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.
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.