

Applied Ethnography and Park Management at Pipestone National Monument

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THE APPLIED ETHNOGRAPHY PROGRAM IN THE MIDWEST REGION of the National Park Service (NPS) conducts and contracts for a variety of basic cultural anthropology studies: general ethnographic overviews and assessments, traditional use studies, cultural affiliation studies, ethnobotany and ethnozoology studies, and special ethnographic studies on peoples associated with specific parks. All of the basic types of ethnographic studies are designed to provide information and data to park managers about the people who are culturally and socially associated with an NPS unit. In addition, the ethnographic research projects help identify and document the resources these groups find culturally significant and meaningful. And we often ask contract anthropologists to make recommendations based on their study on how these resources can be best protected and managed to maintain the cultural significance of the resources to the associated people.

At some NPS units, the ethnographic resources are so prevalent and significant they affect almost all aspects of park management, not just cultural resource management. Pipestone National Monument in southwestern Minnesota is such a place. The monument sits at the location of a major outcropping of “catlinite,” a naturally hardened red clay, colored red by hematite. The stone has been used for thousands of years by Native Americans for the making of pipes and other ceremonial objects. While other kinds of stone used to make pipes is found at various sites across the United States, the red stone from the Pipestone quarries is distinctive in both color and texture, as well as in its history of use for the making of sacred pipes. The stone received its name of “catlinite” as a nod to George Catlin, who visited the area in 1836 and spread word of the site’s existence through his paintings and writings in the late 1830s.

Of course, Catlin wasn’t the first person to see the pipestone area. He was attracted to the region because of stories about quarries of red pipestone that had been heard by Europeans for 175 years, dating back to French traders in the 1660s. But Native Americans had been quarrying the stone to make ceremonial and sacred objects for thousands of years. The first use of the quarries that is observed from archaeological data dates to 200 BC, and the stone and the quarries have been used by Native Americans ever since.

Pipestone National Monument is a 282-acre unit of the national park system established in 1937. The enabling legislation for the monument specifically charges NPS to protect and preserve the unique pipestone quarries, and provide Indian people access to them for acquiring the stone. The National Park Service has known from the outset that the area was

important to Indian people, and worked to provide an administrative mechanism by which pipemakers could acquire the stone they needed. Even so, managers at the monument have had opinions about the quarrying that differed from those of tribal peoples, in regard to who should have access to the stone, whether NPS should regulate how the stone is used once it is quarried, and other cultural activities in and use of the monument.

In 1994, the NPS Midwest Region applied ethnography program took form with the placement of a professional cultural anthropologist on staff to lead the program for the region. That same year, the program began work to help provide current and contemporary ethnographic information about the resources at Pipestone National Monument, why they were culturally significant, and to whom. Two studies were commissioned to look at two different, but equally important, categories of resources at Pipestone. One study was a preliminary documentation of federally recognized American Indian tribes who are culturally associated with the monument, and the second study was a comprehensive documentation of the ownership of 200 pipes that were in the monument's museum collection. Both of these studies were legislatively driven by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), passed in 1990, but also provided current cultural anthropological information to park management to help with decision-making.

The first study on cultural association was completed by David Hughes in 1995.¹ In his report, Hughes briefly outlined the potential associations between contemporary American Indian tribes and the monument, which led to a much more comprehensive study of cultural affiliation between today's tribes and the resources at the monument.

The second study was completed by Peter Nabokov in 1995. Based on the definitions of sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony that were part of the NAGPRA statute (and the later regulations that became final in 1995), NPS was aware that there was a good possibility that some, if not many, of the pipes in the museum collection at the monument might fit into one or more of the NAGPRA-defined categories, and were subject to repatriation. Nabokov was asked to trace, as well as he could through historical documentation and ethnographic interviews, the lineages of the original holders of the pipes. This information was then provided to the federally recognized tribes whose descendants formerly held the stone pipes as part of the summary and inventory requirements of NAGPRA compliance. At the time, one or two NPS staff expressed concern about the study, fearing that all of the pipes would be repatriated and therefore "lost" to the monument. As it turns out, these fears were unfounded because only one pipe has been requested and subsequently repatriated to a lineal descendant (and current religious leader) of a former pipe holder.

By the time these two studies were completed, it had become clear that there was far more contemporary cultural significance attached to Pipestone by Indian people than just the quarries and the pipestone. While Indian people had been telling the NPS managers this for some time, including park employees who were tribal members, there was still not a consistent, direct connection between the cultural anthropological information and park management decisions, although there was often a certain amount of empathy expressed by some park managers.² Beginning in 1996, David Hughes was again asked to conduct an ethnographic study at the monument, this time on the traditional uses of the monument's resources.

For the applied ethnography program, a “traditional use study” is not only about what people used to do historically. A traditional use study is a type of cultural anthropology research project designed to identify and document the uses contemporary people make of park resources or the area within which a park is located. The “traditional use,” then, is a cultural use that has both historical antecedents and which continues through time to the present day, despite changes in land ownership, legal status, or the locations of the cultural groups themselves. Hughes interviewed tribal members and discovered that there were many traditional uses still occurring at the monument, including medicinal and ceremonial plant gathering, vision quests, and ceremonial activity connected to the quarrying of the pipestone. Hughes’s 1997 report not only identified these on-going traditional uses, but placed them within the monument’s boundaries so that their locations could become part of the management decision-making process.³

The monument began a general management plan process in 2000. From the beginning, NPS included the participation of federally recognized American Indian tribes. In addition, the Midwest Region applied ethnography program began detailed documentation of specific categories of ethnographic resources that would need to be considered in the general management planning process. To that end, the program began two large studies, both carried out by cultural anthropologists and archaeologists at the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology at the University of Arizona. One was a comprehensive inventory and documentation of the ethnobotany at the monument, led by Richard Stoffle and Rebecca Toupal.⁴ The other was a comprehensive cultural affiliation study, led by María Nieves Zedeño.⁵

During the ethnobotany study it became clear very quickly that the identification and documentation of important food, medicine, and ceremonial plant species could not occur without being conceptually connected to the landscape itself. The research team had to include a component about the ethnographic landscape of the monument in order to tie the cultural significance of the resources together. The monument has been long recognized by NPS as an important historical place (the entire monument is on the National Register), and as a “cultural landscape” as defined by the National Park Service. The ethnobotany study, by connecting plants and other cultural features such as geologic formations to the significance of the landscape, provided ethnographic data in support of an idea that the Midwest Region applied ethnography program had been a proponent of for several years: the monument was an ethnographic landscape, and the other cultural and historical features were components of that ethnographic landscape, instead of according with the NPS definition of a cultural landscape as one having ethnographic features. In essence, all of the cultural features of the monument—the quarries, the archaeological sites, the bluff, the vision quest sites, the Sun Dance grounds, the stream, and the plants and where they grew, combined with the cultural history and oral history of the tribes, contributed to the cultural significance of this geographic landscape for the associated Indian people.

As part of the general management planning process, the monument superintendent wanted to have a definitive statement on the cultural affiliation of federally recognized American Indian tribes and the traditional associations between them and the monument’s resources. To that end, a cultural affiliation study was commissioned by the Midwest Region applied ethnography program at the same time as the ethnobotany study. The result was an

in-depth, comprehensive examination of the archaeological, historical, and ethnographic information available for the Pipestone area, and the delineation of both American Indian ethnic groups (Mandan, Lakota, Dakota, Otoe, Omaha-Ponca, and Ioway), as well as specific federally recognized tribes that were either culturally affiliated or traditionally associated with Pipestone National Monument.⁶ All of these tribes were consulted during the general management planning process, and several actively participated throughout the eight years it took to finalize the general management plan.

Both of these studies have had an impact on park management decision-making. The ethnobotany/ethnographic landscape report identified plant species and places that have to be considered when planning to mitigate possible adverse impacts from fire management, facilities management, and park activities. The cultural affiliation and traditional association report has provided support for the park to consult with tribes other than the Yankton Sioux Tribe, and expanded management and interpretive perspectives. And while an indirect result of the cultural anthropology research over the last 15 years, the process of engaging the tribes in anthropological research, consultation, park planning, and discussion about park management led NPS in 2008 to change the preferred alternative in the draft general management plan to one suggested and supported by the consulting tribes. The final preferred alternative calls for removal of the existing visitor center (conceived in 1952 and completed in 1958), since it is now recognized that the building's location is right next to several of the pipestone quarries and has had an adverse impact on the cultural significance, as well as the traditional and ceremonial use, of the quarries and the monument.⁷

Endnotes

1. David T. Hughes, *Perceptions of the Sacred: A Review of Selected Native American Groups and their Relationships with the Catlinite Quarries* (report submitted to Midwest Region, National Park Service, 1995).
2. Hal K. Rothman, *Managing the Sacred and the Secular: An Administrative History of Pipestone National Monument* (Omaha, Nebr.: Midwest Region, National Park Service, 1992).
3. David T. Hughes, *Traditional Use of Pipestone National Monument: Ethnographic Resources of Pipestone National Monument* (Omaha, Nebr.: Midwest Region, National Park Service, 1997). Because this report identified actual physical locations of some of these activities, public distribution is restricted.
4. Rebecca S. Toupal, Richard W. Stoffle, Nathan O'Meara, and Jill Dumbauld, *Takuçka-ÆçkaÆ äaÆnomoköe: The Everchanging Pipestone Quarries—Sioux Cultural Landscapes and Ethnobotany of Pipestone National Monument* (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, 2004). Report submitted to Midwest Region, National Park Service.
5. María Nieves Zedeño and Robert Christopher Basaldú, *Pipestone National Monument, Minnesota: Native American Cultural Affiliation and Traditional Association Study* (Tucson: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, 2004). Report submitted to Midwest Region, National Park Service.

6. NAGPRA contains specific definitions of terms and concepts that require some care in their usage. NAGPRA defines “cultural affiliation” as “a relationship of shared group identity which can reasonably be traced historically or prehistorically between members of a present-day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group.” The Yankton Sioux Tribe are clearly culturally affiliated with the quarries and the monument land, since it used to be their reservation land before it became part of the national park system. Several tribes are culturally affiliated with specific objects in the monument’s museum collection, even though those tribes were not physically present in the Pipestone area. And some groups, such as the Mandan, are traditionally associated with the monument since they may be descendants of earlier peoples who were in the area dating back to 200 BC.
7. National Park Service, *Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, Pipestone National Monument* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2008).

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