



Wupatki Outing with Ms. Schafer and Ms. Mimran's 4th Grade Classes

by Sabrina Carlson

On March 21, 2016, I had the privilege of presenting to the 52 students at Ms. Schafer and Ms. Mimran's class at Seacrist Elementary School on 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 helped 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 outside. 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 and sound if they are ever separated from their families while outdoors.

On March 30, 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.

When the class arrived at Wupatki we divided everyone into two groups to start the activities. We discussed the concept of "fundamental human needs," which is the common ground that all cultures throughout history have shared. Material needs like food, shelter, and defense; and non-material needs like love, art, beauty, and a belief system were all examples of this idea. As the students toured the ruins, we looked for evidence of human survival and to see if we could recognize these needs. We wondered if the one petroglyph of a snake was communication, art, or part of their belief system. We took note of the *metates* used for grinding corn and other plants, and imagined the kinds of social customs and religious ceremonies that may have taken place in the community room. We learned the pueblo had no doors on the first two stories in order make the houses safe and better for defense. Figuring out a way to direct fire smoke out of the lower rooms sideways made us realize they had seriously advanced engineering skills!



Imagining living in one of the rooms

Richard May then led the activity at the ball court. He 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 want to 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. While playing out at the ballcourt, the students spotted a pronghorn. Mr. May explained that they were once near extinction, but pronghorn can now regularly be seen in the plains around Flagstaff. This was a special siting for everyone.



It's harder than it looks!

Before leaving, we made a quick stop at the blowhole. A fascinating geological feature in which an opening to an underground cave will either suck air in or blow air out, depending on the temperature differential between the cave and the outdoor air. Archaeologists think this opening might have had supernatural and religious significance to the residents of this home site.



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