



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #18 – Interviews for Native American Heritage Month Transcript

Ranger Patrick Gamman: Welcome to yet another webisode of Insider's Look at Grand Canyon. I'm Ranger Patrick. I am here with my friend and fellow ranger, Shana Watahomigie. Welcome to the show.

Ranger Shana Watahomigie: Thank you for having me.

Patrick Gamman: Well, it is Native American Heritage Month, and you are Havasupai. I was wondering if you would share with the folks out there some of the connections for you, and the rest of your family, and tribal members, your connection with the Grand Canyon.

Shana Watahomigie: Hi, my name is Shana Watahomigie. I am a member of the Havasupai tribe. My tribe has been in the Grand Canyon for, ...since the 1300's. We have a deep connection to the canyon, and the water, and the animals. My tribe, the Havasupai, means people of the blue-green waters. In the early days we used to come up to the rim seasonally and live in the canyon the next season. We would gather medicinal plants, animals (and) travel as far as Flagstaff. Our plants, red ochre's, very sacred to us, and that is very rare to find. The bighorn sheep is one of our most sacred, because we call ourselves the protectors of the Grand Canyon. And so we celebrate the bighorn sheep by a dance with four men wearing bighorns and woman and children dancing. And at the very end with the bighorn clashing to celebrate the seasons. As far as the water....which is our life.

Patrick Gamman: In your language, how would you say; "This place"?

Shana Watahomigie: "*Havsupaga*", that is how we call our place.

Patrick Gamman: Shana thanks so much for being on the show.

Shana Watahomigie: Thank you for having me.

Patrick Gamman: My guest is Phyllis. Welcome to the show Phyllis.

Retired Ranger Phyllis Kachingonva: Thank you (*Ioma*). My name is Phyllis Kachingonva and I am a Hopi-Apache Indian, raised with Hopi beliefs. And actually, raised at Grand Canyon since I was two weeks old. I grew up behind Verkamp's Curio Shop in that little house and my teenage years was spent on top of Hopi house. Also, right on the rim. My grandkids actually make my family here five generations. So who knows, hopefully they will stay here a long time. The Grand Canyon is a very special place for all Native Americans, but a very special place to the Hopi Indians, because we believe that The Grand Canyon was our place of emergence. And after life our spirits return back to the canyon and this is where we are going to remain, this is our home. We are actually descendants of Hinatsisume that lived in this area, you better know then as the Anasasi Indians. But once they left this area they branched out into different areas. So the Ecoma, the Pueblo, Isleta, Zuni, Hopi were actually all descendants of the Hinatsisume. The word for Grand Canyon is "Dupkia", it means "deep canyon".

Patrick Gamman: Phyllis thanks so much for sharing this with everybody here on Insider's Look at Grand Canyon.

Phyllis Kachingonva: Your welcome, (*Aqualana*).

Park Staffer Tina Yazzie: Hi, my name is Tina Yazzie. How to say Grand Canyon in my language is; "*Budahazeh*", at the edge, that's what it means. Navajo people, when we come to the canyon, we respect the canyon as the Ram country. And when we come here, we get two sticks, we clink it together as if we are knocking on the door of the Ram's home, and then before we hike into the canyon we do that. Thank you.