

# People of the Plains

- The **Peoples of the Plains** included a huge group of North American First Nations peoples who lived on the Interior Plains.
- These are the First Nations peoples most commonly portrayed by Hollywood producers
- They lived in Teepees and hunted the buffalo
- They wore interesting head dresses and moccasins.



# People of the Plains

- The Peoples of the Plains included the following tribes:
- Sarcee
- Blackfoot
- Cree
- Assinboin
- Ojibwa
- Gros Ventre



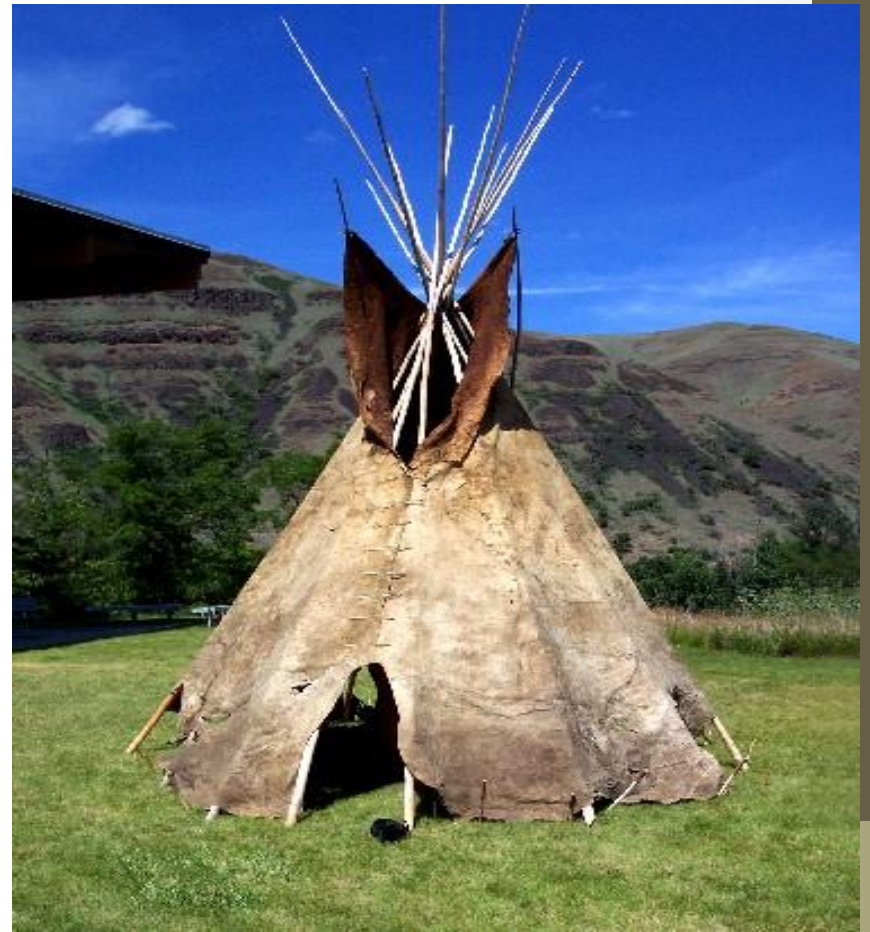
# Buffalo or Bison

- The Peoples of the Plains depended primarily for their survival upon the **Buffalo** or **Bison**, the largest land mammal in North America
- The buffalo is up to 3.5 meters in length and 2 meters in height and can weigh up to 2000 pounds
- Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, there may have been as many as **40 million** buffalo on the plains



# Uses of the Buffalo

- The Peoples of the Plains used every part of the Buffalo – nothing was wasted
- The **hide** was for clothing and tipi coverings
- **Meat** for food
- **Bones** for tools weapons and utensils
- **Intestines** for cords and bow strings



**HIDE (without hair)**  
tipi covers, clothing  
parfleches (saddle bags)  
shields, containers, rattles

**HIDE (with hair)**  
warm winter clothing  
floor covering, moccasins,  
blankets

**HAIR**  
stuffing for balls  
and baby cradles;  
paint brushes,  
ropes, shields,  
saddles

**FAT**  
mixed with powdered meat  
to make pemmican

**HORNS** headdress, container,  
club, cups, spoons

**RIBS**  
arrow shafts  
runners for sleds

**MEAT**  
boiled  
roasted  
dried

**BRAINS**  
for preparing the hides

**TAIL**  
fly swatter

**BLADDER**  
waterproof  
bag

**STOMACH**  
food  
cooking pot  
water container

**SKULL**  
used for religious  
ceremonies

**BONES**  
for tools like  
scrapers, knives,  
awls for sewing  
for hoes

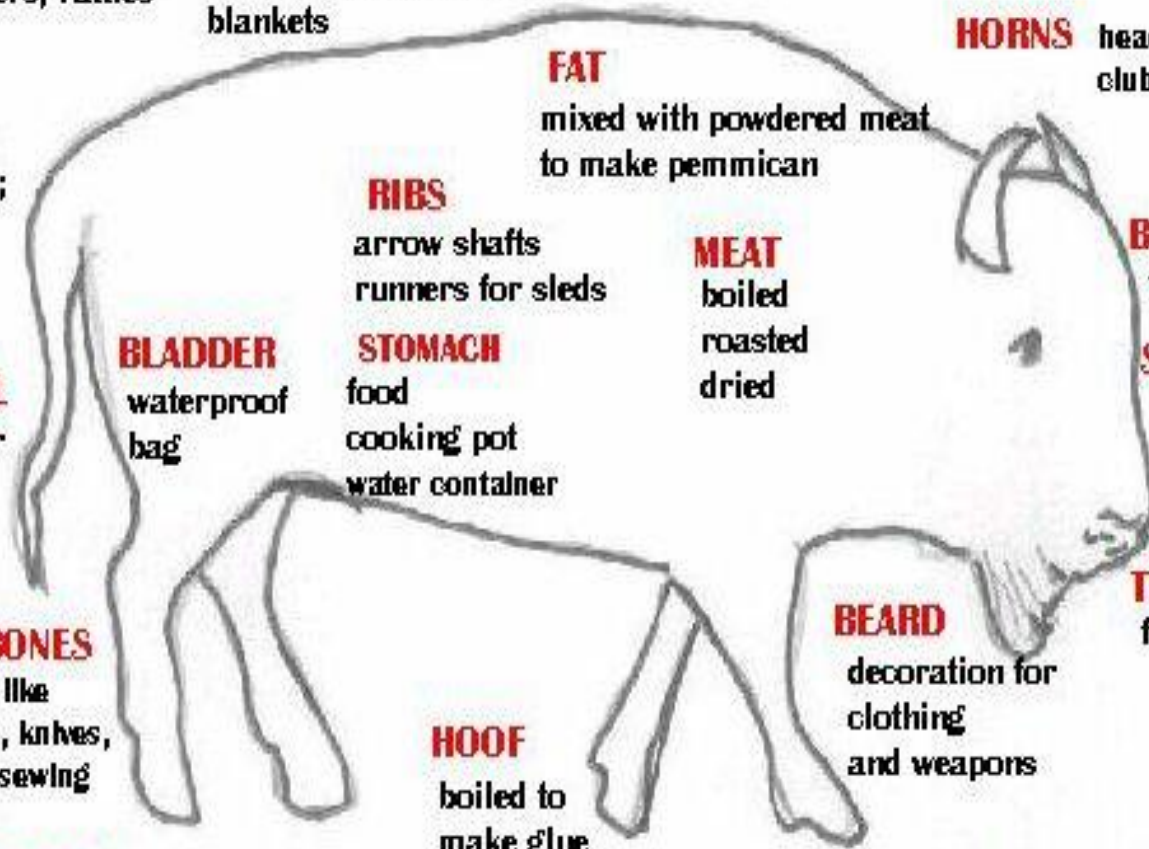
**BEARD**  
decoration for  
clothing  
and weapons

**TEETH**  
for necklaces

**HOOF**  
boiled to  
make glue

**SINEWS (muscles)**  
laces, thread, bowstrings

**DUNG (manure)**  
fuel for the campfire  
smoke signals



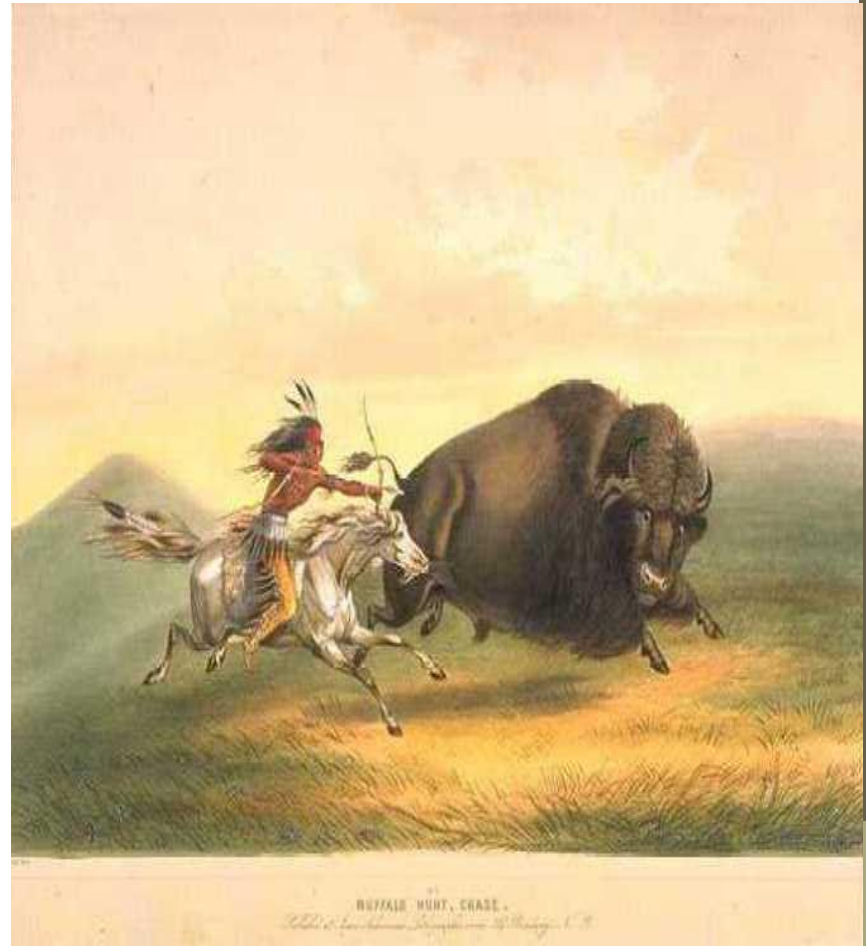
# Pemmican



- To ensure a winter supply of food the Plains peoples created what is probably the world's first example of trail mix called **Pemmican**
- The three main ingredients were: ground-up buffalo meat, lard, and dried berries
- Pemmican was one of the keys to survival for these people over the long winter months

# The Hunt

- The Buffalo hunt was the most important event in the lives of the Plains Peoples
- Buffalo are placid, but very unpredictable
- They will stampede without warning
- The Herds would consist of tens of thousands of buffalo
- At least 50 to 100 people were needed to conduct a hunt
- A **funnel like trap** was constructed to capture the buffalo
- Braves on horse back would chase the herd into the funnel
- The elderly and children would hide behind blinds and direct the herd into the funnel
- The funnel would end in a fenced off **pen or pound** or could end in a **steep cliff**
- Once cornered the buffalo would be killed with bows and arrows and then processed







# Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump



# Life Style

- The Peoples of the Plains were nomadic
- In the winter months they would move to the sheltered foothills of the Rocky Mountains
- In the Spring they would move back on to buffalo rich prairies



# Tipi

- The Plains Peoples lived in **Tipis**, which are cone shaped structures
- The frame consisted of large and small birch poles
- Sewn together buffalo hides would be draped over it
- There would be a flap for entry and a hole at the top to allow smoke from a hearth to escape
- It was perfect for their nomadic existence
- When the buffalo arrived they could quickly dismantle their homes and go in pursuit of their livelihood



# Sun Dance

- One of the more interesting events in their lives was the “Sun Dance” or more appropriately called the “Thirsting Dance”
- It would be held in the summer and sponsored by some important chief or personage
- A large lodge would be built with a tall cotton wood center pole that would be decorated with ritual objects: buffalo skulls, eagle feathers, etc.
- It involved fasting, dancing, and chanting over days
- People would dance on the spot for hours without water, staring at the center pole
- Not surprisingly people experience visions because of this



# Rite of Passage

- Sun Dance also included a ceremonial **rite of passage from boyhood to manhood**
- The boy's chests would be pierced with skewers of bone
- At the end of a long dance, the boy would lean back and the bones would be ripped out of his chest
- The bigger the scar the higher the esteem

