

Buffalo Nation: American Indian Efforts to Restore the Bison. By Ken Zontek. 2007. Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE. 250 p. US\$19.95 paper. ISBN 978-0-8032-9922-1.

Over the past 125 years, Native Americans have sought to preserve the bison in Indian Country. Author Zontek believes the Native American restoration story needs telling. Zontek drove 15,000 miles through Indian Country, conducted dozens of interviews with Native North Americans and observed the Indian people interacting with bison. The author's travels and research resulted in his writing one journal article, a master's thesis, and a doctoral dissertation. His book, *Buffalo Nation*, comes from this endeavor.

As he describes Native American culture and the relationship they have with the bison, the author proposes that theirs is unprecedented human-animal behavior. After the demise of the herds, Natives did not lose their physical relationship with the bison, nor did they lose their spiritual connection. They still had access to small groups and some captive herds.

During the decade and a half from 1875 to 1890, the wild bison population teetered on the brink of extinction. Several groups established captive breeding programs that guaranteed survival of the species. One of the most influential groups was the Intertribal Bison Cooperative (ITBC), which was established as a pan-tribal organization to provide unity in the restoration efforts. Native Americans were champions in rallying against the limitations placed on the bison herd in Yellowstone National Park when government personnel shot bison if they exceeded politically imposed boundaries. Many Native Americans see these bison as symbols of themselves and take great exception to this treatment of buffalo.

In contrast to the United States' limitation on bison, Canadian First Nations Indians help manage select public herds at the Mackenzie Bison Sanctuary and Wood Buffalo National Park. These herds can move with far less restrictions than those in Yellowstone. In contrast, public management in Canada is not the same as in the United States. Canada does not yet possess a pan-Indian organization like the ITBC, which provides cohesion and guidance in bison restoration.

Author Zontek provides the reader with an account of the Native Americans' effort to repopulate the Plains with a healthy viable bison population. He has included over 30 black-and-white photos, an appendix, notes, and a list of resources.

Buffalo Nation is truly the result of the author's study and research conducted for his educational advancement. He believes the story needs to be told, and that is what he has written. The Native people have "demonstrated through their actions that they always sought a home for the buffalo to roam."

Buffalo Nation is not easy reading, but it does offer insight into the ways Native North Americans have progressed in their thrust to restore their bison.

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