

From 2010 *Post-Colonial Perspectives in Archaeology*, Edited by Peter Bikoulis, D. Lacroix, and M. Peuramaki-Brown, pages 55-69. Chacmool Archaeological Association, Calgary, Canada.

RE-ENFRANCHISING NATIVE PEOPLES IN THE SOUTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAINS: INTEGRATED CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES ON FEDERAL LANDS

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For the past decade, the University of Northern Colorado has conducted extensive archaeological research on federally-managed lands in Colorado's Rocky Mountains. An important element of those investigations has been identification of physical and ethnographic evidence of historically-documented tribes removed from the region in the late 19th century. Not only have tribal affiliated camp and hunting sites been successfully located, but so have sites and associated features related to Native American rituals and sacred ceremonies, many now believed to extend into later prehistoric times. Native groups, particularly Ute tribal elders, are key partners of the current research process that is providing a means of reconnecting those groups with their cultural pasts and traditional landscapes, beginning a process of long-term cultural decolonization.

Echoes of former Native American lives are growing ever fainter in Colorado's Southern Rocky Mountains. It is now more than 125 years and five generations since the last tribal peoples hunted elk, bison, and bighorn sheep in north central Colorado's valleys and along its mountaintops. Even material traces of their former presence are vanishing from the region's rugged mountain landscapes with the natural ravages of time, modern development of towns, mountain industries, and the ever-expanding footprint of recreation and tourism. In 1998, initiation of a major archeological inventory project in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), Colorado, funded by the National Park Service's Systemwide Archeological Inventory Program (SAIP), opened the door to recovery of new knowledge on the Park's Native American history and cultural traditions. The SAIP project, operated by the University of Northern Colorado over a five year period (1998-2002), recorded more than 1000 prehistoric and historic archeological sites within ~30,000 surveyed acres of the park's total 275,000 acres. By the second project year (1999), evidence had begun to emerge that many sites contained evidence

of past Native American religious, as well as non-religious, activities. A small number of sites appeared to have been almost exclusively religious in nature. In 2000, the university was awarded a series of contracts to conduct a complimentary research program (to the SAIP inventory) on past Native American religious activities in the Park. On conclusion of the SAIP project in 2002, continued research on those activities was integrated into a long-term investigation, the UNC sacred landscapes project. The sacred landscapes project seeks to systemically collect data related to past Native American religious practices in RMNP and its region in order to formulate and test models of cultural-religious belief and behavior within their cultural (archeological) and environmental-topographic landscapes.

The following sections outline the present status of UNC's sacred landscapes research which promotes not only scientific, systematic modeling of past cultural systems, but attempts to link those systems with Native American descendant communities known to have had historic ties to RMNP and the north central Colorado Rockies. Most important, it is the very process of

documenting those linkages that provides a means of assisting Native American descendant peoples in gaining reconnection to, and re-enfranchisement with, their traditional lands, histories, and belief systems.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SACRED LANDSCAPES RESEARCH PROJECT

Our project's research design focuses on four main lines of inquiry: 1) "mining" of ethnographic and historic records related to the southern Rocky Mountains, and north central Colorado in particular, for information on Native American religious practices, belief systems, and physical manifestations of those practices and beliefs; 2) establishment of a long-term consultation program involving, in conjunction with Park visits, elders and members from the Ute and Arapaho tribes, tribes known to have historically occupied the Park and its region; 3) continued archeological field work designed to further identify sites with possible religious elements, including culturally built or modified features likely to have been associated with past ritual/ceremonial activities; and 4) the use of advanced scientific tools, including Geographic Information System software to generate and test landscape models using data from the above sources (ethnographic and historic documentation, consultations, and archeological).

Background

European and American historic records referencing Colorado Native American groups in general and RMNP and its region in particular first appeared in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and largely ceased with tribal peoples' removal to reservations by the late 1870s (Clark 1999:309; De Smet 1843; Elinoff 2002; Fowler and Fowler 1971; Steward 1974; Stewart 1966; Wroth

2000). In the early to mid decades of the 19th century, historic documents, for the first time, assigned identifying tribal names to the hunter-gatherer bands which, seasonally or annually, inhabited the north central Colorado Rockies. Archaeological evidence strongly suggests that two historic tribal peoples, the Ute and Apache, certainly pre-date European historical records of their presence, with particular Ute bands appearing to have occupied the region as traditional territory for centuries if not a millennium or more (Brunswick et al. 2001; Brunswick 2005b:130-131; Elinoff 2002). Earliest Spanish, French, and American exploration records note the presence of both the Ute and Apache in the north central Colorado Rockies. Slightly later (mid-19th century) historic documents show the presence, often sporadic and ephemeral in nature, of an even greater variety of historically known tribes, including the Apache, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Shoshone, Kiowa, Pawnee and Sioux, which periodically visited, hunted, or passed through RMNP and its neighbor interior basin valleys, North Park and Middle Park, to the west and northwest (Brett 2002:33-50; Cairns 1971:22-25, 41-51; Elinoff 2002; McBeth 2007:13-19; Toll 2003). However, from the early to mid 1800s, the best historically and ethnographically documented tribes were the Arapaho and Ute. The Ute are almost universally considered Colorado's mountain people and have the strongest historical (and traditional) connection to the north central Colorado Rockies. Two closely related Ute bands, the Yamparika and Parusanuch, appear to have had a very long term, almost certainly prehistoric in origin, record of claiming much of the southern Rocky Mountains, including Rocky Mountain National Park, as traditional lands as shown in Figure 1 (Duncan 2000a:17-18; Duncan 2000b:176; Marsh 1982:21; Simmons 2000:20).

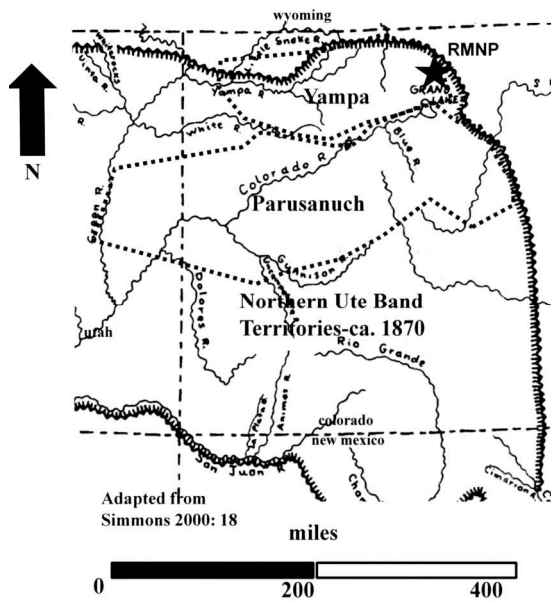


Figure 1: Map showing the historic territorial boundaries of northern Ute bands and their geographic relationship to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Linguistic, ethnohistoric and archaeological sources indicate the Ute were part of an expansion of Numic (also known as Uto-Aztecan) speakers from the Great Basin between AD 1100 and AD 1400 (Bettinger 1994). However, Buckles (1968, 1971), based on an extensive analysis of Ute ethnography and archeology in western Colorado in his 1971 doctoral dissertation, suggested that Ute culture on the northern Colorado Plateau and, possibly, the adjacent Southern Rocky Mountains could well have been resulted from a largely *in situ* development with some time depth. His thesis is supported by archeological and ethnohistoric evidence for material continuity between historic Ute and earlier prehistoric sites in western Colorado.

While most archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and historians accept the *prehistoric* spread of Great Basin Numic (Uto-Aztecan) culture, primarily in the form of what we refer to as Ute culture, into northern Colorado Plateau and Southern Rock Mountain regions, the exact chronology of that event remains in dispute.

that event remains in dispute. Archaeological dates of known or suspected Ute sites in eastern Utah and western Colorado, generally associated with various sub-types of Uncompahgre Brownware pottery, now appear to center around AD 1400 although an earliest presence of that ceramic could date as early as AD 1000 (Reed 1995:-121-122; Reed and Metcalf 1999:-148-152). A Ute presence in north-central Colorado and the RMNP region is associated with the appearance of several material culture traits, including peeled trees, branch wickiups, and variations of [radiocarbon-dated] Uncompahgre Brownware *no later than* AD 1400 and possibly several centuries earlier (Brunswig 2005b:87-92, 130-132; Elinoff 2002).

In the north central Colorado Rockies, the ephemeral nature of archeological hunter-gatherer sites produced by historic tribes such as the Ute, Apache, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux, except in those rare cases where diagnostic artifacts are preserved, leaves their precise cultural affiliation unknown. Determining affiliation of prehistoric and protohistoric sites (ca. pre-AD 1800) with known historic tribes, again except in cases where "diagnostic" artifacts (e.g., ceramics) are present, is at best difficult. A number of considerations have to be accounted for in attempting identification of more recent protohistoric/historic Native American sites, including those of the Ute, in the RMNP region. One issue is the identification of different or even closely related cultural groups in the archeological record. Schroeder (1965) once posed the question of whether various Numic (Uto-Aztecan speaking) tribes, such as the Ute, Shoshone, and Paiute were culturally undifferentiated (archeologically-culturally identifiable as distinctive "sub-cultures") prior to historic contact. Both the Ute and Eastern Shoshone are believed to have occupied, or at least periodically visited RMNP and its region

from at least AD 1400 to AD 1880. Intermountain Tradition "flower pot" ceramics and steatite vessels sporadically found in north central Colorado, including the Park, are considered an eastern Shoshonean cultural marker (Benedict 1985a:22-23, Appendix A; Brunswig 2005:239-241; Eighmy 1995; Frison 1991:116-117). In contrast, peeled trees, pole wickiups, and Uncompahgre Brownware ceramics are considered reasonably reliable indicators of a Ute presence wherever they occur (Buckles 1971:1248-1273; Elinoff 2002; Martorano 1988; Reed 1988, 1995).

Historic Native American tribes in the north central Colorado Rockies, including the mountain-adapted Ute, were seasonally migrating hunter-gatherers until their removal to reservations in southwestern Colorado and northeastern Utah in the late 1860s and early 1870s. At present, there is no evidence that Utes wintered in RMNP. Limited ethnohistoric and archeological evidence support yearly migration into the Park from the adjacent Middle Park and North Park valleys in late spring and summer to exploit its stream valleys and high tundra pastures for bighorn sheep, elk, and deer. Later accounts by 19th century explorers, military expeditions, and settlers suggest Ute bands wintered in the milder confines of Middle Park and North Park or further west along the Colorado, Gunnison, and Yampa rivers (Duncan 2000b:175-177; Steward 1974). A particularly important, historically documented, Ute camp existed at the present-day Middle Park town of Hot Sulphur Springs (Benedict 1992; Cairns 1971:13-14, 297). Like millennia of Native Americans before, Ute bands who visited RMNP appear to have followed a well-established seasonal transhumant, hunter-gatherer subsistence pattern of wintering in lower elevation rivers valleys (Middle Park and North Park) and summering in the Park's higher elevation forests and tundra, following the seasonal

migration of elk, bison, and bighorn sheep (Brunswig 2005b:247-309).

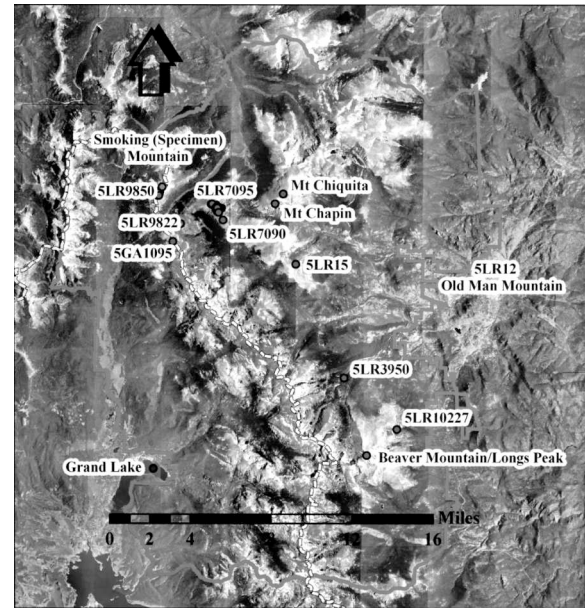


Figure 2: GIS orthographic aerial photography projection of Rocky Mountain National Park and selected sacred sites, landmarks, and trails. The eastern extension of the Ute Trail which crosses the continental divide into the Kawuneechee (Colorado River) Valley on the Park's western margins is marked by a dashed line and labeled. Other unlabeled historic and prehistoric Native American trails crossing the continental divide on east-west trajectories are shown as black dashed lines also. The continental divide is shown as a light dashed line for reference.

The Arapaho, the only other well documented tribe in the RMNP region, arrived much later than the Ute, having entered Colorado from the northern Great Plains around AD 1800 (Brunswig 1995). However, a circumstance of history has provided us with an unusually detailed record of the

Arapaho's brief presence in the Park, compared to similar records for the Ute. In July of 1914, the Colorado Mountain Club invited Arapaho tribal members Sherman Sage (age 73), Gun Griswold (age 63), and an interpreter, Tom Crispin, into the Park to gather Indian place names, anticipating information gained about native use of the Park would help persuade Congress to establish Rocky Mountain National Park (est. 1915) (Butler 2003:44). Oliver Toll, a few members of the Colorado Mountain Club, Sage, Griswold, and Crispin rode horses on six major trails used by the Arapaho in the mid nineteenth century: Big, Childs or Ute, Dog, Deer, Warriors, and Arapaho Pass (Figure 2). Both Sage and Griswold had seasonally visited the Park when they were younger, and remembered Arapaho names of a number of specific Park locations. A book later produced from Toll's notes on the visit, *Arapaho Names and Trails; a Report of a 1914 Pack Trip* (Toll 2003), provides invaluable documentation on Arapaho (and other tribes') history in RMNP. Interestingly, a number of place names mentioned by Sage and Griswold and applied to Park landmarks now appear to be Arapaho translations of former Ute terms, although most

Ute landmark names appear to have been lost since the Ute were removed from the region.

Native American Consultation

An important component of sacred landscapes research consists of information provided by Native American consultations. The premise of conducting a parallel consultation project in support of the landscapes research program, directed by one of the authors (McBeth 2007), was that tattered memories and remembered stories could be used to recreate a picture of RMNP's earliest use, and that buried understandings of their ancestral lands would be triggered by Ute and Arapaho visits to the Park. From the perspective of the early 21st century, much cultural knowledge has been lost, but materials collected during the consultations represent a substantial beginning of at least a partial recovery effort. Data collected by the consultations rely heavily on oral traditions, shared memories of place, community, and loss. They also reveal how culture is inscribed onto the landscape in a real rather than imagined (or theoretical) fashion. Table 1 provides a summary of Native American

The Ute Tribe (Elders and non-Elder Tribal members) (2000-2005)

Clifford Duncan (Elder), Bob and Betsey Champoos-Northern Ute
-multiple visits to UNC, RMNP, and the Northern Ute reservation between 2000 and 2005-

Several Northern Ute Women
-visited RMNP for ethnobotanical and field consultation in 2004-

Neil Buck Cloud (Elder) and Terry Knight (Elder)-Southern Ute Tribe
-visits to RMNP and Southern Ute reservation-

The Northern Arapaho Tribe (Tribal members)

Several members of the Northern Arapaho Tribe
-consultation visit to RMNP in summer 2003-

Table 1: UNC/RMNP Native American Consultations

Consultations conducted for the project between 2000 and 2005.

During Arapaho consultations in RMNP, tribal members provided little information on their ancestor's late historic presence, other than that already available from *Arapaho Names and Trails; a Report of a 1914 Pack Trip* (Toll 2003). However, as described earlier, the Utes have a long prehistoric and historic affiliation with the RMNP area and reflections provided by Ute consultants firmly document the connection. In particular, interpretations of visited known or suspected sacred sites provided by Ute consultants and tribal elders Clifford Duncan, Terry Knight, and Alden Naranjo, all tribally acknowledged religious practitioners, were significant. Each interpreted those sacred sites through shamanic lenses. For example, when the authors visited vision questing or other sacred sites with our native consultants, they frequently reflected on their own tribal roles as healers and discussed the sources of shamanic power. We viewed these as quite reasonable responses from our Ute Consultants since traditional Ute religion was dominated by shamans and a patently individualistic flavor; shamanistic practices took precedence over group activities (Jorgensen 1964:36). Religion, from a Ute perspective, was a very comprehensive phenomenon and its holistic approach to historic and modern lifeways emerged repeatedly in our interviews. The Ute, like many

North American Indian tribes, conceived of supernatural power as a diffuse impersonal force which pervaded the universe. Called PUWA in Ute, it was used by PUWARAT or shamans who could be either men or women (Smith 1974; Jorgensen 1964; Densmore 1922:127-130). It is that holistic integration of the "sacred and the profane" which provides a strong theoretical underpinning to our cultural/natural landscape research strategy (Brunswig 2005a).

Archeology and Geographic Information Systems: Connecting the Threads of Knowledge

Modern scientific archeology, with the assistance of the geographic sciences, provides powerful data-gathering and analytical tools for integrating our project's three data sources (archeological, history/ethnohistory, and ethnographic/published and consultation-based) in assembling testable cultural landscape models. The project's sacred landscapes research design has evolved partly by design and partially through organic development as new data and ideas about those data have emerged. The current research design utilizes three hierarchical levels of analysis, together composing an analytical framework for modeling past Native American religious systems within their formerly existing cultural and natural landscapes. First, and at the most fundamental level of analysis, are *cultural features* defined by their physical traits, spatial contexts, and archeological, ethnohistoric, and consultation-based interpretations of their ritual and ceremonial functions. We have determined that culturally constructed or modified sacred features in the southern Rockies nearly always consist of *rock constructed or culturally modified natural features* associated with a wide range of ceremonial or ritual practices. Unfortunately, rock art (etched, pecked, etc.), an increasingly important source of religious knowledge and symbolism for pre-literate societies, is virtually non-existent in the project area, largely due to the lack of suitable geological formation for the creation and preservation of such art (see Brunswig 2005a).

Consultation-derived knowledge and information from archeological and ethnohistoric sources have enabled us to formulate and refine a sacred features classification system which links such features with known or inferred ceremonial-ritual activi-

ties. Briefly summarized, our present system includes four feature classes: 1) features used in individual or group spirit offerings and specialized ceremonies, often situated on high and remote mountain tops; 2) individualized communing (e.g., vision-questing) with the spirit world in general or locally dwelling spirits; 3) burial or memorial ceremonies; and 4) isolated, or clusters, of cultural features and natural landmarks associated with rituals and ceremonies tied to seasonal changes in the rising, setting, and movements of the sun, moon, and stars. The most common, and visually recognizable, vision-questing features are rock-built U-shaped walls, cleared talus slope platforms (round to oval in outline), crescent-shaped walls, and circular or rectangular walled spaces. Other feature types include small to large stone circles (often with interior features such as rock alignments) and rock alignments (often called “walls”), based on their location and aspect variables, suspected of being associated with seasonal solar (solstice) rituals. Finally, individually isolated and small to large clusters of rock cairns are frequently situated on alpine ridges and knolls which, based on ethnographic information, are believed to represent places of ritual spirit offerings, burials, or monuments for remembrance of notable historic events or prominent individuals (such as shamans or band leaders).

In the course of our research, continuing archaeological surveys for sacred sites have developed standard field-recording protocols to assist in distinguishing suspected Native American features from more modern, non-Native American examples. Distinguishing older from younger rock features is accomplished through careful documentation of age-related physical condition, e.g., heavy uniform weathering of exposed rock surfaces versus less severe weathering of recent, newly exposed (overturned) rocks and relative slumping of previously built-up fea-

tures. In selected cases, constructed rock features have been subjected to lichenometric analysis, a technique for determining relative age estimation by systematic measurement of slow predictably growing lichen colonies (*Rhizocarpon rhizocarpon*) on once-freshly exposed rock feature surfaces (Benedict 1985b:43-47, 90-106; 1988; 1996). Lichen-dating of several suspected ritual features in RMNP has provided age estimates ranging from AD 900 to AD 1200 (Cassells 2002, 2005). In addition to taxonomic classification and scientific analysis of rock features, ethnographic consultations with Ute elders informed us of their belief that certain trails served as conduits of spirit power which “spiritually” connected sacred sites and spiritually significant natural features across the physical landscape (Brunswick 2003; Brunswick and Lux 2003; Lux 2004, 2005).

A second, higher “tier” of analysis is that of *sacred sites and landmarks*, defined as sites (with one or more sacred features, level 1) with archeological or historical evidence of Native American religious activities or natural landmarks believed to possess mythic and religious significance. Sacred sites may, and often do, contain evidence of non-religious activity, e.g., some game drives in the park include ritual features as well as features designed to facilitate hunting and game processing. However, the separation of *sacred* versus *mundane* (economic, technological, social...) activities in most Native American cultures is nearly always based in a false premise since action and belief in both realms are indistinguishable and interrelated in everyday life. It is common in most Native American religions to regard ritual-ceremonial practices and physical evidence of those practices in two ways: 1) they may be spatially unique, e.g., the only type of activity occurring at a particular location; or they may involve secular *and* religious activities at the physical loca-

tions (sites) at the same or different times. For instance, in the latter case, religious rituals are known to have frequently accompanied economic activities such as hunting game or the gathering of certain wild plants for food or medicines.

The most inclusive, holistic level of our project's analytical framework is that of the *sacred landscape*, the large-scale geographic patterning of ceremonial sites and associated ritual features along with sacred landmarks, e.g., lakes, mountains, valleys, etc., the latter believed to represent mythological events (e.g., creation), locations of highly concentrated spiritual-power, or dwelling places of particular spirit beings. In many Native American cultures, including the Ute, a sacred landscape constitutes a physical-psychological (cognitive) map of a seamlessly integrated spiritual and physical world based in religious belief, myth, and legend. It is at the landscape scale which models of past Native American cultural systems, including their sacred "world-views" can be re-created and tested. It must be noted that reconstruction of such landscapes is fraught with pitfalls, particularly given difficulties in identifying spatially patterned (and cognitive) religious phenomena in the archeological record. However, given that human behavior associated with cultural values and beliefs is nearly always repetitive and patterned, it is theoretically possible to identify those patterns through careful spatial analysis of known and inferred components of past cultural landscapes, e.g., sites, ritual features, sacred landmarks, etc. With the use of Geographic Information System software (GIS), it is possible to model spatially-referenced layers of cultural and natural features on a three-dimensionally, digitized physical landscape. GIS predictive models had been previously developed for the earlier RMNP archeological inventory project, providing the basis for similar modeling of a sacred landscape (Rohe 2003a, 2003b,

2004). Based on the earlier described data sources, we constructed a preliminary sacred landscape GIS model in 2006 using ESRI's ArcGIS™ 9.2 software. Figure 2 shows a GIS orthographic projection of selected RMNP sacred sites (by site numbers) and Ute-identified sacred landmarks from that model.

In 2006, we found promising spatial correlation of sacred sites and sacred landmarks throughout the Park (Diggs and Brunswig 2006). Employing a variety of statistical techniques in ArcGIS™, including chi square, linear regression, viewshed analysis, and weights of evidence, we determined the likely existence of non-random spatial (and by inference, cultural) patterns associated with sacred site and feature class/type variables. Of particular interest were initial results of viewshed analyses that suggest a non-random patterning of site locations that appear to reflect a line-of-sight network of sites and sacred landmarks through much of the Park landscape. The network pattern of visually linked sites and landmarks is especially marked around and on Trail Ridge, a prominent alpine ridgeline and confluence of three major passes and river headwaters in the Park's northwest quadrant. Although our initial model of a putative RMNP sacred landscape will require further refinement and testing along with additional data gathering, we feel its current iteration could represent the faint outlines of one or more culturally-constructed, symbolic, cognitive maps of Native American belief systems, primarily Ute, contained within the Parks' mountains and valleys.

CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of extinct cultural systems is a central goal to all archaeological research. The degree to which individual researchers are successful, or even perceived as successful by their peers, in recovering

sufficiently useful and relevant data for realistic reconstruction of those systems will always be a matter of debate. In the case of UNC's sacred landscape project, only time will determine if we will be successful in modeling and understanding once very complex cultural landscapes in Rocky Mountain National Park. Those landscapes, now largely invisible to the casual Park visitor, vibrantly existed in the minds, actions, and surviving material remains of the people who occupied them. However successful we may be judged, we will have minimally recovered at least some of the nearly vanished past for present and future descendants of Native Americans who once traveled the rivers and mountain trails of RMNP. And even more important has been the process of inviting some of those descendants back to their traditional lands, asking them to collaborate in the reconstruction of their ancestor's lives. But the process of reconstruction and collaborative consultation also led to an equally important outcome, a strong sense of re-connection of most of our Ute consultants with traditional lands their great-grandparents and grandparents had been forced to leave more than a century before. In closing this paper, we can do no more than illustrate the importance and impact of the sense of reconnection and cultural re-enfranchisement expressed by our Ute colleagues and friends.

Clifford Duncan (Northern Ute Elder)

So in teaching people about the [Rocky Mountain National] Park, it has to be [that] the importance of the land comes first. Our responsibility as people first would be to the land, the land itself. The main responsibility is to preserve that and recognize that God created all of that [land] and we should leave it as

is... The sacredness of the land, the holiness of the land is what is going to do the work... And that's going to be the center of the whole thing—a ceremony of appreciation and everything will come to light [Duncan 2000a].

Geneva Accawanna (Northern Ute)

I feel so humbled that I'm here and I can feel them; I can feel the spirits; it makes me cry to feel that I'm home. It's like a person leaving home or taken from their home and then finally they come back. I know I can't stay here. I have to go back to the reservation. But I need to share that I just have a humble feeling being here, and being on the Ute Trail, and being on the mountains. Seeing the medicine wheel and praying there, I knew that my ancestors heard me. In our Indian heritage, our Indian ways, we believe in spirits and we believe that everything has a spirit; we believe that the land and everything has a spirit. And even though we don't know the Ute names for these places, we know that our people were here. I'm just so happy to be here. I finally feel like I'm visiting my home. [Accawanna 2004].

Loya Arrum (Northern Ute)

I truly believe in my heart that each one of us has an awakening now to come to because we haven't spoken up in the past. But I think it's time now, particularly because of our children and grandchildren that will be com-

ing forth and I pray that we'll have the knowledge to give the talks and to open the windows and the doors so that people can say, 'Yes, the Utes, this is where they lived. This is where they were.' But very little is known of our people and so it's time for us to tell the world that we have been in these mountains a long time... And I think this living in the mountains for the Ute people, it was a paradise—the grass, lush meadows, the lodge poles, the elk, the deer, the buffalo, and all the animals and plants that are here...

I think the spirits have been waiting for us for a long time to come. As we come each time I think there will be more signs of the spirits of our ancestors... I was overcome with a feeling—it was a welcoming feeling and a presence there. What I think about it personally is that they [the spirits] are glad to see us. It's like leaving our children somewhere, and we come back to them and we see the happiness and joy that our children have to see us when we return home. And that's how it felt. It's like open arms welcoming us back...that we haven't left them...that we were looking for them and we found them. And we'll continue to look [Arrum 2004].

Venita Taveapont (Northern Ute)

Last year when I first came to this country, Colorado, I was reminded of the story that we tell about the creation of Ute people

where the creator had placed people in a bag. He cut up some sticks and he placed them in a bag and then Coyote, being the curious and mischievous person that he is, opened the bag and he let out a lot of people and they scattered over the world. But there were a few people that were left in the bag and those were the Utes. When the creator came back and he found those few people he placed them high in the mountain—high on the mountain tops. And when I came I thought, 'Wow this must have been where he placed them.' Because to me it seemed like we were on the top of the world. And what a choice place to place people, because everything was here, that they needed to survive. The other thing is that there is such reverence, such a feeling of the ancestors being here and that you can't help but be in awe of their hardiness, their ability to survive, and to walk these mountains. Every year, every year they would come either to worship or to hunt and gather—this is the place that they held in high reverence. This is the beginning of the connection, this is the beginning of bringing back those traditional names, bringing back our traditional ways. And I think for too long that we've kind of held things back and we can't do that anymore. For our own people we need to have that reconnection, for our children, for our grandchildren, great grandchildren. We still need to have that connection and rebuilding that knowledge [Taveapont 2004].

Acknowledgments The authors would like to acknowledge funding support for this project by Rocky Mountain National Park (the National Park Service) and the University of Northern Colorado's Sponsored Programs Office. We would also like to particularly acknowledge the very important contributions to this project by Dr. Bill Butler, Rocky Mountain National Park archeologist, and our consultants from the Northern Ute, Southern Ute, Ute Mountain, and Northern Arapaho tribes.

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