



Wupatki Outing with Ms. Timney and Ms. Rischmueller's 4th Grade Classes

by Sabrina Carlson

On April 7, 2016, 48 students of Ms. Timney and Ms. Rischmueller's classes at Thomas Elementary School had the chance to learn 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 are

for our country. To emphasize the importance of staying on the trail, Mrs. Timney shared a story about her granddaughter finding a very fragile artifact just inches off the trail. If she had stepped off the trail even a little, that artifact could have been crushed! 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 outside. The kit contained a poncho, emergency blanket, glow sticks, signal mirror, and whistle. While we hope none of those young people ever need it, we're 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.



Moving Quickly to Stay Warm!

On April 25, 2016 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 their 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!

Richard May 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.



A Fun But Challenging Game!

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.

While many of the trips to the ruins this spring had been chilly or windy, today was downright cold, blustery and threatening to rain. We needed to shorten our second activity rotation a bit to dodge the rain, but it was a good day nevertheless and provided wonderful opportunities to discuss the importance of checking the weather report and dressing accordingly before adventure!



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