

**This article is from the National Bison Association. It is correct and honest.
Tom Barthel**

What is all this Bull

About Crossing Bison and Beef?

Clearing up misconceptions about cattle genetics in today's bison.

You may have heard comments on TV, or read stories on the internet, that today's bison herds contain widespread cattle genetics. We want you to know the truth.

What is behind these comments?

To understand the full story, we have to go back more than 120 years. As the 1800's came to a close, the American bison teetered on the brink of extinction. The more than 30 million animals roaming North America at one time had been decimated to the point where fewer than 600 remained alive. Roughly 25 remained in the newly created Yellowstone National Park. The remainder wandered in isolated clusters across the prairies.

Fortunately, five ranchers scattered along the Great Plains began to gather up those remnants and pulled the species back from the brink. Some of those ranchers experimented briefly with crossing bison with cattle in the hope of creating a hearty crossbreed.

They discovered instead that the crossbred animals were highly infertile, had problems calving, and generally performed poorly. The ranchers soon dropped the experiment. In the process, though, *some* cattle genetics were introduced into *some* bison.

How widespread are the resulting levels of cattle genetics in today's bison?

We have to set the record straight. Some media stories refer to "widespread levels" of cattle genetics in the bison herds on private farms and ranches across the United States. Texas A&M University has conducted DNA testing on more than 30,000 bison in both private and public herds across North America. About six percent of those bison tested have shown evidence of cattle DNA. And, the level of cattle genetics in those bison average less than 1.5 percent of the genetic make-up.

Doesn't crossbreeding still occur?

There is an animal called a beefalo, which is the result of some modern crossbreeding. However, those animals—and the meat they produce—are clearly labeled separately from bison or buffalo.

The members of the National Bison Association are dedicated to maintaining the integrity of the all-natural buffalo. That is why our members have adopted a code of ethics that specifically *prohibits crossbreeding bison with any other species of animal.*

Can't you just weed out the animals with cattle genetics?

Remember that all of the bison in the world today descended from the fewer than 600 left alive in 1894. That genetic pool is very important.

Many ranchers today are testing their herds and culling the animals that have remnants of the cattle genetics. But, those ranchers are also taking care to protect the vital bison genetics that survived the "bottleneck" of the late 1800s.

Today's ranchers recognize that Mother Nature perfected this animal to thrive on the pastures and rangelands of North America. Even as we build the herds to meet growing consumer demand, we are dedicated to protecting the integrity of this species as an animal that produces nutritious meat, survives in harsh climates, and requires relatively little management.

In 1914, the government owned 10% of the bison, as it does today.

Charles Goodnight started his Texas bison herd in 1874 with calves left over in Texas.

The southern herds were gone by 1874, the northern by 1884.

The Bronx Zoo and the American Bison Society were founded by Theodore Roosevelt and Hornaday in 1899.

In 1907, the Bronx Zoo supplied bison to the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Preserve.

Hornaday got bison for the Bronx Zoo got about 1899. Charles Goodnight sold bison to The Bronx Zoo, Yellowstone, the National Bison Range, Canadian National Parks, etc.

Goodnight also experimented with cross breeding.

In 1902, Yellowstone had 23 original bison remaining. In 1902, Yellowstone bought 18 females from a N. Montana rancher and 3 bulls from a Texas rancher.

In addition to raising cattle in 1876, the Goodnights preserved a herd of native plains [bison](#) that year, which is said to survive to this day in [Caprock Canyons State Park](#). The herd in Caprock Canyons was actually donated by JA Ranch and there is no documentation demonstrating that this was the herd preserved by the Goodnights. Bison of this herd were introduced into the [Yellowstone National Park](#) in 1902 and into the larger zoos and ranches throughout the nation. He also crossbred the bison with domestic cattle, which he called [cattalo](#). [Charles "Buffalo" Jones](#), a co-founder of [Garden City, Kansas](#), after meeting with Goodnight in Texas, also bred cattalo, or [beefalo](#), on a ranch near [Grand Canyon National Park](#) in northern [Arizona](#).^[6]

While he was building his cattle herd, Scotty Philip met Pete Dupree, whose son Fred had rescued 5 bison calves from an 1881 buffalo hunt along the Grand River.^[2] After Dupree's death, Philip decided to preserve the species from extinction, and in 1899 he purchased Dupree's herd, which now numbered 74 head, from Dupree's brother-in-law, Dug Carlin.

Philip prepared a special pasture for the bison along the western side of the Missouri River north of Fort Pierre, and drove the herd there in 1901.

Scotty Philip died suddenly on July 23, 1911: by that time the herd had grown to approximately a thousand head. He was buried on a family cemetery near his buffalo pasture. As the funeral procession passed, some of the bison came down out of the hills. Newspapers of the time suggested the bison were "showing their respect to the man who had saved them".^[2]

Bison from Philip's herd helped restock herds throughout the United States, including the large herd at [Custer State Park](#).

In 1883 (or possibly earlier) Fred Dupree and some of his sons and possibly Basil Clement (Claymore) went on a buffalo hunt for some buffalo calves in order to start a herd to preserve the species from extinction.

By this time the great surrounds of the past were over and we can imagine that the desire to preserve at least a few of these animals so necessary, and so Sacred to the Tetuwan people, was strong.

The group headed northwest from Cheyenne River, and these men were gone for many months and in Montana or near Slim Buttes (reports differ), they located a small herd. They finally secured five calves, (other reports were nine buffalo calves), which were loaded onto the wagons brought for that purpose. The buffalo calves were taken back to pure-blood buffalos. By the time of Fred's death in 1898 the herd had grown considerably, and was purchased by James (Scotty) Phillip of Fort Pierre.

By 1918 (the herd) had increased to approximately 500 head. The state of South Dakota purchased 46 of these buffalo and transferred them to the State Game Park in Fall River County.

Hearsay has it that Scotty Phillips sold the buffalo to other states and parks also, spreading the original Dupris stock back into many areas where the buffalo once roamed free by the millions.

Bison

American Buffalo (Bison bison)



As one of the three initial reserves set aside for the preservation of the American bison, this National Bison Range has played an important role in the great success story of recovery of the once endangered plains bison. Today the Bison Range maintains a herd of 325-350 bison, excluding each year's calves. Our goal is to conserve bison as a species, conserve bison genetic diversity, and provide public opportunity to view bison in a natural prairie setting.

It was through the vision of few far-sighted individuals that we still have bison today. Even in the late 1800s, there were people who felt that this magnificent animal was worth saving. Ranchers such as Charles Goodnight of Texas, James McKay of Winnipeg, Canada, Michel Pablo and Charles Allard of Montana, and CJ "Buffalo" Jones were just a handful of the ranchers who maintained herds. Their motivation for maintaining bison herds was a combination of respect and feeling for the great animals and part for the economic benefits. From these scattered bands, many public herds, including the National Bison Range in western Montana, were started.

Bison herds in the Mission Valley originated when a native American of the Pend d'Oreille tribe returned home from the plains of eastern Montana to the Flathead Reservation with four bison calves. By 1884, his herd had grown to 13 animals, when they were sold to local ranchers and partners Michel Pablo and Charles Allard. The Pablo-Allard herd thrived and became one of the largest private bison herds in the country. When Allard died suddenly in 1896, a division of the herd became necessary. Beginning in 1901, Allard's family began to sell their portion of the bison herd. Part was sold in that year to Charles and Alicia Conrad of Kalispell, Montana.

William T. Hornaday, the President of the American Bison Society (founded in New York City in 1905, with President Roosevelt as Honorary President), assisted by many of its members, actively lobbied Congress to purchase suitable land while committing the American Bison Society to supply the bison needed to begin a new herd. Range land was purchased by the Government from five allotments and from the Flathead Nation in 1908, removing it from lands to be made available in 1910 to non-Indian settlers. Meanwhile, after the President signed the Bison Range Act, the American Bison Society began soliciting donations throughout the country to purchase bison. In all, people from 29 of the 46 States then in the Union contributed \$10,560.50 during the one year effort.

By 1909 Charles Conrad had died, but his wife Alicia had become a staunch supporter of the bison cause. She agreed to sell 34 bison to the American Bison Society and then donated a bull and cow she described as her two finest animals. During the same time William Hornaday persuaded Charles Goodnight, the famous Texas rancher to donate two bison from his Texas panhandle bison herd. Goodnight's bison were shipped to Alicia Conrad where they were added to the herd (one of which died before reaching the new Refuge). From New Hampshire, Austin Corbin donated three more.

The National Bison Range herd shows high genetic diversity in relation to bison of the federal herds with one of the highest levels of allelic richness, heterozygosity, and private alleles of the federal herds tested. Bison Range

animals also have a very low level of cattle allele introgression. Only twelve new bison have been added to the herd since 1910 ([diagram of full herd history](#)). Though small, the actual amount of cattle genetic material in the Refuge herd is unknown. Genetic drift and management actions may be decreasing the level of cattle allele introgression in the herd.

Though herd health is an important aspect of herd management, Refuge bison are managed as wild bison and with the exception of moving the herd between pasture and the annual roundup, the bison are left alone to maintain their own lifestyle. Bison are rotated through 8 grazing units throughout the year to maintain high range quality in a native intermountain grassland system. In addition, the Refuge removes about 50-95 bison each year to protect the habitat from overgrazing. The surplus bison are first used for genetic conservation purposes by transfer to other Service herds, but the rest can then be donated to other public herds, Native American tribes, research programs or sold to private individuals. Sale animals are generally 5 years old or less and no calves are sold ([click here to link to information about the bison sale](#)). The Range's herd plays an important role in the continued recovery of the species.

Bison Conservation: The Canadian Story

by [Peter Lorenz Neufeld](#)
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From time to time writers extoll North American's unusually successful conservation project of saving the prairie bison from annihilation. Invariably the impression is left that virtually alone a tiny handful of Americans conducted this worthy undertaking, with Canadians playing a negligible secondary role—a 90% versus 10% at best. In fact, the percentages are in reverse. At least ten Canadians, mostly Manitobans, played pivotal parts in saving the plains bison from extinction. Even of the half dozen Americans usually so credited, writers of this era referred to one as “French Canadian,” and a second was an American Indian living in Canada.

In 1870-71 two young brothers, [Bill Alloway](#) and [Charlie Alloway](#), came to Winnipeg as privates in the [Wolseley expedition](#) from Hamilton, Ontario where their father was a Queen's Own Rifles captain. Charlie became a keen hunter and horseman. Often he roamed the Prairies trading and hunting with Métis and Indians. A description of one of his adventures appears in Wild West magazine of January 1972. On a trip to the Qu'Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan, his party was warned by Indians to move camp, which moments later was plowed to pulp by a “brown river of buffalo” while “for 24 hours men watched the steadily loping herd go by at the rate of about 10 a second” Alloway estimated that over a million bison passed by. Charlie, who took over the amateur veterinary practice Bill began and added a trading post, saw the handwriting in 1873 after buying 21,000 buffalo hides at \$3-\$4 each from a single brigade. He turned his attention, instead, to trying to stop the senseless slaughter of these fine animals.



Caricature of [Charles Alloway](#), 1909.

Source: [Manitobans As We See 'Em, 1908 and 1909](#)

Nan Shipley calls [James McKay](#) “Manitoba’s most outstanding citizen.” [Val Werier](#) depicts him as “a man of great girth and reputation, a buffalo hunter who weighed 350 pounds and was first speaker of the House” [Edith Paterson](#) refers to “a noted trader and hunter.”

In spring 1873 Alloway and McKay travelled west to capture buffalo calves. Taking along a domestic cow as foster mother they joined a Métis brigade and spent the whole summer capturing three young calves near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and bringing them safely to Winnipeg. Next spring they captured three more, but one died enroute home. Four years before his death in 1929, Charlie described these expeditions to a *Winnipeg Tribune* reporter.



[James McKay](#), circa 1870s.
Source: [Archives of Manitoba](#)

The bison calves were placed in an enclosure near McKay's home, just north of today's Assiniboine Park. By 1878 the herd had grown to 13. James died next year and Charlie sold the animals to [Col. S. L. Bedson](#) (see below) for \$1,000 because he was joining his brother Bill in banking with the private bank of Alloway and Champion ([W. F. Alloway](#) founded [The Winnipeg Foundation](#)).

Long after Charlie's death his widow, Maude, told the Manitoba Historical Society of her husband leading a third bison-capturing excursion. In late winter of 1883 the party set out. Aside from the "capture of a number of fine specimen made with the assistance of several Indian buffalo hunters" in the Battle River region about 100 miles from Edmonton, Alberta, their greatest problem occurred crossing the spring-flooding Little Saskatchewan River between Minnedosa and Rapid City, Manitoba.



[Samuel Lawrence Bedson](#), circa 1890.

Source: [Archives of Manitoba](#)

These calves too were corralled in the recently-vacated 30-acre pasture and “as with the other herds, these few multiplied to quite large proportions. A number of the buffalo in Assiniboine Park today are the progeny of this herd” At least three calves from that trip were acquired by Howard Eaton. Mrs. Alloway concluded: “It has been said that to Charlie Alloway should go the credit for the preservation of the buffalo in Manitoba for if it had not been for his foresight years ago, the American bison would be but a mist vision.”

[Samuel Lawrence Bedson](#) also came West with Wolseley. A Montreal army officer’s son, he was placed in charge of Lower Fort Garry just down river from Winnipeg. When Ottawa established a penitentiary-mental hospital there in 1871 he became its first warden. Later he selected the Stony Mountain site a few miles westward for a new prison and upon its completion in 1877 continued in charge there. A popular sportsman always surrounded by friends, Sam proved a kindly but just warden. A wildlife lover, he kept a menagerie of bears, badgers, wolves, deer, moose, geese and other game birds on his nearby farm.

The same morning the Alloway-McKay bison were moved to Stony Mountain, one cow had a calf. That night the herd escaped and tramped back to Winnipeg through deep snow. In the morning they were herded back to the prison, a total of 62 miles for the newborn calf. Under Bedson’s tender care the bison multiplied rapidly to over 100 by 1888. In 1928 the colonel’s son, K. C. Bedson, told a reported of how, as a youngster 40 years earlier, he had herded bison on the prairie near the prison. His popular mother, Jemima, was of great help to her husband in his various unusual endeavors.

By 1888 the settler influx and failing health forced Bedson to conclude it was no longer practical to keep his beloved bison. About six were donated to New York and London Zoos. At least 27 were given to [Donald Smith](#) (Lord Strathcona) to repay a loan. Most of the remaining herd, listed as high as 98 by some researchers and low as 56 by others, eventually went to C. J. “Buffalo” Jones, manager of Garden City (Kansas) Buffalo Company. No

conservationist, he had hunted with Teddy Roosevelt in Africa and dreamed of creating a huge game preserve for hunters to hunt bison for a fat fee.

In November '89 when Jones was negotiating in Winnipeg, he had a standing offer of \$60 per hide he could produce, \$.50 per pound for meat to U.S. restaurants and \$100-\$500 a trophy head. Also he was besieged with telegrams from persons in Minnesota and the Dakotas anxious to buy bison at \$500-\$1,000 each. The sale was delayed briefly when some Winnipeggers tried to form a company to buy the bison to raise commercially. Bedson died in Ottawa at 49 in 1891.

Smith donated all but five of his bison to the Canadian government which installed them in Banff National Park where they flourished under Superintendent Douglas' able care. Winnipeg's street railway company bought the other five plus three from Eaton to donate to Assiniboine Park Zoo, where descendants are still popular with countless visitors each year.

During the mid-1870s one of the original nine Mountie commanding officers, Quebec-native Ephrem Brisebois, had fought a valiant but losing battle in what became southern Alberta to slow down the bison slaughter by developing strict hunting regulations. Unfortunately, this colourful, somewhat controversial sub-inspector who founded Fort Calgary (originally Fort Brisebois) was ignored by his own superiors, consequently made impotent to enforce the judicious restrictions, and resigned.

Much has been written of the role played in saving the plains bison by the Montana Pend d'Oreille, Sam Walking Coyote. Some hail him as a devoted conservationist, others laud his actions as a "ray of light in all the ruthless killing" of these noble beasts. Most have him capturing bison calves in Montana. However, we can thank the Montana Historical Society for separating fact from fiction. George Coder of Ohio State University has conducted detailed buffalo history research. As to who caught Sam's bison, where and why, Coder points to the story in the November 1923 Rocky Mountain Husbandman as most accurate.

It began in 1873 at a Piegan camp on Montana's Milk River where lived Sam "who had a sharp tongue, a swift temper and (a) son-in-law" who "cheated his wife's irascible father in a horse swap," arousing his ire. Life quickly became too hot around camp that winter for the young horse-trader because "every time the old man thought about him, he reached for something to throw; and his aim was good" Dixon Craig of the Edmonton Journal, who also did good bison research, called Sam a renegade. The young man left his parents-in-law and bride, and headed north into Saskatchewan where he became an honest hunter of what remained of the southern half of the once-great bison herd. One day he was lucky enough to capture some calves. A Canadian Press story datelined Wainwright, Alberta gave the number as two bulls and two heifers. Because he missed his young wife considerably, he decided perhaps her cantankerous dad might forgive him if he brought the calves as gift. He herded his peace offering into the U.S. where his father-in-law eagerly accepted it. Sam trailed his calves to this little farm on the Flathead Reserve where by 1884 the four had increased to 13. Old age and difficulty financing his wards caused him to sell.

Charles Allard, his father Caucasian and his mother Oregon Indian, is often called a "French Canadian." Allard and his Mexican-Blackfoot ranching partner Michel Pablo, decided to buy most of Sam's herd. [Gene Telpner](#) described the transaction. Sam refused "a white man's cheque" so the ranchers had to dig up \$2,500 cash. As the trio counted out the money, into 25 piles, a mink ran by. "With the instinct of the hunter strong in their spirits, they immediately gave chase, forgetting temporarily all about the buffalo herd and the large sum of money left lying on the ground" A 1948 *Canadian Cattleman* issue indicates that after the sale Sam "immediately hit for town and after a few weeks of city life was found dead under Missoula Bridge."

By 1893 the Allard-Pablo herd on Pend d'Oreille reserve near St. Ignatius Mission had grown to 100. Meanwhile, Jones' grandiose scheme faded when intense Texas heat and ticks killed most of his bison. He sold the remnant of 35 (one source says 26) to Allard and Pablo. After the former died in 1896, his half of the 300-head herd was divided among his heirs and many sold by them to U.S. zoos and game farms. Despite this, the herd, now owned by Charles Allard Jr. and brother Joseph, Pablo, and Andrew Stringer, totalled 250 in 1899. By 1906 it numbered almost 800 and was the main plains bison herd in North America, the only other of note being the herd in Banff National Park.

Four Canadians, two being Manitobans, played key roles in returning the Montana bison to Canada. Norman Luxton, son of noted journalist W. F. Luxton, (Toronto Globe, Winnipeg Free Press, Nor'Wester) was the progressive publisher of Banff's *Crag and Canyon Weekly*. [Alex Ayotte](#), a huge man weighing 240 pounds, had served with Canada's immigration department in Montana for years and later moved to St. Jean, Manitoba. Hon. Frank Oliver, ex-journalist of *Toronto Globe and Mail*, *Winnipeg Free Press* and founder of Alberta's first newspaper, *Edmonton Bulletin*, was federal interior minister. Howard Douglas was still superintendent of Banff National Park.

To Luxton, a close friend of Oliver's, goes credit for convincing his politician friend the Allard-Pablo herd should be bought by Canada and re-established here. To Oliver goes credit for quick action in 1906 persuading Ottawa the idea had merit and then setting necessary wheels turning to advance what's often been heralded as "the greatest animal comeback in the history of the world."

Ayotte, with a bit of help from Eaton, negotiated the purchase of about 716 animals at \$245 each, and then led three hazardous roundups and drives to Canada which took several years. He continued to supervise five annual roundups in Alberta.

To Douglas fell the massive task of making the whole project work. Also, he helped disperse bison to Canadian zoos and other parks, like Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park where one of the largest plains bison herds in existence still attracts thousands of visitors annually.

An interesting sequel to the bison conservation project was research conducted from 1894 to 1914 by Mossom Boyd of Bobcaygeon, Ontario in crossing plains bison with domestic cattle. In 1915 his bison and cattalo were bought by Ottawa and taken to Wainwright, Alberta. The cattalo project was later transferred south to Manyberries where it continued until 1964.

Today, buffalo ranching is becoming increasingly common across North America, a popular Manitoba one being Marvin McGregor's just across the Little Saskatchewan River from the Ski Valley resort north of Minnedosa. Cattle-bison crossing programs are carried on by individual ranchers, the Beefalo breed being one result. In recent years buffalo have multiplied to the extent that even limited hunting seasons have become necessary to contain the rapidly-expanding herds. In fact, a most serious current problem facing Canadian officials is how to combat rampant disease and forage shortage plaguing the herd in Wood Buffalo National Park consisting of 3,500 plains and wood bison, without having to destroy the animals.

Charlie Alloway, James McKay, Sam Bedson, Ephrem Brisebois, Howard Eaton, Donald Smith, Norman Luxton, Frank Oliver, Howard Douglas and Alex Ayotte left Canadians a most enviable conservation legacy. Let's treasure it deeply and enhance it.



A buffalo from the early herd at Assiniboine Zoo, circa 1915.

Source: [Archives of Manitoba](#)

History of Bison

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HISTORY OF BISON

From A Manitoba Perspective

Bison once roamed North America in the millions. These herds sustained the First Nations people living on The Great Plains of North America. These shaggy beasts, the largest land mammal in North America provided aboriginal peoples with food, shelter, clothing, fuel, utensils, ornamentation and many other uses. Bison fuelled the fur trade, providing an easily transportable food ration in the form of pemmican. The Metis people relied heavily on the bison for their livelihood.

Manitoba has played a significant role in the history of bison. Fossils, bones, rubbing stones, wallows and historical accounts indicates that bison were present in Manitoba. Manitoba's flag and The Manitoba Legislature include bison.



James McKay (circa 1870)

In 1870 Charlie Alloway came to Winnipeg as a private in The Wolsely expedition. While on a hunting and trading adventure he witnessed a bison herd of over one million lope past him. However within a few years, he saw the demise of these great herds. In 1873 and 1874 Alloway along with another Manitoban, James McKay captured a few bison calves. These calves were placed in a pasture in what is now present day Winnipeg. By 1878 the herd had grown to 13. In 1879 the herd was sold to Col. Samuel Lawrence Bedson, Warden of Stony Mountain Penitentiary.



Col. Samuel Lawrence Bedson 1842 - 1891

The herd was moved to the bog area adjacent to Stony Mountain close to present day Oak Hammock Marsh. By 1888 the herd had multiplied to over 100, but the pressure of settlement forced Bedson to disperse his herd. Some were given to zoos. Others were given to Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona) who gave them to the Canadian Government which placed them in Banff National Park where they flourished. The majority of the herd was sold to C.J. “Buffalo” Jones of Kansas.

In the early 1870’s, Sam Walking Coyote captured some bison calves in southern prairie Canada. He herded these back to the Flathead Reserve in Montana.

By 1884 Sam’s herd had grown to 13. Two Metis, Charles Allard often called a “French Canadian” and his Mexican – Blackfoot ranching partner Michel Pablo decided to buy most of Sam’s herd. By 1893 the Allard-Pablo herd had grown to 100. Allard-Pablo also purchased the remnants of the Bedson herd from Jones.

Despite some animals being sold to U.S. zoos and game farms, the Allard-Pablo herd numbered almost 800 by 1906. In 1907, 716 animals from this herd were purchased by the Canadian Government for \$150,000. It took over 5 years for the round up of this herd. Finally the bison were shipped via rail to Elk Island National Park in Alberta. A few years later most of the herd was sent to Wainwright, Alberta, a larger facility. To this day, Elk Island National Park is a source for pure plains bison. The bison at the Lake Audy plain in Riding Mountain National Park are descendants from Elk Island.



Canada has also played an equally important role in the conservation of wood bison. In 1900 there were only an estimated 500 wood bison left. Wood Buffalo National Park was established and the herd grew to 1500 by 1920. During the early 1920's, 6,673 plains bison from Southern Alberta were moved to Wood Buffalo National Park with the assumption that they would not interbreed with the wood bison due to the distance between. Unfortunately, the two herds made contact and cross breeding did occur. In 1959, the Canadian Wildlife Service located a herd of wood bison in a remote corner of Wood Buffalo National Park. During the 1960's some of these animals were removed to start herds at MacKenzie Bison Sanctuary and Elk Island National Park.

Surplus animals have been sent to establish or supplement other free-ranging herds. Some surplus animals have been sold to private ranches.

Manitoba has established a free-ranging herd of wood bison at Chitek Lake. The seed stock for this herd was initially released in 1991 with a second release in 1996 into a region between Lake Winnipegosis and Highway No. 6.

The preservation of the bison species is a remarkable conservation success story. During the last quarter of the twentieth century many ranchers and First Nation's bands started to raise bison. This pushed the conservation effort forward at a rapid pace. As consumers became aware of bison meat, producers recognized the natural benefits of raising bison. This indigenous specie was well suited for the climate and the naturally occurring fauna of North America and particularly Manitoba.

Manitoba has made a huge contribution to the conservation of bison. From the efforts of Alloway, McKay and Bedson in the establishment of some of the seed stock of the present day plains bison herd to the recent establishment of the free ranging wood bison herd at Chitek Lake and ranching efforts – Manitobans have reintroduced a part of a healthy prairie and parkland ecosystem, namely the bison.

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