

## RM-CESU Project Completion Report, FY05

Project Title: Promote Staff Understanding of Native American Connections to Devils Tower

Park: DETO

Funding Source:       \$5000 Rocky Mountain CESU Education Funding  
                              \$1250 DETO base funding  
                              \$ 200 Devils Tower Natural History Association

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Participants: Permanent and seasonal staff at Devils Tower National Monument  
                  Tribal representatives from the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Lakota, and Eastern  
                  Shoshone

### Background:

Over 20 American Indian tribes have a cultural connection with the Tower. Among these are six distinct American Indian Nations that have a direct geographical connection to the Tower: Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, Kiowa, Lakota and Shoshone. A sacred site within the Black Hills, American Indians use the Tower as a place of worship. Most of the ceremonies that take place are small groups or individuals, who have gathered for prayer, pipe ceremonies, the tying of prayer cloths, or vision quests. Group rituals also continue here, including sweat lodge and sun dance ceremonies. Although a small unit of the National Park Service, Devils Tower has been at the forefront of legal matters related to American Indian religious issues and the management of national park lands. While some of these issues have been resolved, tension continues to remain between some of our visitors, neighboring communities, and associated tribes.

Devils Tower National Monument was established because of its scientific and geological importance. Since that time, there has been a growing awareness of the Tower as a cultural resource. In 1978, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed, stressing the importance of access to sacred sites and protection of American Indian religious rights on public lands. In 1996, Executive Order No. 13007 reinforced the duty that land managers have in accommodating American Indian ceremonial use on federally managed sacred sites. All of these contribute to management decisions at the Tower.

### Project Description:

A one day workshop for park employees, designed to raise cultural awareness. The primary goal of the workshop was to promote staff understanding of American Indian connections with Devils Tower. Raising cultural awareness would help park staff to interact more positively with

American Indian partners. It would also aid park employees to better communicate the cultural importance of the Tower to visitors. This workshop was conceived by the previous summer's interpretive staff. The workshop agenda is attached.

After an introduction by the superintendent, the morning session was divided into three basic, but interrelated educational sections. The first session was specifically designed to address the "Ethnohistorical and Ethnological Summary of Tribal Nations." The presentation introduced the various historical Tribal Nations that resided in the vicinity of Devils Tower. The discussion was designed to provide a concise overview of regional tribal affiliations with the Black Hills, of which Devils Tower is an integral part of that cultural landscape.

The workshop facilitator discussed the archaeological record as well as the major historical factors that shaped the region's cultural landscape. A discussion of the construction of the historical cultural landscape emphasized that the current Tribal Nations came into the region, pushing other indigenous societies out, but each society, once they encountered a sacred location, incorporated it into their cultural and religious frameworks. It also demonstrated how some indigenous societies can be separated today geographically from the site, but still maintain an intimate cultural and spiritual association with Devils Tower.

The second session explained the cultural similarities and differences among Northern Plains indigenous societies. The focus was on 1)cross-cultural similarities and distinctions; 2)how various tribes construct and conceive of sacred landscapes and sites, and 3)that all indigenous religions are religions of place and not exclusively practice. The third session of the morning discussed Devils Tower as a cultural and sacred site.

Most of the afternoon was an open forum with tribal representatives from four nations. The workshop ended with an overview of the laws, Executive Orders, and mandates that drive park management policies.

#### Project Results:

The workshop had mixed reviews from park staff. Most felt the morning sessions were very beneficial. The most positive comments came from the interpretation division, who used the information in their programs throughout the summer. The researcher writing a book on the history of Devils Tower National Monument also found the information to be extremely valuable. In contrast, most of the workshop participants felt that little was gained during the open forum with tribal representatives.

#### Follow-up of this Project:

It is unlikely that this workshop could be presented annually. The park's budget continues to get tighter and there are other priorities that the park would like funded through the CESU opportunity. If another workshop is held, it most likely would not have the open forum with the tribal representatives. This portion was time consuming to organize and costly to reimburse for travel. If tribal representatives were to be involved, the workshop would need to be structured differently to be more beneficial. I agree with the facilitator that there is a lot of information to

cover, but having a two day workshop when we are trying to get everyone trained and ready for the summer season is not feasible. As the interpretive division received the most benefit, I would like to pursue developing a cultural awareness module that could be gone through independently or as a group. This module would then be a reference guide for the interpreters' use during the summer.

Publications, other reports expected: The facilitator has already provided us with a final report.

**Employee Training Workshop  
Devils Tower National Monument  
National Park Service  
May 27, 2005**

- 8:00 AM – 8:15 AM**            **Welcome and Introduction**
- 8:15 AM – 9:30 AM**            **Northern Plains Tribal Associations with the Black Hills**  
--Ethnohistorical and Ethnological Summary of Tribal Nations  
-- Governmental Policies and Native American Religious Oppression
- 9:30 AM – 9:45 AM**            **Break**
- 9:45 AM – 11:00 AM**        **Northern Plains Spirituality and Religious Practices**  
--Overview of Northern Plains Spirituality  
--Overview of Northern Plains Religious Practices: Commonalities and Distinctions
- 11:00 AM – Noon**            **Cultural and Sacred Landscapes**  
--Constructing and Conceiving Sacred Landscapes/Sites  
--Worldview: A Cheyenne Example  
--Devils Tower as a Cultural and Sacred Landscape/Site
- Noon – 1:00 PM**            **Lunch Break**
- 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**        **Devils Tower as a Sacred Landscape: Open Forum with Tribal  
Representatives**  
--Opening Prayer and Introductions  
--Indigenous perspectives/presentation of their history and religious connection to Devils  
Tower/Black Hills  
--Open Question Period
- 3:00 PM – 3:15 PM**        **Break**
- 3:15 PM – 4:00 PM**        **Understanding and Respecting Cultural Differences**  
--Aspects of Cultural Context  
--The Cultural Differences of Place
- 4:00 PM - 4:30 PM**        **Native American Religious Issues: Laws and Mandates**  
--Overview of Laws, Mandates the Guide Management Policies  
--Issues, Controversies, and Questions