

Zuni Cultural Heritage; Our Emergence History

The history of the Zuni people in Grand Canyon begins with our emergence into the daylight world at Ribbon Falls. Ascending from the darkness deep within Mother Earth's womb from the forth underworld through the third, second and the first level, the Ashiwi people emerged into the daylight world at Chimik' yanna' kya dey'a -Ribbon Falls. The first thing we saw was the blinding light of our father the Sun. Then we saw the plants, animals, birds, mountains, sky, water and the beauty of the surface of Mother Earth, all of which are held sacred and central to our prayers and way of life. After the emergence, our ancestors journeyed to find the "Middle Place", settling in the canyon and through-out the rivers and drainages of the southwest by following Bright Angel Creek, and the Colorado, Little Colorado, and the Zuni Rivers into what is now known as New Mexico. The Ashiwi view all waterways of the canyon as an umbilical cord that physically connects our place of emergence-Ribbon Falls- to our home, the Middle Place- the Pueblo of Zuni.

This history is documented in hematite on a panel at the Whitmore site. It was not fully recognized until 2006 when erosion of the slope in front of the panel revealed it to us. Monitoring by members of the Zuni Cultural Resource Advisory Team, led to the recommendation that the park conduct some trail work to protect this panel from inadvertent damage from erosion or from visitors who might accidentally damage the elements with oils from hands touching the wall.

Working with the Park and boatmen from Grand Canyon Whitewater, we spent 4 days documenting and protecting this location. Our intent is to provide access and protection to this place, representing one of the most sacred parts of our culture.