

# ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE:

PAST LESSONS, PRESENT CHALLENGES, FUTURE PROSPECTS

Jacilee Wray, guest editor

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## Foreword

*Jacilee Wray*

IN 1981, MURIEL (“MIKI”) CRESPI WAS HIRED BY THE CHIEF ANTHROPOLOGIST of the National Park Service (NPS), Douglas H. Scovill, to develop an applied anthropology program for the agency; it was soon to become the NPS ethnography program. The support she received from Jerry L. Rogers, then the NPS associate director for cultural resources, was crucial in getting this burgeoning program recognized.

I first spoke with Crespi in 1990, discussing the Native American relationships management policy, which she had originated in 1987. I learned of her diligence that led to the structure of the NPS ethnography program. She worked for years to create a program that was responsive to the need of NPS and the federal government to work with people who have historic associations with national parks. My colleagues and I created this special issue of *The George Wright Forum* to address the history and utilization of this forward-looking program and the continuing need for it today. In Crespi’s own words:

Two decades ago, the NPS established the applied ethnography program. Since then, the concepts, data, and strategies of cultural anthropology, or ethnography, as the NPS calls it, have helped the agency hear and see what had been typically unheard and unseen. By giving voices to communities and indigenous peoples, and visibility to the resources they value, the discipline has enriched our understanding of heritage by illuminating the places and concerns that have been unknown, but knowable (Crespi 2001).

The first article in the series is a brief administrative history of the program by those who were closely tied to it. I, along with Alexa Roberts, Allison Peña, and Shirley Fiske, all knew Crespi very well and have written this article based on Miki’s own documentation of the program and our personal knowledge of her goals.

David Ruppert’s article discusses NPS’s leadership role among federal agencies in establishing the ethnography program in 1981. He points out that there is a need to revital-

ize the program to meet the growing needs of a changing population and to understand the various cultural communities affiliated with our parks. He also highlights NPS's role in the international arena of heritage preservation, and concludes with some guidance for the future of the program.

Walter R. Echo-Hawk's article, "Under Native American Skies," is an in-depth look at sacred indigenous wisdom learned from the land. America needs to learn how to view the land not as a resource, but with reverence. A vigorous ethnography program would encourage agencies to look for a greater vision: an approach that taps into all disciplines and teaches a greater vision of stewardship. Everything has a spirit, writes Echo-Hawk, and this ethic should include indigenous wisdom and an understanding that "revels in Mother Earth's remarkable ability to support life."

The article by Michael J. Evans focuses on one unit of the national park system, Pipestone National Monument. This park is very important to Native Americans, and has specific legislation that allows for the tribes to make pipes from the catlinite (red clay) found there. Evans' paper discusses further ties various tribes have to the park, beyond the pipestone quarry, and how information obtained through several ethnographic studies assists park management in a multitude of ways.

Not all traditionally associated peoples (TAPs) are Native Americans. Jenny Masur has written an article on TAPs other than Native Americans to demonstrate the relevance of a workable and working definition, and the interestingly diverse cultural histories the national parks represent in these peoples' historic and ethnographic landscapes.

Barbara A. Cellarius has written a concise article on how an ethnographic overview and assessment is carried out for multiple traditionally associated groups, and the products and benefits such studies can provide to a park, using Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve as an example. The benefits are not only in establishing a baseline of knowledge about TAPs, but also in creating partnerships and enhancing government-to-government relations.

David J. Krupa's paper clearly demonstrates the importance of ethnography in carrying out subsistence requirements under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)—a concept of park management practice entirely different from that followed in the lower 48 states, but one from which the Park Service can learn much about community involvement and sharing resources.

Erin McPherson and Kat Byerly have produced an exceptional article on the evaluation performed by the National Parks Conservation Association's Center for the State of the Parks on the condition of ethnographic resources in the national park system. Based on park interviews and a substantial amount of research, their article highlights the importance of the ethnography program, the lack of understanding of the program on the part of managers, and the lack of its use by managers.

Our series of articles is preceded in this issue by Jerry L. Rogers' National Park Service Centennial Essay, which touches upon program history but aims toward the future. Rogers was there with Doug Scovill to support Miki Crespi and see that the ethnography program succeeded. In retirement, he continues to strive to keep the program alive and progressive.

Rogers draws on work done by the Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation Committee of the National Parks Second Century Commission, whose report was released in September 2009.

As professional anthropologists and ethnographers, we must preserve for today's people and for future generations the lifeways of traditionally associated peoples. In his keynote address to the First World Conference on Cultural Parks in 1984, NPS Director Russell E. Dickenson addressed the future he saw:

[L]and managers and professionals must acknowledge their roles in a world system that includes native and other localized groups, each of whom depends upon the others to create and protect resources that all value, each in their own way (Dickenson 1984:4).

## References

- Crespi, Muriel. 2001. Raising muted voices and identifying invisible resources. *CRM Bulletin* 24:5, 4–6.
- Dickenson, Russell E. 1984. Keynote address. In *International Perspectives on Cultural Parks: Proceedings of the First World Conference, Mesa Verde National Park*. Washington, D.C. US National Park Service and Colorado Historical Society, 1–4.
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