NEW FILM DIRECTED BY JULIANNA BRANNUM EXAMINES RESTORATION OF BUFFALO TO INDIGENOUS LANDS

HOMECOMING, Debating October 18, Brings the Story of THE AMERICAN BUFFALO to the Present

Arlington, VA – September 21, 2023 – HOMECOMING, a new film directed by Julianna Brannum (THE AMERICAN BUFFALO, CONSCIENCE POINT, NATIVE AMERICA, WE SHALL REMAIN “Wounded Knee”) extends the story of Ken Burns’s upcoming film, THE AMERICAN BUFFALO, to the present by examining the return of the species to Indigenous lands today. HOMECOMING will premiere on Wednesday, October 18 on PBS.org and PBS app and on PBS’s YouTube Channel on November 24.

The 18 minute-film, a Florentine Films production with Ken Burns as executive producer, highlights the foundational work of the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) and its partner organizations, and how they’ve become a guiding force in the food sovereignty and cultural revitalization movements led by tribal citizens across the United States. Brannum, a citizen of the Comanche Nation, also served as a consulting producer on THE AMERICAN BUFFALO, which will premiere on October 16 and 17 on PBS.

THE AMERICAN BUFFALO takes viewers on a journey through more than 10,000 years of North American history and across some of the continent’s most iconic landscapes, tracing the mammal’s evolution, its significance to the Great Plains and, most importantly, its relationship to the Indigenous People of North America.

HOMECOMING takes viewers into the 21st century and examines how the InterTribal Buffalo Council’s Bison Conservation and Transfer Program is supporting buffalo restoration to the Indigenous people whose lives, spiritually and physically, were inextricably linked to the bison for thousands of years.

Each winter, approximately 200 bison are transferred to tribal nations around the country. The film follows Jason Baldes, an Eastern Shoshone and a member of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, who was also an advisor to the Burns Film, as he leads historic transfers of bison from the city of Denver, Colorado to his own Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, and from a Nature Conservancy Preserve in Illinois to the Menominee in Wisconsin, communities which will maintain their bison herds to supply a healthy food source and cultural touchstone to their tribal citizens for eternity. The film
discusses what living among the bison once again means for Native people—today and for future generations.

"For many tribes, including my own, our entire lives were centered on this animal," said Julianna Brannum. "It had disappeared from our culture for a time, but with the hard work of folks like Jason Baldes and the InterTribal Buffalo Council, we are seeing a powerful rematriation—a return to our traditional lifeways that help to ground us and refocus our attention to the natural world. It was a real honor to witness such a powerful moment in Menominee history when they welcomed back their animal relatives to their lands."

"THE AMERICAN BUFFALO is a morality tale encompassing two historically significant lessons that resonate today: how humans can damage the natural world and also how we can work together to make choices to preserve the environment around us," Ken Burns said. "Like all stories focused on history, this one continues into the present. With HOMECOMING Julianna tells a powerful story about the important and exciting efforts now underway to restore bison to their ancestral lands and help Native people revive their sacred relationship that for millenia was a vital source of sustenance and spirituality. The film also asks each of us to think about our relationship to the land and the species that inhabit it differently, recognizing that these are ecosystems that must be sustained."

For thousands of generations, buffalo have evolved alongside Indigenous people who relied on them for food and shelter, and, in exchange for killing them, revered the animal. The stories of Native people anchor THE AMERICAN BUFFALO, including the Kiowa, Comanche and Cheyenne of the Southern Plains; the Pawnee of the Central Plains; the Salish, Kootenai, Lakota, Mandan-Hidatsa, Aaniiih, Crow, Northern Cheyenne and Blackfeet from the Northern Plains; and others.

The series documents the startling swiftness of the species’ near extinction in the late 19th century. Numbering an estimated 30 million in the early 1800s, the herds began declining for a variety of reasons, including the lucrative buffalo robe trade, the steady westward settlement of an expanding United States, diseases introduced by domestic cattle and drought. But the arrival of the railroads in the early 1870s and a new demand for buffalo hides to be used in the belts driving industrial machines back East brought thousands of hide hunters to the Great Plains. In just over a decade the number of bison collapsed from 12-15 million to fewer than a thousand, representing one of the most dramatic examples of our ability to destroy the natural world. By 1900, the American buffalo teetered on the brink of disappearing forever, and the Native people of the Plains entered one of the most traumatic moments of their existence.
But the other, lesser-known part of this story, told in the film’s second episode, is about the people who set out to save the species from extermination and how they did it. Their actions provide compelling proof that we are equally capable of pulling back from the brink of environmental catastrophe if we set our minds to it.

**HOMECOMING** will premiere on October 18 on **PBS.org** and **PBS App** and will debut on PBS’s **YouTube Channel** on November 24.

**HOMECOMING** is directed and produced by Julianna Brannum. Executive Produced by Ken Burns. Edited by Matt Leach. Music by Kevin Hoetger and Kyle Crusham. Cinematography by Jared Ames, Brittan Bendabout, Charles Elmore, Lindsay Jackson, and Buddy Squires, ASC. Audio by David Griesinger and Royce Sharp. The film advisors were Julie Dunfey, Dayton Duncan and Craig Mellish.

**THE AMERICAN BUFFALO** will air October 16 and 17, at 8:00-10:00 p.m. ET (check local listings) on PBS, **PBS.org** and the **PBS app**. THE AMERICAN BUFFALO will be distributed internationally by PBS International. The series will be available to stream on all station-branded PBS platforms including **PBS.org**, the **PBS app**, available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. THE AMERICAN BUFFALO will also be available to stream on **PBS Passport** and the “**PBS Documentaries Prime Video Channel**”. PBS station members can view the documentary via PBS Passport as part of a full collection of Ken Burns films. For more information about PBS Passport, visit the **PBS Passport FAQ** website.

**THE AMERICAN BUFFALO** is a production of Florentine Films and WETA Washington, D.C. Directed by Ken Burns. Written by Dayton Duncan. Produced by Julie Dunfey and Ken Burns, and co-produced by Susan Shumaker. Emily Mosher served as associate producer and Julianna Brannum as consulting producer. Edited by Craig Mellish, ACE; Alex Cucchi, assistant editor. Principal cinematography by Buddy Squires. Narrated by Peter Coyote. The executive in charge for WETA is John F. Wilson. Executive producer is Ken Burns.

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: The 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
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