

## **Project Summary**

### **Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit**

**Project Title:** Research on Indian Trails in Yellowstone

**Discipline:** Cultural  
**Type of Project:** Research  
**Funding Agency:** National Park Service  
**Other Partners/Cooperators:** University of Montana  
**Effective Dates:** 9/1/2009 - 9/30/2010  
**Funding Amount:** \$10,340

**Investigators and Agency Representative:**

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Researcher: Katie White, Anthropology Graduate Student, University of Montana

**Project Abstract:** The overall objective of this project is to gather information about prehistoric and historic Native American trails in Yellowstone National Park. The researcher will conduct research trips to three repositories likely to house such information. Namely, these repositories include the Idaho State Historical Society (Boise, ID), the Montana State Historical Society (Helena, MT), and the National Archives (NARA I, Washington, D.C.).

Prehistoric and historic Native American trails are rare and ephemeral cultural resources in Yellowstone National Park. These trails have long been known to exist throughout the park although their exact whereabouts and reasons for use remain unclear. Historical literature, archival documents, and tentative archaeological evidence provide some information about the trails, but more detailed information has yet to be learned. In some areas of the park, subsequent use of these trails from infrastructure development and various park management activities have obscured physical evidence of the underlying routes. In other areas, it is unknown if traces of these trails exist. Native American trails provide key information about the prehistoric and historic use and significance of the Yellowstone landscape.

To date, there has been no comprehensive research effort to cull all known information about these trails. Preliminary research conducted in Yellowstone's Library and Archives (Gardiner, MT) suggest that the archival repositories in Idaho, Montana, and Washington, D.C. (listed above) have potential for housing heretofore unknown information about the routes, uses, and dates of significance for these trails. Information gained from this project will aid in the proper identification, interpretation, and management of Native American trails in Yellowstone National Park that will respect and honor the cultural heritage of those who consider Yellowstone part of their traditional homeland.

The desired outcome for this project is for the researcher to complete three research trips to historical societies and archival repositories in Boise, ID, Helena, MT, and Washington, D.C. and provide research reports from each trip to the Yellowstone Ethnography Office. Each report will include the following: (1) a log of all research activities conducted at each repository (e.g., all collections, files, documents inspected; explanations for investigating certain collections over others, etc.); (2) digital copies of all pertinent documents and material found; and (3) recommendations for future research in those and other repositories.

**Outcomes with Completion Dates:** Due Date for Final Report and/or Other Products: September 30, 2010

**Keywords:** Yellowstone National Park, University of Montana, prehistoric and historic Native American trails