BUFFALO OF THE FLATHEADS

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

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA: Plateau Region

STORY TYPE(S): Description of Culture

Summary:

This book describes the history of the buffalo from the time they were first seen passing through the Bitterroot Valley to the present. The remaining herds reside on the Bison Range as a national park.

During a time when buffalo were scarce, chiefs in one tribe called upon the help of a man named Grizzly Bear Tracks who conducted a dance. It was believed that certain rituals would bring the buffalo and exact procedures were observed. Spiritual ceremonies played a large part in the lives of these Indian people and they were blessed with a good hunt.

There is also a description of how each part of the buffalo was used. This shows not only how important the animal was to the way of life, but also shows how resourceful Indian people were and how little they wasted.

Picking up orphaned calves a man named Samwell Hawk established the first domesticated buffalo herd which grew in size over the years. Some of these buffalo were purchased by Charles Allard and Michael Pablo and eventually became part of the Bison refuge in the 1930's by an act of Congress.

The Buffalo of the Flatheads is an interesting story of how the Flathead herds came to be and gives some good historical information. The chapter that deals with the uses of the buffalo among the Flathead gives particular insight into the values and economy of the Plains culture, pre-contact. This story is significant to the history of many tribes of the Plains who at one time depended and flourished with aid of the buffalo and who were defeated mainly by the near extermination of this animal.

Teacher Guided Activities:

1. Have students play charades. Give students slips of paper with different animals listed or inanimate objects (toaster, egg beater, clock, etc.) and have students imitate them while others guess. You may begin by having students try to imitate the buffalo as the dancers had done for Grizzly Bear Tracks.
2. Locate all geographical sites on a map and have students trace the story as it progresses from one location to another. Label the Bitterroot Mountains, Shelby, Missoula, Skalkaho Pass, Ravalli and Kalispell.

Draw a map locating the spread of the original herd of buffalo brought back by Samwell Hawk. On a larger map, pinpoint the locations of the buffalo to provide some visualization of the spread of the herd.

3. Make a list of the uses of the buffalo. In a corresponding list ask what utensil is used today which serves the same function. Then ask students to give the different modern materials and identify from where they come.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Made From Buffalo</th>
<th>Utensil Used Today</th>
<th>Material Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rawhide bags to</td>
<td>baggies</td>
<td>plastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>store food</td>
<td>saran wrap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foil</td>
<td>metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tupperware</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cloth bags</td>
<td>cotton/nylon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hampers</td>
<td>wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>plastic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Have students write a story about what their first buffalo kill might be like or their first time butchering a buffalo.

5. The following resources will lead to interesting discussions and followup activities on the buffalo.

Films 8mm:

*Beef Butchering and Curing #274—$24.00, Thorne Films, 1229 University Ave., Boulder, Colorado 80302
Hide Preparation #276—$24.00, ibid.
Parflesche Decoration #277—$24.00, ibid.
Stone Boiling #275—$24.00, ibid.*
Films 16mm:

Tahotona, ACI Productions, 30 minutes, color, $380.00
ACI Films, Inc., 35 W. 45th St., New York, N.Y. 10036
This film shows the buffalo hunts, the ceremonial as well as the
economic importance of the buffalo to the Indians, the conflict
with settlers, exploiters, and railroad builders; and the final
near extermination of the buffalo and the defeat of the Indians.

If other skills are learned that are connected with the buffalo,
the class may want to apply this knowledge by putting on a
play or doing a documentary on video tape. Students in small
groups could decide on a theme and organize the information
they desire to share (i.e., history, dance, uses, etc.).

Sioux Legends, Nauman Films, 20 minutes, color, $260.00
This film includes a legend of how the peace pipe came to the
Sioux from a magical White Buffalo Calf Woman plus two
other legends.

Books:

The Buffalo, Haines, Francis. Crawell, 1970, $5.25

The Buffalo Book: the Full Saga of the American Animal,

Records:

Anthology of North American Indian and Eskimo Music,
Folkways Record, FE4541, $8.95, two records.

Songs and Dances of the Flathead Indians, Scholastic,
FE4445, $8.95. Includes the Jump Dance Song.

Student Activity Card(s):
See Buffalo of the Flatheads Activity Card (12A-12B).