

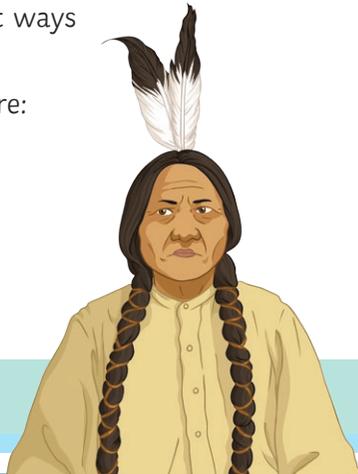
## Key Terms

<b>Great Spirit</b>	A term used by some Indigenous people to describe the major deity in their nation's religion.
<b>nomadic</b>	A person or people who move seasonally for food, water and land.
<b>medicine men</b>	A person who provides spiritual leadership and traditional medicine to a band.
<b>reservations</b>	Government sanctioned areas of land when Indigenous people have been forced to live.
<b>scalp</b>	the practice of removing and preserving the scalp of an enemy. Some nations practiced this for spiritual reasons, others were encouraged by the bounties advertised by the American government for scalps of other Indigenous nations.

## Indigenous Nations

Indigenous peoples live in tribal societies or nations. There is not one nation, but many groups, each with different ways of life, cultures and attitudes. Some nations inhabiting the Great Plains in the 1840s were:

- Arapaho
- Cheyenne
- Crow
- Lakota Sioux
- Pawnee
- Plains Apache



## Indigenous Society in the 1800s

Each nation or tribe would be made up of bands, smaller groups that would be self-governing for most of the time.

Each band was led by a chief who was in power based on his wisdom and skills. Their leadership skills were often referred to as strong spiritual energy or 'medicine'.

Each chief would have a council of elders and **medicine men**. This council would discuss decisions before they were made, often whilst smoking a pipe to gain the wisdom of the **Great Spirit**.

Bands would meet at certain times of year for religious ceremonies and decision making. These meetings would be known as the meeting of a nation.

## How Many?

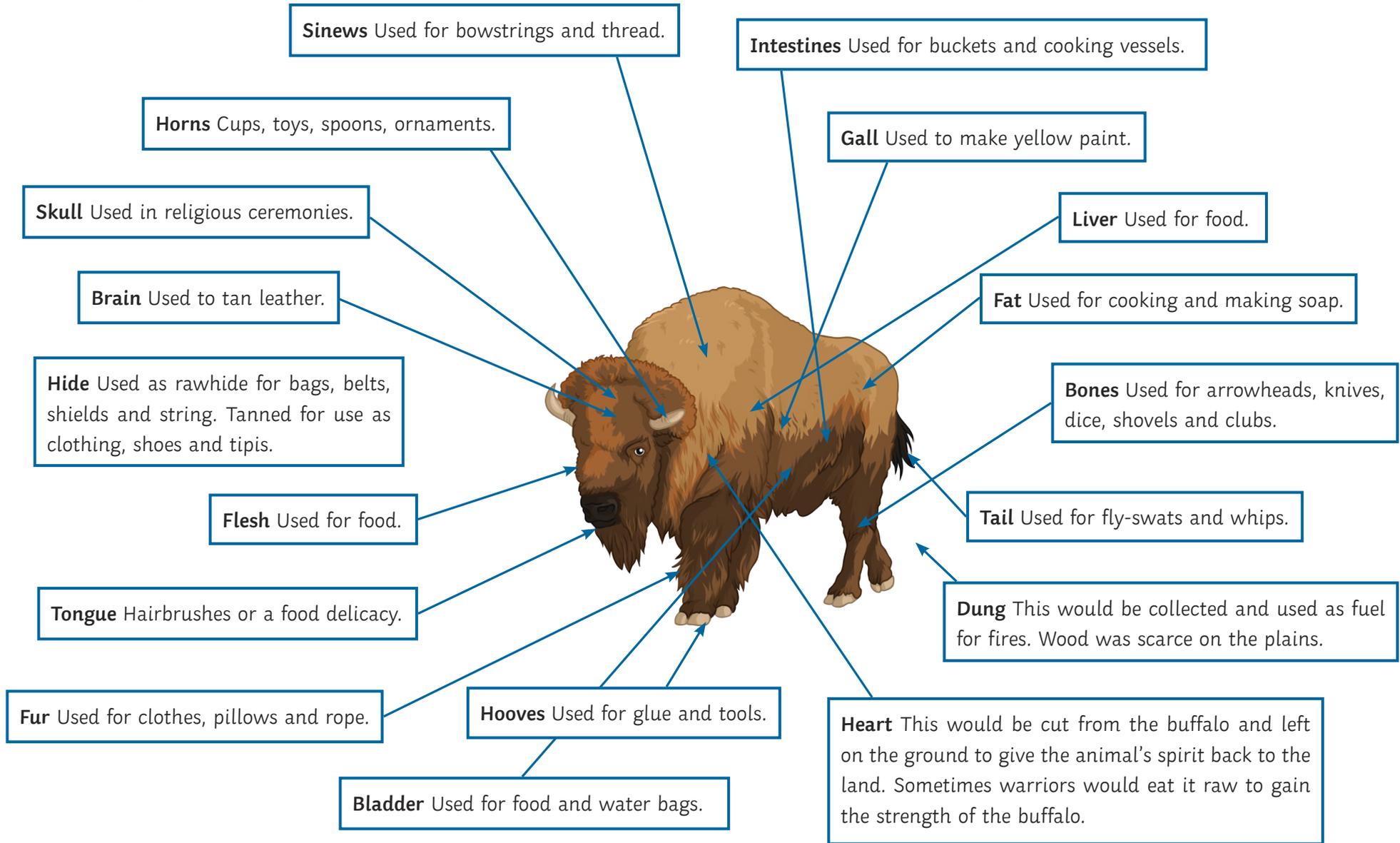
Before the arrival of Europeans, it is estimated that as many as **18 million** Native Americans lived in the area that would become the United States. Europeans carried diseases that were fatal to the Indigenous population, and by 1800 there were only around **600 000** Indigenous people living in the USA. This number would further decrease to just **250,000** by the 1890s. A way of life that had been lived for hundreds of years was to be all but destroyed as Americans moved west.

## Living on the Plains

The Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains (Plains Indians) were **nomadic**. They lived in portable tents known as tipis. These tipis would be made from long wooden poles and buffalo skins. The conical shape of the tipi made it stable in the wind and flaps at the top could be opened to allow smoke from the fire within to escape.

A band would consist of between 10 and 50 families who would travel the plains together. Men were responsible for hunting and warfare, with women overseeing the tipi and children.

Some Uses of the Buffalo



### Indigenous Peoples at War

When Indigenous peoples fought, it was often on a small scale. Raiding parties would fight over horses, hunting space or revenge.

Warfare was highly ritualised. For some nations, it was thought that touching an enemy with a short stick, or coup, was far more impressive than killing them. This practice, called counting coup meant that death in combat was quite rare. A decade-long war between the Lakota and Ojibwa saw a total of 217 deaths, a tiny number when compared to conflicts in Europe or Asia.

If an Indigenous person did kill an enemy, they were careful to remove the scalp of the dead, so their spirit could not take revenge in the afterlife.

### Guns and Horses

Horses were introduced to America by Europeans in 1519. They quickly spread across the Great Plains and changed the way Indigenous people lived. By the 1840s, Indigenous people used horses to hunt, to fight with in battle and as currency. Horsemanship was a respected skill in the plains nations.

Guns also changed the way Indigenous people lived. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, tribes traded guns with Europeans and each other. Guns led to more deadly forms of raiding and warfare than had been historically the case. The Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains of the 1800s had access to rifled firearms. Guns could be used by Americans as trading products and to turn tribes against each other; if one tribe was given guns and another was not, it was hoped the first tribe would wipe out the second.

### Early American Attitudes

In 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was created by the USA to oversee Indian policies. 1830 saw the passing of the Indian Removal Act. This act created a Permanent Indian Frontier which divided the US into territory where Indigenous Americans were not allowed to live and Indian Territory, the areas to the west where they were allowed.

Thousands of Indigenous people were moved from their ancestral lands to Indian Territory in a forced exodus called the 'Trail of Tears'. Thousands of Indigenous people died in this process to clear room for Americans to live in.

The 1840s saw the beginning of the migration of Americans from east to west, something that disturbed the Indigenous peoples.

The **Indian Appropriations Act** of 1851 saw the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains further disrupted as the government tried to change them culturally and contain them in smaller areas known as **reservations**.

As the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains did not believe in land ownership, the increase in the settlement of the plains by Americans made them angry. Their freedom was curtailed as Indigenous people were forced to stay on their reservations.

### Buffalo

The Great Plains were home to many herds of buffalo. These herds moved around the plains and were followed by the nomadic Indigenous peoples. They were the basis of many Indigenous American cultures, lifestyles and survival.

Buffalo hunting was something which was done by men who would use bows and arrows or guns to kill members of the herd and then use the dead animal for a huge range of important things.

The buffalo were not hunted to excess; the Indigenous people usually only killed what they needed and gave respect to the animals they killed, as their belief was that the buffalo had their own noble spirits.

A band would only need to hunt buffalo a few times a year. These hunts were a good form of training for battle as well as an excuse to display horsemanship skills and bravery.

