


The Nokota Horse Conservancy

PRESERVING THE NATIVE HORSE OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS




I am a descendant of
Sitting Bull's war ponies.

My ancestors carried his
warriors in the fight
against Custer at the
Battle of the Little Big Horn.

A dark brown horse stands in profile on the left side of the frame, looking towards the right. The horse's mane is slightly windswept. The background is a vast, open landscape covered in snow, with several low, rounded hills or mounds in the distance under a clear, pale blue sky. The overall scene is serene and evocative of a northern plains environment.

On these Northern Plains,
my homeland, I have
endured now for more than
one hundred and fifty snows.

A person with dark hair, wearing a dark, heavy, fur-lined garment, is riding a dark-colored horse. The horse is standing in a vast, open landscape with sparse, dry vegetation. The background shows a hazy horizon with distant mountains under a clear, light blue sky. The overall tone of the image is serene and contemplative.

I am a descendant of
Fear His Shadow,
Sitting Bull's favorite.

And I am the favorite
of cowboys.





Through my veins flows the
lifeblood of history, and the
stories of great warriors.

I am the Spirit of The Northern Plains.



I am Nokota.®





The History and Cultural Significance
of the Nokota® Horse

Brought to the New World by the Spaniards in the 1500s, by the early to mid 1700s the wild descendants of those original Spanish horses had migrated north across the Great Plains to the great swath of land centered in the present day Dakotas and inhabited by the people whom we know today as “Lakota”.



The Lakota, who had previously been a woodlands people in what today is eastern Minnesota, found themselves driven from their former home by the Chippewa, and out onto the vast open expanse of The Great Northern Plains.



There, they encountered these majestic animals, who so amazed them that the Lakota named them “Sunka Wakan,” or, “Sacred Dogs.”

The introduction of the horse totally transformed Lakota culture. Previously dependent on the dog and travois for transporting their possessions during their nomadic travels -- and on camouflage and stealth for hunting buffalo on foot -- over the next century the Lakota became expert horsemen and breeders.



In the process of domesticating these wild horses, the Lakota also became the finest light cavalry in the world, extending their range and power across The Northern Plains.



By the time of Sitting Bull's birth in 1831, the Lakota were the dominant military force for hundreds of miles in every direction.



Sitting Bull, although known as a great chief, warrior, and holy man, was also an expert horse breeder. It is said that he, using those skills, over many years bred a line of horses that excelled on the hunt and on the battlefield. Known for their intelligence, endurance, easy-going temperament, compactness, and curiosity, today's Nokota® horses are descendants of Sitting Bull's original herd.

By the time Theodore Roosevelt began ranching in the Little Missouri area of North Dakota in the early 1880s, the ancestors of what came to be known as the Nokota® breed had been seized from the Lakota to assure their continued pacification.



Among ranchers in the area, there was little interest in preserving such horses, which were not perceived as rare or especially valuable. Some people felt that the rough appearance, loud coat colors, and small size of many Indian horses made them undesirable prospects for saddle stock.





The Marquis de Mores, a flamboyant French aristocrat and pioneer rancher in western North Dakota, disagreed with that opinion. De Mores, a sophisticated man of the world and expert horseman, admired the stamina shown by the Lakota horses, and purchased 250 of them from the Fort Buford traders.

In 1884, De Mores sold sixty of the Lakota mares to A.C. Huidekoper, founder of the immense HT Ranch near Amidon, N.D. The HT ceased operations in the early 20th century, but decades later the horses he bred -- the original Nokotas® -- were still wild in the Badlands and in



the hands of local ranchers. In the aftermath of the Depression, Federal agencies gained control over the management of public lands. Wild horses were regarded as competition for domestic livestock.





During the 1940s and 1950s, Federal and state agencies cooperated to eradicate wild horses in North Dakota. When Theodore Roosevelt National Park was developed during the late 1940s, a few bands of

wild horses were inadvertently enclosed
within the Park's boundaries.

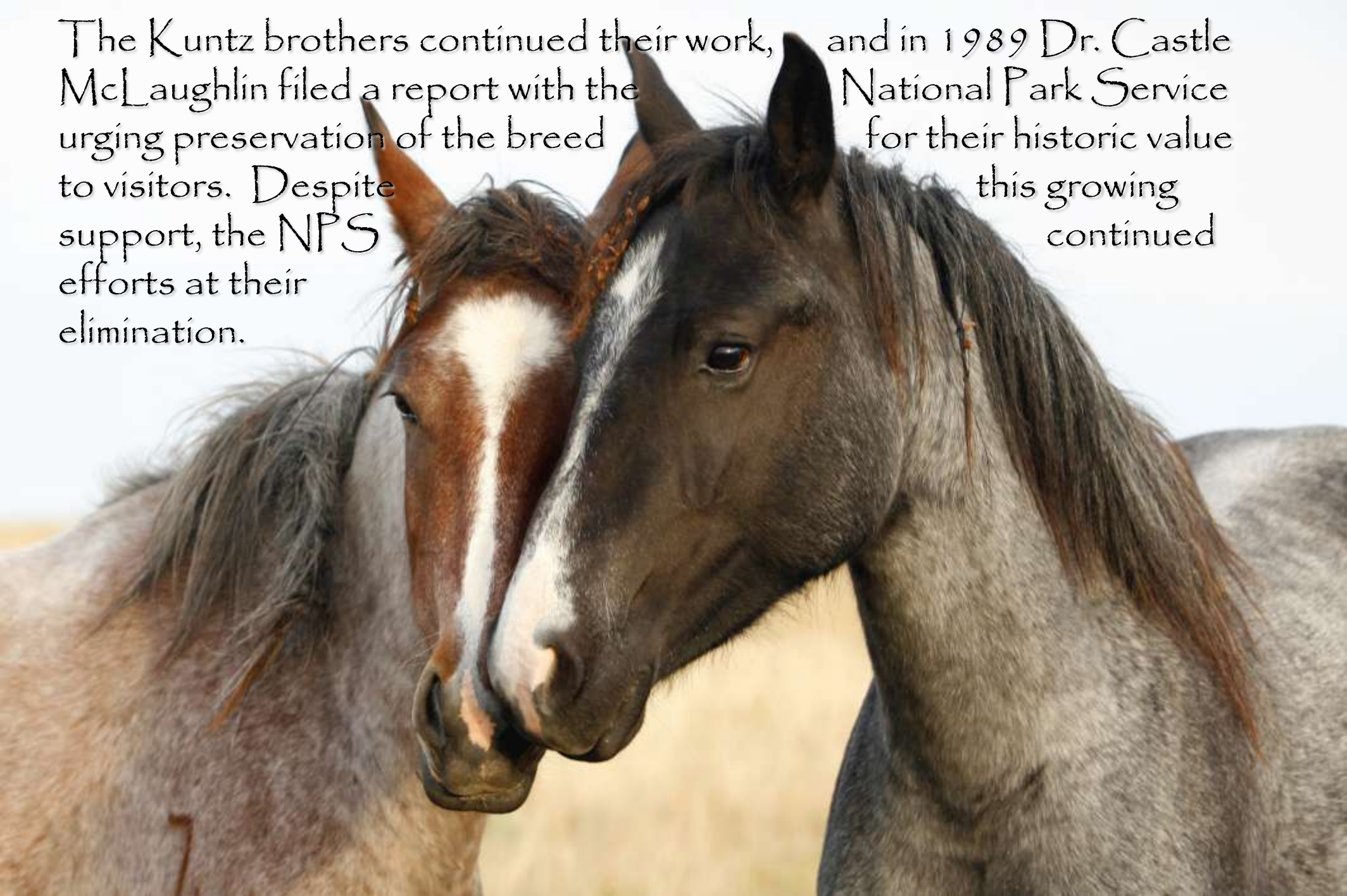
By 1960, they were the last surviving wild
horses in North Dakota.



During the 1980s, Park administrators decided to change the appearance of the wild horses by introducing outside blood lines. The dominant stallions in the Park were removed or killed, and were replaced. The primary rationale for replacing the original horses was to improve their appearance and sale value at auction. At that point, Leo and Frank Kuntz of Linton, North Dakota, began buying as many of the original Park horses as they could to preserve their unique characteristics.



The Kuntz brothers continued their work, and in 1989 Dr. Castle
McLaughlin filed a report with the National Park Service
urging preservation of the breed for their historic value
to visitors. Despite this growing
support, the NPS continued
efforts at their
elimination.



Support for the horses continued to grow. In 1993, led by efforts of State Senator Pete Naaden, the Nokotas® were named the Honorary State Equine of North Dakota, and in 1996, the Kuntz brothers' fight to preserve and return them to Theodore Roosevelt National Park was profiled on ABC Television's prime time news.




Because virtually all of the surviving Nokota® horses are now owned by the NHC and private individuals, our focus has shifted to preserving breeding stock and to promoting their offspring as a new breed.



This transition was nurtured by Charlie and Blair Fleischmann. They organized the non-profit Nokota Horse Conservancy, and created a breed registry. Today, with advice from scientific consultants, the Kuntz brothers and the NHC manage the Nokota® breeding herd.



Nokota® owners across the country promote the breed by campaigning their own horses and developing philanthropic support for the organization and its preservation and educational programs.

A herd of horses is grazing in a grassy field. The horses are of various colors, including white, black, and brown. The background features rolling hills under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The Nokota® Land Trust:
Creating a Permanent Home
for the Nokota® Horse




Today, the greatest threat to the survival of the Nokota® horse is not the rifles of the National Park Service, but rather, the lack of a permanent home for the 120 or so horses that comprise the NHC's breeding herd.



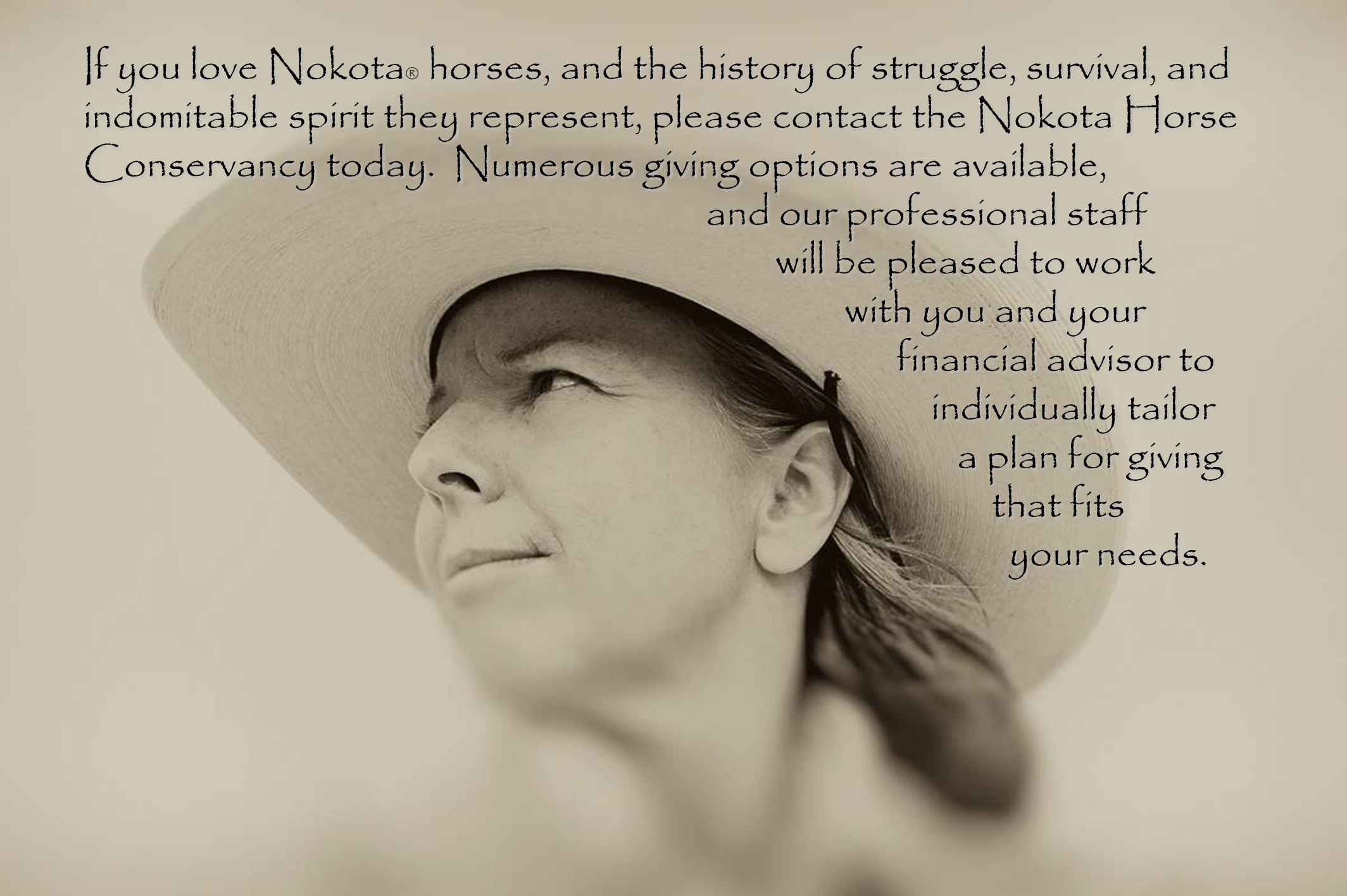
While, as with any non-profit organization,
the needs of the Nokota Horse
Conservancy are many, there
is nothing more important
to the long-term
survival of these
horses than the
creation of a
permanent
sanctuary.

To realize this vision, by the end of 2014 the Conservancy plans to raise \$2 million to create a permanent 2,000-acre land trust of North Dakota rangeland in the “breaks” adjacent to the Missouri River, close to the Nokotas’[®] historic home. The NHC recognizes the valuable role the Nokota[®] play in the preservation of the delicate Northern Plains ecosystem, and that by protecting these historically important horses, we also protect the open spaces in which they thrive.





But we cannot achieve this
critical goal without your generous
tax-deductible financial support.



If you love Nokota® horses, and the history of struggle, survival, and indomitable spirit they represent, please contact the Nokota Horse Conservancy today. Numerous giving options are available,

and our professional staff will be pleased to work with you and your financial advisor to individually tailor a plan for giving that fits your needs.



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