



Montana  
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**Indian Education for All**  
**Montana State Parks Lesson Plan**  
**Medicine Rocks State Park**  
January 2010 (revised)

## Title

Shared Destinies: Tribal Cultural Resources and Cultural Survival

## Content Areas

Social Studies (History, Government, Economics, Montana's Indian Tribes, Federal Indian Policy, Current Events); Science

## Grade Level

11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

## Duration

2 50-minute class periods and 1 homework assignment

## Overview and Objectives

Long before becoming a State Park, the Medicine Rocks area held cultural and historical significance for many northern Plains tribes, including the Northern Cheyenne tribe of southeastern Montana. This region of Montana was occupied and used by tribes such as the Lakota, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara and others. Although this region was reserved for tribes in the Fort Laramie treaties of 1851 and 1868, the United States later took this land and nearby areas totaling millions of acres from the tribes when gold was discovered in the Black Hills. Nonetheless, several spiritually and culturally significant locations throughout the region (southeastern Montana, northeastern Wyoming and the western edges of the Dakotas) remain important to these tribes and are still utilized for cultural and spiritual practices by tribal members. Various forms of resource extraction, development, construction, recreation and urban expansion by non-Native entities has made access to and preservation of these sacred sites and locations difficult for tribes and sometimes tribal cultural and spiritual sites and locations have been damaged or destroyed. This lesson introduces students to one tribe's cosmology (Northern Cheyenne) and the necessity of the preservation of cultural resources (both on and off the Northern Cheyenne reservation) for the cultural and spiritual continuity of the tribe. One of the most economically depressed communities in the United States, the Northern Cheyenne reservation community is also located in a region of extraordinary coal, gas and coal bed methane extraction, which contributes to the dilemma of how to protect the cultural and spiritual resources vital to the tribe's identity.

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- Define and describe terminology and concepts related to cultural resource and preservation, including sacred sites, cultural resource management and cultural resources as defined by Northern Cheyenne peoples and by archaeologists, government entities and academics;

- Learn that the Northern Cheyenne (and other tribes) have an understanding of the world that defines their relationship to all aspects of the world, and that this cosmology is still in existence today and still shapes many or most tribal members' worldviews and actions;
- Become aware that the Northern Cheyenne traditional understanding of the world is different from that of "mainstream" America and consequently compels a relationship to the natural world that is also different from that of the dominant Euro-American society;
- Understand that tribal people continue to use their cultural and spiritual resources located on and off their reservations, in their ancestral tribal territories, and on lands near which they have been relocated and continue to live by their cultural traditions;
- Understand why and how cultural resources and tribal knowledge are important assets for resource management of public lands and for the survival of tribal cultures;
- Examine the implications and consequences for tribes when cultural resources (and access to culturally relevant sites or resources) are or are not protected and preserved;
- Examine the potential impacts of natural resource development, urban expansion, etc..., onto lands used by tribes for cultural purposes;
- Examine the impacts of tribal cultural heritage, tribal-federal history and current economic conditions on natural resource use, preservation and subsistence;
- Define and describe major federal and state policies regarding conservation/preservation, cultural resource management, resource development, religious freedom and American Indian tribes, including policies such as: National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, National Register of Historic Places, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Archeological Resources Protection Act, Presidential Proclamation of 29 April 1994, and Executive Orders 12898 and 11593; and,
- Develop and enhance critical thinking skills, analysis and writing abilities.

## Montana Education Standards and Benchmarks

### *Indian Education for All*

**Essential Understanding 1:** There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

**Essential Understanding 3:** The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persists into modern day as tribal cultures, traditions and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral history beginning with their origins that are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the "discovery" of North America. *Background: Tribal languages, cultures, and traditions are alive and well throughout Indian Country. Indigenous languages are still spoken, sacred songs are still sung, and rituals are still performed... These histories and traditions may be private, to be used and understood only by members of that particular tribe. Educators should be aware of this issue when asking students about their histories, ceremonies and stories. Educators should also be consistent with policies surrounding "religious/spiritual activities" and ensure that Native traditions and spirituality are treated with the same respect as other religious traditions and spirituality.*

**Essential Understanding 5:** Federal [Indian-related] policies, put into place throughout American history, have affected Indian people and still shape who they are today.

**Essential Understanding 6:** History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

## Montana Content Standards

**Social Studies Content Standard 1:** Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations. *Rationale: Every discipline has a process by which knowledge is gained or inquiry made. In the social studies, the information inquiry process is applied to locate and evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources of information [which is then used] to draw conclusions in order to make decisions, solve problems and negotiate conflicts. Finally, as individuals who participate in self-governance, the decision-making process needs to be understood and practiced by students as they prepare to take on civic responsibilities.*

**Benchmark 1.2** Students will apply criteria to evaluate information (e.g., origin, authority, accuracy, bias, and distortion of information and ideas).

**Benchmark 1.3** Students will synthesize and apply information to formulate and support reasonable personal convictions within groups and participate in negotiations to arrive at solutions to differences.

**Social Studies Content Standard 2:** Students analyze how people create and change structures of power, authority and governance to understand the operation of government and to demonstrate civic responsibility. *Rationale: The vitality and continuation of a democratic republic depends upon the education and participation of informed citizens.*

**Benchmark 2.4** Students will relate the concept of tribal sovereignty to the unique powers of tribal governments as they interact with local, state and federal governments.

**Benchmark 2.6** Students will analyze and evaluate conditions, actions and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among groups and nations.

**Benchmark 2.7** Students will analyze laws and policies governing technology and evaluate the ethical issues and the impacts of technology on society.

**Social Studies Content Standard 3:** Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement and regions). *Rationale: Students gain geographical perspectives on Montana and the world by studying the Earth and how people interact with places. Knowledge of geography helps students address cultural, economic, social and civic implications of living in various environments.*

**Benchmark 3.3** Students will assess the major impacts of human modifications on/to the environment.

**Benchmark 3.4** Students will analyze how human settlement patterns create cooperation and conflict which influence the division and control of the Earth (e.g., treaties, economics, exploration, borders, religion, exploitation, water rights, etc.)

**Benchmark 3.5** Students will select and apply appropriate geographic resources to analyze the interaction of physical and human systems and their impact[s] on environmental and societal changes.

**Benchmark 3.7** Students will describe and compare how people create places that reflect culture, human needs, government policy, and current values and ideas.

**Social Studies Content Standard 4:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships. *Rationale: Students need to understand their historical roots and how events shape the past, present and future of the world. In developing these insights, students must know what life was like in the past and how things change and develop over time. Students gain historical understanding through inquiry of history by researching and interpreting historical events affecting personal, local, tribal, Montana, United States, and world history.*

**Benchmark 4.1** Students will select and analyze various documents and primary and secondary sources that have influenced the legal, political and constitutional heritage of Montana and the United States.

**Benchmark 4.2** Students will interpret how selected cultures, historical events, periods and patterns of change influence each other.

**Benchmark 4.3** Students will apply ideas, theories, methods of inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to formulate and defend reasoned decisions on public policy issues.

**Benchmark 4.5** Students will analyze both the historical impact of technology on human values and behaviors and how technology shapes problem solving now and in the future.

**Benchmark 4.6** Students will investigate, interpret and analyze the impact(s) of multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints concerning events within and across cultures...and political systems.

**Benchmark 4.7** Students will analyze and illustrate the major issues concerning [the] history, culture, tribal sovereignty and current status of the American Indian tribes and bands in Montana and the United States.

**Social Studies Content Standard 5:** Students make informed decisions based on an understanding of the economic principles of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. *Rationale: In a global economy marked by rapid technological and political change, students must learn how to be effective producers, consumers, and economic citizens.*

**Benchmark 5.6** Students will explain and evaluate the effects of new technology, global economic interdependence and competition on the development of national policies and on the lives of the individuals and families in Montana, the United States, and the world.

**Science Content Standard 5:** Students, through the inquiry process, understand how scientific knowledge and technological developments impact communities, cultures and societies. *Rationale: Our world and human activity is shaped in many ways by the advances in science. Science and technology are parallel in that science drives technological advances and these advances drive future scientific endeavors. Many different cultures contribute to science and technology. These advances affect different societies in different ways. It is vital that students understand the interrelationships [between] science, technology and human activity.*

**Benchmark 5.4** Students will analyze benefits, limitations, costs, consequences and ethics involved in using scientific and technological innovations (e.g., environmental issues).

**Benchmark 5.5** Students will explain how the knowledge of science and technology applies to contemporary Montana American Indian communities (e.g., natural resource development, management and conservation).

## Materials or Resources Needed

- French, Brett – “Rock of Ages,” from *Montana Outdoors* July-August, 2005. (See Attachments)
- Selected pages from “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources” from “The Northern Cheyenne Tribe and Its Reservation 2002 A Report to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Prepared by The Northern Cheyenne Tribe April 2002” Retrieved on 08/06/09, from: [http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/mt/field\\_offices/miles\\_city/og\\_eis/cheyenne.Par.26503.File.dat/Chap7.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/mt/field_offices/miles_city/og_eis/cheyenne.Par.26503.File.dat/Chap7.pdf) (See Attachments)
- Map of Montana (A current state highway map is fine, or a pull-down or online map will suffice as long as state parks and rivers are shown).
- See Teacher Preparation section for additional online materials for teacher preparation.

## Teacher Preparation

Teacher should become familiar with the following resources.

- French, Brett – *Rock of Ages*, *Montana Outdoors* July-August, 2005 (included in lesson plan)
- Excerpt from “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources” (included in lesson plan)
- Visit these websites to familiarize yourself with cultural resource protection and tribal sacred site protection efforts: <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200211/sacred.asp> (describes tribes’ preservation

efforts related to sacred sites). For a definition of cultural resource management, see:  
[http://archaeology.about.com/od/culturalresource/qt/crm\\_definition.htm](http://archaeology.about.com/od/culturalresource/qt/crm_definition.htm)

## Activities and Procedures

This lesson is designed as a seminar-style class: students will need to participate in and contribute to class discussions and respond thoughtfully to the short-answer written work. The homework assignment is a lengthy reading assignment and will require about 2 hours of time to complete, however, some in-class time is provided (about 30-35 minutes).

### **Class Period 1: Introduction to Medicine Rocks State Park, the Northern Cheyenne, Vocabulary.**

For this period you will need the Overview at the beginning of this lesson plan (use it to introduce the lesson) and all of the materials listed in the “Materials and Resources” section. Notice that you need only 1 copy of a Montana map, the Overview, and the Discussion Questions for “Rock of Ages.” These materials are for your use. Students will need both articles and the worksheet associated with “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources.”

1. Using the Overview from the beginning of this lesson plan, briefly introduce the Northern Cheyenne tribe and Medicine Rocks State Park to your class. Locate on an overhead or pull-down map of Montana: Medicine Rocks State Park, the Northern Cheyenne Reservation (formerly called the Tongue River Reservation) and the Tongue River and Powder River. (One half of the nation’s coal comes from this river basin.) Also point out the relative locations of the Black Hills (to the southeast), Custer National Forest, and Big Horn National Forest (WY, just south of Crow Reservation) which is the location of Medicine Wheel. (5-10 minutes)
2. Have students read (aloud or silently) “Rock of Ages.” Follow with a class discussion of the questions provided. Encourage students to use examples from the article in their answers and to participate in the discussion. (10-15 minutes)
3. Introduce the topics of cultural resource protection and sacred sites to your class, drawing on the materials listed for teacher preparation. This does not have to be a long introduction, but you will want to point out that tribal cultural resources and spiritual sites are at risk and that certain laws apply to their protection, provided that these sites can be defined according to the categories or criteria specified within those laws and policies. (5 minutes)
4. Provide your students with the excerpt from “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources” and the accompanying list of questions. Tell them that this document is one chapter of an EIS (environmental impact statement) that was done regarding possible drilling for oil and gas in the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) lands of southwestern Montana, lands of great cultural and historical value to the Northern Cheyenne. Point out that terms in the document have been high-lighted to draw their attention to these concepts—which are defined and described in the document. (<5 minutes)

You will be using part of “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources” for an in-class activity on Laws and other policies relevant to cultural resource preservation. These policies are listed and described in Section II. “Cultural Resource Protection Laws” of “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources.” This section begins on the 5<sup>th</sup> page of the document and extends through the 9<sup>th</sup> page. Each of these policies have been put into bold type in the text for your convenience. Students should know that these laws and policies exist and be able to define the general idea of each one. Have students refer to this section and for the remainder of Class Period 1, go over each of these policies as a class. Students should be able to identify and give the main point of at least the following acts/policies by name and acronym: NEPA, NAGPRA, AIRFA, NHPA, and ARPA. (These could be an optional quiz at the end of the Class Period 2 lesson. See “Optional Activity” listed at end of Class Period 2.) (Duration: 25 minutes or remainder of class)

5. Assign the rest of “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources” and the accompanying list of questions to be done as homework due at the beginning of Class Period 2. (Homework will take 1 to 2 hours.)

## **Class Period 2: Written work due, class discussion of documents and sacred site preservation.**

Have students turn in their written work at the beginning of class. Then, lead a class discussion comparing the two documents and examining the importance of sacred site preservation (and related issues) for the survival of tribes' cultural and spiritual identities. Some topics and questions for discussion are:

- Compare the description of the geological origins and age of Medicine Rocks with that of the N. Cheyenne's placement of such landforms in their cosmology. What is similar about these ways of understanding Medicine Rocks? What is different?

*Sample response: Both documents describe Medicine Rocks as very, very ancient. "Rock of Ages" describes the geological formation of the rocks and dates them at about 61-million years old. The Northern Cheyenne document describes the Northern Cheyenne cosmology, and included in this cosmology is the space called "Deep Earth," the space furthest from the "Blue-Sky Space" and "basically all substance." Cliffs and badlands are included as being of "Deep Earth" and are considered "spiritually inert," which suggests that these rocks are also part of Deep Earth. (This is not to say, however, that they are spiritually insignificant, as they are also where medicinal plants are located and where tribes have gathered these plants since time immemorial.)*

- Contrast the information regarding tribes' usage of Medicine Rocks as described in "Rock of Ages" and "Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources." What is most notable about the information about tribal use or affiliation with Medicine Rocks as provided in each of these documents?

*Sample response: In French's article, tribal use and affiliation with Medicine Rocks is only described as having taken place in the past, before white settlers came to southeastern Montana. This bias excludes tribal associations with and use of Medicine Rocks State Park over the last 130 (or more) years and makes it seem as though the tribes themselves do not continue to have a spiritual relationship with the area. This historicization of tribal presence is in contrast to the evidence provided in "Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources," which mentions on-going tribal visitation to this site (and others in the area) and emphasizes the cultural protocol of maintaining spiritual ties to culturally significant places and sites.*

- Overview of difference between Cheyenne and "Western" perspectives of the natural environment and its various components ...
- What are some of the non-tribal uses of landscapes, water, and "natural resources" that make preservation of cultural resources and sacred sites difficult or that create conflicts of use? (*Consider, for instance: Oil and gas exploration and drilling, coal bed methane extraction, coal mining, grazing, road building, public recreation, housing development, urban expansion, construction of power lines or generating plants, what about state park or national park designations do these make cultural resource protection or access to tribal sites more or less difficult?, etc.*)
- How are cultural resource preservation and the protection of sacred sites important, even vital, to the continuation of traditional tribal identity, culture and spirituality?
- Should the preservation of sacred sites be important to Montana, non-Indians, and the United States, and why or why not?

**Optional activity:** Quiz your students on the laws and policies from Section II: "Cultural Resource Protection Laws" used for in-class instruction in Class Period 1. List all of the various policies mentioned in the EIS and have students define/describe them.

## Extensions

- A visit to Medicine Rocks State Park with an elder from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe would provide students an unprecedented opportunity to understand a Northern Cheyenne perspective regarding sacred landscapes.
- Read: “Sacred Landscapes: To Developers They're Just Piles of Rocks, to Native Americans, They're Places of Worship” by Valerie Taliman. *Sierra*. Volume 87, Issue 6, November-December 2002. Page 36.
- Visit the website of the Montana State Historic Preservation Office to learn more about preservation of cultural resources of all kinds: <http://www.mhs.mt.gov/shpo/default.asp>
- Read “We, The Northern Cheyenne People” (2008, Chief Dull Knife College Press).
- Research the history behind and reasons for such policies as NAGPRA, AIRFA and ARPA.

## Evaluation

In-class participation, thoughtful/substantive contribution to discussions, written work.

## Attachments

“Rock of Ages” by Brett French, from Montana Outdoors, July-August 2005.

Discussion Questions related to “Rock of Ages” for in-class discussion

Selected pages from “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources” from “The Northern Cheyenne Tribe and Its Reservation 2002 A Report to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Prepared by The Northern Cheyenne Tribe April 2002” This report is a section of an environmental impact statement. Retrieved on August 6, 2009, from the Miles City BLM office website at:

[http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/mt/field\\_offices/miles\\_city/og\\_eis/cheyenne.Par.26503.File.dat/Chap7.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/mt/field_offices/miles_city/og_eis/cheyenne.Par.26503.File.dat/Chap7.pdf)

Short-Answer Questions for “Chapter 7: Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources” for written homework assignment.

## Rock of Ages - by Brett French

**For hundreds of years, the ancient sandstone pillars at Medicine Rocks State Park have conjured feelings of inspiration, awe, and spiritual wonder.**

It's a place where "the spirits stayed and the medicine men prayed," this site of unusual formations of sandstone jutting 50 feet above the surrounding sage- and pine-sparkled prairie.

It's a place where visitors can imagine other-worldly voices in the sound of wind sighing through pine boughs and floating among cathedral-like rocks. In an increasingly noisy and jarring world of car alarms, diesel engines, and blaring TVs, Medicine Rocks State Park in eastern Montana's Carter County still speaks in the hushed tones of ancient times.



*This story is featured in  
Montana Outdoors  
July-August 2005*

Millions of years ago, a gentle freshwater river flowed through this country, cutting a path from today's Miles City southeast into an estuary of a prehistoric sea near what is now Camp Crook, in northwestern South Dakota. The river may have looked much like a larger version of today's Missouri as it moved across the landscape, depositing sandbars over a 5-mile-wide swath.

Slowly the sand built up in underwater dunes roughly 50 feet thick. Under the pressure of their own weight, the dunes compacted into stone, which thousands of years later were shaped by wind and rain into the unique pillars, arches, and other shapes of Medicine Rocks State Park. Eventually, the river's flow slowed, allowing salt water to creep upstream from the estuary. Geologists know this because atop the Medicine Rocks sandstone is a layer of crusty, gray sand riddled with burrows made by marine worms. By dating pinhead-sized teeth of early mammals from the Torrejonian Age, they also know Medicine Rocks was formed 61 million years ago.

Ed Belt, a retired geology professor from Amherst College in Massachusetts, spent several summers studying the geology of Medicine Rocks. He considers it one of the most remarkable deposits in North America. "You have to go a long way to find a sand deposit of a similar age," he says. "And even then, you won't find thick sand and such a large concentration like you have at Medicine Rocks."

### **Indian holy site**

American Indians didn't need geologists to tell them Medicine Rocks was extraordinary. The Arikara, Assiniboine, Mandan, Gros Ventre, Sioux, and Cheyenne all camped near Medicine Rocks at one time or another. The Sioux Indian name for the unusual stone columns is Inyan-oka-la-ka, or "Rock with a Hole in It." Many of the sandstone structures are perforated with holes of various sizes carved out by relentless winds that sweep across the prairie. In one local account, Walter H. Peck wrote that he talked to Charging Bear, a Sioux Indian who said Medicine Rocks was a place "where the spirits stayed and the medicine men prayed." Though Indians no longer camp in the area, the site still contains old tepee rings, stone and bone artifacts, and baked clay cookware.

Warren White, 72, grew up in Ekalaka, 14 miles south of the park, and is curator of the town's Carter County Museum. Old photographs adorning the walls of the museum show Ekalaka picnickers dressed in their Sunday best posed in wagons, buggies, and Model Ts next to the fantastic rock formations nearby.

White recalls an old-time rancher who lived in the area in the late 1800s who told him stories of the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne tribes using Medicine Rocks as a sacred site. “I’ve heard the stories ever since I was a kid,” he says. “Medicine Rocks is considered sacred ground.”

There are many such “medicine rock” sites across the West, says Renee Sansom Flood, an American Indian writer living in Billings. Flood says most sites were used for vision quests, but the rocks also would have provided shelter from storms and lookout posts for spotting enemies and buffalo.

According to Conrad Fisher of the Cheyenne Tribal Historic Preservation Office in Lame Deer, Medicine Rocks was also a place where tribal members stopped on the way from the Yellowstone River Valley to the Black Hills in summer and early fall. Among the attractions were medicinal plants, and seashells used for decorations.

“The story I grew up with is that Medicine Rocks was the site of an annual religious gathering,” says Brice Lambert, who publishes the Ekalaka Eagle. Lambert, who remembers childhood visits to tepee rings now within the park boundaries, says one of the area’s biggest attractions to those traveling the semiarid country was its year-round springs. A pump now taps the springs to bring fresh water to the park’s entrance, where locals fill jugs and bottles.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of the first to write about Medicine Rocks when he visited the area during a hunting trip in 1883. He described the formations in *Hunting Trips of a Ranch Man*: “Altogether it was as fantastically beautiful a place as I have ever seen; it seemed impossible that the hand of man should not have had something to do with its formation.”

Settlers first arrived in the region in the early 1880s, following Texas cattle drives into the free rangelands of eastern Montana. The names and dates of cowpunchers moving through the area can still be seen carved into the rock formations’ soft sandstone. One artist attracted to the area, a shepherd who may have lived in a rock cave around 1905, carved in the sandstone a profile of a woman’s head that is still visible.

It’s now illegal to autograph or otherwise deface the rocks. However, as Lambert notes, “That’s not to say it’s not still done.” Fortunately, most visitors now are either deterred by the law or understand why it’s wrong to disfigure these historic—and for some Indians, religious—rock structures.

The first white person to settle the region was Claude Carter. In 1884, his wagonload of logs bogged down near Russell Creek. Carter unloaded the logs and decided the site would be as good a place as any to build a saloon. From these modest beginnings grew the small town of Ekalaka, known mostly today to deer and turkey hunters who stop on the way to nearby Custer National Forest.

### **Public ownership**

For decades Medicine Rocks was privately owned. The county took ownership during the 1930s after the owners forfeited tax payments. In 1957, the Carter County Commission transferred ownership of 320 acres to the state of Montana. Originally, the land was managed by the state Highway Department, which graveled the roads and built picnic tables and fireplaces. The state Parks Division began to manage Medicine Rocks in 1965 when the site became a natural reserve.

Strapped for adequate funds to maintain out-of-the-way parks such as Medicine Rocks, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks began charging a \$3 entrance fee in 1991 to cover some of the roughly \$20,000 a year it cost to maintain the park. Local park users weren’t happy with the new fee. In a 1992 Billings Gazette article, Ekalaka Eagle editor Lois Lambert was quoted as saying, “We gave it to the state, and now they’re charging us to use it.” So mad were members of the Carter County Museum that, for the first time in its 40-year history, they held the museum’s annual summer picnic in Ekalaka rather than at Medicine Rocks State Park.

After meeting with local residents, FWP officials proposed an alternative to the entrance fee, and in 1993 the Montana legislature eliminated the access fee by creating a new park category. Medicine Rocks became one of 15 “primitive” parks—no fees but also no garbage pick-up, requiring visitors to pack out refuse they bring in.

Though all Montana state parks are popular with local residents, Medicine Rocks is especially so. Many locals consider the park part of their heritage, and it’s one of the few amenities in Ekalaka, population 410. What’s more, nonresident tourists rarely find their way to Medicine Rocks. “We’re not on a major road to anywhere,” says Brice Lambert, “so you don’t necessarily stumble onto it.”

### **Marvelous shapes**

Those who do, however, are in for a treat. Foremost are the rocks themselves. For thousands of years, wind and rain have carved the soft stone structures into hundreds of shapes, both fantastic and strangely recognizable. Kids delight in seeing “hidden” shapes. There’s an elephant’s head, an enormous skull, gigantic mushrooms, and spires resembling an ancient church. If you didn’t know better, you’d swear one lone sandstone pillar was the chimney left standing after a house burned down.

In addition, the rocks form natural stone bridges, overhangs, and caves, making parts of the area resemble a smaller version of southeastern Utah’s arches region.

In addition to the stone “animals,” real wildlife abound in and around the park. Tiny rodent tracks crisscross the sand at the base of stone pillars. Turkey vultures and golden eagles soar on thermals overhead. In nearby pine-covered ridges, wild Merriam’s turkeys move warily into openings to peck at insects and seeds. Mule deer, pronghorn, sharp-tailed grouse, and more than a dozen species of grassland songbirds are common.

The park landscape also attracts climbers and explorers such as Sue Cook and her family, of Ekalaka, who are attracted to the rock holes, ledges, and other hidden spots.

“It’s really neat to crawl around in those caves,” says Cook. “You always find something new. I almost hate to take my boys there because I can’t get them to leave.”

Who can blame kids for wanting to hang around the rocks a bit longer, especially late in the day, when the temperatures start to cool? On a late summer evening, the lowering sun leaks light between the clouds on the western horizon. A steady wind blows a haunting, ragged tune through flutelike holes in the rock formations.

As the sun sets, a dark royal purple rims the bright orange horizon. With nightfall pushing nearer, a half moon slowly appears through a notch in the rocks to the east. An owl hoots. Then all is quiet but for the sound of the Medicine Rocks formations themselves, still speaking as they have for thousands of years in their ancient, otherworldly voice. - **Brett French, of Billings, is a freelance writer and a reporter with the Billings Gazette**

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## Discussion Questions for “Rock of Ages”

1. The author refers to claims that the Northern Cheyenne and Sioux (Lakota) considered Medicine Rocks to be “sacred ground.” What evidence of this reverence for Medicine Rocks and historical tribal use of this area is included in the article?

*Article mentions that these tribes did camp there, gather medicinal plants and seashells, and that the site contains “old teepee rings, stone and bone artifacts, and baked clay cookware.”*

2. According to the article, which tribes have an historical association with Medicine Rocks?

*Arikara, Assiniboine, Mandan, Gros Ventre [who prefer to be called White Clay], Sioux [actually refers to several inter-related tribes] and Cheyenne.*

3. Which tribes are mentioned in the article as using or visiting the Medicine Rocks area since 1880?

*None. The article omits any mention of tribal use of or visits to Medicine Rocks since some time prior to 1880. (This issue will be addressed more following the reading of “Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources.”)*

4. Since the area encompassing Medicine Rocks State Park was taken from reserved tribal lands following the discovery of gold in the Black Hills (and in violation of the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie and the 1868 Second Treaty of Fort Laramie, most notably from the Sioux, as it was included as part of the “Great Sioux Nation”), who has owned or managed or visited the land Medicine Rocks is on (since the 1880s)?

*Private owners (probably ranchers), Carter county, Montana State Highway Department, Montana State Parks Department (now Fish, Wildlife and Parks)*

5. Who, according to the article, visits Medicine Rocks State Park?

*Local area residents, mostly from Ekalaka, climbers, and explorers (outdoor recreationalists)*

6. Who, according to the article, has only an historical association with Medicine Rocks and is not included amongst those people who have a present-day use or association with this place?

*Tribal people/American Indian tribes. French’s only mention of them is in the past tense and in reference to the early history of Medicine Rocks.*

# The Northern Cheyenne Tribe and Its Reservation 2002

A Report to the  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
and the  
State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

**Prepared by  
The Northern Cheyenne Tribe  
April 2002**

*[Note: The following text beginning on the next page is an excerpt from the above report. The different chapters of this report were compiled and written by various contributors to the report. Chapter 7 was written by Sherri Deaver with contributions from Joe Little Coyote, so the original document's acknowledgements to them are included here. Please be aware that all italicized notes in brackets, such as this note, have been added by the creator of the accompanying lesson plan and are not components of the actual report or its chapters. Additionally, any instance of omissions from the full Chapter 7 are noted within the text. Various terms within paragraphs have been put into **bold print** to draw students' attention to these concepts, their definitions and usage. Section headings are in their original bold print.]*

## CHAPTER 7

## NORTHERN CHEYENNE CULTURAL RESOURCES

## I. What Constitutes a Northern Cheyenne “Cultural Resource.”

Many terms are used to describe the remains of a people’s past. Archaeologists tend to use the term archaeological site or just site. A **site** is a location that either contains material remains (artifacts such as chipped stone or historic bottles) or is a place known to be associated with a particular historic event, for example a Lewis and Clark camp. Sites may date from any time period but are generally at least 50 years old. Examples of sites include homesteaders’ cabins, railroads, dams, locations where the earliest peoples in the area made tools, plant gathering areas, bison kills, scarred trees and anything else that shows a people’s imprint on the landscape.

Landscapes may also be sites especially when they have been created by man’s modification of the environment, for example the Berkeley Pit in Butte, Montana. A district is an area that contains several sites. A building or a structure such as a dam may be a site. A single artifact (e.g., a cold war era bomber that crashed in the Nevada testing range) or object such as a sculpture may also be described as a site.

The term “**cultural resource**” tends to be used by land managers and resource specialists who must evaluate a wide variety of resource concerns such as fish and wildlife as well as evidence of a people’s past (cultural resources). This term is used to differentiate [between man-made and “natural”] resources.

The term “**historic property**” is also used. Historic property has a very specific legal meaning. A historic property is a site or cultural resource that has been evaluated as significant or important to the nation’s past, i.e. it has been deemed eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. All historic properties are sites and cultural resources but not all sites and cultural resources are historic properties.

Archaeologists and academically trained resource managers routinely place physical limits or **boundaries** on sites. These limits are commonly based on the distribution of artifacts on the ground. Boundaries are necessary and useful management tools. However, **site boundaries may have little to do with how people used the site location in the past or how it is used today.**

The definition of boundaries is particularly problematic when dealing with sites with ongoing spiritual use. When a Cheyenne person decides, or is called to go fast, he begins both a spiritual and physical journey. He must prepare himself. He must ask his Elders for guidance. He must gather those things he will leave as offerings at his fasting place. When he begins his journey he begins to separate himself from everyday life in the community. Sometimes his spiritual advisors will accompany him. In some cases he will be required to accomplish his journey in stages. For example, he may go to Bear Butte and leave cloth offerings and pledge his intent to fast in the future. The

following spring he will fulfill this vow at Bear Butte or another sacred place. Alternately, he may make a pilgrimage to the Big Horn Medicine Wheel. In this case, he may be required to stop four times along the trail to the Big Horn Medicine Wheel. At each stop, he will pray and make offerings, sometimes at ancient cairns to which he may add stones.

During the physical journey the person prepares himself spiritually for his most serious undertaking, communicating with the spirit world. While on the journey the person's thinking and acting change. He ignores everyday mundane concerns and concentrates more on the spiritual aspects of life. The spiritual qualities of his environment become more recognizable to him. At the end of his journey when he can first see the site of his pilgrimage, for example, Bear Butte, Chalk Buttes, or the Big Horn Medicine Wheel, he is already in the spiritual sphere of influence of that sacred place. He does not leave this sphere of influence until he has completed his fast and rejoins his spiritual advisors and has been ceremonially welcomed back into the community.

Although traditionalists recognize boundaries as management tools necessary for federal agencies to function, they have no meaning in the context of traditional cultural activities. When a Northern Cheyenne or Sioux sees Bear Butte he recognizes it as a **sacred place** and his actions change accordingly.

The National Historic District boundary around Bear Butte is irrelevant both at the level of behavior and belief. It becomes relevant only when some outside agency tries to violate the sanctity of the district by disturbing anything within the National Historic District boundary. This is also true of Chalk Buttes. The Northern Cheyenne recognize that the Custer National Forest has defined a management boundary around Chalk Buttes, which essentially conforms to Forest Service land boundaries. However, the Northern Cheyenne recognize a much wider area including all the area from which Chalk Buttes is visible and includes **Medicine Rocks State Park**. This entire area from which Chalk Buttes is visible is viewed as a powerful spiritual area that must be respected and honored. Fasting at Chalk Buttes and leaving offerings at Medicine Rocks is part of a living religious tradition where participants make both a spiritual and physical journey. During the entire journey the spiritual aspects of life are dominant. The Forest Service management boundary is irrelevant to their traditional cultural responsibility to honor these spirits in this place and to act respectfully.

The **tribal-historical perspective**, in contrast to the **scientific-academic** view of history, emphasizes the interrelationships between the past and the present, the living and the dead, people and the environment, and the spiritual and physical aspects of life. **Time** from this perspective is not only a chronological ordering of events but also has a quality and texture that continues into the present and future as it establishes the rationale and basis for living in the proper fashion. From this perspective, there is often

an intimate relationship between a person and his past. Time or the past provides a template for the **proper way of life**. It legitimizes the present by showing it is related to things that have gone before.

From the tribal-historical perspective, cultural resources are evidence that the landscape has always been **physically and spiritually compatible** with tribal peoples. The location of sites is interpreted as being evidence that sometime in the past, tribal peoples recognized the physical and spiritual characteristics of the landscape that made it an appropriate place to camp, hunt, fast and so on. Because traditional tribal peoples today can still recognize these same physical and spiritual characteristics of the landscape, there is a **continuing tie** between the people and the landscape, and between the people who created the site and those who view it today. It is this sense of connectedness that is important. Because this relationship is highly valued, sites must be shown respect and **the ties to the sites may be periodically renewed** by visiting them, praying and making offerings. These are significant qualities of site locations that transcend time. Therefore, from the tribal-historical perspective, it is often irrelevant whether a site/feature is 10,000 or 200 years old. The presence of the sites/features indicates an earlier relationship with the landscape and validates the continuing relationship with the area into the present.

**Time in the tribal-historical perspective** is divided into a minimum of **five qualitative units**: a sacred time when the world as we know it was created by a series of spiritual beings, a time when Ancient Indian people moved across the landscape interacting with both the physical and spiritual aspects of the world, an historic time when the immediate ancestors known from oral tradition lived their lives, the present and the future. These units of time—**sacred time, Ancient Indian time, history, the present and the future**—have intrinsic qualities as well as being roughly sequential, quantitative, chronological units.

**Sacred time** is literally holy. Events that take place in that period, such as the creation of the earth and its features, involve supernatural forces and personages. This is when the *Maheo* imbued the world with its sacred qualities. Thus the spirituality of Chalk Buttes and Medicine Rocks date from this period and in that sense precede all peoples who have lived in southeast Montana.

**Ancient Indian time** is that period before the coming of the Euro-Americans when people lived in a world where there was no division between the spiritual and physical aspects of life so that they lived in the proper Indian fashion. Consequently, all action and events that took place in this period are indivisibly sacred/spiritual and profane/physical. From the tribal-historical perspective, it is nonsensical to try to discuss only the physical aspects of sites from the Ancient Indian period without discussing their spiritual aspects.

**Historic period** sites, sites created by known ancestors, are also discussed in both physical and spiritual terms, but this is done in more personalized terms since the individuals involved are known. For example, Sitting Bull's Camp on Blue Earth/Spring Creek is known to have been the site of warrior ceremonies before the journey to Deer Medicine Rocks where the last Sundance was held before the battle at Greasy Grass, the Little Big Horn.

**The present** is seen as being a product of all three pasts, and it is the responsibility of the traditional Elders to pass on information about these three pasts and tribal traditions to the future, most commonly defined in terms of coming generations. For example, the Elders encampment at Chalk Butte included interested young people who came to hear their Elders' stories and participate in the other traditional cultural activities during the encampment. Historians working in the tribal historical tradition are seen as guardians and caretakers of traditions. Part of their responsibility is to protect their knowledge and the sources of knowledge, which in some cases includes archaeological properties as well as landscapes, landforms and traditional use areas.

Cross cutting all of these categories of time is the fact that the **spiritual characteristics of the landscape**, although not immutable, exist in all units of time. **Generally, from the tribal-historical perspective, it is not considered important whose ancestors created an Ancient Indian or prehistoric site.** Traditionalists do not generally identify cultural material scatters, petroglyphs, bison kill sites and stone feature sites as being Crow, Northern Cheyenne or Sioux. Rather, they describe why the Indians who made the site might have camped or hunted in that particular location or why they might have chosen to build particular features. What is important from this perspective is that Indians (people who share certain beliefs with the site interpreters) or spirit beings known to Indians made the sites, and that their actions are **explicable and understandable by contemporary Indians who follow traditional ways.** Historic period sites are identified by tribal affiliations when they are known through **oral histories.**

From the **academic perspective**, it is clear that many different groups lived and hunted in southeast Montana during the pre-horse era. These groups were probably in contact with each other. It is most likely that they raided each other, traded with each other and occasionally intermarried. No doubt, they, like historic peoples of the area, shared ideas, hunting and gathering territories and some aspects of their spiritual beliefs. In the 1800s, for example, several groups of Lakota and Cheyenne camped in the Chalk Buttes area of southeast Montana. Here they hunted, gathered plant foods, held ceremonies, fasted, caught eagles, and engraved images into the sandstone at Medicine Rocks (CBEG, 1996).

Most of the data used to trace the migrations of the modern tribal groups is based on linguistics and oral histories. Nothing about language is recoverable from archaeological sites. Therefore, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to linguistically trace exactly the descendants of the people who made the pre-1700 AD spear and arrow points found in southeastern Montana. The arrow point makers may have spoken many different languages.

The identification of ancestral language groups in the Northern Plains before AD 1300 is itself a controversial topic. The debate centers on whether Algonkian or Athapascan speaking peoples first lived in the Northern Plains. One theory maintains that the peoples of the Northern Plains circa AD 1300 were exclusively Algonkian speakers who had migrated westward from the Great Lakes area. Contemporary Algonkian speakers include the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, Cree and Chippewa (Wood and Liberty, 1980:285-287).

A second theory asserts that Athapascan speakers, ancestors to the Apache and Navajo, were also on the Northern Plains before AD 1300, moving southward from Alaska and Canada. Kehoe (1981:133) asserts "a few Athapascan hunting bands ... moved south along the high plains just east of the Rocky Mountains. Some families remained in southern Alberta ... Others continued south into Montana and Wyoming." Wright (1978:113) states that Athapascan speakers were in western Wyoming as early as AD 1100. Jennings (1974:315-316) postulates that nomadic Athapascan tribes continued southward, citing similarities between ceramics found on the Northern Plains and that of the Navajo in the Southwest.

It is not clear if the earliest residents of southeast Montana were Algonkian or Athapascan speakers. However, the Indian peoples that later moved into southeastern Montana surely met with, traded with, and intermarried with the earliest Indian residents of the area. In this sense, these early peoples are all ancestors of the historic tribes of the area. (cf., Wickman, 1999).

## II. Cultural Resource Protection Laws.

In addition to the Northern Cheyenne passing on their traditions to their children they rely on a series of cultural resource laws that can help them preserve localities and cultural resources associated with their heritage.

The **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** became law in 1969. The Act created a decision-making process that requires evaluation of direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of a proposed project on the human [and natural] environment. Environmental impacts associated with various alternatives must be assessed and environmental factors must be considered in the decision making process. Generally, NEPA documents address potential effects to cultural resources with reference to **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)**.

The NHPA established the **National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)** and the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation (ACHP) in order to protect properties which are significant to local, state or national prehistory, and to history, culture, architecture, technology and archaeology. The NHPA federal agencies identify, evaluate and protect properties that may be eligible for the NRHP before initiating any federal undertaking that may affect historic properties.

**Sites, objects, districts and landscapes can be eligible to the NRHP in one of four ways:**

- 1) association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history (criterion A);**
- 2) association with a culturally significant individual (criterion B);**
- 3) embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction (criterion C); or**
- 4) the potential to yield important information about the history or prehistory of the area (criterion D).**

In 1990, the National Park Service (NPS) issued **Bulletin 38** which established guidelines for evaluating sites under criteria A, B and C from the perspectives of tribal history and culture. Sites, artifacts, landscapes and districts that qualify under criteria A, B or C from the perspective of Indian history and culture are called **Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs)**. A property demonstrates traditional cultural value if its significance to Native American beliefs, values and customs “has been ethnohistorically documented and if the site can be clearly defined.” (Parker and King, 1990:15-27).

Properties or natural features significant in the mythology, cosmology and history of a Native American group are potentially eligible to the NRHP. Also eligible are sites “where Native American religious practitioners have historically gone, and are known or thought to go today to perform ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional cultural rules of practice” (Parker and King, 1990:1).

Traditional cultural significance is also attributed to locations “where a community has traditionally carried out **economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity.**” (Parker and King, 1990:1). Eligible TCPs are usually older than 50 years, qualitatively intact and recognized as culturally significant to the heritage of contemporary groups. (Deaver and Manning, 1991:6).

The following discussion of site types that may have religious or spiritual significance to the Northern Cheyenne excludes burials, graves or cemeteries. All graves have spiritual significance to the Northern Cheyenne. All should be shown respect, i.e., not be disturbed. **It is offensive to refer to a person’s final resting-place as a site, cultural resource or historic property.** The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) no longer records graves as sites or cultural resources.

Consequently, the BIA site files no longer contain a complete listing of graves found on the reservation.

Past work on the Northwestern Plains has demonstrated that there are several feature types that are commonly associated with traditional cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. Commonly, these feature types are described today as being "**sacred**" or **culturally/spiritually significant**. These include **large cairns** (2+ m diameter) (Deaver, 1986; Calder, 1977; Deaver and Deaver, 1988; Davis, 1976), **pilgrimage/trail marker cairns** (Deaver, 1993), **vision quest or fasting structures** (Conner, 1970, 1982; Deaver, 1986; Rood, 1988; Deaver and Kooistra, 1992), **eagle trapping pits** (Allen, 1981, 1983; Greiser and Greiser, 1984; Greiser et al., 1986; Howard, 1954; Wilson, 1928), **Medicine Wheels, arrows, alignments, prayer lines** (Brumley, 1986; Calder, 1977; Deaver, 1982; Dempsey, 1956; Kehoe, 1954; Kehoe and Kehoe, 1959) and **very large and very small rings**. (Deaver, 1985; Frison, 1983; Altamont, 1994).

The following site types, features, artifacts and site attributes, may have religious significance for the Northern Cheyenne:

1. large (numerous rings) ring sites which contain large diameter rings (indicating either the warrior society lodges associated with the New Life Lodge or Arrow Renewal, or the dance lodges associated with the Animal Dances);
2. isolated fasting beds, isolated poles with associated buffalo skulls on rugged, high altitude, isolated topographic features (indicating fasting activities);
3. rock art sites; and,
4. large diameter fasting structures associated with mass fasting experience, some of which take medicine wheel form.

Badhorse suggests that five **rock art motifs** have religious significance for both the Sioux and the Cheyenne — “man crawling with v-neck”, the lizard, the turtle, the circle with dot in the middle, and the bisected circle with a line extending outside the length of the radius. (1979:27). The human v-necked figure is symbolic of the New Life Lodge (c.f., Badhorse, 1979; Grinnell, 1972; Powell, 1969). Elder Bill Tallbull disagrees with this particular interpretation of motifs of the images. However, he also views rock art panels as having spiritual significance and meaning. The lizard is also associated with the New Life Lodge (Sun Dance) because the dancers often wear lizard paint and the lizard is reputed to have its own Sun Dance. (Powell, 1969; Grinnell, 1972; Badhorse, 1979). Current use of rock art and “medicine rock” sites for religious purposes is, on occasion, marked by offerings, primarily tobacco and calico flags left at these sites. (Badhorse, 1979:21-22).

According to Northern Cheyenne traditional cultural experts, traditional cultural properties may include **springs, ceremonial sites, and places where special plants and animals are found**. According to Cheyenne theology, all things in the universe have **spirits**. This includes people, plants, animals, all types of water (rivers, creeks, springs, ground water and swamps), archaeological sites such as Deer Medicine Rocks and other aspects of the physical environment including the cardinal directions and rocks. **Section 106** of the NHPA stipulates that federal land managers, “prior to the issuance of any license. . . take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in the National Register.”

Compliance with the NHPA requires that federal land managers notify the ACHP of any proposed action that may affect eligible properties and provide the council “a reasonable opportunity to comment with regard to such undertaking.” Although not mandatory, the preferred course of action is the protection of eligible sites. The **Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA)** of 1979 provides civil and criminal penalties for those who knowingly damage sites eligible to be included in the NRHP. Further section 4c of ARPA, states that prior to issuing any permit which “may result in harm to, or destruction of, any religious or cultural site, ... the federal land manager shall notify any Indian tribe which may consider the site as having religious or cultural importance.” Notification under ARPA specifically applies to religious and cultural sites that are at least 100 years old.

The **American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA)**, Pub. L. 95-341, acknowledges the rights of Native Americans to practice their traditional religions<sup>1</sup> and supports their “access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.” American Indian Religious Freedom Act specifies consultation with the appropriate Native American groups when proposed activities have the potential to limit current religious practices, restrict access to culturally-valued resources, alter sacred sites or affect Indian burials.

The **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)** of 1990, Pub. L 101-106, regulates the treatment of unmarked Indian graves and human skeletal remains. It also sets up a mechanism whereby tribes may seek the return of skeletal materials, grave goods, sacred objects and articles of cultural patrimony from federally funded or regulated repositories. NAGPRA applies to graves on Federal lands. The state of Montana also protects unmarked graves. The Montana State burial

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<sup>1</sup> Many Indians dislike the term religion because, as it is commonly used, it implies that the spiritual aspects of life can be treated as being separate and distinct from other aspects of life. Separating the spiritual from other parts of life is contrary to the most basic precepts of much Indian belief.

law applies to state and private lands. In Montana, when human remains are found on non-federal lands, first the local coroner is called and then the State Burial Board. The State Burial Board is made up of tribal representatives, representatives of the State Historic Preservation Office, the State Coroners association, physical anthropologists and archaeologists.

Several executive orders are also applicable to the protection, preservation and management of cultural resources and sacred sites.

**Executive Order 11593** (see NHPA § 110) directs federal agencies to provide leadership in preserving, restoring and maintaining the historic and cultural environment of the nation. It further directs these agencies to locate, inventory, and nominate to the NRHP all properties under their control that meet the criteria for nomination. It directs the agencies to ensure that cultural resources are not inadvertently damaged, destroyed or transferred before completion of the inventory and evaluation. The intent of this executive order has been integrated into the NHPA section 110 through the 1980 amendments.

**Executive Order 12898** directs federal agencies to avoid differential project effects on poor or minority populations. This Executive Order is commonly called “Environmental Justice.” In effect it states that NEPA analysis must take in to account the ethnicity, tribal status and socio-economic status of the populations affected by the proposed project. In terms of cultural resources, it means that avoiding the Oregon Trail, a TCP for Euro-American should not come at the expense of affecting a tribal TCP (Deaver and Fandrich, 1999).

**Executive Order 13007** directs federal land managing agencies to accommodate access to sacred sites by traditional Indian practitioners and to protect those sites from impacts.

**Presidential Proclamation of 29 April 1994 on Government to Government Relations with American Indian Tribal Governments** directs federal agencies to conduct their relationship with federally recognized Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis.

### III. Cultural Importance of Natural Resources.

According to Cheyenne cosmology all things are related. People, land, water, animals as well as rocks, minerals and fossils all have a spiritual connection to each other. As a result the Northern Cheyenne use the term **cultural site** to include water resources, plant gathering areas, hunting areas, as well as mineral (paint) and fossil sources.

## A. A Review of Cheyenne Cosmology.

To understand the cultural importance of natural resources to the Northern Cheyenne, one must first understand the **Cheyenne cosmology**. To review the basic Cheyenne cosmology discussed in Chapter 2, *Maheo*, the epitome of energy/spirituality, is contrasted with *Heestoz*, the symbol of substance/matter. Both are sacred and necessary for the continuation of the universe. Maleness and zenith, the highest point in the universe, are associated with *Maheo* just as femaleness and nadir, the lowest point in the universe, are associated with *Heestoz*. (The term *Heh'voom* is used when referring to the animate female principle.) These concepts are understood to be complimentary and balanced in the universe. At the same time that aspects of the *Maheo* like the Sun, grandfather to the Cheyenne, is associated with zenith, he is also understood to be everywhere. He is the creative expression of the universe, the spiritual essence of the universe. When the *Maheo* interacts with the earth (grandmother)—*Heh'voom* they bring about all life (Little Coyote, 3/3/02). Figure 7-1 below illustrates the basic structure of the universe. [Note: The figures are missing in this document, as they were not in the PDF file of the report.]

Between these two points there are several levels or spaces. These are the **Blue-Sky Space** (*Otah'ta'voom*), the **Nearer-Sky Space** (*Novah'voom*), the **Atmosphere** (*Tax'tah'voom*), the **Earth-Surface Dome** (*Matah'voom*) and **Deep Earth** (*Nah'stoh'voom*). The Blue-Sky Space contains the sacred manifestations of the *Maheo*, including the sun (grandfather), the night sun (the moon [mother]) and the Milky Way, which is the road to the land of the dead. The stars in the Blue-Sky Space are brothers and sisters of the Cheyenne. Those creatures, primarily the Great Birds (eagles, hawks, dragonflies and butterflies), that mediate between man and the sacred forces of the Blue-Sky Space, inhabit the Nearer-Sky Space. Nearer-Sky Space contains dust devils, clouds, birds, tornadoes and high places like mountaintops. Some Northern Cheyenne refer to mountain tops and hills as “**earthlodges**.” These are natural landscape features that are “power points” or favored locations for fasting, praying and making offerings. They are favored because they are associated with increasing spirituality. “Earthlodges” reach into the *Setovoom* where the mediators (Eagles, Hawks, Dragonflies, Butterflies) between *Maheo* and humans live.

The Atmosphere is in direct contact with the Earth-Surface Dome. This is the area in which dust rises, objects can be thrown and insects fly. The Earth-Surface Dome is animate and extends to the roots of the prairie grasses. It is characterized by

living things that are useful to humans who derive their material and spiritual existence from this environmental setting.

Figure 7-2 below *[missing from this file]* and to the left illustrates the basic cosmological qualities of visible topographic features in the Earth-Surface Dome. First, the earth's surface is **animate**. Hills contain the spirits of animals and people waiting to be reborn. Extinct species are those that *Maheo* does not allow to be reborn. The present increasing rate of extinction of species is explained by the fact that *Maheo* is withholding the animals in order to protect them from the destruction caused by the actions of industrial development. (Schlesier, 1986:4). Exposed cliffs or badlands are Deep Earth and are inanimate.

Mountain tops and other high places are places of increasing spirituality because they reach the realm of Nearer-Sky Space. Surface water is alive, ever moving, and has spiritual qualities. **Springs** are the homes of spirits. Offerings are commonly left at springs today. For example, there is one on the divide between Birney and Lame Deer that the Birney people leave offerings at and clean up when it is polluted by vandalism (Washington, 1987 in Deaver, 1988). There are three varieties of spirits that live in springs. The first have short brown hair/fur like prairie dogs. The second type is white and furry. They do not want to associate with anyone. Thunder always strikes around them. People should not frequent springs associated with these spirits. The third type is black. These spirits/animals come out to pay their respects when ceremonies are held.

Deep Earth is dead/sterile earth; it is basically all substance and, hence, most female. It is visible to man in cliffs and in the badlands. It is characterized by being spiritually inert. Animals that live in caves and burrow into dead earth (bears and badgers) are considered female.

While badgers and bears are important as symbols of the Deep Earth, buffaloes receive the most attention in all sorts of Cheyenne ceremonies and religious thought. Buffaloes live in great caves under the surface and they present themselves to be killed whenever *Maheo* wants to bless the Cheyenne...The Sacred Buffalo Hat...embodies the female principle as it relates to buffaloes. (Moore, 1979:3).

## B. Water.

**Springs, rivers, swamps and ground water** are living beings with spirits. According to the 2001 Northern Cheyenne Reservation Survey on Traditional Economy and Subsistence, over 97% of the people believe that **springs** have spiritual value. Furthermore, over 90% recognize that water is very important to their social, economic and spiritual way of life. “The conceptual meaning of water to us would be the physical manifestation of the essence of life, of life itself, the fabric of life.” (Little Coyote, 1/8/02). The Sacred Buffalo Hat “came to us out of the waters” [of the Great Lakes Region]. (Little Coyote, 1/8/02).

The Northern Cheyenne communicate with these spirits. The ongoing traditional cultural importance of these water locations can be seen in the **respect** shown to these locations and in the offerings made at these locations. Routine archaeological survey on the reservation always takes into account water sources relative to the survey boundaries. A good contemporary example of this is the current widening of U.S. 212 east of Lame Deer. A survey documented the ongoing use of three springs for traditional cultural purposes and design changes were made to avoid affecting these properties/areas.

The Northern Cheyenne Natural Resources Department is conducting a survey of springs on the reservation. This work will include not only the physical characteristics of these springs but also their ongoing traditional cultural uses and the medicinal plants that are often associated with springs (Rollofson, 1/8/02, Appendix F).

**Water** is also associated with the turtle. The turtle is good to eat and is always associated with ceremonies. Some of the sweat lodges are patterned after the turtle and its longevity. These sweats are made for long life (Little Coyote, 1/6/02). The traditional water drum is still used by the members of the Native American Church. “When you take those drums apart after ceremonial use, the breath of life comes out of them.” (Little Coyote, 1/6/02). Water drums must be taken apart after every ceremony. The water must be disposed of in a ritually specific fashion. (Little Coyote, 1/6/02).

**Swamps** are filled with many spirits and may be dangerous due to the accumulation of power at these localities.

The Northern Cheyenne recognize the spiritual qualities of ground water also. There are special prayers for digging wells. **Ground water** represents the quiet nature of the earth. It should not be disturbed.

## C. Plants.

Northern Cheyenne also regard the plants of the Earth-Surface Dome as **relatives**. Plants are living things with spirits. There are plant families, grandparent plants, mother and father plants, plant children and chief plants. Cheyenne children are taught that plant people require the same things as humans: fresh air and water.

Further they are taught to respect plants. People talk to plants, give them gifts and miss them when they have not seen them for awhile. A person may maintain a **friendship** with a particular tree throughout his life. This may include sacrificing his flesh to the tree. When trees are cut down or other vegetation wantonly destroyed, relatives are lost. The same dull aching of loneliness associated with the loss of a human relative is also experienced when a plant relative is destroyed. Chief plants are sought out for medicinal purposes. Personal names are taken from the spirits, birds, animals and plants that are sources of power in major Cheyenne ceremonies (Moore, 1984; Tallbull 1987 in Deaver, 1988).

There are many plants in current use by the Northern Cheyenne. Appendix F lists 170 plants with documented traditional cultural uses. There are a minimum of 81 separate ceremonial uses for these plants, 184 medicinal uses, 67 industrial uses and 94 subsistence uses.. According to the 2001 traditional economic and subsistence survey, 100 of 112 (89%) people reported gathering plants for food and over 84% (95 of 112) gathered plants for medicines or ceremonies....

[text omitted]

.... Plants can be extremely powerful and must be used with caution. The **pollution** from Colstrip is making some plants unsafe and forcing plant collectors to go farther afield to collect their medicines and food plants. (Feeney, *et al.* 1986; Tallbull 1987 in Deaver, 1988). Each plant has special rules about its procurement and use. This is specialized knowledge available only to those who have the right to use these plants.

As noted above plant life has **traditional ceremonial, medicinal, industrial and subsistence uses** that remain important today. Today, box elder trees are used by the Northern Cheyenne for ceremonies. Juniper is used by the Northern Cheyenne to make flutes and charms with spiritual qualities and in ritual purification of females as they move into adult status. White Sage/Man Sage is used by the Northern Cheyenne to make the sacred bed for the *Mahuts* (Sacred Arrows). This sage is also critical to the Sun Dance and the Standing Against Thunder ceremony. It was preferred for purification purposes by Cheyenne Contraries. The purple cone flower is also used in the Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance. Incense of hairy golden aster is used to drive evil sprits from people and their homes.

In 1995, the Elders at the Chalk Buttes encampment collected cedar/juniper, purple cone flower and white sage. All are still in use for traditional cultural purposes (CBEG, 1996).

**Traditional food plants** found in the area include Ponderosa pine, chokecherry, golden current, box elder, sand cherry, spring lily and wild tuberoses. Traditional foods are an important symbol of ethnic identity....

[text omitted]

Northern Cheyenne **horse medicines** present in the Chalk Buttes area and used historically include scurf-pea and yucca. Chalk Buttes area plants also include penstemon used as a blue dye; yucca used as shampoo; juniper used to make bows; currant wood used to make both pipestems and bows; scurf-pea to make baskets; and chokecherry wood used for tipi stakes, closure pins, bows, firewood, root digging sticks and shinny ball sticks. The Northern Cheyenne and Sioux smoked sumac found in the area.

**Medicinal use of plants** continues to be important to the Northern Cheyenne....

*[text omitted]*

#### **D. Animals.**

Animals live on the Earth-Surface Dome. In Cheyenne biological taxonomy, animals include birds, ground animals, crawling animals and water animals. The class *zeevasoheva*, ground animals, which inhabits the Earth-Surface Dome includes *hovan*, which basically translates as mammals; and humans, *votostotaneo*. Mammals are divided between predators/those who paint (wolf, coyote and bear); game/those who do not paint (antelope, deer, elk and buffalo); and small animals who paint (lizards). In the distant past, those who paint and man were on the same side in a great race. Those who lost the race became the food source of those who won the race. People regard **animals as relatives**. A person may get more support from his animal relatives than from his biological relatives. It just depends on the person.

Game animals as well as predators have ceremonial functions. The lower leg bone of antelope is used for pipes used in the Sun Dance. The hooves are used for dance rattles, and medicine taken from antelope throats is used to give speed to messengers. The lining of a deer esophagus is necessary for the last day of the Sun Dance as are mule deer tails. Deer medicine also gives long wind and the ability to move quickly.

Pronghorn antelope are also a source of food. **Traditional foods** are still important in the Northern Cheyenne diet and in their ceremonial life. In addition, many people are emphasizing a return to a **traditional diet** as a way to overcome current health issues (e.g., high diabetes rate) on the reservation (Little Coyote, 2001). Antelope hides and bones are also used to make everyday household items. In addition they have **ceremonial functions**. The Northern Cheyenne use the leg of the antelope for the Sun Dance pipe and the hoof for the Sun Dance rattle. The Northern Cheyenne also use the windpipe of the antelope as a medicine to increase speed. At the 1995 Chalk Buttes Traditional Cultural Elder encampment, antelope soup was served at the ceremonial meal welcoming Mr. Tallbull back to the community after his vision quest.

The buffalo, in addition to being the major food source, also provided hides and bones for industrial uses. In addition, the buffalo is a pivotal symbol of the **Cheyenne ethnic identity** as Indians. The Northern Cheyenne regard the buffalo as a powerful spirit. Buffalo skulls, hides, and tails continue to be used in ceremonies. A buffalo robe was used during a blessing ceremony at the Chalk Buttes encampment.

Today people hunt both on and off reservation. The most common large game taken is deer followed by elk. Dry meat remains important in the diet and the **sharing of meat is still an important social obligation** that is honored by over 67% of the people surveyed in 2001. People not only share meat with relatives but also with tribal elders and others who need meat. Seventy-six percent of the people who hunt and gather report praying or offering ceremony before and/or after hunting. In addition 76% use parts of animals or birds for ceremonial or social purposes.

### E. Great Birds.

Both prairie falcons and red-tailed hawks are classed as Great Birds in Cheyenne biological taxonomy. This means they live in the Nearer-Sky-Space and serve as messengers between men of the Earth-Surface Dome and the Spirit Beings in the Blue-Sky Space (Moore, 1986:183). These birds are used as cancer medicine today. (Tallbull 1987 in Deaver, 1988).

Eagles and hawks as well as being spiritual mediators for the Northern Cheyenne are also recognized as sacred. Eagle feathers and bones are used as ritual items. Prairie falcons and red-tailed hawks are also sources of cancer medicine for the Northern Cheyenne. One individual reported hunting hawks during the 2001 survey year.

## F. Fish.

“Fish are used for food offerings. Fish oil was used for lamps and was an important part of the diet from when we were in the Great Lakes Region. My grandmother used to feed the fish. She would fix a plate for them and take it to the river” (Little Coyote, 1/8/02). According to the 2001 Northern Cheyenne Reservation Survey of Economic and Subsistence Activities, 60% (67 of 112) of the people interviewed reported fishing.

## G. Minerals (paint sources and fossil sources).

Fossil and mineral resources are also important in maintaining traditional cultural practices (Tallbull and Deaver, 1991; CBEG, 1996, Peterson *et al.*, 1995). In 2001, 93 of 113 people (74%) reported gathering clays/pigments. The Tongue River Valley region contains white and black paint sources used today for ceremonial purposes. (Tallbull and Deaver, 1991; Wise, 1/6/02). The Chalk Buttes area contains a blue paint source still used for traditional cultural purposes. (CBEG, 1996). Additionally there is a buffalo stone source on BLM lands in southeast Montana, where traditional cultural specialists still go to collect these effigy figures. (CBEG, 1996). According to Grinnell the early name for Muddy Creek was *Hiyo’vuni’yohe* (Yellowpaint River). (Grinnell, 1906:19).

## IV. Cultural and Archaeological Sites on the Reservation

The following description is based on a 2002 compilation of all site forms on file at the BIA, GLO plat map data and a review of all of the compliance cultural resource management reports filed on Northern Cheyenne Reservation lands up to February 2002.<sup>2</sup> It covers only those resources and sites that have been formally recorded (approximately 700). The Northern Cheyenne do not classify graves as sites, cultural resources or historic properties. The BIA no longer records graves as sites. Consequently this compilation does not include all burial localities known on the reservation. There are many other cultural properties on the Reservation that have not been formally recorded.

### A. Graves, Burials and Cemeteries.

There are a minimum of 65 known locations where people have been buried on reservation lands. Many of these locations are the final resting-place of several individuals. All graves are accorded respect by the Northern Cheyenne. None should be disturbed. People visit graves to pray and make offerings. Traditionally, the Northern Cheyenne view death as a process rather than an event. Death marks the

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<sup>2</sup> This is the first compilation of the cultural resource data for the Northern Cheyenne reservation. It brings together information from numerous limited distribution technical reports. Since this information is difficult to access and is not available in any single source, all of reviewed technical reports are listed in Chapter 8 even though they are not directly cited in the text. This will allow future work in this area to start from the 2002 baseline.

separation of the spirit from the body but the spirit/the person remains a part of the Northern Cheyenne Community. (Strauss, 1978). Consequently, the respect shown to graves is part of the respect shown to spiritual beings.

## B. Ceremonial Sites.

Forty-eight cultural resources have been recorded which have ceremonial functions. The recorded **ceremonial sites** include vision questing/fasting sites, sweat lodges, memorials such the Head Chief/Young Mule Fight Site and a stone memorial to a CCC worker who was killed while working on a reservation project. Other ceremonial sites are locations (trees, springs, rock art, rivers, etc.) where offerings were/are made, Medicine Bundle opening locations, a Medicine Wheel, Sundance Lodges, Piercing Trees, Mennonite and Catholic churches and missions, Peyote Meeting locations and Ghost Dance locations. The diversity of ceremonial sites reflects the complex theological history of the Northern Cheyenne.

Preferred localities for fasts are high and isolated, cliffs, hills or buttes. Physical features associated with the Cheyenne fasting sites are the preparatory sweat lodges, fasting beds—low rock structures, usually open to the east, and/or stripped poles with an associated buffalo skull, rock art and medicine wheels. According to John Stands-In-Timber, many men who went out to fast for power would draw pictographs of their visions—the Sioux Chief Crazy Horse made one on Reno Creek after the Custer Battle. (Stands-In-Timber and Liberty, 1967:104). The usual practice was/is for men to go out alone to fast. However, group fasts have been reported. Both the Crow and the Cheyenne interpret the Bighorn Medicine Wheel as resulting from group fasts. (Deaver, 1982a, 1982b; Stands-In-Timber and Liberty, 1967; Medicine Crow, n.d.).

On the Northern Cheyenne reservation...there is a large site about 10 feet in diameter and about 3 feet high where it has been related that seven Cheyenne men fasted simultaneously. This multiple fasting practice seems to suggest that the famed Medicine Wheel on the Big Horn Mountains...was perhaps originally structured as a mass fasting place...(Medicine Crow, n.d.).

The results of a successful fast for the Cheyenne include the accumulation and continuing use of the personal medicine bundle.

Unrecorded ceremonial sites (for example, umbilical cord trees and medicine bundle locations) probably far out number the 48 formally recorded ceremonial sites. These sites are private and accorded respect. Respect includes not talking about them to non-participants in the ceremonies. Further, many of these sites were used during periods when traditional ceremonies were suppressed by the U.S. government. Consequently, people are extremely reticent to share such information with non-Cheyenne.

7-18 [Page 7-18 lists and describes additional cultural and archaeological sites and resources on the reservation including: **C.Homes, D. Community and Commercial reservation era sites, and E. Military and Exploration Related sites...**]

## F. Archaeological/Prehistoric Sites.

The vast majority of the cultural resources recorded on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation are made up of either stone tools and tool making debris (lithic scatters) or stone piles generally referred to as cairns.

**Lithic scatters** are by far the most common site type on the reservation. Four hundred twenty-four (424) have been recorded as of February 2002. At least 12 are associated with springs. Most only contain stone tool making debris, a few contain fire-broken rock and still fewer include non-human bone fragments. Most of the stone material used by the prehistoric and historic inhabitants of the area was porcellanite that commonly outcrops in the area. Consequently, many lithic scatters include evidence of quarrying and the initial processing of porcellanite.

[ Page 7-19] ... .Thirty arrow/spearheads that can be used to estimate the dates of occupation have been reported from the surface of these sites. The area has been inhabited since the **Paleo-Indian Period** (circa 12,000 years ago) through the Middle Period and the **Late Prehistoric** (ending approximately at 1750 AD).

Some **cairn** sites contain only one stone pile while others contain many. Cairns co-occur with **tipi rings** and lithic scatters. They vary widely in size and have many different functions. Cairns may mark trails or locations where specific events took place. They may be trash or site clearing piles; they may result from the building of tipi rings or sweat lodges. They can also have ceremonial functions when they are the result of people leaving offerings. Cairns sometimes mark human remains. Generally, the larger the cairn and the higher its profile (its height as measured from ground surface) the more likely it is to represent ceremonial activities or cover human remains.

When cairns form linear arrangements they are called **alignments**. Alignment cairns are most often small and have a low profile. Generally alignments are directional markers/prayer lines associated with major ceremonial sites such as the Big Horn Medicine Wheel or drive lines, lines of stone used by groups of hunters to mark the routes on the prairie where they wanted to channel their prey (deer, antelope and bison). One alignment has been recorded on the reservation.

Fifty-four (54) sites containing cairns that are not associated with tipi rings or alignments have been recorded on the reservation. About 30% of these have associated stone tool making debris. One is associated with a location that has both prehistoric and historic rock art. On most site forms, the size of the cairns and their profile is not described therefore it is impossible to state how many have ceremonial functions. One exception to this is the very large cairn at 24RB1789. Since cairns may mark human remains or memorialize spiritual/ceremonial activities, the Northern Cheyenne routinely avoid these sites. Other sites found on the reservation include the **Black Eagle Buffalo Jump** and associated **petroglyphs**, a location with fragmentary large mammal bone and one flake, four rock art (petroglyph) sites and one rock shelter which contains lithic debris.

## V. Off-Reservation Cultural and Archaeological Resources Significant to the Northern Cheyenne.

With the creation of **reservations** in the late 1800s and early 1900s, tribal territories became set in a legalistic sense. However, this does not mean that the Indians thought that lands outside the reservation boundaries were no longer important or significant. Since 1983, over 20 Indian groups have rejected **Indian Court of Claims** and the U.S. Court of Claims awards because they are still trying to regain their traditional lands as opposed to the monetary settlements offered by the U.S. government. (Jorgensen, 1984:17).

Many of the most bitterly fought claims deal with lands with sacred attributes. The disputes of Yellow Thunder Camp in the Black Hills and the Northern Cheyenne's attempts to preserve the sanctity of Bear Butte illustrate this. (FATA, 1979; Josephy, 1984; McCool, 1981; Michaelsen, 1983; Talbot, 1985).

The continuing significance of **Bear Butte in South Dakota** to the Cheyenne is best expressed by the following description of Cheyenne pilgrimages to that locality.

Today, Cheyenne pilgrims climbing *Nowah'wus* see the marks of the past all around them. Circles of rock form the tipi rings of older camp sites. An eagle-catching pit is near. High on the butte itself, that great bird so close to Thunder still nests. Circling above the stone heights he watches the fasters below. A spring marks the place from which the people gather blue clay to make the sky color used in decorating the rawhide parfleches. And to the southwest lies the spot where the Buffalo People themselves first gave the Suhtaio the Sacred Medicine Lodge, the Sun Dance...This is the heart of the Cheyenne sacred places and sacred ways. This is where the All Father and the Sacred Powers themselves gave Sweet Medicine the four Sacred Arrows. (Powell, 1969:19).

The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has purchased 560 acres near Bear Butte State Park to preserve their access to this sacred site. (Little Coyote, 2001:11).

Off-reservation Northern Cheyenne ceremonially significant sites in or near southeast Montana include: **Lake De Smet** (near Buffalo, WY, [Tallbull and Deaver, 1991; White Frog 1950 in Little Coyote, 2001]), **Bear Butte, Deer Medicine Rocks** (a rock art site associated with Sitting Bull's vision prior to the battle of the Little Big Horn), **Little Bighorn National Battlefield, Medicine Rocks** located on the southern border of the reservation (the site of pre-reservation Sun Dances including the last Sun Dance prior to the battle of the Little Bighorn) and **Medicine Rock Site located at Cave Hills, (SD)**. At the Medicine Rock Site in South Dakota, pictographs change to foretell events.

(Deaver, 1986:58). **Chalk Buttes** and the nearby **Medicine Rocks State Park** are also the site of **ongoing traditional cultural activities** by the Northern Cheyenne. (CBEG, 1996; Tallbull *et al.*, 1996). All of these locations are the focus of **individual pilgrimage and prayer today**.

The preceding discussion summarizes some of the best known off-reservation sites that have continuing significance to the Northern Cheyenne. It is not exhaustive. It includes only the well-documented high profile sites in the immediate area. Future work in the area will no doubt document other off-reservation sites with traditional cultural significance for the Northern Cheyenne. In the context of proposed **CBM [coal bed methane] development**, standard cultural resource surveys will have to evaluate sites in terms of their potential traditional cultural significance under National Register criteria A, B and C as well as criterion D or scientific value.

BLM management decisions to develop land traditionally used by the Northern Cheyenne may adversely affect their **access to**, or **utilization of**, areas for ceremonial and cultural activities. For example, the **construction of roads** for coal bed methane development may increase accessibility to remote areas, which have been used for prayer and fasting activities. Seclusion is required for these activities. Conversely, construction of new roads can provide easier access to traditional plant gathering areas. **Construction of fences** may restrict the collection of plants for medicinal purposes and mineral resources used in ceremonies by religious practitioners while protecting them from damage by unrestricted recreational use. Increased **noise levels** associated with some development activities can make areas unsuitable for fasting, prayer and making offerings. The **modification of landforms** by construction activities required by **oil and gas development** can also affect Native American practices and values by interfering with the respectful treatment of dead and spiritual aspects of the environment.

Sites associated with the Northern Cheyenne history and ongoing traditional use in southeast Montana are also found within the management boundaries of the Custer National Forest. These are summarized in the next section. Again, this list is not exhaustive. It is only as complete as the survey and consultation work has been up to January 2002. Further work in the Custer National Forest will document other sites with traditional cultural significance to the Northern Cheyenne.

The early Cheyenne Homesteads east of the Tongue River have ongoing significance to the Northern Cheyenne. They are associated with a pivotal event (establishment of the Tongue River Reservation) in Northern Cheyenne history. Further, they may be important due to their association with important individuals in Northern Cheyenne history. ...

## A. Cultural Resources in the Custer National Forest (CNF) and Vicinity.

The following discussion focuses on the Beartooth and Ashland districts of the Custer National Forest and adjoining lands in the vicinity. Both of these districts include lands under consideration for **coal bed methane development** in southeast Montana. This discussion relies heavily on a cultural resource overview of the CNF completed in 1995 (Deaver and Kooistra-Manning, 1995).

The Northern Cheyenne have several specific **ongoing concerns** about the management of the Ashland Unit of the Custer National Forest and the **cumulative impacts** of this management on their contemporary traditional cultural uses of this area. As more and more development occurs in the Powder River region, the Northern Cheyenne will have fewer and fewer **undisturbed places** to go to collect ceremonially significant pigments and plants. Increasing the ease of access to the medicinal plants across from Birney, in the Poker Jim area, and protecting medicinal plants in Section 27, T5S R43E (Tallbull and Deaver, 1991), are major concerns for the Tribe.

The area immediately east of the Tongue River is extremely important to the Northern Cheyenne (Tallbull and Deaver, 1991) because it is the location of 46 early **Northern Cheyenne homesteads** that predate the creation of the reservation. These homesites contain burials, sweat lodges and other spiritually important features as well as the remains of the homes. Protection of known burials including that of Red Hat (Tallbull and Deaver, 1991), and the grave of an old medicine woman<sup>3</sup> is particularly important.

By 1995, four burial sites had been recorded on Forest Service lands in the Ashland District. The first grave was a box burial with trade beads and bell inside. Transported cobbles were found in association with the second burial site. The third site contained human skeletal remains that had most likely washed down into the gully where they were found. A mound site with lithics may indicate a fourth burial site. Burials occur in Hammond Draw and along Otter Creek (Lahren, 1977; Deaver, 1988; PA, 1980). A site form for a lithic scatter near the Tongue River, immediately adjacent to CNF lands, also mentioned a burial site. Local residents reported that the burial had been potted and a catlinite pipe removed. The specific location of the burial site and land ownership were not ascertained by the archaeologists who surveyed the area. **Burials** in Hammond Draw, Otter Creek and the Tongue River may be impacted by increased access to the area due to development.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Northern Cheyenne, avoidance of the graves of medicine people (religious specialists) is mandatory and no other option is thinkable and would, in fact, be dangerous to even discuss. If graves of ordinary people cannot be avoided or are inadvertently disturbed, qualified religious specialists, designated by the Northern Cheyenne Culture Commission, pray and communicate with the spirits of the dead, apologizing for disturbing them and then preside over their reburial. Reburial is not an option when dealing with the graves of medicine people. It is too dangerous.

*[Note: Portions of this section on pages 7-23 through 7-25 have been omitted here for the use of this document in the classroom. They describe numerous types of cultural and spiritual sites throughout lands adjacent to the Northern Cheyenne reservation and in the region of the Custer National Forest, Beartooth Mountains, Ashland Ranger District and elsewhere. The text below resumes with the middle of page 7-25.]*

In 1995, Deaver and Kooistra-Manning listed the traditional cultural concerns documented for the Custer National Forest. In the Ashland Ranger District, they include:

- 1. Respectful treatment of burials (all tribes);**
- 2. Maintain access for mineral (paint pigment) gathering (Northern Cheyenne);**
- 3. Ease access to plant gathering sites (Northern Cheyenne); and**
- 4. Respectful treatment of Traditional Cultural Properties especially historic Northern Cheyenne homesteads, fasting areas and rock art sites.**

Similar concerns were enumerated for the Beartooth Ranger District:

- 1. Respectful treatment of burials (all tribes);**
- 2. Maintain access for plant gathering (including tipi poles) particularly in the Pryor Mountain Unit (Crow) and especially at the foothills of the Pryors around Warren, Montana (Northern Cheyenne);**
- 3. Maintain and increase access for mineral resource gathering, such as soapstone and paint pigment (Eastern Shoshone); and,**
- 4. Respectful treatment of Traditional Cultural Properties especially Sun Dance grounds, fasting sites, rock art sites and medicine wheels (all tribes).**
- 5. Respectful treatment of hunting, fishing and root gathering sites. (Shoshone-Bannock).**

## B. Cultural Resources of the Tongue River Valley.

The Northern Cheyenne recognize the spiritual nature of water. (Deaver, 1988:29-30). Rivers have spiritual qualities that become associated with the people who live around them. All surface waters are alive, ever moving, and are life giving. Three kinds of spirits live in springs. Swamps are filled with many spirits and may be dangerous due to the accumulation of power at these localities. Ground water represents the quiet nature of the earth and should not be disturbed.

There is a spiritual and cultural tie between the Northern Cheyenne and the Tongue River. (Deaver and Tallbull, 1988:9-10). Offerings of cloth and tobacco are made to the Tongue River. Important **ceremonial events, such as fasts, sweats and the Sun Dance, Sacred Hat and Ghost Dance ceremonies**, have been performed in the Tongue River valley. (Stands In Timber and Liberty, 1972; Marquis, 1978; Murray, 1974; NCPO, 1981a). Ceremonial locales have spirits who remain in place and must be treated with respect. (Deaver and Tallbull, 1991:8).

In 1990, when the Tribe was considering test well locations in Section 24 T5S, R42 east, Birney Community members and the Culture Committee expressed concerns about **damage to the spiritual qualities** of the area. In this area, the cottonwood grove along the Tongue River floodplain was used as a camp from at least the 1800s until 1930. Religious ceremonies, including the annual renewal of the medicine bundles took place at this camp. (Keller, 1990d:1)

An issue raised by George Elkshoulder, and previously by Bill Tallbull, is the concern that **exploration for methane gas** may be in opposition with general religious principles that call for **respect of the land**. More importantly the exploitation may be in direct **conflict** with direction received in an Arrow Ceremony to avoid coal development on the Reservation. Because the methane gas is associated with coal seams, any drilling through these seams to extract or even test the gas could be considered a **violation** of this direction. (Keller, 1990d:2-3).

The people of Birney Village, one of the most traditional settlements on the reservation, acknowledge a close relationship with the **Tongue River**. They pray to the east and fast in the hills overlooking the Tongue River. Birney Village residents use the river for watering horses, watering gardens and washing hides. Basic wild food plants are dependent on this water source. Medicinal and ceremonial plants are collected along the banks of the river. (Deaver and Tallbull, 1991:9-10).

Since the Tongue River valley has been home to the Northern Cheyenne since at least early historic times, the people have developed a relationship with the river and the valley in terms of everyday activities, as well as in a spiritual context.

“Grandmothers ensure that babies born away from the reservation will know their home by hanging part of the child’s afterbirth from a tree near the river.” (Deaver and Tallbull, 1988).

The Northern Cheyenne value the Tongue River valley because of the vegetation and wildlife it sustains. The wild plants and animals of the Tongue River region continue to contribute to **Northern Cheyenne subsistence**. About 57% of Birney residents and 84% of Ashland residents supplement their income by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants and herbs. (NCPO, 1981b:91). These subsistence sources remain important today. (Little Coyote, 2001). Some of the edible plants collected along the Tongue River include chokecherries, currants, ground plums, mushrooms, prickly pear, rose hips, sage, scurfpea, snowberries, sunflowers, wild mint, and wild turnips. Supplemental food sources in the Tongue River valley include antelope, deer, elk, rabbit, duck, goose, grouse, pheasant, catfish and northern pike. Income from selling the pelts of badger, beaver, coyote and river otter is also important to the economic base of Northern Cheyenne living along the Tongue River. (NCPO, 1981a:13).

Plants of the Tongue River region are also valued by the Northern Cheyenne for their medicinal properties. Some of the plants currently used by the Northern Cheyenne for medicinal purposes include big sage, chokecherry, common sage, curlycup gumweed, dandelion, globe mallow, golden aster, goldenrod, juniper, lichen, manroot, milkvetch, phlox, plantain, rabbitbrush, ragweed, scurfpea, sunflower, sweet medicine, white sage, wild mint, wild rose, willow, yarrow and yucca. Big Medicine, a rare and important medicinal root, is collected along the east side of the river, as well as along Poker Jim Creek. (Strange Owl, 1986 in Deaver and Tallbull, 1988; Deaver and Tallbull, 1991; Stands In Timber and Liberty, 1972:109). These plants can be extremely powerful and must be used with caution. Each plant has special rules concerning its procurement and use. This is specialized knowledge available only to those who have the right to use these plants. (Deaver and Tallbull, 1988).

The plants and animals of the Tongue River valley have spiritual significance for the Northern Cheyenne. For example, Moore (1979:2) noted that the Northern Cheyenne consider cottonwood trees sacred because their roots extend into the Deep Earth from the Earth-Surface Dome. The valley is also home to eagles, go-betweens between the people of the valley and the Blue-Sky space. (Tallbull and Deaver, 1991:10).

The Tongue River region also retains a **critical cultural significance** for the Northern Cheyenne as a **sanctuary and homeland**. During the late 1800s, the Northern Cheyenne came very close to extinction. The Tongue River area was their last refuge and is still recognized as the place where they were able to survive and come together as a people. The reservation is viewed as a last sanctuary where the Northern Cheyenne could retain their **unique cultural identity**. Consequently, protecting the environmental surroundings of the Reservation is viewed not only as a **spiritual responsibility** but also as being necessary to ensure the **survival** of the Northern Cheyenne

as a people. (Deaver and Tallbull, 1991:9).

Not only do the Northern Cheyenne have an **ongoing spiritual relationship** with the plants and animals growing along the Tongue River and the river itself; they recognize **spirit persons** who inhabit the valley. These spirits must be treated with respect. They can take different forms (human, animal and light) when they appear to people. Some spirits are benevolent while others are dangerous.

Particular spirits live in springs in the Tongue River valley (Deaver and Tallbull, 1988):

... certain springs have certain spirits in them. Like you go to Birney and see all the offerings hanging there. Their life depends on that water and they give thanks by putting the things there. Each spring has water-makers. ... There's one ... back up the coulee there's a spring. A small spring. You can hear him, he calls you. (Bill Tallbull, 10/30/92).

Mr. Tallbull describes another spirit, named Icky-wicky [*sic*], who lives in a hill near the Tongue River south of the reservation near the Tongue River Reservoir.

There's some sites that people never bothered because they are too powerful, spiritually powerful. Stay away from them. Not too far from there, for instance, there is a hill. A red-shaled hill. In there is a spirit that used to walk among the camps along Tongue River. He had face on both sides. He had two faces. He had a necklace of ears of people. ... Okay ,then he came down to the camps of Cheyenne. He really didn't bother the Cheyennes much. They never bothered him. But the ancient warriors said that he came and took the ears of his people. Then one young man went down along the creek and got [box elder mushrooms]. And he put strings through there and wore that thing. And it looked like ears of people, so he went and talked to him. When that spirit saw the necklace, the same necklace, that he was wearing, they started talking to each other. The man said, how would I return these if they ask for them? The man [spirit] told him. Well, he wasn't supposed to tell. But when he saw that this guy had the ... mushroom, box elder mushroom, then he divulged that information. So, he went home. He told the medicine men, I know how Icky-wicky get the return of those ears. And so they got, they returned them in with some ceremony they had to go through. (Bill Tallbull, 10/30/92).

Mr. Tallbull went on to explain contemporary experiences with Icky-wicky:

That spirit is still there because it has taken Cheyenne. It took old man Strange Owl and his wife when he went to Sheridan, the Sheridan rodeo, on a wagon. Then when my people came the next day, these two had moved on. But when my people moved

in there, they looked to that hill there and they saw that old man and his wife standing there. Their spirits were already taken. They were already in that mountain, and they saw them. Then later on, a few days when he got to Sheridan rodeo, both of them passed away suddenly. His grandson, he has a grandson, that had a car wreck not very far from there. ... So it probably ... his grandson is there too. So these people that are compatible with that ... we are going to that direction where the spirit hid. He said when he comes through camp he doesn't bother anybody because he knows that we have a way of ... we have a way of taking care of him. All we have to do is give him something. So they knew how to treat that. (Bill Tallbull, 10/30/92).

The Tongue River Valley also contains spirit trails by which the spirits visit each other. (Tallbull and Deaver, 1991:11-12).

Again, this discussion of sites important to the Northern Cheyenne is not exhaustive. It is only as complete as the survey and consultation work has been up to January 2002. Future work in the Tongue River Valley will, no doubt, document other sites with traditional cultural significance to the Northern Cheyenne as well as continuing relationships between the valley and the Cheyenne.

## VI. Conclusion

The Northern Cheyenne reservation, where the Tribe and its individual members control 99% of the landbase, is the last refuge where the Northern Cheyenne can retain and continue to live their unique culture. The Northern Cheyenne have a **sacred trust** to protect their remaining homeland. To this end the carefully husband the land and its resources.

The land and the associated resources are not simple inanimate properties to the Northern Cheyenne. Rather they are **living beings**, relations of the Northern Cheyenne, who deserve respect, nurturing and careful consideration. Consequently, for the Cheyenne it is appropriate to take only what you need and safeguard the rest. Taking everything you can is both a shortsighted foolish waste of resources and an immoral act....

*[text omitted]*

In this Chapter, the Tribe's cultural resources are described. Here, the Northern Cheyenne unique view of the world is made apparent from the beginning. The very definition of cultural resources includes water, plants, animals, Great Birds, fish,

minerals as well as the more routinely described archaeologically defined sites. The **spiritual characteristics of natural resources** are important to the Northern Cheyenne because they give meaning to the landscape in which they live. Past peoples' imprint on the landscape of southeastern Montana is important to the Cheyenne because it is a pervasive reminder of their connection to their homeland.

Since places, localities, landforms, and more narrowly defined archaeological sites are seen as having both physical and spiritual characteristics, evaluation of cultural resources, on or off-reservation, must consider **both types of characteristics** to address Northern Cheyenne cultural concerns. Consequently, compliance with section 106 of NHPA requires systematic and consistent consultation as well as routine cultural resources surveys. This is applicable to off-Reservation as well as on-Reservation cultural resource work. As documented in this chapter, the Northern Cheyenne maintain a continuing relationship with the natural resources beyond their current political boundaries. Further, they have important historical and ceremonial ties to archaeological sites throughout the region for the proposed energy development. As noted throughout this chapter, graves are sacrosanct. They should never be disturbed, i.e., always shown respect. NAGPRA is the relevant legal statute for the treatment of graves when they are on trust lands on the reservation or federal lands when off-reservation.

## Short-Answer Questions for “Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resources”

### From Section I: “What Constitutes A Northern Cheyenne Cultural Resource”

- 1) Define the archaeological term “site” and list several examples of types of sites.
- 2) What is a “cultural resource” as the term is used by land managers and resource specialist? How is a cultural resource defined by the Northern Cheyenne?
- 3) What is an “historic property” and what differentiates it from other cultural resources?
- 4) Why are political (“legal”) boundaries “problematic” and “irrelevant” when considering tribal use of cultural sites and tribal spiritual practices/traditions?
- 5) Summarize in just a few sentences the contrast between the Northern Cheyenne “tribal-historical” perspective with the “scientific-academic” view of history, the natural environment, and human-nature relationship.
- 6) Describe the traditional Northern Cheyenne concept of time and tell how this concept of time is significant to how the Northern Cheyenne perceive locations or sites of past tribal use (by other tribes) and their own relationship to such sites. Why are these sites/locations also important to the Northern Cheyenne who interact with them?

### From Section III: “Cultural Importance of Natural Resources”

- 7) What is the fundamental principle at the core of Northern Cheyenne cosmology (a cosmology is a worldview)?
- 8) What types of cultural resource sites are included in the Northern Cheyenne definition of this term?
- 9) What are the five basis “spaces” in the Northern Cheyenne cosmology and how is each space defined or characterized?
- 10) What is an “earthlodge” and how are these places used by the Northern Cheyenne?
- 11) To which of these spaces do exposed cliffs and badlands belong and how is this space characterized?
- 12) Describe water according to the Northern Cheyenne cosmology, including Cheyenne definitions of the qualities of springs, swamps and ground water.
- 13) What kind of terminology is used for plants? How does this terminology demonstrate the beliefs and worldview of the Northern Cheyenne?
- 14) List four of the reasons or purposes for the gathering of plants by Northern Cheyenne people.
- 15) Why are hunting and gathering of traditional foods still very important to the people who live on the Northern Cheyenne reservation? (List three reasons.)
- 16) What are “offerings” and why are they made?
- 17) How are minerals a cultural resource of the Northern Cheyenne?

**From Section IV: “Cultural and Archaeological Sites on the Reservation” and Section V: “Off - Reservation Cultural and Archaeological Resources Significant to the Northern Cheyenne”**

- 18) List the types of sites (as defined in scientific-academic archeological terms) on the N. Cheyenne reservation.
- 19) Which of these do the Northern Cheyenne not classify as sites, cultural resources or historic property? Why?
- 20) What kinds of sites are “unrecorded ceremonial sites” and why are they unrecorded?
- 21) What are the two most common types of archaeological/prehistoric sites on the Northern Cheyenne reservation, and what other examples of archaeological/prehistoric sites are recorded there?
- 22) List three very important off-reservation locations that have been and continue to be spiritual and cultural sites for the Northern Cheyenne, and tell why each is significant and sacred to the Northern Cheyenne people.
- 23) In what ways do past, present or future development and/or mineral exploration (oil, gas, coal bed methane, etc) jeopardize or harm Northern Cheyenne cultural resources and/or spiritual practices? Be thorough in your response.
- 24) What are the traditional cultural preservation concerns regarding off-reservation sites in the Custer National Forest (in both the Ashland and Beartooth Ranger Districts) and what other tribes have expressed concern, thus indicating that they, too, still use these areas for traditional cultural purposes?
- 25) The exploration for or development of coal bed methane involves drilling test holes, pumping out ground water, drilling well sites and the contamination of ground water with salts and other minerals. How are these activities counter to the cosmology and traditional spiritual principles of the Northern Cheyenne?
- 26) Throughout this document, statistics show that very high percentages (57-89%) of Northern Cheyenne on the reservation hunt, fish and/or gather edible plants for subsistence purposes. Why are these forms of subsistence so important, beyond cultural and spiritual reasons? (You might need to do some research to fine the answer to this question, but even if you don’t know, give it your best guess.)
- 27) Why do Northern Cheyenne stay away from some sites and why these sites powerful? (This is not unique to the Northern Cheyenne, by the way.)

**From Section VI: “Conclusion”**

- 28) Why is an intact and accessible natural environment (including landscapes, plants and animal species, minerals, sources of water, etc) essential to the continuation and survival of Northern Cheyenne traditional culture?

**What is meant by a “sacred trust” and how is this trust inclusive of and dependent on lands, resources and cultural sites beyond the reservation boundaries?**