



We hope you enjoy this Nebraska Public Media Book Club Kit, inspired by Ken Burns's *The American Buffalo*.

In this guide, you will find discussion questions and additional resources related to the book *Great Plains Bison*, written by Bison rancher Dan O'Brien, with the short film *Seed Warriors*, directed by Rebekka Schlichting.

The themes of conservation, restoration and respect unite all three of these projects. What can we learn from the stories of Bison and the Pawnee seed keepers? How can conservation be practiced today?

We hope this guide will spark great discussions and inspire you to explore and discover more on these important topics.

Special thanks

We are grateful to these community partner organizations who contributed guidance and materials to this book club kit:

- [Center for Great Plains Studies](#)
- [Vision Maker Media](#)
- [University of Nebraska Press & Bison Books](#)
- [Nebraska Library Commission](#)
- [Nebraska's Regional Library Systems](#): Central Plains, Southeast, Three Rivers and Western

Prepare for your discussion

- Read *Great Plains Bison* by Dan O'Brien.
- Watch *Seed Warriors* by Rebekka Schlichting (available at NebraskaPublicMedia.org/bookclub).
- Look through the discussion questions and resources in this guide and on the book club web page.
- Find the Native American tribes in your area using the [Native Land Digital Map](#).
- Buy ingredients for the two recipes included in this guide to make for your group.

About Great Plains Bison

A project of the Center for Great Plains Studies and the School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska

Great Plains Bison traces the history and ecology of this American symbol from the origins of the great herds that once dominated the prairie to its near extinction in the late nineteenth century and the subsequent efforts to restore the Bison population.

Author

A longtime wildlife biologist and one of the most powerful literary voices on the Great Plains, **Dan O'Brien** has managed his own ethically run Buffalo ranch since 1997. Drawing on both extensive research and decades of personal experience, he details not only the natural history of the Bison but also its prominent symbolism in Native American culture and its rise as an icon of the Great Plains. *Great Plains Bison* is a tribute to the Bison's essential place at the heart of the North American prairie and its ability to inspire naturalists and wildlife advocates in the fight to preserve American biodiversity.



About Seed Warriors

Follow a group of seed keepers in their ancestral homelands of Nebraska as they seek to regain sovereignty over the food system. By reclaiming their sacred corn seeds, they work to return to the healthy, traditional lifeways of the Pawnee people. Learn more at PawneeSeed.org.

Directed by Rebekka Schlichting. Produced in collaboration with Nebraska Public Media for the *HOME GROWN: Future Visions* digital shorts series. *HOME GROWN: Future Visions* is a Co-Production of Firelight Media and the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM), with funding provided by the CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (CPB), In Association with PBS.

Deb Echo-Hawk (Pawnee)



Watch Seed Warriors
NebraskaPublicMedia.org/bookclub



**SCAN
ME**



Filmmaker

An enrolled member of the Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, **Rebekka Schlichting** joined the University of Kansas journalism faculty in Fall 2020 as an assistant professor of the practice where she teaches broadcast video journalism and documentary. Previously, Rebekka worked as an interim director and assistant director at Vision Maker Media (VMM), where she managed 30-50 documentary contracts a year, served as an executive producer for VMM films, organized and led filmmaker trainings and other professional development opportunities. In addition to teaching and filmmaking, Rebekka serves her tribe by leading arts and culture events and by building professional opportunities for Native youth in the Midwest.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Written by **Seed Warriors**
filmmaker **Rebekka Schlichting**

Use these questions to help guide
your book club discussion.



Traditions

1. What traditions have been passed down for generations in your family? What sacrifices were made, and are still made today, for those traditions?
2. What traditions are present in *Seed Warriors* and *Great Plains Bison*? (Watch the 10-minute *Seed Warriors* film at NebraskaPublicMedia.org/bookclub.)

Movements

3. The Pawnee Seed Preservation Society featured in *Seed Warriors* is part of a powerful grassroots, Indigenous-led organizing movement that has been effective throughout generations. What are some grassroots, Indigenous organizations you can find that protect Bison or other Indigenous relatives?
4. Both the film and the book connect humans to plants and animals and the land. In Lakota, "Mitákuye Oyás'íŋ," means "we are all related." What are some ways you feel connected to the land? What are some practices that help you feel close to the land?
5. The home of the Bison is the Great Plains. The home to the Pawnee is Nebraska. What do you think of when you hear the word "home," and what does it mean to you?

Challenging

6. Page 6 of *Great Plains Bison* encourages us to challenge the romantic notion that Natives used all parts of the Buffalo. What are other romantic notions associated with Bison, Native Americans and the West? How are these notions harmful in today's society?
7. *Great Plains Bison* goes into detail about the degradation of an entire ecosystem. Take a moment to reflect on some of the pain this caused. Breathe in and release it with exhale. Afterward, describe a moment where you have turned a bad situation into a good one. Discuss the idea that while it is impossible to cure the past, it is possible to move forward with intention and care.

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Challenging (Continued from page 4)

8. Native American tribes, cultures and traditions are incredibly diverse but are often generalized and depicted as monolithic. It is entirely impossible to write a book about Bison without writing about their first two-legged relatives. What is even more impossible is to go into detail about each tribe's interactions with Bison and their own social structures in a 100-page book. Many tribes and family units were matriarchal, many had warriors and hunters that were women, and many tribes do take great care of their Bison today.

What does *Great Plains Bison* say about Native Americans in the modern day? In what ways are these generalizations? Where do you see generalization of Native American cultures in other media? How can you learn more about the diversity of Indigenous cultures?

9. Before your discussion, research how many Native American tribes exist today, both federally recognized and non-recognized. Take a moment to become familiar with a few tribes in a modern sense, especially those in your region. What programs do they offer their people, animals and lands? How do tribes use social media?
10. On page 96 of *Great Plains Bison*, during the conversation between the author and his cousin, there is an epiphany moment when his cousin says, "There are no needs except human needs." What were your personal takeaways from this moment?
11. The final chapter of *Great Plains Bison* calls out limitations and hesitations of human progress in reconciling with Bison. In an ideal world, what would true reconciliation, respect and balance with Buffalo look like?

Connections

13. What connections are there between *Great Plains Bison* and *Seed Warriors* in thinking about our relationship to the natural world? And what are differences?
14. Who would you recommend the book and/or film to and why?

Note: "Bison" and "Buffalo" are capitalized in this guide. Dan O'Brien notes in his introduction to *Great Plains Bison* that "our neighbors, the Lakota people, consider buffalo a nation in themselves," so we honor that distinction.

Get Involved

Explore more about the stories and issues raised by *The American Buffalo*, *Great Plains Bison* and *Seed Warriors* by visiting these organizations:

- [Pawnee Seed Preservation Society](http://PawneeSeed.org)
PawneeSeed.org
- [Sacred Seed](http://SacredSeed.org)
SacredSeed.org
- [InterTribal Buffalo Council](http://ITBCBuffaloNation.org)
ITBCBuffaloNation.org
- [Center for Great Plains Studies](http://UNL.edu/plains)
UNL.edu/plains
- [Vision Maker Media](http://VisionMakerMedia.org)
VisionMakerMedia.org
- [Crane Trust](http://CraneTrust.org)
CraneTrust.org
- [American Prairie](http://AmericanPrairie.org)
AmericanPrairie.org
- [World Wildlife Fund Northern Great Plains](http://WorldWildlife.org/places/northern-great-plains)
WorldWildlife.org/places/northern-great-plains

Additional Reading

Here are additional book recommendations from our partners for further exploration:

- Dayton Duncan. *Blood Memory: The Tragic Decline and Improbable Resurrection of the American Buffalo* (Knopf 2023)
- Dan Flores. *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains* (University Press of Kansas 2016)
- Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed Editions 2015) *2023 Omaha Reads Selection
- Rosalyn LaPier (Blackfeet). *Invisible Reality: Storytellers, Storytakers, and the Supernatural World of the Blackfeet* (University of Nebraska Press 2017)
- Devon A. Mihesuah (Choctaw) & Elizabeth Hoover (Eds.). *Indigenous Food Sovereignty in the United States: Restoring Cultural Knowledge, Protecting Environments, and Regaining Health* (University of Oklahoma Press 2019)



Warrior's Palate Catering Recipes



Chef Anthony Warrior

Chef Anthony Warrior (Ma-te-yi-ma-pe-to, Sicangu-Bad Nations and Absentee Shawnee Mvskoke Creek), is a celebrated chef and owner of Warrior's Palate Catering and Consultation. Anthony's mission is to educate and promote Native American food revitalization and traditional foodways with Native American communities.

BISON MEATLOAF

Serves 8



Ingredients

2 pounds ground Bison
1/4 white onion, finely diced
1/4 red or green bell pepper, finely diced
1 cup oatmeal flour (rolled oats in a blender)
1 large egg
1 cup milk
2 Tbsp poultry seasoning
Salt and pepper
**Optional | Topping of your choice
Cranberry and maple syrup are Chef Anthony Warrior's Favorites.

Directions

1. Heat oven to 325°F.
2. In a small bowl, add the egg, milk, and oatmeal flour.
3. In another bowl, mix together ground Bison, onion, bell pepper, and poultry seasoning.
4. Add egg, milk, and flour mixture to ground Bison mixture. Salt and pepper to desired amounts. Allow this mixture to sit for 1 hour.
5. Line a 9x9 baking dish with parchment paper and press in Bison mixture. Or form a loaf and place in pan (if you prefer).
6. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the internal temperature hits 145°F.
7. Top with your choice of sauce and turn the oven to broil. Return the dish to the oven to set the sauce.
8. Remove the meatloaf from the oven and let set for 15 minutes before serving.

WILDBERRY DUMPLINGS

Serves 8



Ingredients

2 cups masa flour
2 cups frozen mixed berries
1 14 oz can of cranberry sauce
3 quarts of water
1 pound frozen mixed berries
**Optional | Cinnamon & dried berries

Directions

1. In a 1-gallon stock pot, combine water and cranberry sauce, heating on medium-high heat until it begins to bubble.
2. In a large mixing bowl, add the masa flour, slowly mixing in 1 cup of the hot cooking broth until a dough begins to form.
3. Add 2 cups of thawed frozen berries to the dough. Add additional masa flour if the dough becomes too wet.
4. Once the dough is of a playdough consistency, let it rest for 30 minutes.
5. Form the dough into ping pong ball-sized dumplings and drop into simmering water-cranberry sauce mixture. DO NOT BOIL.
6. Cook for 20-30 minutes.
7. Remove from heat and add one pound of frozen mixed berries to create sauce.
8. Sprinkle with cinnamon to taste. Serve warm or chilled.

About *The American Buffalo*

The dramatic story of how America's national mammal, once numbering in the tens of millions and sustaining the Native people of the Great Plains for untold generations, was driven to the brink of extinction. But then an unlikely collection of people rescues it from disappearing forever. Ken Burns recounts the tragic collision of two opposing views of the natural world—and the unforgettable characters who pointed the nation in a different direction.

Directed by Ken Burns, the series was written by Dayton Duncan, who is also the author of the companion book, *Blood Memory: The Tragic Decline and Improbable Resurrection of the American Buffalo*, to be published by Knopf. It was produced by Burns's longtime colleague

Julie Dunfey. Julianna Brannum, a member of the Quahada band of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, served as consulting producer.

W. Richard West, Jr., a Southern Cheyenne and founding director and director emeritus of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, was the senior advisor.

**LEARN
MORE AND
WATCH**

[PBS.org/americanbuffalo](https://pbs.org/americanbuffalo)



Artwork from an original illustration
by John Isaiah Pepion (Blackfeet)

Homecoming by Julianna Brannum

**A short documentary film to accompany
Ken Burns's *The American Buffalo***

Homecoming follows Jason Baldes, an Eastern Shoshone and a member of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, as he leads historic transfers of Bison to Indigenous communities which will maintain their herds to supply a healthy food source and cultural touchstone for their tribal citizens. The film explores what living among the Bison once again means for Native people—today and for future generations.



Ken Burns and Julianna Brannum (Comanche)

Corporate funding for THE AMERICAN BUFFALO was provided by Bank of America. Major funding was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and by The Better Angels Society and its following members: Margaret A. Cargill Foundation fund at the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation; Diane and Hal Brierley; The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment; John and Catherine Debs; Kissick Family Foundation; Fred and Donna Seigel; Jacqueline Mars; John and Leslie McQuown; and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Tudor Jones. Funding was also provided by The Volgenau Foundation.