buffalo jump from *Montana, Stories of the Land*. You will also need to make copies of Attachment A (student reading and homework list) for distribution to your students at the end of class. Prepare for class by obtaining and reviewing the maps listed in the Materials and Resources section and reviewing "How It Worked."

1. Read the Introduction (included, above) to your class. (5-8 minutes)

2. Briefly describe how a buffalo jump worked, using the description of a buffalo jump from *Montana, Stories of the Land,* Chapter 2, pages 38-39. (Or other reliable resource) (5 minutes)

3. Review the attached "Bison Status" document from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. (5 minutes)

4. Locate tribal territories on a Montana map. Teacher will need to use a map to show the tribal territories of the Lakota, Salish, Blackfeet and Crow tribes in Montana between 1700 and 1855, as well as the overlapping

territories of other tribes present in Montana during these years. Be sure to mention that tribes from other regions, such as the Kootenai, Nez Perce, Cree and Shoshone, also hunted bison on the plains of Montana, east of the Rockies. (10 minutes)

5. Go over the diagram "Traditional Uses of Bison" with your class. You can view it online, print it as a poster, or print individual page-sized copies for each student. Have the students categorize the types of uses for bison into the following categories (this can be done on the board, as a class): food; clothing; tools; household goods; medicine; spiritual practices/ceremonies; shelter; transportation; horse equipment; toys; ornamentation; weaponry. If you are viewing the diagram with the computer/projector, use the bison diagram at http://itbcbuffalo.com/itbc_main_files/buffalo_uses_poster_0.pdf, as this version of it is more thorough than the attached version from the MHS. (15 minutes)

6. Explain and assign Homework 1, due for Class Period 2. (5 minutes)

Homework 1: Evenly distribute and assign one of these tribes to each of your students: Assiniboine, Salish, Blackfeet, and Crow. Students will be reading from the list of materials below according to which tribe they are assigned. They should take notes on the reading materials, as they will be presenting this information to the rest of the class on the next day. (These materials are also listed in Attachment A, which should be distributed to students. Homework will take about one hour to complete.)

- Assiniboine: Read "Buffalo—Staff of Life" p.74-85, "The Tribal Hunt" p.116-122, and "The Chase" p.126-132 in *Land of Nakoda*, by James Larpenteur Long, (originally published in 1942, part of the U.S. Federal Writers Project) republished by Riverbend Publishing, 2004.
- Salish: Read pages 19-50 in *I Will Be Meat for My Salish.* This includes a brief introduction to the Salish buffalo hunting traditions on the plains and several brief stories and histories regarding bison.
- Blackfeet: Read "The Blackfoot Genesis" on pages 137-144 and "Hunting" on pages 226-235 in *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*. Also, read the bison and subsistence-related pages (listed on the menu at the left) on this website: http://www.trailtribes.org/greatfalls/home.htm
- Crow: Read pages 86-99 in *From the Heart of Crow Country.* Also read pages 29-31 and 252-254 from *Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crows* (1962 edition). If you are using the 2002 edition of *Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crows*, the pages you will need to read are: 15-17 (begin at "One day…"and end at "No one else struck him at all.") and 138-139 (begin at "Those were happy days" and end at "meat-holes.")

Class Period 2: Presentations Discussion on Tribal Perspectives and Bison

For this period, you will need: students' notes for presentations, copies of "The Descent of Civilization: The Extermination of the American Buffalo" (Article) by Christopher W. Czajka. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/frontierlife/essay8.html (Note: This essay is three pages long, and you will have to click on the next page number or "next" at the bottom of each page to access the next one. Printer friendly option.) Having paper copies will save class time.

1. Divide students into small groups according to which tribe they read about. Allow each group to present to the class for about 6-7 minutes per group. Presentations should include answering (briefly) the following questions: (25-30 minutes)

a. Tribe and tribe's location/territory from 1700-1850.

b. Brief overview of tribe's interaction with bison. (Hunting methods, spiritual practices regarding, did they have a Buffalo Society, etc.)

c. 3How this tribe views bison (historically) and their own relationship to bison, terms used for bison and how they spoke (historically) about bison/buffalo. (Use of kinship terms, oral histories of originating from bison, bison as gift from Creator, etc.)

d. A significant quote or statement regarding bison from an historical tribal member or from the tribe's oral history or creation story.

2. Distribute the article, "The Descent of Civilization: The Extermination of the American Buffalo" http://www.pbs.org/wnet/frontierhouse/frontierlife/essay8.html (Article) by Christopher W. Czajka for students to read in class. (10 minutes)

3. Read in class the "Introduction" and "Troubled Herds" (see Materials list) that accompany the DVD *American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation.* This will prepare students for watching the DVD. (20 minutes or remainder of class period. These may be assigned for homework if more time is needed.)

Homework 2: Finish the two preparatory reading assignments listed in Activity 3, above.

Class Period 3: Near Extermination and the Beginnings of Restoration

For this period, you will need *American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation* (DVD).

1. View the DVD, American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation.

2. Assign Homework 3, due at beginning of Class Period 4.

Homework 3: Write a 1-2 page (single spaced) response to the film, taking into account the historical significance of bison for the tribes (from the presentations). These responses should be the students' own reflections on the impacts of bison extermination on tribes, tribal economies, tribal cultures, spirituality, social structures (i.e., gender roles, seasonal habits, lifestyle, etc.), physical survival, relationship to environment, and so on. The goal of this assignment is for students to integrate cultural and historical knowledge they have gathered and to think analytically about the all-encompassing impact of bison extermination on these tribes, which will provide them with a historical background for understanding tribal perspectives on bison today. (This will take about 45 minutes)

Also, students should read over Attachment F-1: "Viewer's Guide to *Buffalo War*," from the PBS educational website at http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/buffalowarviewersguide.html

Class Period 4: The Importance of Wild Bison to Indigenous Peoples

For this period, you will need the DVD, Buffalo Wars, and copies of the Discussion Questions (Attachment F-2) and Attachment E-1 (Arvol Looking Horse Statement) for students' homework.

1. View *Buffalo War*. (It is a 57-minute-long movie, so start immediately at the beginning of class)

2. Assign Homework 4. Pass out Attachment F-2 to your class.

Homework 4: Writing Assignment on *Buffalo War* using the Discussion Questions (Attachment F-2). Instructions are on this Attachment. Also, students should read Attachment E-1: Arvol Looking Horse (Lakota) Statement on Bison, http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/bisonhonoring.html in preparation for the final class period.

Class Period 5: Discussion and Tribal Bison Restoration Efforts

For this class you will need Attachments E-1, E-2, a print copy or projector to view "Who We Are" from the ITBC website, and the articles listed in activity 4, below, for your students.

1. Do the Discussion Questions for Arvol Looking Horse's Statement (Attachment E-2) out loud as a class. For their responses, students may draw on the article AND the Buffalo Wars film, so they can process aloud some of their impressions/interpretations of the film. (15-20 minutes)

2. Using the "Who We Are" and main page of the Intertribal Bison Cooperative website, from http://www.itbcbison.com, introduce the ITBC to your class. Then list the Montana Tribes with bison herds: (5-10 minutes)

Fort Belknap White Clay (Gros Ventre)and Assiniboine tribes

Fort Peck: Assiniboine (Nakoda) and Sioux (Dakota, Lakota)

Apsáalooke (Crow)

Confederated Salish & Kootenai*

Northern Cheyenne

4. Have your students read the following essays, which you should print in advance. (20 minutes)

"Where the Buffalo Now Roam" (Article) Douglas Chadwick, reprinted 2009 at http://www.itbcbison.com/featured_tribe.php?id=266 (Story on Montana tribes with bison herds)

Attachment B: Native American commentary on the Intertribal Bison Cooperative (Source: **"A Symbol of Strength"** (Essay) from http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/a-symbol-of-strength/2185/)

Attachment G: "Bi'Shee: For American Indians, the Return of the Buffalo Brings Healing to Both Body and Spirit" (Article) Richard Peterson (Assiniboine-Sioux) in *American Indian*, Summer 2001. Online at: http://yeoldeconsciousnessshoppe.com/art79.html

5. Assign Homework 5, due at beginning of next class period. Ideally, class period 5 is on a Friday and the students can have the weekend to do the paper. If not, you may wish to give them an additional day to complete this homework essay. See Attachment A for a description of the essay topic. There is also an optional "extra credit" short-answer question listed below and on Attachment A.

Homework 5: Write a 4-6 page essay comparing and contrasting the contemporary perspectives of tribal members on bison. See Attachment A for a full description of the essay topic. Essay is due at the beginning of the next week/class unless otherwise arranged by teacher.

Extra-credit short-answer question:

In the 2009 Montana Legislative session, a bill (SB 337) was introduced that would have made it impossible for tribes or other entities to receive Yellowstone National Park bison. It was tabled after the initial phases of committee discussion. **How and why is the management of wild bison a sovereignty issue?**

(Answer: Tribal sovereignty precedes and supersedes state law, and state law cannot trump treaties, which are federal-tribal agreements. Some treaties preserve the right for tribes to hunt outside of their reserved lands, while tribes such as the Nez Perce, Shoshone and Bannock have treaties that include specified stipulations protecting their right to hunt bison in their traditional hunting areas—which includes parts of present-day Montana and Wyoming. Tribes retain the status of nations in their dealings with the United States government and individual states cannot, legally, override this sovereignty or nation-to-nation status. Therefore, tribal negotiations with the federal government are beyond the legal scope of the Montana state legislature.)

Assessment

Substantive contribution to class/group discussions, written work (essays and short answer).

Related Extension Activities and Online Materials

- Visit Madison Buffalo Jump and/or the First Peoples Buffalo Jump (Ulm Pishkun) state parks and have a park interpreter give you a tour and presentation. Contact each park via the Montana State Parks website (http://stateparks.mt.gov) to schedule a fieldtrip or call 406-994-6934 to reach the Madison Buffalo Jump's interpretive guide.
- Visit the exhibits at the Montana Historical Society's Museum—"Homeland" gallery and "Neither Empty Nor Unknown: Montana at the Time of Lewis and Clark"—in Helena, Montana. Contact the education office at 406-444-4789 to schedule a class fieldtrip and tour.
- Take a fieldtrip to Yellowstone National Park to see wild bison. You may want to check with the National Park Service at Yellowstone National Park online to find out how to get a guided tour.
- Visit the National Bison Range, Moiese, Montana. Learn more about the NBR at: http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/nbr/index.htm For a map and visitor information at: http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/nbr/Aboutus.htm
- Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, visit: www.head-smashed-in.com/ (Has a short virtual tour.)
- Wahkpa Chu'gn archaeological site- a 2,000-year-old buffalo jump: http://www.buffalojump.org/
- Visit this website to learn more about the importance of buffalo to tribes of the Northern Plains: http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/human/archaeo/aspects/buffalo.htm
- Website of bison/tribe related publications for research: http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nattrans/ntecoindian/ecolinksbuffalo.htm
- Continue your research of American Bison management issues via these three lessons created by PBS TeacherSource for grades 9-12:

- Lesson 1: Buffalo Biodiversity: Is it Important? http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/lesson1.html (Biology) This lesson looks at biodiversity that occurs both between and within species, by examining characteristics of the students themselves, of a population of peanuts, and of buffalo. It concludes with an assessment of the value of such variation.
- Lesson 2: Brucellosis in Bison: How Serious is the Threat? http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/lesson2.html This lesson involves research into both sides of the brucellosis problem and ends with students presenting their position through letters written to Montana's Department of Livestock.
- Lesson 3: The Buffalo War: A Clash of Cultures, http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/lesson3.html Using the documentary "Buffalo War," students will discover how cultures living together often come into conflict because they may place different values and meaning on items they share such as nature and resources. The students will further explore ways in which conflict may be reduced by identifying the difference and similarities and seeking a way to build on the latter.
- Lesson 4: A Bison Web http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/lesson4.html Students will construct a web site (alternatively this lesson can be done using a non-electronic version explained below) based on the documentary "Buffalo War." The design of the site and the kinds of graphics and or animation is left entirely up to the student or students so that lesson is open to students with varying computer skills. The content of the site, however, should follow strict guidelines and may be graded with an easy-to-follow rubric.

Attachment A: Homework Assignments for Students (2 pages)

Homework 1: Use the materials listed below according to which tribe you will be presenting about:

Assiniboine: Read "Buffalo—Staff of Life" p.74-85, "The Tribal Hunt" p.116-122, and "The Chase" p.126-132 in *Land of Nakoda*, by First Boy (James Larpenteur Long), originally published in 1942, part of the U.S. Federal Writers Project, republished by Riverbend Publishing, 2004.

Salish: Read pages 19-50 in *I Will Be Meat for My Salish.* This includes a brief introduction to the Salish buffalo hunting traditions on the plains and several brief stories and histories regarding bison.

Blackfeet: Read "The Blackfoot Genesis" on pages 137-144 and "Hunting" on pages 226-235 in *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*. Also read the bison and subsistence-related pages on this website: http://www.trailtribes.org/greatfalls/home.htm (See the menu at the left for topics.)

Crow: Read pages 86-99 in *From the Heart of Crow Country*. Also read pages 29-31 and 252-254 from *Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crows* (1962 edition). If you are using the 2002 edition of *Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crows*, the pages you will need to read are: 15-17 (begin at "One day…"and end at "No one else struck him at all.") and 138-139 (begin at "Those were happy days" and end at "meat-holes.")

Homework 2: Prepare for watching the film, *American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation* by reading these online accompanying essays:

"Introduction" at http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/introduction/2183/

"Troubled Herds" at http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/troubled-herds/2181/

Homework 3: Respond to *American Buffalo: Spirit of a Nation* and prepare for watching *Buffalo War:*

Write a 1-2 page (single spaced) response to the film, taking into account the historical significance of bison for the tribes (from the presentations). These responses should be the students' own reflections on the impacts of bison extermination on tribes, tribal economies, tribal cultures, spirituality, social structures (i.e., gender roles, seasonal habits, lifestyle, etc.), physical survival, relationship to environment, and so on. The goal of this assignment is for students to integrate cultural and historical knowledge they have gathered and to think analytically about the all-encompassing impact of bison extermination on these tribes, which will provide them with a historical background for understanding tribal perspectives on bison today. (This will take about 45 minutes)

Review Attachment F-1: "Viewer's Guide to *Buffalo War*," from the PBS educational website at http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/buffalowarviewersguide.html in preparation for watching *Buffalo Wars.*

Homework 4: Complete the following writing and reading assignments:

Writing Assignment on *Buffalo War* using the Discussion Questions (Attachment F-2). The instructions for this assignment are Attachment F-2.

Read Attachment E-1: Arvol Looking Horse (Lakota) Statement on Bison, http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/bisonhonoring.html in preparation for the final class period.

Homework 5: Final writing assignment

Several differing perspectives are offered in this lesson which reveal many of the ways in which bison are important to tribes today as wild bison or as semi-domestic tribal herds. Write a 5-6 page paper comparing and contrasting present-day tribal perspectives on bison as portrayed in the two films and in the reading assignments from Class Periods 3, 4 and 5. Your paper should address the following questions in detail:

- How is the significance of bison to today's American Indians represented in these materials, and what are the different tribal purposes/perspectives regarding bison today?
- What is the Intertribal Bison Cooperative and who is/are involved as members of this cooperative? What is its mission or purpose?
- How is this purpose different from the purposes or goals expressed by Rosalie Little Thunder and Arvol Looking Horse?
- What is (are) similar about these perspectives, purposes and efforts?
- Why do some tribal members support the preservation of wild bison and other tribal members seek to maintain tribally managed herds?
- How are multiple tribal actions and perspectives important aspects of the bison restoration and preservation efforts and, by extension, important for maintaining tribal cultural identity into the future?
- One issue that often compounds the preservation of tribally significant resources is that tribes and the federal government do not always agree on what constitutes a "cultural resource." From an academic/archaeological viewpoint (state and federal), a cultural resource is defined as a "man-made resource" (as opposed to a "natural" resource) and is a site, an artifact or other evidence of human activity. Many tribes, however, define something as a cultural resource based on its *significance* to their histories, cultures and traditions. Using what you have learned in this film and in the reading assignments in this lesson, answer the following questions: How and why might tribes define bison as a cultural resource? How is that definition of cultural resource different from the academic/archaeological definition? Why do these differences of definition matter?

Extra-credit short-answer question:

In the 2009 Montana Legislative session, a bill (SB 337) was introduced that would have made it impossible for tribes or other entities to receive Yellowstone National Park bison. It was tabled after the initial phases of committee discussion. **With this in mind, how and why is the management of wild bison a sovereignty issue?**

Attachment B: Native American commentary on the Intertribal Bison Cooperative

Source: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/american-buffalo-spirit-of-a-nation/a-symbol-of-strength/2185/

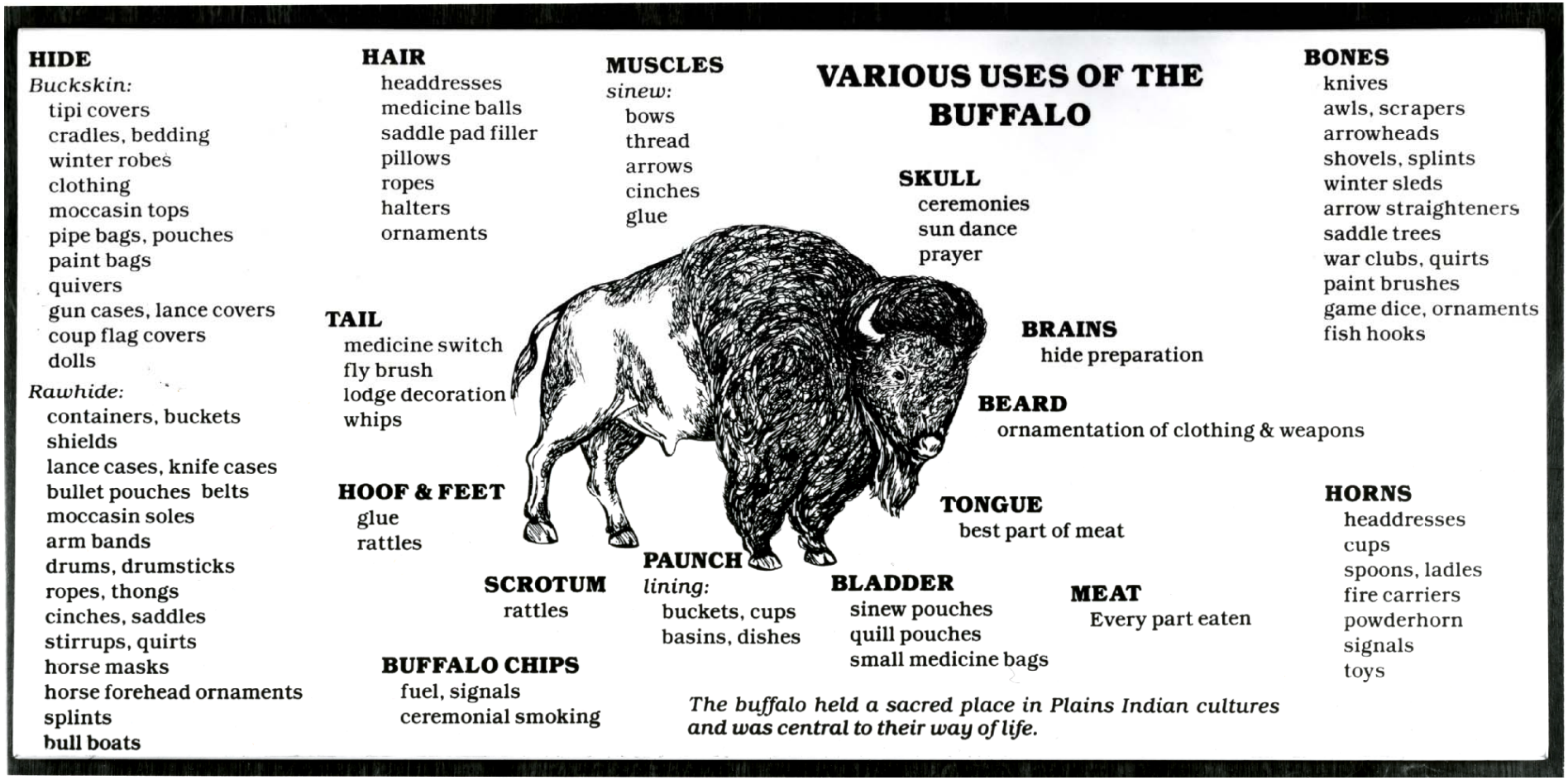
Many Native American tribes revere the bison. South Dakota's rugged Black Hill country is frigid and raw in winter. But in 1991, the February chill didn't dampen the enthusiasm of delegates from 19 tribes that gathered there to give the American bison a new lease on life. In forming the Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative (ITBC), the delegates hoped to restore the bison to millions of acres of tribal lands — and to a central place in tribal life. "We recognize the bison as a symbol of strength and unity," says Fred DuBray, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux and former president of the ITBC who appears in *American Buffalo*. The South Dakota-based group believes that "reintroduction of the buffalo to tribal lands will help heal the spirit of both the Indian people and the buffalo . . . To reestablish healthy buffalo populations on tribal lands is to reestablish hope for Indian people." So far, more than 40 tribes have joined the effort, which has helped create a collective herd of almost 10,000 animals.

In bringing back the buffalo, the ITBC is attempting to restore a key part of Native American culture. Once, dozens of prairie tribes depended on the bison for food, and their lives revolved around the annual buffalo hunt, which was celebrated in song and ritual like those seen on *American Buffalo*. The "buffalo people," as some tribes called the animals, were revered for their power and the good fortune they brought the tribe. "I really believe, like the old people do, that these [animals] have a spirit," says Gerard Baker, a Plains Indian who appears in SACRED BUFFALO PEOPLE, a documentary film made by the Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium in 1992. "When you shoot them, you can almost feel that spirit around you for a while."

One place that spirit is now being felt again is the Fort Belknap Reservation, of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventre tribes in northern Montana. There, modern buffalo hunters use helicopters to help manage a herd of 250 bison — part of a larger effort to restore many native animals to the land. On the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, however, Lakota herdsmen still go out on horseback to round up the herd, which has become an important source of meat. The annual event is followed by a slaughtering ceremony that attracts widespread attention. Indeed, selling bison meat has become a $650 million industry — one that many Native Americans are eager to join. Bringing back buffalo herds, they say, will not only bring in some sorely-needed cash, it will also help realize an old tribal vow. "I love the land and the buffalo," a Kiowa elder once said, "and I will not

part with it. I want you to understand well what I say." Today, new generations of Native Americans are seeking to restore buffalo to their lands they understand all too well.

Attachment C: Traditional Tribal Uses of Bison (some apply to current tribal uses)



(Image above used with permission from the Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.)

[Note: A similar diagram with greater detail is available online at the website of the Intertribal Bison Cooperative, online at http://itbcbuffalo.com/itbc_main_files/buffalo_uses_poster_0.pdf*]*

Attachment D: Bison Profile, State and Global Status

Bison - *Bos bison*

American Bison (Buffalo), Male - Bos bison - Bull, grazing

Species of Concern

Global Rank: G4
State Rank: S2

Agency Status
USFWS: none
USFS: none
BLM: none
CFWCS Tier: 1

General Description

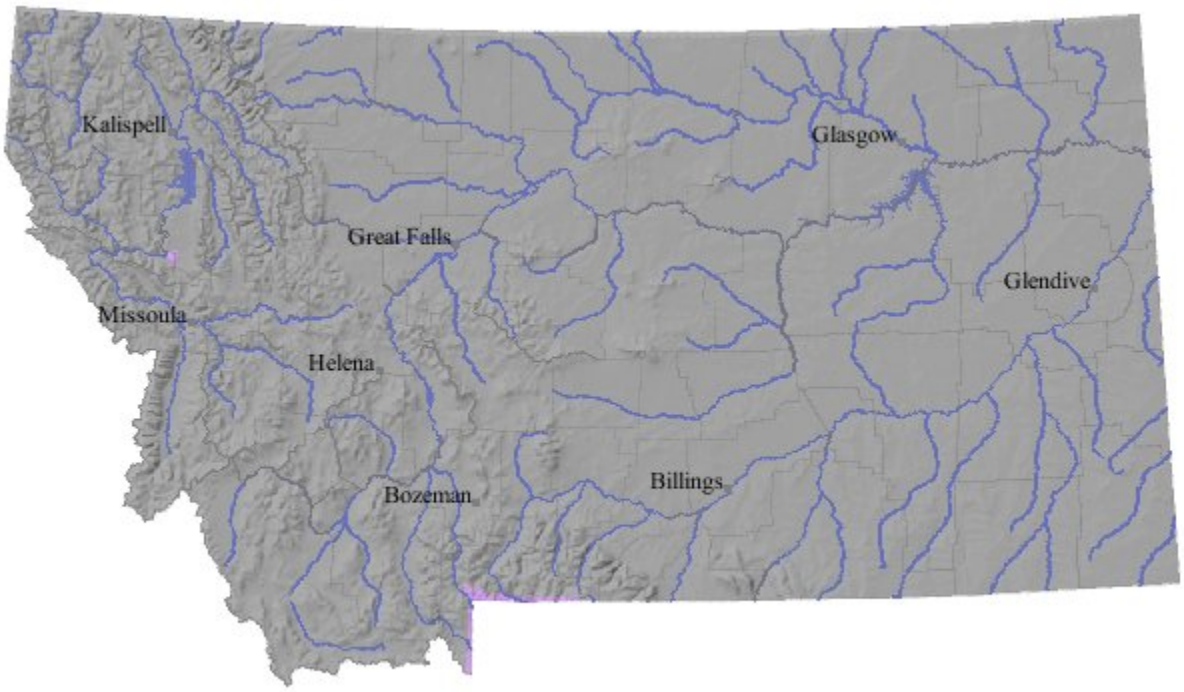
American bison are the largest North American land animals with weights over 1000 kilograms recorded (Foresman 2001). They have a massive dark head with short black horns curving upward and inward from the base. A large mop of long dark hair covers the top of the head. The body is tall and narrow (1.8 meters at the shoulder) (Foresman 2001), with a distinctive large shoulder hump tapering toward the hindquarters. The tail is short and tufted at the end. The legs are relatively short. Adult bison have heavy light brown hair covering their shoulders and forequarters blending to shorter darker hair from their shoulders back. The head, neck and front legs have dark hair as well. In summer, much of the hair on the hindquarters is lost. Male bison are proportionally larger and more robust than females. Calves are reddish in color but darken to adult pelage by their first fall.

Diagnostic Characteristics

American bison are unmistakable. The combination of large size, shoulder hump, and short, dark, curved horns on both sexes eliminates any other large ungulate.

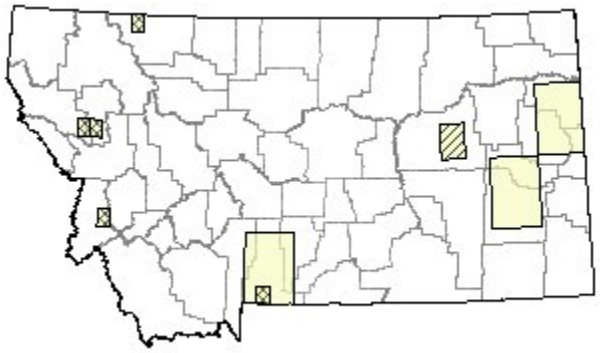
Distribution

Montana Range



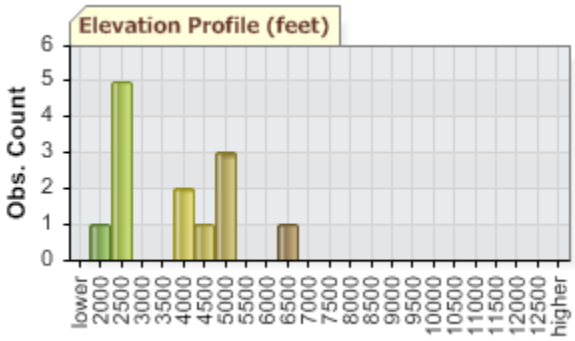
Year-round Range | Summer Range | Winter Range | Migration Range | Historic Range

Generalized Observations



(click map to view in Tracker)

Elevation Profile



Observations in Montana: 15

Montana Counties

Indian Education
Montana Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, Superintendent

Migration

American bison migrate out of Yellowstone National Park during the winter and these movements are more frequent and involve greater numbers of animals during years of heavy snow when populations are high, generally over 3000 individuals (Chevelle et al. 1998). Recently, (1985-1986) harvest has resumed in response to Montana movements out of Yellowstone National Park. American bison at the National Bison Range are confined to the range and no migration is possible. This species previously made mass migrations across the prairie in spring and fall, with mountain populations moving to lower elevations in valleys.

Habitat

Because of restrictions, currently occupied habitat does not reflect the full natural range for American bison. Habitat consists of Palouse prairie and montane forest on the National Bison Range; the Yellowstone Park range is unavoidably at higher elevations with grassland interspersed with forest. Throughout their range, American bison inhabit open plains and grasslands. Woodlands and openings in boreal forest, meadows, and river valleys are used in the northern parts of their range. Like other large grazers, they are attracted to burned areas the next growing season (Shaw and Carter 1990). During the growing season at the Konza Prairie in northeastern Kansas, they preferred areas that had been burned in spring. Summer grazing was concentrated in large watershed area (79 to 119 hectares) dominated by warm-season, perennial C4 grasses. In fall and winter, they grazed both burned and unburned watersheds more uniformly, but grazed most intensively in areas with large stands of cool-season, C3 grasses (Vinton et al. 1993).

Food Habits

American bison are grazers and feed on grasses, forbs, and sedges. The massive head is used to sweep snow away from forage. They possess a greater digestive capacity than cattle. In Yellowstone National Park, sedges are most important in all seasons, grasses second in importance. Forbs and browse are minor components in the diet. Preferences may be related to plant phenology.

Ecology

American bison are gregarious and often forms herds of 11 to 12 animals. Cows and young remain in herds throughout the year. Bulls are solitary or in small groups until summer when they begin to mix with cow-calf herds. Home ranges in the Northwest Territories averaged several hundred square kilometers (Larter and Gates 1990). The life span of an American bison is 18 to 20 years with winterkill being the primary mortality factor in Yellowstone Park. More severe winters result in increased winterkill (Podruzny and Gunther 1999). Wolf predation of American bison has increased since their reintroduction into Yellowstone National Park (Smith et al. 1999). They may be becoming a regular prey item for some wolves, particularly in late winter and spring. The primary reason for bison harvest around Gardiner is the perceived threat of brucellosis transmission to cattle.

Reproductive Characteristics

Most cows breed at 2 to 4 years, whereas males usually mature at 3 years. Older (6+ years) males do most of the breeding. The majority of mating occurs in July and August. Gestation lasts about 9.5 months. Normally, 1 calf is born mid-April to early June, with most births occurring in May. Cows usually give birth in isolation where vegetation provides cover. Isolation during birth is infrequent where cover is lacking (Meagher 1986). Brucellosis causes abortion and temporary sterility in cattle, but in Yellowstone it apparently does not affect pregnancy rates to any significant degree. Most calves are weaned by late fall or by the end of the first year and remain with their mother until spring or later if she does not conceive. The life span of an American bison is 18 to 22 years.

Management

Management of free-ranging American bison in Montana has been controversial. The presence of brucellosis in these animals and their migration out of Yellowstone National Park into adjacent public and private lands has led to conflicts between private landowners, citizens, public administrative agencies and public land management agencies. Free-ranging herds in Montana are currently managed under the Interagency Bison

Management Plan. Please consult this management plan for details concerning American bison management in Montana.

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Source: Bison — Bos bison. Montana Field Guide.
Retrieved on August 12, 2009, from http://FieldGuide.mt.gov/detail_AMALE01010.aspx

Species of Concern (From http://fieldguide.mt.gov/statusCodes.aspx#soc)

Species of Concern are native taxa that are at-risk due to declining population trends, threats to their habitats, restricted distribution, and/or other factors. Designation as a Montana Species of Concern or Potential Species of Concern is based on the Montana Status Rank, and is not a statutory or regulatory classification. Rather, these designations provide information that helps resource managers make proactive decisions regarding species conservation and data collection priorities. See the latest Species of Concern Reports for more detailed explanations and assessment criteria.

Global and State Rankings: (S2 by Montana, G4 by USFWS)

G1 S1
At high risk because of extremely limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.

G2 S2
At risk because of very limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.

G3 S3
Potentially at risk because of limited and potentially declining numbers, extent and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.

G4 S4
Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.

Attachment E-1: Arvol Looking Horse (Lakota) Statement on Bison

"Today, we stand on this sacred site; the ground where our relatives, the Pte Oyate, have chosen to bring the renewal of life.

Many, many generations ago, our relatives, the buffalo emerged from Wind Cave in the Black Hills; the heart of Unci Maka (the Earth) and prepared the way for our existence. From that time forward, they saw to our survival. They taught us how to live in an honorable way, by example and through the teachings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman. She brought the Sacred Pipe to remind us of our responsibilities and also the rituals that are necessary to discipline ourselves. From the buffalo, we learned to have an honorable kinship with Unci Maka. They knew Unci and carefully tended to her health. For that reason, we hold them to be sacred.

We co-existed in a good way until we were nearly decimated. Ob unkasotapi tka. The sacred buffalo in these mountains are the survivors. We are culturally and spiritually indebted to them and we still need their guidance, to remind us how to be at peace with Unci Maka. Let it be known that the habitat of the wild buffalo is sacred ground, a SACRED SITE for the Lakota, for all native people, and for all humanity who hold reverence for Creation.

We are here once again to pray for the Pte Oyate, the four-legged relatives that have perished in Yellowstone and for the little ones are born here into suffering. We pray for those that cause this

needless death and suffering.

We pray that they can accept the wisdom that we cannot turn away from; the wisdom that Pte Oyate is very essential to the wellbeing of Unci Maka and that the two-legged ones must respect and work with the Natural Laws of Unci Maka.

We must pray for Unci Maka, who has been seriously wounded by this violence. We must pray for the healing of the human spirit.

We give wopila; thanks for the relatives and the newly born that have survived. We give wopila and ask for Tunkasila's blessings for all those that gather here today, for the people who have woksape, the wisdom of the Earth and have stood with our relatives for many, many cold winters. We are deeply grateful for all of your efforts and ask for your continued help.

We, the two-legged and four-legged Pte Oyate, the Buffalo Nation, call upon all relatives to prepare for a gathering. We call for this Buffalo Summit during the Fall 2009, to put our hearts and our minds and our spirits together on behalf of our relatives in distress.

With deepest respect for the challenges of leadership, we call upon another relative, President Barrack Obama, to join us to begin shaping a Nation-to-Nation agreement for the Yellowstone buffalo. Such an agreement would not come easy nor can it be reached in one discussion, but we invite him to sit with us to begin an honorable Nation-to-Nation consultation process. Great things can be achieved when good spirits come together in honor.

Ho hecetu welo. Mitakuye Oyas'in (All My Relations)"

Chief Arvol Looking Horse,
19th Generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe.
Horse Butte, 2009

Unci Maka = Earth
Pte Oyate = Buffalo Nation/People
Wopila = Thanks, gratitude
Tunkasila = Grandfather, the Creator
Woksape = wisdom
Ho hecetu welo = This is how it is
Mitakuye Oyasin = "We are all related"

(**Source:** "Statement of recent prayer gathering to pray again with the Buffalo Nation/Pte Oyate" by Arvol Looking Horse, quoted on http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/bisonhonoring.html Retrieved August 12, 2009. Please note, the box of translations of Lakota words to English has been added for readers' convenience.)

Attachment E-2: Discussion Questions for Arvol Looking Horse's Statement/Prayer:

Please note: Although this statement is by a Lakota person, many of the viewpoints and perceptions expressed in it are also true for several other tribes with similar or related cultures and histories.

1. Describe the cultural-historical significance of bison to the Lakota.

2. What words are used by Arvol Looking Horse to describe significance of bison to the Lakota people? (There are several terms he uses here—adjectives and nouns—list them.)

3. How are these terms similar to or different from those used by other tribes whose bison-related histories we have read or heard presentations on (Nakoda/Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Crow, Salish)?

4. What is a "sacred site"? What is Looking Horse referring to as a sacred site or sacred ground?

5. Who shares this sacred ground with the bison?

6. How does Looking Horse describe the relationship of bison to the Earth? Of bison to humans?

7. What central component of Lakota cosmology is evident throughout this statement?

8. From this Lakota perspective, what is the status of the bison at present?

9. What kind of agreement does Looking Horse say is needed for resolving the wild bison-management issues and the slaughter of bison within and outside of Yellowstone National Park? What does this mean?

Attachment F-1: Viewer's Guide to Buffalo Wars (5 pages)

(Source: http://www.pbs.org/buffalowar/buffalowarviewersguide.html Retrieved August 13, 2009.)

THE BUFFALO WAR VIEWER GUIDE
Buffalo have come to symbolize so much that is valuable to indigenous and American peoples. Their likeness appears on several state flags in the United States as well as on the antique Buffalo nickel, and they have a special and protected place in a few of our nation's most well-known parks.

Many native nations see the buffalo as a relative. In fact, most natives of the Plains trace their origins to the buffalo. The Buffalo Nation - the name Native Americans use for the bison population - has endured experiences that mirror those of many native nations, including destruction and enforced boundaries, even as they are admired for surviving near extinction.

Still others see buffalo as an economic threat to their livelihoods. Cattle ranchers are especially concerned, viewing bison as competitors for valuable grazing lands and fearing that the wild animals will spread the disease brucellosis to their herds.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE
In THE BUFFALO WAR, diverse parties voice concerns that call for further discussion and reflection. This guide provides additional information about the conflict to be used by students, families, teachers, community organizations and public television viewers in discussing the issues and understanding the film….

Please feel free to photocopy and distribute this guide.

What is The Buffalo War?
For more than a century, bison have been a symbol of the American West. One of the mandates of both the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Park Service is to manage public land for wildlife such as bison.

Since 1985, state and federal agencies have eliminated more than 3,000 bison outside Yellowstone National Park on publicly owned and managed land. Montana officials say they do not want to kill the bison, but need to protect the state's livestock industry from brucellosis, a disease perhaps 50 percent of the Yellowstone bison herd carries. Activists and environmentalists say the state's methods are too severe, jeopardizing the viability of the last wild bison herds.

In THE BUFFALO WAR, filmmaker Matthew Testa examines the positions of the Montana officials, one cattle-ranching family that feels threatened by the bison, and several groups and individuals who are trying to end the slaughter. In particular, Testa focuses on a group of Lakota Sioux, who in February 1999 undertook a 507-mile walk from Rapid City, South Dakota to Yellowstone National Park in Montana in a devotional act offered as a sacrifice to the spirit of the animals with whom the Lakota feel an inseparable bond.

Filmmaker's Statement--Matthew Testa
"When I first learned about the controversy over Yellowstone's bison herd, I was working as a newspaper reporter in Wyoming near Yellowstone's southern gateway. I had witnessed many battles fought in the West over public lands, wilderness and wildlife, but this one affected people in ways I had not expected.

This is more than a story about a livestock disease, animal management or a range war, as the bison conflict has stirred people from vastly different backgrounds, offering a fascinating cross section of life in the Rocky Mountains today. It's a story with historical tragedies embedded deeply in our national consciousness, evoking a sad past, but offering a chance for redemption. At the center of the battle is the buffalo, an animal that, in its silence, manages to tell us a great deal about how we see the world.

I wanted to make a film that explored all the dimensions of the bison conflict, one that elucidated the scientific and political facts of the issue but didn't shy from the emotional aspects of the story. I also wanted to represent the public that seemed to be overlooked in a controversy dominated by industry and government agencies. All of these groups, along with the buffalo, have a great deal at stake in this story.

This is also a film about activism and expression, meant to inspire reactions and dialogue. My hope is that this documentary will move audiences to voice their opinions on this perplexing conflict. With more discussion, awareness and

thought, maybe the buffalo war can be settled."

Bison, Native Americans, and Yellowstone National Park
The bison is the largest land mammal living in North America. In the United States, "bison" and "buffalo" are often used interchangeably, although "buffalo" technically refers to species in Africa and Asia.

Weighing between 900 and 2,400 pounds, bison appear ungainly, but they are surprisingly fleet, capable of speeds in excess of 30 miles per hour. Their broad shoulders allow them to literally plow through deep snow, and their shaggy heads are made for pushing snow aside to reach the vegetation below.

Scientists believe that bison came to North America via a land bridge from Asia. ** The bison adapted to the Eastern woodlands and Great Plains, receiving nourishment from the rich grasslands. Native American tribes settled these same grasslands because of the plenteous bison. Native peoples came to rely on the bison for food, clothing, and shelter, raw materials for tools and spirituality.

Starting around 1830, Anglo-European settlers from the East began to kill the bison in vast numbers, mostly for hides and tongues and later to subdue tribes who relied on the animals. By the early 1900s only a few hundred were left, most in captivity. By that time, many of the Native people who had once lived with and off the animals had been put on reservations.

In 1902, several hundred bison lived in ranches and zoos across the United States while only 23 wild bison were living in Yellowstone National Park. This small herd was supplemented by government and conservation groups with bison from semi-domesticated herds and allowed to grow. Until 1967, bison numbers were controlled by the park and their population limited to 397. After that year, the National Park Service adopted a new policy of minimal management, and no killing or disease control was done. The population increased, peaking in the 1990s at more than 4,000. Today, the Yellowstone herd stands at over 3,000 animals. It is thought by many to be the United States' last free roaming bison herd. There are between 150,000 and 200,000 bison throughout all of North America, although the vast majority of them are raised on ranches for commercial purposes.

While bison are well-suited for Yellowstone's harsh climate, the winters from 1995 to 1997 were particularly severe in the high country, forcing bison to leave the park in search of easier forage. They found milder conditions and convenient grazing on several U.S. Forest Service allotments that were to be used by area cattle ranching families in the summer. In 1995, the Yellowstone bison herd was designated by the Montana state legislature as a species in need of disease management. The Montana Department of Livestock (DOL) was designated by the state legislature to be the lead agency for the bison/brucellosis disease management outside of Yellowstone. It was the DOL's responsibility to work with other state and federal agencies either to force the bison leaving Yellowstone National Park back within park boundaries or to capture and test those bison that could not be moved back into the park for brucellosis. The DOL's role in bison management has been problematic for environmental groups who believe that wildlife officials, not a livestock agency, should be managing bison.

Brucellosis
Ranchers are nervous about mingling between cattle and bison because of brucellosis, which can decrease milk production and animal weight, cause spontaneous abortion of the animal's first fetus and cause infertility. For nearly 60 years and at a cost of billions of dollars, the livestock industry across the United States has waged a war to eliminate brucellosis from its herds. In 1952, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated that annual losses due to this disease were more than $400 million. To prevent an epidemic of the disease, federal and state agriculture officials have eliminated infected herds.

Brucellosis can also infect human beings, causing persistent, intermittent flu-like symptoms known as undulant fever. Transmission occurs through direct contact between a person's open cuts and birthing fluids or animal tissue. Veterinarians, butchers and farmers have been those most commonly affected, though the incidence of brucellosis in humans is extremely rare.

Brucellosis was first identified in domestic cattle in the United States in 1910. In 1917, it was first identified in Yellowstone bison. The USDA, responding to livestock and public health concerns, began an effort to control and eradicate brucellosis in 1934 by developing vaccines and depopulating entire herds when several animals tested positive for the bacterium. Currently, all but Florida and South Dakota are brucellosis-free, and these last two states are poised to eradicate the disease.

After more than 30 years and $30 million, and the sacrifice of many cattle, Montana achieved brucellosis-free status in 1985. That same year, state and federal agencies began eliminating some Yellowstone bison that migrated out of park boundaries. Since the winter of 1991-92, Native Americans from reservations such as northern Cheyenne, Crow, and Fort Peck have sometimes assisted in harvesting and using the bison carcasses. Other bison carcasses have been distributed to nonprofit charitable organizations and food banks.

Beef cattle ranchers
Cattle ranching/agriculture is a two billion dollar per year industry in Montana. With 2.6 million head of cattle and about 20,000 dairy cows, Montana ranks sixth in beef production in the United States. In the area immediately around Yellowstone National Park, ranchers tend to about 2,000 head of cattle, 45 percent of which graze on lands held in the public trust by the federal government, which include Forest Service lands and those under the care of the Bureau of Land Management. These are also lands where Yellowstone bison may also graze in the winter and spring.

In many ways, the Munns family featured in THE BUFFALO WAR is a typical ranching family. For more than 60 years, the Munns have raised cattle on their ranch near West Yellowstone. They pay the U.S. Forest Service a small per-animal fee each summer to graze their cattle on and around Horse Butte, which is under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. The Munns have persisted despite the rising costs of ranching, declining beef prices, younger generations moving away and pressures to sell to real estate developers. Surrounding their ranch on Hebgen Lake are hundreds of vacation homes, making them some of the last ranchers in their community.

A scientific dispute
Yellowstone's bison herd carries an uncontrolled pocket of the disease. However, detractors of the slaughter believe there are flaws in the bison management. First, bison migrate out of the park to graze in the winter and spring, whereas cattle are not placed on the allotments until June, after most bison have gone back over the park border. However, there is disagreement about how long the Brucella bacteria can survive in the environment. As a precaution, cattle and bison are kept from interacting for at least 45 days. Second, transmission occurs mainly through direct contact with birthing matter, but state and federal officials have included hundreds of male bison in their slaughter, contending that males still present a risk. Third, methods of testing for brucellosis are hardly foolproof. Among those bison that field-tested positive for brucellosis and were killed between 1996 and 1999, 80 percent later tested negative for the disease in more reliable lab tests. In addition, thousands of elk in the region also carry the disease, but are not managed similarly. Lastly, there has been no documented case of brucellosis transmission in the wild between cattle and bison. Known transmission has only occurred in the lab.

Today, some tribes and Native groups are trying to reintroduce bison onto their reservations. They are also working to take in unwanted bison from Yellowstone instead of having these animals sent to slaughter. So far, these requests have been denied by government officials.*

Since the making of the documentary:
December 20, 2000 - Interagency Bison Management Plan drafted and agreed upon by the Montana Department of Livestock, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S.D.A. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). It calls for steering bison back into Yellowstone National Park as a first priority. When steering is no longer effective, capture and testing is mandated. Bison testing negative are released on public land; those testing positive are sent to a slaughter facility, and the head, meat, and hides are donated to a tribal organization or other charity organization. According to the various steps in the plan, a specific number of bison will be allowed outside Yellowstone.

Environmental activists
A number of groups and individuals have actively opposed the killing of the Yellowstone bison, including the Fund for Animals, the National Wildlife Federation, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition and the Buffalo Field Campaign, the last of which has been on the front line of the slaughter protests since 1997. Activists Mike Mease and Rosalie Little Thunder (Lakota) formed Buffalo Nations, which coordinated a campaign of public education and civil disobedience to draw attention to the slaughter. Mease and Little Thunder later agreed to split the group because of their different approaches to activism. Mease renamed his organization the Buffalo Field Campaign. Little Thunder continues to advocate through the organization Buffalo Nations.

The Sun Dance
While following the Lakota Sioux on their 507-mile walk to Yellowstone, filmmaker Matthew Testa was asked to turn off his

camera during sacred ceremonies, including the emotional climax of the march - Gary Silk's Sun Dance inside the northern entrance to Yellowstone National Park. While Testa respected wishes of the Lakota and did not film the dance, he re-created the moment in a respectful way that was sanctioned by his Native American hosts. Testa states, "The ceremony conveyed so much about the tribal dedication to bison, I thought it was important to reenact for the film. At the same time, I knew this was sensitive territory and tried hard to respect the concerns of Native Americans."

The traditional Sun Dance, a sacred ritual that has been practiced for hundreds of years, goes on for four days and includes fasting, dancing and singing. This act of sacrifice is dedicated to The Creator and is done for the good of the nation. An effigy of the buffalo is central to the ritual, which is also performed for the well-being of the animal. Today, the Sun Dance is practiced by many Native Americans as a way of demonstrating spiritual devotion and sacrifice, and as a purifying ritual.

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*__Recent update:__ *As of August, 2009, the process of determining who will receive the 50 or 60 Yellowstone bison that have been in quarantine for about 4 years is still underway after the Northern Arapaho tribe declined to accept this herd. Other tribes and tribal members, in addition to private non-Native ranchers, have applied to receive these bison. To follow this issue, do an online search or visit the websites of the Billings Gazette, Yellowstone National Park or Indian Country Today.*

** **The Bering Strait theory** *is strongly disputed within and beyond the scientific community. In addition, tribes have their own oral traditions regarding the origination of the bison, and many of these oral stories also conflict with the "land bridge from Asia" theory. For the purposes of this lesson, it is important to remember that traditional tribal perspectives factor in to tribal-bison history and tribes' views of bison today.*

Attachment F-2: Discussion Questions for Buffalo War

Please answer each of these questions about the film, Buffalo War, with a complete and thorough response. Some will require only a couple of sentences; others will require a paragraph.

1. When the march reaches Yellowstone Park, Rosalie Little Thunder stated that this was the "hardest time in my life." Comment on why a Lakota would perceive this slaughter in this manner. How are the tribe's history and origin informative regarding this issue? (Note, the Cheyenne and other tribes share a similar perception.)

2. What did the Lakota who walked 500 miles from South Dakota to Horse Butte near Yellowstone National Park say motivated them to do so? (What was their primary concern?)

3. Officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park, and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and scientist Todd Wilkinson all concur (agree) that Yellowstone bison do not pose a real threat to domestic cattle, even when the bison are outside the park. What two reasons do these agencies/individuals specifically articulate?

4. In Buffalo Wars, Rosalie Little Thunder makes the statement,

   "When we talk about Buffalo People, we're not talking about buffalo and Lakota separate. We're all one. Our creation story, our origin, says that we came from the buffalo. That's no different than believing you came from the monkey or Adam and Eve… We [Lakota and buffalo] have very common histories and our prophecies talk about a very inseparable destiny."

   In the winter of 1996-97, one-third (1,100) wild bison were killed when they left the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park to seek forage. Many of these were the herd's largest bulls (the lead bulls) and pregnant females. Brucellosis culture tests revealed that over 80% of these bison didn't carry brucellosis, although the disease was used as the excuse for this slaughter. In light of the statement above; discuss why Rosalie Little Thunder and other Lakota (and tribes with similar histories) would refer to the bison slaughter of 1996-97 as the "hardest time in my life."

5. How do the actions of the American Indians and the reasons for their presence at Yellowstone differ from the actions and reasons of the Buffalo Field Campaign activists?

6. Voluntary suffering is, from the perspective of many tribes, an act of humility and self-sacrifice done on behalf of one's family and tribe. What was (is) the significance of the piercing, a Sun Dance ritual, performed by one of the Indian people at Yellowstone National Park, and how did tribal members describe this act with regards to their efforts to prevent the destruction of the bison?

Attachment G: Return of the Buffalo article

Bi'Shee: For American Indians, the Return of the Buffalo Brings Healing to Both the Body and the Spirit, by Richard Peterson, in *American Indian* (Smithsonian Institute Pub.) Summer, 2001.

For many Indian tribes, the sight of an eagle is a sign of good luck, or approval from the Creator above. So when an eagle soared in the sky above a buffalo herd being unloaded at a ranch on the Fort Peck Reservation in January, it signaled a day that's been a long time coming on the prairie in northeastern Montana.

"This is a new day, a new hope," says Assiniboine spiritual leader Larry Wetsit. "More so for our children and grandchildren. They're the ones who really need help."

The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux tribes have been working to obtain a herd for the past decade; bison disappeared from the reservation more than a century ago. But an unexpected opportunity arose this year, when the neighboring Fort Belknap Reservation wanted to sell a portion of its herd because of severe drought conditions. With the help of some grants, Fort Peck was able to purchase the herd of 100 at $300 a head. The buffalo (the proper name for the animal is "bison," but most Americans refer to it as "buffalo") were put out to pasture in June on the reservation's 5,800-acre game reserve, 25 miles north of Poplar.

About 50 other tribes in the United States have been just as busy setting up or expanding their own herds. According to the Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative (ITBC), a national agency based in Rapid City, S.D., the tribes have a collective herd of 8,000 to 9,000 bison, located in 16 states across the country from California to Michigan.

The animals, which numbered 60 million in the early 1800s, were hunted and killed nearly to extinction during the settling of the West in the mid-to-late 1800s. By the beginning of the 20th century, that number had dwindled to 1,500, say some historians.

Today hundreds of thousands of bison roam in refuges and on reservations. The mission of ITBC is simple, say its leaders: to heal the spirits of both the Indian people and the buffalo. "Bringing them back allows a tribe to develop a whole new learning experience and thought pattern," says Louis LaRose, past president of the ITBC and volunteer manager of the Winnebago tribe's herd of 72 bison in Nebraska. "Each year we learn more about them and learn more about ourselves. We're restoring Mother Earth the way our grandfathers meant it to be."

The cooperative was formed in 1990 to coordinate and assist tribes in returning buffalo to their lands. The following year, Congress appropriated funds for tribal bison programs, and tribes met later that year to plan their efforts to improve and expand existing herds or develop new ones. "We recognize the bison is a symbol of our strength and unity, and that as we bring our herds back to health, we will also bring our people back to health," says Fred DuBray, ITBC board member and Cheyenne River Sioux tribal member.

One of the oldest and largest herds in Indian Country resides on the Crow Reservation in southeastern Montana. The Crow were given *Bi'Shee*, or buffalo, from the Yellowstone Park herd but had to kill the animals in 1964 after most tested positive for brucellosis. The tribe reintroduced the buffalo to its reservation in 1971 and now has more than 1,500 head roaming in the Big Horn Mountains. The Crow have helped other tribes to start or expand their herds.

For most of the tribes, the return of the buffalo is needed for spiritual growth and also for health reasons. The Winnebago use buffalo meat to curb the rise of Type II (adult onset) diabetes and heart disease among its tribal members. In fact, the Winnebago are getting an early start—the meat is also served at a children's nutritional lunch program on the reservation in an effort to encourage younger people to form better eating habits, says LaRose, known as the "buffalo man" to local school children.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a 3.5-ounce serving of bison steak has 2.4 grams of fat and 116 calories. The same amount of beef carries about 8 grams of fat and 161 calories. "We managed to reduce

the rate of diabetes and we believe we're beginning to reverse the onset of diabetes," LaRose says, pointing out the elimination of diabetes-related eye surgeries and limb amputations as evidence. "Now we're starting to realize the spiritual impact."

The Nebraska herd, which resides on the reservation near the Missouri River, has also made the tribe more conscious about caring for its land. To have a healthy herd, a healthy diet is a must. The tribe encourages the growth of wild prairie grasses so familiar to the buffalo hundreds of years ago. "We've sort of rebuilt the prairie," says LaRose.

The Cheyenne River Sioux tribe in South Dakota has conducted a restoration project *Pte Hca Ka* that was recognized by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of government as an original and effective program. The Innovations in American Government award was given because *Pte Hca Ka* combines environmental and ecological restoration, cultural preservation, and spiritual revitalization in the tribe's effort to restore its longtime relationship with the buffalo.

During a traditional youth campout 10 years ago at Fort Peck, tribal members became interested in obtaining a herd when they noticed there was no buffalo on the camp menu, says tribal planning director Abby Ogle. "We started asking ourselves, 'How come we can't have them!'" In a coordinated effort, the tribes began working with the ITBC to bring back the buffalo. Five of Montana's seven Indian reservations now operate buffalo herds. The Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Blackfeet, and Salish-Kootenai also have herds of their own.

It's also easier and cheaper to raise bison, according to Val Smith, the Fort Peck tribes' buffalo herd manager. "Cattle are so expensive to raise, and I think that buffalo have less overhead, are cleaner, and can forage for themselves." Like most other tribes, Fort Peck has developed a business plan, which includes marketing and tourism possibilities. The arrival of *tatanka* (the Lakota word for bison) also fills a cultural and spiritual void that has been missing since the late 1800s.

The return of the buffalo, however, has raised concern from cattle ranchers across the country who worry that some of the animals may be afflicted with brucellosis, a disease that causes cattle to abort their calves. But Robbie Magnan, tribal fish and game director, says the herd at Fort Peck has been tested and is free of the disease. In the 1990s, Montana state livestock inspectors shot hundreds of the Yellowstone Park herd when the buffalo migrated north out of the park and onto state lands. Today, Montana has declared itself brucellosis-free.

"There may be some opposition to this but it is part of our culture that was lost, and now it's back," Ogle says. Before the animal disappeared, it was a primary food source for Plains tribes as well as a material for clothing and shelter. The last documented buffalo hunt on the reservation was in 1873. Shortly thereafter, hunters, soldiers, and ranchers wiped out buffalo throughout the reservation as part of a government plan to eliminate the Indians' food supply during the westward expansion.

The tribes recently set aside as a game preserve the pastureland used specifically for the 100 buffalo at Fort Peck. Tribal members celebrated the herd's arrival with a powwow and other ceremonies as the animals were released into a pasture of rolling hills and badlands.

Assiniboine and Sioux spiritual leaders and tribal officials held a pipe ceremony. Several female elders served a traditional meal of corn soup, berry pudding, and frybread in a nearby barn on the ranch. Busloads of tribal leaders and school children watched as the buffalo charged from the livestock trailers and into a huge corral, where fresh hay and water awaited them.

"I'm glad they're back," said Brockton elementary student Trent Spotted Bird as the buffalo rushed off a livestock truck. "They make us stronger."

Richard Peterson (Assiniboine/Sioux) is a freelance writer and former newspaper magazine, and television reporter. © Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian; from *American Indian*, Summer 2001. Retrieved on August 13, 2009 from http://westgatehouse.com/art79.html