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NEW VOICES IN OLD LANDS: NATIVE AMERICAN MUSEUM CONSULTATIONS IN ARCHES, CANYONLANDS, AND HOVENWEEP NATIONAL PARKS

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ABSTRACT
In the United States, Native peoples are reconnecting with traditional lands, resources, and objects and influencing how these are interpreted in museums. The National Park Service (NPS) interprets Native resources and then educates millions of visitors through museums, brochures, outdoor displays, and ranger-guided tours. This paper is about three studies in Utah conducted by our research team for Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, and Hovenweep National Monument. The analysis is based on 696 interviews with representatives of 9 tribes/pueblos. As part of these interviews, there were 349 recommendations made to the NPS, most of which focused on the content of museums and outdoor displays. Discussed here are recommendations that potentially influence how the NPS understands and interprets the cultural resources of these tribes and pueblos.

KEY WORDS: New heritage voices in museums, Native Americans, Colorado heritage, Utah heritage, post-colonial museums, applied cultural anthropology

The National Park Service (NPS) was established as an agency of the United States of America by the Congress in 1916 through the Organic Act. The NPS was charged by its establishment legislation to manage all national parklands and resources that had been set aside by Congress beginning in the late 1800s, as well as all new parklands declared from this time forward. The primary dual mandate of the new NPS agency was to preserve natural and cultural resources within specific parks and to provide public access. Indeed, when the NPS agency mission was updated in 2000, the new statement emphasized working with partner organizations and communities to extend the benefits of conservation. NPS work on interpretation and education has grown to reflect this.

Public education has become a primary means of accomplishing both preservation and public access. The NPS today educates tens of millions of people annually through museums, pamphlets, outdoor displays, and ranger-guided tours (Figure 1). Each NPS unit has one or more tourist visitor centers where a free interpretative video explains the most charismatic components of the park. Nearby is a museum that provides further information. At the bookshop, hundreds of educational materials are sold, from maps, to postcards, to children’s and technical books. Beyond the visitor center are dozens of trails lined with interpretative signage and displays. Park rangers provide guided educa-
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Tional tours at key locations. Tourists come to parks to be educated, wowed by their natural splendor and cultural interest, and cautioned about how to preserve these national treasures.

Our understandings of park interpretations are connected to the broader issue of how museums have represented Native peoples. Many museum displays have celebrated colonial progress narratives. This essay in contrast, considers how museums might reflect diverse, intersecting, and transforming identities. American anthropologists since Boas have engaged with museums as sites for arguments against social evolutionist frameworks and for an accurate interpretation of the cultures and values of Native American and other indigenous peoples (Stoessel 1988). Native American peoples and scholars of American culture have led efforts to decolonize national and tribal museums (Clifford 1997; Lonetree 2012).

This essay considers the new museum in two ways by reframing the conventional boundaries of the museum to examine a spectrum of educational and interpretive contexts from displays situated “inside” at the visitor center to “outside” displays and signage that guide and educate visitors throughout the park. While there is no hard line marking the division between “inside” and “outside” domains, we aim to understand the different functions of interpretation as visitors move through various park spaces. Second, the essay discussed how research can provide a range of “Native voices,” which the NPS is increasingly trying to understand. We examine the actual process by which antiquated conceptions are challenged and rewritten in contemporary displays and signage.

Today, Native Americans own only a fraction of their aboriginal lands as reservation lands. Southern Paiutes, for example, have lost 99% of their aboriginal lands to encroachment (Stoffle, Arnold and Bulletts 2016). Native Americans and other indigenous peoples stipulate that their aboriginal connections to homelands that derive from Creation have bound peoples and their ancestral lands in reciprocal obligations of nurturance and care (Plisnet 2018). Despite being removed, Native Americans continue to desire to strengthen their connections with aboriginal lands.

The Studies

Native peoples share cultural perspectives in order to influence interpretation and management as they strive to reconnect with aboriginal lands, resources, and objects (Stoffle and Arnold 2003, Stoffle et al. 2015). The NPS conducts formal consultation on a government-to-government basis to collect new information to be used in museums, brochures, outdoor displays, and ranger-guided tours. One type of official study is the park-funded Ethnographic Overview and Assessment (EOA).

This analysis is based on three EOAs: Arches National Park (Arch) (Stoffle et al. 2016); Canyonlands National Park (Canyonlands) (Stoffle et al. 2017a); and Hovenweep National Monument (Hovenweep) (Stoffle et al. 2019) (Figure 2). Researchers conducted formal and informal EOA interviews with representatives of the following nine tribes and pueblos who participated in one or more of these studies: (1) Acoma Pueblo, (2) Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, (3) Southern Ute Indian Tribe, (4) Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, (5) Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, (6) Navajo Nation, (7) Hopi Tribe, (8) Zuni Pueblo – Ashiwi, and (9) Santa Clara Pueblo. The analysis is based on 696 ethnographic interviews (168 at Arches, 316 at Canyonlands, and 212 at Hovenweep).

Tribal and pueblo representatives shared common perspectives, thus providing a clear and unified story about these parklands, natural resources, and objects. Overall these constitute a Native American perspective, though certain differences do exist. These perspectives enrich what was already being told in park interpretations or being practiced in land management. They provide new ideas about Native American history, the cultural meaning of the land, the cultural centrality of natural resources, and the traditional use of objects. In general, the participating tribal and pueblo representatives are supportive of park museums and their management. The representatives also agreed that the traditional people of these areas each have valid alternative voices.

New Voices for Old Issues

The following cases illustrate new Native American park resource identifications and interpretations, which differ in important ways from current park interpretations. It is important to understand that these recommendations do not obligate the NPS to change or add to interpretive displays, however in recent years these parks have demonstrated an interest in changing their educational materials to reflect Native American voices. Today many of these

Figure 2: Arches, Canyonlands, and Hovenweep parks in Utah and Colorado
recommendations are being implemented.

The phrase “contribute a voice to a discussion” is commonly understood. Here the technical concept of “voice” is used to design the studies, frame the analysis, and assess the impacts of recommendations. Anthropologists have studied “voice” as a set of relationships of agency or power, that of the speaker and the listener, all in the context within which speech is produced and received. Keane (2001:268) notes, “Research on voice directs attention to the diverse processes through which social identities are represented, performed, transformed, evaluated and contested.” Scholars working with Native American narratives as verbal art maintain that voice involves both content and form of speech; that is, how something is said on the one hand and what is said on the other (Hymes 1981; Basso 1996). Finally, the concept of voice necessarily raises questions of who has the authority to claim a voice for a social group or community. This authenticity issue was often raised during EOA interviews by displays that quote a Native American without there being clear evidence of tribal approval. The notion of voice signals the possibility of convergent and divergent perspectives both between and within communities. So multivocality is expected to emerge from consultations between the NPS and tribes and pueblos.

The concept of voice authenticity raises the question of who is it that the speech represents. Clearly, in studies of the relationships between tribes/pueblos and parks, the voices incorporated in any report should represent, with some level of confidence, the ethnic groups involved. A methodology has been developed and utilized in these studies that involves (1) tribes/pueblo governments agreeing to participate in the study; (2) official representatives being chosen by their tribal/pueblo government and their participation supported; (3) confidential interview situations provided by the ethnographic research team and the park; (4) all report text being first reviewed by the representatives, their cultural departments, and if required their tribal/pueblo councils; and (5) the NPS agreeing not to modify either tribal/pueblo interpretations or recommendations.

Representatives made 349 recommendations, which are cross-tabulated in Table 1 by type of recommendation made and the park where it was made. Recommendation by park were 103 at Arches, 150 at Canyonlands, and 96 at Hovenweep.

In each study, park recommendations broadly fell into one of four categories. First, they were about changing signage or updating museum information at both visitor centers and at interpreted sites along trails. Second, they were about how archaeology sites could be better managed. Third, they were about bringing groups of tribal/pueblo youth and other members into the park for camping, teaching, and ceremony. Fourth, they were about gaining permission to collect traditional plants and natural resources like clay and paint pigments.

**Table 1. Recommendations by Park and Type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Signage/Museum</th>
<th>Site Management</th>
<th>Teaching/Visiting</th>
<th>Resource Collection</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arches</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyonlands</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hovenweep</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: AICC Map; Canyonlands and Green River**

Arches and Canyonlands centered on Traditional Crossing of the Colorado River
Where is This Region?
Management focuses on lands and resources within an officially defined boundary specially identified by the US Congress when the park was established; however these boundaries isolate the park from a broader Native American landscape. As such, while management often excludes discussions of resources located outside the park boundary, it remains the case that these parklands and cultural features cannot be fully understood without reference to an interconnected cultural landscape.

Two of the three parks are part of a much larger regional landscape integrated by functionally interdependent natural and cultural resources. The aboriginal cultural landscape within which these two parks are situated is called the American Indian Crossing of the Colorado River (AICC) (Figure 3). Moab, Utah, is a place aboriginally used to cross the Colorado River because there are no massive canyon walls, which elsewhere make getting down to and up from the river channel very difficult. This landscape is bounded by three topographically large Sky Islands (US Forest Service 2020) or massifs: the La Sal Mountains to the north, the Abajo Mountains to the south, and the Henry Mountains to the west. The region is dissected by the Colorado River and the Green River, which unite in Canyonlands. In addition, there are a variety of medium-sized creeks and rivers, all of which flow from these massifs into the Colorado River.

The traditional crossing of the Colorado River, at what is now Moab, Utah, is the lifeline of social interaction and place of ceremonial activity that is centered on a traditional trail that connects the entire region. For about 3000 years, Indian life at and near this trail crossing involved residential communities primarily supported by irrigated agriculture. In addition, the people had diverse hunting and gathering areas in the surrounding mountains. These activities often involved hundreds of people who participated together over months at a time. This way of life was maintained by a complex system of functionally integrated ceremonies and local communities. Native American stories cannot be fully understood without reference to this river crossing and the cultural resources and places located elsewhere.

Another regional system of residential and cultural places has been termed the Mesa Verde World (Noble 2014), which defines the setting of Hovenweep. This region—named for the charismatic, Mesa Verde National Park—is defined by archaeologists as an integrated complex of common cultural forms and architectural styles, occurring from the junction of the Colorado and San Juan Rivers to the flats on the southwest edges of the San Juan Mountains (Figure 4).
was developed over a span of 800 years, from approximately AD 500 to AD 1300, after which construction and ceremony within the entire area largely abruptly ceased.

According to representatives, Hovenweep is a ceremonial complex constructed for the purpose of revitalizing the land and balancing life through spiritual practice. These ceremonies and religious structures served the people of the Mesa Verde World. Therefore, in order to interpret places located inside the park, Hovenweep must be understood as part of regional cultural landscapes.

What is this Place?
The Native American EOA participants define each of the three parks as a particular kind of place containing specific cultural resources. Arches is a place abundant with stone arches that were made at Creation as portals to other dimensions (Stoffle et al. 2020). The Arches area is not a place of residence. These portals are considered powerful and potentially dangerous when used by untrained individuals, thus making this an exclusive use zone for spiritual leaders.

Canyonlands is at the junction of two major rivers where water has always provided riparian habitat, including the potential for many irrigated farming settlements in the lowlands and ceremony in the highlands. Locations within the southern district of Canyonlands, called the Needles District, contain relatively flat riparian zones developed for farming using runoff from the Abajo Mountains. One example is Salt Creek, which was a center of village life and agriculture. Throughout Canyonlands there are special use areas designated at Creation to be used for ceremony. These are often marked by paintings and petroglyphs.

Hovenweep, at the time its structures were constructed and utilized (AD 1100-1200s), was a place situated away from the major communities which are located far away in the dry farming regions to the north and west and irrigated agricultural areas to the south. At Hovenweep, religious and ceremonial leaders came from great distances to collectively understand time from the stars, sun, and moon; to get guidance from each other regarding the frequently reoccurring climate changes. Religious leaders sent prayers for rain and weather stabilization to the mountains through the springs at the canyon heads. The carefully made structures both measured time with passing light and they elevated religious leaders for views of the stars and surrounding sky islands.

Can We Actually Know the Past?
“We May Never Know” is the title of an interpretive sign at the visitor’s center in Hovenweep. From the tribal/pueblo perspective, this statement exemplifies a significant issue. Signs such as this, which have been made without adequate consultation, rely heavily on scientific findings thus they focus on what is deemed to be known or “proven.” Interpretations shared with park visitors often present the meaning of park features as somehow un-

knowledgeable and cloaked in mystery. Yet that mystery and uncertainty is actually a product of limited scientific and archaeological knowledge, which do not adequately incorporate traditional knowledge that has been transmitted orally over generations. Native traditions have moved forward through space and time. In many respects, the practices and the knowledge held by the people who inhabited the parks from AD 900-1300 continue today as living traditions. One representative expressed the following:

“It says ‘many questions may never be answered.’ That is totally wrong. Something else needs to be put here because this is wrong off the start. We know!”

According to representatives, such a statement wrongly suggests to park visitors that the people who once inhabited and used the park no longer exist. Representatives affirm that to know the past, the park managers need to consult with them, the descendants of its original inhabitants.

The meaning and function of Hovenweep structures is another point of discussion between archaeologists and tribal/pueblo representatives (Figure 5). For most of the last 100 years, archaeologists have described the structures as strangely located residential homes, perhaps built for “defensive” purposes. In our EOA studies, tribal and pueblo representatives offered a distinctly different interpretation, which is best exemplified by this statement from a pueblo representative:

These [structures] had a very unique function, cosmological observation, it was a place for the seclusion of rain priests, and religious leaders to carry on praying for the people. Some of our medicine songs are not intended to be heard by anybody but the leaders so they were sung in a confined space.

These structures were not meant for family living. You would not see children playing around here because of that angle. And it is not a defensive structure. It was for prayers, to do the songs and prayers that ordinary people are not allowed to hear.

Clearly, the interpretation and management of a set of special ceremonial structures—ones built to support astronomers and climatol-
ogists, who interact with the earth's climate and stars—would make this a different kind of place, when compared with the idea that Hovenweep structures were simply old homes, that were built in isolated canyons away from the primary large farming villages of the time.

Indoor Interpretative Displays

All of the three parks have indoor interpretative displays to orientate the visitor and explain the park. The following are three examples of Native American recommendations regarding changing, expanding, or even adding to displays.

That is Not a Ute family.

In the interpretative museum at Arches, only one panel discusses Native Americans. Dominating this panel is a large old photo (probably from the late 1890s) of what appears to be a family in front of their summer dwelling, which is a wooden structure. The panel is labeled “A Ute Family;” representatives interpreted this to be a photo of a Navajo and not a Ute family. Also, the home structure was that of a type that Navajo families would construct in the summer in contrast with the Utes, whose dwellings were deer-hide tents.

From one perspective, this is an easy correction; however, it was deemed to be important because there are few images of late 1800s Native lifestyles in this area and so mislabeling one of the few photographs is especially problematic. The park missed an important opportunity to portray and interpret local Native peoples. The misinterpretation of clothing, housing, and lifestyle was perceived to potentially have a significant impact on visitor perceptions.

Who Lived in Canyonlands First?

Some interpretative signs were either wrong from an Indian perspective or were misleading (Figure 6). In Canyonlands, one of the displays contained the following text: “Even though American Indians had passed through the area, the cowboys were the first permanent settlers.” Representatives maintain that they had permanently lived along the waterways within the park while using the surrounding uplands and mountains since time immemorial. They pointed out that Native Americans were in these lands when the Europeans first arrived and continue to live here today.

The social construction of cowboys was disputed by representatives, who pointed out that many of the cowboys in the area were Utes, Paiutes, and Navajos (Figure 7). This observation not only elaborates on the adaptive economic roles of Native people in the late 1800s and early 1900s, but also directly challenges the US national distinction between Indians and cowboys, and raises the national narrative of Indian extinction (Dobyns 1998). These observations made by representatives have the potential to stimulate a formal discussion of cultural adaptations of Native people to new frontier technologies, economies, and occupations.

Mimura (2010), for example, uses early twentieth-century photographs of the Nez Perce to reframe a US national narrative of Indian extinction, drawing attention to examples of successful adaptation of Indian people living near Colville, Washington. Nez Perce successfully adapted to new and challenging circumstances and to most aspects of frontier society. One of their adaptations, beginning in the 1860s, was to the cattle-ranching economy, which they contributed to as working cowboys (Mimura 2010: 701). They adopted cowboy dress, such as angora chaps, and sought horses like the selectively bred Appaloosa. Styles of work of all cowboys in the area were heavily influenced by Native American culture. These signs of cultural hybridity document the adaptive versatility of the Indian people in this frontier society. Similar adaptations exist in southeastern Utah and can become a theme in park displays.

What Kind of Stick Is on Display?

One interpretative display at Canyonlands contains a range of items, including a long stick identified in the display as a farming tool, pieces of dried corn, and a pot (Figure 8). This display documents how the people along the permanent stream known today as Salt Creek were corn farmers and pot makers. The long stick was identified as a digging stick that was used to make holes in the ground in which seeds could be planted.

Representatives interpreted the stick as one used in the common traditional game often called shinny, which is a form of Native American field hockey. The shiny stick was an item of personal property...
owned by women for use in the game. One female representative stated:

This almost looks like a shinny stick [at the Needles Visitor Center]. There is that shinny game, and you get a whole bunch of those sticks and go out and play. My sister has got a whole bunch of those sticks in a bag, we use them for those games. It looks just like it.

Other representatives who recognized it as a game stick noted that similar sticks are used today, and the game of shinny continues to be played among various tribes/pueblos.

Evidence supports these identifications of the shinny stick. In Games of the North American Indians, Culin (1992) includes a drawing of a shinny stick in the Brooklyn Institute Museum associated with the Zuni Pueblo. The shinny stick in the image is 35 inches long and appears straight before curving and flattening out at the bottom (Culins 1992).

The stick in the Canyonlands display case was found cached with two similar sticks, which are between 35 and 37 inches long and display a shape identical to that in the Culins’ drawing. Thus, it is highly likely that all three of these sticks are shinny sticks, not farming tools as the sign interprets.

The question about the cultural meaning of the shinny game to the Native American women is more difficult to address. Where the sticks were found suggest they were ceremonially deposited and this implies a cultural significance for the game beyond recreation. The stick in the display case, was found with two other sticks high in the back of a small overhang. Immediately above them is a charismatic painting called “The All American Man.” Rock paintings are long known to be signifiers of ceremonial activity and importance. By implication, placing three shinny game sticks just below this image suggest they too were ceremonially important and that the game itself involved women’s ceremonies. Furthermore, this could have implications regarding the vernacular name of the painting in the overhang; considering the gendered construct of this specific game, it may be more appropriate to identify the painting as the “All American Woman.” Also, the legs and feet of the painted figure appear to be shinny sticks. Ultimately, changing the name and interpretation of such a famous painting would require extensive consultation with Native peoples who are associated with the area.

The new interpretation of this shinny stick does not take away from the observations that these people were successful corn farmers...
and pot makers, but instead now adds to the interpretation that women played shinny here. Somewhere, in what is now Canyonlands along Salt Creek, women had a large playing field devoted to their game of shinny. According to Walker’s document-based analysis of Indian women in Utah in the late 1890s:

The contest of ‘shinny’ was also popular. This was a soccer-like game, played on a two or three hundred-foot field with a four-inch buckskin ball stuffed with deer hair. Two teams of ten to twenty-five women competed, each wielding a three and a half or four foot, curved-at-the-bottom, hockey-like stick. The goal of the game was to move the ball across the opponents’ goal line. The activity might consume an afternoon (Walker 1992:110).

There is now an opportunity for park museum managers to talk more about women and their roles in society because the shinny stick greatly broadens interpretations that have limited female gendered roles to grinding corn and making pottery. Women now can be understood as having a more complex life where competition with other women is desired, and they collectively engaged in ceremonies. These new interpretations shift the stick in the display from a simple agricultural implement used by men for farming to a game piece that illustrates the complexity of women’s life in society.

Outdoor Interpretative Displays

Outdoor interpretation in the form of signs, guidebooks, and guided-ranger tours occur in all parks. This section presents Native American recommendations regarding three outdoor interpretative displays.

The Ute Pecking Panel

In Arches, there is a prominent rock face near one of the few permanent springs. On a major portion of the rock panel are peckings of Indian people riding horses and surrounded by peckings of mountain sheep (Figure 9). Even without consultation, this panel was interpreted by the park as Ute people hunting sheep from horseback. The area and panel were entitled by the park as the "Ute Panel." A wheelchair access trail was made from the parking lot to the location, obviously a highlight of a park that otherwise is largely devoid of Native cultural materials.

The Ute and Paiute tribal representatives largely agreed with the park’s interpretation and approved of it being celebrated as one of their cultural places. Two interpretative issues, however, were raised. First, the mountain sheep live in rugged terrain, so they were hunted on foot not horseback. Second, mountain sheep are a spirit helper who normally works with rain shaman. So the peckings of sheep may not represent hunting activity but instead a more important ceremony conducted for individual, community, or world balancing and health.

Elsewhere Paiute elders identified a similar pecking during the Old Spanish Trail ethnographic study for the NPS (Stoffle et al. 2008:235). At a point where the trail crossed Meadow Valley Wash in Nevada, there is a pecking interpreted by elders as the Spanish travelers who were dangerous had harmed Paiute people. The mountain sheep on the pecking panel were placed there as a part of ceremonies to protect the Indian people from Spanish intrusion and diseases (Figure 10). It is not a hunting scene.

Other representatives generally agreed these peckings depicting Ute or Paiute activities; however some representatives talked about other dimensions of the panel including the nearby spring and viewpoints from the area. Spring water and horizon views were perceived as components of why ceremonial activities were conducted at this location.

Representatives of the Zuni Pueblo, for example, paid almost no attention to the peckings of horse riders and mountain sheep but instead focused nearby on what appeared to be an abstract pecking that was not interpreted by the park, Ute, Paiute nor other pueblo representatives. After a long discussion in the Zuni language, the rep-
representatives decided to explain the pecking as a sign of their emergence from the third world into the present world. This movement between worlds was accomplished by climbing up a plant that grows in springs, and this pecking was of that plant (Figure 11). Clearly, to the Zuni representatives, a celebration of emergence occurred (perhaps many times) at this location and was commemorated by the single pecking of the sacred plant. At a nearby spring, Zuni representatives moved down to the water and extracted a number of these emergence plants, which they identified as Phragmites (Figure 12). They then further explained emergence and the special role—including specific ceremonial uses—of the plant.

Though this case includes accurate park interpretations and subsequent public celebration of the location as a component of Ute culture, the meaning of the pecking panel was greatly expanded by the Zuni interpretation of their emergence plant. This illustrates the importance of multiple voices in parks and how consultation can expand the meaning of a place and surrounding resources.

Aztec Butte Granaries

Aztec Butte and Lower Butte are located in the northern regions of Canyonlands, approximately five miles southwest of the Island in the Sky Visitor’s Center. These buttes contain built structures under their rims, which have been identified by archaeologists as ancient Puebloan “granaries” (Figures 13, 14). However, visiting representatives expressed the culture-based interpretation that these structures were not “granaries” and that such a description leaves out vital information about the origin and complex uses of the butte and these structures. All participating tribes and pueblos identified multiple other uses for the structures. No one agreed with the use of the name Aztec which is a EuroAmerican place name.

The buttes are at a higher elevation and spatially distant from the major agricultural communities...
found thousands of feet lower and miles away in the park. At 6300 feet elevation, Aztec Butte is 2370 feet above villages located along the nearby portion of the Green River, which is at 3930 feet in elevation. The mesa on which the butte is located is without surface water, and as such, the mesa area is not prime land for farming.

The high elevation is, however, conducive to other activities where storage would be necessary. Located near the buttes are the remnants of a scarred ponderosa pine with evidence of bow and staff removal. Analysis of the scars places the wood removal around 1818-1819, several decades before Euro-American presence in the region (Welsh and Olsen 1969:151). This use of the tree would have ceremonial significance, requiring the storage of specific tools in a nearby location.

Zuni interpreted the buttes as a place for medicine men. The fine grain river sand found inside the small structures had to have been carried up high vertical cliffs to the location. River sand is connected with the powerful water of the Green River and thus would be integral to healing ceremonies.

Representatives talked about the importance of storing ceremonial items away from where uninitiated people and children reside. Since ceremonial items contain power they may only be handled by certain members of a tribe/pueblo. Items used in ceremonies have the ability to harm people not trained in their handling and use. Structures such as the buttes are reminiscent of ones pueblo representatives have on their reservation for storage of ceremonial effects.

Navajo representatives provided an additional interpretation that focused on small eroded stone structures located on the top of the butte. These they maintained are associated with the Eagle Catching. The eagle is a sacred species with ceremonial involvement. The height of the butte would be integral to Eagle Catching practices, and the structures under the rim could serve as storage for the items used in this process.

Ute representatives indicated that...
the panoramic viewscapes were important for vision questing, as well as contributing to cultural value of the place for the activities by religious elites (Figure 15). The height of the buttes is important because three distant snow-capped sky islands, the La Sal massif, the Aboajo massif, and the Henry Mountains, are all visible from the buttes.

Signage at the structures defines them as an “Ancestral Puebloan Pantry.” Such an interpretation simplifies the complexity of the area and range of cultural practices associated with the butte and surrounding areas. Representatives maintain that their interpretations more accurately define how Native Americans used these high dry buttes and highlight the styles of their own cultural uses.

Concluding Assessment

Aboriginally, Native American people resided and adapted to traditional lands for more than 13,000 years. Their adaptations were deep, complex, and largely sustainable (Stoffle, Toupal, and Zedeno 2003). During this time the natural resources of traditional lands were understood, modified, and adapted to, thus creating what is today called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Events of importance happened and were incorporated into oral history and added to the people’s knowledge of the world. Climate changed, old crops diminished and new ones were used, droughts came followed by floods, all of these changes became further foundations for environmental adaptations and stability. The lands, resources, and people of the Americas were co-adapted during this phase. The people and the land began to “talk with each other” (Stoffle, Arnold, and Bulletts 2016).

European conquest and colonization resulted in the removal of Native Americans from their lands either through mass relocations (Decker 2004), settler encroachments (Hansen 2013), or up to 90% depopulation from diseases (Dobyns 1983). The process of removal was justified by the colonial society as a rights-based action, grounded in irreconcilable differences in culture and lifestyle and the divine impetus of civilization (Jennings 1976; Stoffle et al. 2017b). Colonial heritage museums were designed to publically display colonial justifications for separation (Decker 2004; Cummins, Farmer, and Russell 2013).

In the current post-colonial world Native American people are...
being invited to return to aboriginal lands currently held and managed by US federal and state agencies. These consultations occur through formal government-to-government protocols and they can result in the co-management of traditional lands, resources, and heritage. One argument for the return of Native people has been to re-establish a new balance of ideas and actions in order to increase land and cultural (heritage) sustainability. Another reason is to get better interpretations of the past. Museums are helping agencies to move beyond their colonial roots by listening and responding to the voices of Native Americans. Applied cultural anthropologists are facilitating this process by conducting ethnographic studies in partnership with tribes/pueblos and agencies.

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