



Knowledge Holder

This lesson was created by Lucy Grignon (Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Nation, Menominee Nation).



Materials

- Wildflower Seeds (Favorites of our Buffalo Relatives)
- Buffalo poop (Dried and ground into powder) – if available
- Water
- Compost/Soil (dark and healthy)
- Powdered Clay (binding agent)
- Book: *The Gift of the Great Buffalo* by Carole Linstrom

Standards

This lesson aligns with national frameworks in Visual Arts, Social Studies, and Environmental Science:

- Examining how treating the Buffalo as a relative challenges Western views of animals as commercial commodities.
- Learning from the matriarchal leadership and social structures of Buffalo herds.
- Engaging in hands-on habitat restoration by creating and distributing native seed bombs.
- Exploring how Indigenous organizations support modern tribal sovereignty and food security.

Menominee Medicine Buffalo

Grades 6-9

Objective

Students will get to know the Menominee Buffalo herd as our older relatives, shifting away from the Western view of animals as livestock or commercial cattle. Through close observation, youth will build a deep relationship with the herd and learn how they care for the earth.

Additionally, students will develop an active relationship with our Seed and Plant Relatives, grounding themselves in the sovereign knowledge that we are all interconnected with the natural world in countless physical and spiritual ways.

Survivance Message

The Menominee people have lived alongside and intimately connected with their Buffalo Relatives for many, many years. Our Buffalo are not commodities; they are explicitly referred to as Medicine Buffalo. We have so much to learn from them. All we must do to receive their teachings is learn through quiet observation, listen closely, and actively reconnect.

The Wisdom of the Matriarchs: Buffalo live in a beautiful matriarchal society. It is the females who guide the herd's seasonal movements, fierce protection over the littles, and lead the way across the land with gentle love, collective wisdom, and deep intention.

Buffalo as Climate Engineers: Under settler-colonialism, the mass slaughter of millions of buffalo and the introduction of industrial cattle ranching severely degraded the soil systems of Turtle Island. Cattle stay in one place and overgraze, destroying root systems, while Buffalo are migratory stewards. As we face a changing climate and longer droughts, the Buffalo are showing us how to heal the land.

Their heavy hooves break up the hard earth, making small bowls in the dirt that catch every drop of rainwater before it evaporates. At the same time, their thick fur catches native seeds and carries them across the prairie, planting them naturally. Bringing the Buffalo home isn't just about conservation, it's how we restore our traditional food systems and protect the earth.

Activities

15 Min: Feel! (Inside the Classroom) Introduce the literature and history of our more-than-human buffalo relatives.

"Gather in our community circle. We are going to investigate Indigenous children's books and educational media that center our Buffalo Relatives. Look closely at how the Buffalo moves and carries itself. In our modern world dominated by capitalism, animals are often categorized purely by their economic value as meat or livestock. But here, we look at the Buffalo as an anchor of our health and survival."



Braiding Knowledge: Curriculum Standards

This lesson is part of a broader framework that weaves together the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITECK). We teach Western science through a localized, relational lens to honor the history and sovereignty of the land and its caretakers. For a detailed breakdown of how this lesson aligns with specific NGSS benchmarks, ITECK guidelines, and UNESCO climate action goals, please visit our [story map](#).

Menominee Vocabulary

Maskīhkiw (pron. mus-key-key):
Medicine

Pesāēhkiw (pron. pe-shaeh-key):
Buffalo

Vocabulary

Wallows, compost, relatives, caretakers, matriarchal, micro-depression, migratory, commodity, intertribal, intentionality

Resources

Omāēqnomenēweqnaesen, the Menominee language, has been passed down to us for many generations. This webpage is going to be useful for those that have chosen to pursue learning our language, history, and culture. Each of these are intertwined and can not exist on their own, and especially not without you.

[Menominee Language Website](#)

Book: Our Ancestors' Kitchen by Willie Poll celebrates Indigenous harvesting, foods, and connections that build for all of our relations.

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How does shifting your mind to see the Buffalo as an older relative, a protector and a source of medicine, change your responsibility to the land?"

30 Min: Connect & Play! (Outside the Classroom) Move your students completely out of their indoor classroom for the day. Take the learning out into Creator's Classroom (the outdoors) to become active seed-dispersers alongside our Buffalo relatives.

"We are stepping outside to infuse the land with plants again and again! We are going to make Intentional Seed Bombs to mimic how the Buffalo naturally plants the prairie. Follow these protocols with a focused mind and a good heart:

1. *Offer Intentionality: Before touching the materials, look at the soil. Thank Mother Earth and say out loud your positive intentions for the seeds. You can say: 'Thank you Seed Relatives and Friends, grow big and strong, take root, you deserve to be here, welcome plant friends!' Share whatever moves you from within. Sing a traditional song if you feel it in your heart.*
2. *Mix the Relative Earth: In your large bowl or bucket, thoroughly mix together 1 cup of seeds with 5 cups of compost (including Buffalo poop) and 2–3 cups of powdered clay. You are looking for a rich, thick consistency similar to brownie batter.*
3. *Weave with Water: Slowly mix in water using your bare hands until everything completely binds and sticks together.*
4. *Shape the Future: Roll the mud and seed mixture into firm, compact balls using the palms of your hands.*
5. *Honor the Sun: Leave your finished seed balls to dry completely in a sunny spot.*
6. *The Act of Resistance: Once dry, throw them with joy onto the areas of the land you wish to see re-seeded and healed."*

Reciprocity through Stewardship

Set up a dedicated field trip day to visit the Buffalo at Medicine Fish, the sacred space where our Menominee Buffalo Relatives live and protect the land. You can also connect with a Buffalo herd restoration project in your own regional area, as many Tribes across Turtle Island are actively bringing our Buffalo relatives back to their traditional homelands.

Providing this rare opportunity for students will deepen their learning and structural understanding. Students will have the space to sit quietly with the Buffalo, listen to the wind through their fur, and observe their interactions firsthand. Visiting our Buffalo Relatives is truly life-changing.

Reciprocity means ensuring the herd thrives. To support these relational networks, students can practice an act of stewardship by monitoring the

Educator's Guide by: Pitāēpanuhkiw
Lucy Grignon

Book: *Brave Like the Buffalo* by
Melissa Allan shares an important
message that will inspire all readers to
face the storms in their life with the
help of their support systems with a
brave mindset.

Medicine Fish

InterTribal Buffalo Council

Menominee Language Learning
Website

The Menominee Nation: Stewards of
Sustainability - Come along as we
head into the forests of the first
stewards and uncover a story rooted
in the long history of sustainability.

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growth of the native plants from their seed bombs, participating in local prairie restoration projects, or fundraising to support the herd's expansive land needs. By offering our physical energy to protect the land, we feed the relatives who historically fed us.

Adaptations & Extensions

This unit can expand into advanced studies of tribal wildlife policy, soil biology, and language revitalization. To expand the conversation and spark new inquiries, teachers and youth can utilize:

- Educational Materials developed by the InterTribal Buffalo Council
Dive deep into specific behavioral inquiries: *What is Buffalo hair used for? What does it mean when a Buffalo shakes its head? How can they help plant life grow?* Answer your students' questions and spark new conversations with the educational materials.
- Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults-- Discussion Guide for Educators and Caregivers-- For the Young at Heart
Utilize the specialized educator and caregiver guides to prompt critical reflections on restoration, Indigenous engineering, and personal healing.

Take a moment to smile and know that you are making a tangible difference for the plants, the animals, the land, the ecosystem, and all living things. How does it feel in your soul to connect and reconnect?