

Tribes get bison as they seek to restore bond with animal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GOLDEN, Colo. — Nearly three dozen bison from a mountain park outside Denver were transferred Wednesday to several tribes from across the Great Plains, in the latest example of Native Americans reclaiming stewardship over animals their ancestors lived alongside for millennia.

Following ceremonial drumming and singing and an acknowledgement of the tribes that once occupied the surrounding landscape, the bison were loaded onto trucks for relocation to tribal lands in several states.

Six of the animals from Colorado will form the nucleus of a new herd for the Yuchi people south of Tulsa, Oklahoma, said Richard Grounds with the Yuchi Language Project.

The herd will be expanded over time, to reestablish a spiritual and physical bond broken two centuries ago when bison were nearly wiped out and the Yuchi were forced from their homeland, Grounds said.

He compared the burly animals' return to reviving the Yuchi's language — and said both language and bison were inseparable from the land. Bison were "the original caretakers" of that land, he said.

"We've lost that connection to the buffalo, that physical connection, as part of the colonial assault," Grounds said. "So we're saying, we Yuchi people are still here and it's important to reconnect and restore those relationships with the land, with the animals and the plants."

Bison from the Denver park also were transferred to the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes in Wyoming, the Porcupine District of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota and the Tall Bull Memorial Council, which has members from various tribes.