

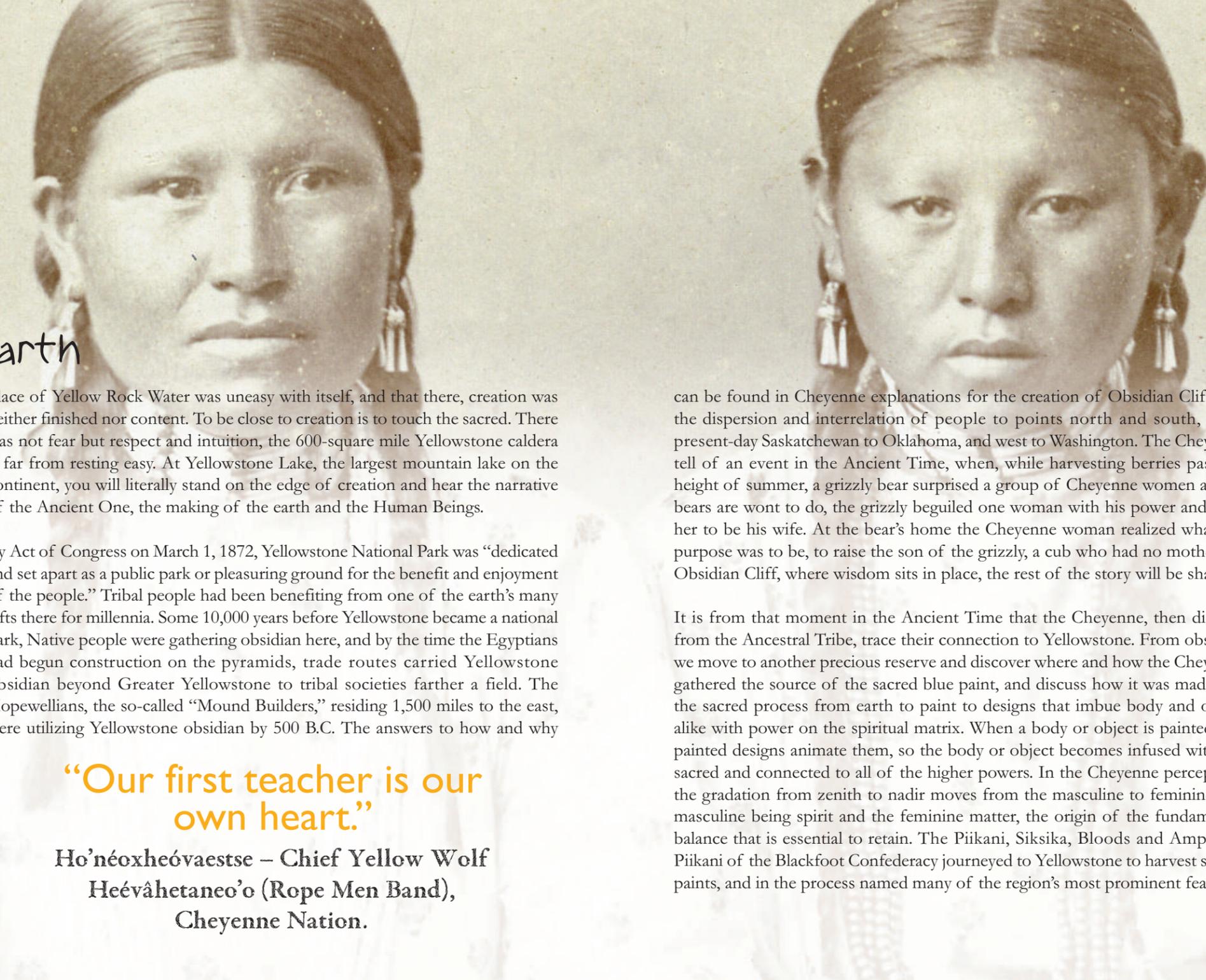
Native
Yellowstone

Wisdom in the Circle of Creation

May 18 – 24, 2019



Coyote Woman and Buffalo Wallow Woman, Cheyenne Nation.



Bald eagle at Yellowstone Lake.

The Power of Creation . . . The Heartbeat of Mother Earth

The Place of the Yellow Rock Water. Tribal people called it home over 10,000 years before the Pilgrims anchored at Cape Cod and sought to find their own. Since the days of Bridger and Moran, through Yellowstone becoming the first and now oldest national park in the world, the absence of a tribal presence in Yellowstone has been explained by the myth that Indians feared this vast, pine-robed plateau that is punctuated by thermal wonders from lakeshore to river course. Supposedly, the geysers engendered such apprehension among tribal people that they would do all they could to avoid this bountiful landscape. It was, like so much in the reinvention of The West, false. The fantasy was created by Yellowstone National Park's second superintendent, Philetus Norris, to portray Yellowstone as "Indian free," a policy reflected in the present with the abject lack of tribal interpretation in the Park. The geysers and hot springs are, in reality, shrines - sacred sites for prayer and quest.



Obsidian Cliff.

The Cheyenne, Kiowa, Shoshone, Bannock, Blackfoot, Arapaho, Nez Perce, and the most recent arrivals, the Crow, are among the twenty-seven tribes with cultural ties to Yellowstone that each know a different story. Within these archives from ancestral memory is found a common theme – the sacred nature of the land named for the Yellow Rock Water and the connection to place, an ancient compact between the two-legged and four and the earth that sustains but is, as yet, still unmade. From the earliest experience it was gleaned that the earth in the

Place of Yellow Rock Water was uneasy with itself, and that there, creation was neither finished nor content. To be close to creation is to touch the sacred. There was not fear but respect and intuition, the 600-square mile Yellowstone caldera is far from resting easy. At Yellowstone Lake, the largest mountain lake on the continent, you will literally stand on the edge of creation and hear the narrative of the Ancient One, the making of the earth and the Human Beings.

By Act of Congress on March 1, 1872, Yellowstone National Park was "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Tribal people had been benefiting from one of the earth's many gifts there for millennia. Some 10,000 years before Yellowstone became a national park, Native people were gathering obsidian here, and by the time the Egyptians had begun construction on the pyramids, trade routes carried Yellowstone obsidian beyond Greater Yellowstone to tribal societies farther a field. The Hopewellians, the so-called "Mound Builders," residing 1,500 miles to the east, were utilizing Yellowstone obsidian by 500 B.C. The answers to how and why

“Our first teacher is our own heart.”

**Ho'néoxheóvaestse – Chief Yellow Wolf
Heévâhetaneo'o (Rope Men Band),
Cheyenne Nation.**

can be found in Cheyenne explanations for the creation of Obsidian Cliff and the dispersion and interrelation of people to points north and south, from present-day Saskatchewan to Oklahoma, and west to Washington. The Cheyenne tell of an event in the Ancient Time, when, while harvesting berries past the height of summer, a grizzly bear surprised a group of Cheyenne women and as bears are wont to do, the grizzly beguiled one woman with his power and took her to be his wife. At the bear's home the Cheyenne woman realized what her purpose was to be, to raise the son of the grizzly, a cub who had no mother. At Obsidian Cliff, where wisdom sits in place, the rest of the story will be shared.

It is from that moment in the Ancient Time that the Cheyenne, then distinct from the Ancestral Tribe, trace their connection to Yellowstone. From obsidian we move to another precious reserve and discover where and how the Cheyenne gathered the source of the sacred blue paint, and discuss how it was made and the sacred process from earth to paint to designs that imbue body and object alike with power on the spiritual matrix. When a body or object is painted, the painted designs animate them, so the body or object becomes infused with the sacred and connected to all of the higher powers. In the Cheyenne perception, the gradation from zenith to nadir moves from the masculine to feminine, the masculine being spirit and the feminine matter, the origin of the fundamental balance that is essential to retain. The Piikani, Siksika, Bloods and Ampskapi Piikani of the Blackfoot Confederacy journeyed to Yellowstone to harvest sacred paints, and in the process named many of the region's most prominent features.



Kiowa Bear Shield.

The Kiowa have an ancient connection to Yellowstone and we go to the origin of that bond before discussing the relationship between the buffalo and the Kiowa, and the significance of the buffalo, the sacred provider of physical and spiritual sustenance in many cultures. Sacred bundles and explanations related to the buffalo embody the well-being of not only the Kiowa, but also the Lakota, Cheyenne, and other tribal people, and this inter-relationship and inter-connection is explored through traditional narratives that speak of the days when the human beings and the buffalo were as one, and how the buffalo is an ancient relative. Just as the human beings and the buffalo share an ancient compact, so too do the wolf and the buffalo, and the wolf and the human beings. The wolf taught many to hunt, and would call others to share the bounty, and we learn of that tradition – of the wolf as a teacher, and how the wolf is revered in Cheyenne, Blackfoot, and other Plains cultures, to the extent that the scouts of the people, those who guide, those who bring warnings and messages, are referred to as “wolves.” Those are but parts of the wolf’s story of benevolence to the People, the source and depth of which we will discover.

It was here, in Yellowstone, where the Kiowa “bear names” originated, White Bear, Sitting Bear among them, the names carried by the great Kiowa leaders later known as Satanta and Satank. The Kiowa Bear Shield, which inspired other tribes’ shield designs, was founded upon knowledge found in Yellowstone.

“I love this land and the buffalo and will not part with it. I have heard you intend to settle us on a reservation near the mountains. I don’t want to settle. I love to roam over the prairies. There I feel free and happy, but when we settle down we grow pale and die. A long time ago this land belonged to our fathers, but when I go up to the river I see camps of soldiers on its banks. These soldiers cut down my timber, they kill my buffalo and when I see that, my heart feels like bursting.”

**Set-tainte (Satanta) - White Bear
Kiowa Chief & Koitsenko Society Leader.**



*Set-tainte, White Bear,
the legendary Kiowa
leader who was named
for the grizzly.*

“Makoiyi, the wolves, were the first Ksahkomi tapiksi (Earth Beings) to pity us. The wolves shared many spiritual gifts with us. The wolves also told our ancestors that animals with hoofs and horns were all right to eat, but that animals with paws and claws should be left alone. The wolves disappeared in the spring, but we still see them in the sky as Makoi-Yohsokoyi - Wolf Trail (Milky Way). These stars constantly remind us of how we should live together.”

Louise Crop Eared Wolf - Kainai (Blood Tribe), Blackfoot Confederacy.



Makoiyi, the Wolf.

To journey into Yellowstone is to enter the realm of the Great Bear – as the Blackfoot say, the Real Bear – the grizzly, and we will learn of the physical and spiritual significance of the bear to tribal people who shared this land with the bear. Tribal Nations have been at the forefront of the struggle to defend the sacred and protect the grizzly, the physical embodiment of the Spirit of the Earth, from trophy hunters’ guns. A great healer, a potent symbol of feminine power, a guardian and a grandparent, the grizzly bear is all of these and more. Through traditional stories and explanations, and by actually entering the grizzly’s domain, you feel the power and gifts the grizzly bear brings to the people, and the bear’s prominence in art and symbolism. The Nimiipuu, the Nez Perce, speak of how grizzly bears retained the knowledge of how to cross the Bitterroot Mountains on the Lolo Trail, for it was the grizzlies that made it. The Nez Perce used the ancient route when they would journey to Yellowstone and the plains beyond, and in 1877, pursued by General Oliver O. Howard and some 730 officers and men, a band of Nez Perce known as the Dreamers struggled across the pass on the way to Yellowstone. We criss-cross the Nez Perce trail through Yellowstone, a dramatic section in their harrowing three-and-a-half-month, 1,700-mile trek from their homelands in the Wallowa Valley to freedom in Canada that ended at Bear’s Paw Mountains, just thirty-eight miles from the border.

**“Nobody to help us tell our side?
The whites told only one side. Told it to
please themselves. Told much that is not
true. Only his own best deeds, only the
worst deeds of the Indians, has the white
man told.”**

**He-Mene Mox Mox – Yellow Wolf
Nez Perce.**



*Itsaya'ya, Coyote, spiritual being
central to Nez Perce culture.
Left: Fox pup.*





*Mother & Child:
Grizzly sow and cub.*

Shoshonean peoples are often identified as Yellowstone's first permanent inhabitants, anthropologists and ethnographers hypothesizing that the Tukudeka, the "Sheepeaters," were the primary sub-band in the area. We will visit a historic Tukudeka site in the park, Sheepeater Cliff, and discuss the challenges of their lifeway, before exploring the Tukaduka's relationships with the other Shoshone peoples. One of those groups, the Bannock, forged the Bannock Trail in the northern reaches of the park, and we will enter into the environ of the historic trail to discuss why it was made and who, other than the Bannock, used it. On the Great Bannock Trail, where elk, moose, bear, and wolves roam now as they did then, a true perspective of Yellowstone can be found; that away from the highways there is ground where wickiups still stand, where petroglyphs are untouched, and where circles of stone are intact and in place.

Within those reminders of the long and not so long ago you appreciate that, to date, only about two percent of Yellowstone National Park has been surveyed for such cultural sites. For those who want to find it, the evidence exists that tribes had a unique relationship with our Grandmother, the Earth, in the land of Yellow Rock Water before European nobles accepted that the world wasn't flat and that their seadogs wouldn't sail off the edge. But it is tribal memory that retains the authentic – the voices, the history, and the cultural perspectives – so listen for the words and silences, the ancient songs of the two-legged and four, and see Yellowstone, a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site, as you will have never seen it before.

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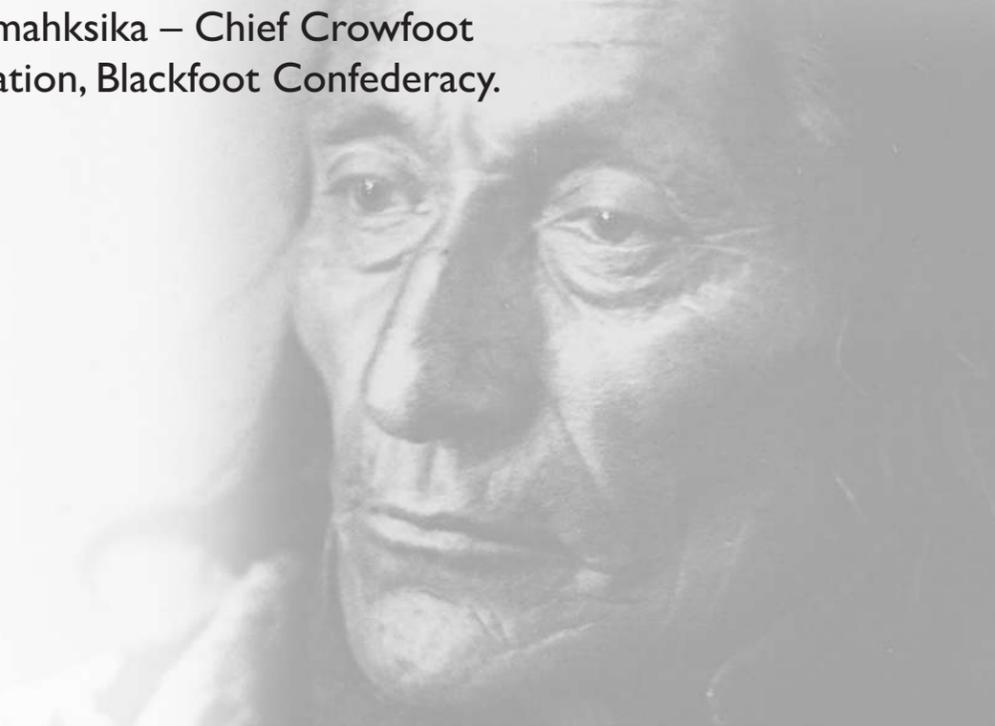
Elk Medicine.

“What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.”



*New Life:
Newborn buffalo calf.*

**Issapóómahksika – Chief Crowfoot
Siksika Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy.**





Coyote.

Day by Day . . . Wisdom in the Circle of Creation

Arrival:

Fly into Bozeman, Montana and overnight in preparation for “Wisdom in the Circle of Creation.”

Day One:

The Time of Creation – Yellowstone Lake.
The Power of Mother Earth – Norris Geyser Basin.

Day Two:

The Journey of Grizzly Cub and the Thunders, how with fire and ice Obsidian Cliff was made – Obsidian Cliff.

Tukudeka Shoshone Lifeways - Sheepeater Cliff.

Transition to the Sacred, where the blue paint was gathered – Artists Paint Pots.

Day Three:

A Blackfoot Holy Land – Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

Brother Wolf: The many gifts and blessings in heaven and earth shared by the wolf – Buffalo Nations’ Valley.



Day Four:

Where the Kiowa Passed the Test of Faith: How Yellowstone Became a Homeland to the Kiowa. The Buffalo and the Kiowa, A Relationship Born – Yellowstone River & Mud Volcano.

The Real Bear: The physical embodiment of the Spirit of the Earth, the first two-legged, the grizzly – Sedge Bay.

Day Five:

Following the Nez Perce in 1877: A Perilous Journey Through Incredible Beauty – Firehole River to the Bannock Trail.

Day Six:

Depart from Bozeman, Montana.



*Top: Moose. Center: Grey Wolf.
Left: Otter with cutthroat trout.
Above: Like “Old Times,” village
on Greater Yellowstone trade route.*

“Do not misunderstand me but understand me fully with reference to my affection for the land. I never said the land was mine to do with it as I chose. The one who has the right to dispose of it is the one who created it. I claim a right to live on my land and accord you the privilege to live on yours.”

Hinmatóowyahtqit – Chief Joseph
Nez Perce



Grizzly at sunset.



*Grizzly tracks along
the Yellowstone River.*

Join us in the sacred circle:
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Call - 307 699 6015



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