

CHAPTER 13

BUFFALO GENOCIDE IN NINETEENTH- CENTURY NORTH AMERICA

“Kill, Skin, and Sell”

Tasha Hubbard

The Buffalo are very numerous on the ne side the Red Deers river & near . . . the ground is entirely covered by them & appears quite black. I never saw such amazing numbers together before. I am sure there was some millions in sight as no ground could be seen for them in that complete semicircle & extending at least 10 miles.

—Peter Fidler (1792), quoted in Brink,
Imagining Head-Smashed-In

Peter Fidler and other eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Euro-Western observers could not help but be overwhelmed by the numbers of buffalo on the Great Plains. Scholars debate the exact number of buffalo that ranged from what is now central Saskatchewan and Alberta down to Mexico, but a generally accepted number falls between 30 and 60 million. Their sheer numbers made them a keystone species, influencing almost every other living being that inhabited the Plains, humans included. Winona Laduke (1999: 143) explains their impact in the following way: “Buffalo determine landscape. By their sheer numbers, weight, and behavior, they cultivated the prairie, which is the single largest ecosystem in North America.”

When Euro-Westerners began to eye the Great Plains as part of the imperialist project, they identified two major obstacles to claiming the land: Indigenous peoples and the buffalo. Through philosophers and thinkers of the day the foundation was laid for colonial genocide, couched in the language of progress. Charles Lyell, one of Darwin’s mentors, said the following in *Principles of Geology*: “We human beings . . . have no reason to feel guilty

because our progress exterminates animals and plants. In our defense, we can state that when we conquer the earth and defend our occupations by force, we are only doing what all species in nature do" (quoted in Lindqvist 1992: 117). By positioning extermination of entire species as a "natural" process, Lyell and his followers were able to mitigate their guilt. After all, why say one does not have to feel guilty, unless one is guilty?

Following Lyell, Herbert Spencer, in his 1850 treatise, *Social Statistics*, says that imperialism is "the great scheme of perfect happiness" and the Indigenous peoples were obstacles to achieving said happiness. Thus "be he human or be he brute—the hindrance must be got rid of" (quoted in Lindqvist 1992: 8). Spencer is equating Indigenous peoples with animals in an attempt to relegate them to the status of "savage" in the colonial mind, thereby absolving the perpetrators of the colonial project. For Spencer, "savagery itself was often, by definition, a sufficient explanation for the extinction of some, if not all, savage races" (Brantlinger 2003: 18). The explanation is easily transformed into justification of action toward that end.

In the language of imperialism, Indigenous peoples and buffalo became conflated, both categorized as brutes that needed to be erased. Colonel Nelson A. Miles wrote the following of the buffalo slaughter: "This might seem like cruelty and wasteful extravagance but the buffalo, like the Indian, stood in the way of civilization and in the path of progress" (quoted in Smits 1994: 333). Savagery, represented by the Indian and the buffalo, must give way to civilization, represented by the Euro-Western man and his agrarian ideal. Daniel Heath Justice (2010: 66) posits that erasure "provides the philosophical and legal justification for land and resource theft, cultural and spiritual appropriation, subversion of social and political sovereignty, degradation, dehumanization, abuse, misrecognition, and slaughter." A few of the authors in this collection have outlined the physical genocide of Indigenous peoples in the Americas, but it is the specific act of slaughter that I grapple with in this chapter. I wish to make the argument that the slaughter of the buffalo constitutes an act of genocide.

Obviously the loss of the buffalo was catastrophic for Plains Indigenous peoples and, alongside actual massacres of Indigenous peoples, is often characterized as part of the colonial genocide of Indigenous people: "Starvation tactics, the destruction of homes and shelters during the freezing winter, and the killing of horses and buffalo herds ensured the submission or deportation of the survivors of the various tribes" (Travis 2010: 129). By removing the means of survival, the perpetrators of genocide succeed in removing Indigenous peoples. Raphael Lemkin agreed, including Indigenous experience in the Americas as part of his writings on genocide, arguing, "Colonial

genocide involved the destruction of the foundations of the collective life of hunter-gatherers and their subsequent extermination" (quoted in Breen 2011: 73). In other words, destroy the buffalo, and one destroys the foundation of Plains Indigenous collectivity and their very lives.

I do not disagree with this idea. My traditional teachers describe the loss of the buffalo as the second major wave of trauma for Plains Indigenous peoples (epidemic disease is the first). Many people starved to death after the herds were extinguished. However, I endeavor to apply the concept of genocide to the buffalo slaughter of the late nineteenth century within an Indigenous epistemological framework, while not excluding the impact of the near-extinction of the buffalo on the Indigenous peoples and the land itself.

Solidifying a definition of genocide is the subject of numerous scholarly and ideological positions. Christopher Powell (2007: 530) reminds us of the following: "Different definitions of 'genocide,' different conceptions of what 'genos' could refer to, presume different theories about the nature of social life." An Indigenous paradigm expands the conception of *people* to include other-than-human animals. George Tinker (1996: 165), an Osage theologian, explains this: "In one of the polyvalent layers of meaning, those four directions hold together in the same egalitarian balance the four nations of two-leggeds, four-leggeds, wingeds, and living-moving things. In this rendition human beings lose their status of 'primacy' and 'dominion.' Implicitly and explicitly American Indians are driven by their culture and spirituality to recognize the personhood of all 'things' in creation." In other words, being "a people" is not a domain exclusive to humans. Animals-as-people is found throughout Indigenous epistemologies. Linda Hogan (1998: 12), in her essay "First People," echoes Tinker's statement: "For us, the animals are understood to be our equals. They are still our teachers. They are our helpers and healers. They have been our guardians and we have been theirs."

For some Plains Indigenous peoples, buffalo are known as the first people. Arvol Looking Horse, keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf pipe, explains this to Laduke (1999: 162): "With the teaching of our way of life from the time of being, the First People were the Buffalo people, our ancestors which came from the sacred Black Hills, the heart of everything that is." My own teachings tell me that the buffalo people take care of us and teach us how to live, much like a benevolent grandparent.

Many Euro-Western viewpoints disregard this knowledge or relegate it to the category of folk tales. However, Griffan Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010: 11), in their *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, remind us that colonial domination over Indigenous peoples "was effected over the ensuing centuries through environmental—and hence

cultural—derangement on a vast scale, such destructive changes were premised on *ontological* and *epistemological* differences between European and Indian ideas of human and animal being-in-the-world.” According to Indigenous ways of knowing, humans do not hold exclusive title to personhood, and therefore neither to genocide.¹

Specific genocidal practices and their theoretical underpinnings can be applied to the buffalo slaughter. As Andrew Woolford reminds us in this volume, “Study of colonial genocide should help decolonize genocide studies by challenging Eurocentric biases within the field.” I maintain that this entails, among other things, challenging human-centric and territorially shallow conceptualizations of group life. It is specifically the “human-centric” bias that I wish to dispute by arguing that Euro-Western governments and their representatives undertook buffalo genocide in order to consolidate political power in the Great Plains.

Recent research on the late nineteenth-century western United States draws a firmer line between the army and the slaughter of the buffalo. Sarah Carter (1999: 96) explains this recent development in scholarship, which suggests that the army’s involvement in the buffalo extermination was part “of a well-calculated policy to subdue Native Americans and drive them onto reserves . . . by employing and providing assistance to non-Aboriginal buffalo hunters, by routinely sponsoring and outfitting civilian hunting expeditions that slaughtered on a massive scale, and by encouraging troops to kill large numbers of buffalo using artillery and cannon.” The army, representing the colonial U.S. interest in erasing buffalo in order to clear Indigenous peoples from the land, engaged in the genocidal process through policy and action, and at the same time “allowed,” according to Israel Charny’s (1994) definition, genocide to happen by encouraging civilian sport hunters and hide hunters to indiscriminately slaughter the buffalo.

David Smits (1994: 333), in his article “The Frontier Army and the Destruction of the Buffalo: 1865–1883,” not only outlines the details of the slaughter but posits that the slaughter was unwritten official army policy, whereby “the decree had gone forth that they must both give way,” referring to Indigenous peoples and the buffalo. This includes orders from General Phillip Sheridan, appointed in 1867 to lead the U.S. military during the Indian Wars, the campaign to pacify Indigenous Nations in the west. Because of Sheridan’s past practice of issuing kill orders without written documentation, Smits says, “it is probable that Sheridan deliberately refused to issue the relevant written orders knowing that orally conveyed orders could be more easily concealed or more plausibly denied. . . . Why subject himself and the army to avoidable Indian enmity and humanitarian disapproval?” (333).

Sheridan can be understood as one of the engineers of buffalo genocide. His biographer refers to his "pragmatism and elastic ethics," which made him "the perfect frontier soldier" (Hutton 2009: 180). Thus, willing to undertake gruesome tasks in order to fulfill his frontier goals, "Sheridan authorized an conscious extermination of the remaining bison (and, where appropriate, horses too) to starve intractable tribes into submission" (Levene 2005: 96). Sheridan and other military leaders fostered an atmosphere in which killing buffalo was a patriotic practice. When one officer admitted that he had indiscriminately killed buffalo while out on a hunting party, his superior responded, "Kill every buffalo you can! Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone" (quoted in Smits 1994: 328). The infamous 7th Cavalry general George Armstrong Custer is known to have used buffalo as target practice for his new recruits.

Much has been written about the period in U.S. history known as the Indian Wars and its inclusion within the category of genocide. However, there were periods when the army was hampered in its efforts for various reasons. Smits (1994: 318) elaborates:

Frustrated bluecoats, unable to deliver a punishing blow to the so-called "Hostiles," unless they were immobilized in their winter camps, could, however, strike at a more accessible target, namely, the buffalo. That tactic also made curious sense, for in soldiers' minds the buffalo and the Plains Indian were virtually inseparable. When Captain Robert G. Carter of the Fourth Cavalry referred to the "nomadic red Indian and his migratory companion, the bison," he linked the two together in a manner typical of military men. Soldiers who associated the buffalo with the Indian so inseparably could even occasionally pretend that slaughtering buffalo was actually killing Indians.

Again Custer provides the best example of this, as he is known to have described the tactics of a buffalo hunt in the same terms as a military action against Indigenous peoples.

There was also collusion between official U.S. government representatives and the army to decimate buffalo in order to decimate Indigenous peoples. In the Fort Laramie Treaty the "government agreed to abandon the Bozeman Trail and its guardian forts and to look upon the Powder River country as 'unceded Indian territory' in which the Sioux might continue to roam" (Utley and Washburn 2002: 233). However, wording was included in the treaty to ensure the right to this territory existed only "so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase" (Rinella 2008: 81). As soon as the treaty was concluded, the military looked the other way as the hide hunters went in and began slaughtering buffalo. With their food sources

depleted, the Lakota were forced to ask for provisions, suggesting the buffalo numbers no longer justified the chase. "That effectively undid the treaty and opened the door for more hide hunters to go down there with military protection and kill whatever buffalo were left" (81).

Collusion between the army and the government had a third party with which to enact buffalo genocide: hide hunters themselves. Records exist of a speech Sheridan delivered before the Texas legislature, which was contemplating a bill to protect the buffalo in 1875: "[The buffalo hunters] have done in the last two years and will do more in the next year to settle the vexed Indian question, than the entire regular army has done in the last thirty years. They are destroying the Indian's commissary, and it is a well-known fact that an army losing its base of supplies is placed at a great disadvantage. Send them powder and lead, if you will; for the sake of a lasting peace, let them kill, skin, and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated" (quoted in Dary 1989: 129). The words "kill, skin, and sell" are an appropriate mantra for the hide hunters, whose efforts had begun in earnest in 1871. According to William Hornaday (2002: 494), a former hunter turned conservationist, "The buffalo country fairly swarmed with hunters, each party putting forth its utmost efforts to destroy more buffaloes than its rivals." While buffalo had been hunted in significant numbers prior to 1871, what focused the efforts was the development of an industrial tanning process in that year. "Buffalo leather suddenly became part of the world economy, prized for machinery belts and army boots. The United States government realized it could subdue the Plains tribes by letting freelance hunters (many of whom were Civil War veterans) kill off their food supply" (Wright 2008: 164). Ironically the genocide of the buffalo and the subsequent use of their hides became fuel for the overall genocidal project of colonizing the entire western territory.

The numbers are stunning: "Colonel Dodge once counted one hundred and twelve carcasses of buffalo 'inside a semicircle of 200 yards radius, all of which were killed by the one man from the same spot, and in less than three-quarters of an hour'" (Hornaday 2002: 469-70). Dodge went on to describe the slaughter: "Where there were myriads of buffalo the year before, there were now myriads of carcasses. The air was foul with a sickening stench, and the vast plain, which only a short twelvemonth before teemed with animal life, was a dead, solitary, putrid desert" (quoted in Smits 1994: 327). By 1883 the buffalo were effectively removed from the Great Plains, relegated to remnant herds of orphan calves, a few animals in captivity, and a refugee herd in Yellowstone. Estimates put their numbers as low as a few hundred animals by 1889.

Patrick Wolfe's (2006: 387) discussion about the "logic of elimination"

and the ways “settler colonialism destroys to replace” is especially relevant for this period. The buffalo were now essentially destroyed, facilitated in part by their replacement with cattle: “Only the smaller northern herd [of buffalo] remained by 1879. Its destruction by 1883 resulted from a combination of hide-market (and ‘sport’) hunting, drought, and the arrival of nearly a half million head of cattle in Wyoming alone, whose appetite for grass and water competed with that of the diminishing bison” (Magoc 2006: 92). In fact, as Andrew Isenberg (2000: 130) observes, “the belief that domestic livestock were destined to replace the bison sustained the hide hunter’s destructive harvest.” Remove the existing species and replace it with one of European origins in order to solidify ownership of the land.

I should pause here to note that there is considerable dissent about the primary cause of the buffalo’s near extinction. There are those, including Shepherd Krech (1999), Dan Flores (2001), and even Andrew Isenberg (2000), who posit that Indigenous peoples share equal (or more) responsibility for the destruction of the buffalo herds, thereby minimizing the actions of the government, the army, and hide hunters. The most commonly cited example is Indigenous overhunting by the use of buffalo pounds or Indigenous participation in the hide trade. There is some good Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) scholarship about the breakdown of the intricate relationship between the buffalo and Indigenous people due to colonization and some accounts of over-hunting as part of participation in the hide trade.² However, the evidence of Euro-Western culpability is overwhelming: “Still, even with some profligate hunting, estimates are that all Indian tribes on the Great Plains killed no more than half a million bison annually” (Magoc 2006: 90).

Furthermore Krech, Flores, and Isenberg rely on such evidence as comparing cattle’s impact on the land in 1910 to buffalo’s use of the land over millenium, manipulate numbers of the buffalo to minimize the destruction, and conflate European and Indigenous peoples’ actions, such as in the following passage from Isenberg (2000: 197): “From the perspective of the bison, there were striking similarities between the nomads and the Euroamericans. Both were newcomers to the plains in the eighteenth century. Both employed new technologies and adopted new modes of production to hunt the bison. Both sacrificed bison to meet social demands of integration, prestige, or conquest. Both increasingly adapted to capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the end, that adaptation was fatal to millions of bison.” This statement not only fails to take into account the oral history of Indigenous existence and interrelatedness with other inhabitants of the land over thousands of years but also completely disregards the uneven power dynamics

that were occurring during the time of the buffalo slaughter. Sebastian Braun (2007: 195) explains Isenberg's reasoning this way: "Following his own agenda ... he in turn does not contextualize relations between Indians and Euro-Americans, which makes him ignore any notions of distribution of power, and ultimately any notion of cultural difference."

Genocide and denial of genocide work in conjunction, and the buffalo genocide is no exception. After all, "the battle is not only about history and the authenticity of the records of past events in our civilization, it is about the extent to which we today hold our governments responsible for their actions" (Charny 1994: 74). Isenberg and the others attempt to render the government, army, and hide hunters inculpable by reinforcing notions of Indigenous culpability in their own destruction.

Returning now to the Indigenous epistemology that applies "peoplehood" to the buffalo, the actions of the trinity of destruction (government, army, and hide hunters) can be viewed through the lens of genocide. For example, it has been established, in this volume and elsewhere, that colonial genocide includes the removal of children, which is destructive to the future of a people. "The sportsmen adventurer John Mortimer Murphy claimed to have seen a troop of cavalry lasso one hundred buffalo calves and bring them to a corral near the post barracks. Although the little ones had sufficient room to run about and an abundance of hay and grass, 'few of them lived more than a week'" (Smits 1994: 320). Other accounts abound of the removal of calves from the herds for both sport and curiosity. In exploring the parameters of the concept of genocide, Powell (2007: 538) writes, "Given that a *genos* is a network of practical social relationships, destruction of a *genos* means the forcible breaking down of those relationships." The army in effect broke down the family relationships of the buffalo by removing the calves, contributing to the genocidal project. The destruction of the buffalo's social relationships did not stop with the removal of calves from the herd. Even Isenberg (2000: 136) discusses the impact on the buffalo's ability to reproduce, which depended on the ability to gather together: "Reproductive success likely declined with group size in the 1870s, as unceasing predation (by hide hunters) prevented the congregation of the herds in the rutting season, upsetting the bison's patterns of migration and reproduction and thus inhibiting a recovery of the bison's population."

... the impact of the geno-

When Charlie and Jimmie drove out the next morning to get the hides, there was a young calf standing by one of the carcasses, its mother being one of the victims of yesterday's work. It still had the reddish color that all buffalo calves have in their infancy, not obtaining their regular blackish brown until in the fall of the year, when they are very fat, plump and stocky, and take on a glossy look. I have watched buffaloes many times during my three years' hunt, not with a covetous eye at the time, but to study the characteristics of the animal, and I do not remember ever seeing buffalo calves frisky, gamboling, and cavorting around in playful glee like domestic calves. Perhaps their doom has been transmitted to them! Yes, this was the pathetic side of the question. And thousands of these little creatures literally starved to death, their mothers being killed from the time they were a day old on up to the time they could rustle their own living on the range.

Buffalo feel grief for their dead, according to both my traditional teachers and the longtime buffalo warden at the Grasslands National Park, Wes Olsen. He has observed the behavior of the wild herd and their reaction to a death. Rather than abandon the body, buffalo will stay with the deceased, attempt to revive their family member, and make audible sounds of grief. The hide hunters' practice of shooting from a hidden location with a high-powered rifle did not give warning to the buffalo of the coming danger. Hide hunter accounts of what happened after they shot their first victims intersect with Olsen's observations: "When one of their number was killed the rest of the herd, smelling the blood, would become excited, but instead of stampeding would gather around the dead buffalo, pawing, bellowing and hooking it viciously. Taking advantage of this well-known habit of the creature, the hunter would kill one animal and then wipe out almost the entire herd" (quoted in Magoc 2006: 95). Hornaday's (2002: 469) accounts also support the buffalo's expression of grief: "They cluster around the fallen ones, sniff at the warm blood, bawl aloud in wonderment, and do everything but run away."

In the latter days of the buffalo slaughter, many of the buffalo's social relationships broke down. Cook describes the hunters' practice of surrounding available waterways, forcing the buffalo to approach anyway, and gunning them down. Those buffalo who managed to find a water source that was free from hunters "would rush and crowd in pell-mell, crowding, jamming, and trampling down both the weak and the strong, to quench a burning thirst. Many of them were rendered insane from their intolerable, unbearable thirst" (Cook 1938: 198). Instead of living cooperatively in their herd society, the buffalo were tortured prior to their death at the hands of the hide hunters.

It is not surprising that Indigenous accounts describe buffalo genocide as a war on buffalo. Note the account told by Old Lady Horse (1968: 170) in "The Last Buffalo Herd":

There was a war between the buffalo and the white men. The white men built forts in the Kiowa country, and the woolly-headed buffalo soldiers [the 10th Cavalry, made up of Negro troops] shot the buffalo as fast as they could, but the buffalo kept coming on, coming on, even into the post cemetery at Fort Sill. Soldiers were not enough to hold them back. . . . But then the whites came and built the railroad, cutting the people's land in half. The buffalo fought for the people, tearing up the tracks and chasing away the whites' cattle. So the army was sent to kill the buffalo. The army brought in hunters, who killed until the bones of the buffalo covered the land and the buffalo saw they could no longer fight.

Indigenous peoples saw the buffalo as their protector, who took a position on the front line in the genocidal war against Indigenous peoples. Laduke (1999: 154), in her exploration of buffalo genocide, discovered that "many native people view the historic buffalo slaughter as the time when the buffalo relatives, the older brothers, stood up and took the killing intended for the younger brothers, the Native peoples." Laduke contextualizes buffalo genocide as an example of a colonial war on nature, "a war on the psyche, a war on the soul" (149). Others have characterized the destruction of nature with similar terminology. The Indigenous psychologist Eduardo Duran (2006) describes it as a "soul wound." He remarks that elders understand such circumstances as the erasure of the buffalo from the land as an earth wounding: "When the earth is wounded, the people who are caretakers of the earth are also wounded at a very deep soul level" (16).

Pretty Shield describes her reaction to witnessing the aftermath of buffalo genocide: "Ahh, my heart fell down when I began to see dead buffalo scattered all over our beautiful country, killed and skinned, and left to rot by white men, many, many hundreds of buffalo. The first I saw of this was in the Judith basin. The whole country there smelled of rotting meat. Even the flowers could not put down the bad smell. Our hearts were like stones. And yet nobody believed, even then, that the white man could kill *all* the buffalo. Since the beginning of things there had always been so many!" (quoted in Calloway 1996: 131). Her being as an Indigenous person was profoundly impacted by the loss. Crow Plenty-Coups describes his grief in the same terms: "But when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened. There was little singing anywhere" (quoted in Lindemann 1930: 169). Both Indigenous

individuals are expressing what Justice (2010: 63) categorizes as “an understanding of nationhood that’s fully rooted in broadly ecosystemic concepts of Indigenous kinship” with the buffalo, which intertwines their respective and interrelated genocides. The buffalo gone from the land meant the Plains Indigenous peoples who had been holding out to negotiate better treaties and claims to their land were forced to submit and relocate to small reservations scattered across the newly forming states and provinces. The destruction of the interrelated bond between buffalo, Indigenous people, and the land reminds me of Waldau’s claim that cultural imperialism affects both human and nonhuman animals (2006: 636). The stories of genocide need to be told and accepted as truth in order to clear space for Indigenous stories, many of which lay out ways to live on the land in healthy and non-destructive ways.

In her work outlining what she terms the “pillars of white supremacy,” the Cherokee scholar Andrea Smith (2006: 68) lists the logic of genocide as the second pillar: “This logic holds that indigenous peoples must disappear. In fact, they must *always* be disappearing, in order to allow non-indigenous peoples rightful claim over this land.” Through a complex and interrelated policy of buffalo genocide, enacted by the state, military, and hide hunters, the buffalo disappeared from the land, forcing the disappearance of Indigenous people at the same time. Both Indigenous peoples and buffalo were the subjects of colonial elegies, which lamented their loss with a pen held in one hand and a gun in the other. “Extinction discourse often takes the form of proleptic elegy, sentimentally or mournfully expressing, even in its most humane versions, the confidence of self-fulfilling prophecy, according to which new, white colonies and nations arise as savagery and wilderness recede” (Brantlinger 2003: 3).

These tropes remain with us still. As we examine the current realities facing the Great Plains, including widespread drought, continued animal genocides (wolves come to mind), and the relentless extraction of what is termed “resources,” it would be wise to revisit the historic buffalo genocide in order to consider the repercussions of applying a Euro-Western ideology to the land, propped up by the continued hierarchy in which humans occupy an exalted place at the top.³ Huggan and Tiffin (2010: 6) put it this way: “In assuming a natural prioritization of humans and human interests over those of other species on earth, we are both generating and repeating the racist ideologies of imperialism on a planetary scale.” How can the past lessons of buffalo genocide speak to us now?

I wish to conclude by returning to my own teachings as a Nehiyaw human person. I am reminded that the buffalo remains with us. I am reminded that everything comes back to our spiritual understandings. Their bodies were

destroyed; their spirits were not. Our stories, still told and still understood, tell us the buffalo will return one day.

Notes

1. These kinds of discussions are also happening in recent animal studies scholarship. David Sztybel (2008: 252) discusses the limitations in both language and understanding: "'Person' is interchangeable with humans in most dictionaries but we need to update our lexicon in order to overcome speciesist thinking."
2. The Blackfoot scholar Betty Bastien (2004) is the best example.
3. Buffalo genocide continues into the present time, with the systemic slaughter of buffalo that leave the confines of Yellowstone National Park, a genocide sanctioned by the state government of Montana until a Montana Supreme Court ruling in March 2014. For the first time in centuries, buffalo in Yellowstone are free from genocidal practices.

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