

INCORPORATING  
**BUFFALO  
MEAT**

INTO THE SCHOOLS' LUNCH MENU

INTERTRIBAL  
— BUFFALO —



COUNCIL

SPRING 2014



**Monet Chisholm**  
Taos Pueblo Elementary

Cover Photo: Monet Chisholm, Taos Pueblo, New Mexico

## The History

The American buffalo, also known as bison, has always held great meaning for American Indian people. To Indian people, the buffalo represented their spirit and reminded them of how their lives were once lived free and in harmony with nature. In the 1800's, the white-man recognized the reliance Indian tribes had on the buffalo. Thus began the systematic destruction of the buffalo to try to subjugate the western tribal nation. The slaughter of over 60 million buffalo left only a few hundred buffalo remaining.

To reestablish healthy buffalo populations on tribal lands is to reestablish hope for Indian people. Members of the InterTribal Bison Cooperative (ITBC), now called InterTribal Buffalo Council, understood that reintroduction of the buffalo to tribal lands will help heal the spirit of both the Indian people and the buffalo. The InterTribal Buffalo Council (formerly InterTribal Bison Cooperative) was formed in 1990 to coordinate and assist tribes in returning the buffalo to Indian country. In February 1991, a meeting in the Black Hills of South Dakota, was hosted by the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. It was obvious to everyone that the ITBC organization to assist tribes with their buffalo programs, was not only desired, but also necessary. With the hard work and dedication of the Society, Congress appropriated funding for the tribal buffalo programs in June of 1991. This action offered renewed hope that the sacred relationship between the Indian people and the buffalo might not only be saved, but would, in time, flourish.

## ITBC Today

ITBC has a membership of 58 tribes in 19 states with a collective herd of over 15,000 buffalo. Membership of ITBC remains open and there is continued interest by non-member tribes in the organization. ITBC is committed to reestablishing buffalo herds on the Indian lands in a manner that promotes cultural enhancement, spiritual revitalization, ecological restoration, and economic development.

ITBC has been reorganized as a federally chartered Indian Organization under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act. This was approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2010. ITBC consists of a Membership that includes all Tribes that have joined the organization and is governed by a Board of Directors, which is comprised of five elected officers and four regional representatives.

The role of ITBC, as established by its membership, is to act as a facilitator in coordinating education and training programs, developing marketing strategies, coordinating the transfer of surplus buffalo from national parks and tribal lands, and providing technical assistance to its membership in developing sound management plans that will help each tribal herd become a successful and self-sufficient operation.



The ANA Grant is used to help decrease the health risk in our educational systems by incorporating buffalo meat into children's diets. Buffalo meat is low in fat and rich in omega 3's. This quality helps fight against cancer. This nutrient dense food is low in calories and has a greater concentration of iron and Vitamin E, which has a positive impact on helping combat diabetes, heart disease and other health issues.

The Project Director has worked with several schools over the last year to assess the feasibility of incorporating buffalo meat into their schools. This determines the supply level of buffalo that their tribe has available to process and then to identify customers' product needs (quantity, cuts, packaging, labeling, delivery time, and price points). The Project Director also prepares a feasibility study on how much buffalo meat the tribes can supply to the schools. Will the tribes be able to supply the schools a year, two years, three years, and or even 10 years from now? Our study will determine these questions.

Since the beginning, eight schools have taken the step to incorporate the meat into their lunch menu: Loneman Day School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota started before 2013; Flandreau Indian School on the Flandreau Indian Reservation, South Dakota in 2013; Four Winds School on the Spirit Lake Sioux Reservation, North Dakota in 2013; Enemy Swim School on the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Reservation, South Dakota in 2013; Lower Brule Schools on the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Reservation, South Dakota in 2014; St. Francis Indian School on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation, South Dakota in 2014; Taos Pueblo Day School of the Taos Pueblo Reservation, New Mexico in 2014; and the Circle of Nations Boarding School at Wahpeton, North Dakota in 2014.

These six schools are in the process of incorporating buffalo meat into their lunch menus: Darlington Public School on the Cheyenne and Arapaho of Oklahoma; Shoshone-Bannock Jr. /Sr. High School from Fort Hall, Idaho; and Lodge Grass High School, Plenty Coup High School, Wyola School, and the Crow Agency School, all from the Crow Tribe in Montana. The Three Affiliated Tribes in North Dakota will also be incorporating buffalo meat into their Fort Berthold Community College cafeteria.

The Intertribal Buffalo Council's ultimate goal is to help our younger generation become healthier and to incorporate buffalo meat into every school throughout the United States.



## The Sacred Food Medicine Wheel

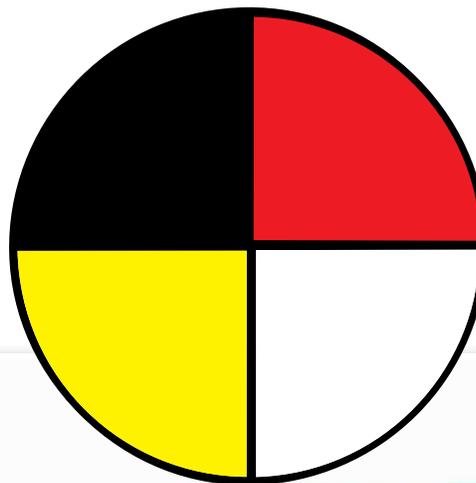
An Oglala Sioux nutritionist, Kibbe McGaa Conti, (2004) utilizes “the Sacred Medicine Wheel symbolizing the four directions, which represents the west for healthy water, the north represents lean meat such as the buffalo, in the east are fresh fruits and vegetables, and the south represents corn, beans, and potatoes.” This sacred Food Medicine Wheel (as pictured below) is a way to change the eating habits and return to eating the traditional foods, which keeps Native people healthier.

What are the changes that are being done in school systems to help improve the students’ health?

Some schools are making changes to improve the students’ health such as: diabetes education, teaching students to

grow gardens, getting the proper exercise that they need and having a healthy choice week, which involves eating buffalo meat.

Buffalo meat is low in fat and cholesterol and is compatible to the genetics of the Indian people. Buffalo meat was the main diet of the Plains Indians who never had cancer, never had heart disease or heart attacks, and lived to be 85-90.



- **Buffalo vs. Beef**
- **Potatoes vs. Potato Chips**
- **Water vs. Soda Pop**
- **Fresh Fruits and Vegetables vs. Commodities**
- **Decrease in Major Health Concerns Obesity**
- **Diabetes**
- **Cardiovascular Diseases**

-  >> *West for Water*
-  >> *East for fruit and vegetables*
-  >> *North for buffalo*
-  >> *South for corn, beans and potatoes*



## Gerianne Headrick, Flandreau Indian School

Three years ago, Flandreau Indian School in southeastern South Dakota broke the mold in school lunch programs. They began to offer buffalo in the menus that the school used. The program was initiated through a grant won by South Dakota State University.

In that first year the students were treated to buffalo, in ground or patty form, once or twice a week. Students had an option of dining on the buffalo or eating beef. Some students knew about buffalo and welcomed the buffalo dishes while others thought of it as wild game such as deer or elk. The students who were not acquainted with buffalo generally opted to go for the beef.

Staff experimented with placement of the meat in the food line, sometimes putting it first and sometimes second in the line. They observed the students and generally found that placement did not matter in the

number of students choosing the buffalo, but did note that those who wanted the buffalo, were students who had more cultural knowledge about it. Experience also showed that if the students had one on one contact with the lunch personnel and were taught that buffalo was an advantageous food when dealing with diabetes and heart disease, they started to eat the buffalo, because most of them had a close relative who was dealing with one of these conditions.

Recipes used were generally the same as for ground beef except that procedures needed to be changed just a bit. While beef may be cooked from the frozen state, it was found that buffalo is best cooked from a thawed state and at a lower temperature and for a longer

time than beef. In general, it was felt that, if not told the students would not have known that a change was made.



*Students learning to cook with buffalo.*



## Four Winds Tribal School Welcomes a Wind of Change!

InterTribal Buffalo Council Project Director, Dianne Amiotte-Seidel, works with the Administration for Native Americans Grant, which strives to bring buffalo meat back to the diets of Native American children. She taught the summer school students about the history of the buffalo within their culture by use of a buffalo box.

She told the children about the diet of our ancestors before they were confined to the reservation and about the status of their health at that time. It was a time in which our Native ancestors grew to be old with relatively good health. It was a time that people maintained a great deal of

physical activity in their daily routines. Buffalo was the main menu and eaten daily.

more hunting, there was no more work in preparation of the hides and tools made from buffalo. The people had to stay in one place on the reservation so physical activity was greatly reduced. The commodities given to Natives were high in fat, cholesterol, and carbohydrates. From that time, health among Native Americans began to deteriorate. Sickneses such as diabetes and heart disease came to our Native relatives and have steadily increased. Today we all know someone who has diabetes. Dianne told the children about having buffalo meat back in our diets and how good it is in taste and for our health. Board member, Raymond Jetty, fielded questions from the children about how buffalo live, how much they weigh, and what they eat.

The children learned that when their ancestors were confined to reservations, they no longer had access to buffalo, but instead were given beef and commodities to eat. Since there was no



*Students learning about the buffalo parts.*



The children were then invited to have a piece of buffalo jerky and to see and feel the buffalo box and its contents. The use of the bones, the hair, the tail, the bladder, and the horns were explained by Amiotte-Seidel to the children and they were given the opportunity to touch each item. To think that the children see buffalo in pastures far away and here in front of them were the things that the buffalo gives to us. The children's fingers felt the coarseness of the buffalo hair on the box and the tail. They felt the strength of the braided hair made into rope. Then they felt the strong buffalo bone and the sharpness of it. Most of the children touched the bladder that was used to carry water and wonder that such a thing was done came to their eyes. Then at the end of the table were the horn caps that had been boiled and worked into spoons and other utensils. The smoothness of the horn was hardly able to be comprehended

after feeling the coarseness, strength and texture of the other items.

Meanwhile pizza for the students and community was being created by the Four Winds School cooks. A bread dough was used and patted into pans, topped with pizza sauce, chopped zucchini squash, ground buffalo and mozzarella cheese. While some children were reluctant to try the new dish, most really enjoyed and were up for more!

Future dishes will include other ground buffalo recipes, ground patties, and stew meat for soups.

Four Winds Tribal School Superintendent, Charles Morin, and school cooks are taking a step toward bettering the health of their students by making use of their tribally raised buffalo.



*Yum! Pizza made with buffalo meat!*



# Isna Wica Owyawa - Loneman School

Students of Loneman School in Oglala, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Sioux Indian Reservation started the school year right. One of their first meals consisted of buffalo gravy and wild rice. This year, school lunches for the 205 students at the school will include buffalo meat once or twice a week. The buffalo used in the program are purchased from the tribe's buffalo herd.



Neona Yellow Horse, Head Cook

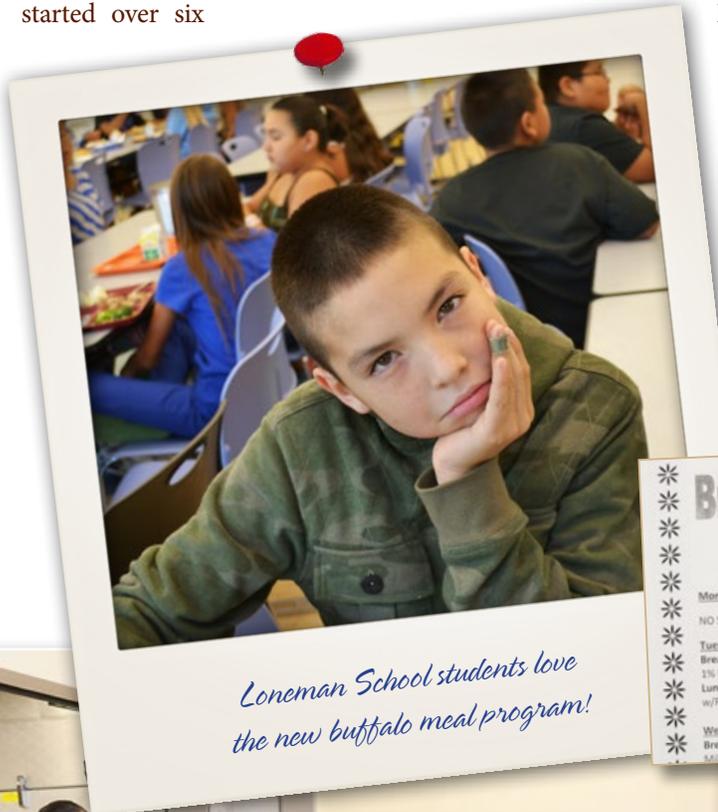
years ago. It blends well with Michelle Obama's school lunch guidelines, which the school is following. Those guidelines provide for eight to ten ounces of meat each week for the students. The school uses roast cuts, stew meat, and ground buffalo.

thanks for the sacrifice of the buffalo to take care of us and that the hunt will go in a good way. Just after the kill is made the buffalo is prayed over by the Spiritual Leader and the students. The liver is then cut from the animal and pieces are passed to everyone to be eaten. All of the students then help to skin the buffalo.

Loneman School is continuing an effort to include buffalo meat in school lunches that started over six

Ed Starr, Lakota Studies instructor, described how the students are involved on every level with the buffalo. The day before the hunt, the girls are led into a sweat lodge by Shirley Weston, while the boys are led by Ed Starr. Prayers are given in

The buffalo is processed under USDA criteria and the meat is processed into cuts used by the school. The skull and the hide are taken to taxidermy where they are processed and then returned to the school. The school now has enough hides for each classroom to begin a winter count. Pte San Win (Lakota) or "Babe" Poor Bear (English), fifth grade teacher,



*Loneman School students love the new buffalo meal program!*



* Breakfast & Lunch Menu *	
September 2-September 6	
Week 2	
Monday Sept. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	NO SCHOOL HOLIDAY (Labor Day)
Tuesday Sept. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Breakfast: <del>Whole Grain Cheerios</del> , Sausage Links, Pineapple Tidbits, Skim & 1% Milk
	Lunch: Ground Buffalo Gravy over Whole Grain Rice, Fresh Broccoli & Cauliflower w/Ranch, Mandarin Oranges, Skim & 1% Milk
Wednesday Sept. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Breakfast: Whole Grain Cheerios, Assorted Yogurt, Orange Halves, Skim & 1% Milk



will help some of the children tan a hide.

As part of the traditional teaching that Loneman School is immersed in, the students are taken on field trips to the spiritual and historical sites in the Black Hills and Badland areas. This, in addition to the student's involvement in obtaining their own food, is giving the students a basis steeped in their culture with historical and practical knowledge.

Charles Cuny Jr, new principal at Loneman Public School, is fully supportive of the buffalo meat inclusion in the lunch program and of the cultural knowledge that is being imparted to the students.



## Observing the Lower Brule Students

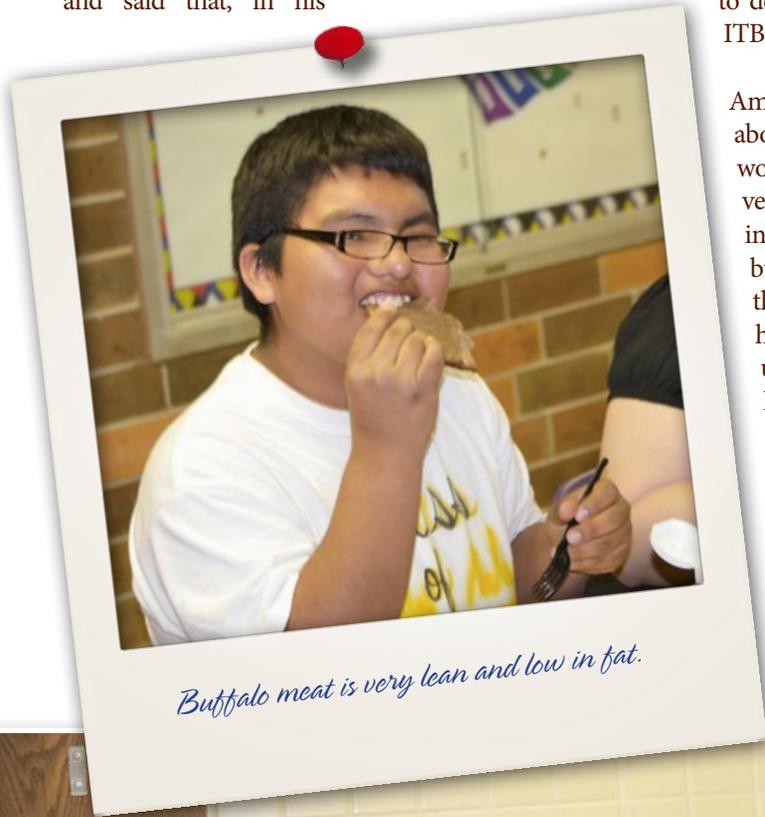
On the day that the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Project Director, Dianne Amiotte-Seidel visited Lower Brule School to observe the use of buffalo in the school lunch program, buffalo roast was being served along with mashed potatoes and corn. According to Adam, the head cook, the students really like the buffalo meat and look forward to having it in their menu. Superintendent Cody Russell agreed and said that, in his

observation, "The kids don't even notice the difference between beef and buffalo."

Karil Harmon is the administrative assistant that oversees the national school lunch program in the summer food program and told ANA Project Director, Dianne Amiotte-Seidel, that the school had recently changed their menu to include 100% buffalo meat in all of the meat offerings making it the first school under the ANA grant to do so. The school uses ITBC buffalo meat recipes.

school lunch program. This defined just one of the benefits that ITBC and the ANA grant are trying to educate people about with regard to buffalo in the diet.

The afternoon was spent having the students fill out a survey regarding their feelings about buffalo meat. Kansas and Kyal Middleton, teacher aids at Lower Brule, helped in getting the surveys out and then in the collection of them. Both aids are involved in the sports programs at the school and in helping in algebra and geometry classes.



*Buffalo meat is very lean and low in fat.*

Amiotte-Seidel was told about the school social worker who had been a vegetarian for years, but in learning about how buffalo are raised and the fact that they have no hormones or chemicals used in their raising, has come to enjoy the buffalo served in the



*Adam Cook, Cook*



*Cody Russell, Superintendent*

Those skills came in handy in the tallying of the surveys, which indicated to ITBC that the students like having the buffalo meat in their school lunch and have an appreciation about the cultural aspects of the buffalo.

Lower Brule School has moved far ahead in their buffalo meat inclusion in going 100% buffalo. It is hoped that others will be able to follow their example.



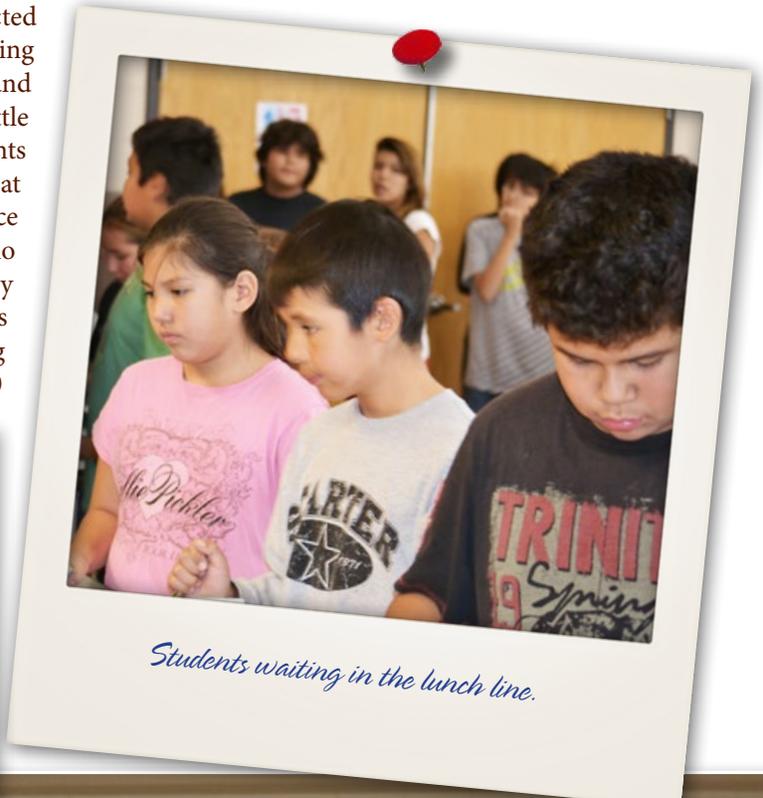
## Enemy Swim Day School

School meals just got healthier at Enemy Swim Day School thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Food Service Team, Sisseton Wahpeton Buffalo Farm and the Inter Tribal Buffalo Council! According to Barb Danley, the ESDS school food authority, buffalo was first served to students in super nachos without their knowledge, as it is the goal of the school food service to incorporate buffalo meat into the school menu in a natural transition without making it seem like a dramatic change. Buffalo meat was a regular staple of the traditional Dakota diet and placing a lot of attention and fanfare on bringing it back to daily menus can cause students to resist trying it, because it is not as widely accepted

as the more fatty beef hamburger. The collective work of the group and the culturally responsive environment at the school is changing old perceptions.

April Rouillard, a cook's assistant at ESDS, reflected that she liked cooking with the buffalo meat and "that there is very little waste from the students when the buffalo meat is used. The difference between the buffalo and beef meat is very evident as the beef has grease in it." Serving two school meals to 170

students and the adults in the learning center and FACE (Family and Child Education) takes over 100 pounds of buffalo meat and it is well received by students and adults alike. FACE adult learners reflected that they are



*Students waiting in the lunch line.*



happy to see inclusion of buffalo meat in school lunches.

Enemy Swim Day School is the smaller of two tribal schools serving Native students in the Glacial Lakes region of NE South Dakota, and is the pilot school for incorporating buffalo in school menus in the area. Justin German, Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribe's Natural Resource Director, explained that the tribe can supply the smaller school with buffalo meat to be served weekly without adversely impacting the herd.

Justin German and Cody Toutges, the Tribal Conservation Officer, were pleased to be a part of the partnership

and observe students and adult learners enjoying buffalo as part of their lunch. The SWO Buffalo Farm lies directly south of the school and the school first began trying to get buffalo on the school menu in 2011. The wellness coordinator and the school food authority worked to partner with the tribal buffalo farm who then worked with the council to bring the project from awareness to action.

The InterTribal Buffalo Council's ANA Director, Dianne Amiotte-Seidel, works with 58 tribes throughout 19 states interested in incorporating buffalo meat into their schools or tribal entities. Dianne does a feasibility study on each tribe to see if there is herd capacity

buffalo to supply the schools not just for one or two years, but as a long term goal of bringing a more healthful source of protein to food menus in educational and public settings. The InterTribal Buffalo Council also assists public programs and schools in identifying USDA certified plants, product labeling and assurance of quality standards in the slaughter and packing process. The initiative to use more buffalo in Native food systems is funded by a grant from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) and Dianne projects that in the project time frame, eight schools will be serving buffalo as a regular menu item as she currently works with six schools and this is the second project year!



Incorporating Buffalo Meat into the Schools' Lunch Menu

## The Circle of Nation Boarding School

The Circle of Nation Boarding School is located in Wahpeton, North Dakota, and is an inter-tribal off-reservation boarding school established in 1904, as a charter under the Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota Oyate and funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), takes fitness to a whole new level. The Circle of Nations School serves American Indian youth in grades 4 through 8. As of February 2014, there were 87 students from 30 different tribes that were served buffalo meat in their lunch menu. I, Dianne Amiotte-Seidel, Project Director/ Marketing Coordinator, observed the students eating spaghetti with buffalo meat in their spaghetti

sauce. I asked the students if they liked their spaghetti and 99% of the students said that they like their spaghetti and that they like buffalo meat. The head cook, Janet Danks, from the Three Affiliated Tribes has worked as a cook since 1996, and said that she learned to cook with buffalo meat by experimenting. She also stated that when she cooks with buffalo meat she noticed that there is a lot less grease compared to beef. She is really excited to have buffalo meat in their lunch program. Janet did an excellent job cooking the buffalo meat!

The cultural teacher, Jason Kingbird, stated that not only eating buffalo meat is good for the students, but learning their cultural heritage is just as important. The students learn

about their Native heritage and most of all respect. Jason also stated that he would like to see buffalo meat in every meal rather than once a week.

The mission of the Circle of Nations School is to build academic achievement and foster healthy development of the whole child in the Native American cultural environment. Circle of Nations School received a Healthier United States Schools Gold Award winner and the first Green Ribbon School in the state of North Dakota or the entire 184-unit Bureau of Indian education system. They are also a P.E.P. school!

They actively pursue Farm to School initiatives and any opportunity to promote local sustainable food systems,



*Enjoying lunch with friends.*



*Incorporating Buffalo Meat into the Schools' Lunch Menu*

environmental health and physical activity/nutritional improvement for their 100% free and reduced school lunch eligible American Indian 4-8th grade students.

Their nutrition partner, InterTribal Buffalo Council, is incorporating buffalo meat into the school lunch menu. Mission Statement: "Restoring buffalo to Indian Country, to preserve our historical,

cultural, traditional and spiritual relationships for future generations." ITBC works with 58 tribal units in 19 states, striving to re-introduce or maintain buffalo herds on tribal reservations.



*Smiling faces tell the true story!*



*Friends learn about the Buffalo Meat in Schools.*



# Taos Day School

Spirits were high on the morning of Monday, February 10th, when Dianne Amiotte-Seidel, InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) Project Director/Marketing Coordinator, and Lucy Bull Bear, ANA Administrative Assistant, journeyed to Taos, New Mexico, to observe the students at Taos Day School to eat buffalo meat for the first time. The representatives were greeted by Delbert Chisholm, buffalo manager and Region 4 Director with ITBC. Delbert has been caring for the buffalo at Taos Pueblo since 2008, which currently has 105 head of buffalo on 500 acres of land.

Delbert approached the Day School about the idea of including buffalo meat in the student's lunch, but due to lack of funding he decided to ask ITBC on

this matter. Once the new budget was available, things really started to move forward. Taos Day School is the first Southwest school to incorporate buffalo meat in their lunch. Since this was the first time students will have buffalo meat in their meal, Delbert invited tribal officials to join in on the occasion.

During the visit, Delbert shared a brief history of when the Taos Pueblo began herding the buffalo. From time immemorial Taos ancestors would go hunting in the plains area and bring buffalo back to the village. During the 1820's the first buffalo herd was acquired. Since that time the Taos Pueblo began raising buffalo. Families would take turns caring for the buffalo and

eventually War Chiefs of the tribe took over the responsibility. To this day, this is how the buffalo are monitored. The War Chiefs are selected yearly and 12 positions are held. The herd is managed by the War Chiefs and by Delbert.

The principal of Taos Day School, Patricia Kessler, oversees 160 Kindergarten through eighth grade students. The school, which has 100% enrollment of Native students, teaches the Native language and culture. There is also an after school cultural program that is available to tribal students.



Head cafeteria cook, Theresa King, and Cafeteria Assistant, Meredith Sandy, talked about a cooking summit they attend once a year, where the cooks from area schools compete. They understand that recipes are changing to more nutritious foods such as using more grain and less processed foods. With this understanding the cooks

prepared 35 pounds of ground buffalo with pasta, salad, wheat dinner roll, and Jello. Second grader, Monet Chisholm, was one of the students that were present to enjoy the new experience. She was familiar with the meat and enjoyed the meal that was presented for the day. Rosemarie Lujan, a language and culture teacher with the school, was also present. She teaches classes on the weekend to the

community. Rosemarie spoke about the significance of cooking with buffalo meat and how important it is for the culture.

The Taos Newspaper was also present to document the new experience with the students. As the students took their turns trying the new dish, the Governor and War Chiefs also assembled in the cafeteria to join in.



## St. Francis School

The St. Francis Indian School staff and students were treated to a tasty surprise on March 5, 2014. They were informed by Wayne Frederick, Rosebud Sioux Tribe's Buffalo Coordinator, and Dianne Amiotte-Seidel, InterTribal Buffalo Council's ANA Director, that they were eating buffalo meat in the soup being heartily consumed that day via the school lunch program.

According to Thetis McCloskey, Food Service Director, the students had been served buffalo meat in spaghetti, chili, sloppy joes and soup for the past month without their knowledge. No one other

than the Superintendent of the School, Richard Bad Milk, Thetis and the nine school cooks knew about the buffalo meat being substituted for beef. Kudos out to the cooks for knowing exactly how to turn the usual beef recipes into delicious buffalo dishes! When quizzed, the cooks, however, were unwilling to share their culinary secrets.

Ms. McCloskey said, "I am excited to be able to serve buffalo meat to our students for the school lunch program. I would like to eventually be able to serve buffalo

meat at least twice a week. The kids need to know their ancestry and this is a good way to bring it back."

Rosebud Sioux Tribe's buffalo herd is the school's meat source. Frederick says, "We have been able to provide enough buffalo to serve at least once a week for the rest of the school year and plans are underway for providing it for the 2014-15 school year."

When the students were told about the buffalo meat in their soup, their



*Buffalo meat tastes great and is good for me!*



*Thetis McCloskey, Food Service Director and daughter*



comments included, "I could not tell the difference," and "I had no idea it was buffalo!" Frederick said that two little girls talked about having eaten buffalo meat at ceremonies by eating bits of the liver and kidneys. When surveyed, one whole table of students all said they liked the buffalo soup. From all observations, the buffalo soup was a huge success.

One of the schools cooks, Destiny

DeCory, said, "My grandma would always cook buffalo meat. She would boil the meat first, then cook it. At that time, she got the meat from a locker in Valentine, NE, but then they quit selling it and we had to start eating beef. It was very hard to get used to the beef."

St. Francis Indian School, K-12, is located on the Rosebud Indian Reservation. It first opened its doors to educating

students in 1886 with around 40 students and currently has an enrollment of 620 students. The school is administered by Superintendent, Richard Bad Milk.

InterTribal Buffalo Council is working toward a goal of assisting all our member Tribes in providing buffalo meat to schools and other programs via an ANA grant, administered by Dianne Amiotte-Seidel.



Incorporating Buffalo Meat into the Schools' Lunch Menu

# INTERTRIBAL —BUFFALO—



# COUNCIL

ITBC invites you to contact the ANA grant Project Director, Dianne Amiotte-Seidel, with any questions, suggestions, or information that you might have regarding this project.

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