

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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InterTribal Buffalo Council Ships 40 Yellowstone Buffalo to 16 Native Nations in First Transfer of Its Kind



This August, the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) will transfer 40 Yellowstone buffalo to 16 Native American Tribes in nine states in partnership with the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes. These transfers will help develop and sustain Tribally-managed buffalo herds while preserving the unique genetics and lineage of the largest and continuously free-roaming buffalo herd (also known as American or plains bison). These transfers are a victory of Native American

Tribes which represents the culmination of nearly 30 years of advocacy by ITBC (formerly the InterTribal Bison Cooperative) on behalf of its Member Tribes to prevent the needless slaughter of Yellowstone buffalo. Through the implementation of a quarantine program, buffalo are captured at the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park during the winter months. Those that test negative for the disease brucellosis may enter a quarantine protocol which varies by age and sex, and which ends with their transfer to the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes in Montana to complete post-assurance testing. After a final negative test result, they are declared brucellosis-free by the state of Montana and the US Department of Agriculture and are cleared for travel.

Yellowstone buffalo represent an important population of the National Mammal. Buffalo once numbered in the tens of millions across North America until their decimation through hunting, disease, and use as a political and military tool to subjugate Native Americans. Many Native American Tribes have been working to restore buffalo across the United States, where they now number in the tens of thousands on Tribal lands. The buffalo managed by Yellowstone National Park have never been interbred with cattle and will be used to help increase the long-term health of many populations across Tribal lands. The fight to protect Yellowstone buffalo is significant to many Native Americans who disagree with management strategies which have led to the slaughter of more than 10,000 Yellowstone buffalo since the early 1990's.

ITBC has advocated to stop the slaughter of Yellowstone buffalo since its formation in 1992, when conflict surrounding their growing population escalated between the National Park Service, the state of Montana, and the US Department of Agriculture. In 1994, ITBC presented the first quarantine proposal to Yellowstone National Park, with both the Choctaw Nation and Fort Belknap Tribes offering land and resources to support the development of quarantine facilities. Quarantine has been well-supported by the public throughout the last 25 years, but did not come to fruition until 2018, when the quarantine facility built by the Fort Peck Tribes (and funded in part by ITBC) was approved for use in post-quarantine assurance testing. ITBC commends the Fort Peck Tribes for their willingness to develop a quarantine facility and undertake assurance testing on behalf of restoration efforts for all Tribes. Since 2018, quarantine operations have saved over 200 Yellowstone buffalo from slaughter.

Ervin Carlson, ITBC's President for the past 17 years stated, "ITBC appreciates the efforts of the state of Montana in supporting quarantine operations and is deeply grateful to the US Department of Agriculture, Yellowstone National Park and to the Fort Peck Tribes for their dedicated partnership in accomplishing this mission. Finally, this moment would not be possible without our Member Tribes' years of participation, support, and tireless work to ensure that buffalo and Native people are reunited to restore their land, culture, and ancient relationship across North America."

ITBC is a federally chartered Tribal organization with a membership of 69 federally recognized Tribes from 19 states whose mission is to restore buffalo to Indian Country to preserve our historical, cultural, traditional, and spiritual relationship for future generations. To reestablish healthy buffalo populations on Tribal lands is to reestablish hope for Indian people. Returning buffalo to Tribal lands will help to heal the land, the animal, and the spirit of Indian people.