

Canyon Sanctuaries: entering quietly respects cultural & biological diversity

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Abstract

Why is the Grand Canyon sacred to Native American communities in the Southwest? It's a place of Emergence into this world, a place of beginning; the home of Salt Woman and other deities; where ancient people lived; where present Native communities live; a place of the dead, of ancestors, and of creation of new lives.

How does present day visitor behavior affect the spiritual and cultural values of the canyon? Actions accumulate in places; what we do now affects the past and the future.

Appropriate behavior means Respect, Reverence, and Responsibility: Native people are engaged in stewardship of water, plants, animals, mineral resources, ancestors, shrines, and springs, by means of prayers, songs, pilgrimage, environmental monitoring, and adaptive management programs with federal agencies.

Respectful recreation means discouraging:

- Alcohol use (in excess, leads to bad behavior...)
- Excessive noise
- Excessive splashing around in streams and waterfalls
- Entering springs and sensitive habitats
- Damaging archaeological sites, removing artifacts, touching petroglyphs and rock paintings

And encouraging:

- Quiet, contemplative approach to sacred places such as springs, waterfalls, confluences, ancient dwellings
- Respectful, low-impact treatment of plants, animals, artifacts, ancient architecture

Why approach quietly?

- Watch, listen, learn
- Who and what are already there?
- “asking permission” = establish mutually respectful relationship with a place and its inhabitants
- Protect ecosystem diversity with low impacts to aquatic species, insects, birds, etc
- Protect educational values— visitors learn about ecosystems and cultures, create places/contexts for transmitting values and knowledge to next generation
- Protect cultural values
- Protect inter-cultural relationships

Short articles for further reading

Enote, Jim, and Jennifer McLerran (editors)

2011 *A:shiwi A:wan Ulohnanne, The Zuni World*. A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center. (Available at the Museum of Northern Arizona and on Amazon.com)

Hays-Gilpin, Kelley, and Greg Woodall

2014 Respectful Recreation in the Grand Canyon—An Anthropologist's Perspective. *Boatman's Quarterly Review*.

http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/sites/default/files/gc_Respectful_Recreation_BQR.pdf

"Ancestors are not just people who lived and died a long time ago. They are still present in the places they lived...in the cultures of people who call the Grand Canyon their homeland, our actions are seen as impacting the present, the future, and the past (and those in the past). [We should] approach any special place quietly and respectfully. In this way, you and the Place (and the past people in it) get to know each other by watching, listening, and feeling. You acknowledge mutual respect by quietly, even silently, asking permission to visit, and by observing what's already there. Partying, yelling, and jumping right into the watery home of myriads of small creatures disrupts the quiet contemplation of those already there and those to come in the future."

Jenkins (Kuwanwisiwma), Leigh, and T.J. Ferguson

1994 Öngtupka: Hopi Sacred Geography of the Grand Canyon. Presentation to the Symposium on Sacred Geography of the Grand Canyon, Annual Meeting of the Western History Association, Albuquerque, October 22, 1994. Available at this address: <http://content.lib.utah.edu:81/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/wwdl-neh&CISOPTR=8787&CISOMODE=print>

"As the Grand Canyon is the place of beginning, so too it is the ending place. The spirits of the Hopi's ancestors return to and inhabit the Grand Canyon...Öngtupka [Salt Canyon] is not a place where Hopis go casually. One must be spiritually, emotionally, and mentally prepared for the hardships and tests that are faced when visiting such a powerful and potentially dangerous area."

Nez, Jason

2012 Grand Canyon: Geography of Origin, Identity, and Future. In *Grand Archaeology: Excavation and Discovery along the Colorado River*. *Plateau* 7(1):54-56. Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff.

"Our recognition of the 'cultural landscape' – holy places, mountains, rivers, and storyscapes is our umbilical cord to the earth...This canyon is threaded into the very fabric of existence for all the tribes in the Southwest. It is a shared interest that connects every single one of us, regardless of our cultural differences."