
INTRODUCTION

Thank you for booking the “People of the Prairies” program at FortWhyte Alive. This program is designed to help your students learn about three groups of people who have made their homes on the prairie—First Nations, the Métis, and European settlers. Students will throw atlauts, explore a sod house, see a Red River Cart, the bison herd, and a tipi.

Appropriate Dress for Your Field Trip

To ensure that students get the most out of their FortWhyte experience, we ask that they be appropriately dressed for a 2-hour outdoor excursion. All of our programs include time outdoors, regardless of weather. Comfort and safety are key in making this an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Suggestions for Outdoor Dress

Layering of clothing is very important in maintaining body temperature and in remaining dry. Four thin garments may offer the same degree of warmth as one thick overcoat, but the four layers allow much greater flexibility. Layers can be shed or added as temperature, wind, exertion, or other variables dictate.

Waterproof outer layers are also important. Rain may get us wet but so will dew on grass, melting snow on pants and puddles in the spring. Boots in the winter are always important to keep moisture out and heat in.

Please share this information with other teachers that are coming to FortWhyte Alive with your group.

GOAL

To understand the connection between the past peoples of Manitoba and the prairie ecosystem. Including people of the past and people who continue to live in what we now call Manitoba.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Visualize what the prairies looked like pre-European settlement.
2. Identify three different groups of people that made their homes on the prairies in Manitoba, including: First Nations, Métis and European settlers.
3. Recognize that these three groups used their understanding of the prairie lands to live here.



FORTWHYTE ALIVE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the beginning of the program, FWA will share our land acknowledgement:

FortWhyte Alive is located on Treaty 1 Territory, on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Ininew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene and Dakota peoples, as well as the Birthplace of the Métis Nation and the Heart of the Métis Homeland.

FortWhyte Alive is guided by respect for the land, for all living things, and for all people and our future generations. We recognize the truth of harms done to Indigenous peoples throughout Canada's history of colonization and are committed to reconciliation and the building of a better future for all our relations. All are welcome here.

VOCABULARY

| Term | Definition |
|------------------|---|
| Bison | The largest mammal in North America resembling an ox, but with massive head and shoulders and a humped back. The bison represents respect within the Seven Sacred Teachings of the Anishinaabe. Bison were once common in North America, but were nearly driven to extinction and are found on ranches or in protected areas. |
| Colonization | The process of Europeans taking control of the territories and Indigenous people of what is now known as Canada, and applying their own systems of law, government, and religion, for example by taking over the land and controlling Indigenous peoples' way of life and rights. |
| European Settler | People who crossed the Atlantic from Europe to settle on land in North America with the intention of staying. On the prairies, farmland was one main reason why people immigrated. |
| First Nations | A term used to describe Indigenous peoples that are not Métis or Inuit who live in what is now known as Canada. In this program, we will use this term to talk about First Nations with traditional territories on the prairies of Manitoba: the Plains and Swampy Cree (Nehiyawak and Ininew), Anishinaabe, and Assiniboine (Nakota) and Dakota peoples. |
| Indigenous | Peoples of culturally distinct ethnic groups who are native to a place which has been colonized and settled by another ethnic group. In Canada, the three distinct groups of Indigenous people are the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. |
| Métis | A person of both European and First Nations descent, especially those who established settlements and a unique culture in the Assiniboine, Red, and Saskatchewan River Valleys during the 19th century. The Métis form a distinct culture. Métis means "mixed" in French. |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Nomadic | People who move from place to place throughout their territory each year. Bison migrated for pasture, moving an average of two kilometers a day. First Nations who relied on bison for sustenance, moved camp as needed to ensure access to bison. |
| Pemmican | A mixture of dried bison meat, berries and fat, which was a main food source for European fur traders, produced and sold to them by First Nations and Métis hunters. From Cree: pimīhkān, pronounced pim-eeh-kawn. |
| Prairie | North American grasslands - plains with dense grasses and few trees, providing ideal habitat for a variety of herbivores and their predators. |
| Red River Cart | A strong, two-wheeled cart pulled by horse or oxen, constructed entirely of wood. Symbolic of the Métis people, and the province of Manitoba. |
| Sod House | A house with walls made of strips of sod laid horizontally in layers like bricks. Sod houses were common in the time of early European settlement on the prairies, where wood and stone were scarce. |
| Tipi | A conical shelter built around several long branches or wooden poles that meet and cross at the top. Tipi covers were traditionally made of bison hides on the prairies. The word tipi is the Dakota name, the Cree name is mīkiwāhp. |

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

All of the books listed below relate to the theme of Manitoba prairie history are available through the Winnipeg Public Libraries and/or the [Online Resources for Manitoba Educators catalog](#). You may wish to make these titles available in your classroom surrounding your 'People of the Prairies' field trip.

Books and activities with an Indigenous perspective are indicated with a medicine wheel. 

| Fiction |
|---|
| The Giving Tree, a retelling of a Métis Traditional Story by Leah Dorian  |
| Fiddle Dancer, Dancing in My Bones, and Call of the Fiddle by Wilfred Burton and Anne Patton  |
| The Diamond Willow Walking Stick and Relatives with Roots and Métis Camp Circle: A Bison Way of Life by Leah Marie Dorion  |
| Angelique: Buffalo Hunt by Cora Taylor  |
| Anytime Stories and Anywhere Stories by Leo Sawicki  |
| Bulrush Helps the Pond by Leo Carriere  |
| Prairie Lotus by Linda Sue Park |
| Honouring the Buffalo: A Plains Cree Legend by Judith Silverthorne  |
| Non-Fiction |
| Peter Fidler and the Métis by Donna Lee Dumont  |
| Stories of the Road Allowance People by Maria Campbell  |
| Buffalo Bird Girl by S.D. Nelson  |
| A Native American Thought of It: Amazing Inventions and Innovations by Rocky Landon with David MacDonald  |
| A Pioneer Story: The Daily Life of a Canadian Family in 1840 by Heather Collins and Barbara Greenwood |
| A Visit with the People of Red River—A Young Person's Guide and Resource Book by Judy and Barry McPherson (also available for purchase through the Manitoba Historical Society) |

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

The Prairies Then and Now

Activity Length: 1-3 Lessons

Curriculum Links: Science/Social Studies/Language Arts

Before coming to FortWhyte, encourage students to explore what defines the grassland or prairie ecosystem. The prairie region is relatively dry and is characterised by rich soil, diverse grasses and other flowering plants, low shrubs, and small stands of trees. Examples of animals include grazing animals, burrowing animals, birds and insects. Many students do not realize that what we think of as “prairie” today is mostly agricultural farmland. Less than 1% of intact native prairie remains in Manitoba. Because of this, students may need help visualizing the prairies of the past.

Read the Prairie Visualization (**Resource #1**) aloud to students and have them reflect on what they experienced. What did they see in their mind’s eye and how is it different from the farmland they see when driving outside of Winnipeg today? Students might journal, sketch, or use a graphic organizer to compare and contrast the prairies then and now.

Extensions:

Re-read the visualization slowly and have students attempt to identify the various plants and animals that are described. Bolded numbers in the text indicate where a particular plant or animal or human-created item is referred to. A list at the end of the document identifies all of the living things by their common names. Discuss what you might see, and what you will not see, at FortWhyte on your upcoming field trip.

View photos of prairie landscapes as well as prairie farmlands today. Have students imagine they are entering into the pictures. What would they see, hear, feel, and smell? Have students talk or write about each experience.

Note: The idea of a “pristine wilderness” in North America prior to European colonization is not accurate, and excludes Indigenous peoples’ histories on the land. First Nations oral history, accounts of European explorers, and archeological evidence all show that diverse peoples had settlements, roads, and agriculture. One children’s book recommended to address this concept is *Buffalo Bird Girl*, by S.D. Nelson.

Tipi Teachings

Activity Length: 1-3 lessons

Curriculum Links: Social Studies



On your field trip to FortWhyte you will visit a tipi. Tipi were (and are) a part of the life of prairie First Nations peoples. They are traditionally made of wooden poles and a bison hide covering, though the FortWhyte tipi cover is made of canvas, as tipi are commonly made today after the near extinction of the bison. Tipi were easily erected and taken down and could be moved from one camp to another with relative ease and speed. It took about an hour to set up a tipi and sometimes only a matter of minutes to take it down. The longest poles were sometimes used to create a travois (frame used to carry heavy loads) for transportation. The tipi is a place of safety, respect, and honour. Students will be asked to follow certain protocol when entering and sitting in the tipi.

How are tipis similar to the homes we live in today? How are they different? What etiquette and customs do students follow in their own homes? Examples might include removing their boots at the door, sitting down for supper together as a family, rules for sharing the bathroom with siblings in the morning, etc. Use the attachments, links and books below to help your students prepare for their visit to the FortWhyte tipi.

Tipi Teachings (Please note that these teachings vary amongst different Indigenous groups) -

<https://powwowtimes.ca/indigenous-education-alberta-tipi-teachings/>

<http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/cree.html>

<https://www.commediaportal.ca/en/media/tipi-teachings-meaning-15-poles>

https://www.hboierc.com/uploads/5/2/0/6/52064031/tipi_pole_teachings.pdf

Books

Tipi by Nancy B. Rosoff and Susan Kennedy Zeller

The Tipi by Lisa Meeches and Ted Nolan

Storm Maker's Tipi by Paul Goble

Bison Investigations

Activity Length: 1-2 lessons

Curriculum Connections: Science/Social Studies/Math



In the program "People of the Prairies," students will visit FortWhyte Alive's bison herd. Listed below are some suggestions for gaining some background on the natural and cultural significance of bison on the prairies:

Using a meter stick or tape measure, measure out the size and height of an adult male bison in your classroom (height = 2.5m, length = 4.6m). Bison males weigh roughly 2000 lb (900 kg) and can run up to 60km/h. Bison also have horns and thick skin. Ask your students to imagine the strength of a bison. How dangerous and difficult would it be to hunt a single bison, let alone bison in a herd of hundreds?

Invite students to learn about all of the possible parts that could be used by humans who hunted it (inside and out). When people hunt animals today, do they still use every part of them? Do we create food waste when we prepare or eat our meals? Why was and is the use of every single part of an animal so important in Indigenous culture and tradition?

Use **Resource #2: Uses of Parts of the Bison** for reference.

Introduce students to the Seven Sacred Teachings of the Anishinaabeg. Ask students to brainstorm ideas of why the bison represents Respect.

- Seven Sacred Laws animated series:
<https://manitoba150.com/en/programs/the-seven-sacred-laws-animated-web-series/>
- Saskatchewan Teaching Resource:
<https://rover.edonline.sk.ca/system/guides/R054842.pdf>

Why do we no longer see herds of bison roaming the prairies today? What happened to the bison and their habitat with European colonization? In the late 1800s, there were less than 100 Plains bison left. Today, there are approximately 600,000 to 720,000 Plains bison in North America, more than 95% of these bison are being farmed for commercial purposes (not wild). Prepare students by learning about the loss of the bison and the impact on Indigenous peoples.

Resources:

Discover some initiatives for Plains Bison recovery:

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/plains-bison>

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/mb/riding/nature/animals/mammals/bison>

Prairie Symbols

Activity Length: 1-2 lessons

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies/Language Arts



In the program “People of the Prairies”, the lives of First Nations, Métis, and European settlers are related as three themes: Story of the Bison; Story of the Sashes; and Story of the Barley.

What is a symbol and why were bison, sashes, and barley selected to represent the three different cultural groups in this program?

Use the links and activities below to explore the significance of sashes and barley (for information on bison see “Bison Investigations”, above):

The Métis sash: http://www.mmf.mb.ca/the_sash.php

Métis symbols: <https://www.louisrielinstitute.com/culture/>

Sash craft: <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/settlement/kids/021013-1811-e.html>

European settler life and the Sod House:

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sod-houses/>

Mennonite Heritage: <https://mennoniteheritagevillage.com/visit/#education>

Grow your own barley: <http://sproutpeople.org/growing-barley-grass/>

What other symbols could have also been used to represent these three cultural groups? Have students research and brainstorm more possibilities. Students might also consider common symbols of Canada or Manitoba or design their own.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

The Prairies Now and Then Part 2

Activity Length: 3-6 lessons

Curriculum Links: Science/Social Studies/Visual Art/Language Arts

In FortWhyte’s Interpretive Centre, two dioramas illustrate the evolution of the same plot of land over one hundred years. In some programs, your students have had a chance to view this exhibit, but they have also explored prairie history on the trail.

Have students create dioramas of their own that accurately show the progression of change on a single plot of prairie over several generations.

You might research the history of a local area near your school (the Manitoba Historical Society often can provide information about neighbourhood histories), or you might simply invent a sample plot of prairie land.

Students could work individually or in small groups to research, design, and write about what the prairies have looked like at different points over the last two hundred years (mixed-grass prairie, First Nations community, Métis bison hunt, European sod house, contemporary farm or neighbourhood, etc.).

We are all Treaty People

Activity Length: 1-5 lessons

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies



The arrival of Europeans brought drastic changes to the lives of First Nations and Metis people. The Selkirk Settlers came to Manitoba in 1812 and, as their population grew over the next several decades, land negotiations became a reality of co-existence amongst all of the cultural groups living in the area. Informal agreements were continually established to divide up the land, but it was not until after Manitoba became a Province of Canada in 1870 that formal treaties were established between the Crown and First Nations peoples in this area.

Treaty history is a critical part of understanding Canada's past and present. Resources and treaty education training are available through the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. See www.trcm.ca for resources and information.

Old-time Painting

Activity Length: 1-2 lessons

Curriculum Connections: Visual Arts

Try decorating the way a settler might have decorated their sod house. European settlers were known to have used leaves or dry plants to splatter paint designs on wooden chairs and chests. Your students can use the same process to create gift boxes, cards or wrapping paper.

You will need:


- Leaves, ferns and grasses
- Newspaper
- Sheets of paper, bags, boxes or cards to decorate
- Wire sieves or small squares of wire screening
- Old toothbrushes or stiff-bristled paintbrushes
- Tempera paint in several colors

Directions:

- For patterns, have your students collect interesting shapes from nature. Use leaves and grasses while they are fresh or press them between books to keep them flat.
- Spread newspapers over your students' work space. Have your students place their paper or cardstock over the newspaper. They can arrange their leaves in a pattern on the paper. Ensure they weigh each leaf down with small stones.
- Direct your students to hold their sieve or screening about 8 cm above their paper. Then have them dip their toothbrushes into the paint, tap off any drips and run their brushes over their sieves. If they don't have sieves or screening, they may hold their toothbrushes over the paper and drag their fingers along the bristles.
- After your students have let the paint dry, they may try splattering a second color. When they are finished, they may carefully pick off the leaves.

Other Ideas:

For a feathery pattern, your students may outline their image using an almost-dry brush. Have them dip their brushes into the paint, then wipe most of the paint off on the newspaper. Holding



their image down with their finger, they then brush the pattern out to the paper. Note: This works best with single, large leaves.

I Am a Person of the Prairies

Activity Length: 1-3 lessons

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies/Language Arts

After learning about the people of the prairies, have students reflect on how each of them is also a person of the prairies. How are they connected to the land and its history, and how can they connect more?

Create a class map that identifies where each student comes from. Who is connected to the First Nations, the Métis, and the early European settlers? Who has immigrated to the prairies more recently? What does it mean to be a person of the prairies today?

Have students conduct interviews with family members and write narratives about what life was like in the past. Create a book of family stories and invite students to compare and contrast experiences from their own generation with generations past.

Native Prairie Garden

Activity Length: ongoing

Curriculum Connections: Science

FortWhyte Alive's Naturescape for Educators program can help you and your students to learn what to plant and how to create space for native prairie species in your schoolyard. For resources, contact education@fortwhyte.org.



RESOURCES

Resource #1 **Prairie Visualization**

Ask students to set aside all pens and pencils. Have them close their eyes and relax while you read the following visualization slowly and with expression. Don't forget to pause and give students time to flesh out their images in their head. Skip over bold numbers where they appear, they are part of a post reading activity.

Close your eyes and imagine that...


You are standing outside with your eyes closed. You know you are outside because you can feel a cool, fresh breeze in your hair and on your face. It whistles through your clothing and rushes past your ears. You can hear it rustling through leaves and plants all around you. You smell wet soil, rich and a little bitter. Also, a slightly sweet and spicy smell that reminds you of your kitchen. It smells like a familiar herb (1). The cool air tickles your nostrils as you inhale again and open your eyes.

The first thing you notice is the sky. All around you in every direction the sky stretches like a perfectly round upside-down dome. The brisk wind is pushing ragged clouds across a bright blue background. In the distance you can see high piles of dark grey clouds that might be thunderheads. But closer to where you are standing rays of sun stream down, dappling the landscape around you.

You are standing on a small hill and for as far as you can see, all the way to the horizon, the prairie stretches out around you. Grasses of all different heights are bending and swaying like waves in the ocean. Much of the grass is as high as your chest. Some of it is taller. A thousand shades of green blend into browns, blues, and yellows. Here and there dots of brightly coloured wildflowers catch your eye. You can follow the pattern of the wind as it traces its way across the landscape. In one place it turns up the silvery undersides of grass stalks, reflecting the sunlight and making you squint. In another, it shakes the boughs of a stand of slender, white trees. Their small, heart-shaped leaves tremble and dance against the blue sky (2). A small bit of white fluff whips past your ear and you watch it as it spirals away across the land (3). It dips and twists and finally catches in the up-reaching twigs of a light green shrub (4).

Past the grass ocean, the sound of lighthearted conversation and play catches your attention. Turning to investigate, you see several tipis made of bison hides, set up in an irregularly flattened area. Children are playing outside, and you see that there are strands of smoke snaking out from the top of each tipi. (5) As you focus on the smoke, your hair moves in the soft wind.

Over the rustle of the wind you hear a high-pitched scream above your head. Looking up, you see the silhouette of a large bird with straight, outstretched wings. It is riding an up-draft, circling comfortably higher and higher in spite of the strong breeze. The undersides of its wings are dark, separated by a lighter body. Its tail fans out in a half-circle of deep, glossy red-brown feathers (6). It screams again, wild and raw, as its sharp eyes search the prairie below. Suddenly, not too far from your feet you hear a scuffling noise and see a small rodent about the size of a rabbit sitting up on its hind legs. It is light brown with big eyes and a black tail (7). It wrinkles its nose and lets out a series of sharp barks. "Choo! Choo! Choo! Choo!" it calls as the hawk glides overhead. Then it turns tail and disappears down a hole. Looking around you notice that there are other holes of a similar size on the hill where you are standing. Bits of grass and stems are piled and broken on the ground around them.



Bending down to look more closely at one of the holes, you notice a light pink ball growing nearby. The ball is actually made of tiny, tiny pink flowers and is attached to a plant whose grey-green leaves look heavy and full (8). You gently reach out and tear off a piece of leaf and as you draw your finger away you notice a thick, white liquid forming beads where the leaf was torn. It looks like milk and leaves a sticky residue on your fingers. Nearby, a black and orange butterfly flutters past (9).

Now that you are down at ground level your eyes adjust to the details of the landscape. Even in the small area around your feet there are plants of all different shapes and sizes. Creeping ground cover (10) and tiny vines (11); tall purple-ish grasses branching into three or four seed heads at the top (12); nodding sedges (13); hairy awns catching the light (14); tiny flowers with blue petals (15); yellow bunches of goldenrod (16)...

And weaving through all of it the trails of animals. Here you spot a nibbled leaf. Over there a spider web. Insects of every shape and colour explore the crevices of this vast landscape on delicate, creeping legs. Just to your right you notice a large, round pile of something brown. It is dry and yet it too is alive with insect life. Tiny larvae, flies, and beetles are moving within it. The ground nearby is trampled and the soil is marked with large hoof prints (17). You can see a trail of flattened grasses and shrubs leading off in that direction towards the horizon. Not too far away, collected rain water sits in the bottom of a shallow depression. The earth is bare around it. A hunting spear, split almost in two, rests beside a pile of stones (18).

Snakes slither and bask amongst the tall grasses (19) and other, bigger, predators move across the canvas of the prairie as well. A coyote (20) or badger (21) may beat the hawk to its prey. A burrowing owl may come to forage for insects amongst the bison scat (22).

But though all of these animals are camouflaged somewhere within the landscape, you are mainly aware of the wind, the fresh smell, and the vastness of the prairie around you. There are no straight lines as far as the eye can see. No signs, no cement buildings, no tractors, no airplanes criss-crossing the sky. There is just the prairie, this never-ending sea of wind-blown plants and grasses. So many different kinds of plants and animals coming together to form one gigantic system.

You close your eyes again, inhale deeply, and let the wind carry your imagination back to the present moment.

PLANTS, ANIMALS AND HUMAN-CREATED ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE PRAIRIE VISUALIZATION

1. Prairie Sage
2. Trembling Aspen
3. Common Cattail
4. Saskatoon Berry
5. Tipi - Bison hides
6. Red-Tailed Hawk
7. Black-Tailed Prairie Dog
8. Showy Milkweed
9. Monarch Butterfly
10. Pussytoes
11. Milk Vetch
12. Big Bluestem
13. Sedges
14. Wild Barley

15. Blue-Eyed Star Grass
16. Goldenrod
17. Bison
18. Atlatl dart (see image) - used up to about 2000 years ago by Indigenous hunters
19. Red-Sided Garter Snake
20. Coyote
21. Badger
22. Burrowing Owl

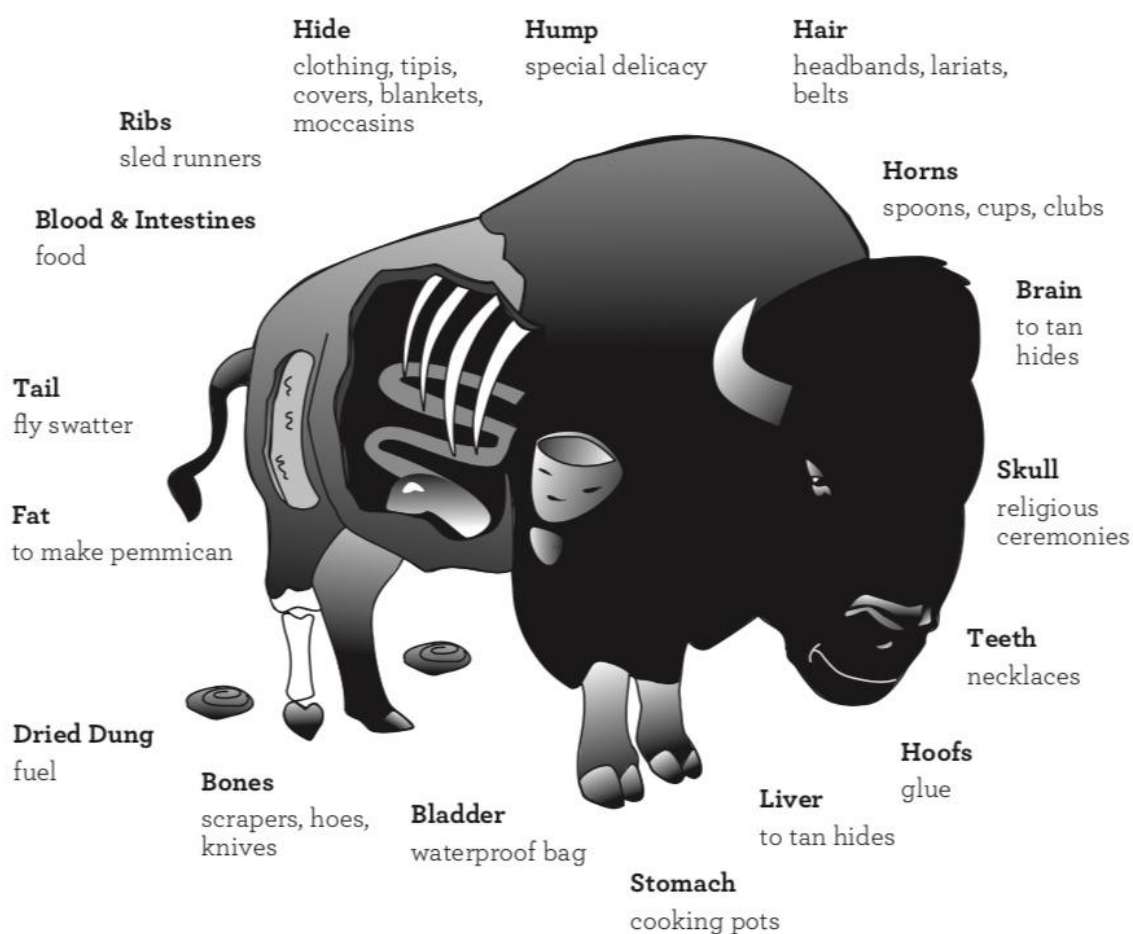


Resource #2
Uses of Parts of the Bison



FortWhyte Alive
HUMAN. NATURE.

EVERY PART OF THE BUFFALO WAS USED



Adapted from:

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