

## Foreword

Archaeology on the northern plains spans the second half of the twentieth century. Although people had found objects from the old stone age, the dedicated inquiry that goes with the profession only appeared when universities and museums supported researchers. These curators and professors, such as Richard Forbis (1919–1999) and Marie Wormington (1914–1994), made their occupation the full time search for traces of ancient people. That first generation brought with them the methods of an observational science. Their immediate goal was to systematically excavate through the different strata and record their findings. Their long-term objective was to make sense of the artifacts and features in order to understand the cultural history of the northern plains. Their motivation was to establish a chronology or devise a taxonomy from patterns in the material culture they unearthed. More importantly, they trained the students who would pick up the task of interpreting the archaeological record and find the explanations that fit the data.

From then to the present generation, the sites that persistently pique the imagination are the enigmatic buffalo jumps. Interpreting the archaeological record may seem like trying to find answers in the entrails of a badger. However, archaeologists possess many methods that help them understand the life and culture of people who in ancient times called the northern plains their home. The modern era in archaeology benefits from breakthroughs in other disciplines, but in return archaeologists contribute food for thought. Like many in this profession, Jack Brink feels fortunate that he can conduct research that continuously stokes the sense of wonder that makes his job worthwhile. He also recognizes that there exists strong public interest in archaeological work and that we have a duty to report the results of our inquiries in an accessible manner. Thus he can inject his wry sense of humour into the text to illustrate a point he wants to make.

When Jack began his studies in archaeology he was able to concentrate on that topic at university. As a young student he learned his trade from his elder academics, but he was not content to merely absorb data. He has devoted his career to expanding the knowledge base he inherited from them. Of course the challenge for him was not just to look for answers, but also to look for questions. What remains to be done in northern plains archaeology? What questions

will preoccupy the current generation of archaeologists? You might well ask. Jack certainly has. He has picked up the task initiated by his intellectual predecessors and continues to look for insights amid the buffalo jumps. The reader will easily find the humanity in both the author and his subject. Nowhere is there a hint of the stereotypical researcher preoccupied with minutiae while ignoring the big picture around him.

Curiosity and wonder drew Jack to the cliffs and crevices that fired his imagination. This memoir of his contemplations about the buffalo jumps, and other artifacts of ancient people, is a synthesis of his life's work. Together with his knowledge he takes on the role of storyteller, relating the personal anecdotes that spiced up his research. He also poses challenges for the next generation. What research questions will they formulate to imagine the northern plains in ancient times? How will they use the knowledge they gain? Well, that is up to them to determine, but at least they will have Jack Brink's narrative to guide their thoughts.

The vantage point from his perspective is similar to the expansive view of the plains from the edge of the precipice. His endeavours have culminated with this inspired volume. From his pen flows a quixotic tour through archaeology; with his own practical guide for imagining northern plains antiquity, including all the blood and guts. More than anything, Jack shows us yet again that buffalo do not jump; they have to be pushed!

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