Bringing back the buffalo

Establishing a community herd at Rock Creek
Ronald Brownnotter is a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. He is majority owner of the Brownnotter Buffalo Ranch, a large buffalo cow/calf operation located on his grandmother’s original allotment in Bullhead, South Dakota.

“It means the world to me, to be here. To see that my grandma, she herself had a vision, to leave something for her kids, to keep her line going ... I see the same thing happening with me, for my kids,” Brownnotter said. “The land is critical to me. Without the land, I’m lost.”

Brownnotter holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy from California State Polytechnic University. He has served on the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council and in the United States Marine Corps.

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ILTF grant supports the Rock Creek Buffalo Project

Many Native Nations relied on the sacred buffalo (Tatanka) to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, clothing and ceremony. In the 19th Century, more than 50 million buffalo were deliberately destroyed in order to starve Native people onto reservations, resulting in dire poverty and ill health.

ILTF supports efforts to bring back the buffalo along with healthy lands, diets and economies to American Indian People. In 2017, ILTF supported the Rock Creek Buffalo Project on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota. The Rock Creek District, comprised of nearly a million acres, is the most isolated of the eight districts on the reservation. It includes the 15,000-acre Shambo Ranch, where a community buffalo herd has been established.

ILTF’s support provided the resources to build fencing in a section of the ranch to contain at least 100 members of the growing herd. Among the additional impacts of the project are job training, employment opportunities, community sharing and a youth engagement program that is helping young people explore a future in buffalo ranching.

Presentation of $100,000 from Indian Land Tenure Foundation to Rock Creek Land & Livestock
The Message Runner is an educational publication produced by ILTF to address specific topics related to Indian land tenure. Past issues have been widely distributed throughout Indian Country and have been used by colleges and universities, tribes and federal agencies for education and training purposes.

The latest edition is Message Runner 9 – “Managing Indian land in a highly fractionated future” – which offers readers an overview of creative new ways that Indian landowners can consider exercising their ownership rights, managing their land and engaging in more effective estate planning through ‘Co-Owner Management Entities.’

“We hope Indian landowners will find this information valuable,” said ILTF president Cris Stainbrook, “as they look for new opportunities to better manage their family’s trust assets and stop further fractionation of their land title.”

ILTF first published the Message Runner in 2002 to provide Indian people and others with much-needed information about Indian land tenure issues.

Read past issues of Message Runner at www.iltf.org/resources/publications