

Native Heritage in the Moose-Wilson Corridor
Grand Teton National Park
Prepared by the National Park Service
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Background

American Indians have occupied the Jackson Hole area for thousands of years, and places and resources within Grand Teton National Park continue to hold both traditional and contemporary significance for many tribal groups. American Indians often passed through the area following stream and river corridors, or by way of other traditional access routes for hunting and foraging, migration, religious and ceremonial purposes, and other cultural activities. Today, numerous American Indian tribes retain traditional associations with what are now park lands including the Moose-Wilson corridor.

Past research has examined the traditional, proto-historic (early contact era), and historic presence of the park's traditionally associated tribes. Tribes view the entire region and its resources holistically, with geographic and other features contributing to their spiritual, economic, and material cultures. On a broad scale, the Teton Range has long represented a monumental and sacred geological feature within the landscape, serving as a focus for vision quests, hunting and gathering, and other purposes. Other culturally important sites in the region include Jackson Lake, the obsidian quarries at Conant and Teton Passes, and the geysers and thermal features of Yellowstone National Park. Other notable sites within the park show evidence of camas bulb roasting pits, fishing weights, butchered animal bones, and camp sites - all of which demonstrate a close relationship with the natural world.

The cultural importance of such natural resources as bison, obsidian, plants, hot springs, and other water features are reflected in spiritual practices such as ceremonies and offerings; medicinal uses; and as sources of food, water, and tools.

The vital importance of bison in the activities of the Plains tribes was manifested in the far-reaching reliance on bison for all aspects of subsistence and for spiritual guidance. The annual subsistence cycles of tribal groups were determined in large part by the migration patterns of bison herds. Seasonal subsistence strategies drew on the traditions of Great Basin and Plains cultures, permitting the exploitation of a broad range of resources. Within the watershed of the Snake River headwaters, the varied environments of canyons, wetlands, subalpine mountains, and plains supported a diverse variety of berries, fish, and large and small game that could be procured on a seasonal basis.

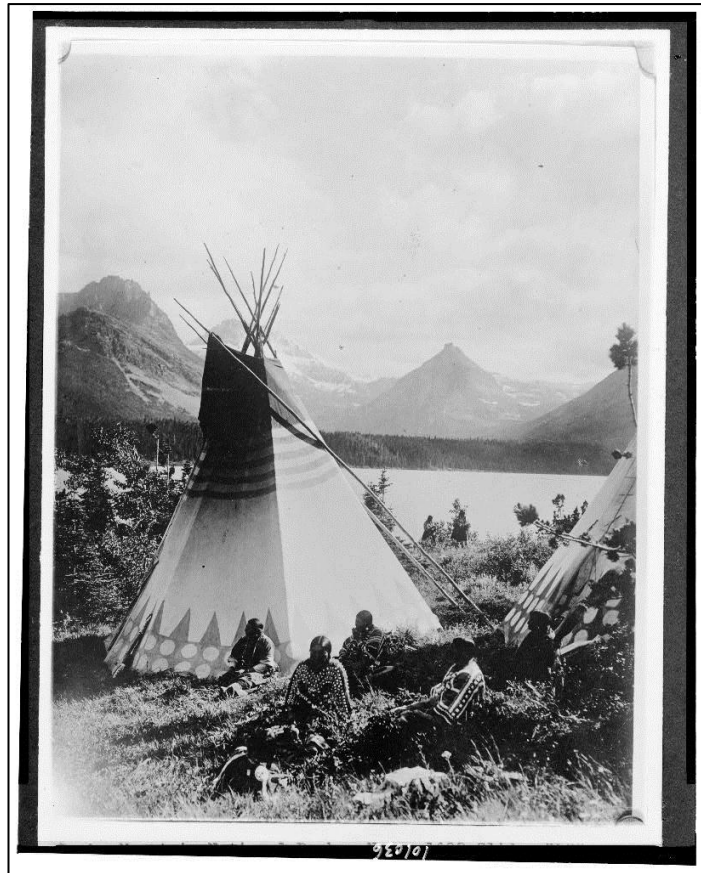


Figure 1. Alpine tipi camp beside a lake in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, 1909-1932; Library of Congress.

Archeological evidence of former campsites often retain faunal evidence of bison, elk, deer and other animals, as well as hearths, lithic scatters, and rock structures. In addition to the archeological importance of these resources, they often retain enduring cultural value as traditional or sacred sites that continue to link tribes to particular geographic areas. Many resources and sites used during the proto-historic and early historic period (e.g., plants and animals, minerals, ceremonial sites) are used by contemporary tribes, but currently only for non-consumptive use within the park under NPS regulations.

Archaeology of the Moose-Wilson Corridor

One of the most archaeologically rich areas of Grand Teton National Park is the Moose-Wilson corridor. The corridor provided abundant natural resources that supported subsistence needs and served as a source for raw materials that were transported across extensive trade networks. Teton Pass, on the south end of the corridor, was an intensively quarried source of obsidian, a black volcanic glass highly valued for its razor sharp edge. An analysis of 2,000-year-old obsidian artifacts recovered in present-day southern Ohio revealed that the source material was quarried at the Teton Pass site, demonstrating the widespread use and trade importance of local obsidian across the country. Jenny Lake lies on the north end of the corridor, and archaeologists hope to gain a better understanding of the importance of fishing to native groups through ongoing study of a large site near the outlet of Cottonwood Creek. Documented high altitude sites within the park indicate that the Tetons were utilized in the summer months, and the sagebrush flats to the east sustained extensive animal communities for hunting. The corridor itself provided abundant plant foods, game, and water sources, and served as an ideal central location with easy access to all of the resources necessary to sustain life and economic trade.

Until recently, archaeological studies within the corridor were limited and revealed only sporadic sites consisting mostly of small lithic scatters. Since 2013, NPS archaeologists have begun to systematically survey areas within the corridor and revisit previously recorded sites. These surveys have revealed that the archaeology of the corridor is far more complex and significant than previously known. Of particular importance are two archaeological sites identified in 2014 and 2015 as containing multiple stone circles believed to be tipi rings. These two sites are the largest documented concentrations of tipi rings within Grand Teton National Park.

Archaeological Investigations

Multiple archaeological surveys have taken place within the Moose-Wilson corridor since the 1970s, most of which targeted specific areas in advance of proposed projects. Even including these surveys, only a small portion (approximately 8%) of the Moose-Wilson corridor has been surveyed for archaeological resources. Ongoing surveys suggest that the area likely contains additional undocumented sites that demonstrate an intensive use of the corridor by native communities.

As of this writing, the corridor study area contains a total of 11 documented archeological sites and nine isolated finds. This number will grow as survey results from the 2015 field season are analyzed and recorded. Three of the prehistoric sites within the corridor are recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and additional sites identified in 2015 are also likely to be determined to be eligible.

Mettler & Associates investigated a portion of the Moose-Wilson corridor in 2012 in support of the proposed Moose-Wilson Road Realignment Project. The study area at that time encompassed about 378 acres, of which 36 acres had been previously surveyed for cultural resources. Investigations were conducted to fulfill NPS compliance responsibilities under section 106 of the National Historic

Preservation Act. During the 2012 archeological surveys, investigators found and recorded four previously undocumented sites and five isolated finds. Two prehistoric cairns were recorded and recommended ineligible, as well as five prehistoric isolated finds.

NPS staff began an archeological survey of the Moose-Wilson corridor project area in October, 2014. The initial survey area encompassed approximately 233 acres and resulted in the identification of four isolated finds of less than 15 artifacts each and two sites. One previously recorded site (48TE1197) near the White Grass Ranch included over 30 lithic artifacts and was recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In 2015, an extensive previously unrecorded site within the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve was identified and recorded consisting of 380 lithic artifacts that included non-diagnostic / irregular tools and tool fragments that could not be attributed to a period of occupation. The high percentage of primary flakes from obsidian cobbles suggests the site was long used as a place to initially reduce the size of material quarried from nearby obsidian source locations, and demonstrates the use and importance of local obsidian sources.

Site 48TE498

One of the most important known archeological sites in the Moose-Wilson corridor is site 48TE498, a large archaic period occupation site dating to approximately 1,500 – 3,000 years before present. The site is located within the path of the proposed realignment of the Moose-Wilson road contained in some of the preliminary alternatives. The site was first identified and recorded in 1973 by archaeologist Gary Wright, who believed the site to be one of three large base camps in the area. The other two known base camps are the Hunt Site, which is located outside of the park near the base of Teton Pass, and the Jenny Lake site, which has been largely impacted by 20th-century development of the Jenny Lake area. Wright and Marceau (1977) noted that the location of site 48TE498 is approximately half-way between the Hunt Site and Jenny Lake. During a revisit to 48TE498 in 1977, a portion of the site was tested to better understand the site and 159 artifacts were collected. The artifacts collected during testing are housed at the NPS Midwest Archeological Center. The site was revisited again in 1991 by archaeologist Ann Johnson, who recommended that the site has sufficient integrity and significance to be considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

As a part of the Moose-Wilson corridor planning effort, NPS archaeologist Jacquelin St. Clair and archaeologist Stacey Whitman Moore revisited the site in 2013. Although the site was known to be significant, it had not been evaluated for 22 years and there were gaps in the documentation and site data,



Figure 2. Late archaic chert knife collected from 48TE498; NPS photo.

including an unclear site boundary. During their site revisit, St. Clair and Whitman Moore identified and documented significantly more surface artifacts than previously recorded, including two late archaic period corner-notched projectile points, and several tool fragments. Artifacts and fire cracked rock from cooking hearths are scattered throughout the site. The site boundary was much larger than that previously documented; the entire site encompasses a total of 11.3 acres. Additional testing indicated that the site retains a high level of integrity and data potential. All diagnostic tools, including projectile points, were collected for curation.

All pre-contact artifacts observed at 48TE498 are chipped stone. Diagnostic artifacts include two late archaic period corner-notched projectile points. Additional flaked stone tools include utilized flakes, several obsidian bifacial tools/knives and one chert knife. A total of 13 tools were collected.

Obsidian is clearly the dominant material type followed by local quartzite, then chert. Secondary and tertiary flakes are also dominant indicating a lot of final modification or resharpening activity at the site. Wright and Marceau (1977) believed that the abundance of flaked material together with the lack, or complete absence of, cores indicates that obsidian and chert were carried to the sites already in the form of tools, or as flakes ready for final modification. The flaked stone examples at 48TE498 seem to support this hypothesis; only one core was found at the site, and it was from a local quartzite quarry.

St. Clair and Whitman Moore's investigation revealed at least 11 newly discovered partial stone circles at 48TE498 that were previously unknown. Vegetation cover likely obscured the rings during previous surveys, and additional rings are likely located in areas of the site under dense vegetation cover. The stone circles, believed to be tipi rings, identify the site as a habitation area. Stones were placed around the base of a tipi to hold down the skins, and when it was time to move, the rocks would have been pushed off the hides so the tipi could be prepared for transport. Evidence of partial rings may also indicate that an area was occupied on multiple occasions, as stones were often removed from an older ring and then placed around a newer one. Tipi foundations begin with either a three-pole or four-pole framework. With a four-pole framework, tipis are more circular, while three-pole tipis tend to be more egg-shaped. The egg-shaped three-pole type is more commonly found in Jackson Hole. Fire hearths were not identified in any of the circles identified at 48TE498.



Figure 3. Teepee ring in Yellowstone National Park, 1965; NPS photo.

In pre-horse times tipis averaged approximately 10 to 12 feet in diameter using from 8 to 12 hides. It is believed that after the acquisition of the horse, tipis became larger because horses are capable of transporting greater loads. After the introduction of canvas and the metal axe, straps and wooden pegs replaced the stones around the base of the tipi in the historic period.

Although tipi rings have been sporadically identified throughout the park in small numbers, this is the highest documented concentration of tipi rings in Grand Teton National Park. In addition to the high concentration of tipi rings, the site is also significant because it may contain double tipi rings. The significance of the double stone circles at the site is not yet fully understood, but possibilities include occupational overlap and the presence of a winter or shoulder season habitation site that used double-walled tipis for protection against snow and wind. As studies continue, the site has the potential to change our understanding of how people lived on the landscape and may challenge the traditional belief that the area was only occupied during the warm seasons.

Some proposals contained in the 2014 Moose-Wilson corridor preliminary alternatives to realign the Moose-Wilson road would re-route the road directly through this site, which is one of the most significant archaeological sites within Grand Teton National Park.

Laurence S. Rockefeller (LSR) Area Sites

An archeological survey of the LSR area within the Moose-Wilson corridor was conducted in 2015 by NPS archaeologist Jacquelin St. Clair and archaeologist Stacey Whitman Moore. During the course of the survey, archaeologists identified three new sites, re-evaluated one previously recorded site, and documented eight isolated finds.

Together, the three newly recorded sites in the LSR area contain over 680 surface artifacts, approximately 90 percent of which are obsidian. Because obsidian can be sourced and dated, much can be learned from the obsidian alone. Very few diagnostic projectile points were identified to provide strong dates for the sites, however, there is some evidence suggesting dates for the late archaic period, which in this area



Figure 4: Obsidian flake

range from 1,500 to 3,000 years before present. There is also some evidence suggesting both late prehistoric and historic components to the area. At least seven partial stone circles were identified in the LSR survey area. Like site 48TE498, the stone circles are believed to be tipi rings and identify the site as a habitation area. These stone circles are approximately two miles southeast of site 48TE498. These two tipi ring concentrations are among the largest known habitation areas in the park and could possibly be related.

The previously recorded site (48TE1197), located near the White Grass Ranch, is a prehistoric lithic scatter located only 1.5 miles north of the largest of the three newly identified LSR sites. The site

consists of 33 obsidian flakes. These flakes could be sourced to identify the original location of the lithic material, information from which may also indicate travel routes used in prehistoric times.

Much of the lithic material identified in the LSR area consists of large early-stage reduction flakes, suggesting that locally quarried raw material was prepared on site to be traded and/or worked at a later date. The obsidian has not yet been sourced, but given the importance of Teton Pass obsidian as a trade commodity, the sites within the LSR preserve may have played an important role in large-scale lithic trade networks.

Archaeological survey and analysis within the Moose-Wilson corridor remains ongoing.

Tribal Consultation

The National Park Service has a government-to-government relationship with Indian nations, and any undertaking that has the potential to affect cultural resources, including those within the Moose-Wilson corridor, require consultation with affiliated tribes. Traditionally associated tribes whom park staff consults on a government-to-government basis include the following:

- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
- Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana
- Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana
- Burns Paiute Tribe, Oregon
- Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Oklahoma
- Coeur D'Alene Tribe, Idaho
- Comanche Nation, Oklahoma
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Montana
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Washington
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Washington
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Oregon
- Crow Tribe of Montana
- Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Reservation of Montana
- Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
- Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
- Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, Montana
- Oglala Sioux Tribe, South Dakota
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe of the Rosebud Indian Reservation, South Dakota
- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, Idaho
- Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota
- Yankton Sioux Tribe of South Dakota

NPS staff held on-site visits with tribal representatives at selected locations in the park, including the Moose-Wilson corridor, to assess tribal issues and concerns and to gain insight into potential ethnographic resources and traditional cultural properties. A site visit was conducted to the Moose-Wilson corridor on July 16, 2014. Representatives of the Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Crow Tribe of Montana, Fort Belknap Indian Community, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, and Yankton Sioux Tribe of South Dakota accompanied NPS staff on the site visits. Participants discussed opportunities for tribal members to assist with archeological surveys to provide the benefit of tribal cultural knowledge in identifying and recording sites, as well as the importance of incorporating tribal perspectives in interpretive programs and media; measures to improve consultation; and the purpose and need of the Moose-Wilson Corridor Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement.

Subsequent tribal consultation meetings and a rapid ethnographic assessment of the Moose-Wilson Road corridor were held November 5–7, 2014, with the participation of representatives from the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Crow Tribe of Montana, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, and Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation. The rapid ethnographic assessment examined and documented traditional and contemporary tribal perspectives on the resources and landscape of the corridor, and addressed potential impacts to ethnographic resources for this comprehensive management plan / environmental impact statement with recommended mitigation measures. Site visits were made to three archeological sites within the corridor. Tribal representatives identified the cultural importance of traditionally collected/used plants, animals, and stone/mineral resources. The enduring cultural importance of site 48TE498 was also expressed because the large number of stone circles strongly support the repeated use of the site as an ideal winter camp location. As

expressed by a tribal representative, “This place tells us how our ancestors lived. We need to respect this place. It tells us what they had to deal with in order for us to be here. . . I would be saddened if this were destroyed.” The large site within the LSR Preserve was identified as a tool processing site indicative of the long history of tribal use of the corridor. Tribal representatives emphasized the paramount need to protect cultural sites, and disturbance and loss of sites was seen as an erosion of tribal cultural identities and heritage.

The archaeological record at Grand Teton National Park shows a rich history of traditional cultural practices and a deep spiritual interdependence between the people and the landscape that sustained them. Archaeology and ecology are not just science; they are threads in a vibrant and enduring cultural tapestry. With the disappearance of wilderness, endangered species, and archaeological material, the threads that form that tapestry become weaker and cultural identity incrementally fades. The archaeological sites at Grand Teton National Park have significant scientific and historical value, but they are also culturally significant to modern native groups.

The Shoshone, Shoshone-Bannock, Crow, Assiniboine and Sioux, and 20 other affiliated tribes know this landscape as part of their ancestral home, and the archaeological sites at Grand Teton provide a tangible connection to 11,000 years of their place on earth. Disturbance to archaeological sites does not just remove a piece of history; it creates spiritual imbalance for native people by removing what was intentionally left by their ancestors. Archaeology provides a new generation of native people the opportunity to connect to their history and understand the hardships their ancestors endured to ensure the survival of their descendants.