

The Buffalo Stone

The Buffalo Stone is a fossilized remnant found in the Southern Alberta plains that is considered to be around 71 million years old. The fossils are a segment of a sea creature called a “baculite” also known as ammonite. The Blackfoot term of “Buffalo Stone” comes from the shape of the septal walls that resemble a buffalo. Blackfoot people call the fossils “**Buffalo Stones**”, or “**Iniskim**” because these stones are considered to be powerful and significant, possessing unique properties [1]. “This stone has great power and gives it’s owner good luck in bringing the buffalo close so they may be harvested for the Blackfoot people” [2].



Blackfoot Legends of “The First Buffalo Stone” is about the sudden disappearance of the buffalo. It was before the time when the Blackfoot had horses. Hunters killed all of the game; deer, elk, and smaller animals, such as rabbit along the river bottom leaving the people to starve. An older woman who camped in a circle near buffalo drive thought she heard someone singing but didn’t see anyone. As she got closer to the sound, she discovered a small rock that was singing “Take me! I am of great power”. After telling her husband of her experience he gathered men together. The rock told his wife they needed to sing a song to bring the buffalo back. Firstly, her husband needed to get a small piece of the back of a buffalo from the Bear-Medicine man. Then the inside of the lodge was to be arranged as a square with some sage and buffalo chips. “Now tell the men to come and ask for the rattles they use”. After the men were seated in the lodge, the buffalo stone began to sing, “The buffalo will drift back, the buffalo will drift back”. The fourth time you shout all of the chips will turn into buffalo and will go over the cliff.

The men followed her directions while the old woman led the singing in the lodge. She knew that a cow-buffalo would take the lead and would lead the buffalo over the cliff as she was singing. Then the old woman sang a different song that made over 100 buffalo fall over the cliff. She said, “I have made more than a hundred buffalo fall over the cliff and the man above hears me”.

“Ever since then the people took good care of buffalo stone and prayed to it, for they knew it had much power” [3].

When someone walks along the prairie, they will hear a queer faint chirp similar to what a bird makes. They will know this is the sound of the buffalo stone [2]. “Many people still find “**iniskim**” on the prairies and keep them in sacred bundles to help us have successful lives” [4].



**“The Buffalo Calling Stones
“Iniskim”** are a central element of Blackfoot ceremonial activity” [4].

The photos are of the “Marjorie Medicine Wheel” (Iniskim Umaapi) that provides a record of Blackfoot ritual activities.

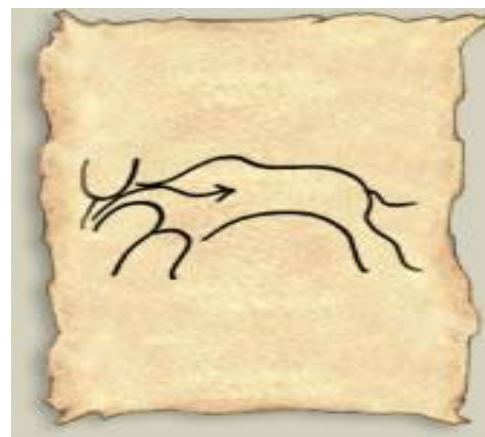
The Blackfoot people offer sweetgrass, sage, willow, cloth, tobacco, prayer, and song to the buffalo calling stones to maintain spiritual connections with their ancestors. The site has been deemed to have been used continuously for at least 4500 years making it one of the oldest religious monuments in the world [4].

References

1. The Blackfoot ‘Buffalo Stone’ and Korite Ammonite. Retrieved June 2022 from: [The Blackfoot ‘Buffalo Stone’ and KORITE Ammolite](#).
2. Buffalo Tales and Trails. Retrieved July 2022 from: [The Buffalo Stone - Buffalo Tales and Trails](#).
3. The First Buffalo Stone- A Blackfoot Legend. Retrieved online July 2022 from: [The First Buffalo Stone - A Blackfoot Legend \(firstpeople.us\)](#).
4. Waking up on Turtle Island. (2013). Iniskim (Buffalo Calling Stones). Retrieved July 2022 from: [Waking Up on Turtle Island: Iniskim \(Buffalo Calling Stones\)](#).



**BUILDING
BRAINS
TOGETHER**



(From: The Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta)