

## **Plenary 4: The Kainai linnii Rematriation Project, Restoring the Plains Bison as an Ecological and Cultural Keystone**

**February 23, 2023, 1:00-1:35 pm**

Abstract: The Kainai linnii Rematriation Project (KIRP) is an eco-cultural restoration project that centers around the restoration of the land and culture of the Kainai (Blood) First Nation by re-introducing plains bison (*Bison bison bison*) back to the mixed-grass prairie pastures on the North End area of the Blood Reserve. Bison have been absent from these lands for ~155 years, and First-Nation-led environmental research is being undertaken to study and better understand how re-introducing plains bison can benefit mixed-grass prairie ecosystems. Bison are considered both an ecological and cultural keystone for the Blackfoot/Kainai. Bison were essential for our survival and ceremonial practices, and members of the KIRP herd will be harvested and utilized for meat distribution and ceremonial practices for tribal members once carrying capacity is reached. The herd is not being utilized for harvest yet, but some of their parts are still being utilized for ceremonial practice, and their return to the land has already had a profound effect on the community and local ecosystem.

Presenter:

**Justin Bruised Head**, Kainai linnii Rematriation Project Coordinator, Blood Tribe Land Management

Justin Bruised Head (“Akkamootskoonaki”) is The Kainai linnii Rematriation Project Coordinator at Blood Tribe Land Management. He was born and raised in Southern Alberta and is a member of the Blood Tribe First Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy. Justin received his Post-Secondary Diploma in Renewable Resource Management in 2017 and Bachelor of Applied Science Degree in Ecosystem Management in 2019 from the Lethbridge College. Justin enjoys the outdoors and is an advocate for grassland conservation & restoration on the Blood Reserve.