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Dr. Loa Traxler

**SPEAKING IN CIRCLES: INTERPRETATION AND VISITOR
EXPERIENCE AT CHACO CULTURE NATIONAL HISTORIC
PARK**

by

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BACHELOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Anthropology

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2015

Acknowledgments

This thesis could have been completed without the wisdom, support, and diligence of my committee. Thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Ronda Brulotte, for consistently and patiently guiding me to rethink and rework. Dr. Erin Debenport supplied both good humor and good advice, keeping my expectations realistic and my writing on track. I am grateful to Dr. Loa Traxler for providing a sounding board, and for teaching me how to tack back and forth.

I would like to thank the staff of Chaco Culture National Historic Park, particularly Dabney Ford, GB Cornucopia, Christine Czazasty, and Wendy Bustard, as well as the host of other rangers and campground hosts who befriended and taught me about everyday life at Chaco. The employees truly steward Chaco and its many resources with great care and passion.

The faculty of UNM's Anthropology department and Museum Studies program have all been instrumental in creating an academic place for their students to learn and succeed. In particular, Dr. Sara Otto-Diniz, Dr. Joyce Szabo, Dr. Lea McChesney, Anne Marie Carpenter, Dr. Steve Feld, and Dr. Suzanne Oakdale - thank you for the time and effort that you invest in your students. I also wish to thank the staff of the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, particularly Shelley Simms, Amy Grochowski, Devorah Romanek, Mary Beth Hermans, and Mike Rendina. Thank you for being incredibly funny, supportive, and innovative and giving me the opportunity to get my hands dirty in a museum.

I would also like to acknowledge three of my Weber State University undergraduate professors, who first introduced me to anthropology and to Chaco Canyon: Dr. Linda Eaton, Susan Young, MA, and Dr. Renee Barlow. Thank you for opening up a lifetime of enjoyment to me.

Thank you to my incredible and indestructible friends, particularly Sahra Jones, Scout Mendenhall, and Caitlin Davis, who offered constructive criticism, wise opinions, snarky opinions, and who have been so patient in letting me vent. Thank you for keeping things light and humorous. You are all the best.

I must thank my wonderfully supportive parents, Jeff and Julie Svare, for all their love, and for encouraging me to pursue my education. Thank you to my brothers, Peder and Stein, for the board games at Christmas and the silly texts the rest of the year. Thank you to my sister Berit, her husband Josh, and my nephew Owen, for letting me crash on the couch, play with your dogs, and for the MadLib Skype sessions. Also, thank you to my sweet dog, Mesa, for keeping me company and being the best kind of distraction. Thanks to Martha Ann Albretsen for teaching me young that women can be educated and independent. Thank you to the Albretsens, the Stutsmans, and the Winters. I appreciate all the support!

Abstract

This study treats Chaco Culture National Historic Park (CCNHP) as a museum space with the National Park Service (NPS) as the head curator. As a museum space and a World Heritage site, Chaco is a place of knowledge production and consumption, with interpretation structured to relay a narrative of Chaco as a thriving prehistoric civilization and to foster an environment where visitors can create idiosyncratic relationships with the space. Trail guides, Wayside Exhibits, and Park ranger interaction constitute formal interpretive resources for visitors to interact with sites in the canyon. These processes are both easily available and easily avoidable for visitors, allowing visitors agency in constructing their experience at Chaco. During visitor interactions with these interpretive materials, visitors and curators enter into a constructive dialogue with one another, creating interpretations and knowledge about the sites. Focusing on the sites of Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, this study critically examines the relationship between CCNHP's current interpretive processes and actual visitor experience, and discusses the possible implications of this interaction.

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Introduction

“Our vision for the NPS centennial in 2016, is that the experience of the visitors to Chaco will be substantially the same then as it is today. That visitors can independently wander through stable, well-preserved standing architecture, examine original wood, stone and mortar, and walk through pristine sites built when Chaco was the center of a vibrant civilization that flourished in the 9th to 13th centuries. That visitors are not confined to tours nor kept away from the sites by ropes or chains and that they are able to develop their own (idiosyncratic) relationship with this place.”

-Vision Statement from Chaco Culture National Historic Park’s 2007 Centennial Strategy

Using the 2007 Vision Statement as a mission statement for Chaco Culture National Historic Park¹ (CCNHP), this study treats Chaco as a museum space and provides a critical look at Park interpretation and visitor use of the space. In treating CCNHP as a museum space, I also treat the National Park Service² (NPS) as one of the multiple curators of the space.

The Vision Statement describes two objectives: to educate visitors about the Great Houses and ancient Chacoans, and to offer a space where visitors can create their own idiosyncratic, or personal, relationships with the canyon. Separate from CCNHP’s interpretative goals are the individual visitors’ purposes for visiting the canyon. These interpretive goals and visitor purposes coexist in the same physical space, but do not necessarily parallel one another. Focusing on the Great House sites of Pueblo Bonito and

¹ In this study, the term Chaco Culture National Historic Park refers to the NPS-administered lands that include the canyons, its sites, and several near outlier sites. I use the terms Chaco and Chaco Canyon interchangeably to refer to the more amorphous geographic and cultural landscape of the canyon and its surrounding area.

² In this study the term National Park Service refers to the body NPS employees at, and working with, Chaco Culture National Historic Park, unless contextually referred to as the overarching National Park Service institution.

Chetro Ketl, I use trail guides, Wayside Exhibit signs, human (ranger) interpretation, and visitor surveys to critically examine the relationship between CCNHP's current interpretive processes and actual visitor experience, and to discuss the possible implications of this interaction.

Outline

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one provides study site background information in order to better contextualize the present-day examination of Chaco's structure and narration. Chapter two reviews the bodies of literature that this study draws from. It includes literature from museum studies, tourism theory, archaeological surveys of Chaco Canyon, and other studies that offer a critical analysis of non-traditional museum spaces. The third chapter introduces my methodological approach to visitor experience and interpretation at Chaco Canyon. Chapter four offers a close reading of written interpretive material at CCNHP, including trail guides and Wayside Exhibit signs. Chapter five deals with ranger-guided programs at the Park, illustrating the interaction between visitors and rangers. Chapter six includes an analysis of a visitor survey I conducted at Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl during the fall and early winter of 2014. The final chapter synthesizes the information gathered during my fieldwork. I then offer a constructive critique of interpretive materials at the Park, highlighting the beneficial outcome of certain aspects of current interpretive processes, and identifying potentially negative aspects of current interpretation. I offer suggestions for mitigating these undesirable aspects to create a more holistic narrative experience for visitors.

Chapter 1: Site Background

In 2014, over 38,000 visitors made the trek to Chaco Culture National Historic Park (NPS 2014). Turning off of New Mexico Highway 550, visitors pass by fry bread stands and drive down a deceptively smooth ribbon of road, winding over hills and arroyos, headed south. A brown wooden sign eventually turns visitors off this road and onto a wide washboard road, about the same time that cell phone reception cuts out. The road is generally well kept, but its grating surface has been known to pop tires, ding windshields, steal license plates, and even shake the DVD players out of unsuspecting minivans. It is a challenge to reach Chaco Canyon. About forty minutes after starting down the road, visitors are treated to their first peek at Fajada Butte, a towering rock formation inside the canyon. Fifteen minutes later, the road enters National Park Service (NPS) land and returns to its smooth asphalt status before coming to a halt in the Visitor Center's parking lot below a red cliff. Just like the entrance to a museum gallery, the entrance to the canyon and every subsequent destination is crafted to manufacture an aesthetic experience for visitors.

As a curator, the NPS manages the body of information that is presented to visitors in order to give a cohesive narrative about Chaco Canyon. Because the Great Houses are what is available to see in the canyon, CCNHP appropriately uses most of their interpretive material and programs to educate visitors about the Great Houses. However, Great Houses are not all that Chaco is about. In this chapter I explore the history of Chaco Canyon to better establish a background for examining what is and is not narrated or easily visible to visitors in 2015.

Site Background

Chaco archaeologist and scholar Steven Lekson notes that, “we have, perhaps, conducted more archaeology per square kilometer or per century of sequence at Chaco than at any comparable district in the United States (Lekson 2006:4).” Archaeologists date habitation in Chaco Canyon to the Archaic period, some three thousand years ago (Strutin 1994:8, Vivian and Hilbert 2002:10). Around A.D. 500, the inhabitants of the southwest region, called Basketmakers for their basket weaving, developed strategies that allowed them to live a more sedentary farming lifestyle. Notably for Chaco Canyon, the Basketmaker peoples began constructing pithouses and open-air rectangular storage areas as well as subterranean kivas (Strutin 1994:9, Vivian and Hilbert 2002:11). Contemporarily, kivas are ritual and social areas in Pueblo communities. The kivas at Chaco share many similar features and are typically round with a bench circling the room, and include a floor hearth, a ventilator, and a *sipapu* (Vivian and Hilbert 2002:148).

Two hundred year later, architecture began changing as people began building adjoining square storage areas into four or five room blocks at a time. Adjacent open air workspaces called ramadas began to be walled up with stones, creating a sheltered living area (Vivian and Hilbert 2002:11). In A.D. 850, the people living in Chaco began to construct more elaborate buildings than they had previously lived in. The Chacoans began adding second and third stories to living areas, creating clusters of room blocks (Vivian and Hilbert 2002:14). These expanded room blocks were the nucleus that would grow to become Great Houses, sites like Pueblo Bonito, Chetro Ketl, Peñasco Blanco, and Una Vida. Great Houses are large D-shaped or rectangular masonry buildings

composed of room blocks. They stand several stories high, and typically enclose a kiva. The carefully planned building style typified by Great Houses expanded out from the canyon to outlier sites across the contemporary Four Corners region to sites like Salmon and Aztec (Vivian and Hilpert 2002:15).

In this study I focus on two of the most frequently visited Great House sites in the canyon: Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl. Pueblo Bonito was the longest-used Great House, with habitation and on-going construction beginning in A.D. 850 and extending until nearly A.D. 1150 (WNPA 2012a). Pueblo Bonito has a D-shaped footprint, and is the largest Great House in the canyon, with nearly 700 rooms, 32 kivas, and 3 Great Kivas. At its peak, Pueblo Bonito was four stories high at the back wall. A north-south oriented wall runs across the middle of the structure, dividing the plaza in half. As with all Great Houses, estimates on how many people lived in the structure at any given time vary by scholar and theory (Vivian and Hilpert 2002:200). Chetro Ketl, one of Bonito's next-door neighbors, was constructed from A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1100 (WNP 2012b). The site is larger than Pueblo Bonito, though it has fewer rooms. While having much of the same architecture characteristic of a Chacoan Great House, Chetro Ketl also has a few interesting and unique aspects. Chetro Ketl's includes a colonnade – an architectural feature not found in the southwest, but in Central Mexico (Vivian and Hilpert 2002:75; WNPA 2012b). Although these two sites have markedly different building periods, I group them together in this study since visitors typically experience them one after the other because they share a parking lot and trailhead.

Around A.D. 1150, major construction at Chaco ceased, and soon after the canyon was depopulated. The inhabitants of Chaco migrated away, moving to Mesa Verde, the

Hopi Mesas, Zuni Mountain, Mount Taylor, the Chuska Mountains, and along the Rio Grande Valley. (Strutin 1994:11; Vivian and Hilpert 2002:15). Several contemporary Puebloan nations, including Zuni, Hopi, and Acoma, claim cultural affiliation as the descendants of Chacoans (CCNHP 2014; Kuwanwisiwma 2004; Vivian and Hilpert 2002; WPNA 2012a, b). At present, there are nineteen of federally recognized Pueblo tribes in New Mexico (Mondragón and Stapleton 2005:60).

Puebloan peoples are not the only communities who culturally affiliate with Chaco. Navajo oral tradition, or *hané*, tells of Nááhwíłbį́į́hí, the Gambler, who manipulated the people of Chaco (Begay 2004). Nááhwíłbį́į́hí was eventually overpowered by a young man, and was forced away. Navajo scholar Richard M. Begay characterizes those who migrated away from Chaco as “eventually becoming part of the modern-day Pueblo Indians (such as those at Zuni and the Rio Grande Pueblos), and others becoming Navajos (Begay 2004:56).”

The arrival of the Navajo to the Colorado Plateau is a topic of debate among archaeologists. Linguistically, the Navajo language is linked to Athabaskan speakers. Some scholars argue that Navajo peoples did not arrive in the region until soon before Spanish explorers (Brugge 2004:61). Spanish records from the 1600s also awkwardly combine Navajo peoples with Apachean groups who were also in the area, thus further muddying cultural affiliations based upon duration of residence (Brugge 2004:61).

Recounting a brief history of Chaco Canyon in a 2005 Getty study of four National Parks, de la Torre states that:

“Archaeologists generally believe that Chaco Canyon was not resettled until the Navajo migration into the region from the north in the late 1500s

or 1600s, although Native American groups assert that the canyon has been continuously occupied since Anasazi times.” [de la Torre 2005: 64]

One of the earliest mentions of Navajo in the Chaco area dates from materials recounting the 1680 Pueblo Revolt (de la Torre 2005: 64). In August of 1680, Pueblo communities under oppressive Spanish rule united to stage a successful revolt against the Spanish priests and colonists, pushing them out of the region for twelve years (Strutin 1994; Wilcox 2009). Before the Pueblo Revolt, and again after 1692, Spanish soldiers and missionaries noted the presence of Indians hiding near Chaco. Both Puebloan groups and Navajo peoples used the Chaco area as a sanctuary to escape the violence being perpetrated against them by the Spanish (de la Torre 2005:64).

Written reference to Chaco Canyon between the late 1600s and the 1800s is sparse, until 1896 when self-taught archaeologist Richard Wetherill moved into the canyon to begin excavations at Pueblo Bonito. From that time on, archaeologists, museums, and tourists became more aware of the canyon and its ancient ruins.

Richard Wetherill originally visited Chaco Canyon in 1895 while acting as a tour guide for the Palmer family, who wanted to see Indian sites in the southwest (Gabriel 1992). The following year, Wetherill returned with one of the Palmer’s daughters - now his wife - Marietta, hoping to begin excavations at Pueblo Bonito. He had previously excavated at Mesa Verde, and had gained financial backing for the Chaco expedition from the Talbot and Frederick Jr. Hyde, the heirs of an eastern soap company fortune (Vivian and Hilpert 2002:132). The Hyde brothers requested that Wetherill hire a professional archaeologist to oversee the excavations, and so Wetherill contacted Dr. Frederick Puntam from the Peabody Museum at Harvard. Dr. Puntam sent a student,

George Pepper, to assist them with the excavations (de la Torre 2005: 64; Vivian and Hilpert 2002: 132). The Hyde Expedition was the first funded scientific excavation at Chaco Canyon. Although Pepper was professionally trained, and Wetherill was known for his methodical digging, excavation standards were not what they are today. Fill dirt went unscreened, leading to small artifacts being lost. Wetherill and his workers also actively destroyed the structures by burning ladders and other pieces of wood from the Chacoan structures to keep warm (CCNHP 2014; Gabriel 1992:86).

In 1901, Wetherill filed a land claim that encompassed Pueblo Bonito and several other sites. In response to Wetherill's excavations at Pueblo Bonito, Dr. Edgar Hewett from the University of New Mexico (UNM) and founder of the School of American Research³ (SAR) requested that the Government Land Office (GLO) survey the land claim and assess the excavation (de la Torre 2005:64). The GLO sent Stephen Holsinger to Chaco. Holsinger cleared Wetherill of Hewett's claims against him, and when he filed his report, Wetherill simultaneously relinquished his land claim and recommended that federal protection be given to the canyon and its sites (Vivian and Hilpert 2002:125).

Aside from his excavations, Wetherill and his wife Marietta also homesteaded and operated a number of trading posts in Chaco Canyon and nearby regions. Marietta interacted with local Navajo communities through the trading posts and the excavations. While Richard Wetherill's interaction with archaeologists, museums, and the professional world of the 1890s is well-documented in historical texts (Brugge 1980; McNitt 1966), Marietta Wetherill's life history, recording daily life and interactions in Chaco in the 1890s and early 1900s, is recorded on cassette tapes. In the 1950s, Silver City New

³ The School of American Research was renamed the School for Advanced Research in 2007 (sarweb.org).

Mexico newspaperman Louis Blanchly worked with Marietta to record her life history (Gabriel 1992:2). From the recordings and notes of these interviews, Kathryn Gabriel compiled the book, *Marietta Wetherill: Life with the Navajos in Chaco Canyon* (1992). The stories Marietta tells expand and supplement the history of early excavation and homesteading in the canyon.

The Wetherills lived at Chaco for approximately 15 years (Noble 1984:81-86). Although she was a transplant to the region, Marietta Wetherill insisted that the Navajo thought of her as one of their own, and she saw herself as an ethnographer (Gabriel 1992:20). Within her oral life history, Marietta discusses the location of multiple hogans throughout the canyon and the surrounding areas, citing the Navajo kinship rule, “never look mother-in-law in the eye (Gabriel 1992:58).” With this in mind, she maps out the Navajo’s use of space and geographic features within the canyon in order to facilitate this mandate.

While almost continuously situating her story on Pueblo Bonito and the trading post next to it where much of her interaction with the Navajo took place, she also notes several times throughout her story that the Navajo were afraid to come into the canyon because of the spirits of the dead that were there. She recounts, “We found very few burials in Chaco Canyon. We knew the Navajo wouldn’t live in Chaco Canyon because of all the souls of dead people but we couldn’t find where all those dead people were buried (Gabriel 1992:69).” Given these two somewhat conflicting facts, that the Navajo were both inside and outside Chaco, it is difficult to tell from this account exactly where the Navajo were living, but the point is that Marietta’s oral history lets readers know that

the Navajo were actively engaged in a relationship with the canyon that did not only concern themselves and the Wetherills, but also the ancient Chacoans.

Marietta also paid attention to other ways that Navajo people used the canyon. Chaco Canyon has an enormous amount of rock art, spanning across its occupation by different groups for over two thousand years (Schaafsma 1984:59). The rock art includes petroglyphs and pictographs, petroglyphs being images pecked or incised into the rock, and pictographs being images painted onto the rock (Schaafsma 1986). In her life history, Marietta mentions that in the days prior to a ceremonial, she noticed a large new painting on the wall of the canyon.

“The ceremony took place right below a sun symbol, painted recently. It was a yellow circle with feathers all around the face and it had eyes and a mouth, four feet wide. I remember distinctly riding up the canyon for goat’s milk and seeing this new painting on the wall of the canyon, but I didn’t pay attention to it. Now I know why the painting was there.”
[Gabriel 1992: 171]

Her description of the panel illustrates that the Navajo actively used the canyon as an integral part of their ceremonial lives, shaping and reshaping it to suit their needs.

In 1910, Richard Wetherill was shot after what is characterized as an argument over a horse (CCNHP 2014; Vivian and Hilpert 2002:77; WPNA 2012a). The Wetherills are buried in a cemetery just east of Pueblo Bonito. A Hispanic man from nearby Cuba, New Mexico operated the trading post for several more years until its closure (de la Torre 2005:64). The trading post and homestead stood for several more decades; used by artist families and University of New Mexico field school students (Chaco Research Archive

Items A0079733, A0035193⁴; Rollins-Griffin 1971). At present, the area east of Pueblo Bonito where Wetherill's trading post and home was is empty. In the 1960s, the structures were demolished in a process that was not documented by the National Park Service (GB Cornucopia, personal communication 1 November, 2014; Vivian and Hilpert 2002).

In 1907, President Roosevelt created Chaco Canyon National Monument, and when Congress created the National Park Service in 1916, Chaco came under its administration. The National Park Service is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and aims to conserve wilderness areas through designated Park administration and protection (NPS 2015b). Now, nearly one hundred years later, Chaco Culture National Historic Park is still exclusively administered by the NPS, but has worked alongside many other co-curators to steward the canyon. These co-curators included the School of American Research, the National Geographic Society, the University of Arizona, the University of New Mexico, and the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) (NPS Brief History). Most of these co-curators were interested in – to use a museum phrase – expanding the collections via excavation.

The CCC, however, was more interested in conservation and preservation than in site excavation. Two CCC camps with different purposes were constructed at Chaco. One camp housed a typical CCC workforce who designed and built extensive erosion control and roadwork throughout the main canyon. A second CCC camp housed a group comprised entirely of Navajo men, conducted much of the original stabilization and reconstruction work on sites throughout the canyon. Two active CCC camps at Chaco

⁴ Historic Photo UNM Chaco Field School Collection, Chaco Research Archive, University of Virginia.

meant that there were once barracks, kitchens, administration buildings, and many other modern structures. These structures were dismantled in 1946 in favor of presenting a pristine prehistoric viewshed and streamlined focus on archaeology (de la Torre 2005; SRI Foundation 2010; Strutin 1994).

The CCC's preservation work was important because it stabilized sites and the canyon in general against erosion, and, in the process created methods still used in current conservation work (Svare 2015; Vivian and Hilpert 2002:227). While the CCC and subsequent stabilization workers' achievements kept the Great Houses safe for visitors, without a preservation team working on site, visitors likely don't think much about the structures being stabilized either in the past or today.

Contemporary Chaco

In 2015, Chaco is an enclosed National Park with very few visitor amenities. Reaching the Park from State Highway 550 entails driving sixteen miles on rough washboard road through open range on the Navajo Reservation where horses, cows, sheep, and goats, graze and roam freely through the area, making an already tricky driving situation that much more engaging. Most of the visitors I spoke with expressed anxiety about the experience. They commented on how long the road seemed, that it felt dangerous, and some said that it had caused permanent damage to their vehicle. Only one couple that I chatted with thought the road was all right. They said that, "there is a lot of doom and gloom written about the road, but we didn't think it was bad (Svare 2015)."

The Park rangers and staff talk about it as “the Road.” While rangers live in the Park, bookstore and other staff members live off-site, and drive in daily. Driving the Road – and being skilled at it – is a badge of honor because it means you have mastered the blind corners, memorized the potholes, and can generally negotiate the terrain in around 45 minutes. Realizing that many visitors have little to no experience on such a roadway, rangers keep tabs on road conditions and have information available at the Visitor Center. As winter storms and lack of light became an issue during my fieldwork, visitors frequently asked rangers after tours what the status of the road was, worrying that it would be impassible, or more difficult in the dark.

There has been much debate concerning whether or not to pave this road. The washboard road is maintained by the county, and is generally fairly drivable unless the weather has been wet recently. Two rangers commented that, as of November 2014, the road was in really good condition despite any kind of weather. Not all of the road is maintained by San Juan County, however. At a certain point on the road there is a sign stating ‘End County Maintenance,’ and the road comes under the jurisdiction of the Navajo Nation (Figure 1.1)⁵. Typically, this portion of the road is rougher, rockier, and generally harder to drive than the county-maintained portion. The final approach to the canyon is a steep hill known colloquially as Verizon Hill, with a rutted and precarious stretch at the bottom that I refer to as the Bacon Strip. From the top of Verizon Hill, the deep ruts and rolling character of the road make the bottom look much like a piece of bacon. Verizon Hill is the only spot in the canyon where cell phone service is available – and then only if you are lucky. During monsoon season, the Bacon Strip becomes

⁵ All figures are located in Appendix I.

permanently indented with the tire tracks of vehicles, leading to dangerously soft, deep, and slippery mud when it rains. The road acts as an outer frame for Chaco, by forcibly removing visitors from a sense of modern convenience and security and into an unpredictable and wild landscape. This framing continues inside the Park, where a carefully curated landscape aesthetic is presented to visitors.

Upon reaching the Park, a campground, small Visitor Center, and vault toilets at backcountry trailheads are the best accommodations that visitors can expect. The lack of amenities is tied directly to the NPS's valuing of a pristine environment that reflects a non-modern space (de la Torre 2005). The canyon is kept clear of visible modern buildings apart from the Visitor Center and NPS housing, creating a very specific viewshed; i.e. the visible landscape. This empty viewshed expunges some of Chaco's historic structures like hogans, trading posts, and CCC camps, which were quietly erased in favor of a streamlined prehistoric narrative. Necessary modern structures such as water tanks and pipelines have been carefully painted to blend into mesas, or else are built far enough back onto the mesa that they are not easily visible from the canyon floor.

A one-way interpretive loop road runs through the Park, taking visitors to six easily accessible Great Houses. This structured presentation creates an ambiance of solitude and personal discovery for visitors, and deters larger crowds that the Park feels it cannot support. The entire Park is set up to create a sense within the visitor of stepping into the past (de la Torre 2005). With the viewshed free from modern structure, and an archaeological narrative so ready to hand, a non-critical visitor may feel that Chaco is a frameless exhibit. But it is precisely what they do not see which frames Chaco. Museum theorist Janet Marstine states that, "Frames not only set boundaries; they provide an

ideologically based narrative context that colors our understanding of what's included. ...Framelessness...is also a framing device (Marstine 2006:4-5).” With such delicate framing, a general picture of just what Chaco *is* can be an incredibly complicated question, if not an unanswerable one. CCNHP works with other curatorial entities to establish narratives at Chaco.

The Native American Consultation Committee for Chaco

Other important curators/consultants at Chaco are contemporary Native Americans who culturally affiliate with the canyon. Several years prior to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, the NPS at Chaco created a consulting body of interested Native American tribes, which provided a space for interested Native parties to speak to NPS staff about the administration and stewarding of Chaco Canyon. While this committee is inherently a consulting body, the concerns and advice of Navajo, Zuni, and Hopi tribal members who sit on the committee are given serious consideration by NPS officials. “Over the past ten years, the Park’s American Indian Consultation Committee has gradually taken the lead role in shaping Park policy and practice (de la Torre 2005: 92).”

Clearly, at a place like Chaco it is imperative to have indigenous concerns heard and met. However, the deployment and discourse surrounding the consulting body is fascinating. De la Torre’s study (2005), CCNHP’s *Brief History* leaflet, and the film *Chaco* (2002) cite this consulting body as the American Indian Consultation Committee (AICC). There is no further mention of the AICC anywhere on the Park’s website, nor in the reviewed literature. The matter becomes further complicated as a 2006 book edited by Steven Lekson references a body called the Native American Advisory Board

(NAAB) (Lekson 2006: 26). Presuming that they were the same entity renamed, I asked rangers at the Park to clarify the proper name of the consulting body. Rangers were unable to answer my question, and I was directed to Dabney Ford, Chief of Cultural Resources for the Park. She stated that the official name for the group is the Native American Consultation Committee for Chaco (NACC) (Ford, personal communication, March 5, 2015).

According to Ford, the NACC includes tribes that are recognized as affiliated via NAGPRA, and any other interested tribes who self-affiliate. They are mostly a “reactive” body, giving feedback to CCNHP about proposals, decisions, and research requests. She did note that the NACC had requested to be put in touch with researchers once they had concluded their work, as they were involved in the initial review process, but had difficulty getting access to the results of the work. CCNHP was able to facilitate those conversations (Ford, personal communication, March 5, 2015).

If de la Torre’s study is correct in positing that Native American consultants have “taken the lead role in shaping Park policy,” it is not apparent to visitors at Chaco. From this statement, as well as Ford’s statement and other references to the committee, its existence and curatorial input are evident. However, visitors do not have access to authorship of the trail guides or Wayside Exhibit signs that they read, nor do they have any visual indicator of any curator aside from the NPS at Chaco.

UNESCO

In 1987, CCNHP became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, gaining yet another co-curator. The Vision Statement addresses this move directly, stating that, “the park

will have a professionally trained staff that is diverse, knowledgeable, and committed to helping preserve this extraordinary World Heritage Site for generations to come (CCNHP 2007).” Chaco was nominated for inscription because of its “universal” value (UNESCO 2014). According to the World Heritage Convention, “*outstanding universal value* is ‘taken to mean cultural and / or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity (de la Torre 2005:76).” Unlike other co-curators and narratives, Chaco’s UNESCO status is very visible, although some visitors I spoke with were unaware of the fact. There is a sign in front of the Visitor Center, and all of the Park brochures have a UNESCO emblem on them.

Clearly, being a UNESCO site is an achievement. But aside from the additional distinction given by World Heritage status, it does not appear that gaining UNESCO as a co-curator has altered anything at the Park, nor is it a legal asset. During a conversation with a Park ranger about oil drilling near the Park, I asked if the UNESCO status helped deter or shut down any drilling operations. According to the ranger, the UNESCO status is simply an “honor” and has no legal teeth. Obviously though, it is a tool for garnering public interest and awareness in situations that threaten the Park.

UNESCO is based upon goals of education and preservation. In fact, “it is often said that the E (for education) comes first (Meskell 2013:485).” As a museum space, the NPS at CCNHP invests time and energy in providing interpretive material for visitors. It also provides interpretation in a way that visitors can easily choose to either use or ignore it, and also creates a forum for discussions and questions to be asked. Chaco is an informal learning environment where nearly all of the visitors are highly motivated to

learn. It is also a place where individual interpretation is privileged, making a direct link between CCNHP's desired idiosyncratic relationship and UNESCO universal value.

Chaco Canyon is not simply a prehistoric site administered by the NPS. It has a varied and dynamic history full of different curators with diverse curatorial approaches. Today, these curators and their impact on the canyon are condensed and streamlined into subtle augmentations of a prehistoric narrative that allows the Great Houses to stand out for visitors.

Visitors and Learning

Visitors come to Chaco with a variety of prior knowledge about the place/space (Roschelle 1995). As visitors interact with CCNHP employees and the provided interpretive material, they can learn about ancient architecture, prehistoric climates, and current archaeological theories at the same time that they touch the walls of kivas, see the Milky Way, and internalize their own experience of Chaco. Because visitors all have their own background, knowledge, and expectations about Chaco, they also engage in interpreting what they see. The information presented by CCNHP can be accepted, rejected, or molded to fit each visitor's personal interpretation of the canyon and its ruins. However, it is important to note that if a visitor has very little prior knowledge about archaeology or the southwest, it is more difficult for that visitor to think critically about narratives and experience. Using or not using, accepting or rejecting CCNHP's interpretive material and its narrative; a fascinating relationship is created between the Park's interpretive processes and actual visitor experience.

Anthropologist Eric Gable works at heritage and historic sites in the United States, examining narratives and possibilities for visitor meaning making (Gable 2013; Handler and Gable 1997). According to Gable, visitors and curators should ideally work together in museums to create meaning. Gable brands this kind of dual interpretation as “democratic” (Gable 2013:110). In his argument, museums should not approach learning as a top-down system where the all-knowing museum spoon-feeds a “real” and “true” version of history to a passive public. Rather, it is a give and take where both the museum and the community reason together to learn about the past. However, for the visitor who has little or no previous knowledge of a subject, the information presented and created during their time in the museum becomes the visitor’s total knowledge of the subject in that moment. Therefore, the information that is *not* presented is just as important as the information that *is*.

All museums make careful decisions about what version of the past, or what kind of story, they want to tell. This is especially relevant in history museums and heritage sites, where the version of history presented says a great deal about the current political and moral views of the establishment’s society. No matter how many different narratives a museum wishes to present, the information must be pared down and streamlined for visitors. Of the multiple histories available for telling at Chaco, the NPS has chosen to focus on prehistory, and for valid reasons. At Chaco, visitors come because of the massive Great Houses throughout the canyon. Archaeologist Stephen Lekson states, “Chaco is all about Great Houses. That is, Chaco *today* is all about Great Houses. There would be no Chaco Culture National Historic Park, nor Chaco Project, nor Chaco Synthesis Project, without Great Houses. Great Houses are Chaco’s attraction and central

matter (Lekson 2006:67).” Lekson is absolutely correct. Potential visitors, whether they research their visit use the Internet, guide books, or hear about the canyon through word of mouth, will eventually see pictures of Great Houses. For visitors, the architecture they see at Chaco is staggering compared to other southwest archaeological sites, and it centers on the Great Houses. It is therefore appropriate that CCNHP devote time and care to interpret the Great Houses for visitors.

Nevertheless, Great Houses are not all Chaco has to offer. There are Archaic sites that are well-documented by archaeologists. Navajo and Apachean peoples who lived in or moved through the canyon after the Chacoans had moved on interacted with the canyon and its previous occupants in multiple ways. Ranchers and excavators, such as Richard Wetherill, lived and worked in the canyon in the late 1800s, building their own structures and making a mark on the canyon. The University of New Mexico erected several large structures and hogans during the 1930s to serve their field school (Gifford and Morris 1985; Joiner 1992; Western National Parks Association N.D.). During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) constructed two camps in the canyon and did building conservation, reconstruction, and environmental erosion control (Brugge 1980; SRI Foundation 2010). Multiple excavations have taken place in the canyon throughout the 20th century. What these additional histories of Chaco Canyon have in common is their physical invisibility. No structures from these additional histories are visible to visitors in the canyon; only the Wetherill Cemetery and historic period rock art is visible.

Visitors are focused on the Great Houses, and so the Great Houses are what CCNHP expends time interpreting. Even when visitors have the opportunity to see

something aside from the Great Houses, I observed that they usually were not interested. Most of the visitors I interviewed had not been to the Wetherill Cemetery, and some did not know what it was. During International Archaeology Day, I observed visitors paying close attention to prehistoric artifact displays, dinosaur displays, and current archaeologist's tools, while the display with historic photographs and books was passed by.

Still, Chaco's public image is focused on the Great Houses through travel guides, the Park's website, and archaeological reports. CCNHP has curated the image of Great Houses and a prehistoric experience, visitors then expect this, and CCNHP delivers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The creation of this project stemmed from a prior interest in understanding stakeholding at Chaco Canyon. In researching this, two sources stood out which culminated in the creation of this current project. The first is a study published in 2005 by de la Torre, MacLean, and Myers (cited as de la Torre). This study examines the various past and present stakeholders at CCNHP, and the values that each stakeholder places on the canyon. Broadly, de la Torre discusses “the emergence and evolution of these values” and the way that concurrent stakeholders articulate these values through the shaping of physical and narrative space at CCNHP (de la Torre 2005:71). Additionally, de la Torre spends a great deal of time discussing histories at Chaco that are not actively narrated by the Park Service. It was through this source that I became more aware of Richard Wetherill’s role, early excavations, and the evolution of the canyon into a federally administrated National Park (de la Torre 2005:7-9).

The second source of interest was CCNHP’s 2007 Centennial Strategy. In the Vision Statement portion of the document, CCNHP articulates the goal “that visitors are not confined to tours nor kept away from the sites by ropes or chains and that they are able to develop their own (idiosyncratic) relationships with this place (CCNHP 2007).” Thus, visitors are invited to engage in their own meaning making within the space of Chaco.

In linking de la Torre’s synthesis of values, and CCNHP’s goals as a stakeholder and administrator, the possibility of Chaco as a museum space becomes fascinating. If visitors are to create an idiosyncratic relationship with sites, and yet must do so through the structure of value-holding stakeholders or curators, what sort of relationship is

actually created? To unpack these questions, I look to critical museum theory, tourism literature, and heritage site studies.

John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2000) are concerned with the question of how visitors learn in museums. Although formal learning is typically thought of as the acquiring of empirical facts, museums are conceived of as informal learning environments. In this book, they argue that museum learning is fundamentally different from formalized classroom learning, and cannot be measured in the same manner. They propose the Contextual Model of Learning, which affords museums visitor three areas of individual consideration before passing judgment on their learning. “The Contextual Model involves three overlapping contexts: the *personal*, the *sociocultural*, and the *physical*. Learning is the process/product of the interactions between these three contexts (Falk and Dierking 2000:10).” Thus, for learning in the museum to be effective, it must encompass these three contexts. They further state that, “meaningful learning results when a person is able to actively construct and find personal meaning within a situation (Falk and Dierking 2000:41).” At CCNHP, these overlapping contexts, facilitated by written and oral interpretation, allow visitors to create idiosyncratic relationship with the sites if they desire. Falk and Dierking draw a parallel between personal meaning and learning, which actively figures into the analysis of visitors’ response to questions about their relationship with the sites.

Gaea Leinhardt and Karen Knutson (2004) take visitor studies and operationalize them in various museums. They conducted ethnographic studies of visitors in museums observing ways in which visitors interact with exhibits. This methodology allows them to appreciate what visitors are seeing, at least insofar as visitors are verbally articulating

their thoughts. Leinhardt and Knutson's work is useful in creating an evaluation of different methods for studying visitors, and how experience in museums equate with learning, or in this case, meaning making.

Because 2016 is the National Park Service's Centennial, it is worth noting how the NPS initially began interpretation. In 1941, NPS director Newton Drury asked journalist and writer Tilden Freeman to become familiar with the National Parks and write a book that addressed public relations and interpretation. His work was accepted in the NPS system, and Freeman continued to write for them. In 1957, Freeman wrote *Interpreting Our Heritage*. In it, he points out six principles of interpretation that are crucial for interpreters to bear in mind while doing their jobs. Three of these principles are pertinent to this study:

- Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
- The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
- Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.

These principles can be applied to both the written and oral interpretation that happens at Chaco (Tilden 2007: 34-35). The first principle aligns with Falk and Dierkings' argument concerning visitors needing to find a personal connection in order to have a meaningful or learning experience. The subsequent principles point out that interpretation should be thought provoking, and that it should actively work towards interpreting more than just one story for visitors. Interpretation should be inclusive and acknowledge alternative and additional histories.

Other museum scholars have turned their attention to critically evaluating the social discourse and power structures that create and maintain interpretive narratives. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) offers anthropological and sociological evaluation of narratives within museums. Through given narratives, visitors are offered possibilities for creating relationships with the artifacts they encounter. In discussing narrative, she takes relationships a step further. By giving agency to the museum staff, the visitor, and the subject (artifact), Hooper-Greenhill echoes George Hein (1998) in her creation of constructivist meaning making, sometimes in circumstances where both empirical and culturally relative learning coincide. (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 103). However, despite the agency that visitors and visible curators actively exercise, applying this reveals the master narrative of prehistory that is disseminated, similar to Hooper-Greenhill's definition.

“Master narratives are created by presenting a large-scale picture, by eliminating complicating and contradictory detail, by disguising difference, by hiding those elements that don't quite fit, and by emphasizing those that do. Unity rather than difference is emphasized; gaps that emerge when the story doesn't quite work are filled somehow, and those things that would have shown a different interpretation of events are excluded.” [Hooper-Greenhill 2000:24]

In this study, close reading of CCNHP's trail guides and Wayside Exhibits, and observations of site tours demonstrates the master narrative or prehistory that is privileged at the Park.

CCNHP is not a traditional museum, but is not the first non-museum space to be treated as one. Speaking of Chaco, a scholar from Santa Clara Pueblo said, “today, it feels different even from the way it felt those thirty-some years ago when I first walked

there. It is more like a museum, where Don't Touch and Don't Enter are commonly posted signs (Swentzell 2004:52).” Richard Handler and Eric Gables study heritage sites in the United States, examining master narratives illustrating how heritage sites’ communities are affected by that narrative (Handler and Gable 1997; Gable 2013). As a heritage site with a large community encompassing visitors, Native American tribes, the state of New Mexico and the southwest region, Handler and Gables’ work is applicable to CCNHP. Handler and Gable study Colonial Williamsburg, providing useful insight into visitor experience, master narratives, and the perception of authenticity.

At Colonial Williamsburg, visitors who do not have much prior knowledge of colonial American history will see authentic history through the presentation created by the site’s management. This authenticity and history is defined by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s mission statement:

“The Colonial Williamsburg story of a revolutionary city tells how diverse peoples, having different and sometimes conflicting ambitions, evolved into a society that valued liberty and equality. Americans cherish these values as a birthright, even when their promise remains unfulfilled.”
[www.history.org]

Colonial Williamsburg is in essence a preserved/recreated time capsule that embodies American ideals and their roots. The visitor is promised a truly patriotic experience that will leave them in possession of the facts, but also in possession of their own meaning, or experience. Visitors will see the authentically recreated city and learn what a 1770 town would have looked like (within reason), but will also come away with an intangible, deeply personal knowledge of what American ideals mean to them. Therefore, not only is history important at Colonial Williamsburg, but also close attention

to social history. Handler and Gable discuss how curators and visitors enter into dialogue to shape that social history, which in turn shapes perceptions of authenticity and truth. Prior to the Civil Rights movement, the social history narrative of Williamsburg under-represented slavery (Handler, Gable, and Lawson 1992; Martin 1973). Once a dialogue had been opened between Williamsburg's curators and the community, social history began to change. Handler and Gables' work can be translated to CCNHP as a way of thinking critically about representation and transparency in narrative. At Chaco, whether or not Native American consultants/curators wish to be visible or not, it is important for non-Native visitors to know that consultation takes place.

Historian Tiya Miles makes a similar critique at the Chief Vann House in Georgia. She comments on non-Native Georgian's appropriation and narration of a Native history at the Vann House, and eliding the history of slavery there (Miles 2010). At Chaco, a similar critical approach can be helpful in observing *who* is creating narratives, and to whom it is being presented. Particular narratives can elide the stories of certain aspects of history, and the way a narrative is presented can inform us about the narrators.

Museum scholar George Hein asks, "Do museum exhibitions show the world 'as it really is,' or do they represent convenient social conventions, or do they provide phenomena for the visitor to interpret as they will (Hein 1998:16)?" Whatever the case, it is certain that curators, and subsequently, interpreters, have a lot of power in the creation and representation of history. "Who has the power to create, to make visible, and to legitimate meanings and values (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:19)?" Indeed, curators and interpreters hold a lot of power in the narrative creation and representation of events.

Today, museums have (hopefully) come a long way from the trickle-down learning methods of days past. Different types of museums have embraced different and appropriate ways of fostering informal learning. In his work on museum education, Hein discusses what a museum's *theory of knowledge* is, and ties it to a *learning theory* (Figure 2.1). Any given museum's theory of knowledge explains what the museum believes to be knowledge: whether it is socially constructed, or a hard fact that exists without human interpretation. In turn, a museum operationalizes its theory of knowledge through its learning theory, or how visitors construct meaning: through their own personal experience, or through retaining facts (Hein 1998).

In science centers and natural history museums, knowledge is something that exists outside of the individual, and can be taught and learned incrementally. This is in sharp contrast to places like art museums, where knowledge can be and is created within an individual. Science centers and natural history museums are actively marketed as learning centers, and both the curator and the visitor are aware of this. On the other end of the spectrum, art museums promote themselves as experiential spaces where learning "facts" is not necessarily on the agenda of either the curator or the visitor. It is clear, then, that museums are places where knowledge is manufactured on two levels: one, as places where learning takes place, and two, as places where learning is managed based upon the ideology, structure, and purpose of the institution.

Where, then, do history museums and heritage centers fall on Hein's chart? History museums are especially important to evaluate critically because they are the considered in Western society as the keepers of heritage: the places where national, cultural, and communal narratives are disseminated to insiders and outsiders alike.

Because historical accounts are relative and multi-vocal, history museums face the enormous task of deciding *which* account(s) to narrate.

At present, Chaco's interpretive material denotes an incremental learning theory, where knowledge exists outside the visitor. Written interpretation like trail guides and Wayside Exhibit signs are didactic and expository, landing squarely in the top left quadrant of Hein's chart. As visitors engage with these materials, they learn facts about construction dates, masonry styles, and design. However, these materials are not forced upon visitors, and they are free to ignore them completely, or use them only when interested in a certain area marked on the trail. CCNHP also employs interpretive programs where rangers lead tours, use props, and talk with visitors about what they are seeing. The use of props, such as a recreation of a cylindrical jar from Pueblo Bonito, or a photo of turquoise strands excavated from Chetro Ketl, help visitors see beyond the walls of the structure to the people that created them and the artifacts found within. In this case, learning is a discovery experience, where knowledge still exists outside the learner, as the visitor can handle and examine objects for themselves.

Chaco works as a museum space, but ultimately visitors are tourists as well. What can be construed as tourism? Tourism theorist Chris Rojek argues that, "travel experience involves mobility through an internal landscape which is sculptured by personal experience and cultural influences (Rojek 2000:53)." Another tourism theorist, Erve Chambers, says, "Tourism shall be constituted of any kind of travel activity that includes the self-conscious experience of another place (2010: 6)." Dean MacCannell, arguably one of the leading authorities on tourists and tourism, argues that tourism provides a way of looking at class, society, and ways of being in and out of place

(MacCannell 1999). All of these definitions focus on people being within, and having experiences with, different places, spaces, and scapes.

Applying tourism literature to Chaco, two elements became very interesting. “Markers” of Chaco, and the ways that these markers influence and help construct a visitor’s interpretation of Chaco. MacCannell posits that tourist attractions are signs, and calls the visual imagery signifying them markers (MacCannell 1999:110). These markers, frequently seen before a visitor ever reaches their destination, influence visitors’ perception of what a place *is*, and what it looks like. At Chaco, these prior markers include images on the Park’s website, guidebooks, descriptions from other travelers, documentaries on television, road signs, and the road into Chaco. Within the Park, *in situ* markers indicate to visitors that they are within Chaco. These markers could include Fajada Butte, the Visitor Center, or the landscape.

These markers help shape the visitor’s interpretation of Chaco. Interpretation begins long before a visitor ever sets foot in the Park, and prior knowledge and expectation in turn influences interpretation while in the Park. MacCannell argues that tourism, at least as far as this study is concerned, is about the privileges of the leisure class, and is rooted in postmodernism. He says, “for moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles (1999:3).” Chaco is narrated through its prehistoric elements, presenting the perception of authentic Chaco through prehistoric makers, i.e., the Great Houses.

This in turn leads to the question of what Chaco *is*. As both a place and a space, it incorporates qualities of both phenomena. What visitors, or tourists, make of Chaco is important for this study. MacCannell discusses tourist use of sites, appealing to San

Francisco for an example. He states, “The sightseer may visit the Golden Gate Bridge, seeing it as a piece of information about San Francisco which he must possess if he is to make his being in San Francisco real, substantial or complete (MacCannell 1999:112).”

Visitors at Chaco, particularly ones who have limited time in the canyon, are frequently directed to Pueblo Bonito as *the* site to see if they only have time for one thing.

MacCannell continues, “There is a second possibility. The sightseer perceives the bridge as only a piece of San Francisco and unworthy in itself of his attention. (MacCannell 1999:112).” I also observed this occurring with visitors who stated that they did not visit the Wetherill Cemetery because they did not associate historical events with the prehistoric Great Houses they were engaging with.

Visitors do not *see* Chaco Canyon any more than MacCannell’s sightseer *sees* San Francisco. Instead, visitors see Pueblo Bonito, Fajada Butte, petroglyphs, and the Milky Way. All of these elements can add up to a visitor believing that he or she has seen Chaco Canyon. Not seeing one of these sites could leave a visitor feeling deprived of an authentic Chaco experience. However, not seeing supposedly unrelated sites, like the Wetherill Cemetery, do not leave visitors feeling that they have neglected to see part of Chaco. In this case, seeing only Pueblo Bonito or Fajada Butte is not in itself important. One must see a list of specific sites, sites that they have prior expectations of seeing from guidebooks, the Internet, or other sources. MacCannell creates this progression (1999:131):

Sight → [Marker → Sight]

At Chaco, this could read:

Actual Pueblo Bonito → Symbolizes → Chaco Canyon

All of these site/sight expectations must be met in order to create the Chaco experience that a visitor desires.

Chambers argues that tourists are “seeking to recover pieces of the past through tourism (Chambers 2010:67).” Chambers also says that, “Tourism is one way in which people come to express their relationships with nature (Chambers 2010:75).” According to his designations of nature tourism, the visitors I encountered at Chaco fell into his categories of embeddedness and education. Embedded tourism creates a situation where the visitor is isolated from the rest of his human community in order to “acquire an identity from nature (Chambers 2010:75).” Educational tourism’s goal is to learn about something specific through a certain view of knowledge. Visitors at Chaco articulated both of these goals when surveyed, some stating that they wanted to find a more natural and peaceful environment to rejuvenate, and others that they wanted to learn about Native American culture (Appendix IV).

General tourism in the southwest has a very rich history that has drawn people since the 19th century. As a geographic and conceptual space, the southwest appeared to be an un-modern and undeveloped portion of the country, which drew visitors from the east via Harvey Tours and similar excursions (Frow *in* Riley 1994). This type of early tourism created an event where non-Natives could observe Native people and their cultures *in situ*, putting Native communities under a colonizing and romanticizing gaze.

These tours created an incorrect sense of Native American authenticity for tourists.

Michael Riley states that:

“In the Southwest of the twentieth century, the spatialization of culture is displayed in an endemic mode of appropriation wherein ethnically derived forms are used to construct romantic nostalgias in the form of specialized histories linked to conceptions of place – histories for the vicarious experience of other places and times that we call “tourism.” [Riley 1994: 224]

In this instance, Native bodies are linked to nostalgia and history, and associated with a specific place. Because Chaco is a site where non-Native visitors come to learn about Native American history, it may fall prey to these pitfalls.

Commentary on southwest tourism fits nicely into critical indigenous theory. Historian Jean O’Brien takes this up in her book, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (2010). O’Brien looks at historical early American documents to argue that descriptions written of colonial activities and colonist / Native relationship has had a lasting impact on the way Americans perceive of Native communities.

“More specifically for my purposes, these scripts inculcated particular stories about the Indian past, present, and future into their audiences. The collective story these texts told insisted that non-Indians held exclusive sway over modernity, denied modernity to Indians, and in the process created a narrative of Indian extinction that has stubbornly remained in the consciousness and unconsciousness of Americans.” [O’Brien 2010: xiii]

O’Brien argues here that Natives can never be modern insofar as historical narratives (and subsequent contemporary narratives) are concerned because these narratives were constructed by non-Indians. She also argues that these false narratives were created by

non-Indians for the specific purpose of writing Indians out of existence. At Chaco, the staff of CCNHP actively consult with Native American groups, and yet this is not readily transparent to visitors. This could have the unfortunate effect of creating a false perception of contemporary Native Americans for non-Native visitors.

While asking visitors about their personal connection with Chaco Canyon, I consistently witnessed cultural appropriation and non-critical remarks about “culture,” and heritage that assimilated and erased modern Native American presence and knowledge of Chaco. Of course, the ability to feel a personal connection with Chaco does not necessarily indicate a simultaneous belief of ownership of Chaco, Native culture, or indigenous spaces. However, these relationships nonetheless illustrate how non-Native tourists, focusing on prehistory, can fail to grant Native American communities modernity and legitimacy, as argued by O’Brien.

No study of Chaco Canyon can be done without at least a rudimentary understanding of its archaeology. As the capstone to the Chaco Synthesis Project, Stephen Lekson (2006) provides a series of papers on current scholarly thought on the Chaco Phenomenon (Strutin 1994: 9-11). In conjunction with Lekson’s academic work, other scholars such as David Grant Noble (1984, 2004), Gwinn R. Vivian (2002), Patricia Crown (2009), Wirt Wills (2001, 2009), and Ruth Van Dyke (2007) flesh out the value that Chaco holds for archaeologists. Additionally, Kathryn Gabriel’s documentation of Marietta Wetherill’s life history gives another point of view from which to view Chaco’s history of excavation (1992). Ramona Rollins-Griffin’s memoirs about her life in the canyon as a trader’s wife also contributes another perspective to historic life at Chaco (1971).

Chaco's literature is full of academic archaeological work, and it is more difficult to find written information from Native scholars and communities. Noble's book, *In Search of Chaco Canyon: New Approaches to an Archaeological Enigma* (2004), has three chapters in which Native scholars talk about Chaco and its past and present importance. Additionally, *Chaco* (2002), a film narrated entirely by affiliated Native tribal members, provides insight into Chaco as a space that is more than simply an archaeological treasure. Although both Noble's book and the film is available for purchase in the book store, and the segments of the film are shown in the Visitor Center's auditorium, these represent a very small portion of the overall available literature on, and interpretation of, Chaco Canyon.

The online Chaco Research Archive maintained by the University of Virginia, and the Chaco Canyon Archive maintained by the NPS contain thousands of artifacts, texts, and images that have been useful in researching historic structures that no longer exist within the canyon. The NPS's website for CCNHP also contains records, photographs, and information about the Park's administrative history.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Fieldwork

Chaco Culture National Historic Park is administered by the National Park Service, which for purposes of this study, I argue effectively establishes them as the head curator. However, there are many co-curators at Chaco who help steward and care for the canyon. Throughout this study I will refer to the NPS, Native American tribes, archaeologists, and other stakeholders as curators. This term is specifically designed to suit museum professionals in a traditional museum setting, and it is arguable that the term steward or administrator would better fit the unique situation at CCNHP. However, while affiliated tribes and archaeologists do steward the canyon, and the NPS act as administrator for the Park, the Park functions much like a museum, and by extension, the stewarding entities can be regarded as co-curators. According to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), museums serve the public and community, and work with schools as educators (American Alliance of Museums 2015). Chaco serves the public and its community as a place for education, recreation, and preservation. Its community includes the NPS, Native American communities, visitors, New Mexicans, and – as UNESCO would have it – the entire world. Chaco also holds “collections” of sites and artifacts that are displayed for the public. These collections need to be curated: researched, preserved, interpreted, and appropriately cared for (AAM 2009). While many artifacts and documents are stored off-site in other museums and repositories, such as the Hibben Center on the University of New Mexico campus, the sites are part of the collection that remains *in situ*. Under the direction of the NPS, all of the curators I discuss in this study work together in some manner to preserve and interpret the sites and artifacts of Chaco.

Hooper-Greenhill states that, “curators display objects in groups along with associated images and texts, and thereby produce interpretations for visitors (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:124).” It is clear from the overall setup of the Park that CCNHP facilitates visitor use of sites and creates interpretive text for them. The NPS is also the entity through which researchers must go to gain access to Chaco’s “collections”: the sites in the canyon and the artifacts and documents stored offsite. Therefore, using Hooper-Greenhill’s and the AAM’s definitions of curators, I utilize the term curator to refer to the NPS, CCNHP, Native American tribes, archaeologists, and other stewards.

A critical evaluation of any museum includes a close look at its mission statement. Mission statements are the cornerstone of a museum’s funding opportunities, collections management, and educational goals. Mission statements identify the museum’s values, collecting policy, intended audience, and learning theory. In 2007, the NPS at Chaco Canyon issued a Centennial Strategy, which serves much the same purpose. This strategy includes a Vision Statement that identifies a valuing of science and preservation (de la Torre 2005), dedication to the conservation of archaeological sites in the canyon, the hope that visitors will continue to come to and return to Chaco; and that visitors will be allowed to create independent “idiosyncratic” relationships with the sites (CCNHP 2007).

This is a very broad mission statement, but the two basic elements – education about ancient Chaco’s zenith and making a space for idiosyncratic relationships – are complementary. CCNHP focuses nearly all of its narration on the Great Houses and the ancient Chacoans, offering trail guides, Wayside Exhibits, ranger-led tours, films, as well as a variety of literature in the bookstore. The visitors I surveyed typically indicated that

they were there to learn about southwest history and culture, and this aligns with CCNHP's focus on interpreting the Great Houses.

Of course, not all of Chaco's visitors are there for the Great Houses. Some visitors indicated that Chaco was a place to hike, camp, and look at the stars. Others, typically repeat visitors, said that they had liked the more ephemeral qualities they felt Chaco had, such as it being spiritual, magical, or special, and had come back in an effort to recapture those qualities (Appendix IV). Visitors who fall in this category may never pick up a trail guide, attend a tour, or read the signs, because these interpretive materials do not help fulfill their reasons for visiting. However, CCNHP's second goal of creating a space where personal relationships can be made caters to these visitors. None of the interpretive materials are overwhelming, and can easily be avoided. This low-impact interpretation fosters a space where personal, or idiosyncratic, relationships can be created.

A visitor creating an individual relationship with the sites, the canyon, and the packaged experience at large seems standard in the sense that visitors to any museum internalize their experience. CCNHP does not elaborate directly upon what it means by "idiosyncratic relationships", but does contextualize it with a discussion of how visitors will individually interact with well-preserved sites. The Vision Statement combines concrete visitor actions such as examining timbers with experiential actions like wandering unconfined. Hence, Chaco becomes both a *place* – a physical location in New Mexico, and a *space* – an experience or overall feeling evoked by or felt while visiting Chaco. Concerning this phenomenon in tourism, Erve Chambers writes:

“Places are specific, visually recognizable terrain – landscapes, ecosystems, monuments, villages, hotels, and shopping malls. *Spaces*, on the other hand, represent the ways in which places are occupied, and they might be physical spaces, but they might also be more experiential spaces, such as emotional, fantasy, or sacred spaces.” [Chambers 2010:116]

During my fieldwork, many visitors indicated why they had chosen to come to Chaco, and also that they had a personal relationship with it (Appendix IV). I would argue that all repeat visitors, and all those who stated they had a personal connection with Chaco, treat Chaco simultaneously as a place and a space. I also participate in this trend, delineating CCNHP as a physically bounded place stewarded by the NPS. Chaco Canyon, on the other hand, is a more loosely defined experiential space that does not have specified boundaries. This again is replicated in Park literature, which discusses Chaco Canyon – a physical canyon – as the center of Chaco Culture, a much broader tradition that includes Chacoan outliers and trade networks (CCNHP 2014; GB Cornucopia, personal communication Nov.1 2014).

There is a trope articulated by visitors, rangers, and broad Chaco survey literature. It is the idea that Chaco is never going to answer all of our questions (Svare 2015). Within this concept, Chaco becomes almost anthropomorphized and agentic, keeping secrets from those who would try to understand more about life there in the past. This silence could be for any number of reasons depending upon who is expressing this opinion. However, it is a very prevalent notion that people will never know everything about Chaco, and yet researchers and interpreters continue studying it.

Chapter five deals with ranger-led interpretive programs in depth, but here I wish to introduce the subject in order to illustrate the typical process of meaning-making at

Chaco. Site tours, supplemental programs, and general interactions with rangers, are more dynamic forms of interpretation that create conversations between visitors and curators. These programs begin with educator monologues, or lecture style teaching (Edwards and Mercer 1987; Lemke 1990). At the conclusion of tours, rangers typically moved into an Initiate, Respond, and Evaluate (IRE) style (Wellington and Osborn 2001; Wells 1999). During this time, rangers assess what prior knowledge their audience has of Chaco, archaeology, and the southwest through a question and answer session. From this groundwork, a conversation begins, or a reflective discourse (Scott et. al. 2006; van Zee and Minstrell 1997). These conversations are when visitors and curators work together to co-construct meaning.

Linguist Mikhail Bakhtin posits that “all real and integral understanding is actively responsive, and constitutes nothing other than the initial preparatory stage of a response (in whatever form it may be actualized) (Emerson and Holquist 1986 69).” If this is the case, then all visitors are agentive listeners at some point during the conversation, and are continually formulating responses and questions to the interpretation they are hearing. What visitors say in response (and what curators say when they respond to visitors) is part of, “a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterance (Emerson and Holquist 1986: 69).” Every utterance or response builds upon the previous ones, leading Bakhtin to state that, “our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others’ words (Bakhtin cited in Emerson and Holquist 1986:89).”

Hooper-Greenhill takes the Bakhtinian concept of utterances and applies it to museum conversations, calling it the hermeneutic circle (Hooper-Greenhill 2003). This

circular conversation occurs when “a dialogue is established between the whole and the part, the past and the present, which enables continual checking and rechecking, revising ideas, trying new ones and rejecting those that do not work (Hooper-Greenhill 2003:566).” In museums, this hermeneutic circle is a space where curators can give visitors information, visitors can formulate opinions, and connections can be made within this museum community to help the museum better serve its public. Such was the case at the Thomas Jefferson home and site of Monticello, where Eric Gable also did research. Gable described the “democratic” conversations that visitors and curators engaged in to continuously update the social history that is portrayed there (Gable 2006). Conversations are not just between curators and visitors, but also between co-curators who consult and collaborate to create exhibitions, themes, and narratives. At Chaco, this hermeneutic circle, or conversation, includes the Native American Consultation Committee for Chaco, which aids in stewarding the canyon and making sure that the concerns of Native communities are heard and considered.

During tours and other ranger-led programs at Chaco, rangers facilitate conversations between themselves and the visitors. These are not one-way conversations between uneducated visitors and the informed ranger, but rather between a group of visitors with various experiences, areas of expertise, and viewpoints and a ranger who acts as a listening ear for CCNHP. If visitors can provide information and interpretation about the Park that is pertinent, the Park will listen. During several of the tours and programs I attended, the ranger would cite previous tours where a participant, typically one of Native American heritage, would offer information about rock art, kivas, or Chaco in general (CCNHP 2014; Svare 2015). Rangers retold these experiences to their groups

in an effort to demonstrate that there exists a conversation between curators and visitors, and that dialogue between the Chaco and its community (visitors, researchers, tribes, NPS) is open and continuous. However, even if visitors are told that Native American groups are participating in the conversation, visitors cannot *directly* hear Native American voices; not through tours, written interpretation, or the overall structure of what visitors are and are not allowed to see and experience.

Hooper-Greenhill states that “the process of constructing meaning is like holding a conversation. No interpretation is ever fully completed. There is always more to say, and what is said may always be changed. The hermeneutic circle remains open to these possibilities and, in this sense, meaning is never static (Hooper-Greenhill 2003:566).” Given that CCNHP’s tour structure seems to embrace conversations, and that the larger interpretive feel of Chaco negates any end to conversation, it is possible that in the future visitors at CCNHP will be aware of a more transparent list of interlocutors that they may converse with.

Fieldwork

Prior to conducting fieldwork at CCNHP, I went through the University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure that human interaction during the study, i.e. visitor surveys, was conducted ethically and appropriately. Visitors remain completely anonymous throughout my study. During the survey process, no demographic information was requested, and the surveys do not carry names or other identifiers. Park rangers, unless giving specific, solicited information, remain anonymous, although it may be possible for rangers to identify one another from this study.

Permission was also obtained through the National Park Service's Research Proposal process. This process, which also included necessary permissions from the IRB board, established a Park contact between myself and CCNHP. I met with and reported to my contact regularly prior to and during fieldwork. The contact was also kept apprised of the study's progress once the analysis phase was underway. Per the stipulations of the NPS's Research Permit, a copy of this document will be on file with CCNHP, and will include a record of field notes and photographs taken during the study (Svare 2015).

I have identified two main goals contained in the 2007 Vision Statement. First, to educate visitors about ancient Chaco and Great Houses, and second, to sustain a space where visitors can create an idiosyncratic, or personal, relationship with the sites. To analyze these two goals and look at the relationship between Park interpretive material and actual visitor experience, I looked at two areas of interpretation and separately at visitor comments. The two areas of interpretive analysis include a close reading of CCNHP's trail guides and Wayside Exhibit signs, and observations of ranger-led tours at Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl. I look at visitor comments primarily through the Visitor Survey (Appendix IV).

I conducted fieldwork at Chaco on weekends during September, October, and November of 2014. During this time, I went on ranger-led tours through sites, attended special events, talked informally with visitors, spoke with interpreters about their tours, and gathered surveys at Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl. Interacting with tourists during various stages of their experience at Chaco and talking with rangers about the behind-the-scenes workings of the Park gave me a more realistic picture of Chaco as a museum space and experience. I was able to ascertain what information visitors have access to,

what visitors learn, how they believe they learn, and if visitors believe that they have created a personal, or idiosyncratic, relationship with these sites.

My fieldwork included talking with rangers and visitors, and giving visitors surveys to evaluate their experience at Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl. These surveys were short, and questions were structured to be both quantitative and qualitative. That way, visitors could mark either “yes” or “no” and not elaborate if they did not wish to. Taking the survey typically took visitors about three minutes. During this time, visitors could rest on benches near the Great Kivas in both sites, which allowed them to be more comfortable. A copy of the survey instrument is included as Appendix II.

While surveying tourists and speaking with rangers, I wore an identification card so that visitors could easily recognize me as a researcher. Initially, this resulted in formal interactions when I approached visitors about taking a survey. If the visitor consented to take the survey, there were typically two responses. Some visitors completed the survey quickly and left without speaking to me, thus only allowing me to learn what was on their survey. These individuals frequently did not elaborate on their yes or no answers. The second response was much more useful to both the visitor and myself. Many visitors stayed and talked with me about their impressions of Chaco, the tours and guidebooks, and about my research. These discussions were the most useful source of information, because we were able to use the survey as a starting point for a conversation about Chaco, and for them to ask questions about the survey. For instance, many visitors asked about Richard Wetherill, leading them to re-read trail signs and the trail guide. Many asked what else they were missing by only spending a few hours in the park. These

conversations allowed me to flesh out both the surveys and my previous observations of visitors in order to gain a more qualitative body of data.

CCNHP's visitorship throughout the year encompasses a broad demographic. During the summer, it is not unusual to see families, students, and international tourists on a daily basis. Many of these visitors reserve space in the Gallo Campground and stay for several days, exploring the park more thoroughly and taking advantage of the excellent backcountry trails. The summer is also the park's peak tourist season (NPS 2014). During the winter, when I conducted my research, Chaco has a much narrower visitor demographic. During my time there, the majority of visitors I spoke with appeared to be 40-70 years of age, and mostly confined their activities to sites along the interpretive loop road. While the summer tourists have many hours of daylight, and are not concerned with leaving the park at the end of the day, visitors during the winter months must pay close attention to these circumstances. As the weather became cooler, fewer visitors camped, and after Daylight Savings Time ended in November of 2014, even fewer visitors spent the night, even in RVs. By mid-November, most of the visitors drove into the park during the middle of the morning and left by mid-afternoon in order to reach Farmington or Albuquerque by evening. This meant that the visitors I worked with relied heavily on the one available afternoon tour, and written interpretive material to visit a handful of sites relatively quickly. Although my data is confined to these visitors, they are an important audience, and their experiences and concerns should be addressed.

During the winter older tourists may not spend as much time in the Park as younger or summertime guests, but they have a large impact on how the Park is logistically structured. In general, National Parks are accessible to most of the public, though they

are not held in strict compliance with accessibility standards (G.B. Cornucopia, personal communication, Nov.1 2014). The concerns of older visitors are something that the NPS has to think about. Benches, rest facilities, and handicap parking areas are all concerns. This older demographic is also the main visitor audience for many months out of the year while families and students are in school. This means that for much of the year, their entrance fees, camping fees, and bookstore purchases keep money coming into the park. These visitors are also less likely to use backcountry trails, meaning that winter is a convenient time for the park to conduct trail and site maintenance while not inconveniencing visitors. These tourists are therefore an important part of CCNHP's community.

In the following chapters, I address the goals put forward in the Vision Statement: to educate visitors about ancient Chaco and the Great Houses, and to make a space where visitors can create an idiosyncratic relationship with the sites. I will address these goals by examining the interpretive material available to visitors, and using visitor surveys to understand how visitors report using these materials.

Chapter 4: Interpretive Text

Chaco Culture National Historic Park's interpretive loop road makes six Great Houses accessible to visitors. Six more are accessible via backcountry trails. In one day, even visiting all of the sites on the interpretive loop road is practically impossible. CCNHP understands that visitors, especially during the winter months, typically do not spend sufficient time in the canyon to see everything thoroughly in one visit. As is often the case, visitors pick and choose what they want to see, and those who have only a few hours are typically directed by rangers to Pueblo Bonito. Accordingly, CCNHP has to think about how to provide interpretation to visitors who are only in the canyon for a few hours at a time, as well as to those who spend several days.

Museums typically provide an array of different educational materials for visitors, including text panels, graphics, tactile exhibits, audio tours, and guided tours. However, intended uses of educational materials in museums are not always reflected in visitor behaviors. As visitor studies developed as a discipline, studies have adopted terms for different kinds of visitors based upon their behavior (Falk 1982; Higgins 1884; Veron and Lavasseur 1989; Wolf and Tymitz 1978). These terms include names such as lounge, nomad, commuter, serious shopper, and fish, denoting the different movements and behaviors exhibited by visitors (Hein 2008:104, 105). Some of these individuals move more quickly than others, some are more invested in reading text panels, and others, typically part of a group, are unengaged. Hein observes that visitors also jump between these categories based upon their moods.

“Visitors who go in a planful way may prefer an organized exhibit; spontaneous visitors may prefer free-choice environments (Griggs 1983).

Of course, the same individuals can fall into either category, depending on their reasons for visiting, the company they are in, or the mood generated by the situation that they find as they enter the museum.” [Hein 1998: 137]

I noted this type of behavior during my fieldwork. Some visitors made their way through the sites using the Trail Guide flow, even if they did not read the guide. Other visitors went in the opposite direction through the sites. Some did not read any interpretive material, and moved quickly and somewhat fluidly through the sites. Museum practitioner Beverly Serrell notes that, “museum learners are under no obligation to learn anything (Serrell 1996:60).” Chaco visitors also spend varying amounts of time looking at specific features, or stop to take pictures. As Hein pointed out, and I observed, motivation level and behavior could also change for an individual visitor throughout their visit.

Given that reaching Chaco takes so much effort, however, I presume that visitors are fairly motivated to come. And as many visitors pointed out in surveys, they came to learn about history and Native American culture, which, using MacCannel’s argument, I interpret the Great Houses as the markers that visitors will see to learn about these topics. In order to accommodate visitors’ desire to learn about Great Houses, CCNHP provides on-the-ground written interpretive material, available at the sites for visitors to use. These materials include Wayside Exhibit signs and trail guides. Wayside Exhibits are large orienting/informational signs that serve as introductory text panels on the trail into a site. Trail guides consist of small booklets available in a box near the introductory Wayside Exhibit. Visitors can use these trail guides as they move through the site, encountering numbered signposts. The numbered signposts have corresponding entries

in the trail guide, and provide more information tailored to the specific location of each signpost. In this chapter I will review the layout of Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, and examine these materials in depth: what they contain, how I observed people using them, and comments that visitors made about them.

Wayside Exhibit Signs

The most popular site in Chaco Canyon is Pueblo Bonito. It is the largest Great House in the canyon, the most studied, and the most visited. At present, it shares a parking lot with Chetro Ketl, its next-door neighbor. Chetro Ketl is a somewhat smaller Great House, with different architectural features including colonnades and remnants of structures abutting the mesa behind it to the north. From the parking lot, the trail splits and visitors can either visit one or the other. The Petroglyph Trail, which runs along the base of the mesa, links the two sites together, and visitors are able to experience the two in one trip along this trail. Restrooms and a picnic area are available at the parking lot, which enable visitors to go through one site, rest, and then visit the next one.

While preparing to visit either Pueblo Bonito or Chetro Ketl, visitors pass by a Wayside Exhibit sign that displays introductory text. Within the sites, the only other signage is numbered posts that correspond to entries in the trail guide. In Pueblo Bonito, there are two Wayside Exhibit signs, and a commemorative plaque. The commemorative plaque is affixed to a boulder just outside the eastern corner of Pueblo Bonito, and discusses several National Geographic Society-funded excavations by Neil Judd.

On the way into Pueblo Bonito, the first Wayside Exhibit sign that visitors encounter is near the trailhead, and gives a basic overview of what functions

archaeologists believe Pueblo Bonito fulfilled. The design layout of Wayside Exhibits is standard across the National Park Service, but CCNHP controls the content, just as they do in the trail guides (Figure 4.1). The trail leads visitors around the east side of Bonito and up onto the remains of Threatening Rock where the second Wayside Exhibit is mounted. Threatening Rock is an enormous sandstone boulder that detached from the cliff behind Pueblo Bonito. In January of 1941, Threatening Rock fell, crushing twenty room blocks on the northeast side of Pueblo Bonito (Szasz 2006:228). The Wayside Exhibit sign atop the rubble of Threatening Rock talks about Pueblo Bonito as the “Heart of the Chaco world” (Figure 4.2). This sign has a different feel to it than the other Wayside Exhibits throughout the Park because it features a large color photo of a Tewa girl dancing (CCNHP 2004: Wayside Exhibit). Other Wayside Exhibit signs feature only drawings of recreated sites or building footprints. For visitors, this sign stood out from the rest as a favorite, perhaps because it was such a pleasing image. One visitor even mentioned it specifically in their survey (Appendix IV).

By contrast, a ranger remarked to me that some rangers didn’t like the sign because they felt like it tried to do too much. Alongside the dancing girl are several paragraphs of text about the different building phases of Pueblo Bonito. These static facts seemed to make less of impact upon visitors than seeing the photo. Shown together, the vibrant and living image and the dry facts do not complement one another successfully.

The “Heart of Chaco” sign is different from other Wayside Exhibits in the Park. The single Exhibit sign at Chetro Ketl, and those at other sites throughout the Park, have only illustrations and associated text. No other Wayside Exhibits incorporates a

photograph. However, it is precisely because the “Heart of Chaco” Exhibit *has* a photograph that it is a powerful sign. Visitors still may or may not read all of the text on the sign, but they remember it, and often comment on the dancer. On one hand, this Wayside Exhibit does attempt to convey too much information. Following Serrell’s museum label approach the sign does not directly index what the visitor is looking at (Serrell 1996:12). From its position on top of Threatening Rock’s rubble, visitors have a panoramic view of Pueblo Bonito and the south side of the canyon. This landscape is still, featuring archaeological ruins. What the photo accomplishes is breathing life into the building. It is a moment when a contemporary depiction of a Native American is seen in context with a Chacoan building, and is the only time this happens at the Park. The same ranger who commented that the “Heart of Chaco” sign was disliked, also said that Chaco desperately needed to be “peopled, otherwise it becomes a museum (GB Cornucopia, personal communication, Nov.1, 2004).”

While observing visitors, I noticed that many people would stop and read this “Heart of Chaco” sign aloud, although I did not notice this behavior with the introductory Wayside Exhibits. Despite visitors reporting that they read the Wayside Exhibits at Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, I observed that visitors only gave introductory Wayside Exhibits a cursory glance before moving on down the trail (Svare 2015). Passing by introductory text panels in a museum installation can be problematic if that is the only way the curators have provided context and introduction for an exhibit, as visitors are easily distracted. Visitors can be drawn into the exhibit by something that has caught their eye, or a parent may be trying to keep an eye on their child or keep up with their group (Serrell 1996:22). At Pueblo Bonito (and Chetro Ketl), it is no different. The

Wayside Exhibit is easily visible, but visitors can see Pueblo Bonito looming in the distance, they are likely more interested in reaching the site than they are in reading about it.

The introductory sign and the “Heart of Chaco” sign are the only two Wayside Exhibits in Pueblo Bonito. Signage at Chetro Ketl is also minimal. As at Pueblo Bonito, there is an introductory Wayside Exhibit at the trailhead, but the remainder of the site is free from interpretive signage. This allows the site to be mostly free of distracting signage, with the focus on the structure itself. It creates an unencumbered viewshed, and allows visitors a freedom to move throughout the site without needing to see or avoid any unwanted interpretation. If a visitor desires an uninterrupted personal experience without curatorial voices interpreting or attempting to educate them, it is entirely possible to have such an encounter.

Serrell states that, “self-selected, casual museum visitors have always been in charge of their own goals, used their own strategies, managed their own tasks and time, [and] arrived at their own conclusions and integrations (Serrell 1996:61).” CCNHP has created a strategic environment where visitors who want to learn about Great Houses certainly can, and visitors who prefer to move freely in their own manner also can, and they both do so within the same space. Still, if visitors do read the Wayside Exhibit signs (and most of them reported doing so), what do they learn about the Great Houses?

At Pueblo Bonito, Wayside Exhibits describe the city as a Great House, or public building, which served as the center of Puebloan civilization between A.D. 850 and 1150. Visitors can see a plan view of the building, and read about the plazas and different kivas. There is also information about the different building phases of Pueblo Bonito, and

illustrations of the building's footprint as it was constructed during different building phases (WNPA 2012a). At Chetro Ketl, visitors learn about the unique architecture of the building, its elevated kivas and plazas, and how the building materials were sourced. Also discussed is the continuity of the building phases; that younger generations carried on the work of their forbearers (WNPA 2012b). The Wayside Exhibits are a low impact way for the NPS to disseminate information about the basic structure, building, and purpose of the sites.

Because they are so unobtrusive, it is important to know how visitors use them and remember them. In the survey visitors were asked, "While visiting the sites, did you read the plaques and signs? Which were the most interesting or meaningful to you?" Answers varied, but when they reached this question, particularly if they were being surveyed in Chetro Ketl, visitors would frequently look at one another and say "which signs (Svare 2015)?" It would seem at this location that the minimal signage was not very memorable, overshadowed by the trail guide, or went un-noticed. Still, all but a few visitors answered "yes" to the question, but only made vague remarks about the usefulness of the signs, such as "very good," "all" were useful, or "informative." Many people did not respond to that part of the question at all. The exception to this indistinct recall of the signage, visitors did remember, and comment on, the Heart of Chaco sign. In contrast to visitor's lukewarm response to the Wayside Exhibits, the trail guides seemed more popular and useful (Appendix IV).

The Trail Guide

“If I’m standing, looking at #10, I’m looking at a doorframe, not a water control feature.”

-Visitor commenting on the Chetro Ketl trail guide

Like all accessible sites on the loop road, Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl have trail guides available for visitors at the trailhead. These can be borrowed and returned, purchased there, or purchased later at the Visitor Center. These guides are the main source of written interpretive material available to visitors, and are available in English. As visitors move through each site, they encounter wooden posts with numbers (Figure 4.3). These numbers correspond to entries in the guides that talk about architecture, kivas, excavation, and interesting features, such as the painted wall still visible inside a room at Chetro Ketl. They are written specifically for a general audience, and are full of archaeological information (WPNA 2012a; WPNA 2012b). CCNHP’s full-time staff, which includes interpreters, archaeologists, and natural resource personnel, writes the text in the trail guides, which is reviewed by other Chaco archaeologists before it is printed. The Western National Parks Association prints the guides for most of the sites, while CCNHP prints shorter guides for the sites of Hungo Pavi and Una Vida (Cornucopia, personal communication 2014).

The numbered posts and related trail guide are a good interpretive move for several reasons: the posts are unobtrusive, less expensive than dozens of signs, and low impact on the site. Their corresponding information can be updated or added onto with minimal effort in a revised trail guide. The trail guide is a useful tool for visitors desiring to move through the site at their own pace. However, if a visitor decides to go through a site without consulting the trail guide, the numbered posts can be confusing,

because the posts do not explicitly indicate what site features they are referencing. I observed several visitors experiencing this confusion, and asking one another either what the signposts were for, or wondering what they were supposed to be looking at (Svare 2015). Still, this creates a variety of options visitors, who can chose at any time to stop using the trail guide, or to simply enjoy the experience of walking through a site without feeling compelled to learn.

Trail guides are housed in small metal containers near the trailhead of each site, and include free-use guides that can be borrowed and returned, or new ones that can be purchased inexpensively and kept by visitors. While I encountered a couple of visitors who told me, “we didn’t know there *was* a trail guide (Appendix IV)!” I believe that this was a complete aberration, since most of the visitors I surveyed reported using a trail guide. Because the trail guides are conveniently located and clearly marked, most visitors were aware of them, even if they chose not to use them (Visitor Survey 2014).

The trail guide for Pueblo Bonito is a seventeen-page booklet with nineteen numbered interpretive stops that moves through the site and delivers information about specific aspects of the structure, the ancient Chacoans, and site excavation. Apart from each of the stops and its associated information, there are also several orienting pages that give visitors context for the site. There is a plan map of the site showing where all of the numbered stops are. Following the map, there is introductory information: what to expect during your visit, the cultural significance of Chaco to contemporary Native tribes, and a general warning to not leave the trail, deface the structure, or remove anything. This is followed by a more detailed account of Chaco and its ancient and contemporary importance. A table illustrates the approximate construction date for Pueblo Bonito in

comparison to other Great Houses in the canyon. The setup for Chetro Ketl's trail guide is the same, although there are only twelve interpretive stops in it (WPNA 2012a; WPNA 2012b).

Visitors follow navigational signs that direct them around and then through the middle of Pueblo Bonito. The numbered posts are easily visible on the trail, and provide a good amount of information about certain aspects of the site. Things like masonry, architectural planning, archaeological excavations, kivas, building materials, and construction phases are discussed in the trail guide. The Chetro Ketl trail guide is again identical in format, and delivers similar information to the Pueblo Bonito trail guide. It also looks at some unique features of the Great House, such as the surviving partial mural inside one of the rooms, and the colonnade-style architecture that is on one side of the plaza.

Visitor response to the trail guides was generally positive, and I observed many of them taking time to read at least portions of the guide at each stop. Both Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl have clearly marked paths through the sites. This is to ensure that visitors have a structure, limited impact on the sites, and also for their own safety. The trail at Chetro Ketl is very easy to follow, and is naturally demarcated by the structure's walls. Throughout most of Pueblo Bonito, this is also the case. However, in the plaza areas, visitors spread out and wandered away from the plaza's north-south wall, looking in smaller kivas and over walls. Because the area is so open, visitor movement is hard to control. The signpost stops are also somewhat confusing here as they are spread far apart and are difficult to see. As visitors move off the designated trail, the risk of damage to the site and risk of injury to the visitor increases (Svare 2015).

While surveying visitors to Pueblo Bonito, I positioned myself at stop #10 in the Pueblo Bonito trail guide, next to the Great Kiva. The benches there provided an excellent place for visitors to rest for a few minutes, look at the plaza, and easily take surveys while seated. After taking the survey, many visitors would ask me how to get to stop #11. This information is clearly marked in the front of the trail guide (which most of them were carrying), but the openness of the area and the imprecise path made it difficult for visitors to distinguish where to go next.

Another interesting question that I was frequently asked at this location was, “what *is* the Wetherill Cemetery?” This was in response to a question on the survey asking if they had taken the side trail between stops #7 and #8 over to the Wetherill Cemetery. I explained what it was, and briefly who Richard Wetherill was. I also was asked to explain *where* the cemetery was. I indicated the side-trail entrance, and that there was another entrance near the parking lot at Pueblo Del Arroyo. Again, most visitors were carrying, and reading from, the trail guide, which talks about Richard Wetherill under #7. In response to my explanation, many visitors seemed interested, and indicated that they would see it later, perhaps when they visited Pueblo Del Arroyo. Some seemed embarrassed that they had missed such an obvious trail and bit of information. Overwhelmingly, though, visitors indicated that they had not been to the cemetery (at least from Pueblo Bonito), and a couple of them even put question marks as their response on the survey (Appendix IV). The trail guide talks extensively about Richard Wetherill, and there is a small trail sign pointing towards the cemetery, but many visitors were still unsure about it. Just as the Wayside Exhibit sign is overshadowed by Pueblo Bonito, so is Richard Wetherill. It would be interesting to do a similar survey in

Pueblo del Arroyo's parking lot to determine if visitors saw the larger signs pointing to the cemetery, and if they visited it from there.

Despite an almost overwhelmingly positive response to the trail guides, there were some people who did not find them useful. One visitor responded that they were "basic information," and another that they "wished they were more in depth."

Another visitor, thinking critically about the placement of numbered signposts and the corresponding information, offered the commentary that appears at the beginning of this section. After completing a ranger-led tour of Chetro Ketl, this visitor commented that she had taken a trail guide along with her on the tour, and had been frustrated by stop #10. The trail guide reads:

"Evidence of irrigation ditches has been found in the small box canyon behind Chetro Ketl, on the canyon floor to the east of the site, and elsewhere. ... The earthen ridges and stone structures that you can see in the canyon behind Chetro Ketl... are modern erosion control structures built in the 1950s to preserve the sites from flashflood damage."

The visitor expressed to me that it was difficult for her to know where to look for these features, as the signpost was directly in front of a doorframe, and there were no orientating arrows or specific directions in the trail guide (see Figures 4.4, 4.5). This prompted me to check out #10 more thoroughly. Indeed, the erosion control features were somewhat difficult to locate, especially if the visitor is unfamiliar with Chaco's environment, archaeological sites, or flood control in general. I pursued this further, going systematically through Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl with the trail guides and noting whether or not the signpost's location and the trail guide's description matched up with what I was really seeing. Generally speaking, they matched well, with only a few

descriptions being difficult to match. It is important that visitors are easily able to identify what architectural feature or artifact that the trail guide is referring to.

Just like with the Wayside Exhibits, visitors are free to use the trail guides to whatever extent they wish, from completely ignoring them to reading every entry. The information visitors gather from reading the trail guides is similar to what they learn from the Wayside Exhibits, just in more detail - architecture, building materials, unique features, interesting excavation facts, and that these are sacred sites. Unlike the Wayside Exhibit (the Heart of Chaco), neither of these trail guides provides any provocative, immediate representation of Native Americans. They focus almost exclusively on the past, which fulfills visitors' desires to learn about the Great Houses – after all, they came to see them – but it does not reach beyond this narrative. In the next chapter, I will look at how CCNHP's ranger-led interpretive programs augment and complement the written interpretive data.

Chapter 5: Human Interpretation

“The policy of relying on human interpreters on site is considered by Park management to be well suited to the telling of the very complex Chaco story. The contact of visitors with Park rangers and the absence of signs or interpretive panels in the ruins are believed to contribute to the quality of the experience, in particular by enhancing the associative value of the place.” [De la Torre 2005: 82]

Tours at Chaco Canyon appear to be one of the most popular ways to visit (or re-visit) a site. The majority of the visitors I surveyed and subsequently spoke with had just finished a tour at Pueblo Bonito or Chetro Ketl. These visitors typically were in the canyon for only a day, wanted to see as much as possible, and were frequently physically incapable of attempting backcountry hikes. Because so many visitors were under these constraints, the tours that I observed were typically very large. All of the visitors I spoke with were positive about their tour experience, and the Park rangers were all enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their tours.

Beyond the tours and other interpretive programs, Chaco Culture National Historic Park also provides human interpretation through film segments shown in the Visitor Center. While the shorter daylight hours make watching a film less of a priority for winter-time visitors, it is also an excellent option should the weather prove to be too inclement for visiting the sites.

Visitors who use the Wayside Exhibits and trail guides learn almost exclusively about the archaeology of the Great Houses. Ranger-led programs also begin with and center on the Great Houses, because that is what people see in front of them. However, these programs also encourage visitors to see and think beyond the Great Houses.

Interaction with a ranger or watching a film can supplement a visitor's interpretation of Chaco by introducing additional histories and narratives, and allowing visitors the chance to ask questions and receive answers. Through human interaction, the visitor's experience becomes very complex and nuanced. All visitors have a different experience, depending upon their individual purpose for visiting, the time of year they visit, weather conditions, if they decide to attend tours and other interpretive programs or watch films, the rangers they interact with, and the amount of time they spend in the Park.

In this chapter I look at the different types of ranger-led interpretive programs offered to visitors, and the *Chaco* (2002) film that is shown in the Visitor Center. The goal is to illustrate how Park rangers educate visitors about Chaco's Great Houses. To do this, I have divided the ranger-led programs into three distinct categories: site tours, supplemental interpretive programs, and special events. While the *Chaco* film is not an interactive source of human interpretation, it is important because it, like the "Heart of Chaco" sign, brings depictions of Native Americans and additional narratives to the canyon.

Site tours are fairly straightforward: rangers lead visitors through a given site along the interpretive loop road, talking about architecture, excavations, and the possible use of the site. I define supplemental interpretive programs as campfire talks, summer night sky programs, and other frequent programs not centered on a specific site. Special events include solstice, equinox, International Archaeology Day, and Star Parties. In the following sections I will discuss each of these programs in detail. During my fieldwork I attended at least one of each type of program.

Site Tours

"I want them to leave with more questions than they came with."

-Park Ranger

CCNHP's Vision Statement expresses hopes that visitors will have the freedom to experience Chaco personally, and that they not be confined by tours. Some visitors do chose to completely ignore all interpretive material in favor of seeing the Great Houses and hiking trails without any curatorial guidance. Still, a majority of the visitors I surveyed reported reading Wayside Exhibit signs and using a trail guide (Appendix IV). Guided tours were also a very popular option. All of the touring groups that I observed had at least fifteen people in them, and some close to thirty. The amount of people on a tour (among many other factors) shapes the way that the ranger leads, teaches, and the questions they ask.

Rangers are typically given on the job training: observing several tours, reading through available literature, and then creating their own tours based upon this information. One seasonal ranger I spoke with said that she did online training through the NPS, and then based her tour structure and content off of other rangers' tours. She also brought her own educational expertise and teaching style to her tours. Once rangers have created an outline for their own tour, it is vetted by the Park's Head of Interpretation, who can provide feedback and makes a final decision. Once they have been given the green light, rangers can begin leading tours (personal communication, G.B. Cornucopia, Nov. 1 2014). Beyond mastering the material, rangers must learn on their feet how to field and answer questions, move large groups through small spaces, respond appropriately to difficult situations, know procedures for inclement weather,

accidents, and a myriad of demanding circumstances. On top of all of this, most rangers try to use their tours as starting points for conversations. This can be incredibly difficult with large or distracted groups, or groups who simply do not respond to learning in this manner.

Recently, the Park expanded its tour repertoire beyond Pueblo Bonito to include all of the Great Houses on the interpretive loop road. There are two tours daily, and one of them is normally at Pueblo Bonito. The other varies from site to site so that on any given day visitors can have tours of two different Great Houses (G.B. Cornucopia, personal communication, Nov.1, 2014). During my fieldwork, I attended a number of Pueblo Bonito tours led by different rangers. Typically, the Pueblo Bonito tour follows most of the trail guide's route through the site, and rangers pointed out many of the things that were discussed in the trail guide. There are exceptions to this route, dependent upon the ranger leading the tour. Architecture and construction of the site, the materials used, the time frame of occupancy and building, and current excavations were the main themes the Pueblo Bonito tour guides discuss. This tour generally concludes at the Great Kiva, where the tour wraps up and become an informal question and answer session.

Rangers with different backgrounds emphasize different elements of the site. One ranger with a degree in geology talked about the Chacoan environment, pointing out fossils in the mesa, and talking extensively about Threatening Rock and Son of Threatening Rock. Another ranger with a background in archaeology emphasized excavation processes, fill dirt in kivas, and the constantly shifting archaeological theories of Chaco. No matter what rangers emphasized during their tour, they tried to end it with a conversation about ties between Chaco Canyon and contemporary Native American

communities. If groups are a manageable size, these conversations typically become question and answer sessions where visitors ask the ranger various things like, “what do Natives think about Chaco;” to explain more definitively what kivas were used for; or questions about the NPS’s stewarding practices (Svare 2015).

During one Pueblo Bonito tour I attended, the ranger began the final conversation by talking about kivas as ceremonial spaces, telling visitors that contemporary Puebloan communities did not all agree on their specific purposes. Rangers also used this moment to talk about the depopulation of the canyon. The group then started telling about experiences they had visiting Pueblos, things they had read in books, and asking open-ended questions about the purpose of kivas. Without trying to make any definitive statement about the use and purpose of kivas, the ranger tied all of these threads together by pointing to the kiva and saying, “there are twenty-seven voices telling us about this...and yours (CCNHP 2014; Svare 2015).” While the ranger did not clarify whom the twenty-seven voices belonged to, I presumed that it was an indication of the multiple tribes who affiliate with Chaco and participate in interpreting the canyon. Regardless, this snappy statement aimed to achieve two things: to help visitors think about contemporary Native American presence and investment at Chaco, as well as their own presence and experience as visitors. It encapsulates Chaco’s Vision Statement because visitors were offered information about the ancient Chacoans through the architecture of the kiva, and by creating narrative space for multiple interpretations. However, during all of the tours I observed, contemporary Native American communities were only referenced through the marker of kivas. Since kivas are discussed as ceremonial spaces, and visitors add to this contextualization through their own speculation and experience,

Native American peoples are only spoken about in terms of a ceremonial space, and in movement and abandonment. Visitors with little prior knowledge of the southwest, or of Native Americans, can easily romanticize these concepts.

The concluding conversations that rangers hold with visitors are productive because they help visitors process archaeological facts and attempt to contextualize the sites with contemporary Native American groups and their own personal interpretations based upon this knowledge. However, these talks also devolved into a sense of general inexplicability and wonder about Chaco. Given Chaco's endless array of questions, possibilities, and unanswered questions, this was to be expected. The ranger quoted at the beginning of this section hoped that visitors would leave with more questions than they came with. I also noted previously that the concept of Chaco not answering questions, but continuing to pose them, was a concept discussed by both visitors and rangers. In the case of these conversations, people began talking. Even if no conclusions were reached, visitors and rangers were opening up possibilities and realities to one another. However, while the visitors and the rangers can hear one another speaking, they are not the only participants in the conversation. Rangers may be able to hear additional curatorial voices through their own: those of Native American communities, archaeologists, environmentalists, or astronomers. However, because none of these other curators are visibly present during most parts of the Chaco experience, visitors do not understand that they are hearing more than one perspective from the CCNHP ranger. One bears in mind that the hermeneutic circle is un-ending, which, for Chaco visitors, is a good thing. Since these conversations are ongoing and open-ended, it is possible that these other curators will be heard more clearly in the future.

Supplemental Interpretive Programs

Supplemental interpretive programs are focused outside of individual sites. These include campfire talks in the Gallo Campground during the summer months, and evening programs on Chaco's night sky. The campfire talks are a walk through the Gallo Canyon, looking at rock art and talking about conservation, rock art interpretation, and animals in the canyon. I only attended one of these campfire talks during my fieldwork, and was struck by how actively the ranger referenced Native friends in an effort to illustrate the impossibilities of CCNHP accurately interpreting rock art. By citing complimentary and dissonant interpretation by members of various tribes, she made visitors recognize that Native American communities are not a homogenous body, that images can be read differently by everyone, and that many times the knowledge of what an image means is not appropriate to share with the public. The ranger admitted at the end of the program that she was a bit of a "black sheep" for foregrounding the issue of intellectual property so much, but that she felt it was important (Svare 2015).

This particular campfire program also ended with visitors having a conversation, facilitated by the ranger, about contemporary issues affecting Chaco, Native American communities, the Park, and the landscape. The group frankly discussed the Indian School system in the southwest, the forced eviction of the Navajo from the Park boundaries in the 1940s, and how to appropriately conserve rock art images and protect against vandalism. There are large bodies of literature on all of these subjects. Scholars of the Indian School System include Lomawaima (1994), Modragón and Stapleton (2005), Suina (2003, 2004), and Noriega (1992). National Park Service Employee David M. Brugge has written extensively on the Navajo's relationship with Chaco Canyon (1980,

2004). Rock art specialist and artist Polly Schaafsma (1984), along with Deacon (2006), Clottes (2008), and others have documented the importance of preserving rock art.

The conversation was provocative and memorable, and visitors engaged with the ranger and each other in a much more comfortable manner, despite the large size of the group. Because this interpretive program was not overshadowed or constrained by the presence of a Great House, visitors seemed more willing to look beyond what they were physically seeing and talk about intangible, yet impactful, issues, such as those mentioned above. As a supplement to the formal site tours, this interpretive program fosters a more intimate environment where visitors can take the knowledge they have accumulated and creates a forum for conversation that applies the knowledge in a manner beneficial to both visitors and rangers. Conversations are beneficial to visitors because they are able to ask questions, offer opinions, and reach conclusions in concert with other visitors' knowledge and the ranger's knowledge and facilitation. These types of conversations are also incredibly useful for interpreters, as they allow rangers to know what visitors are interested in learning about, as well as benefiting from the knowledge and experience of visitors. In several programs, rangers referenced information they learned from Native visitors (CCNHP 2014).

Special Events

In addition to its daily and weekly programs, the Park hosts special events throughout the year. I attended the 2014 Fall Equinox, the Star Party, and International Archaeology Day. On these occasions, the day's regular programs were either re-scheduled or altered to emphasize the special event. There were also many additional activities and programs presented.

Equinox and solstice are always big events at the Park thanks to artist Anna Sofaer's work on archaeoastronomy in the canyon (Sofaer, Zinser, and Sinclair 1979). Equinox occurs twice during the year, when sun crosses the earth directly over the equator, creating equal hours of day and night. These events mark the spring and autumn seasons. Solstice also occurs twice a year, during the summer and winter. The summer solstice indicates when the sun is at the northern-most point on the earth, and during the winter, the sun is at its southern-most point (Anthropolis 1999).

During these solar phenomena, special programing allows visitors to watch the sun rise at the Great Kiva of Casa Rinconada during equinox, or watch Casa Rinconada's niches be lit by the sun during the solstice. These events draw large crowds of people who are eager to witness the events for themselves. During the 2014 Fall Equinox, two visitors remarked that they had "come all the way from Salt Lake City" to witness the event (Svare 2015). The excitement surrounding solstice and equinox began in 1977 when Sofaer discovered a panel of rock art – three spirals – behind three upright slabs atop Fajada Butte in the middle of the canyon. During the astronomical events of equinox and solstice, sunlight passes through the slabs to illuminate specific points on the spirals (Sofaer, Zinser, and Sinclair 1979; Wilder N.D). The largest spiral became known as the "Sun Dagger" for the way the sun created a dagger-like shape down its center at solstice. Researchers and visitors alike wanted to see the newly christened Sun Dagger for themselves.

Several years later, in 1982, the NPS evaluated visitation traffic at the site and became concerned for the stability of the rock formation as well as for visitor safety. At this point, the butte was closed to everyone except for those who had obtained a permit

from the NPS (de la Torre 2005:83, 84). In 1985 the site was again evaluated, and it was decided that Fajada Butte could only be visited by, “Native Americans using the site for religious purposes” and researchers who had gone through extensive application and screening procedures (de la Torre 2005:84).

While this agreement seemed advantageous to Native groups wishing to continue use of the site, and manageable to hopeful researchers, the circumstances changed again in 1990. The slabs creating the Sun Dagger had moved marginally, likely due to continued site visitation, and the astronomical accuracy was compromised. After this, the Fajada Butte was closed to everyone, with the exception of “monitoring visits by NPS personnel (de la Torre 2005:84).”

Although Fajada is closed to everyone at this point in time, it is still a source of keen interest for many visitors. Prior to the fall equinox of 2014, CCNHP posted a notice on its website notifying visitors that they must reserve spots for the sunrise program. The program was capped at 100 visitors, and the Park and campground were full for the occasion. Although there are other programs offered during the day of the equinox, including site tours and the talk at Fajada Butte Overlook, the main event is watching the sun rise from Casa Rinconada. At sunrise on the equinox, the sun rises exactly in alignment with the side of a mesa east of the kiva. As it rises, the sun shines directly through two east – west aligned doorways on the north end of the kiva. From the west side of the doorways, it is possible to watch the sun clear the horizon, climb up the side of the mesa, and cast light directly through the doorways (Figure 5.1- 5.3).

As visitors stood around Casa Rinconada’s doorways on the morning of the 2014 Fall Equinox, hoping that a cloudy pre-dawn sky would break long enough for the sun to

rise, a ranger gave a short talk about what was going to happen. He deliberately contextualized the alignment with some information about the reconstruction of Casa Rinconada, and the idea that while today we can observe things at Chaco, we cannot really say for sure why things happen. Specifically, he talked about how site reconstructions are likely not absolute, but simply follow the available layout as closely as possible (CCNHP 2014; Svare 2015). Where Casa Rinconada appears to have a number of observable solar alignments, the ranger emphasized that we needed to be aware of those things before deciding if we thought the reconstruction was accurate and the alignments intentional.

Many of the visitors availed themselves of the opportunity to talk to the ranger before the sun rose, while others did not. And as the sun rose, most of the visitors formed a line (some on their stomachs) behind the west doorway, cameras poised to capture the sunlight coming through the doors. One visitor seemed uninterested in seeing the alignment, and appeared to concentrate instead upon marking it in some fashion. This visitor moved around the kiva playing a “Chakra” bowl, which emitted a pleasant ringing tone. He was not disruptive, nor secretive about what he was doing, and quickly became an object of interest to other visitors, who began to ask him about his bowl. One visitor approached him and asked if she could take a picture of his “pot.” He replied that it was a Chakra bowl, and that she could take a picture, but that first she needed to make it sing. He proceeded to explain to her that the sound connects with the fifth Chakra, and began to reminisce about coming to Chaco years ago, back when people were allowed into the kiva. He expressed a regret that he could not enter the kiva anymore (Svare 2015).

This event demonstrates that visitors come to Chaco with different entrance narratives and beliefs about purpose, energy, and appropriate behavior. It also demonstrates that while rangers can guide conversations and teach, visitors are free agents to do whatever they wish with that information. During the sunrise program for the equinox, multiple interpretations and purposes from visitors became evident. Many of them talked about how far they had travelled to witness the event, an interest that stemmed from watching the 1992 film *The Mystery of Chaco* on television, and how excited they were to see such an alignment. Some commented about how people “back then” had things “figured out” more than people today (Svare 2015).

The usefulness of these conversations between visitors is based upon one’s own opinion of whether or not another visitor is correct, and whether that opinion holds any sway with others. I believe, however, that the CCNHP encourages and appreciates these conversations because although visitors may not all subscribe to an archaeological interpretation, the conversations do help visitors produce idiosyncratic relationships with the sites, and subsequently fulfills the Park’s Vision Statement.

Film

“Have you seen the Robert Redford film on the Sun Dagger? It’s available in the bookshop for \$29.95.”

—Visitor at Pueblo Bonito

From my experience during the 2014 Fall Equinox, it is apparent that many visitors are interested in the solar alignments of Chaco. Park signage and trail guides mention these alignments, but it is in passing. Visitors frequently asked me whether I was aware of the multiple solar alignments and the Sun Dagger, eager to demonstrate

their own expertise about Chaco. The most frequently cited source these visitors used was *The Mystery of Chaco*, a 1992 film directed by Anna Sofaer and narrated by Robert Redford.

The film is available for purchase in the Park's bookstore (as I was informed by one visitor), but is not shown in the Visitor Center's auditorium. What is shown in the auditorium, and also available for purchase, is *Chaco*, a 2002 film by Gray Warriner. *Chaco* narrates Chaco Canyon from the perspective of Native American scholars and leaders, including Rina Swentzell and Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, who are also authors in *In Search of Chaco: New Approaches to an Archaeological Enigma* (2004). Through the narrators of this film, *Chaco* offers a way for the NPS to include some Native perspectives of the canyon, the sites, the region, and importantly, Chaco's contemporary importance to Native peoples.

The film shows clips of the Chaco landscape as various Native scholars talk about themes including place, sacredness, the ancient Chacoans, building the Great Houses, kivas, sky watching, and leaving Chaco. These voices do not always entirely agree with one another on particular details, and they do not always agree with current archaeological theories about the canyon. This film allows visitors to see other valid ways of knowing, remembering, and interpreting, places and events. *Chaco* is very different from the *Mystery of Chaco* film, and from any other interpretation visitors encounter in the Park. Because of its different approach, *Chaco* can provide visitors with additional points of departure for continuing their education about Chaco Canyon.

This, and my examination of written interpretive material, are based on observations and conversations with visitors and rangers. The next chapter is based upon

the results of visitor surveys I conducted at Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl. It illustrates how visitors believe they are using interpretive materials, as well as what visitors think about their usefulness. It also tackles the question of idiosyncratic relationships through visitor's articulation of personal meaning.

Chapter 6: Fieldwork

In the previous chapters, I have talked about the interpretive materials available to visitors, and documented my observations of visitor – curator interactions. Although I can talk critically about this material and these interactions, the important factor is how *visitors* talk about interpretive material and what they get out of it and their interactions with rangers. This chapter focuses on the impressions visitors have of Chaco Culture National Historic Park’s interpretive material. I use visitor data to illustrate what exactly visitors to Chaco see, do, and learn through a variety of types of knowledge presentation. The data also illustrates how visitors *think* they are using interpretive material. The fieldwork results support my arguments that visitors come to Chaco Canyon to learn about the Great Houses. It also demonstrates that CCNHP employees fulfill their goal to educate visitors about the Great Houses and foster an environment where visitors can create idiosyncratic, or personal, relationships with the sites. Using these results, I offer some suggestion for educating visitors (mostly) about the Great Houses, and provide insight into steps that CCNHP might take to make the visitor experience more fulfilling and holistic.

Surveys

Although daytime temperatures were sunny and comfortable, the early mornings, evenings, and nights of late fall and early winter in 2014 were cold, and daylight hours were at a premium. Most visitors who camped in the canyon started their day late, and nearly everyone was gone from the sites by 4:30 in the afternoon. Every morning, I would check in with the ranger at the Visitor Center, letting rangers know where I would

be that day, and checking the tour schedules and weather. I tried to match my location with the tour location, switching sites at lunchtime. While I was never able to solicit surveys from every visitor, I was able to survey 57 respondents.

Most of my survey participants had just completed guided site tours. All of the rangers were supportive and helpful with my research, and as they brought their group past me, they would pause and allow me to introduce myself and briefly say what my research was about. The rangers encouraged their groups to take my survey after the tour was over. This boosted survey participation significantly, and I am very grateful to all of the rangers who supported my field research. Because of the time of year and the weather, there was a lot of down time between surveys. I used this time to write notes about encounters I was having with visitors and general thoughts on my observations of visitors using interpretive material and navigating the sites.

At both sites, I set up my survey station near the Great Kiva. In Chetro Ketl, this is stop #5 and in Pueblo Bonito it is stop #10 in the trail guide. I positioned myself here because both locations are central to each site and have sitting benches. The benches made it easier for visitors to take the survey, and it also made my presence in the site for hours slightly less distracting for visitors (Figures 6.1, 6.2). There were also setbacks to choosing these locations. There were very few visitors in the sites at any given time, unless they were on a tour. This meant that in Pueblo Bonito, when visitors climbed to the top of Threatening Rock's rubble for a panoramic view of the city, they would look down and see me, generally the only person in the site, marring their otherwise very unpeopled picture. Even visitors on the Pueblo Alto trail and the Pueblo Bonito Overlook

trail could see me, and because the canyon's acoustics are exceptionally good, I could hear them asking each other about the person sitting in the plaza.

During the summer months, there are enough visitors that the opportunity to see any of the sites absent the presence of other tourists is a rare phenomenon. During the winter, however, visitation is low, and visitors typically enjoy near-solitude at all of the sites. Concerning this phenomenon, tourist theorists Crawshaw and Urry state that "the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy, and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze. The presence of other people detracts from the quality of the experience (Crawshaw and Urry 2000:177)." While none of the visitors asked me to leave the plaza so they could take photos of an un-peopled site, I was aware of this phenomenon. Anthropologists Chris Pinney (2011) and Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton (2009) critically examine notions of authentic ethnicity as seen through a non-Indigenous gaze. These notions of authenticity, ethnicity, and experience coincide with part of Erve Chamber's argument of embedded tourism (see chapter 2). Chaco offers plenty of opportunities for isolation, but during the summer months, isolation typically can only be experienced on the backcountry trails. During the winter, opportunities for isolation can also be had at the major sites.

As visitors moved through the site and approached the Great Kiva, I introduces myself as a researcher from the University of New Mexico, and that I was collecting data about visitors' interpretations of Chaco. I asked if they would like to take a short, anonymous survey. Completing the survey typically took 3-5 minutes, and many visitors stayed and spoke with me afterwards. These conversations were helpful to me for a

general sense of what visitors liked about current interpretive processes, and things that they would like to see at the Park.

The survey included six questions allowing for an objective and a subjective answer to most queries. That way, visitors who only wished to answer yes or no could still respond, and I could still gather some quantitative data from their survey (see Appendix IV). The survey questions are as follows:

1. Have you been to Chaco Canyon before?
2. Why did you decide to (re)visit Chaco Canyon?
3. When you went through these sites, did you use the trail guide? What did you find most useful about it?
4. While visiting these sites, did you read the plaques and signs? Which were the most interesting or meaningful to you?
5. While in Pueblo Bonito, did you take the side trail to the Wetherill Cemetery? Why or why not?
6. Does Chaco Canyon hold any personal meaning for you? If so, what, how?

These questions allowed me to gather information about the kinds of interpretive materials that visitors used, what they learned from them, if they were aware of non-prehistoric features of the canyon, and if they felt they had an idiosyncratic relationship with the sites. CCNHP's Vision Statement expresses hope that visitors can "independently wander through stable, well-preserved standing architecture...walk through pristine sites...and that they are able to develop their own (idiosyncratic) relationship with this place (CCNHP 2007)." Due to the dual nature of CCNHP's goals, these surveys allowed me evaluate how visitors were actually using the interpretive material, and to see what visitors' purposes were. The relationship between CCNHP's current interpretive processes and actual visitor experience comes to light through

visitor's comments, and we can see where they do and do not align. Further, the surveys open up the discussion of possible implications for this interaction.

I collected a total of 57 surveys during my fieldwork, reflecting off-season visitors' Park experience. The survey sheet included a YES / NO next to each applicable question, allowing visitors to circle an answer, and some visitors chose not to include an additional written response. This meant that I was able to gather quantitative data, which I include in Appendix III. The most interesting and informative parts of the surveys were the written responses that visitors provided. These gave me a better idea of visitor motives and prior knowledge regarding the use of the site and interpretive materials, and also could be used in conjunction with quantitative data. For example, if a visitor indicated that he or she had been to Chaco before, and then marked that they had not used a trail guide during this visit, saying that they wanted to explore on their own, I could evaluate if this was a trend among returning visitors.

With few exceptions, all of the visitors surveyed answered every question. The exceptions were two visitors who either wrote nothing, or answered 'N/A' to the query about the Wetherill Cemetery. Also, nearly all of the visitors who agreed to take the survey did it on an individual basis. However, there were several couples who decided to answer the survey together. Because the surveys were completely anonymous, and I frequently had several survey-takers at a time, it was not possible to document which survey were completed by couples. This only happened on a few occasions, and apart from the final question concerning a personal relationship, I do not feel that this adversely effects the data. In the following sections, I report on my analysis of visitor

behavior, and supplement the quantitative data with responses from visitors. I have broken the results up by question.

Question 1: Have you been to Chaco before?

Out of the 57 visitors I surveyed, only 18 (32%) reported having been to Chaco before. The remaining 39 (68%) had not. Returning visitors responded somewhat differently than first time visitors, with about half acknowledging a personal connection with Chaco, or at least offering a reason for their revisit. A little more than half of returning visitors also stated that they had not used the trail guides, but had read the Wayside Exhibit signs. Although none of the visitors who expressed these tendencies commented on whether they felt they already knew the information contained in the trail guides or Wayside Exhibits, it is worth noting, and could be a potential query in future visitor studies at the Park.

Question 2: Why did you decided to (re)visit Chaco Canyon?

This was the only entirely qualitative question on the survey, and all participants responded, although some with only one or two words. The most common responses for people who had never visited before were that friends or family had recommended it, or that they had always wanted to see it. Other various reasons included “I work at Hovenweep National Monument and lots of visitors ask about here,” “after reading about its historical / cultural importance I added it to my itinerary,” “read it on the tour book,” “have a personal interest in learning more about ancient Native cultures,” and “looking for something of historical significance (Appendix IV; Visitor Survey 2014).” According to the survey data, Chaco appears to be popular with visitors because of its regional

cultural and historical importance, and as a place where non-Native visitors feel they can learn about Native culture. Hence, visitors to Chaco are typically curious about southwest culture and history. Respondents used the term “history” on their surveys, presumably to indicate the Chaco-era structures and associated features, but interpretive materials at CCNHP focus on an archaeologically defined prehistory (Appendix IV; WNPA 2012a; WPNA 2012b).

Those visitors who had previously been to Chaco had different reasons for returning, but all indicated a personal interest in the place. One returning visitor said that he had, “liked it, and brought a school group and their parents.” A common response was, “to have friends experience Chaco.” One couple talked about how Chaco held a special significance not only for them individually, but as a couple, and they wanted to revisit. “The first time we camped here in the 1970s, our experience was very spiritual, even magical,” and “because it was a very special place the first time (1976-ish), and I’ve always wanted to come back.” During the Dark Night Sky event, several visitors talked about Chaco’s personal importance to them as a space with a dark sky, for example, “my astronomy club (TAAS) is doing outreach (Appendix IV; Visitor Survey 2014).” Returning visitors frequently remarked that they had some type of personal reason for returning. One ranger summed this up this sentiment nicely when he said that something must be wrong with people who only visit Chaco once (CCNHP 2014; Interpretive Program).

One visitor I spoke with commented that it was “another world heritage site off the list.” When I asked him which other world heritage sites he had been to, he was unclear what that meant. He said that he did not think he had been to a UNESCO World

Heritage site before, and was unaware that Chaco was one. This seemed to indicate that he may have felt that Chaco merited enough significance to *be* a World Heritage site, but was unaware that it actually was one. Furthermore, he was not only visitor who remarked that Chaco had been an item on a personal “bucket list,” a list of places to visit or things to do in one’s life. The idea of visiting certain sites evokes Chamber’s theories involving education tourism (2010), as well as Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital (1986). Seeing, or somehow coming to capture (via film, souvenirs, stories) and retain the experience of a tourist site to take home and share with others is part of the tourist experience. Chaco is a place of cultural consumption for tourists, who come to “visit history” and check another destination off their bucket list. Tourism scholar Jennifer Craik says that “the spaces and places in which consumption occurs are as important as the products and services consumed (Craik 2000:125).” Chaco is considered by tourists as a space where they can learn about regional history and Native American culture; thus according to Craik Chaco is a space where cultural consumption can take place. Craik continues, “Consumption occurs within, and is regulated by, purpose-built spaces for consumption characterized by the provisions of consumption-related services, visual consumption, and cultural products (Craik 2000:125).” The Chaco experience is carefully structured for tourists, indexing ideas of “prehistory” through highlighting the Great Houses and allowing visitors to focus on either the Great Houses, or the general openness of the environment, creating their own idiosyncratic relationship to the canyon. Not only is Chaco’s narrative structured by the CCNHP, but the ways in which the narrative (and lack thereof) can be consumed is also highly structured.

Question 3: When you went through these sites, did you use the trail guide? What did you find most useful about it?

The trail guide was a popular interpretation option, with 38 (67%) visitors reporting that they had used one, while only 19 (33%) said they had not. The trail guides are easily accessible, well-placed and well-marked for visitors to find. This is likely a contributing factor in assessing why so many people use them. Visitors reported using the trail guides to different extents. Some said that they only read for “points of interest,” while other said that the entire guide was “informative.” A few visitors were somewhat critical of the trail guides saying that they were “basic information” and would make good “back-seat car reading.”

Of the 38 visitors who reported using a trail guide, 7 (18%) had been to Chaco previously, and 31 (82%) had not. Of the 19 visitors who did not use the trail guide, 11(58%) of them had previously visited Chaco, and 8 (42%) had not. The visitors who had not used the trail guide occasionally offered explanations as to why they had decided not to. One couple stated that they “did not see the guides” because they were in a hurry to catch up with the ranger tour (Appendix IV). Someone else echoed this sentiment by saying that they hadn’t because they were going on a ranger tour. Another said that the trail guide box was empty, which I found interesting as no one else had given that response, and there were not many people in the site that particular day. Another visitor responded that “we should have but forgot. I would like to know what facts are associated with numbered sites (Appendix IV; Visitor Survey 2014).” Visitors had various reasons for not using the guide, and it appears that first-time visitors and repeat visitors used the guide at about the same rate, which could be interpreted as meaning visitors are continually interested in using the trail guides to learn while they are in the

sites. Just as with other informational material, repeat readings highlight different things for the reader. This is beneficial, as the trail guide offers an easily updatable format for CCNHP to disseminate information. In this instance, we see an alignment of CCNHP's interpretation goals and actual visitor experience.

Question 4: While visiting these sites, did you read the plaques and signs? Which were the most interesting or meaningful to you?

Signs, or Wayside Exhibits, are the most easily accessible form of interpretation for visitors, because there are only a few of them and they do not take a long time to read. Fifty people (88%) reported reading all or some of the signs, and only 7 (12%) said that they had not. Comments about the Wayside Exhibits were few and often vague despite the fact that most visitors indicated reading the signs. Most of the offered responses were that they were "all" interesting, or "explained what you were looking at." One visitor simply wrote, "The one in Pueblo Bonito. Interesting and informative." A few of the comments were more substantial and opinionated. One visitor also referenced Pueblo Bonito, saying, "The Heart of Chaco sign was interesting. It encouraged you to look out and view the whole area." One visitor felt that the Wayside Exhibits "complement[ed] the guide," but others felt differently. "They were ok, just a better insight would be nice." Another visitor said that they were "introductory at best (Appendix IV; Visitor Survey 2014)."

The Wayside Exhibits are designed to be introductory texts, similar to opening panels in museum exhibits. The trail guides are what offer the more substantial information for visitors. The discreet signage in the sites is also preferable for rangers (and for visitors, most likely) because it allows for a continuous viewshed that is

uninterrupted by modern features. Limited use of signs also reduces the impact on the sites themselves, and acts as a preservation technique, in accord with CCNHP preservation interests.

While most of the comments I received in the surveys spoke directly about Wayside Exhibits at Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, the minimal number of signs in these sites made visitors think of other signs at the Park. Several visitors happily referenced the Wayside Exhibit in the Gallo Campground, and several talked about the shrimp burrow signs on the Pueblo Alto trail. The shrimp burrow signs are simple labels that identify the paleontological features on the mesa top, and are not Wayside Exhibit signs. While these other signs do not apply directly to this study, it is good to know that visitors see and recall them.

Question 5: While in Pueblo Bonito, did you take the side trail to the Wetherill Cemetery? Why or why not?

I asked this question to ascertain two things. First, I wanted to see how much attention visitors pay to the trail guide and Wayside Exhibits and trail signs, and second, how aware are visitors of historic aspects of the canyon? Out of the 57 visitors who responded, only 10 (18%) reported having been to the cemetery; 45 (79%) said they had not, and 2 visitors (3%) gave neither response: one answered with a question mark, and another wrote N/A. The visitor who answered with a question mark had never been to Chaco before, and stated that they had used both the trail guide and the signs. The visitor who wrote N/A had also never been to Chaco. They did not use a trail guide (said they didn't see it), but indicated that they had read the trail signs. The side trail to the Wetherill Cemetery from Pueblo Bonito is very discreetly marked, and is easily overshadowed by the prospect of finally walking into the plaza of Pueblo Bonito. Most

visitors I observed appeared to be excited about leaving the back wall of the structure and moving inside, and passed by the trail marker without a second glance.

At Pueblo del Arroyo, there is a more formal trailhead and Wayside Exhibit that encourages visitors to go to the Wetherill Cemetery. My reason for asking about the cemetery at Pueblo Bonito was to see how aware visitors were of the side trail and whether or not they directly associated Wetherill with Pueblo Bonito or just Chaco in general. Given that the off-season tourists tend to be older than summer tourists, several of them cited physical issues with walking, and that they did not want to waste their time and energy on something that was not Pueblo Bonito. Other visitors had interesting comments to make about the cemetery and the Wetherills. One said that the cemetery was, “too new a timetable of information,” and another group said that they had just come from Mesa Verde, and already knew all about Wetherill. The majority of visitors seemed much more intent on the Chacoan Great Houses than they did on historical figures, aside from two women I spoke with. One of them reported in her survey that, “I read Marietta’s book. She was a strong and important woman. Wanted to say a prayer for her.” Marietta’s life history (Gabriel 1992) is available in the bookstore alongside several other historical accounts featuring her husband. Not only were these two visitors interested in the more recent history of the canyon, they were interested in Marietta’s life in Chaco, a story that does not frequently get told. For most visitors, however, Chaco’s Great Houses continue to be the major draw, and what they are interested in learning about.

Question 6: Does Chaco Canyon hold any personal meaning for you? If so, what, how?

Responses to this question were almost equal in terms of whether or not the visitor indicated that Chaco held a personal meaning to them. Thirty of the respondents (53%) reported Chaco having a personal meaning, while 27 (47%) did not. Of the 30 visitors who did have a personal connection to Chaco, 16 (53%) were first time visitors, and 13 (43%) were revisiting the canyon. The 27 visitors who reported no personal connection included 23 (85%) first time visitors and only 5 (19%) returning visits. Although returning visitors were slightly more likely to hold a personal connection, very few repeat visitors stated that they held no personal connection with Chaco.

Visitors' comments on this question were the most interesting, because they provided more personal information and opinions than they did when answering why they had come to Chaco to begin with. All comments are included in Appendix IV. Comments include:

"Interested in the spiritual aspect of their [Native American/Chacoan] life."

"Chaco Canyon had a deeply spiritual feeling to it when I first came here, which it still has now. It's magical being here. It really spurs me to imagine what life was like here, and it makes me wonder what places in the U.S. will still be here 800 years from now."

"More as a dark sky site than its historical significance."

"Magical. Very interesting piece of the world history. Happy to have experienced it with my family."

"It was an early exposure to a way of social organization and life that became a lifelong magnet for us wherever we went."

It's clear from these comments that Chaco Canyon is definitely a place where visitors are encouraged to make their own interpretations and create personal relationships with the sites. The individual interpretations are many and varied, and demonstrate that CCNHP has definitely succeeded in fulfilling their Vision Statement's goal of a making a place where visitors create idiosyncratic relationships. It is also clear that (possibly unintentional) cultural appropriation is at work. This appropriation of Native culture by non-Native tourists can be read as a form of neocolonialism, wherein Native bodies are continuously colonized through lack of and misrepresentation, discourse, and the reaffirmation of destructive and false master narratives placed upon Indigenous peoples. An enormous body of literature exists on this subject, including Brown (2003), Bruyneel (2007), Byrd (2011), Gonzales and Cook-Lynn (1999), Graham and McJohn (2006), Manus (2006), Million (2013), Povinelli (2002), and Strang and Busse (2012). At Chaco, visitors are unable to hear co-curators at the Park, which could potentially lead to further romanticization and essentialization of Native peoples.

Visitors experience CCNHP differently than other National Parks. It is different from other National Parks in that the space feels unregulated and only lightly supervised to visitors – visitors can move very freely and have almost complete control of their experience. For instance, Mesa Verde National Park restricts access to many of the cliff dwellings so that visitors must be on a guided tour to see the site (MVNP 2015). Other National Parks like Zion do not allow visitors to drive their own vehicles through Zion Canyon, but must ride on a park shuttle bus (ZNP 2015). In contrast, Chaco is a place where visitors can drive their own vehicles, visit all publicly accessible sites on their

own, do backcountry hiking, and decide how much ranger and interpretive interaction they desire.

Based upon the survey results, CCNHP fulfills its goals of educating visitors about the Great Houses, and creates a free environment where visitors are welcome to create their own interpretations and relationships with the sites. However, I have pointed out that during conversations or interpretive programs, visitors are unable to see and hear all of the interlocutors in the conversation, namely Native American groups. In the final chapter, I address this issue, as well as some of the implications of CCNHP's interpretive programs. I offer possibilities for improvement, particularly through broader interpretation and more transparent curation.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

At the beginning of this study, I posited that Chaco Culture National Historic Park's Vision Statement plays the same role as a museum's mission statement. The Vision Statement has two objectives: to educate visitors about the Great Houses and ancient Chacoans, and to foster a space where visitors can create their own idiosyncratic, or personal, relationships with the canyon. In this study, I have discussed trail guides, Wayside Exhibits, human interpretation, and used visitor surveys to look at the relationship between CCNHP's interpretive goals and programs and actual visitor experience. Overall, the majority of visitors' personal goals and expectations aligned with CCNHP's interpretive materials, and the result was that visitors were exposed to educational material about Chacoan Great Houses and culture. Those visitors who did not use this material were still in a position to realize personal goals – whatever those may be – due to the freedom that is allowed at Chaco to construct an individual experience.

The trail guides, Wayside Exhibits, and ranger-led interpretation all offer visitors the opportunity to learn about the Great Houses of Chaco with specific attention given to their archaeological significance. The trail guides and Wayside Exhibits are interpretive materials that visitors can use to whatever extent they wish. Visitor surveys demonstrated that visitors use these materials, and generally find them useful. Ranger-led interpretation is another option for visitors, and offers them the opportunity to learn Chaco's prehistoric narrative in more detail, and also is a time when they can ask questions and receive answers. Tours and programs also are moments when broader interpretation can be offered to visitors, although my research has demonstrated that

visitors typically do not care about these additional histories as much as about Chaco's prehistory. This was demonstrated through visitors' lack of interest and knowledge of Richard Wetherill, and their continual focus on the Great Houses.

Additionally, close to half of the survey respondents reported having a personal connection with Chaco. An idiosyncratic relationship with the canyon is not something that can be forced on visitors, but CCNHP has gone to great lengths to ensure that Chaco is a space where visitors are afforded every opportunity to create one. Chaco is less chaperoned than other National Parks, leaving visitors free to do things at their own pace. Those that did report having a personal connection were very fervent about it. Seven visitors who said they did not have a personal connection still made comments about how visiting Chaco was a good experience.

CCNHP's goals to educate visitors about the Great Houses and create a space open to personal relationships is definitely a success, especially when these goals are aligned with visitor goals. Visitors leave satisfied, even if they do leave with more questions than they came with. The success of CCNHP's interpretive program is not without its implications. I turn now to the possible positive and negative consequences that CCNHP's interpretive program creates.

Most of what comes of educating visitors about ancient Chaco and providing a personal experience is beneficial in that visitors come away from Chaco with an awareness of the importance of cultural heritage preservation, and of environmental preservation. Although none of the interpretive material is specifically designed to teach visitors about heritage preservation, it is emphasized throughout the experience. The canyon, Great Houses, and accompanying artifacts would not exist in such stable

condition without careful stewardship and conservation. Of course, the framework of stability that CCNHP privileges is only one ideology of appropriate curatorial care for the sites at Chaco. Many archaeological sites in the southwest are looted and defaced, but the NPS provides a safety barrier against those actions. Visitors are aware that, while these sites are very remote, it is the stewardship and heavy presence of the NPS that keeps them safe in this regard. Visitors and rangers both articulated that preserving the sites for future generations is an important task (Svare 2015). Additionally, the Park's status as a UNESCO World Heritage site is inherently bound up in concepts of value and preservation. It is worth noting that these perceptions of preservation and stabilization are from only one perspective, and that there are alternative appropriate ways of caring for structural remains.

The archaeological record of the canyon is well-documented academically, and visitors can easily see that. Great care has been taken to learn about Chaco through past excavations, and current research. Visitors leave impressed by the importance that heritage sites have in terms of data, identity, and, as UNESCO would have it, a universal human value. This raises visitor's awareness of Chaco and other archaeological and world heritage sites, which in turn could lead to a better-informed and educated public that helps make decisions about the management of these sites.

Another subtext throughout visitors' experience is the importance of environmental preservation. Chaco's aesthetic privileges empty viewsheds, open space, wildlife, and a dark night sky. One of the main things that visitors encounter while visiting Chaco is just how big and seemingly empty it is. The viewshed is carefully kept clear of anything historic or modern, letting visitors catch a glimpse of the southwest

without any (perceived) development. The canyon is also home to many animals, such as rabbits, lizards, ravens, coyotes, bobcats, and a large elk herd (NPS 2015a). Throughout the year, visitors see and hear the different animals, many that visitors from other parts of the country or world may not have encountered before.

One of Chaco's most stunning features is its dark sky. On August 29, 2013, CCNHP became an official Dark Sky Park (International Dark Sky Association 2013, NPS 2013). Not only was it awarded Dark Sky Park status, but at the level of Gold-Tier, meaning that Chaco's skies are some of the closest you can come to complete dark status (IDSA 2013). CCNHP takes advantage of this status (and its previous point-of-fact darkness) with a Dark Sky Party, and seasonal star parties. The Albuquerque Astronomical Society (TAAS) participates in these events, and I was present during a Dark Sky Party. During these events, visitors have access to CCNHP's observatory, and any telescopes that TAAS brings. Visitors can see planets, stars, and other astronomical phenomena at these events. And on clear (and hopefully moonless) nights, simply looking up affords visitors an incredible view of the Milky Way. And when the moon is out, visitors can see just how bright it is, casting shadows throughout the campground and making flashlights completely unnecessary.

The implications of these experiences could be that visitors have a heightened awareness of what a (perceived) more natural landscape looks like. Given that the San Juan Basin is a current hot spot for oil drilling, visitors who come away with a knowledge of what will be lost through area development is important (NGI' Shale Daily 2015; WPXEnergy 2015). Again, this could be applied to contexts other than Chaco to include natural or historical sites closer to visitors' own homes. While these positive implications

are undocumented by this study, it is important to realize the constructive impact that CCNHP's interpretive programs may provide. Just as ancient Chacoan life was not confined to Chaco Canyon, today it continues to be a center from which knowledge and change can emanate through contemporary society.

Positive implications are not all that can come from CCNHP's interpretive program, however, and this study would be remiss to not offer some critical thoughts on possible negative implications. My main argument here is that an apparent absence of Native American co-curators results in subsequent (and probably unintentional) romanticization by visitors and Park interpreters. I believe that a transparency of curatorial voices in interpretive materials could make visitors more aware of the presence and influence of co-curators.

At the moment, the themes of CCNHP narration index prehistory, nature, and an undeveloped and non-modern space. These themes carry possible negative implications for Native American communities who affiliate with and surround Chaco, and for the larger Native American community. The NPS administers CCNHP, and has consulted with the Native American Consultation Committee for Chaco (NACC) since around 1990 (de la Torre 2005). However, this on-going consultation is not directly transparent at the Park, where visitors only see as the NPS employees doing interpretation. Some visitors ask questions like, "what do Native people think?" Other visitors talk about their experience in the Park as a moment where they learned about Native American culture (Appendix IV). However, because of the visual absence of explicit Native interpretation during their visit, it is possible for visitors to mistake elements of prehistoric Native Chaco culture for a comprehensive and homogenous contemporary Native culture.

Hooper-Greenhill observes that, “where meanings are multiple, but where a single meaning is insisted upon, questions must be asked as to who is advantaged by the meaning made available, and whose history or culture is being denied by being suppressed? Questions of knowledge are also questions of power (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:77).” The power to narrate at Chaco appears to be largely in the hands of CCNHP, who controls what is available to visitors and what is not. The few interpretive moments where visitors can see Native narratives include the *Chaco* film, the “Heart of Chaco” sign (which is more visual than narrative), and a few books in the bookstore.

One text that allows some space (three chapters out of seventeen) for Native narratives is David Grant Noble’s *In Search of Chaco Canyon: New Approaches to an Archaeological Enigma* (2004). In these three chapters, three Native scholars from different federally recognized tribes (Hopi, Navajo, and Santa Clara Pueblo) tell their own stories of Chaco. These stories, sometimes at odds with each other, give readers a glimpse into an alternative narrative. Leigh Kuwanwisiwma offers a story of Hopi clan mythologies, stressing that different clans have different stories to tell because they have differing histories. Rina Swentzell counters this compartmentalization with, “in general, Pueblo people easily identify with any and all of those places, because making distinctions about who actually lived where and for how long is not the way we think (Swentzell 2004:49).” Instead, she says that the Santa Clara Pueblo does not specifically talk about Chaco Canyon, but knew it as a place where the ancestors had lived. Richard Begay, a Navajo scholar, adds onto these two perspectives. He talks about Chaco as the home of the Gambler, who exercised power over the ancient Chacoans until their cities fell (Begay 2004: 56).

These stories of different Native connections with the canyon demonstrate that oral histories of Chaco are as diverse, dissonant, and valid as written histories are. And at Chaco, Native peoples are awkwardly lumped together as descendants of the ancient Chacoans and these sacred sites. Kuwanwisiwma (2004) combats this simplistic narrative with the example that, “outside researchers sometimes casually misuse the terms “Hopi” and “Hopi tribe” without understanding their meanings (Kuwanwisiwma 2004:43).” He goes on to say that, “today there are thirty-four living Hopi clans and at least thirty additional extinct clans. Fundamental, then, is to accept that there are sixty-four clan histories (Kuwanwisiwma 2004: 44).” Kuwanwisiwma argues that CCNHP does not understand this, and that their attempts to lump all affiliated Native groups together by the category Puebloan or even by tribe, is flawed.

According to this argument, although the NPS does leave some spaces for broader interpretation, visitors, especially ones from other parts of the country, cannot identify the different tribes who affiliate with Chaco, much less the complexities of clan histories. While exposing and clarifying these differences would be a monumental task for the NPS and the NACC, at present there is nothing to keep visitors from perpetuating this idea of amorphous and non-present Native Americans.

Aside from visitors possibly failing to understand the non-homogenous nature of affiliated tribal communities, Natives could also be pushed into the past alongside the prehistoric Great Houses. During tours, the occasion when Native Americans were brought up by rangers was typically in connection with Great Kivas. On the tours, kivas are discussed as ceremonial, sacred, and somewhat ambiguous spaces. Hence, the only tie that Native groups are allowed to have in this moment is through the architectural

evidence of ancient ceremonial spaces: something that non-Natives can easily romanticize. Although rangers constantly emphasized that the Chacoans did not vanish, but migrated, rangers hardly ever made ties to anything aside from ambiguous ceremonies. Discussion of modern Puebloan architecture was not mentioned, nor was rock art. Also unmentioned were any of the curatorial decisions that the NACC has made with the NPS. During the programs I observed, although it was mentioned a couple of times that the Park staff consults with Native peoples, this characterization of the relationship makes it a very ‘us and them’ rapport. This further reifies to visitors that non-Natives are the ones creating narratives at CCNHP. Although consultation is taking place, it is not collaboration. And the NACC was never mentioned to visitors by name, nor was its appropriate designation known by the rangers I questioned about it.

The lack of curatorial transparency is not the only thing problematic about interpretive programs. During a site tour, one ranger guiding a group past the Great Kiva at Chetro Ketl said, “I’m not even going to talk about what happened here after 1300, because it would detract from this.” Clearly, *something* happened in Chaco after 1300, but CCNHP is not interested in narrating it. By eliding the history of excavation, traders, ranchers, researchers, and the CCC, Chaco is frozen in time after 1300, until around 1916, when the NPS became the administrator. Highlighting these additional narratives in some manner would expand Chaco’s local community use and purpose, drawing the canyon out of prehistory and into the contemporary era.

CCNHP and other co-curators or stakeholders, such as archaeologists and travel companies, create a marketable image for Chaco that centers on the Great Houses and particular aesthetic qualities. Potential visitors see this image, desire it, and come to

Chaco eager to be educated about Great Houses, ancient Chacoans, and to experience the pristine and empty space of the canyon. Hence, CCNHP delivers a narrative that caters to this image. Additional histories are mentioned (but not focused on) within interpretive programs and tours, but visitors are uninterested. This may be because visitors are also unaware of the existence and importance of additional histories. Were CCNHP to craft a new image that included information about historic and modern Chaco, it is possible that visitors would eventually come to expect these narratives during their visit.

Chaco is a delicately framed space and experience for visitors. The framing, I argue, begins with the unpaved road into the Park. This road can be construed as another index of the fictitious absence of modernity in Native communities, particularly for the Navajo families who live in this area. As visitors make their way down this road, they see homes, corrals, and other structures that are very different from housing seen in the surrounding cities of Farmington and Albuquerque. There is no familiar layout to the homes or farms, and animals range freely throughout the area. As visitors are on their way to see ruins – ruins built by ancient indigenous groups – it could be very easy for visitors to compare ancient Chacoans to modern Navajo and Puebloan communities in ways that essentialize them. Using Shelby Tisdale's (1996) argument that brief interactions between Natives and non-Natives in the southwest only reinforce stereotypes, I think that these factors need to be something that the NPS, CCNHP, and NACC should think critically about.

At the time of writing, CCNHP has no active museum, and is currently working towards opening a new one in 2016 (CCNHP 2014). The exhibit space gives CCNHP the potential to include multiple additional histories, as well as to grapple with complex

issues of modern Native curation at the Park. Because the upcoming museum is going to be housed in the Visitor Center, it is an excellent opportunity for visitors to become better acquainted with not only Chaco's origins, but also with Chaco's ongoing importance and dynamic presence on the landscape and in people's lives.

As Chaco Culture National Historic Park moves into its second century of existence, administered and jointly curated by the National Park Service, this study serves as a visitor and interpretive evaluation at a critical junction in CCNHP's life. To date, the Vision Statement expresses hope that visitors have access to information about the Great Houses and ancient Chacoans, and to create a space where personal relationships can be created with the landscape is successful. The effectiveness of the interpretive program demonstrates largely positive impacts.

Conversations about Chaco are ongoing, and "no interpretation is ever fully completed (Hooper-Greenhill 2004:566)." This study is just one, "link in a very complexly organized chain of other" interpretations and studies of Chaco Canyon, one that will continue to grow (Emerson and Holquist 1986:69). In 2016, the NPS will celebrate its Centennial year. Moving into the future, it is vital that all curatorial voices at CCNHP are equally valued and explicitly present for visitors.

This study has examined the current interpretive processes at CCNHP and compared them with actual visitor experience. In doing so, I have illustrated how visitors engage with the space and the interpretive materials provided to them. While visitors are generally pleased with the current structure and interpretation at the Park, a critical analysis of the implications of the visitor experience demonstrates that visitors are not able to see Native interpretation and co-curation at Chaco, and do not see contemporary

Native communities' presence. Hopefully, this study offers CCNHP an opportunity to see the success of their current interpretive programs, how visitors utilize these materials, and to see areas of narration that can be improved upon.

Appendix I



Figure 1.1 San Juan End of County Maintenance sign.

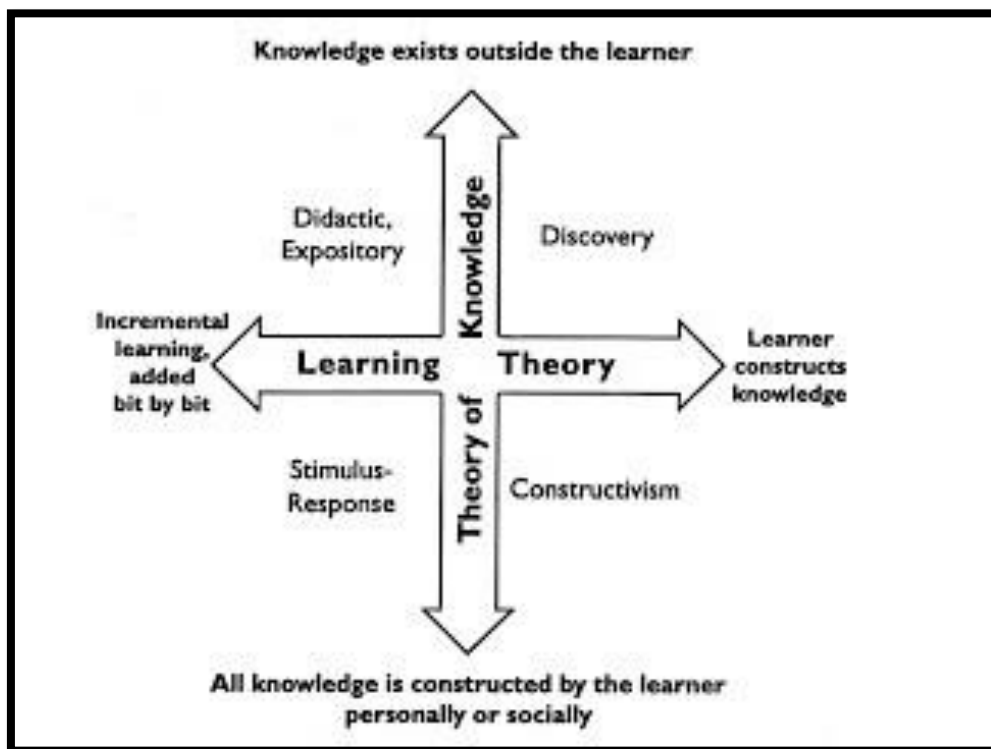


Figure 2.1 Theories of Education. Hein 1998.



Figure 4.1 Wayside Exhibit for Chetro Ketl.

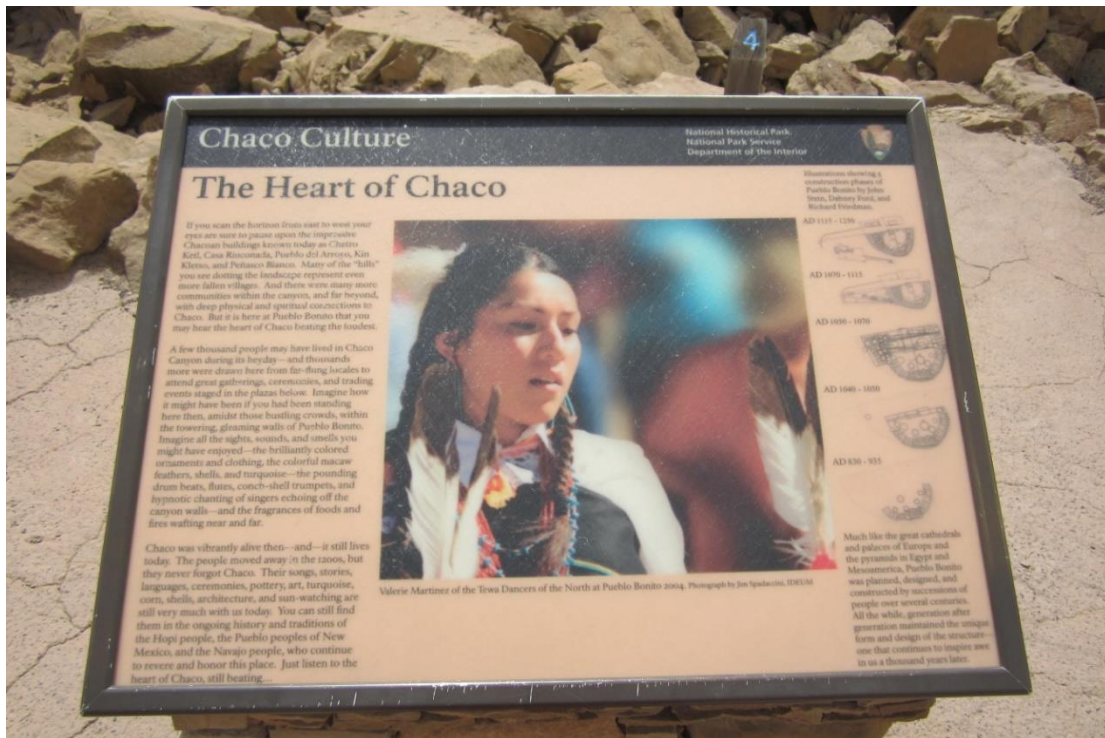


Figure 4.2 The Heart of Chaco Wayside Exhibit in Pueblo Bonito.



Figure 4.3 Chetro Ketl trail guide entry with corresponding numbered post.



Figure 4.4 Chetro Ketl trail guide entry concerning water control devices. View towards flood control area behind site.



Figure 4.5 Chetro Ketl trail guide concerning water control devices with corresponding numbered post.



Figure 5.1 Visitors watching 2014 Fall Equinox sunrise through doorways at Casa Rinconada.



Figure 5.2 View of cliff through doors at Casa Rinconada. View to the east.



Figure 5.3 View of cliff from Casa Rinconada. View to the east.



Figure 6.1 Area of survey collecting near Great Kiva at Pueblo Bonito.



Figure 6.2 Visitors taking surveys near Great Kiva at Chetro Ketl.

Appendix II

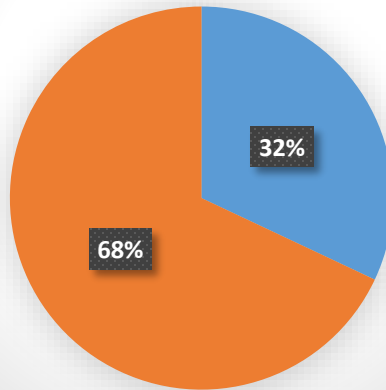
Pueblo Bonito & Chetro Ketl Visitor Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This project's goal is to understand why visitors come to Chaco and how they learn here. Only individuals who are 18 years of age and older, and are not Park employees may take this survey. This survey is completely voluntary and anonymous, and no individual information will be collected. Thank you for your participation! ☺

- 1) Have you been to Chaco Canyon before? YES / NO
- 2) Why did you decide to (re)visit Chaco Canyon?
- 3) When you went through these sites, did you use the trail guide? YES / NO
What did you find most useful about it?
- 4) While visiting these sites, did you read the plaques and signs? YES / NO
Which were the most interesting or meaningful to you?
- 5) While in Pueblo Bonito, did you take the side trail to the Wetherill cemetery?
YES / NO
Why or why not?
- 6) Does Chaco Canyon hold any personal meaning for you? YES / NO
If so, what, how?

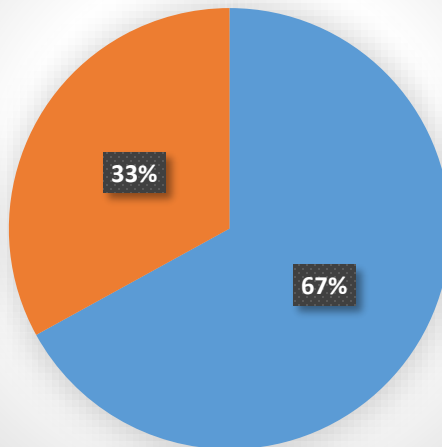
Appendix III

Have you been to Chaco Canyon before?



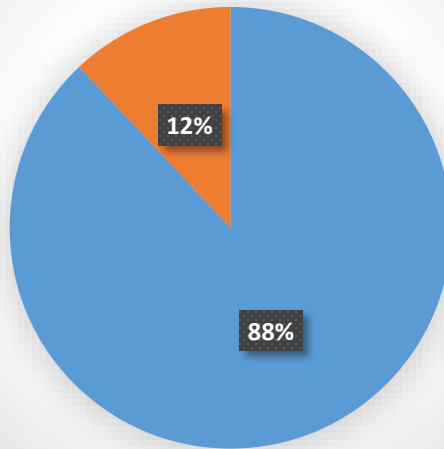
**BLUE: YES
RED: NO**

Did you use a trail guide?



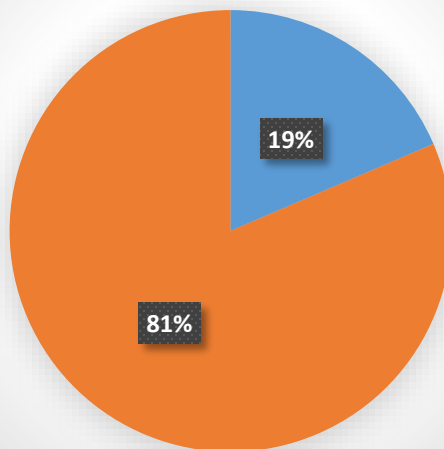
**BLUE: YES
RED: NO**

Did you read the signs in these sites?



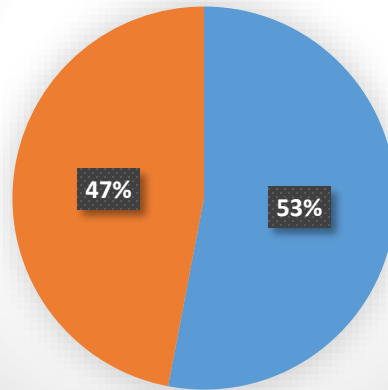
**BLUE: YES
RED: NO**

Did you visit the Wetherill Cemetery?



**BLUE: YES
RED: NO**

**Does Chaco Canyon hold any personal
meaning for you?**



**BLUE: YES
RED: NO**

Appendix IV

Author's Note: Visitor comments are recreated here exactly as they appear on the original survey. Visitor's surveys that did not include comments, but only answered "Yes" or "No" are not represented here. That information appears in Appendix III. Additionally, question 1 is omitted here because it is quantitative in nature; its data appears in Appendix III.

2. Why did you decide to (re)visit Chaco Canyon?

Curious about it.

Camping, hiking

Family recommended

No response

Was told about it by a friend

Because it was there and sounded really neat

Never been

Heard about it 25 years ago

We heard about it [unreadable] from a friend who had visited.

I work at Hovenweep National Monument (SCA volunteer) and lots of visitors ask about here.

After reading about its historical / cultural importance I added it to my itinerary.

Wife: I wanted to come back to a place I had visited that was very spiritual to me. Husband: It's the center of the universe.

To see it again

It is a very special place

Enjoyed Gila Cliff Dwellings

Driving home from Durango and had always wanted to visit. Also have a personal interest in learning more about ancient native cultures.

Son-in-law told us about it.

One more (world) heritage site off the list.

On my bucket list – lifelong dream

Love the culture, history, beauty, and antiquity (American antiquity); the light!

I came for the Dark Skies Star Party

Participate in Dark Sky Star Party and see the ruins

Bring the kids and explore, great weather.

Recommended by friend.

Read it on the tour book.

To take my wife and spend more than part of a day.

Liked it, and brought a school group and their parents

My husband rediscovered the uniqueness and beauty of the area.

Visiting relatives and looking for something of historical interest.

For the history, spiritual, and archaeological.

View ancient ruins

Read about history – saw documentaries about the area and the people.

To give a Boy Scout troop the experience.

A chance to experience a significant part of our history – of the southwest.

To have friends experience Chaco.

Invited by friends from Albuquerque.

The spiritual quality that I remembered. Our friends saw a photo in a NM Magazine and wanted us to take them here.

I was in the area and my husband has seen it before / recommended it.

Visiting the area, on the map.

The first time we camped here in the 1970s, our experience was very spiritual, even magical.

My astronomy club (TAAS) is doing public outreach this weekend.

Because it was a very special place the 1st time (1976ish), and I've always wanted to come back.

Historical appreciation.

For its cultural experience and history.

Star Party / My son wanted to see Chaco but didn't make first trip.

Friend invited.

To see and learn about Puebloan ancestors.

Touring southwest and always wanted to come here.

I like it here, beautiful, interesting.

Referred by friends. Interested in early Native Americans.

Culture.

The culture, the mystique. The architecture and how it was erected.

Read two books on the canyon, and decided it was a place to visit.

To visit history.

Have known about for years – live in Montrose, CO – brother in ABQ – friends have seen it. On bucket list for a long time.

Show my parents and siblings.

Hiking group.

3. When you went through these sites, did you use the trail guide? Yes / No

What did you find most useful about it?

Yes – Explaining what we were looking at.

Yes – Lots of info I mostly skipped. Would have been excellent back-seat car reading.

Yes – The numbered stops.

Yes – Explanations at the markers

Yes – The explanations of various rooms etc.

Yes – Info

No – Did not see the guide. Was in a hurry to catch up with ranger tour.

No – Not yet, tomorrow we will check it all out.

No – The trail guide box was empty. I would have.

Yes – Both the maps and detail cultural / historical information.

Yes – Petroglyphs was fun trying to guess what they meant.

Yes – The descriptions of the buildings.

Yes – Informative and concise.

No – We should have but forgot. I would like to know what facts are associated with # sites.

Yes – Very helpful.

No - Not yet.

Yes - Only points of interest

No - Had park ranger tour.

Yes - It pointed out building methods, what the rooms were used for, how old they were, and community life.

Yes - Excellent – very informative! Helped understand people, buildings, history, and architecture.

Yes - The opportunity to learn more.

Yes - Background information, historical perspective.

Yes - Descriptions – supplemented what the guide was saying.

Yes - Great. Short and sweet.

Yes - The numbered ones that match guide.

Yes - Pointed to significant sites and restoration.

Yes - The numbered stops with explanations of each.

Yes - Came in backwards but yes, used trail guide. Very useful.

Yes - Great information.

Yes - Information is useful but limited as well.

Yes - We also took guided tour, but the [trail] guide allows you to linger longer and see more.

Yes - Excellent coverage, good detail description.

Yes - Descriptions.

Yes - What and why about what we are looking at.

Yes - Giving information about the specific sites, but also had general info that covers all the sites. At Hungo Pavi there were no markers, so you had to guess at the different sites.

Yes - Explains the features and history. Very informative.

Yes - We used the books and got most info from them.

Yes - Information on how they did it.

Yes - The reasons or the whys or what questions answered.

Yes - The knowledge.

4. While visiting these sites, did you read the plaques and signs? Yes / No

What did you find most useful about them?

Yes - All.

Yes - Very good information

Yes - Those that explained what you were looking at.

Yes - All

No - Tomorrow we will check it all out.

Yes - Explanations of structures (those are vents (sp?), that's ceremonial, etc.)

Yes - Both

Some

Yes - any explaining what life there was like.

Yes - Haven't seen them all but I'm sure they're informative.

Yes - The Pueblo Bonito. Interesting and informative.

Yes - The stack rock and some of the styles.

Yes - Pueblo Bonito and tie to current culture.

Yes - Understanding how the Chacoans lived.

Yes - The archaeological work.

Yes - Historical info.

Yes - They are very useful.

Yes - Shrimp burrows, pecked basins.

Yes - They were ok, just a better insight would be nice.

Yes - I liked the names of the houses with the years of occupation.

Yes - Sometimes.

No - Not yet. After the guide, will walk through to gain more information.

Yes - Actually, they were all very valuable to me.

Yes - All – I love history!

Yes - They complement the guide

Yes - The numbered ones that match guide.

Yes - Those which linked present day native peoples to the Chaco culture, and gave a hint of the one era long ago of the vibrance of this community.

Yes - The Heart of Chaco sign was interesting. It encouraged you to look out and view the whole area.

Yes - All.

Yes - The pictures with point of and pictures of sites.

Yes - The very few that are present are useful but need more!!! Gallo campground: working class / info / sustained large part of community!

Yes - Information.

Yes - Introductory level at best.

Yes - Just starting out, first stop here at Chetro Ketl.

Yes - All were good, especially ones about culture.

Yes - Descriptions plus visuals.

Yes - Cannot remember.

Yes - When they estimated the building of the sites, who has explored them.

Yes - They were all very interesting, as I'm getting more interested in histories and cultures.

Yes - Some. We used the books and got most info from them.

Yes - All relevant.

Yes - They were helpful.

Yes - the kiva (sp?).

5. While in Pueblo Bonito, did you take the side trail to the Wetherill Cemetery? Yes / No
Why or why not?

No - Not interested.

No - Time constraints.

No - Wanted to stay on Pueblo Bonito guide.

No - Too new a timetable of information.

No - Physical issues

No - ?

N/A

No - Haven't been there yet. Sorry!

No - Ran short of time.

Yes - Wife: I read Marietta's book. She was a strong and important woman. Wanted to say a prayer for her.

No - Heading there now.

No - Haven't gone there yet.

No - Saving for next year's trip.

No - I was tired.

No- Pressed for time this trip.

Not yet but will visit.

No - Not yet, but we are going to.

No - Will do today.

No - On the tour, not included.

Yes - decided to visit after speaking with researcher.

No - on guided trail.

No - I read about it.

Yes - Wanted the chance to see as much as possible.

Yes - I wanted to get as complete an experience as possible.

Yes - I wanted to learn more about Wetherill.

Yes - Led by others to do so.

No - Knees. My friends went.

No - Might do it later today.

No - Spouse's knee injury forces us to limit our walks, and just slowly take in and feel the highlights.

No - Lack of time.

No - Saving on walking due to a finicky knee.

No - Had just been to Mesa Verde.

No- Just came from Mesa Verde.

No - Did not because really didn't know anything about Wetherill, but did research before this trip and will visit now.

No - Did not know about it.

No - Haven't been yet, plan to visit.

N/A

No - Can't walk very far.

No- did not visit site.

No - Not enough time.

No - Plan to.

No - This is our next stop.

No - Haven't been there yet.

No - Haven't been there yet.

No - Too far. Going by car to the next. We have small children.

6. Does Chaco Canyon hold any personal meaning for you? Yes / No

If so, what, how?

No - It's very interesting and I'm so glad that it is preserved.

No - But this is a place I can see the stars at night.

No - Great site.

Yes - Love the history and architecture.

Yes - It's a very important piece of our American heritage.

Yes - It was my husband's and my first trip together...9 years ago.

Yes - It's a very spiritual place and shows how the ancients could use geological formations and astronomy to predict seasonal events.

Yes - I studied Native American art history and always wanted to see what I read about / studied. Also heard stories about this place from my family (I grew up on the Isleta Reservation).

Yes - No freeways!

Yes - Connection to sacred site and ceremony.

Yes - There is something about the SW and the Anasazi that seems so authentic, so glorious. I especially liked the doors and windows, the petroglyphs. Guess it would be nice to have info at the site rather than a trail guide. Love, LOVE this place!

No - I find it fascinating intellectually.

Yes - Very spiritual place for the soul!

Yes - My wife, kids, and I lived in Chinle, AZ for 16 years. And Albuquerque, NM for past 20 years. Still fascinated by Native American culture.

Yes - Like history.

Yes - One of the three Anasazi ruins. We lived in Chinle at Canyon de Chelly 1979-1995. Very sentimental. Thank you.

Nothing personal but hard not to feel a sense of wonder – something like one might experience by looking at any ancient civilization.

Spiritual

No - Ancient ruins have always interested me.

Yes - I feel a connection to the people who lived, worked, had families, from the past.

Yes - Simply as a beautiful and interesting cultural site.

No - Spiritual – Appreciation for the native culture.

Yes - Magical. Very interesting piece of the world history. Happy to have experienced it with my family.

Yes - It was an early exposure to a way of social organization and life that became a lifelong magnet for us wherever we went.

Yes - More as a dark sky than its historical significance.

Yes - Chaco Canyon had a deeply spiritual feeling to it when I first came here, which it still has now. It's magical being here. It really spurs me to imagine what life was like here, and it makes me wonder what places in the US will still be here 800 years from now.

Yes / No – Preserving the past is important.

No - Not currently, no.

Yes - Wanted to visit but had to become an adult to visit. Father had no interest in Indian life, but I always have and my 22 year old son is building Indian-like structures.

Yes - Very interesting to know how olders lived.

Yes - My understanding of the world and peoples' habitation of it. Additional Comment: Would like to see expansion of services: longer paid tours to alternative sites.

Part of Mesa Verde – Machu Picchu. Ancient peoples, Ancestral Puebloan fascination.

Yes - I love ruins, interest in SW culture. Was at field school in NM 52 years ago. Was anthropology BA in California.

Yes - Interested in spiritual aspects of their life.

Yes - Maybe the solitude, a place that brings out a lot of what-ifs about life?

Yes - Love learning and feeling the great feelings here.

Yes - History.

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