



## Wupatki Outing with Ms. Grimmitt and Ms. Fisk's 4th Grade Class by Sabrina Carlson

On February 24, 2016 I had the privilege of presenting to the 57 students of Ms. Grimmitt's and Ms. Fisk's classes at Marshall Elementary School about Leave No Trace Ethics, outing expectations, and the Hug-A-Tree curriculum. We had a discussion about what trash really is (yes, your apple core is trash),

and what a special treasure places like Wupatki National Monument is for our country. The students were empowered with the knowledge of what to do if they ever get lost in the woods, and they all agreed that staying in one place would be the best plan, even if it might feel scary at times. Many students had concerns and questions about how to know if someone looking for them was Search and Rescue or a stranger. It comforted them to know that Search and Rescue volunteers will always have a radio and identification. When our presentation was finished, each of the students received a basic survival kit to always keep with them when adventuring in the outdoors. The kit contained a poncho, emergency blanket, glow sticks, signal mirror, and whistle. While I hope none of those young people ever need it, I'm thrilled to know that these students now have the knowledge to keep themselves safe if they are ever separated from their families while outdoors.



First look at the ruins from above!

On March 22, we took our newly found outdoor confidence to Wupatki National Monument to learn about the history and culture of the ancient people who once lived there. In typical fashion, I had carefully planned for a number of detailed and exciting lessons that would capture how ancient and modern cultures are similar, how to build an emergency shelter using architectural concepts from ancient builders, and a ball and stick game often played by the Zuni people. Ideally all wonderful plans, but today they had to quickly change.

Being the first Wupatki outing of the season, we discovered that the transit time we originally anticipated had doubled. This unfortunately made three of our activities unreasonable. We were also reminded that spring wind on the open desert north of Flagstaff would make shelter building with modern materials impossible to do without the potential of littering the monument. So, after a quick conversation with the teachers, and co-leader Richard May, we made a quick decision to modify the plan to include a tour of the ruin, a fun ball game, and a break for lunch in between.

As luck would have it, Ms. Grimmett had previously worked as a ranger for Wupatki, so she led the first round of ruin tours. She knew all sorts of wonderful details that I would never have known, and I was grateful to learn so much from her.

Richard and I led the activity at the ball court. We taught the students about the importance of ball courts throughout villages all over the southwest and what a huge distance there is between Wupatki (the northernmost example of these ceremonial courts) and Chichen Itza (the southernmost). The students were amazed to learn that the quetzal feathers and seashells found at Wupatki were evidence that trade took place between the two separate groups. He also explained how even today, playing games with people from other cultures helps break language barriers and has the ability to create friends anywhere you go. After the short lesson, the students had the chance to play a ball and stick game similar to what children at Wupatki might have played 900 years ago



Play Ball!

It was a glorious first visit to Wupatki, and both students and adults learned a great deal.



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