

Buffalo Economy and Red River Carts

Lesson 1

Guiding Question for the Lesson

- How did the buffalo support Indigenous life?

Standards

Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

EU 1 There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

Social Studies Standards

SS.E.6-8.6 Explain how changes in supply, demand, and labor standards cause changes in prices and quantities of goods, services, and other capital.

SS.G.6-8.5 Explain the role and impact of spatial patterns of settlement and movement in shaping societies and cultures, including Indigenous cultures.

SS.G.6-8.6 Identify how the historical and contemporary movement of people, goods, and ideas from one area can impact change, conflict, and cooperation in other areas.

Materials

Uses for parts of the buffalo (Appendix A), South Dakota State Historical Society.

[Bison Bellows: Indigenous Hunting Practices](#), National Park Service.

[Welcome to the Madison Buffalo Jump](#) (video, 2 minutes), Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All Unit, 2021.

[Madison Buffalo Jump - Ceremonial and Cultural Connections](#) (video, 5 minutes), Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All Unit, 2021.

[Madison Buffalo Jump Tour](#) (video, 3 minutes), Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All Unit, 2021.

[Madison Buffalo Jump Viewed from the Top](#) (2 minutes), Montana Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All Unit, 2021.

[It's Bison, Not Buffalo. And Other American Bison Facts](#), Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, 2018.

Notes Capture Form (Appendix B)



Length

One class period

Steps

Step One

Ask students, can you think of an item you get from nature that you use? Can you think of one you use every single part of? Display the image of all the uses for parts of the buffalo.

Encourage discussion. You might ask what they notice, what things we need in today's world, and what things we no longer need. One thing not explicitly mentioned is the fresh meat. First and foremost, buffalo was a food source.

Step Two

Introduce students to the text found at the National Park Service, called Bison Bellows: Indigenous Hunting Practices. Written for a young audience, this short descriptive piece will help your students understand the buffalo jump that will be shown in the video series. Encourage conversation and questions.

Show the four short videos with Dr. Shane Doyle at the Madison Buffalo Jump. Ask students to use the note capture form (see Appendix B) to note details from the videos. Between each one, or perhaps after the first two, ask students to chat with each other and/or as a whole group about what they are noticing.

Make a class list of “questions I have” (right-hand column). Can anyone answer anyone else’s questions? If you have time, and they have easy access to the internet (via a device already in front of them) you can assign a lightning-fast research project. Each student or pair of students gets a question to try to answer via the internet in five minutes. Have them provide the answer and a source citation. You can use this to reinforce research skills, evaluating source material skills, and citation skills you may already have taught.

If there is not time/resources for a lightning-fast research project, a possibility is taking a sideways trip into words? Use the Smithsonian’s National Zoo site for information on the difference between bison and buffalo. It is worth noting, though “bison” is technically correct in English, tribes had their own names for these animals long before Europeans arrived.

Assessment

Ask students to use their note-taking form to answer the guiding question, “How did the buffalo support Indigenous life?”

Extension Options

Note: the lessons in this section do not touch on the near-extinction of the buffalo. Extension resources focus wholly on that.

[Buffalo & the Plains Indians](#) , South Dakota State Historical Society. Starting on page 5 there are several paragraphs on how and why buffalo herds were decimated.

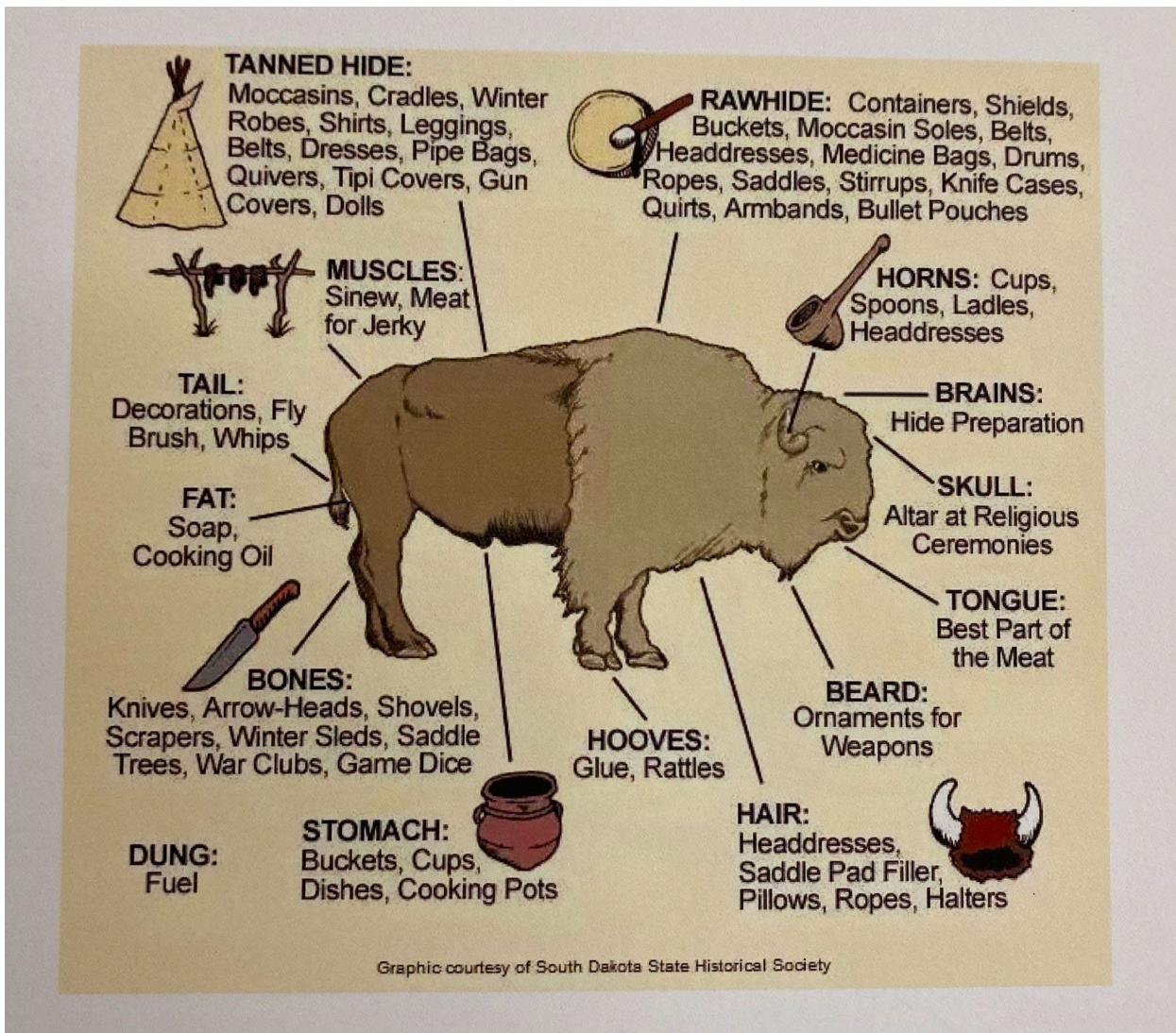
[InterTribal Buffalo Council](#), Rapid City, South Dakota. This is an organization dedicated to restoring buffalo to tribal lands.

[Buffalo Head Home to Tribal Lands](#), The Nature Conservancy, October 14, 2022. This article might be easier for kids to digest than the ITBC website.

[Where the Buffalo No Longer Roamed](#) by Gilbert King, Smithsonian Magazine, July 17, 2012.

[Buffalo Should Be Everywhere](#), The Montana Experience: Stories from Big Sky Country, 2019. This video (3 minutes) is about restoration of buffalo to tribal lands and features Aaniih language and children's voices.

Appendix A: Uses for Parts of the Buffalo



Appendix B: Notes Capture Form

Name:

Date:

Details I already knew	Details I learned	Questions I have/ Connections I can make