



The Canadian Bison Association – Our History

The bison industry in Canada is only almost 40 years old. The profile and growth of the industry can be attributed to the men and women who had the vision and saw an opportunity to develop an industry around an animal that through centuries of evolution is well suited to the Canadian landscape and variable and sometimes harsh climate. These historical highlights are an attempt to capture part of the history of the Canadian Bison Association.

Every attempt was made to ensure that the information is accurate. We know that some significant events have been missed and important leaders in the industry may have been excluded. For those who have information that should have been included, please forward the information to us. We also recognize that there are many stories that could be included about the activities of the past 40 years – send us these stories – the people, important dates and other information that you believe should be part of the Canadian Bison Association's history.

The Beginning

The Western Canadian Buffalo Association was formed in 1971 under the Presidency of Lawrence Schmalzbauer. The goals were:

1. To promote buffalo and buffalo products, namely meat and hides
2. To seek fair and equitable regulations in the control of disease and in the movement of buffalo and buffalo products in Canada
3. To promote and develop recreations where it is connected with buffalo
4. To advance any and all ventures where we can better our position in the promotion of buffalo.

In 1982 the members were:

Lawrence Schmalzbauer, Saskatoon Saskatchewan

Morris Johnson, Beaubier Saskatchewan

Gail Kenderdine, Lloydminster Saskatchewan

Bob Kenderdine, Lloydminster Saskatchewan

John Snow and Bill Ear Sr., Morley Alberta

Fred Laloch, Yorkton Saskatchewan

Walter Oczkowski, Pincer Creek Alberta

Helen Ternes, Kindersley Saskatchewan

Big K Ranch Gagetown New Brunswick



Lawrence Schmalzbauer

In March of 1982 a group of some 100 visionaries met in Lethbridge, Alberta for the inauguration of the Canadian Buffalo Association with national representation. "The growth in numbers of buffalo owners in the past few years has been tremendous and the need was felt for a national organization to promote and market buffalo and buffalo meat" stated Morris Johnson in the April 1982 edition of the World of Beef and Stockman's Recorder.

Those in attendance of the inaugural meeting were a dedicated group with a dream for growth of the bison industry – a dream that was passed to them by Lawrence Schmalzbauer.

On Friday March 5, 1982 the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Buffalo Association nominated the following executive:

Morris Johnson, Saskatchewan – President

George Poitras, Saskatchewan - Vice President

Mary-Beth Bintner, Saskatchewan – Secretary

Dr. Willoughby Belch, Ontario – Director

Glory-Ann Galicia – Director

Bill Lenton, Manitoba – Director

Hugh McKinnon – Director
Gordon Sherman, Alberta – Director
Bernard Vere, British Columbia-Director
Judy Wilkinson, Saskatchewan – Director
Lawrence Schmalzbauer - Honorary President

In 1982 it was estimated that there were about 175 bison producers in Canada. Of those producers 54 became members of the Canadian Buffalo Association. Membership grew steadily as the industry evolved to reach 1,357 active members in 2001. In 2016 there were just over 550 members.

On March 6, 1982, the Canadian Buffalo Association held its first sale hosted by Perlich Brothers. Prices averaged \$875 for 1981 Heifers and \$775 for 1981 bulls. Two-year old heifers averaged \$1370 with the top two-year old bull selling to Fred Becker of Invermere British Columbia for \$1,450

Presidents

The Canadian Bison Association evolved and prospered because of its leadership. Building on the ground work that was established by Laurence Schmalzbauer and the Western Buffalo Association ten years prior, Morris Johnson was elected as the First President of the Canadian Buffalo Association. Since inception, presidents have been provided the leadership and the vision for the association and have been involved in assisting in the development of an infrastructure for the industry from a grading system to an animal handling protocol. During these developments there was rapid growth that was impacted by the need to develop markets for bison products.

1982 - Morris Johnson, Saskatchewan
1984 - Pierre Belanger, Ontario
1986 – Roy McGann, Saskatchewan
1987 - Six Months – Roy McGann, Saskatchewan
1987 – Six Months - Gervais Bisson Quebec
1990 – Willy Effinger, Ontario
1991 - Dr. Willoughby Belch, Ontario
1992 – Mel Mathews, British Columbia
1994 – Len Ross, Alberta
1996 – Mel Mathews, British Columbia
1997 – Louise Miller, Manitoba
1999 – Jim Quick, Saskatchewan
2001 – Bill Bouffieux, British Columbia
2003 – Tom Olson, Alberta
2004 – 2015 Mark Silzer, Saskatchewan
2015 – Thomas Ackermann, Alberta - Honourary Chair Posthumously
2016 – Sharif Fahmy, British Columbia



Figure 1 Pierre Belanger, Prime Minister Mulroney, Bill Lenton

Regional Associations

At the Canadian Bison Association Convention in Grande Prairie in 1991, felt that provincial chapters of the CBA would make the association more accessible to all producers in all areas of the country. The concept of provincial chapters was expected to provide an ideal form for meeting fellow producers, exchanging information, and providing forum for stakeholder networking. In addition there were provincial funding opportunities to develop the industry.

Alberta

October 26, 1991 – After meeting on July 13, 1991, on October 6, 1991 the Alberta South Central Bison Association was established with Len Ross as President.

1994 – Bison Producers of Alberta created in order to have only one association representing Alberta producers.

British Columbia

October 27, 1991 – BC Interior Bison Association established with Mel Mathews as President.

December 1, 2004 – BC Bison Association established because of the dissolution of the BC interior Bison Association and the Peace Country Bison Association. Bill Bouffieux elected President.

Saskatchewan

July 27, 1991 – Saskatchewan Bison Association established with Don Scott as President.

Peace Country Bison Association

December 1985 – Peace Country Bison Association Ken Boake, Matt Boake, Dan Patten, Leon Poudrier, and Bill Bickford, with Brian Clarke as witness. PCBA became a registered society in British Columbia on December 23, 1987, and on March 13, 1989 in Alberta. It was the first registered bison association in Canada. When the Bison Producers of Alberta (BPA) was created in 2004, Peace Country Bison Association ceased to exist in its old format. Its Alberta members became part of Region 3 in BPA, while BC members became part of the BC Bison Association.

November 2005 - Official Dissolution of the Peace Country Bison Association.

Ontario Bison Association

August 15, 1992 – Ontario Bison Association formed with Pierre Belanger elected as President.

Manitoba Bison Association

June 28, 1992 – After meetings on June 5, 1991 December 8, 1991 and January 26, 1992 the Manitoba Bison Association was officially formed with Dave Giesbrecht as President.

Quebec Bison Association

April 1991 – Quebec Bison Association formed

Conventions\Meetings

One of the ways the Canadian Bison Association shared the knowledge gained by industry stakeholders was through events such as conventions and field days. From 1983 to 1993 the annual meetings of the Canadian Bison Association moved from province to province. Each meeting was highlighted with special events from touring the world's largest buffalo – an all-steel 18 foot high, 30 foot long, nine-ton sculpture being built by Mike Camp to in Earlton Ontario to producer tours in other parts of the country. In 1993, it was decided to hold the National Convention in conjunction with the

- 1982 – Lethbridge Alberta
- 1983 – Regina Saskatchewan
- 1984 – Earlton Ontario
- 1985 – Not Held
- 1986 – Winnipeg Manitoba
- 1987 – Sherbrooke Quebec
- 1988 – Edmonton Alberta
- 1989 – Peterborough Ontario
- 1990 – Winnipeg Manitoba
- 1991 – Grand Prairie Alberta
- 1992 – Collingwood

1993 - Saskatoon Saskatchewan (Spring)
1993 – Regina Saskatchewan (Fall)
1994 – Present – Regina Saskatchewan

International Board Members

There has been a close working relationship between the United States and the Canadian bison associations. This relationship has been maintained by having other country representation on boards of directors.

U.S. International Directors on CBA Board

1990 – 1997 Del Hansel, Colorado
1998 – 2001 Merle Maass, Colorado
2002 – 2003 Steve Wilson
2004 – 2009 Rusty Seedig
2009 – Dr. Gerald Parsons

Canadian International Directors on U.S. Bison Association Board

1989 – Fern Mertens
1991 – Len Ross
1997 – Lorne Miller
2000 – Ray Blais
2004 – Doug Griller
2008 – Nolan Miller
2012 – Marvin Moore
2015 – Paul Kolesar

International Bison Convention

September 19, 1984 Ken Childs President of American Bison Association raised the possibility of an international convention. Working with the Canadian Bison Association, the first International Bison Convention was held in La Crosse Wisconsin July 26 – 31, 1993. Louise Miller was Canadian Representative in charge of registration at that convention. Since that time three other international Bison Conventions have been held.

1993 – Lacrosse Wisconsin “IBC ... The Place to be in ‘93”
2000 – Edmonton Alberta “Bison are “Back”
2007 - Rapid City North Dakota “The Thunder Grows”
2012 – Quebec City Quebec “Experience the Difference”
2017 – Nig Sky Montana “Bright Skies, Bright Horizons

Bill Bouffoux is famous for his photography of bison in action, and often served as an official photographer at Shows and Conventions at award times, with his work appearing in Smoke Signals magazine, and as the theme art for the ***International Bison Conference 2000*** posters.



Significant Events in Canadian Bison Association History

1972 – Bill Nilsson purchased some exotic cattle from North Dakota, and with them came a buffalo. He sold the animal for \$800 and made a \$400 profit so he brought in more buffalo – from Custer State Park, and from Durham Ranch in Wyoming. By 1980, the Nilsson herd numbered close to 2500, and were very visible – they attracted a great deal of attention, and ranchers started investigating the merits of raising them. His animals were the beginning of many bison herds.

April 1978 – Wood Bison designated as “Endangered.”

1978 - Surplus Plains Bison from Elk Island Park were sold by bid lots to ranchers in various parts of Canada and the US.

March 5, 1982 – The first meeting of the Canadian Buffalo Association.

August 1983 – The name “Buffalo” dropped in the marketing and grading of animals and changed to bison.

March 4, 1984 - Canadian Buffalo Association receives certificate of approval as a breed association under the Livestock Pedigree Act.

1984 – President Logo of Maple Leaf with bison in centre is selected. Canadian Buffalo Association followed by “Association canadienne du Bison”. Committee set up to develop bylaws that comply with Livestock Pedigree Act.

1986 - Buffalo Bits started by Myrt Lenton.

Spring 1990 - Registration of foundation stock begins and is to be completed by December 1994.

1990 – Permanent CBA office in Morden, Manitoba.

June 1990 - First Smoke Signals with Myrt Lenton Editor.

June 1990 – Gail Reichert becomes Canadian Bison Association part-time secretary.

June 1990 – Aaron Mountain becomes first life-time member.

1990 – Rod Potter becomes youngest Life-time Member of the Canadian Bison Association.

October 1991- Alberta South Central Bison Association – Board Clay Curry, Len Ross, Ken Boake, Gary Fielding, Steve Wills.

1991- Bison removed from the need to pay Goods and Services Tax.

1991 – Discussions begin about grading system for bison.

1992 – Grading system established led by Committee Chair Richard Bintner.

April 1, 1993 – Bison grading projects initiated.

November 1993 – First Canadian National Show and Sale.

November 1993 – Don Scott becomes First Show and Sale Chairman in Regina.

1994- Announcement that Myrt Lenton Memorial Award established.

May 1997 - European Commission opening and providing for the administration of tariff quotas for high-quality fresh, chilled and frozen beef and for frozen buffalo meat.

November 1998 – Bison National Carcass Class started at National Show and Sale.

November 28, 1998 – CBA Board decides to Move head office to Regina Saskatchewan.

June 1999 - Gavin Conacher Becomes the Executive Director.

Fall 1999 - Bernard Vere introduces “Canadian-bison.ca” and encourages all to “get on the net”.

November 1998 - Top Bull Calf in Canada for \$34,000 at a Canadian National Show & Sale in Regina.

May 2000 – Wood Bison designated as “Threatened.”

August 2000 – The Canadian Bison Association and the Canadian Cattle Identification (CCIA) sign agreement for CCIA to provide the CBA database and tag distribution services.

October 2000 – Tara Dulugan becomes first CBA office administrator in Regina.

November 2000 – Brian Wojceichowski becomes Barn Boss at National Show and Sale.

March 2001 – Canadian Bison Marketing Council established.

July 2001 – Samantha McDonald hired by the Canadian Bison Marketing Council as an international and domestic market analyst.

May 20, 2003 - BSE shuts U.S. border to Canadian exports.

September 2003 - Terry Kremeniuk becomes CBA Executive Director.

Spring 2004 – The Committee on the Status of Endangered wildlife in Canada lists plains bison as “Threatened” but plains bison remains unlisted under the *Species at Risk Act*.

November 2004 – Les Kroeger becomes Barn Boss.

December 2004 – BC Bison Association formed.

October 2006 – Pauline Long-Wright joins CBA as office Manger

May 2007 - Amended bison grading standards implemented.

November 2007 – Last year of bison carcass competition.

July 2010 – CBA national field days begin again in partnership with regional associations with the 2010 field day being held at Miller’s Silver Creek Bison Ranch in Manitoba.

October 2013 – Agreement in principle between Canada and the European Union announced and will pave the way for the removal of the 20% tariff on shipments of bison to the European Union.

November 2016 – Canadian Bison Junior Judging Program Initiated.

September 21, 2017 – Implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union begins.