

Buffalo of the Flatheads

The Indian Reading Series



THE INDIAN READING SERIES: Stories and Legends of the Northwest is a collection of authentic material cooperatively developed by Indian people from twelve reservations. Development activities are guided by a Policy Board which represents the Indian community of the Pacific Northwest. The Pacific Northwest Indian Reading and Language Development Program Policy Board members are:

- Warren Clements — Warm Springs
Chairman
- Clement Azure — Devils Lake Sioux
- Walter Moffett — Nez Perce
- Emmett Oliver — Quinault
- Bob Parsley — Chippewa
- Lloyd Smith — Warm Springs
- Max Snow
- Jeanne Thomas — Yakima



THE INDIAN READING SERIES
Stories and Legends of the Northwest

The Buffalo of the Flathead

Level V Book 9

Developed by the Salish (Flathead) Cultural Committee
of the Confederated Salish/Kootenai Tribes

Clarence Woodcock, *Coordinator*

Tony Incashola

Dolly Linsebigler

Pete Finley

Stories told by:

Pete Beaverhead

Eneas Pierre

Louise Vanderburg

Agnes Vanderburg

Illustrated by Dwight Billedeaux

Joseph Coburn, Director

Pacific Northwest Indian Program

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Developed by the Pacific Northwest Indian Reading and Language Development Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 300 Southwest Sixth Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97204

Copyright © 1981 by the Salish Cultural Committee, designated as the representatives
of The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation
All rights reserved.

The work upon which this publication is based was performed pursuant to Contract
No. 400-80-0105 with the Educational Equity Group/Multicultural/Bilingual Division
of the National Institute of Education. It does not, however, necessarily reflect the
views of that agency.

Printed and bound in the United States of America

When the Buffalo Were First Seen Passing
through the Bitterroot Page 2

Medicine Man Helps Buffalo Hunters Page 12

How the Buffalo was Used Page 28

Coming of the Buffalo to the Reservation Page 44

The Pablo-Allard Herd Page 56

The Bison Range Page 60

**When the Buffalo Were First Seen Passing
Through the Bitterroot**

by Eneas Pierre

It was a long long time ago when my father's grand-
parents saw a cloud of dust. They thought it might be
another tribe on a war party coming toward them.

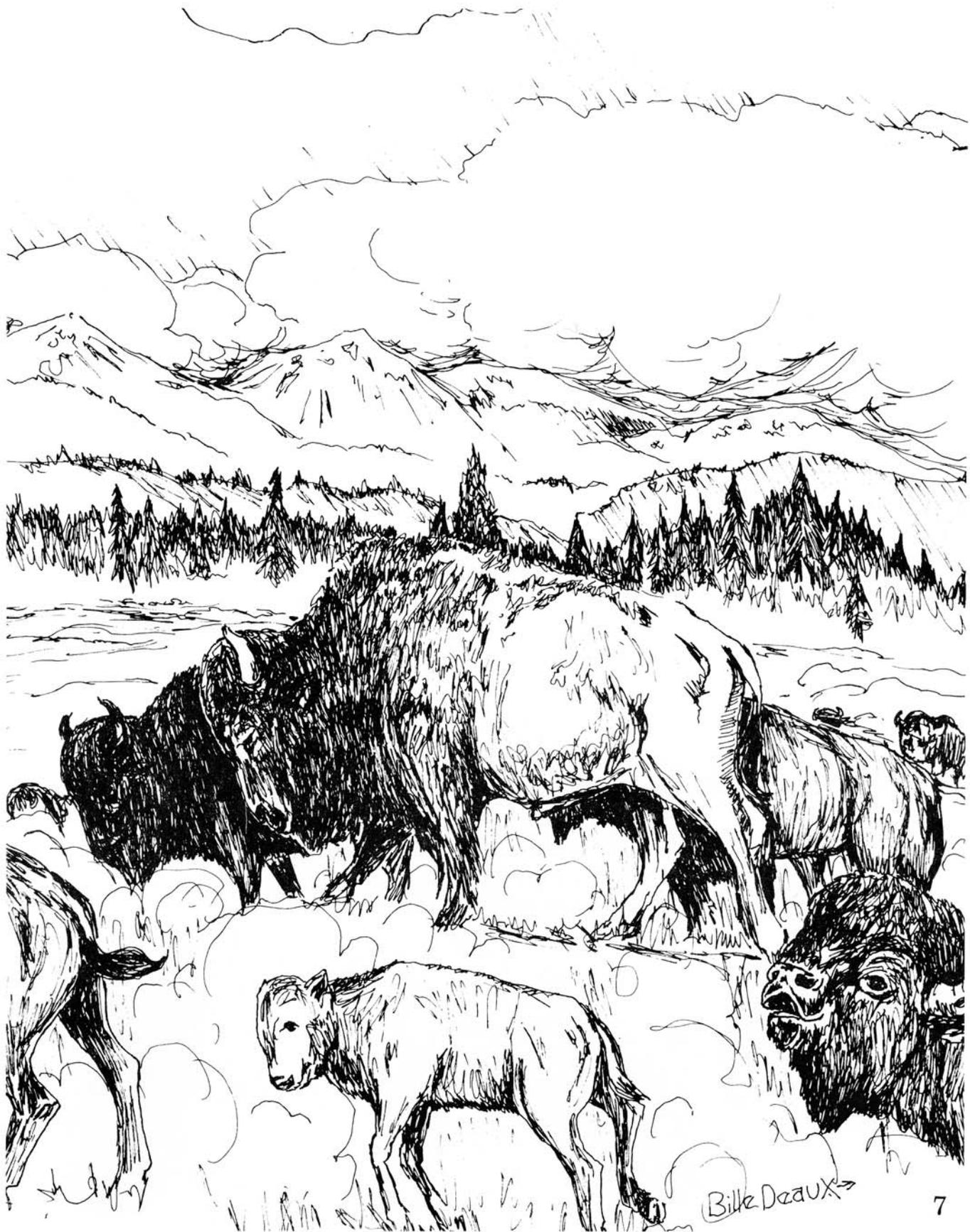


Two scouts were sent out to see what it was. When they returned they said, "No, they're animals. There are lots of them. We don't know how many thousands there are."



Bille Deaux →

The buffalo came and went through where Missoula is now. They went down the Bitterroot Valley then east over Skalkaho Pass.

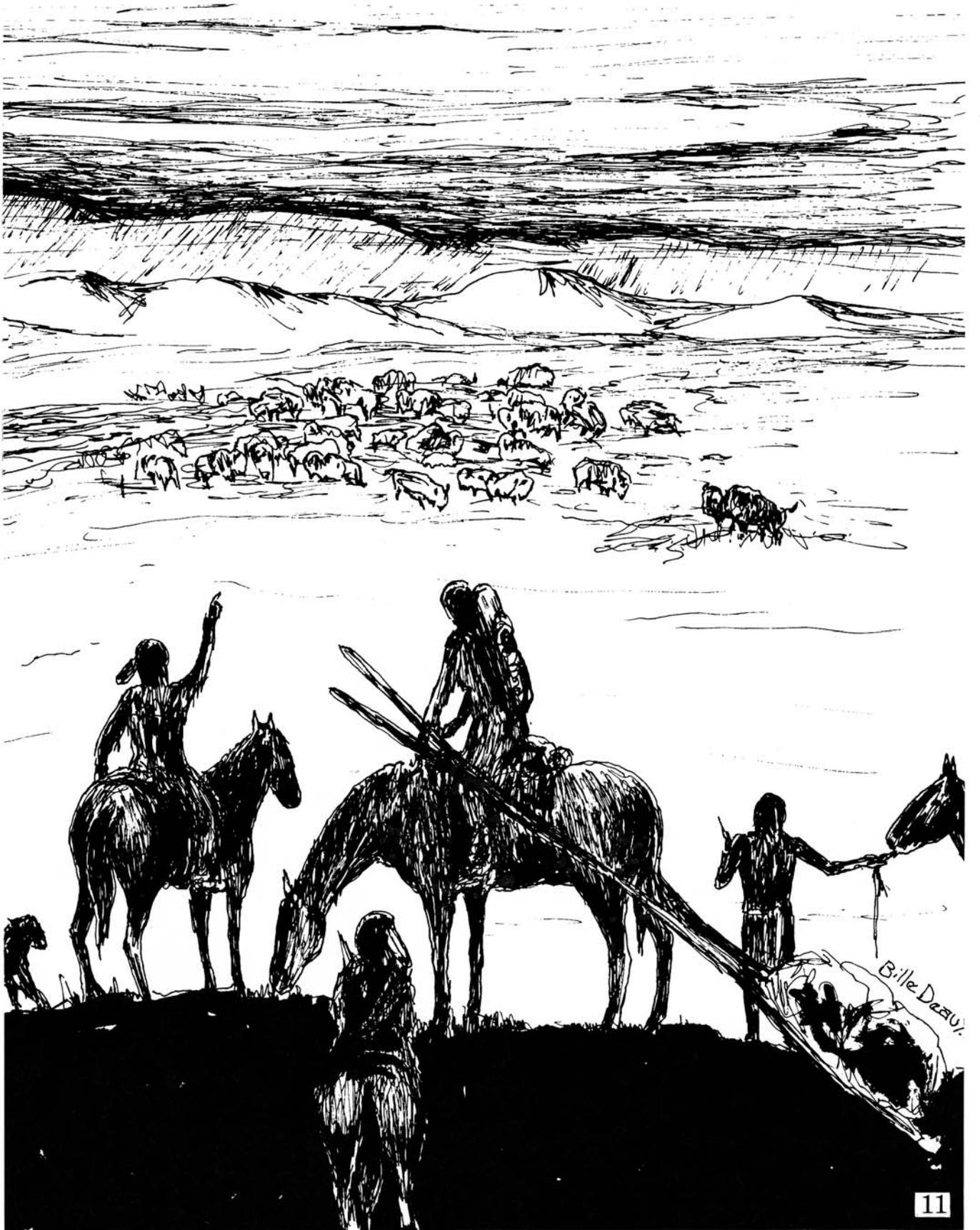


Bille Deaux →

People killed some of the buffalo. They found them to be good to eat.



They hunted buffalo every year after that. It was like they were chasing after the buffalo. They would kill all they needed until their parfleches were filled. The women would let the men know when they had enough. After that they would move back from the plains where they hunted buffalo.



Bille-Dzau!

Medicine Man Helps Buffalo Hunters

by Eneas Pierre

On hunting trips scouts were sent out to look for buffalo. During one hunting trip the scouts got tired and disappointed. They had seen hardly any signs of buffalo. They had only seen six bulls.

The chiefs chose their best shooters and sent them to kill these six buffalo. They told them to pile the meat in one place after they came back so they could divide the meat. That way each camp would receive a share of the meat.



Bille Deaux →

Buffalo were scarce. There were only the six that the scouts had killed. The scouts kept looking each day. Every day each man would go a different direction but the buffalo were hard to find.

Finally, the chiefs gathered in one camp. They said, "We should ask Grizzly Bear Tracks to help out. We are hungry."

One of the chiefs was chosen to go see Grizzly Bear Tracks. He told Grizzly Bear Tracks they had talked about the buffalo and the people were in need of food.

"Yes, we will try it," Grizzly Bear Tracks told him. "We may have some help. We might see some buffalo. This evening you have the chiefs come and see me."

That evening the smartest chiefs, those great leaders against the enemy, went to see Grizzly Bear Tracks.

He told them, "Build a lodge with the door facing toward the rising sun. Put it up tomorrow."



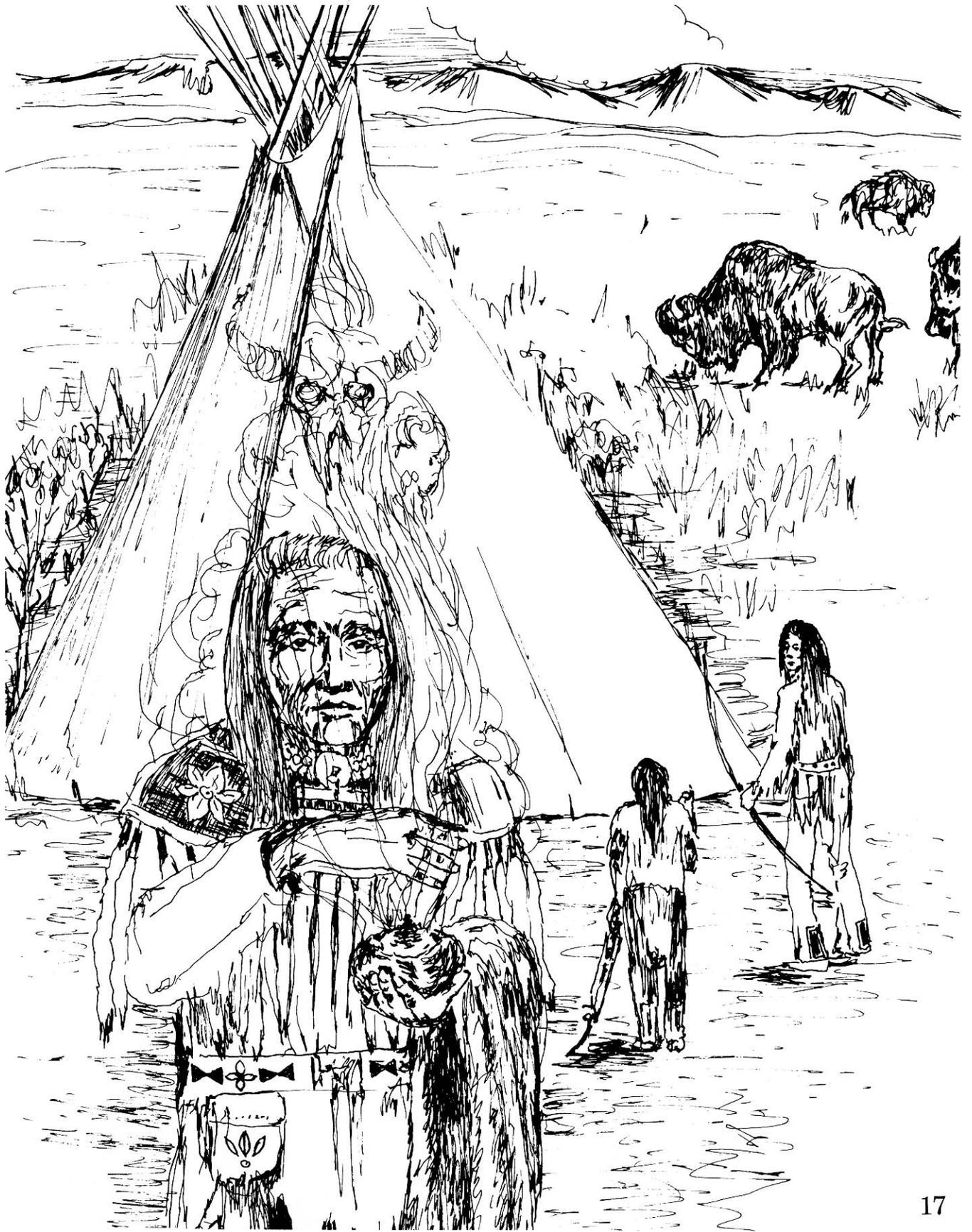
In the morning they built the lodge. It was a big lodge.

After two days Grizzly Bear Tracks came to the camp. "This evening we will go in the lodge," Grizzly Bear Tracks told them.

That evening all the people gathered and went into the lodge.

"Are we all here now?" Grizzly Bear Tracks asked.

"Yes," the Chiefs answered.



“We are going to do the jump dance. We are going to imitate the buffalo.”

The people had their robes with them. Even the children had baby buffalo robes. The older ones had robes made from the yearlings. The adults all owned large buffalo hide robes.

“Okay, now we will begin,” Grizzly Bear Tracks told them. “I will start to sing and when I change to a different song, you all mix together. That is the way buffalo do it. You children get into the middle.”

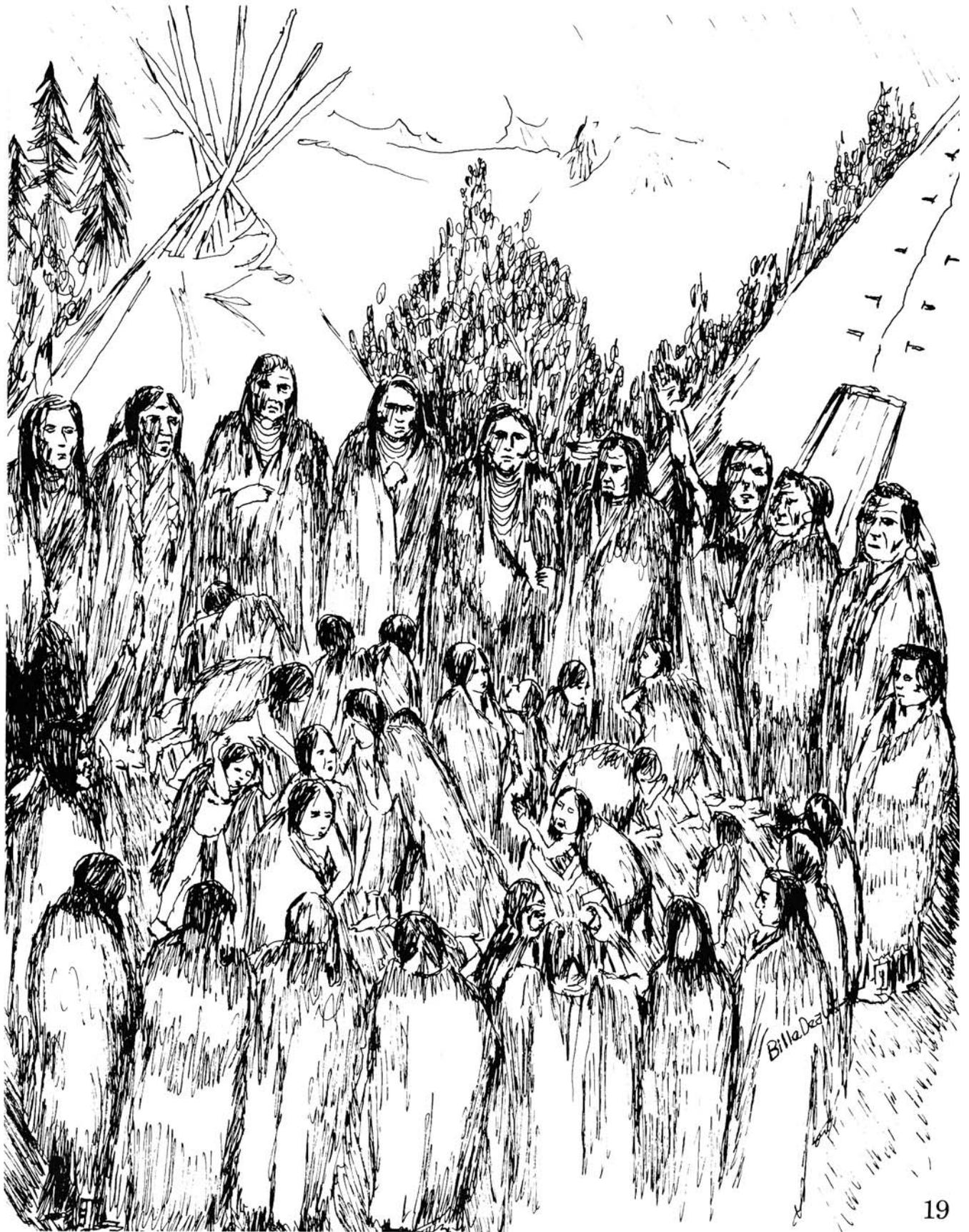
He sang a special song for the buffalo. This was Grizzly Bear Tracks’ song for imitating the buffalo.

When dawn approached, the people stopped dancing and went back to their lodges. Grizzly Bear Tracks stayed in the lodge and slept. The next night they would dance again.

Daylight came and Grizzly Bear Tracks remained in the lodge. When it grew dark, people returned to the lodge.

“Okay, we are all here,” he said. “We will begin. When I lay down last night, I heard the sound of many buffalo hoofs. It sounded as if we’re going to be helped.”

The people sang and danced late into the night. The smart chiefs also sang. Late that night Grizzly Bear Tracks said, “In the morning everyone is to be very still. The buffalo are going to be right here among us. You are not going to kill any yet. Wait! You will be told when. There will be many buffalo very close to us.”



When the morning light came, the scouts saw the buffalo. They reported there were many.

“This evening I will choose those who will be the first to go,” said Grizzly Bear Tracks.

That evening six men were chosen. Grizzly Bear Tracks told them to go to the edge of the herd and kill five cows. “Bring them all back and we will fix them for a feast.”

The chosen ones went out on their horses. It was true. There were many buffalo. They killed the five from the edge of the herd as they had been told. They tied the buffalo to their horses and brought them back to camp.



The smartest women were picked to cook the buffalo for the feast.

In front of the lodge a place was prepared for the buffalo meat. The meat was unloaded there. Throughout the day, the women were busy preparing and cooking the buffalo.

That evening when everything was ready, the camp crier went out among the camp. Everyone was told to gather at the lodge to eat.



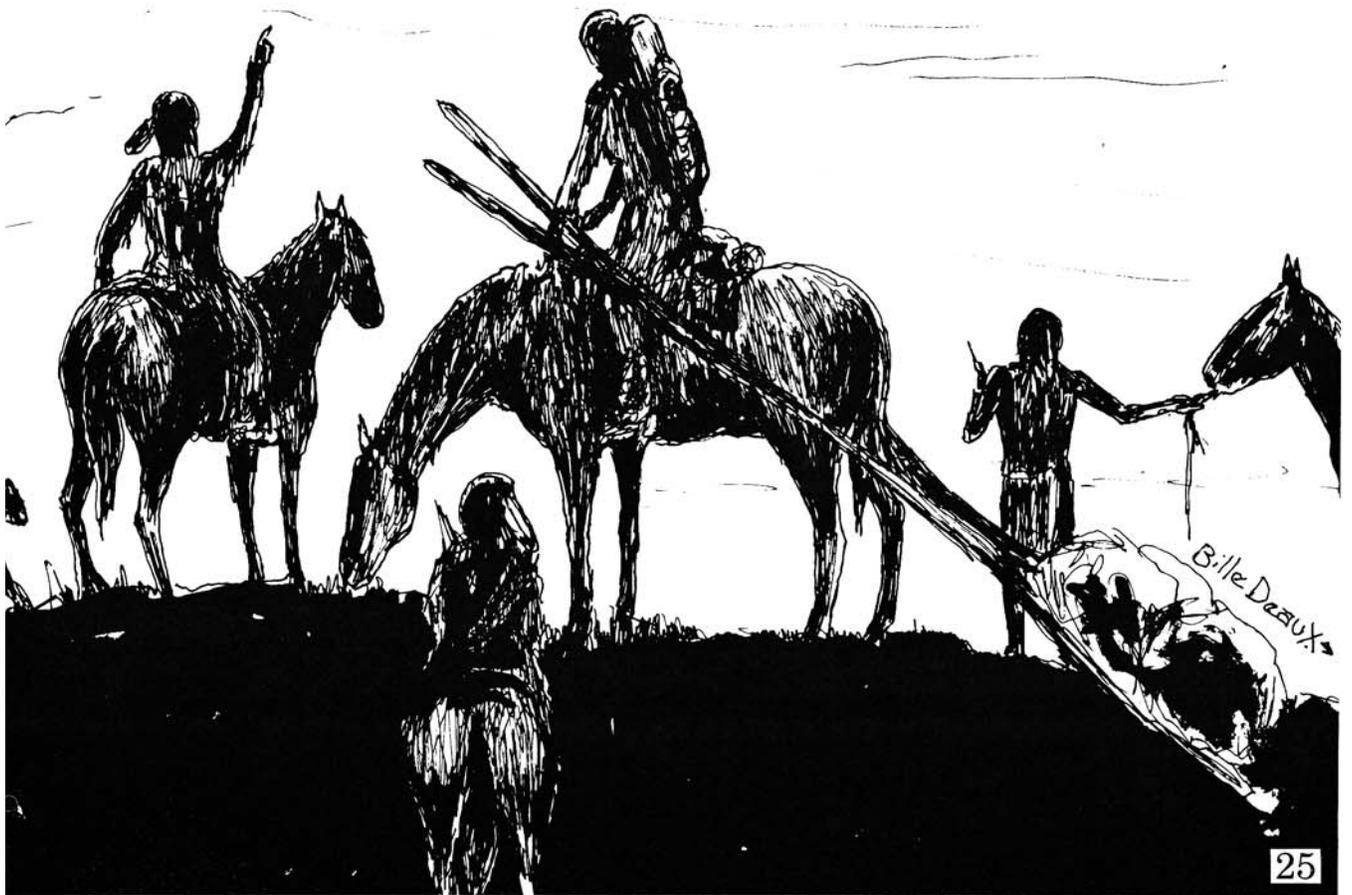
Bill Deaux →

When they finished eating, Grizzly Bear Tracks sang again. "When the morning light comes, you can kill the buffalo. All of you can kill what you need," he told them. The people were happy.

The next morning the camp crier told the people to get ready. "Get your buffalo horses and go. We have been saved."

Everyone prepared to go. The wives who knew how to skin out a buffalo were going along. There were several women traveling with the men.

When the people reached the top of the hill and saw the buffalo, the chief leading the hunt told them to get off their horses to pray. They gave thanks before the chief told them to go.



When they neared the herd, the chief signaled and they charged. Many buffalo were killed. The women began skinning. Hunters who could skin quickly killed two at a time. As soon as they finished them, they killed some more. Those who were not as fast killed only one but kept busy skinning during the rest of the hunt.

The cries of happiness from camp were loud. There was plenty of food. The women got very little sleep during the next few days. They were busy cutting meat to dry preparing for the winter. The women said, "Our parfleches are full. We can't pack anymore."

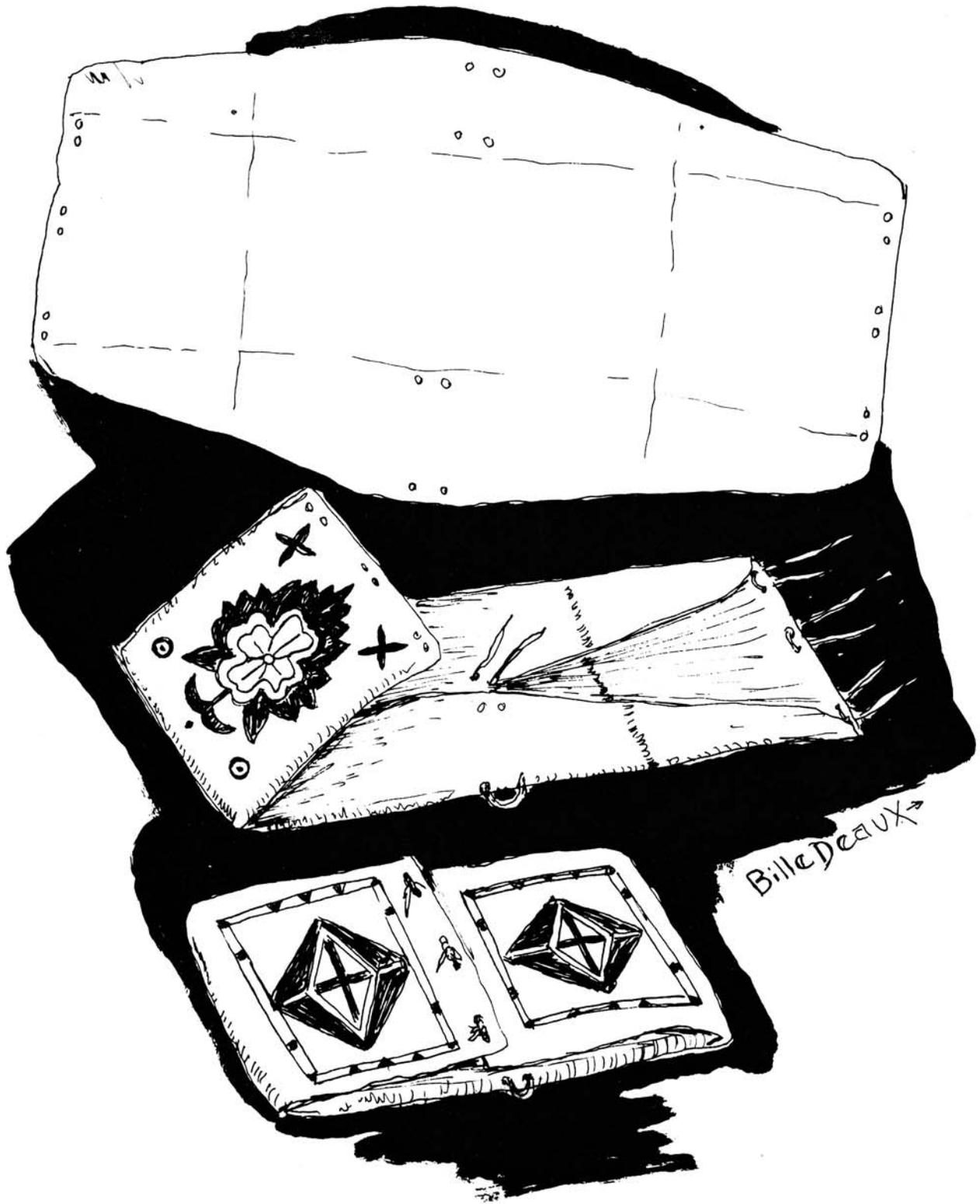
The chief told the camp crier to go out and tell the people, "When the morning light comes, prepare to move camp. We are going home."



How the Buffalo Was Used

This information is from Pete Beaverhead, Agnes A. Vanderburg and Louise Vanderburg.

The women made rawhide bags from buffalo hides to store food and clothing while they moved around the country. These are called parfleches.



The buffalo meat was dried, ground by pounding, then stored in parfleches. It would be good to eat for many months.



Sinew was taken from the hind legs. This is where the longest strips were. Small strips peeled off to use as thread were very strong.

Awls were made from buffalo bones. Awls were used to make holes in the hide. Sinew was then woven through the holes. This was how the women sewed the hides together.

The buffalo hide was used for making tepees. It kept the heat inside and the cold outside.



BilleDeaux →

Buckets or pots were made by stretching the neck part of the buffalo hide over a stump. It was then allowed to dry until hard. The edges were then trimmed and rawhide strips were tied on for handles.



The young men would skin the scalp of the buffalo just below the horns and along the forehead. They made headresses from these. The horns were cleaned and scraped smooth to use for drinking cups.



The neck part of the male buffalo was very thick and strong. This part of the hide was always used to make ropes. It was cut in wide strips, then stretched around trees very tight until it was dry. It was trimmed and pounded with a stone hammer until soft. These made very strong ropes for horse packs and for leading other horses.

Bridles and halters were also made from the neck piece of the hide. The thick mane of the male buffalo was braided and made into halters for the horses.

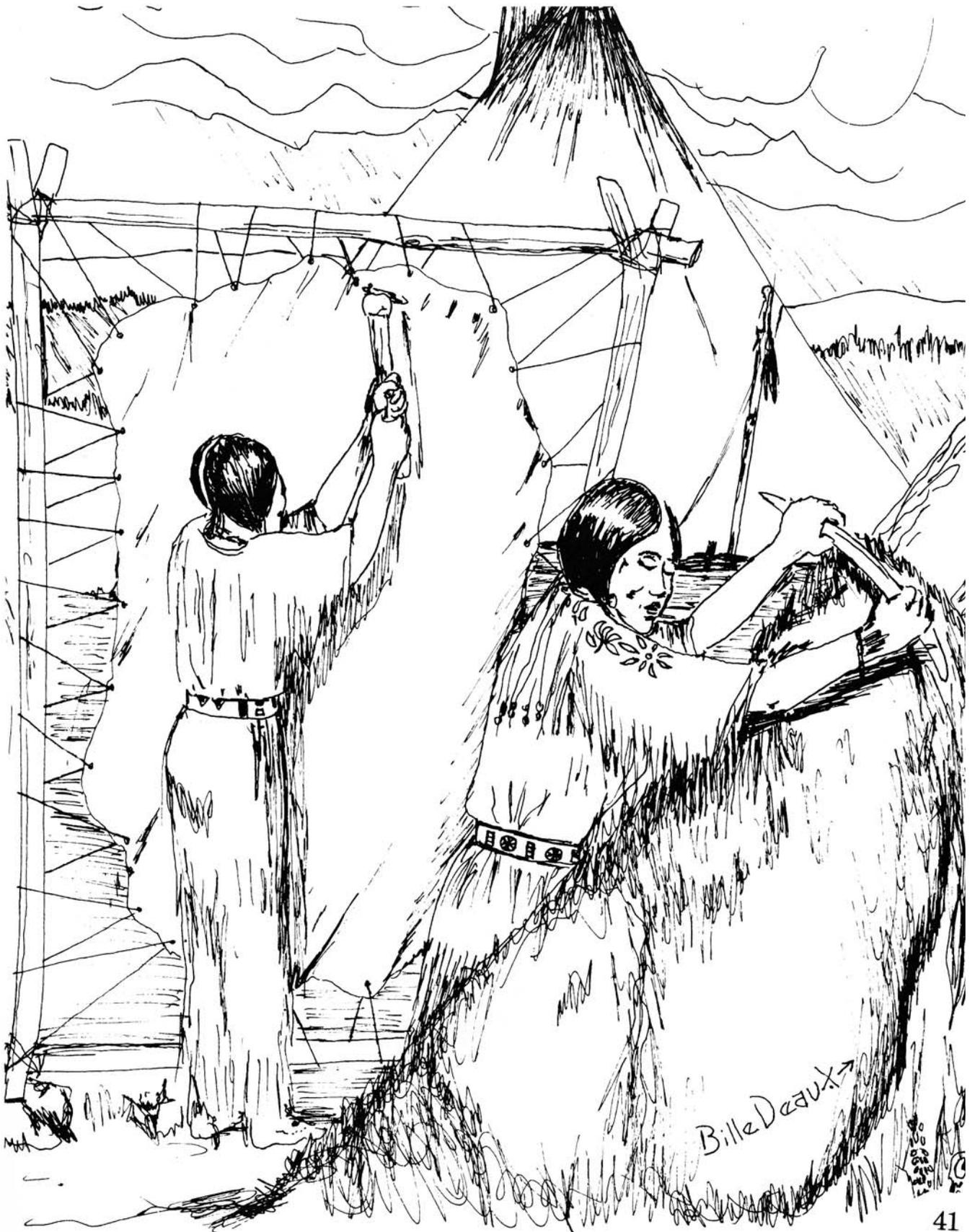


The large ribs were scraped and cleaned, then sharpened into scraping tools used in the hide tanning process.

Buffalo hides were also tanned to make blankets, robes, tepees, dresses, shirts, moccasins and leggings.

The marrow from the lower part of the buffalo leg was used to oil or grease moccasins in the winter. The moccasins would not get wet. This marrow stayed soft and would not harden when cooked.

Brains were boiled and smeared on hides. They were then dried, rolled up and tied. These hides could be stored for years before being tanned.



The sinew from the hind quarter of the buffalo was very large and long. This would be boiled until the sinew fell apart and the water became like syrup, forming glue. This glue was rubbed over bows and arrows. This made the bows and arrows very shiny, strong, and slick. Water would not soak through the glue.

The bows and arrows covered with this glue were regarded as the best. They were very hard to break and would not split easily.

Now you can see why it was so important that the early Indians had successful buffalo hunts each year.



Coming of the Buffalo to the Reservation

by Pete Beaverhead

You have read how the Flatheads moved into the plains in the summer looking for buffalo.

Once they were near a place where the town of Shelby, Montana is now located. They found a large herd and set up camp. When the buffalo hunt began, a lot of the calves were orphaned because their mothers were killed.



A man named Samwell Hawk gathered a small herd of buffalo calves. When the tribe decided to move home he had the calves gathered together. Samwell and his herd would always be the last one in line as they moved home.

In the evening when camps were put up, Samwell would let his little herd graze and eat. As it got dark he would stake each one to the ground with ropes. Several of the calves died during the trip. By the time they reached Missoula ten calves had survived.



He moved them near Moiese where he had a log cabin. He had a pasture by the river for his buffalo.

They were in good shape by then and they grew well. In a year or two they started having calves and the herd began increasing in numbers.



One day Michel Pablo told him, "I want to buy your buffalo from you. Will you sell them to me?"

Samwell said, "Yes, if you pay me well, I'll sell."

So Michel bought Samwell's buffalo and moved them to Pablo. He made a pasture for them and built a high fence. The herd grew larger.

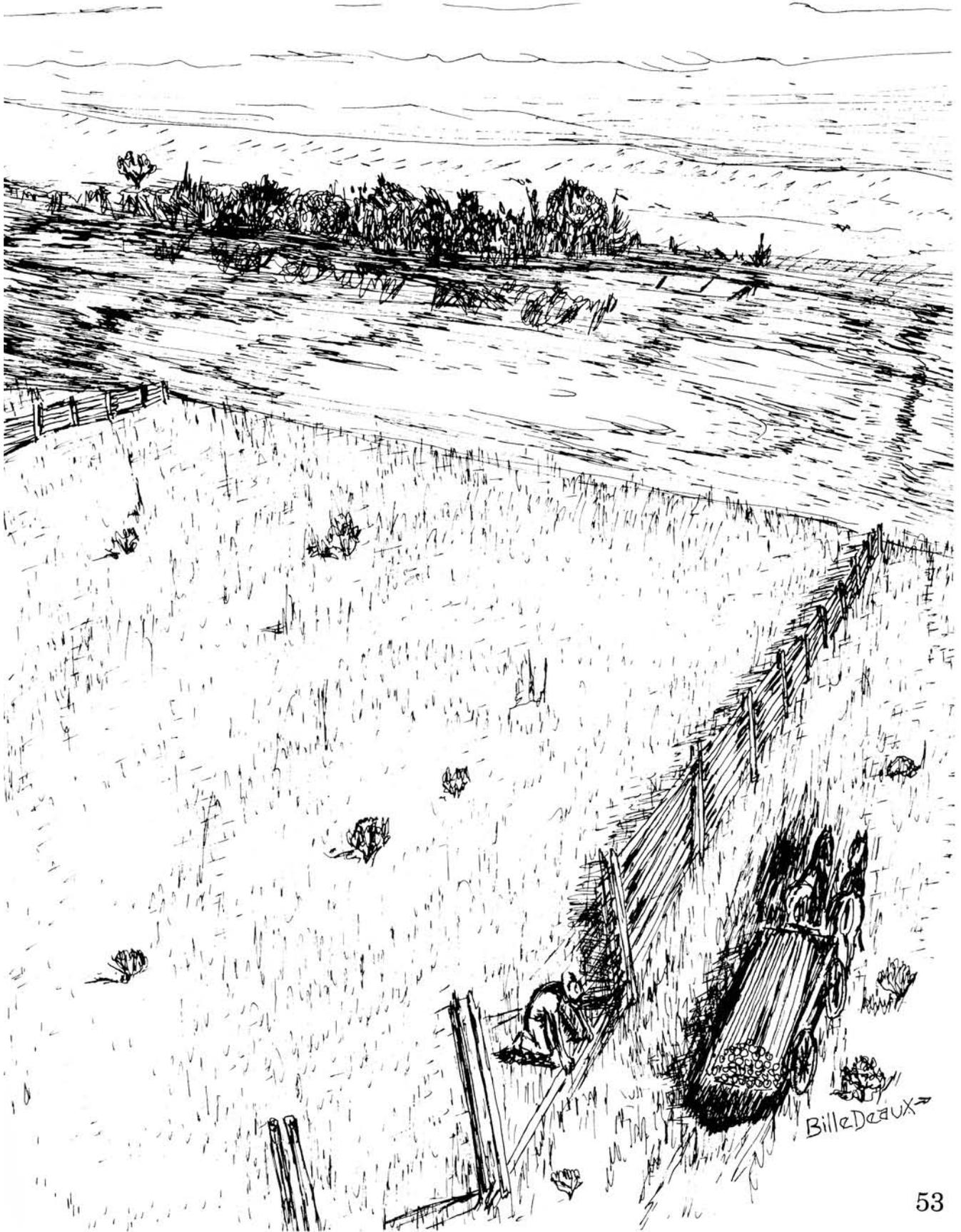
When the grass started growing in the spring, he moved the buffalo in wagons to a pasture along the Flathead River. He built high racks on the wagons and loaded two or three buffalo into a wagon. A lot of wagons were made for this purpose.

The buffalo stayed there until fall. Then they were hauled back to the winter pasture.



The buffalo herd grew so large that they ran out of pasture land. The pasture along the river had been eaten down to the ground. The fence had been built on three sides. The side toward the river was left unfenced so the buffalo could have water.

Some of the buffalo crossed the river at times.



That fall when Michel Pablo went back with his men to get his buffalo, he couldn't get the ones that had crossed the river. They became wild.

A lot of Indians went across the river to hunt the stray buffalo, but they didn't get all of them. There were two that were seen at times but were never killed.

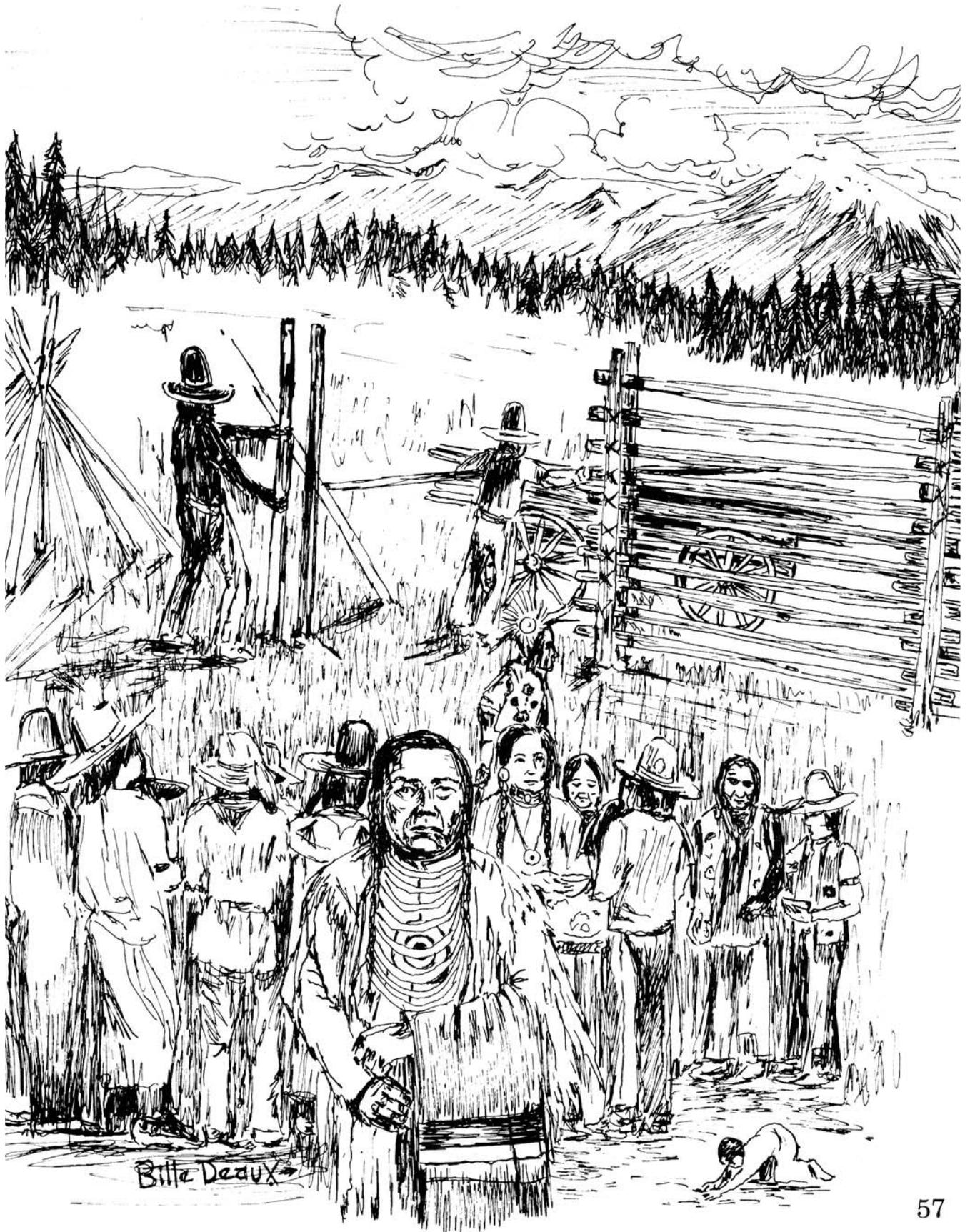
That is how the buffalo got to the Flathead reservation.



The Pablo Herd

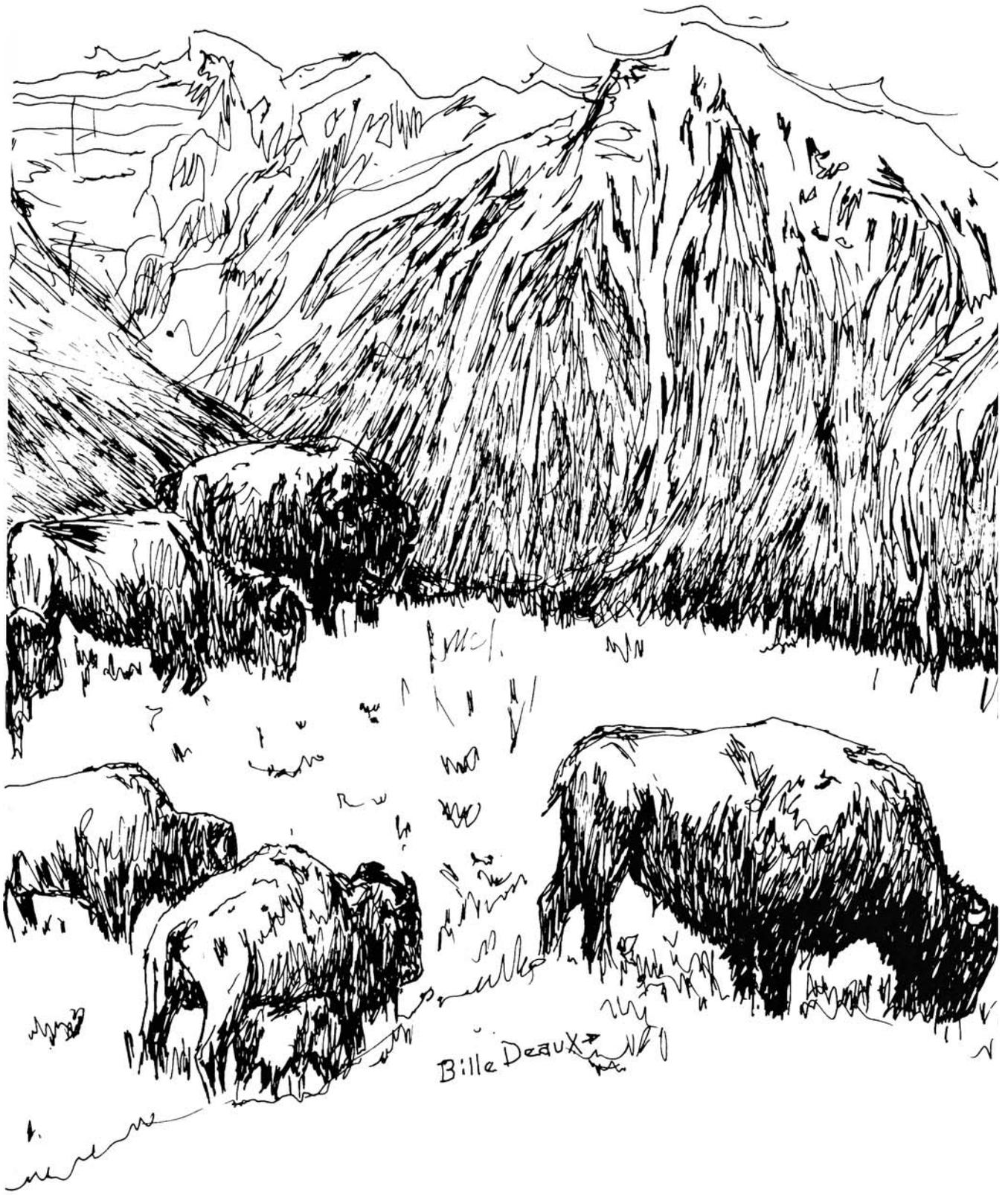
In 1884 Charles Allard and Michel Pablo purchased ten buffalo from a man named Samwell Hawk.

Later, in 1893, the two men purchased another herd from a man named Jones at Omaha. This purchase consisted of forty-four buffalo, twenty-six of which were purebred buffalo and eighteen of which were hybrids. These additional buffalo brought new blood to the herd and also caused the buffalo to increase in numbers faster. The entire herd was then located on the Allard and Pablo ranch which was beyond Ravalli. There they lived for several years.



The eventual division of the herd began with a sale to Sir Donald Smith, known now as Lord Strathcona. Lord Strathcona presented his portion of the herd to the Canadian government, four of which were kept for the City of Winnipeg. The rest of Lord Strathcona's herd was sent to Banff, Canada to be kept in a National Park.

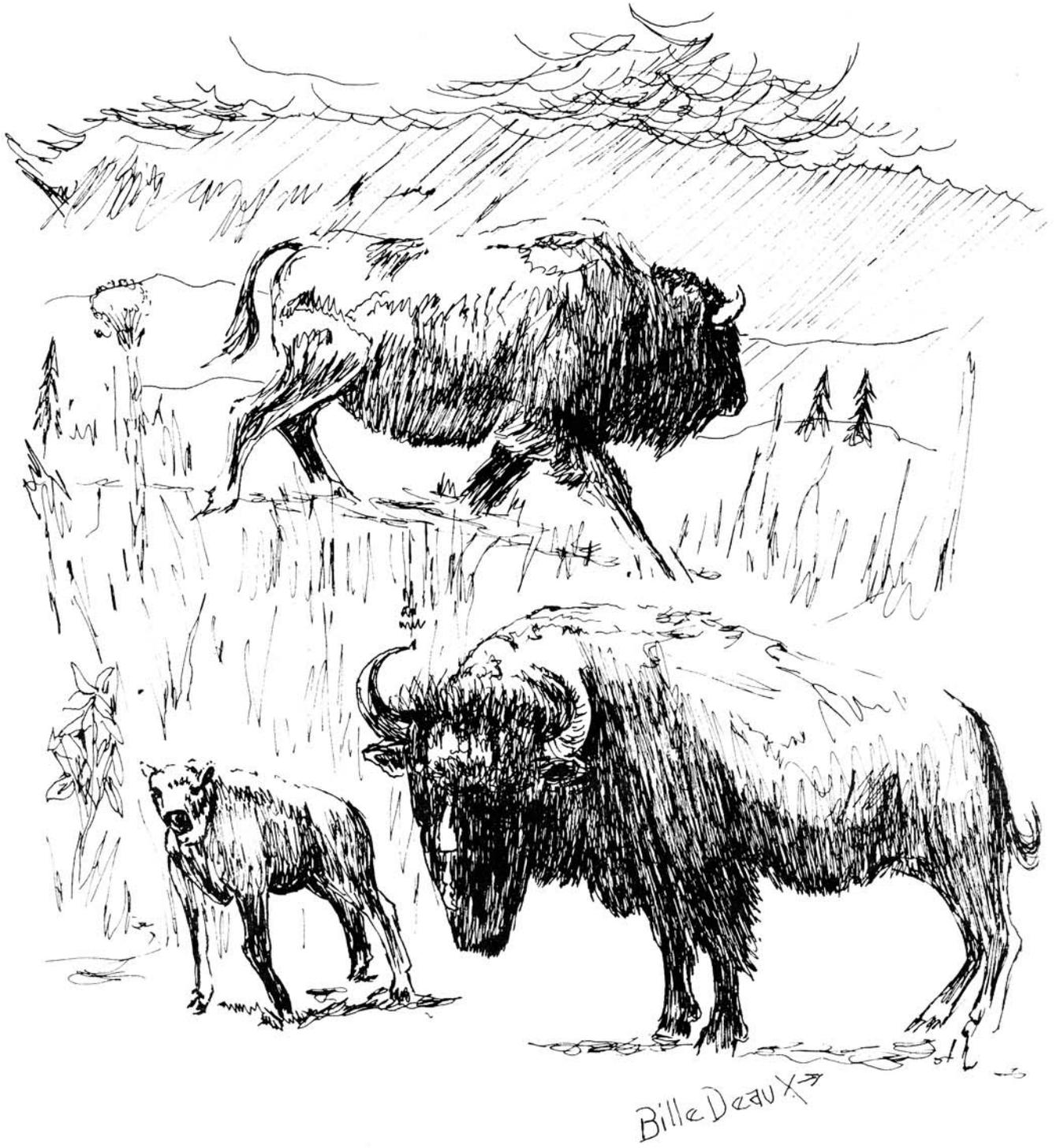
When Charles Allard died in 1896, there were 300 head of buffalo left. Since he and Michel Pablo were partners, Mr. Allard's portion of the herd was equally divided between his widow, their sons and Mr. Pablo. Mrs. Allard later sold her share of the herd (which totaled about sixty head) to Charles Conrad of Kalispell. This sale ended the Pablo-Allard herd.



The Bison Range

The idea for a Bison Range refuge originated in 1908 by the American Bison Society. In 1909 under the Dixon Act, Congress allotted 18,540 acres of reservation land to the Bison Society. This land was to be fenced off and used as a refuge for buffalo.

Later funds were given in the sum of \$40,000 and the land was officially purchased from the Tribes. Thirty-four buffalo were purchased from the Conrad estate at \$275 per head to stock the newly acquired Bison Range.



In 1933 a very rare male Albino Buffalo was born. It was the result of a breeding experiment conducted at the park. Another male was born in 1937, the off-spring of the first albino. It soon died.

The adult male survived. He lived and became the famous "Big Medicine" up to his death in 1959.

The opening of the Bison Range as a National Park kept the buffalo alive. This park gives evidence to the traditional way of life of the Flatheads and the buffalo from long before the whiteman was here.



Booklets available in the Level IV sequence are listed below. Numbers refer to the Planned Sequence of use in the *Teacher's Manual*. Materials developed by these tribes and others in the Northwest are included in the Levels I, II and III sequences.

1. *Warm Springs Animal Stories*
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
Reservation of Oregon
2. *Snail Women at Sq³a'le*
The Suquamish Tribe of the Port Madison
Reservation
3. *Blue Jay – Star Child/Basket Woman*
Muckleshoot Tribe
4. *Assiniboine Woman Making Grease*
Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation
5. *Coyote*
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
Reservation of Oregon
6. *How the Summer Season Came*
Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Belknap
Reservation
7. *Little Weasel's Dream*
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead
Reservation
8. *Fort Hall Stories*
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall
Reservation
9. *The Bear Teepee*
Northern Cheyenne Tribe
10. *Sioux Stories and Legends*
Sioux Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation
11. *Kootenai Stories*
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead
Reservation
12. *Chief Mountain's Medicine*
Gros Ventre Tribe from the Fort Belknap
Reservation
13. *Coyote the Trickster*
Burns Paiute Reservation
14. *Running Free*
Shoalwater Bay
15. *Salish Coyote Stories*
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead
Reservation
16. *Coyote and the Cowboys*
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall
Reservation
17. *Napi's Journey*
Blackfeet Tribe
18. *Warm Springs Stories*
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
Reservation of Oregon
19. *Teepee Making*
Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead
Reservation
20. *Baskets and Canoes*
Skokomish Tribe
21. *Warrior People*
Blackfeet Tribe



THE INDIAN READING SERIES:
Stories and Legends of the Northwest