

“Native Perspective in Rock Writing”

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Roland’s talk was interesting in that it was not really a lecture but a question and answer session based on the seven points in the introduction.

Roland, as cultural preservation director for the Kaibab Paiutes, is responsible for teaching children and adults who have come back to the reservation about the native cultures and traditions.

He participates in various healing ceremonies such as the “Sun Dance” that is performed during the day, while the “Ghost Dance” is performed at night. These are Lakota ceremonies but they originated with the Paiutes.

The healing ceremonies are for healing everyone and everything – the earth and the people. Everything is related – all things in the earth and on the earth. We, the people, are part of the Animal Family – “All my Relations”.

The Paiutes believe in both Native Beliefs and Christianity, which he said are not that different. They may have different terminologies but similar meanings. For example “spirit beings” are angles.

A problem is that children do not see the value of native languages or traditions. The Paiutes are trying to associate science to traditions. The examples given are:

- Forest management
- Agriculture – pollution and water control
- Organic Foods
- Rotate crops and herd to prevent overgrazing

The selling point is that when these scientific practices (native traditions) are followed you will be more productive resulting in increased income.

Roland talked some about the Paiute history. He said that after contact with Europeans in the 1800’s, there was about a 90% mortality rate. At this point

the people became suspicious of interactions with and the intentions of whites.

The Paiute oral history says that they were always in their lands. There is no part of the history that talks of migration. Their history does talk of a people that migrated into their lands from the north and stayed for hundreds of years and then migrated away. He says these people were the Hopi.

He had little time to talk about the petroglyphs or pictographs. However he did stress that they are rock writing not rock art and that they carried a meaning for the people – it was communication.

Prepared Notes:

Introduction:

1. Tell about self
2. Explain about life on the reservation and how it differs from secular society.
3. Relay some of the issues of living on the reservation.
4. Some of the issues of in maintaining our culture.
5. How non-natives can show respect.
6. Some of the differences between the native and non- native world perceptions and values.
7. How to effect a restoration of trust between native and non-native communities, especially in the face of atrocities. Whether these were out right warfare or displacement coupled with indifference to the obvious hardships associated with occupation, the total lack of empathy.

Rock Writing:

One of the first things we must remember is that this is not art, in that this carries a message. The simple fact that we do not know how to interpret the writing does not invalidate the fact that it is still writing. The high level of spirituality that can be associated with these images, along with the fact that we no longer know of or use these rituals and images, this due to a lack of need and or seeing the value in pursuing this type of knowledge does not marginalize these to art. They are not just random drawings in pretty places, but rather information in areas of specific use.

Many times the message is clear and easy to understand, they can be as simple as migration trails, gathering areas, springs, notes of dangers ahead or supplies of food. Some are easy to follow; hunting areas along with what kind of prey is to be expected, as well as how to affect a harvest. Others are associated with out of body experiences, spiritual messages, dreams and ceremony. Who can or cannot participate, where to be to make one's self-available for understandings, as well as if there are any seasonal restrictions. Many times we see the writings of purported knowledgeable individuals on this subject. These individuals who have gone out and spoken to the people who still live around the area and have that most likely lineal descendant connection. What we generally forget is that these natives were the same ones who carried the memories of the atrocities of occupation. That in order to be able to continue to fulfill their perceived responsibility of maintaining the spiritual needs of their people, and that these things had to be done in secret. That we should think that the information being relayed to the researchers was spoken in truth and not being guarded is an oversight so often forgotten.

The reason I bring up this last part is because of the fact that as First Nation Peoples we are the only group that had to have our freedom of religion rights secured by an act of congress, namely the American Indian Freedom of Religion Act 1978. Many of the sites where we find this rock writing is where, as a people we endeavor to persevere in our desire to maintain that spiritual and physical connection with both our ancestors and nature itself. In gathering information and different interpretations for the picture writings themselves, we must always remember to take into consideration who it is that is giving the information. What is their history with the area, as well as

what has been documented as to the activity that they have had in the area. This of course making the assumption that we are speaking of tribal people. In so much as whether or not there is an enemy status or one of friendly relations. This leads to the question of whether or not there is some kind of historical lineal claim that is trying to be established.

You will find that as is the case with those who have been able to over power, work with the dominate culture and have been quicker to adapt to the new system that they find themselves in, are not necessarily the ones with a long historically documented residence in the area where we find these writings. This is important to remember because it will help in determining the authenticity of any interpretation being received. One must ask one's self if these people do not have a long history in this area, how they can have any accurate knowledge of the subject matter.

In considering these writings as well as the areas that they are found, we begin to realize how special these areas. That many people from differing backgrounds, who have an understanding of naturally occurring energy points, find that these are also aligned with these areas. It helps us to see that at one time there was a globally practiced form of spirituality. That this was and still is based on nature, this is understood to mean all aspects of the world around us, that it is truly all-inclusive.

Symbol Meanings:



Limp arms means tired or weak.



Figure with arms held out means to stop, restrict, keep back, to bar.



A hill, mountain, mound or something rising. If symbol is above or over a figure then it represents protection of something under (like an umbrella).



Pile up, a mountain, a pile of clouds, anything piled.



To cross over a hill (combine hill and cross symbol = cross over).



To meet, come together (place both hands in this position for sign).



To separate, split up (place hands in this position for signing).



Words being handed from one mouth to the other, to talk, speech.



To hold, (place fingers around one finger to show sign for hold).



Steps, to go up or down.



Footsteps, walking, going.



Tracks with dewclaws showing, means to flee, run away.



To go around (put hand in this position and move in half circle).



To go around both sides (put both hands in this position for sign).



Two arrowhead points touching, represents battle, war, to fight.



Movement, going (use hand and make motion same as symbol. Looks like waves of water in sign language to represent movement).



Going back and forth, Water, watercourse, canyon, anything that goes back and forth (Use finger and go up and down like symbol).



A deep bowl, deep, canyon, anything deep.



Cross, to cross over (use both hands and place across like symbol)



Failure to cross, line don't match up representing missed, failure.

The Law of Mother Earth

The Law of Mother Earth recognizes the rights of all living things, giving the natural world equal status to human beings. Will provide the earth with rights to: life and regeneration; biodiversity and freedom from genetic modification; pure water; clean air; naturally balanced systems; restoration from the effects of human activity; and freedom from contamination.

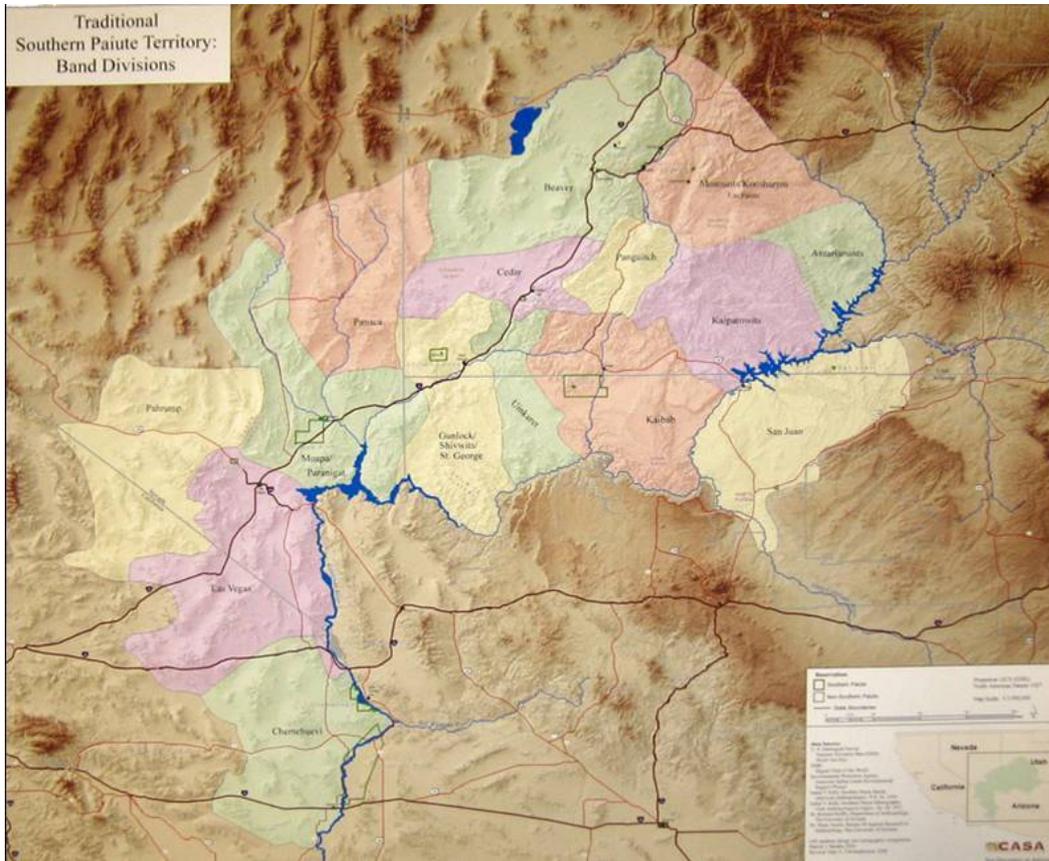
It is based on the broader principles of living in harmony with the earth and prioritizing the “collective good”, understanding that the earth is sacred,

which arises from the indigenous world view that Mother Earth is a living being, defines Mother Earth as a dynamic and “indivisible community of all living systems and living organisms, interrelated, interdependent and complementary, which share a common destiny.”

The Law of Mother Earth will help to prioritize the well being of the people and the natural world by developing policies that promote sustainability and control industry, so as to operate within the limits of nature. Preventing climate change is key, which includes protecting the lives of future generations (7 gens out). Request rich countries adapt to the effects of climate change in recognition of the debt they owe for high carbon emissions (foot print). Will advocate peace and elimination of all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. This will represent a shift away from the western development model and towards a more holistic vision, based on indigenous concept. We must adopt forms of consumption, behavior and conduct that are not degrading to nature. This requires ethical and spiritual relationship with life. This law proposes the complete fulfillment of life and collective happiness, as well as a return to a traditional stewardship role.

As paraphrased from Brazil’s new constitutional law, based on indigenous concepts

Map of Traditional Paiute Territories:



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John Mangels