Every Buffalo Restored is an Indian Renewed:
An Analysis of Tribal Buffalo Herd Management Practices and the Indian Buffalo Management Act

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BACKGROUND

Timeline of Tribal Buffalo Restoration

- **1935** First tribal bison herds on the Crow Nation (MT) and the Oglala Lakota in Pine Ridge (SD)
- **1991** Intertribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) founded
- **1999** Significant decline in bison's value due to overproduction
- **2014** M.O.U. entered between ITBC and the Nat'l Bison Association
- **2016** "Buffalo Treaty" signed
  "National Bison Legacy Act" Passed into Law
- **2019** H.R. 5153: Indian Buffalo Management Act introduced.
- **2020** H.R. 5153 Amended & Placed on Union Calendar No. 554
- **2021** USA Beef Packing supplied 1.36 million pounds of frozen ground bison to USDA Traditional Foods program for $9.8 million

OBJECTIVE

House Resolution 5153, The Indian Buffalo Management Act (IBMA), was introduced and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources on November 18, 2019. The bill currently sits on the House of Representatives Calendar (No. 554) as of December 18, 2020[4].

IBMA seeks to establish the following:

- Create a permanent tribal buffalo management program within the Department of the Interior
- Authorize the Secretary of Interior to enter contracts, cooperative agreements or grant awards with Tribes and Tribal Organizations enacting buffalo management and restoration projects
- Allows continued access to surplus buffalo from federal lands for tribal use
- Appropriates $14,000,000 each fiscal year for grants

Aim: Survey approaches of rangeland management for tribal buffalo herds in Indian Country to understand potential risks of constraining tribal autonomy under a permanent management system.

How do buffalo management practices vary among tribal herds?

> **Upon the request of tribes, "buffalo" is distinguished from "bison" in order to designate products that were acquired from tribal sources. The [USDA] bison products are procured from animals raised for commercial production in feedlots.**
>
> – David Lulka

Rangeland Management Paradigms

	UTILITARIAN	PROTECTIONIST	ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT	*INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW**
ORIGIN	Gifford Pinchot	Ralph Waldo Emerson Henry David Thoreau John Muir	Aldo Leopold	*Ancestors*
OBJECTIVE	"Most benefit for many"	"Protect nature from humans"	"Maintaining the full suite of biodiversity"	*maintain the cohesiveness of people and place*
PERSPECTIVE	Dichotomous	Dichotomous	Holistic	*Biocultural Holism*
APPROACH	Conservation for Economic Stability	Set aside or reserving lands	Preserve Natural Processes	*TEK/IK*
EXAMPLES	Rotational Grazing	National Parks & Preserves	Fire Water Cycling	*Open/ Observatory "Management"*
COMPETITION	Livestock Grazing vs. Wildlife	Nature vs. Humans	Nature vs. Humans	*Culture vs. Capitalism*

Adapted from Fuhlenforf Et. al

**Proposed Paradigm*

METHODS

Vulnerability Assessment Survey [6]

- **Target Participants:** 69 Intertribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) Tribal Partners (*fig. 1)*
- **Vulnerability Scoping Diagram:** [6]
  - **Focus:** Dimensions of Vulnerability around exposure, sensitivity, adaptive capacity and culture (*fig. 2*)
- **Goal:**
  - ➢To determine what style or paradigm of rangeland management ITBC tribal partners follow more closely.

Fuzzy Logic [7]

- **Fuzzy Logic** enables the understanding of adaptive and holistic approaches associated with Indigenous Knowledge (IK).
  - Fuzzy Cognitive Maps
  - Fuzzy Expert Systems
- **Goal:**
  - ➢To maintain the integrity of qualitative data derived from interviews and on-site visits that also prevents the exploitation of IK through the coding of linguistic variables.

FIGURES

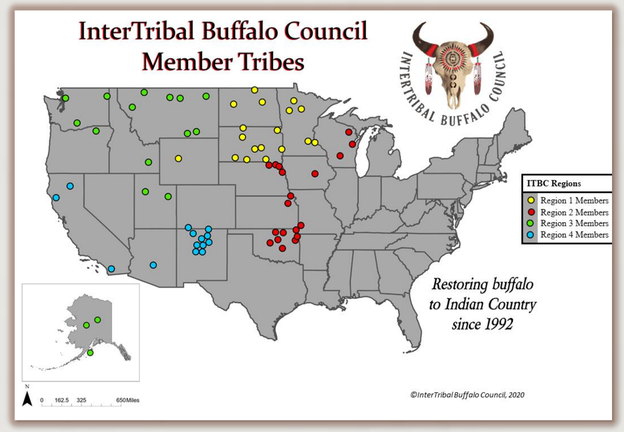

Figure 1. The Intertribal Buffalo Council, founded in 1991, partners with 69 tribal nations in four regions.

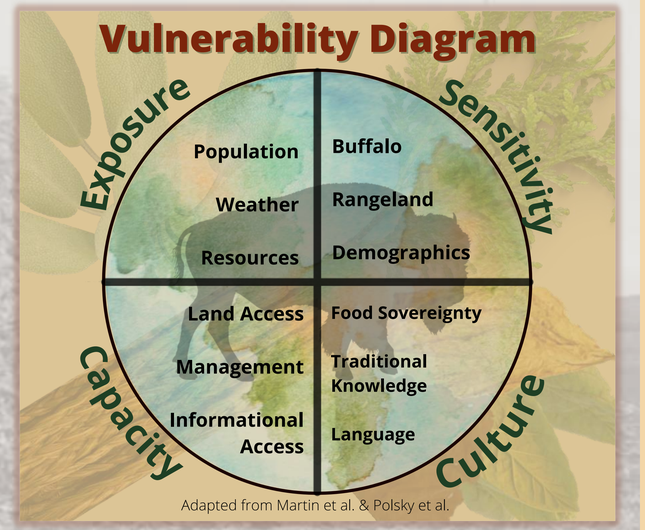

Figure 2. Adaptation of Polsky's Vulnerability Scoping Index to include an additional dimension of cultural vulnerability inclusive of tribal autonomy.

FUTURE DIRECTION

The Native Land Information System (NLIS) provides geographic information regarding topics such as soil capability, land cover and rangeland capabilities in Indian Country. Future studies could cross reference the NLIS Rangeland Analysis Platform (RAP) with mapped locations of ITBC buffalo herds. This would allow an analysis of rangeland conditions to determine management practices and best areas for future expansion.

Contact Information

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