

[Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates](#)

CHWHA advocates for the proper management of the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park to ensure that this herd continues to survive and thrive for generations to come.

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**“You have to know the past to understand the present.” ~ Carl Sagan ~
Part 3**

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2000 Stallion Circus living in TRNP

We thought we would pause to play catch up with those of you who may be new to this page and the story of the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. We walked into the story in 2016 and have been working hard to piece together what has happened and the long list of why's associated with these horses. I feel that it is important to note that I served very briefly on the board for North Dakota Badlands Horse, believing that I would be helping the wild horses in the park. When the running response to any of my questions was: "We don't question the park.", it became clear to me that NDBH was nothing more than an advocacy group for the park – NOT the horses. We believe you will see the difference by the end of this series.

We have also tried to work with Eileen from Wild in North Dakota. We have also invited her to join our fight for proper management of the wild horses in TRNP. She has not shown any interest in discussing the strides we are making with our legal team.

Both of these groups have several similarities:

- Both support the park and their decisions to continue to cull this herd without the use of science and genetics
- Both advocate for the horses captured and sold but turn a blind eye when asked how this herd survives and thrives for future generations when they support the park taking ALL of the horses aged 4 months – 3 years old out of the park
- Both tout that they "educate" the public on this "historical" herd, yet I have never heard any of the history we have unearthed mentioned by any of them
- Both fought to have individual partnerships with TRNP that essentially state they will help the park sell ALL of the horses removed from the park.
- Both groups have dropped the ball in terms of truly advocating for the wild horses that remain IN TRNP – the

older horses who have been dying off with nothing to replace them. Under the respective leadership of the two organizations, what was reported in the park's 1978 Environmental Assessment as one of the most genetically diverse herds in the US, 40 years later was found to be one of the most inbred herd of horses in the WORLD! If that does not speak to failed advocacy efforts with regards to the horses who live IN TRNP, I am not sure what does!

- Both groups are stuck in a time when this herd did not have the following it does now and horses were captured and went to slaughter. Both groups should be commended for their work in finding homes for captured horses over the years. Their shortcomings come with their ignorance of the historical significance of these horses as well as the lost genetics that NEITHER GROUP spoke up for over the years.

The truth is the wild horses of TRNP, and the remaining genetics that make them unique, are running out of time. There WILL be a round up next year, in about 4 short months in March/April 2022. Once that round up begins, it will NOT end.

We have pushed hard to have captures delayed and/or postponed due to Covid and the drought. I guarantee you that as soon as the North Dakota winter weather breaks and spring peeks its head out, captures will resume in TRNP. We believe that the remaining 70 horses that are 4 months old to 3 years old will be captured and sold. That includes any horses born as of December/January through those born in 2019.

We are working hard to raise awareness because everyone will be ready to be up in arms WHEN the captures start, but that will be way too late!

I don't want you to believe a word I am saying.

Yes, read that again. Don't believe me.

Instead DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH!

ASK YOUR OWN QUESTIONS!!

We have asked questions to:

- Dr. Dan Baker, Colorado State University (CSU)
- Dr. Jenny Powers, National Park Service (NPS) & CSU
- Dr. Blake McCann, NPS
- Superintendent Wendy Ross, NPS
- Regional Director Herbert Frost, NPS
- Marylu Weber, President North Dakota Badlands Horse (NDBH)
- Eileen Norton, President Wild In North Dakota (WIND)
- Castle McLaughlin, Curator Harvard's Peabody Museum
- Frank Kuntz, founder of The Nokota Horse Conservancy
- Congressman Kelly Armstrong's Office
- Senator John Hoeven's Office
- Senator Kevin Cramer's Office

Just to name a few. Please, feel free to question them yourselves.

More than anything, when these groups are asking you to support them with donations, DON'T be afraid to ask them WHERE THE MONEY IS GOING!! When you ask, make sure you ask HOW your donation helps the horses that continue to live IN Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Remember they no longer have any partnerships with the park, although both have admitted they want those partnerships back. They also do not fight the park's decisions to pull as many horses as they choose without using science and genetics. They believe "The Park is going to do whatever it wants to." – no matter what the public says.

We believe they are wrong.

This will be a quick history. Again, please do not believe me. Do your own research. Google TRNP horses. Google the people's names we will mention going forward. Look at the documents, videos, and articles we have added to our library on our website www.chwha.org. ASK QUESTIONS!!!!

Theodore Roosevelt National Park is a fenced National Park. The fence was completed in the 1950's and the wild horses were unintentionally fenced within the park's boundaries. The park decided to allow the horses to stay, but the HUGE "WHY" question I cannot for the life of me get an answer to is WHY the park does not embrace the historical significance of these horses. I have found that I am not the only one asking these questions.

A few years ago, the pieces finally started coming together for us when we had the extreme pleasure of meeting Frank Kuntz. It is amazing to talk to someone who has been truly advocating for these horses, by the deliberate definition of advocating, for over 50 years. It is equally upsetting to hear the same things we have been told since we got here are the same answers, he and his late brother Leo received some 50 years ago. It is literally like there is a script left for the next person to give the same generic answers no matter how you frame the questions.

Frank and his late brother Leo frequented TRNP and in 1981, Leo bought his first horse from a TRNP roundup. The two brothers, who had grown up KNOWING and working with horses all their lives, immediately noticed significant differences in these horses. Their initial reasons for buying the park horses were to race them in long distance endurance competitions because these horses proved to have more stamina than other horses. We all know that turned into what would become their life's work to preserve these genetically unique horses.

Frank and Leo continued buying horses from TRNP through around the year 2000.

In 1986, Frank and Leo met Castle McLaughlin. Castle worked for the National Park Service and they commissioned her to research the history of the wild horses in TRNP.

Castle spent 3 years working on her historical report. The park barely acknowledged her report then, and definitely does not see it's significance now. Her 300+ page report literally sat in a file box or on a shelf until we submitted a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request for it a few years ago. It is now scanned into the NPS data base and is available to read and download in its entirety in our library.

In 1999, Castle joined Frank and Leo and they founded The Nokota Horse Conservancy. The Nokota horse is now a recognized breed of horse with extremely interesting genetics. Genetic studies are still ongoing and we are excited to see what the latest report will show.

It is important to mention that Castle is currently an associate curator at Harvard's Peabody Museum. Castle and Robert Utley, who we spoke about yesterday, are considered to be the premier experts on Western Americana. They also have the support of people of other people in the same circles. Robert Utley has also done extensive studies on Sitting Bull.

While life has taken all of these people in different directions, they do come together on the point of the historical significance of the wild horses of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. They all recognize the direct line, with a clear paper trail, that links the horses in were found in this area in the 1880's and ultimately fenced in TRNP back to Sitting Bull's ponies.

We will continue down the rabbit hole there next. While you are waiting, PLEASE do your own research. Google the names. Checkout the news compilation on nokotahorse.org. Google Patrick Springer and his decades of reporting on the TRNP horses as a reporter in the state of North Dakota.

Please feel free to share your findings with us! We will continue to share ours with you.

We do have one last thought from Robert Utley to leave you with today. This sums up EXACTLY how the challenges currently facing the TRNP herd transpired:

"We had a similar case, not similar, but we had a case at Little Bighorn last year, in which we were trying to stop them from doing a bad thing, which was enlarging the visitor center. And I said no, that thing was built in the wrong place to begin with, it's an adverse affect under the preservation law and you can't enlarge it because the over it. A breed of his horses and the cowboy horses wraps up the two significant themes, historical themes, on which the significance of that Park is based. And that is the Indian and the cowboy, DeMores and TR, you know you don't get much more significant than that. And all I have been arguing for is that, not that they bring the horses back, I wouldn't trust them, but they open a dialog with the people in Linton and work out some sort of arrangement by which they are acknowledged as historic resources and to the degree, and this will probably never happen, is reintroduce them but that's not going to happen under the present management. It's j ust not going to happen; they won't even listen to Castle."

"But you've got to have a Park Service who would like to do this and I stand ready as long as I live to cultivate that. I can't cultivate it within this Park Service; I've made too many enemies for one thing

or too many people that say that is just Utley. **If you had this kind of combination, a receptive Park Service, a Superintendent who would listen and was sold, and a conservancy that was viable and able, maybe with some federal funding, and then the public support in North Dakota, possibly South Dakota, that would bring pressures on the congressional delegation.** Sign up the governor, too. It's probably going to happen."

Thank you for your support!