



Wupatki Outing with Ms. Herman and Ms. Bolden's 4th Graders by Sabrina Carlson

On April 7, 2016, I had the privilege of presenting to the 48 students of Ms. Bolden and Ms. Herman's classes at Thomas

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.



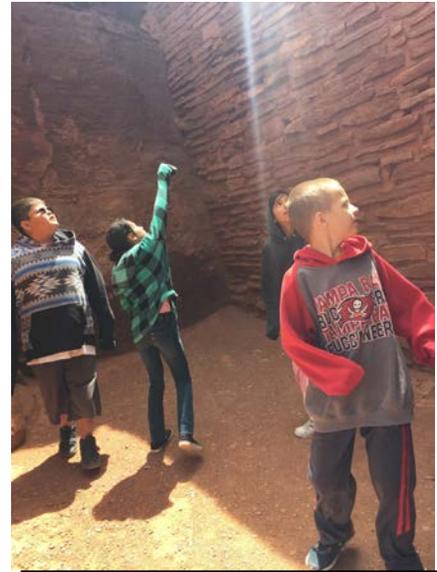
Ranger Erin welcomes the class!

On April 26, 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. We learned the pueblo had no doors on the first two stories in order to 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 skill!

While observing the metate and food storage room, two female Hopi Elders passed our group and told us that they still use the same traditional methods of corn grinding and preparation to make traditional piki bread like the residents of Wupatki used. They suggested that the children come up to Hottevilla sometime to see them. "It's hard work!" they exclaimed with a friendly chuckle as they walked away up the trail.

Co-leader 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 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.



Exploring history at Wupatki

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. Archeologists think this opening might have had supernatural and religious significance to the residents of this home site.



This Seeds of Stewardship outing made possible by grants from:



Thanks to Peace Surplus for donating a portion of the survival kits for all the 4th graders in Flagstaff!