



THE BUFFALO: A TREATY OF COOPERATION, RENEWAL AND RESTORATION

June 09, 2020

Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Minister responsible for Parks Canada Agency
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6
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CC: Ron Hallman, Parks Canada Chief Executive Officer, ron.hallman@canada.ca
Sue Milburn-Hopwood as Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service, ECCC, sue.milburn-hopwood@canada.ca

Dear Mr. Wilkinson,

We, the Buffalo Treaty signatories, are writing to share the U.S. Department of Interior Bison Conservation Initiative and would like to invite you and the Canadian government to develop a similar process towards a shared vision for this iconic species, the bison. The cultural and ecological restoration of bison needs leadership and partnerships.

The Buffalo: A Treaty of Cooperation, Renewal and Restoration was first signed on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana in September 2014 by eight First Nations and Tribes. It is now the biggest modern North American Treaty amongst 30 Nations from Manitoba to British-Columbia and Tribes in four different States. All the signatories are committed to doing their utmost to restore Buffalo to its rightful place and look to cooperation to achieve this vision for reconciliation through protecting the land and our culture. The bison is the best environmentalist and climate change champion for grassland carbon sequestration.

The Treaty annexed to this letter articulates a vision of renewal, cooperation and restoration. It is the collective intention of the Buffalo Treaty Nations to recognize buffalo as a wild free-ranging animal and an important part of the ecological system; to provide a safe space and environment across our historic homelands, on both side of the United States – Canada border, so together we can have our brother, the buffalo, lead us in nurturing our land, plants and other animals to once again realize the buffalo ways for our future generations.

Canada participated in one of the main studies titled “Long-term Viability of Department of the Interior Bison Under Current Management and Potential Metapopulation Management Strategies” conducted in partnership with the U.S. National Parks Service that lead to the Department of Interior’s Bison Conservation Initiative. This is a major step in the right direction that enables all of us to stay on the path toward better health, eco-cultural recovery and nationwide reconciliation and we invite you and the Canadian Government to collaborate with the signatories of the Buffalo Treaty in developing a similar vision for Canada.

We, the signatories, look forward to further meaningful collaboration and development of a shared vision in Canada that mirrors the U.S Bison Conservation Initiative.

Sincerely,

SIGNATURE



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2014

RELATIONSHIP TO BUFFALO

Since time immemorial, hundreds of generations of the first peoples of the FIRST NATIONS of North America have come and gone since before and after the melting of the glaciers that covered North America. For all those generations BUFFALO has been our relative. BUFFALO is part of us and WE are part of BUFFALO culturally, materially, and spiritually. Our on-going relationship is so close and so embodied in us that BUFFALO is the essence of our holistic eco-cultural life-ways.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE TREATY

To honor, recognize, and revitalize the time immemorial relationship we have with BUFFALO, it is the collective intention of WE, the undersigned NATIONS, to welcome BUFFALO to once again live among us as CREATOR intended by doing everything within our means so WE and BUFFALO will once again live together to nurture each other culturally and spiritually. It is our collective intention to recognize BUFFALO as a wild free-ranging animal and as an important part of the ecological system; to provide a safe space and environment across our historic homelands, on both sides of the United States and the Canadian border, so together WE can have our brother, the BUFFALO, lead us in nurturing our land, plants and other animals to once again realize THE BUFFALO WAYS for our future generations.

PARTIES TO THE TREATY

WE, the undersigned, include but not limited to BLACKFEET NATION, BLOOD TRIBE, SIKSIKA NATION, PIIKANI NATION, THE ASSINIBOINE AND GROS VENTRE TRIBES OF FORT BELNAP INDIAN RESERVATION, THE ASSINIBOINE AND SIOUX TRIBES OF FORT PECK INDIAN RESERVATION, THE SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES OF THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI INDIAN RESERVATION, TSUU T'INA NATION along with other nations.

ARTICLE I - CONSERVATION

Recognizing BUFFALO as a practitioner of conservation, We, collectively, agree to: perpetuate conservation by respecting the interrelationships between us and 'all our relations' including animals, plants, and mother earth; to perpetuate and continue our spiritual ceremonies, sacred societies, sacred languages, and sacred bundles to perpetuate and practice as a means to embody the thoughts and beliefs of ecological balance.

ARTICLE II - CULTURE

Realizing BUFFALO Ways as a foundation of our ways of life, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate all aspects of our respective cultures related to BUFFALO including customs, practices, harvesting, beliefs, songs, and ceremonies.

ARTICLE III - ECONOMICS

Recognizing BUFFALO as the centerpiece of our traditional and modern economies, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate economic development revolving around BUFFALO in an environmentally responsible manner including food, crafts, ecotourism, and other beneficial by-products arising out of BUFFALO's gifts to us.

ARTICLE IV - HEALTH

Taking into consideration all the social and health benefits of BUFFALO ecology, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate the health benefits of BUFFALO.

ARTICLE V - EDUCATION

Recognizing and continuing to embody all the teachings we have received from Buffalo, We, collectively, agree to develop programs revolving around BUFFALO as a means of transferring intergenerational knowledge to the younger and future generations and sharing knowledge amongst our respective NATIONS.

ARTICLE VI - RESEARCH

Realizing that learning is a life-long process, We, collectively, agree to perpetuate knowledge-gathering and knowledge-sharing according to our customs and inherent authorities revolving around BUFFALO that do not violate our traditional ethical standards as a means to expand our knowledge base regarding the environment, wildlife, plant life, water, and the role BUFFALO played in the history, spiritual, economic, and social life of our NATIONS.

ARTICLE VII - ADHESIONS

North American Tribes and First Nations, and NATIONS, STATES, AND PROVINCES may become signatories to this treaty providing they agree to the terms of this treaty.

ARTICLE VIII - PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTERS

WE, collectively, invited Non-Governmental organizations, Corporations and others of the business and commercial community, to form partnerships with the signatories to bring about the manifestation of the intent of this treaty. Organizations and Individuals may become signatories to this treaty as partners and supporters providing they perpetuate the spirit and intent of this treaty.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

This treaty may be amended from time-to-time by a simple majority of the signatories.