

THESIS

A STRONGHOLD OF STRONG MEDICINE: PLACE ATTACHMENT AND THE SOUTH  
UNIT, BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Submitted by

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## ABSTRACT

### A STRONGHOLD OF STRONG MEDICINE: PLACE ATTACHMENT AND THE SOUTH UNIT, BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK

This thesis explores the relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the White River Badlands of South Dakota. Through constant interaction the Oglala Lakota have built a place attachment to these badlands located on the South Unit of Badlands National Park. Described through qualitative interviews, the contentious past of the South Unit colors this attachment, but the possibility of creating a new park on the South Unit offers the Oglala Sioux Tribe the unique opportunity to re-create a sense of place for the youth of the Reservation that is not based on a history of dispossession but rather on the precedent-setting repossession of national park land through the creation of the first Tribal National Park in the United States.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My study is rooted as deeply within my own history as it is in the history of the Lakota people. My parents, Randall and Susan, and my grandmother, Martha Jean Trueblood, never doubted my ability to complete this study, and enthusiastically listened to every update I offered. My brother, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year law student, was always ready to find statute numbers for government legislation at the drop of a hat. I also am deeply indebted to my Quaker Trueblood ancestors who left first England and then North Carolina to seek religious freedom in Washington County, Indiana. For almost two hundred years a number of Truebloods chose to continue living there, thus inspiring within me a deep sense of place. My Quaker ancestry has embedded in me the Quaker proverb, “speak only if your words improve upon the silence,” an idea that helped me greatly in my interviews. This study would not have been possible without three important people. Kathleen Sherman gave me the opportunity to participate in the field school on Pine Ridge Reservation. Ashley Cobb allowed me to join her phenomenal research project as an equal partner. Megan Murphy provided both research assistance and moral support. These three women had more influence on this thesis than they will ever know. Most importantly, I thank the Oglala Lakota of Pine Ridge Reservation who gave me their stories. I hope that I have done them justice.

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## Introduction

On June 2, 2012, a group of officials from Badlands National Park and the Oglala Sioux Tribe<sup>1</sup> of Pine Ridge Reservation met on the South Unit of Badlands National Park for an open house. Events of the day included a traditional brain tanning demonstration and traditional dancing and storytelling. The open house marked the beginning of the summer season at the South Unit, and the seasonal opening of the White River Visitor Center. In the midst of the celebration Badlands National Park Superintendent Eric Brunnemann and President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe John Yellow Bird Steele met in an open teepee and signed a Record of Decision.

The signing of this document was last minute, and went unpublicized leading up to the event. However, it marked another important step in a decade-long effort to create the first Tribal National Park in the United States. The new park will replace the South Unit of Badlands National Park which is located entirely within the boundaries of the Pine Ridge Reservation.

This precedent-setting park has developed out of a recognition by both the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service that the land of the South Unit was obtained through dispossession. For 150 years the story of national parks has included the often veiled history of Native land dispossession. Early parks focused on preserving a priori nature in America's West, an act that precluded the presence of Indians who had been using the land for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The signing of the Record of Decision in 2012 that officially selected the Tribal National Park as the preferred management alternative for the future of the South Unit

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Oglala Sioux Tribe" or "OST" used in this paper refers to members of the Tribe who either live on Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota, or claim membership to the OST. This term can be used interchangeably with "Oglala Lakota." The OST is part of the Great Sioux Nation which used much of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains for their livelihood before being forced onto reservations following the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, and many subsequent treaties. More information on the OST can be found at <http://www.oglalalakotanation.org>.

was one more step in a long and winding road towards reconciliation with one tribe that experienced dispossession in the name of first patriotism and later preservation.

As the Tribal National Park process continues to move forward, the entities involved are interested in learning about the areas of agreement and areas of discord between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and Badlands National Park. In 2012 Badlands National Park and members of the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority worked with a Colorado State University researcher, Ashley Cobb, to develop interview questions that would look at the changing relationship between these two groups. In the summer of 2012 I visited Pine Ridge Reservation, and worked to collect a number of interviews with Ashley. The complete analysis of these interviews is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead this thesis considers just one of many aspects of the interviews in order to understand the changing relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service.

The Oglala Lakota have been interacting with the White River Badlands<sup>2</sup> for hundreds of years. Because of their experiences on these lands, the Lakota have developed a place attachment to the badlands. Sartre argues that “when knowledge and feeling are oriented toward something real, actually perceived, that thing, like a reflector, returns the light it has received from it” (Sartre 1965:89, quoted in Basso 1996b:55). Interaction with an object creates meaning. The Oglala Lakota that I interviewed have been constantly focusing their knowledge and feelings on the badlands of South Dakota. That knowledge is then reflected back onto the Lakota so that the meaning in their lives can be defined through their relationship with the badlands.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “White River Badlands” describes the arid regions containing highly eroded landforms located in southwestern South Dakota near the White River. Badlands can be found throughout the Reservation, but those located within Badlands National Park are often called “big” badlands by members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe because of the towering formations and deep crevices in comparison to the smaller formations located throughout the Reservation and South Dakota. Any badlands discussed in this paper refer to the specific formations, both great and small, within the boundaries of Badlands National Park and the Pine Ridge Reservation. For more information on these badlands visit <http://www.nps.gov/badl/naturescience/index.htm>.

Constant interactions with the land have worked to build an interactional past full of memories. Future goals for the South Unit work to create an interactional potential of anticipated happenings associated with a place. Together the interactional past and interactional potential of the badlands as viewed by the Oglala Sioux Tribe work together to create place attachment.

Past negative experiences have colored the place attachment felt by adults on the Pine Ridge Reservation, but they are hopeful about the future, and look forward to the creation of a Tribal National Park that will be good for the land and good for the Tribe.

As the Tribal National Park process continues to move forward, the ways in which the members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe have created a sense of place in the past, and the ways in which they hope to re-create that sense of place in the future for the younger generation, must be taken into account by the National Park Service. The attachment to the land felt by the Lakota that I interviewed could prove just as important to the success of this precedent-setting venture as any passing government legislation.

## **Overview of Thesis**

While on Pine Ridge Reservation I interviewed National Park Service employees as well as Oglala Sioux Tribal members. However, this thesis focuses on the Native voices presented in the interviews. The Tribal National Park will be theirs to carry into the future, and as such it is important to understand their views on past successes and failures.

Though the thesis is written analytically, it also contains more casual elements in an effort to mirror the tone of the interviews I participated in. This thesis is not meant to reflect any sweeping opinions of the South Unit process from the eyes of the Oglala Lakota. The interviews were limited to a small group of people who have been actively involved in the Tribal National



Park process, but they do not speak for the entire Tribe. Still, their voices are an essential part of the continued success of the South Unit process.

In chapter one, I offer a look at the methodology I employed during my time on Pine Ridge. Using responsive interviewing techniques as well as participant observation I travelled throughout the Reservation performing interviews in order to gain a complete picture of the Tribal National Park process. This mixed methods approach established in conjunction with my research partner, Ashley Cobb, allowed me to look beyond the interview responses and truly understand the deep rooted feelings that the Oglala Lakota have for the badlands.

Chapter two considers symbolic interactionism and the ways in which people create place attachment. Using a framework developed by Milligan (1998) I look at two components of sense of place: interactional past and interactional potential. I also consider how disruptions in spatial continuity can act as breaking points that relegate events to the past, and open up the future to new possibilities. Using data from disaster studies I discuss the ways in which place attachment can contribute to the resilience of a society, and how this can be applied to the Oglala Lakota.

In chapter three I take an in depth look at the answers to four different questions asked during the interviews. With a heavy focus on the words of the Tribal members I interviewed, this section gets at the heart of the matter, and allows the Oglala Sioux to tell their story, perhaps for the first time.

Using the interview data detailed in chapter three, chapter four looks at how place attachment has been created by the Oglala Sioux Tribe in the past, and how they hope to re-create that sense of place for future generations through the Tribal National Park. By considering Tribal members' personal relationships to the badlands of South Dakota and Badlands National Park, as well as their reactions to the loss of the land to a bombing range in 1942, I contend that

these interactions have created meaning for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, and have contributed to the interactional past. The future goals described by Tribal members offer insight into the interactional potential as seen by residents of Pine Ridge Reservation. While many future goals look to creating a unique visitor experience on the South Unit, others focus more on the good of the Tribe. The goals represent the ideals of the Oglala Sioux people and present the National Park Service with an opportunity to understand the things that are important to the Lakota, such as place attachment. This understanding could prove essential to the success of the future Tribal National Park.

In my conclusion I consider what I have learned from this interview project, as well as what others can learn from it. The importance of place attachment to the success of the South Unit process cannot be undervalued, however it can be overlooked. This study works to make sure that does not happen.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Responsive Interviewing on Pine Ridge Reservation**

My research took place over six weeks in May and June of 2012. During those weeks, I resided on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, and travelled throughout the Reservation and southwestern South Dakota performing interviews that would help elicit the current relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service as they move towards the creation of the first Tribal National Park. However, my arrival on Pine Ridge was far from the beginning of this project, and though it has been many months since I left the Reservation, the project continues on.

One of the most important lessons that any researcher must learn is their place within the project they are working on. Many researchers will design a project from start to finish, and can truly call the work their own. However, the interview project that I took part in has roots much deeper than a single researcher or even a single institution. To understand the need for these interviews, a brief history of the South Unit of Badlands National Park must be considered.

#### **Repossessing the Badlands: The Struggle over the South Unit, Badlands National Park**

The creation of the South Unit of Badlands National Park has its roots in the early 1900s. With the passing of the Antiquities Act of 1906, the President of the United States gained the power to set aside lands of “historic or scientific interest” without Congressional approval (16 U.S.C., §§ 431). After much local campaigning by those seeking preservation, President Franklin D. Roosevelt invoked the Antiquities Act on January 25, 1939 to create Badlands National Monument (Shuler 1989: 34). On November 10, 1978 the Monument was re-designated as a national park (16 U.S.C., §§ 441e-1). The original struggle for preservation as a national park took place over seventy years with many starts and stops, and the entire effort is documented in

many sources about the White River Badlands. However, another struggle over preservation in Badlands National Park has drawn very little attention over the past decade, but it has the ability to change the National Park Service at its very roots.

This newer struggle has been going on for almost forty years. On January 2, 1976 the Oglala Sioux Tribe of South Dakota and the National Park Service signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which transferred 133,300 acres of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation into Badlands National Monument creating the South Unit, which includes the Palmer Creek Unit (Figure 1.1) (Oglala Sioux Tribe of South Dakota and the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior, 1976). This transferred land was to be held in trust for the Tribe, and managed by the National Park Service. The story of the newly incorporated land, however, does not begin with the co-management plan set up in the 1976 Memorandum of Agreement.

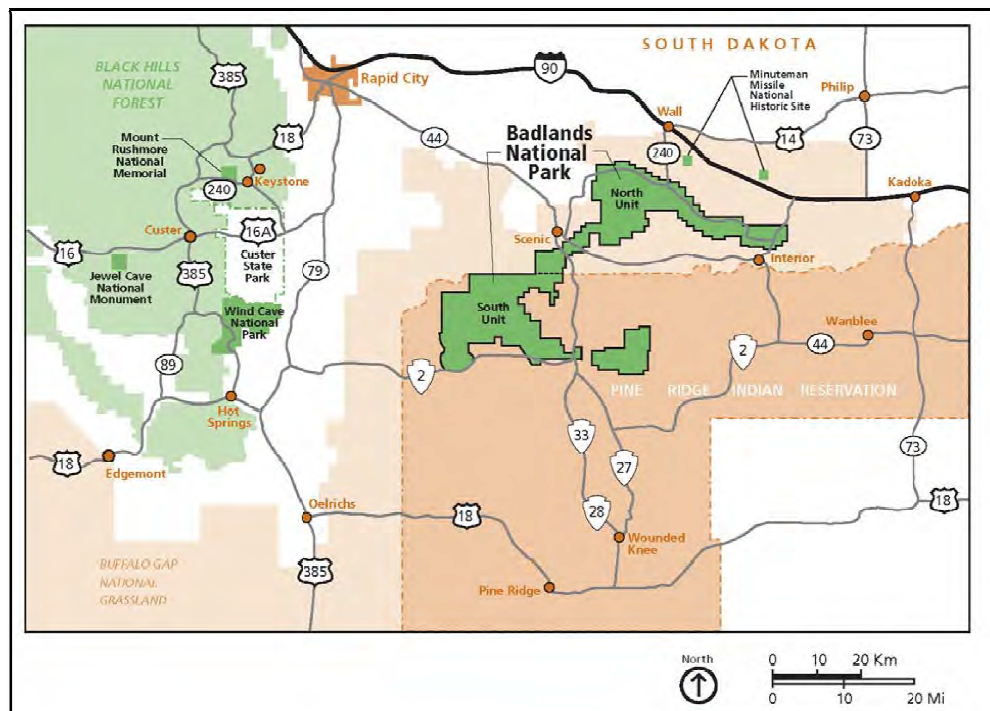


Figure 1.1 Vicinity Map: Badlands National Park (United States Department of the Interior et al. 2012)

## THE AERIAL GUNNERY RANGE - 1942

When the Oglala Lakota were forced onto the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1889 they had already been using the badlands of South Dakota for centuries. The Reservation is located in the heart of a landscape that the Oglala Sioux Tribe considers both historically and spiritually significant. With the entry of the United States into World War II in 1941, the United States Government saw the badlands as an important asset to the war effort. To best train for battle, the United States War Department began to look for land to use as bombing ranges. In 1942, 341,725 acres of the Pine Ridge Reservation were taken from the Oglala Lakota, and established as an Aerial Gunnery Range for training purposes (Figure 1.2) (United States Department of the Interior et al. 2012: 6).

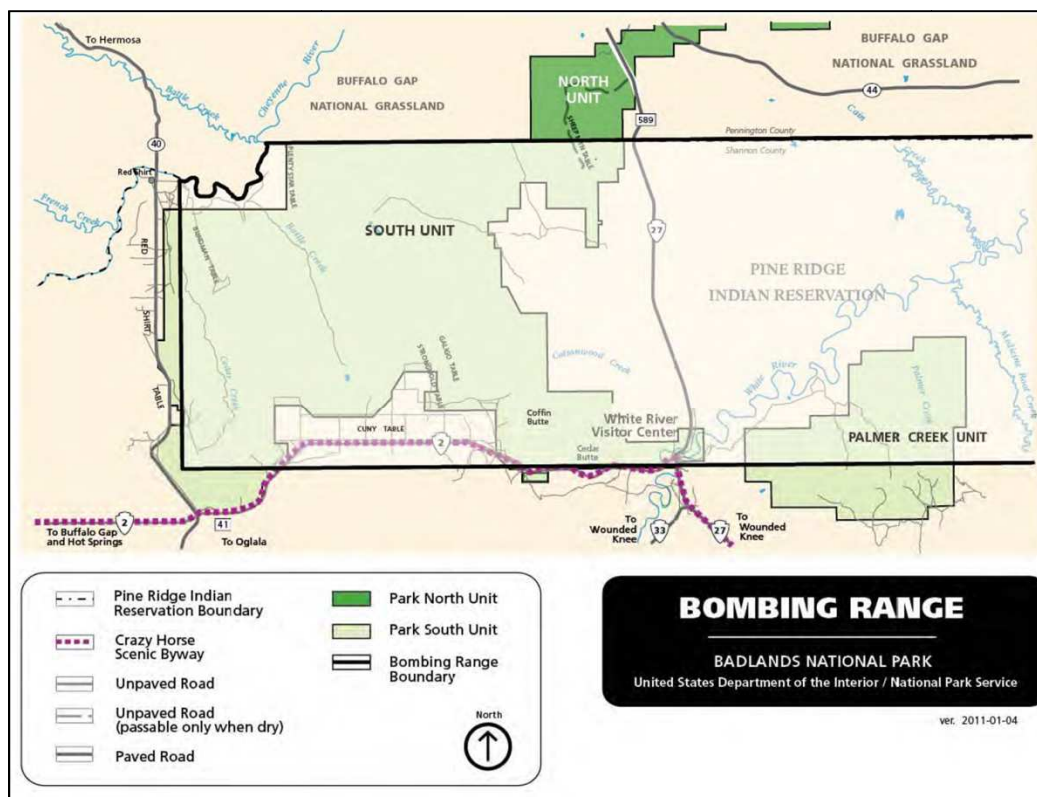


Figure 1.2. Bombing Range: Badlands National Park (United States Department of the Interior et al. 2012)

Past experiences with the badlands have created a rich history for the Oglala Lakota, but for many that history is partially clouded by the creation of the bombing range in 1942. Today there are few people remaining who lived through the original taking of the land in 1942, but the stories of the loss are passed down from generation to generation. In one of the interviews I performed during my time on Pine Ridge, one Oglala Lakota woman stated, “the South Unit is a part of our history, and it’s a history that hurt a lot of families” (Personal interview, 6/1/12).

The bombing range lands were acquired through condemnation, and hundreds of families were forced to leave their homes with very short notice. The government did reimburse those affected by the aerial gunnery range, however the compensation was paltry in the wake of the Great Depression, and available land outside of the bombing range was scarce and expensive. Many families had to dispose of their livestock before moving, and found themselves leaving their own plots of land to move into the housing with the communities of Pine Ridge Reservation (United States Department of the Interior et al. 2012: 6). Today the families who live in these communities are seen by others members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe as the poorest people on the Reservation. This designation has nothing to do with money. Rather, it is because they do not have any land to call their own that they are seen as poor (Personal interview, 6/14/12).

#### CREATION OF THE SOUTH UNIT

Many Pine Ridge residents who were forced off of their lands in 1942 believed that after the war they would be given preferential status to repurchase their lands (United States Department of the Interior et al. 2012: 6). In 1968, however, the bombing range was declared excess land. This opened the area up to new ownership, and a land grab began. Among those competing for the land were the Oglala Sioux Tribe, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service, and U.S. Air Force. After much consideration Congress decided on a land exchange between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service, subject to Oglala Sioux Tribal approval. However, Congress made it clear that if the Oglala Lakota did not approve the transfer, the bombing range lands would be disposed of as surplus property. With no other choice, the Oglala Sioux Tribe approved the transfer of 133,300 acres to the National Park Service. This land was incorporated into Badlands National Monument as the South Unit. Though the land continued to be held in trust for the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the agreement mandated that management of the land be surrendered to the National Park Service. (United States Department of the Interior et al. 2012: 6).

As contentious as this land transfer seems, the simple fact is that many national parks were created through the dispossession of Native peoples from their lands. However, because the land of the South Unit of Badlands National Park is held in trust for the Tribe, it is technically still owned by the Tribe. Additionally the South Unit is located entirely on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Because of these factors, the South Unit offers a very unique situation for the discussion of land dispossession.

#### 1976 MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

The story of the South Unit does not end with the land transfer in 1968. In 1976 the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which established the framework through which the South Unit would be managed. To this day, this MOA serves as the framework for the working relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service.

Under the MOA, the Tribe maintains usufruct rights on South Unit lands. These rights include hunting and grazing, though the MOA did call for the Tribe to perform a feasibility study for the reintroduction of buffalo on the South Unit. Additionally the Tribe was to look into diminishing the access to grazing for livestock on the South Unit. The Memorandum of Agreement also stated that all Service positions on the South Unit should be filled with Oglala Sioux Tribal members whenever possible. While many other items are laid out in the MOA, the document mainly seeks to create a cooperative relationship between the two signing entities while also ensuring the preservation of the badlands (Oglala Sioux Tribe of South Dakota and the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior, 1976).

#### SOUTH UNIT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

However, the 1976 Memorandum of Agreement has not proven to be a very effective management framework, and both the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service have recognized this. When the National Park Service began to look at creating a new general management plan for the entirety of Badlands National Park in 2000, it was not long before it became clear that separate plans for the North Unit and the South Unit might be more appropriate. Discussion began in 2003 and from 2006 to 2010 a planning team held workshops to find a new way to manage the South Unit. These discussions included Oglala Sioux Tribal Members, Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority employees, and National Park Service employees. The result was the South Unit General Management Plan (South Unit GMP).

The South Unit GMP offers a number of management options as well as numerous resource and visitor experience alternatives. Through public forums and input from both the National Park Service and Oglala Sioux Tribe, the final preferred management option that was



decided upon is a Tribal National Park. Under this option, the Oglala Lakota would “manage, own, and operate their lands for the educational and recreational benefit of the general public, including both Tribal and nontribal visitors and residents” (United States Department of the Interior et al. 2012: v).

On June 2, 2012, the National Park Service took another step in the process of creating a Tribal National Park. Meeting at the White River Visitor Center on the South Unit of Badlands National Park located on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Badlands Superintendent Eric Brunnemann and President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe John Yellow Bird Steele signed a Record of Decision (Figure 1.3) that officially selected the Preferred Alternative as the “guide to best manage these world class natural and cultural resources” (National Park Service, 2012).



Figure 1.3. Record of Decision Signing. Pictured from left to right: Kathy Janis, OST Wounded Knee District Rep; Virgil Bush, OSPRA Chairman; Eric Brunnemann, Badlands Superintendent; John YellowBird Steele, OST President; Steve Thede, Badlands Deputy Superintendent; Ruth Brown, OST

The signing of the Record of Decision, however, was simply one more step in a long and winding road that could lead to the creation of the first Tribal National Park in the United States. The idea of giving the management of a piece of government land to a non-government affiliated group is extremely contentious. It could set a precedent for future land repossession by other tribes who saw their lands taken away for the creation of national parks in the past. The Oglala Sioux Tribal members who were interviewed know that they are being watched by other tribes around the country, and National Park Service employees recognize this as well.

### **Enlightenment through Interviews**

The history of land dispossession in relation to the creation of national parks is a contentious topic for many scholars. In his study of Indian removal from Yosemite, Yellowstone, and Glacier national parks Spence contends that the policies of exclusion of Indians from park lands by the National Park Service have served as “models for preservationist efforts, and native dispossession, the world over” (Spence 1999:5). As such, the relationship between tribes and the National Park Service are often troubled, but the creation of the first Tribal National Park offers the United States Government the opportunity to look at the relationship they have with one particular group of Native Americans in relation to a land dispossession case that still stings sharply.

As noted above, the process to create a South Unit GMP took almost a decade, and involved many different members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and employees of the National Park Service. One group that participated in the creation of the South Unit GMP from the beginning is the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority (OSPRA). The roots of this interviewing project can be found in the offices of OSPRA.

In the summer of 2010, my research partner, Ashley Cobb, spent a few weeks on Pine Ridge Reservation as an intern for OSPRA. During that time she began to learn more about the South Unit, and its potential future as the first Tribal National Park. In 2011, Ashley reprised her role as an intern and began to work on a basic feasibility study for the Tribal National Park by identifying logistical needs to be met before the process could move forward.

Because Ashley is a PhD student at Colorado State University, her dissertation has always been on the horizon. In 2012 she decided that rather than write a strictly academic paper about the South Unit process, she would like to contribute something that might help the Tribal National Park become a reality. Because of this she asked OSPRA and Badlands National Park what would be most useful to them. The result was the interview project that I took part in.

In the spring of 2012 as Ashley was beginning to consider how best to write a dissertation that would be helpful to the Tribal National Park process, I was still confused about my place in the graduate school world. I had entered the Anthropology program at Colorado State University with a background in history, and was originally pushed towards the sub-field of archaeology. However, that was not where I wanted to be.

During my first semester in the fall of 2011 I took a class called Economic Anthropology. Undoubtedly the things I learned in that class have found their way into my research, but it was the people that I met in the class that really changed my graduate school career. With their support I took a stand and changed my advisor and my sub-field to cultural anthropology. It was a small step, but an important one nonetheless. Having earned my Bachelor's Degree in History, I have a great love for the past, but I also recognize that our past shapes our present and affects our future. From that moment when I decided on a cultural anthropology track, I knew that my future would focus on a hands-on applied anthropology approach that would allow me to use my

love of history to better understand cultures today. The group of people I met in that Economic Anthropology class helped to guide me towards this path by making me feel welcome, and reminding me that one of my defining qualities is my gumption. However, they also introduced me to something very important: field school.

Many people in my Economic Anthropology class had spent at least a part of the previous summer in field school, and our weekly discussions almost always included some mention of their time doing research. While a few had spent time at Ute Mountain in southwestern Colorado, a larger number had done their field school on Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

By the end of that first semester I knew much more than I had when the school year began. Of my new-found knowledge, three things really stick out in my memory. As I moved into my second semester I knew that I had to write a thesis in order to graduate, that thesis needed to be based on personal research, and, most importantly, I wanted nothing more than to be a part of the Pine Ridge field school family. I do not know if everyone would have felt the same as I did, but sitting through a semester hearing about all of the exciting activities and interesting research that my cohorts had participated in while on Pine Ridge, I knew that my time in graduate school would only be successful if I also had that opportunity.

However, with the coming of the spring semester in 2012, I was still clueless as to what research project would take me to the Reservation. That is where Ashley came in. During that semester we were both taking a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation course. We were asked in the very first class to get to know our classmates, and pick a few people that we would like to work with to complete a semester-long group project. Ashley had been in my Economic Anthropology class, and I knew that her interests were in the Tribal National Park process.

Always a fan of national parks, I immediately decided that she would be a great person to work with. In the end we were joined by another student with interests in Tribal relationships with the National Park Service, and our group began to consider the role of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in the Tribal National Park process.

As interesting as learning about NEPA was, however, I still did not have any idea of how this project might translate into something larger on Pine Ridge. Then, one day Ashley came to class and told me that she had a research project that I might be interested in. She told me about her previous work with OSPRA, and about her efforts to make a dissertation that would benefit the future of the Tribal National Park process. Then she told me about the interview project and asked if I would be interested in working on it with her. I could not have been more pleased to say yes.

From the very beginning of this project, our focus has been on building a participatory relationship with the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service. After all, we first became a research team in a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation class. In that class I learned a lot about applied anthropology, and began to wonder why anyone would choose not to follow that path. I think I always knew what kind of researcher I wanted to be. The idea of collecting research for solely my own benefit never appealed to me. In that class I found the terms to describe what I had already been striving towards.

With the ideas of applied anthropology and participatory methods beginning to cement themselves in my brain, I was more than happy to join Ashley's interview project. It was clear that she, too, was interested in a participatory approach. Because of this, the questions that we used for the interviews were developed with help from OSPRA and Badlands National Park, and before we began interviewing we asked for them to approve our questions (See Appendix I).

Because the interviews will be pieced together to provide a complete picture of the relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service, the interview technique that we used is called qualitative interviewing. This technique allows researchers to obtain deep, detailed descriptions of a topic. Using Rubin and Rubin (2011) to inform our technique, Ashley and I employed the responsive interviewing model. This model allows researchers to create a conversational experience with those being interviewed. One thing that Rubin and Rubin stress in their work is that the relationship built between the researcher and the interviewee is highly influenced by the personality and expectations of both parties. Additionally, background characteristics can alter the interview experience.

As a new researcher embarking on an interview project, I was unaware of just how important these things would be to the outcomes of interviews. However, it soon became exceedingly clear that our presence in the interviews had the ability to dramatically affect the responses we received.

### ***The First Three Weeks***

My time on Pine Ridge Reservation can be split into two parts. For the first three weeks I worked in tandem with Ashley to perform interviews. During that time, we conducted eighteen interviews with National Park Service employees, OSPRA employees, and Oglala Sioux Tribal members who had no professional affiliation with either of these institutions. Because Ashley had spent time on the Reservation for two summers before our interviews began, she had developed many relationships that helped us in gaining access to a number of people to interview.

There was a certain amount of ease with the first set of interviews. For Ashley, it was an opportunity to meet with old friends, and to discuss a project that they all felt very passionate

about. The interviews each took an average of forty-five minutes, though some were much longer. Our interview questions gave us the opportunity to stray from the script and ask follow-up questions that helped us to get the deep, detailed information we wanted. Each interview was recorded, though I took copious notes because of an underlying fear that technology would fail us. Before we began the interviews we asked everyone to sign a Facesheet and Consent form that acknowledged their acceptance to being part of the research. They also had the option of choosing whether or not to be recorded, and if they would like to remain anonymous (See Appendix II).

In addition to writing about the answers that each person gave, I also used my notes to perform participant observation. For every interview that took place across a desktop in those first three weeks, another took place across a dining table or coffee table, usually with a steaming cup of coffee in hand. It was important to identify the setting as well as the tone of the interview.

The ease with which this first set of interviews took place is just as important as the answers to the questions. Ashley had long-standing relationships with almost everyone we interviewed in the first three weeks. If she did not know them personally, she had enough other connections to assure them of her position in this project. As her research partner I had the opportunity to join these relationships and find my own place in this project.

In June, however, Ashley had a prior engagement which took her off of the Reservation. Through snowball sampling at the end of every interview, we had developed a long list of potential interviewees that I was in charge of contacting and interviewing while she was away. However, it soon became clear that something was wrong.

## ***Being Unknown***

Before Ashley left we had developed a plan for completing fifteen interviews in my remaining three weeks on the Reservation. Having already finished eighteen interviews, it did not seem like too much to ask. However, we had overlooked one very important factor.

While Ashley had been with me, we had interviewed the many people that she had built relationships with over the years. When Ashley left, I was to interview the people that neither of us knew, most of which were Oglala Sioux Tribal members. Though we did not know the people I was to meet with, our previous interviews had set up a foundation that could easily be used for these future interviews. For instance, we had developed an informal elevator pitch to be used at the beginning of each meeting to explain the project and our part in it. Additionally, Ashley had reminded me to make sure that people understood our connections with both OSPRA and Badlands National Park by name-dropping. We understood that these connections might prove essential for securing future interviews.

However, without the relationship that Ashley had built with many of our previous interviewees, it was extremely difficult to set up meetings. In the end, the reason for the struggle was actually quite simple. I was an unknown to the Reservation and the Reservation was an unknown to me. I had no deep connections to OSPRA or Badlands National Park. Still, I had a list of phone numbers for people, and every day I made cold call after cold call hoping that someone would pick up on the other end. More often than not, they did not answer. And, even more alarmingly, it soon became clear that many of the numbers we had were actually disconnected.



It was an excruciating three weeks. I had to be constantly ready to grab my keys and head out for an interview. It was extremely stressful, but more importantly it was a gigantic learning experience.

Of the many stakeholders involved in this Tribal National Park process, it is often easy to overlook ourselves. Colorado State University has a longstanding relationship with Pine Ridge Reservation through Dr. Kathleen Sherman, and although I had never been there, I still had a tradition to uphold. While we were doing our research on the role of NEPA in the Tribal National Park process, Ashley and I developed a conceptual model of stakeholders (Figure 1.4). We brainstormed to come up with all of the organizations who had been involved in the creation of the South Unit GMP. We also tried to consider the ways in which they were involved in the process. While preparing a presentation for the Society of Applied Anthropology conference in the spring of 2013 I returned to that stakeholder map, and was surprised to see that we had not included Colorado State University.

As researchers, I believe we tend to focus on the information we collect, rather than our role in that collection. However, when considering the stakeholder map for the second time I realized the importance of my role as a participant in this project. In fact, it is essential to consider this. Ashley and I may have been chosen to do this research because she asked the National Park Service and OSPRA what would be helpful, but the fact that no one else from either of these institutions was chosen to help is extremely important. Would the Tribal members we interviewed have been so forthcoming with their opinions if they were being interviewed by park service personnel? Could we have had candid conversations about the future of the South Unit with National Park Service employees if we were Tribal members? The simple truth is, we

cannot know the answer to those questions. But we do know the answer to a lot of other important questions. Answers that can help to move the Tribal National Park process forward.

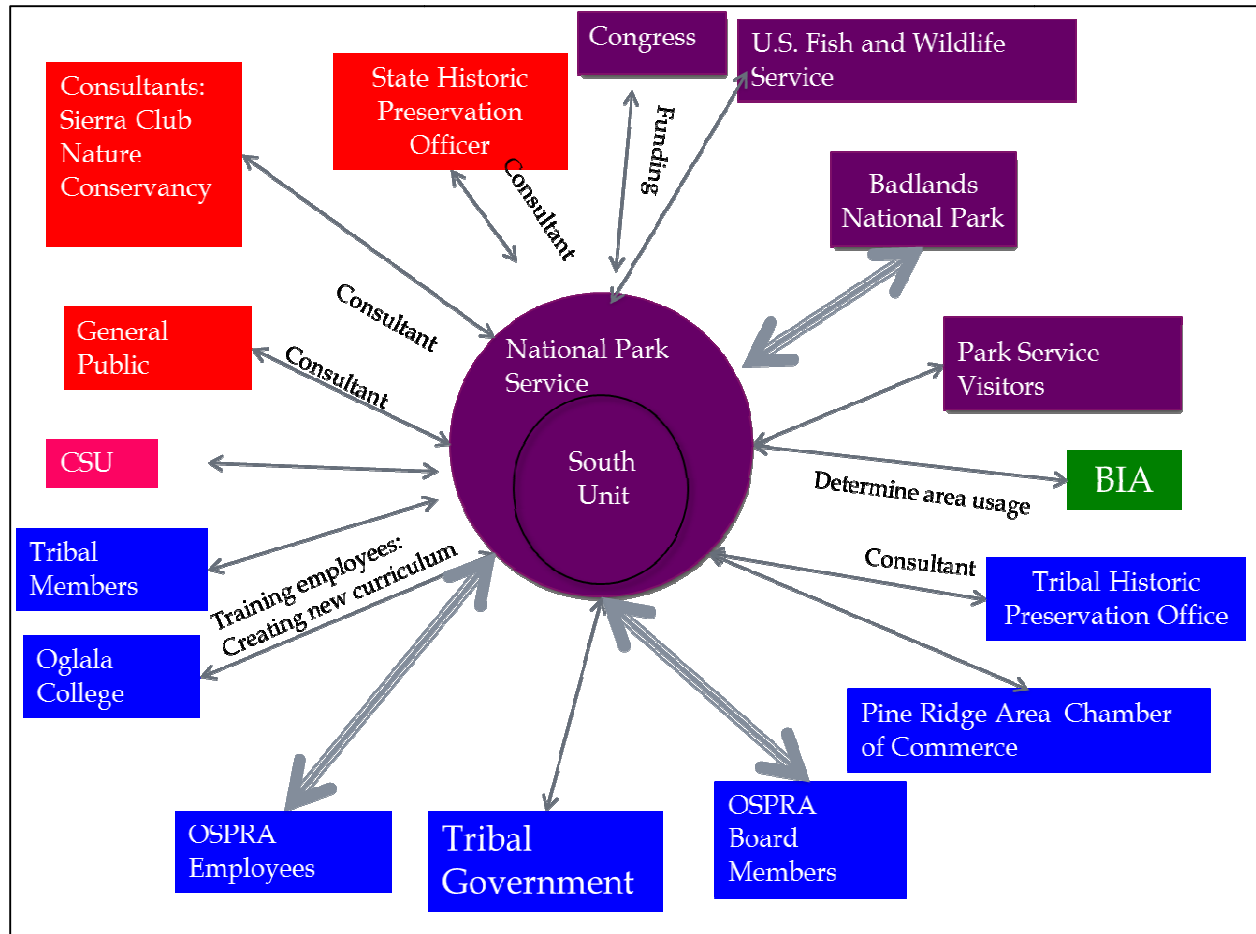


Figure 1.4. Stakeholder Map for the South Unit General Management Plan process. Original map created March 2011, Colorado State University (CSU) added March 2012. Purple stakeholders represent United States government affiliated groups. Blue stakeholders represent Oglala Sioux Tribal affiliated groups. Red stakeholders represent outside agencies. BIA and CSU both seem to straddle multiple affiliations and are therefore given their own colors.

One of the most important things that I have learned through this research project is that although my role as an active participant may only exist for a short time, the work I have done will hopefully be used to inform future decisions. Participatory research is only possible when there is an even give and take. This conceptual model of stakeholders is, honestly, an absolute mess. But that doesn't mean that this process has to be a mess. Working together, these stakeholders can help to create the best future for the South Unit. As researchers from Colorado State University we have a place on this map, we can provide a service to this project. But we are only as useful as the other larger stakeholders want us to be. In the end the decisions about the future of the South Unit will take place among four main stakeholders: The National Park Service, Tribal Members, Tribal Government, and the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority. These are the people who worked with Ashley to create the interview questions, and these are the people who will look at our results.

What I have learned through this process is that my work is important, even when it seems like little more than drudge work, such as transcribing interviews. Because in the end, that is what the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe need from Ashley and I. They do not need someone to come in and take over the project by using their own ideas to move the process forward. They already know what has to happen next. What they need from us is basic information about what has worked in the past and what needs to change in the future.

However, our role as stakeholders could have gone very differently. As noted above, there were definitely some bumps in the road as I embarked on this interview project. Building trust is something that takes time, but during the interviews I only had so much time to make that happen. With trust comes openness, and to elicit the areas of agreement and areas of discord that still exist between the Tribe and the National Park Service, it was necessary to make sure that the

interviewees felt at ease. I feel that Ashley and I were able to create a sense of openness and respect in the interviews that we performed, and if the hundreds of pages of transcribed interviews are any indication, it seems that everyone felt at ease with us.

Of course, as I mentioned before, I had no connection to Pine Ridge, or at least that is what I thought. However, during the last three weeks on the Reservation I discovered that I actually had a great asset, my own life history. I am from a small rural community in southern Indiana, and I have a deep connection to both place and family. Pine Ridge Reservation is composed of rural communities. The people there have a deep connection to both place and family. Therefore, many of the things that were brought up in the interviews, I could relate to. With this familiarity also came a sense of ease, an important component to open discussion.

My mother's family, the Truebloods, have lived in the same small section of Washington County, Indiana for almost 200 years. Seeking religious freedom the Truebloods left England in the late 1600s. They first settled in North Carolina, but moved to the Indiana Territory in 1815. Over the decades that followed, many Truebloods continued to live on that original section of land. Knowing this family history, living in this same area, I have a deep connection to place. The Oglala Lakota also have a connection to place. Though the specific site may be different, the feelings that we have about our beloved places are very much alike.

In a lot of ways it was this shared understanding of the importance of place that first made me feel comfortable in the interviews. I had arrived on Pine Ridge full of the knowledge that it was going to be a desolate place with few facilities and entertainment opportunities. Former field school participants had warned me about the lack of stores and advised me to bring in any supplies I might need. They cautioned me that I would have to drive at least an hour to get to a "real" store. However, I was well prepared for the atmosphere of Pine Ridge Reservation

because of my past. Being raised in the hills and “hollers” of south Indian, I had grown up knowing that a trip to the movies or the mall only happened on the weekends, and usually only once or twice a month considering that the nearest facilities of that sort were forty miles away. I learned as a youngster that if the local grocery store does not have what you need, then you do without until you can make a trip to a larger store. So in a way, I was very well prepared for Pine Ridge Reservation.

However, I still was nervous about the interviews. I understood that I was asking a lot of people that did not know me at all. From the very beginning Ashley had me ask every respondent the question that I had developed: in your opinion, would it be worthwhile for other tribes to pursue a similar co-management relationship with their neighboring national parks? Twice Ashley encouraged me to take the lead in the interviews, but usually I just sat back, listened, and took copious notes. Every once in a while I would ask a follow-up question as per our responsive interviewing technique, but for the most part I let Ashley control the interviews. I could tell that this made Ashley a little nervous. I was quiet, a little too quiet, and when she left it would be my job to take over. Personally, I was not concerned at all. While my rural roots certainly played a part on Pine Ridge, my religious beliefs did as well. As a Quaker I have followed in my Trueblood ancestors’ footprints and firmly believe the Quaker proverb, “speak only if your words improve upon the silence.” The people we interviewed had so many important things to say that I could not find a reason to interrupt, and they usually answered my follow-up questions before I had the opportunity to ask them. Still, I understood my position and when Ashley left the Reservation in June I took over her role and followed her lead. The interviews that I performed became conversations quickly because of my willingness to let the interviewees express whatever they wanted.

The nerves that I first experienced during interviews began to wane with one unique experience. The second interview that I did on my own took place on a beautiful, sunny day in early June. However, the night before had been a terror. The small bed and breakfast where we stayed during field school was located at the end of a dirt track that became almost impassable after rain. The night before my interview it had poured. However, I was not going to miss this interview. While making the appointment over the phone, the person I was meeting reminded me that it was extremely important to keep my word. When a person says they are going to do something or be somewhere they better show up. He also reminded me that wars have been started over miscommunications. With this in mind, there was no way that a little mud was going to stop me from making that interview. I hopped in my two-wheel drive sedan while my field school director climbed in his four-wheel drive truck to guide me through the muddy mess, and provide towing assistance if necessary. It soon became apparent that my car was somehow better equipped to handle the mud, and while the field school director got bogged down I was able to speed through the rough patches and be on my way, carrying the scars of my experience: huge streaks of mud on my hood and windshield courtesy of my guide's truck.

As I reached the main road, the person I was going to be interviewing called me. He asked if we were still on for our interview. I said, "Yes, 10am, right?" He responded with, "No, it's at 9am." I did not know what to say. We were meeting in a city park just outside the Reservation, about an hour away from the bed and breakfast. I began to apologize profusely, so incredibly embarrassed by my scheduling fail, and then I heard him laughing. He came back on the line saying that he was just kidding, it was at 10am. Relief flooded through me, and I hurried on my way, startled by his sense of humor but relieved that I had not already messed up.

When I finally got to the park and we began the interview we barely got through the first two questions before he asked me to turn off the tape recorder. He just wanted to talk for a while. We followed this same procedure after every other question. He had fantastic information about the South Unit, but what I remember most about the interview was the easy conversations we had when the tape recorder was turned off. It turned out that my mud streaked car was a great conversation starter.

With this interview, and the conversation in between, I came into my own as a researcher. I started collecting tidbits of information to talk to the other interviewees about, things that had nothing to do with the South Unit, like small town politics, a hot topic for anyone living in a rural community, and especially those living on Pine Ridge Reservation. These ice breakers were interesting for me to talk about, but they also showed the respondents that I did not just care about the South Unit. The people I interviewed rarely asked for any information about me besides what I provided in the elevator pitch. They knew I was an anthropology graduate student and they knew I went to Colorado State University. Invariably they asked if I had heard “that song about the anthropologists,” referencing “Here Come the Anthros” by Floyd Red Crow Westerman. I had not heard it, but when they asked they always laughed, and I laughed right along with them, knowing that they were poking fun at me.

With any process like the Tribal National Park process, time is money. It is hard to find a minute to convey important information, let alone participate in an easy conversation. That is where we came in. As researchers, Ashley and I were getting the information we needed to write whatever paper awaited us. As participants and stakeholders in the South Unit process we were also getting to know the people involved, to understand what they want to see happen, and how they plan to follow through on those goals. For me, however, it was equally important to get to

know the people we interviewed in a more holistic manner. Our research may have led us to ask specific questions, but the easy conversations I had outside of the confines of the recorded interviews were the most enjoyable part of my time on Pine Ridge.

At the end of my time on Pine Ridge Reservation I only managed to secure five additional interviews for our project, however, these interviews, along with the others that Ashley and I collected together, offer deep insight into the making of a Tribal National Park. The conversations that I had with Oglala Sioux Tribal members revealed important information about the South Unit process, information that will help to move this project forward, but they also helped to shape me as a researcher. In all honesty, I could never thank the people of Pine Ridge enough for that.

### **The Feared But Forgotten Stakeholder: A Cautionary Tale**

Very few research projects are completed without having left something undone, and the South Unit interview project is no exception. At the end of the summer we had completed twenty-five interviews, though our complete list of possible interviewees contained at least twice as many people. As researchers we wanted to conduct as many interviews as humanly possible. OSPRA and Badlands National Park simply wanted interviews that captured different views about the Tribal National Park process. They gave us no guidance in number of interviews; they simply wanted to make sure that a variety of voices were represented.

However, I cannot help but feel that the South Unit interview project deserves more time. There came a point during the snowball sampling in which people only suggested others who were already on our list. At that point, we felt like we had found the core group of people to interview. In transcribing the interviews, though, it became clear that we were missing a very important group of stakeholders.



After transcribing the interviews I began to hand code them to find common themes that might be helpful to understanding the changing relationship between the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Some of these themes were the loss of land, personal experiences on the badlands, future goals, and youth involvement. While hand coding my interviews I underlined a term that showed up again and again: Tribal Council. Almost every person I interviewed mentioned the Tribal Council at least once.

In the Tribal National Park process, the Tribal Council has the final say in everything. Though OSPRA will manage the park in day- to-day operations, it will still be under the jurisdiction of the Tribal Council. This government body also has the ability to delay the creation of the Tribal National Park or stop it altogether. And the people I interviewed recognized this. The term “Tribal Council” was always spoken with discontent or anxiety. Many interviewees were unhappy with the past actions of the Council, and many of them feared what actions the Council might take in the future to hurt the Tribal National Park process. However, when asked about who else we should speak with to gain a variety of voices on the South Unit process, Tribal Council Representatives were rarely mentioned, and those that were suggested to us were suggested because of their work on the South Unit GMP, not because of their position on the Tribal Council. In over two hundred pages of qualitative interviews, the Tribal Council does not have a voice.

This feared but forgotten stakeholder is not the only one voiceless in this project. It is untoward to think that a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe can be gained in just six weeks of interviews. So much more needs to be done. So many more voices need to have their say.

While it was not feasible for me to continue interviewing stakeholders before completing my thesis, I hope that my research partner will delve more deeply into the unheard voices of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council and other Tribal members. The future of this project rests much more heavily on their shoulders than anyone else's.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Loving the Land: Attachment Theory and the Importance of Interactional Past and Interactional Potential**

Before I could begin to develop a topic for my thesis, I had to transcribe the interviews I had collected. Six months and 227 pages later, I was at a loss. In my opinion the best method for the stakeholders involved to understand the changing relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service would be to give the transcribed interviews to the leaders of OSPRA and Badlands National Park and let them read all of the collected stories. However, on further thought, it became clear that the information we gleaned from the interviews is not just in the transcribed words of the people interviewed. Rather, it is a mass conglomeration of words, emotions, and observations. The transcribed interviews only tell part of the story. However, a Master's Thesis cannot contain all of the information that could be useful to the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service as they move forward with the Tribal National Park process, and reevaluate their changing relationship. Because of this, I needed to pick one topic to delve into more deeply. Considering the hundreds of pages of transcribed interviews made this decision seem overwhelming, but in the end I chose to consider a topic that shapes the way that the Oglala Sioux experience their world.

As stated previously, I went to the Reservation wondering about how I would fit in, whether I would have any connection to compare with the relationships that my research partner had built over the past few years. It took me a while to realize that I did have an important connection with the people of Pine Ridge Reservation. Having grown up in a rural community, I felt comfortable among the rolling plains of South Dakota. Being forced to drive an hour for a movie theater or a shopping mall was nothing new to me. My family has lived in the same area

of Washington County, Indiana for almost two hundred years. Sense of place is something that I grew up with. However, I understand that many people my age do not have a similar place attachment. In the interviews it became clear that many of the Oglala Lakota I spoke with do have a very strong place attachment to the land of the Reservation and the South Unit. My curiosity led me to question how that place attachment has been formed in the past and how they hope to re-create that sense of place for the youth of Pine Ridge Reservation.

Before the interviews can be considered, however, it is necessary to understand sense of place and the ways in which people create place attachment around the world.

### **Place Attachment**

The methods people use to develop attachment have been studied by many different disciplines with psychology leading the way. However, in recent decades geographers have begun to consider more specifically how people develop attachment to the spaces around them. Anthropologists followed the geographers by looking at how specific groups formulate a sense of place in relation to their surrounding environment.

### ***Symbolic Interactionism***

Place attachment has its roots in symbolic interactionism. This theory examines the ways in which people formulate their reality. In anthropology, researchers use symbolic interactionism to explain culture as a mental phenomenon. As Dolgin, Kemnitzer, and Schneider (1977) explain, “our concern is not with whether or not the views a people hold are accurate in any ‘scientific’ sense of the term...In social action, that which is thought to be real is treated as real” (quoted in Lett 1987:111).

Anthropologists see symbols as systems of meaning that are shared by a group of people. That group must have some sort of shared social or historical context in order to understand symbols in the same way. People can create new meanings for symbols or morph meanings that already exist. In this way, a group of people can construct their own cultural reality. However, this also means that it is seemingly impossible for researchers to develop a universal theory that applies to cultures throughout the world. Still, they can consider the ways in which people create meaning within their own world (Mcgee and Warms 2012:438-440). One method for looking at how people create meaning is to consider the importance that they give to place and space.

Place is defined as a physical site that is given meaning through interaction. It is also a form of object. Blumer suggests, “the position of symbolic interactionism is that the ‘worlds’ that exist for human beings and for their groups are composed of ‘objects’ and that these objects are the product of symbolic interaction” (Blumer 1969:10, quoted in Milligan 1998:2). Objects can be split into three categories: physical, social, and abstract. Blumer defines objects as “anything that can be indicated, anything that is pointed to or referred to” (1969:10, quoted in Milligan 1998:3). In this way, places are most definitely objects. Our interactions with these objects results in place attachment because,

When knowledge and feeling are oriented toward something real, actually perceived, the thing, like a reflector, returns the light it has received from it. As a result of this continual interaction, meaning is continually enriched at the same time as the object soaks up affective qualities. The object thus obtains its own particular depth and richness [Sartre 1965:89, quoted in Basso 1996b:55].

As our knowledge and feelings towards an object, or place, change so does our attachment to it. Without constant interaction, however, a place can lose its importance.

## *Sense of Place*

Sense of place is an extremely complex subject. Basso calls sense of place “that close companion of heart and mind, often subdued, yet potentially overwhelming” (Basso 1996b:54). Indeed, trying to define sense of place can be a very challenging exercise, but it may be best described by considering three narrower concepts: place attachment, place identity, and place dependence.

*Place attachment* describes a positive bond developed between individuals and their environment. Using emotions, beliefs, knowledge, and actions towards a place, people are able to develop an attachment to that place. This attachment can be built over a very long period of time, but people who are migratory and live in many different places can build place attachment in each of their new surroundings. However, it is often believed that a longer presence in a place leads to a stronger place attachment.

Place attachment can be shared among a group of people. Similar feelings and beliefs about a place may be found among people living in the same area. However, some differences will persist. These differences may constitute *place identity* which is part of a person’s self-identity. Composed of ideas, feelings, goals, and values, place identity works to define the personal identity of an individual in relation to a place. If a person truly defines themselves by a specific place then it would be said that they have a place identity connected to that place. This identity can be at a larger level. For instance a person may identify themselves with their state by calling themselves a Sooner or a Hoosier. Place identity can also be connected to a smaller, less generalizable space based on their house, local physical geography, or social community.

Though many people build attachments and identities around places, they would be unable to do so if they did not recognize *place dependence*. If a person believes that a place can

provide for their human needs, then they may develop a dependence on that place. However, this does not just describe essential human needs like food, water, and shelter. Rather, it includes the things that make life worth living. Just as millions of people have relocated to new places based on health needs throughout history, people also migrate for pleasure. A person that enjoys fishing will most likely develop a place dependence on somewhere with plenty of ponds, streams, or lakes. If a person either does not like cold weather, or perhaps is afraid of driving through snow, they might seek out warmer climates and become dependent on them. (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618).

Most of the literature concerning sense of place uses that term interchangeably with place attachment which means that all three components of sense of place are grouped under this first component. For this paper, the terms sense of place and place attachment will be used to mean the same thing with the understanding that both entail the complex definition described in three parts above.

### ***Complex Meanings***

The development of sense of place has been taking place for hundreds of thousands of years. In the beginning place attachment most likely grew out of dependence. If a place was able to provide for the basic necessities of human life then the humans living there probably did not leave it until forced to do so. Human needs of food, water, and shelter are still being met today by geographical spaces, but place attachment is much more complex than that. However,

We tend not to think so, mainly because our attachments to places, like the ease with which we usually sustain them, are unthinkingly taken for granted...sense of place quite simply *is*...and the thought that it might be complicated, or even very interesting, seldom crosses our minds (Basso 1996a:xiii).

In another work Basso argues that when we do realize our attachment in a fleeting moment of remembrance it “is swiftly replaced by awareness of something else” (Basso 1996b:54). For many people throughout the world, though, place attachments are constantly being broken and reformed. Whether through disaster, removal, or relocation, people experience a moment when they realize their attachment for a place, and must come to terms with how tenuous that bond of sense of place can be.

Still, the past experiences and future prospects of a place have the ability to overcome even the most devastating events and create a safe harbor for those who have an attachment to that place. It is important, though, to remember that place attachment can be negative as well as positive. It is built out of the place we call home, our belongings, our surroundings, our affiliations, and our immediate and extended communities (Cox and Perry 2011:399). As such, we can experience both good times and bad times in these places, and these experiences affect our place attachment because sense of place is constantly changing. For instance, fear of crime, neighborhood incivility, and frequent mobility can cause a negative sense of place to develop. However if a person already has a positive sense of place when these events occur, that person might become more involved in improvement efforts rather than developing a negative sense of place (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009:618). Everything depends on how each person perceives the world around them.

Positive or negative, sense of place is an intricate part of a person’s lived experience because, as the human geographer Edward Relph stated,

To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one’s own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular (Relph 1976:38).



The roots that people grow in a place are finally being noticed by researchers for their complexity. Some anthropologists are even beginning to consider place attachment as a part of social capital. Social capital is seen as the resources or assets that individuals and communities possess through social organization. Place can be seen as both the site and the material used to create and maintain social capital (Cox and Perry 2011:396).

Though the importance of place attachment continues to grow within many disciplines, it is important to remember that humans are not born with a sense of place. Additionally, length of residence does not necessarily correlate with strength of place attachment, though it should be considered (Handler 2007:74). People are constantly re-creating their sense of place both individually and as groups. Many researchers have developed theories as to how people develop a sense of place. Some offer insight into the deep connections people feel when they have lived in a place for their entire life. Others look at how migratory populations re-create place attachment over and over again. Milligan (1998) offers an interactionist-based theory of place attachment which suggests that the history of a place as well as the potential of that place combine to create place attachment for the people living there. These two components of sense of place are called the interactional past and the interactional potential.

#### INTERACTIONAL PAST

As stated above symbolic interactionism considers the ways in which people formulate reality and create meaning in their lives. Milligan(1998) argues that through interaction with a place, humans can form a meaning of that place. In this way, humans create an emotional link to place which can be either positive or negative. A large piece of place attachment is the interactional past. Memories or past experiences associated with a site affect how emotional bonds are created. Milligan contends that more meaningful memories will create deeper

attachments (Milligan 1998:2). Our past interactions with a place connect us to that place. The emotional bonds may be created by humans, but often humans then define themselves through these emotional links with the past because, “The past is at its best when it takes us to places that counsel and instruct, that show us who we are by showing us where we have been, that remind us of our connections to *what happened here*” (emphasis in the original; Chapman 1979:46, cited in Basso 1996a:4).

Places become meaningful because meaningful activities have occurred there or are associated with that site. What one person finds meaningful and important, however, may not be shared with others which is why people can develop different levels of place attachment for the same place (Milligan 1998:8-9). Without interaction attachment does not occur. More meaningful interactions allow for more meaningful attachments. People who have experienced these meaningful interactions can actually experience a shared interactional past.

It is important to remember that history is constantly changing based on new interpretations. As such, memories can be construed, and the interactional past of a place can change over time. As Sartre says, “the affective state follows the progress of attention, developing with each new discovery of meaning...with the result that its development is unpredictable” (Sartre 1965:89, quoted in Basso 1996b:55). However, the closer that a subject is to the memories of a place, the harder it will be for the interactional past to be altered (Milligan 1998:9). For instance, if a person has developed an interactional past for a place based on their own experiences rather than histories provided by outside sources, it may be more difficult to change the interactional past. An attachment based more on the historical significance of a site might change if new sources present those historical moments in a new light.

## INTERACTIONAL POTENTIAL

The interactional past is constantly growing as new experiences get relegated to memory status. Every action that occurs in a place has the ability to shape the future and create an interactional potential. The interactional potential of a site is composed of the expectations that people have concerning a place. Whatever future experiences they anticipate or imagine happening in a particular site contribute to the interactional potential (Milligan 1998:2).

Interactional past is made up of meaningful interactions with a place. Because of this, it does not necessarily correlate with the physical space of a place, but rather with the events that occurred there. Interactional potential, however, is much more deeply connected to specific physical characteristics of a place. So much of what is possible for the future of a site is based on its physical components (Milligan 1998:16).

## SPATIAL CONTINUITY

Spatial continuity describes the ways in which acts are organized in time. When a break in continuity happens, a person might perceive a break in experiences or activities that defines that moment in time. For instance, if a community were to experience an earthquake, that event might break the spatial continuity. Everything that happened before the event would be part of the interactional past, and everything that followed could help to develop an interactional potential.

However, sometimes these breaks can completely alter sense of place. One example of this would be if a person had developed a sense of place through meaningful interactions to a place before the breaking event. For instance, perhaps they had developed a strong place attachment to a relative's house, say a grandmother. They had thousands of memories associated

with that place, and the interactional past of that place was built solidly on positive experiences. When the earthquake happened, though, perhaps the grandmother's house was structurally unstable and collapsed. Even if no one was hurt, the people who had built a place attachment to that house will feel a break in their spatial continuity. The interactional past, everything that they had grown to expect about that place, is disrupted. They can no longer expect those same experiences to take place at that site. As Milligan says, "when continuity is disrupted, it acts to close a category of past experiences, but it also acts to alter one's expectations for the future." Any relocation causes a break in spatial continuity and "closes the door on a particular interactional past" (Milligan 1998:9).

### **Place Attachment as Resiliency**

Because of its tenuous nature, it is often difficult to decipher whether place attachment can be considered a vulnerability or a resiliency. Resilience is seen "as the capability of a community to face a threat, survive and bounce back or, perhaps, more accurately, bounce forward into a normalcy newly defined by the disaster related losses and changes" (Cox and Perry 2011:395-396).

Place is where people build their lives from the time they are born until the day they die. That place may change, but people will still find a way to connect to it. However, place is also where people experience catastrophe, and where people can choose to recover from that experience. Some communities may come to realize that place attachment is a startling vulnerability. If a community experiences some type of loss and is unable to recover, a sense of displacement might set in. When this happens that community might be unable to rectify their interactional past with their interactional potential and rebuild place attachment. Some members of the community might stay and try to rebuild, while others will move away to a new location

and begin building a new sense of place. Still others will remain, but never re-create their former place attachment. In fact, what used to be a positive place attachment may become negative.

Other communities, however, might view sense of place as a sparkling resiliency that provides hope to the individuals who recognize it. Many studies, including those done by Cox and Holmes (2000) in relation to the Ash Wednesday bushfires in Australia, show that a strong place attachment before a disaster foreshadowed an even stronger place attachment post-disaster. Other place attachments may simply fade over time. Regardless of its lifespan, sense of place affects the way that humans survive and thrive in a world of their own creation.

### **Place Attachment and the South Unit**

No one that I interviewed mentioned place attachment. They did not discuss whether or not they had formed a sense of place with the South Unit, nor did they mention anything relating to interactional pasts and interactional potentials. They simply told their stories. They discussed their personal relationships to the badlands of South Dakota, and remarked on the loss of land in 1942 which served as the starting point of this decades-long struggle to repossess the land and build a Tribal National Park. However, just because they did not talk explicitly about the resiliency of place attachment and past disruptions to their spatial continuity does not mean that the Oglala Lakota Tribal members that I interviewed do not have an attachment to the South Unit. In truth, every answer they gave cemented the fact that they do have a very strong sense of place in relation to the South Unit.

The study of place attachment in anthropology is a growing field, but there is still much to be done. In 1996 Basso argued that “ethnographic inquiry into cultural constructions of geographical realities is at best weakly developed” (Basso 1996b:54). In the last seventeen years anthropology has moved forward in this study, and I hope that my work contributes to this

growing field. What we do know is that culturally diverse peoples create meaning in relation to places. Some locations matter much more than others. The South Unit of Badlands National Park seems to be a place full of strong memories, a place that matters to the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

As stated previously, sense of place is something that is seldom thought about in our everyday lives,

But now and again, and sometimes without apparent cause, awareness is seized...and the place on which it settles becomes an object of spontaneous reflection and resonating sentiment...it is on these occasions of focused thought and quickened emotion that places are encountered most directly, experienced most robustly, and...most fully brought into being (Basso 1996b:54).

Though the main purpose of the interviews may have been to better understand the changing relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service, these interviews also created the moment of awareness described by Basso. Respondents talked about the South Unit and the badlands as if they were standing on them at the time, rather than sitting in an office or a living room. Place and their attachment to it resonated in every word. The truth is that “places consist in what gets made of them...and their disembodied voices, immanent though inaudible, are merely those of people speaking silently to themselves” (Basso 1996b:56). A large part of my research is to make sure that these voices are heard.

Through an analysis of the interviews I hope to shed light on how place attachment in relation to the South Unit has been formed in the past, and how the Oglala Lakota plan to re-create that sense of place for the future generations through their plans for the Tribal National Park. Place attachment is often best understood through,

The voices of people speaking to each other...Surrounded by places, and always in one place or another, men and women talk about them constantly, and it is from listening in on such exchanges and then trying to ascertain what has been said that interested outsiders can begin to appreciate what the encompassing landscape is really all about [Basso 1996b:56].

The stories that the Oglala Lakota have to tell, the experiences they have had on the badlands are just as important as meeting moods and rhetoric to understanding the relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service. Their connection to the land must be understood and considered if the Tribal National Park is to become a successful reality.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Discovering the Interactional Past and Interactional Potential of the South**

#### **Unit Badlands**

For the Oglala Lakota that I interviewed on Pine Ridge, place attachment is not something that gets talked about openly, but it is constantly present in conversations. When they were asked about the badlands and their experiences on the land, it became quite clear that they felt more than a passing interest for the badlands. Their past is intricately connected with the land, and this can be seen in the stories about their experiences on the badlands that they told in the interviews. As Milligan (1998) suggests, place attachment is made up of two parts: the interactional past and the interactional potential. These two pieces work together to create and re-create sense of place throughout a person's life, and it became clear through my interviews that these elements are constantly shaping perceptions of the badlands on the Reservation.

To begin a discussion of the place attachment that was felt by the people I interviewed it is necessary to break down our conversations based on the questions asked. While responsive interviewing allowed for my research partner and I to have conversations that strayed from scripted questions, each person I interviewed was asked the same basic questions. Three of these questions seem to shed light on the interactional past that has helped to shape the sense of place felt by the Oglala Lakota for the badlands of the South Unit. These questions consider the experiences each person has had with the badlands and also the relationship they have had with Badlands National Park. These questions seem to illuminate the ways in which interactional past shapes place attachment.

The interactional potential associated with the badlands is elicited through another question concerning the goals that each interviewee has for the future of the South Unit. Each



question offers much more than a simple answer to our inquiry. They offer insight into the changing relationship between the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe, while also looking at many of the underlying elements working every day to inform the opinions of the Oglala Lakota Tribal members that I interviewed. To best understand the attachment that this group of Oglala Lakota has for the land, it is important to consider their responses to these four questions.

### **“Strong Medicine”: Experiencing the Badlands of Pine Ridge Reservation**

#### ***What is your personal relationship with the badlands of South Dakota?***

To ask this question seemed unnecessary to the goals of understanding the changing relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service. For me, as a person new to field work, it seemed too probing, too personal, especially as the first question that was asked. It just seemed like an unexpected way to start an interview. It certainly does not line up with the objectives of the interview that I outlined for each person before beginning. Still, it soon became clear that this question had the ability to open people up to the topic at hand. For many of the people I interviewed, there was an assumption that I would be asking only about the National Park Service and specifically Badlands National Park. This question caused them to pause. And then the stories began.

The connection that many respondents felt for the badlands was evident from the very beginning. In fact, if they did not feel strongly about this piece of land, they probably would not have been suggested as people to interview. When asked “what is your personal relationship to the badlands of South Dakota?,” it became clear that the connection was formed through many years of good and bad times on the badlands.

Sitting around a kitchen table on a hot, dusty day in May, one Lakota man responded to this question simply with, “that’s where [my family] comes from.” Through our continued conversation it became clear that he no longer knew exactly where on the badlands his family had lived, but he knew their history in that area. The information that he had about his family’s plot of land came from other Oglala Lakota Tribal members. Some helped him by showing him plat maps in the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority office. Others aided him in discovering the past by telling stories about their own time living on the badlands, and what they remembered about this man’s family. Many of the people who remember living on the badlands before it became a bombing range in 1942 are no longer living, and, as this man said, to find answers about that time it is now necessary to ask them in prayer. Though his connection to the badlands is based mostly on stories, these anecdotes seem to show a certain pride of family and of place,

My dad, he used to speak of his grandpa’s house where the water, had running water. They were the only, one of the only houses that had running water. They had channeled a spring through it. It came in one window. It came through the sink, and it went out the other side. I think that qualifies as running water.

With a chuckle he continued, “I have total admiration for the badlands. I don’t think I’d want to live there anymore...but, yeah, that’s an awesome place” (Personal interview, 5/30/12).

Many other people that I interviewed had similar stories about their parents, grandparents, and other relatives who were landowners on the badlands. The familial connection to the land is strong, though many lost their plots to the bombing range.

Even those who do not have a family history tied to the badlands have other connections that have worked to build a strong place attachment to the land. For many of the Oglala Lakota I interviewed, the badlands provided recreation during their youth. Sitting in his office on a blisteringly hot day, one Lakota man reminisced about the many hours he spent on the badlands

as a child. He had a friend who lived just on the outskirts of the “big” badlands and on Friday nights after school they would go horseback riding through the maze of eroded formations. The land offered more than just recreation, and his current job takes him to the badlands often. To him, the relationship he has with the badlands can be summed up with the simple statement, “I’ve been out there my whole life” (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

The recreational opportunities available on the badlands have been a big draw to the Oglala Lakota living on the reservation. Many people talked about taking hikes or horseback rides through the badlands both during their youth and as grown-ups. The highly eroded formations may seem foreboding to outsiders, but one Lakota woman summed up her feelings for this landscape by saying, “I guess, you know, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, they’re home.” She continued by noting the times when she has been out on the badlands and weather conditions have changed quickly and dramatically. In these times she found that, “there’s safety in terms of protection from Mother Nature...I’ve hid out in the badlands in hail storms and all kinds of stuff.”

This view of the badlands as a safe place extends back hundreds of years, but no story is more poignant than that of Wounded Knee. On December 29, 1890 the U.S. Cavalry attacked an encampment of Lakota along the banks of Wounded Knee Creek and over two hundred people were killed within minutes (Marshall 2007:161). Fearing for their lives, Pine Ridge residents who had escaped the massacre fled the area and searched for a safe place. While today some Oglala Lakota may see safety from Mother Nature in the badlands, in 1890 a number of Lakota found protection from the U.S. Cavalry by hiding out in the rugged terrain. This effort at survival created the term “The Stronghold” which is now a synonym for the South Unit.

The history of Wounded Knee and the resulting flight to the badlands was described by multiple people in this way, and the South Unit GMP also tells this version of the story. One person I interviewed had additional information about the importance of The Stronghold and the badlands to the Lakota during that time of struggle,

The Stronghold. It was where the last of the ghost dances took place as the Tribe was being put on the Reservation. They did it on the sly because the army told them they couldn't do that, along with sun dancing. But people did it anyway. They just went where they couldn't see them. They call it The Stronghold, I think, because there was a little isthmus of land, I guess, and then an island there out in the badlands. So they got out on that little island there, and they were gonna stand the soldiers off as they came through that little narrow passageway. But they never had to. They did some dancing out there, they stayed for a while, and then they left on their own (Personal interview, 5/4/12).

For many people, like this man, the story of The Stronghold is one of flight, but it is also important to understand what led to that flight, and how the Lakota responded to the threat from the United States Government.

Many of the people I interviewed asked if I had been to the badlands. This question made complete sense considering the topic of our discussions. However, just as many people asked me if I had been to Wounded Knee, located thirty miles from the South Unit's White River Visitor Center. To outsiders the connection is obscure, but the massacre at Wounded Knee and its repercussions are a constant presence on the Reservation. As indicated above, the historical significance of the badlands is not lost on the local residents. One Lakota man responded to the question of his personal relationship to the badlands by saying,

I guess I'm connected in a historical way, our assets being out there. Using it as a strategy to defend our families against the enemy or their enemies or, at the time, cavalry and so forth...and that's one way that I'm tied to the badlands...I guess I have, not really emotional, I guess some spiritual aspects...of just knowing that our ancestors were there and they utilized it. It being one of the sacred places that they worshipped. So in reality it just falls back on ancestors, just using that barren land. They knew that there was strong medicine out there (Personal interview, 5/21/12).

The spiritual connection that this man discussed is not unclear to outsiders who pay any attention to information in the White River Visitor Center, or who take the time to talk to Oglala Lakota Tribal members about the South Unit. There are very few trails on the South Unit of the badlands, and future plans for the addition of hiking trails and roads will bypass the spiritual sites important to the Oglala Sioux Tribe. One man, a Mandan-Hidatsa who had the opportunity to work with the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority, had not heard about the badlands of South Dakota until he took a job with the National Park Service. For him, learning about the presence of the badlands required learning about Lakota Tribal history as well. He admitted that the lands are, “very, very spiritual...I hate to use the old terms, mysterious and all that kind of stuff, but there’s a lure to it....I think it’s more spiritual than anything else” (Personal interview, 5/21/12).

For the Oglala Lakota as well as some outsiders, the White River Badlands are “an awesome place,” a place full of “strong medicine.” The land seems so essential to the Oglala Lakota that one man responded to the question about his personal relationship to the badlands by saying, simply, “I’m Lakota” (Personal interview, 6/8/12). However, the intricate spiritual and historical significance of these lands was not enough to protect them from the United States Government.

***What did the loss of the land in 1942 mean to you personally?***

Past experiences with the badlands have created a rich history for the Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation, but for many of them that history is partially clouded by the creation of the bombing range in 1942. Almost the entire 133,300 acres located in the South Unit were part of the bombing range, which also included a large portion of Reservation lands. Though few

people remain who remember the loss of the land in 1942, the stories of the loss are still told. As one Lakota woman stated, “the South Unit is a part of our history, and it’s a history that hurt a lot of families” (Personal interview, 6/1/12).

That pain is still present today, and when they were telling their stories many of the Lakota I interviewed became visibly angry while remembering the loss of land. For some who did not have any close family members who were affected by the bombing range, their anger centers around what was done to the Tribe as a whole. For instance, one Oglala man said,

We got our elders that lived through the badlands, getting kicked out of the badlands, getting kicked out by the army when World War II started, and their parents lived through Little Bighorn, and their parents before that...I don’t know what it meant to the Tribe. I know we lost a lot of land...you have no choice. You have to go, and if not you have to face the consequences (Personal interview 5/18/12).

This man, and many others, likened the taking of the lands for the bombing range to the taking of land through treaties in the nineteenth century. When they discussed the taking of the land, they did so with brutal honesty. Very little about the situation was justifiable to a group that had lost hundreds of thousands of acres of land in the past. As one Lakota woman noted, “They had no choice. They were gonna take it. That’s how I feel. I don’t know if that’s a misconception” (Personal interview, 6/1/12). When asked about the loss of the land, one young Oglala Lakota man shook his head and suggested it was,

Just probably another slap in the face that they had been getting used to by now. Well, there was quite a gap, I guess, from the last time that the Reservation had been reduced in size, but before, Lakota land was from the Missouri to the Little Bighorn or even farther, but then pretty soon it was just West River, and pretty soon it was just the Reservation we have now, the Oglalas. It’s just kind of the same events happening over and over again, and just maybe a smaller scale now. I’m sure every one was just a slap in the face and a pain. I’m sure, you know, they’ve gotten used to it by now (Personal interview, 5/17/12).

However, being accustomed to the loss of land is different from accepting it, and many people did discuss the taking in 1942 just as this young man did. It was a slap in the face from which they are still trying to recover.

Still, it is important to look at this issue from all sides. Some respondents mentioned that a number of the Lakota who were forced to vacate the bombing range lands were not as upset as others, because they felt that they were helping their country in a time of need, though none of the people I interviewed who have a family connection to the badlands shared that sentiment. Some people who are well removed from the events of 1942 can consider the taking in a different light. One Lakota man said,

I feel pretty bad for the people that it happened to, but it wasn't my family so I can't say that I know what it feels like to be in that position. I really wish it wouldn't have happened, but in another sense it might have been necessary. There's gonna have to be somewhere that the army, navy, whatever, can train like that. It had to be somewhere. It's just sad that it had to happen on the Reservation. To me I thought it was worse that when they gave it back they kinda put the stipulation on that it has to be a national park. You know, if they were gonna give it back, why not just give it back? But if they had, we probably wouldn't be looking at a tribal national park right now. So I guess, all's well that ends well (Personal interview, 5/17/12).

However, others remain skeptical, "the war effort? I don't know. I don't see where it really helped the war effort any. [Laughter] Except for leaving a bunch of duds down there, you know" (Personal interview, 6/1/12)?

In the quote above, a Lakota man discusses the stipulation that the bombing range become a national park. When the war ended, many believed that the former landowners would have the opportunity to buy back their personal lands. Approximately 150,000 acres of the bombing ranger were returned to the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Another large parcel, however, was not returned and became subject to a land grab. Eventually Congress told the Oglala Sioux Tribe that

this land would be held in trust for the Tribe if they approved it being turned into a unit of Badlands National Park. Otherwise, the land would be declared excess property and sold to the highest bidder. With no other choice, the Oglala Sioux Tribe took the deal, and the South Unit of Badlands National Park was created.

While some Oglala Lakota have made an effort to record the stories associated with the bombing range, this history is still mostly oral. An entrepreneur who owns a store on the Reservation discussed the many stories she had heard,

It was devastating to them because they didn't have enough time to leave. They had the impression that they would only be gone for a short while so they took some things, but they couldn't take everything. They lost their homes; they lost their corrals, their gardens...they depended on their gardens. They could take some of the animals, but a lot of them got bombed...Take them where?...So the stories that I heard, what people were telling me, was it was really devastating to them. The places close to their houses where they buried their loved ones, they had to leave all this just to come back some day and see that somebody pushed it all together with a bulldozer and used it as a target for bombs (Personal interview, 5/31/12).

Because the stories of the bombing range are oral histories, they are constantly growing and changing. One Lakota woman that I interviewed seemed cautious about the history of the bombing range as it is told among the Oglala Sioux of Pine Ridge Reservation. The bombing range was a massive piece of land that stretched across the northern half of the Reservation. What would become the South Unit of Badlands National Park is located almost entirely within the aerial gunnery range boundaries. However, a substantial portion of the Reservation was subsumed by the bombing range, as well. Stories about the removal of families can become convoluted quickly because no one knows exactly how many families had to leave. When asked about how many families were removed from the South Unit, an Oglala Lakota Tribal member may respond with the total number of people removed rather than just the group in the badlands. Numbers range from 100 to 800 individuals or families. No one gave me the same figures as



someone else. Some people mention the struggle that families went through to leave their homes, while others say that they have heard of families that believed it was part of their patriotic duty. The cautious Lakota woman mentioned above distilled the confusion into these words,

I don't think it was such a big impact as it is today when we think about it.... I think back then it impacted those families and that was pretty much who it impacted... Well, it's a whole generation ago so the people telling that story may have heard it from their grandparents, but see there was non-Indians that owned land out there, too. And we never hear how awful it was from them. Or if they were unjustly compensated. We don't know. So it's like that piece of the story needs to be filled in. It really does (Personal interview, 5/31/12).

Even though there is confusion about how many people were forced off of the land, and about how difficult that transition was, the fact is that when someone believes the worst stories, that affects their view of the badlands and the National Park Service in a way that will shape all future relations. Because these stories are passed down through the generations, they continue to affect the relationships between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and United States Government entities, such as the National Park Service. As one Oglala Lakota woman said, "The government wanted it....they wanted to bomb the heck out of it. You know, let's get rid of the people out of there. Don't matter where they go, if they have a place to go. We want it and that's it" (Personal interview, 6/1/12). These sentiments were repeated again and again in the interviews, and have affected the relationship that many Oglala Lakota have with Badlands National Park.

***What is your personal relationship with Badlands National Park and the South Unit?***

Many of the people involved in this interview process have very deep connections to Badlands National Park and the South Unit on an institutional level. The history that the Oglala Lakota have experienced on the badlands floods into these relationships. The people interviewed

have all had to deal with Badlands National Park in some way. For many, they work with the North Unit on a daily basis, while others worked in cooperation with Badlands National Park to produce the South Unit GMP. Others have worked to make sure their voices are heard about this process by attending public forums. No matter their connection, the good and bad times they and their ancestors have experienced on the badlands seems to color their relationship with Badlands National Park.

The Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority (OSPRA) has been selected to run the day-to-day management of the South Unit once it becomes a Tribal National Park. Because of this, many OSPRA employees have a longstanding relationship with Badlands National Park. Many also helped to write the South Unit GMP and participated in the public forums. Though OSPRA employees have the emotions described in the above sections, they also must maintain a professional relationship with Badlands National Park.

Because the Tribal National Park is not yet a reality, decisions concerning the South Unit are still under the purview of the North Unit. Each summer a group of rangers are hired to work the South Unit, and based on the 1976 Memorandum of Agreement, these seasonal workers are Oglala Lakota Tribal members.

The relationship between the North Unit and the South Unit is difficult to grasp. There are many intricacies in that association that cannot be easily relayed to those who are not part of the relationship. All employees of the South Unit must undergo interpreter training with the North Unit, but they also receive training through OSPRA. During my time on the Reservation I was able to sit in on parts of the two-day training that was being given to the new seasonal workers. The group of people was equally split between presenters and park interpreters. The Superintendent of Badlands National Park, Eric Brunnemann, was in attendance for the first day

of training and took notes on the presentations just like the other interpreters. Most of the interpreters were returning for another season at a job they knew well, but they were still required to take the training.

The crux of the training centered on oral presentations by a number of Tribal members who spoke about the history of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, the history of the bombing range, and the spiritual significance of the South Unit. On the second day of training a wildlife biologist from OSPRA gave a presentation on the natural history of the South Unit, and an OSPRA law enforcement officer talked about problems they have experienced on the South Unit with the illegal removal of fossils.

This training worked to combine North Unit policies with the unique history of the South Unit. Visitors to the White River Visitor Center get a different education about the Badlands, because that story involves a cultural aspect that is less talked about in the North Unit.

However, like with any working relationship, there are strains on the bonds between the North Unit and the South Unit. The relationship is often tenuous with those on the ground at the South Unit recognizing areas that need improvement, but being unable to get a response from the North Unit. One Lakota man who has served as a supervisor on the South Unit admitted, “they’re not allowing me to do some stuff, but I’m doing it anyways because they can change it back if they want to after I’m gone. I’ll fight to keep it, keep it the way I want.” When asked if he would talk to supervisors at the North Unit about his concerns he said, “If I could get it out without getting mad, yeah. We tried before...we tried, but it didn’t seem to do any effect” (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

Many other respondents mentioned the difficulties that they have experienced when working with Badlands National Park. While one Lakota woman saw improvement in cultural

understanding of some National Park Service employees she also said, “The other pet peeve that I have with the national parks is that I always felt like they were way more supportive of Wall Drug<sup>3</sup> than this way. And one time [someone] told them in the training, you know, you go out past that auto gate out there, you go out across that bridge on highway 44, guess what people? There’s a bunch of people that live out there” (Personal interview 5/31/12).

Many people discussed the fossils on the South Unit of Badlands National Park. For a long time outside agencies were granted permission by the North Unit to come in, study the fossils, and remove some for further study or display in their institutions or museums. Because of this, the relationship between the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe was deeply affected. As one Lakota man noted,

The feelings were hurt because of the deal with the fossils going off of the Reservation. They didn’t know that was happening. It wasn’t in any report that the tribe had ever seen...I guess the National Park Service didn’t think it was important enough to tell the tribe. I’m surprised they didn’t (Personal interview, 5/4/12).

In fact, during one interview, an Oglala Lakota man and his wife brought out numerous photos that they had taken of fossils stored in the South Dakota School of Mines which had come off of the South Unit. Over and over again the man stressed his concern about the fossils, especially now that a Tribal National Park is on the horizon. He said, “I want to see them address [the] fossils. I never did ever find any authorization for the park service to take those fossils out of there in the first place. Or allow somebody to come in and do it” (Personal interview, 6/12/12). The removal of the fossils continues to color the relationship between the Tribe and the National Park Service today. Fossils from the South Unit are in colleges from California to Georgia, and

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<sup>3</sup> Wall Drug is a store located in Wall, SD along I-90. It has long been considered the ultimate “tourist trap.” For more information on Wall Drug and the tourism associated with it visit <http://www.walldrug.com/> or [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/04/wall-drug-south-dakota\\_n\\_994739.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/04/wall-drug-south-dakota_n_994739.html).

some can even be found in Europe. However, Oglala Lakota Tribal members did not receive any recompense for the removal of the fossils, and many have very bitter feelings about that.

Even though most of the blame for past disappointments like the removal of fossils is placed on the National Park Service, many respondents did mention that a number of past failures have dual roots in the National Park Service and in the Tribe. When asked about her professional relationship with Badlands National Park another Oglala Sioux woman said her main duty was,

Just giving information and input, and what we would like to see happen there and what we thought should happen there and the history of it, you know, how it came to be and what had happened since the first signing til up until the present, of the unaccountabilities, not only on the United States Government's part, but also on our Tribe's part. I think it could be made right, and should be (Personal interview, 6/1/12)

Both sides need to become accountable for their actions in the past in order to move forward with the Tribal National Park process. This woman's response is indicative of something more important than the past difficulties in the relationship between Badlands National Park and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. While everyone had a different story to tell about the past, a common thread could be found in their plans for the future: hope.

### **“How Could You Go Wrong?”: Building a Tribal National Park**

#### ***What are your goals for the South Unit?***

When I was doing my interviews I started to realize that this question was viewed as the most important by the respondents. Every other question became a warm-up for this one. The South Unit General Management Plan offers a foundation for the building of a Tribal National Park, but once the South Unit is under Tribal control, the sky really is the limit. The Oglala Lakota Tribal members that I spoke with have so many ideas for the future park that their goals

seem overwhelming at times. However, even knowing all of the obstacles that stand in their way, the Lakota are very optimistic about the future, and offered two separate categories of goals.

### ***Building a Park for America***

The first category considers infrastructure changes that need to take place to make the South Unit more accessible. This category also includes efforts to increase tourism through new programming on the South Unit. With changes to infrastructure and facilities, as well as an increase in available activities, the Tribal National Park will be a shining example of the future of the National Park Service.

### **BRINGING PEOPLE IN**

One Lakota man who has worked as a supervisor on the South Unit mentioned that he would like to make jeep trails and horse trails through the badlands. Many respondents noted that these activities currently take place on the South Unit, but there are no trails to protect the natural resources. Future trails could provide recreation while also safeguarding resources. The man went on to say,

I'd like to make it like a two day ride, like a whole chuck wagon. Just go out there and spend the night out in the middle of nowhere. For us, we'd go out there and have some people come out and sing for them all night and tell stories; not scary stories, but real stories of the badlands. Same with jeep trails. Open up some hiking trails out there. I was trying to do some geocaching but I guess they didn't allow it. I wanted to do more of that. More just short hikes, long hikes, campground, RV park... There are people who want to stay and they always ask every year, can we stay? Can we park somewhere? Do you have any RV places? We don't have that and I wish we did (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

The goals that this man provided offer insight into the current situation of the South Unit. There is a small visitor center and one road that passes along the southern boundary of the South Unit.

Other than that, visitors have no options for viewing the badlands in a safe, and National Park Service-approved, method. As the same man noted, “the area is just real small and kind of hard to really do anything” (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

In addition to the building of trails and campgrounds, many people discussed the building of a Lakota Heritage and Education Center, generally referred to simply as the heritage center. This center would replace the current White River Visitor Center as the primary visitor contact area in the South Unit. In addition to offering the same services as a National Park Service visitor center, the heritage center would educate visitors about Lakota history. Many of the respondents feel that the heritage center cannot be built soon enough. The current visitor center is small, and many of the displays inside were provided by the Harpers Ferry Center, an interpretative media division of the National Park Service. For many of the people I interviewed the fact that their stories are being told strictly through the eyes of the National Park Service is galling. They are ready to take over the interpretation, and provide insight into Oglala perspectives of the South Unit. In addition to a heritage center, many people suggested the building of a repository, and indeed the South Unit General Management Plan does call for this. Once the repository is built, fossils housed off-site will be returned, if feasible.

With improved infrastructure and new facilities, many of the Lakota are confident that tourists will come and one Lakota man mentioned, “I know they come with money, and they want to buy stuff...If we could get that addition...I think we’ll be okay. We’ll have regular visitors everyday” (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

## ENTERTAINING VISITORS

In addition to the building of roads and facilities, as well as trails, the Oglala Lakota have many goals that work to create the best visitor experience possible. In the interviews multiple Tribal members mentioned the importance of the stars and the knowledge they have to share. One Lakota man suggested that they should, “have a little presentation nightly...it’ll be really nice to see all the stars, and it would be nice to hear our version of Lakota star knowledge, what they mean to us” (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

Many goals for the future Tribal National Park center around this idea of interpretation, however they stray from the path set by the National Park Service in the past. Ranger led programs would be different, and knowledge would be relayed not just across an information counter in the heritage center, but out in the open air as well. One Lakota man said he would like to see a living village that would be, “like a real camp, like a real encampment with tipis. Indians actually living in the tipis and you’ll pull up there and you can come over and share their food and have them all in dress, you know? That’d be cool” (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

Remembering his childhood, this man recalled participating in a living village in the Black Hills when his father was teaching a class of college students. While the class was taking place the Oglala man, along with ten of his friends, decided to play a prank,

We all dressed up, put leggings on or breastplates, war bonnets, and put our feathers on and come flying out of the Hills. The camp was at the bottom. We come flying out at full blast on horse. We scared the shit out of them. That was fun. But then we got off and they all came around...My dad explained it. Then we did dances for them, and they were still kind of like, checking us out. But it was good, though...I mean, it would be nice to do that out there...have someone scraping a hide or fixing or a bow or something. Fixing a dress, beating something. We’d come over and introduce each other, sit down, and have a talk. Feed them. Something like that. Then tell them about the stories of creation and our history stories. The next morning let them go, send them on their way (Personal interview, 5/18/12).



This type of interpretation would offer visitors a unique opportunity to see how the Lakota used to live while also interacting with modern Lakota. A living village could allow tourists to be entertained while also learning about the unique culture of the Oglala Sioux and the importance of the badlands to this group. These types of visitor experiences also offer the Reservation as a whole the benefits of increased tourism. Currently there are misunderstandings about the safety of the Reservation, but a Tribal National Park has the ability to break down those misunderstandings so that hopefully, “that barrier will go away eventually.... People will just come through here like it’s not a reservation. They’ll just drive right on through here and stop at a store and say ‘hi’ to people without really noticing that they’re Indians. They’ll be just another person” (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

#### NEW MANAGEMENT

The Tribal National Park will be subject to Tribal Council rule, and day-to-day activities will be managed by OSPRA. However, there will also need to be a group of managing officials who are not weighed down by their other obligations to OSPRA. There will have to be a new hiring guide when the Tribal National Park becomes a reality, and quite a few people had something to say about that. Many reiterated the same point that, “we are our worst enemy” (Personal interview, 5/30/12). In the past, many expressed concern that personnel positions on the Reservation have been deeply influenced by politics and nepotism. They do not want to see a continuation of such policies on the South Unit. Instead one man contended,

We need training, we need a personnel policy that’s rock solid and whoever might be the manager of the South Unit has got to be left alone...no political interference...I would think that we would need a panel on both the National Park Service side and the Tribal side who....it’d be a personnel board...It’s gotta be treated as a business, no two ways about it. It’s gotta be a solid business with

business-minded people. So anthropology degree is pretty cool, but maybe the big dog should have a Master's in business (Personal interview, 5/30/12).

Part of the plan for the future of the park is for the National Park Service to continue acting as a guide for management and preservation policies. Eventually Service employees would be phased out on the ground, but their help is necessary to get the park up and running. Many Lakota are optimistic about the continuing support to be offered by the National Park Service because, as one Lakota man commented, "They do things well don't they? They do things well. So how can we, with that type of teacher, how could you go wrong? Failure is not an option" (Personal interview, 5/30/12).

### ***Building a Park for the Lakota***

The second category of goals looks introspectively at the Oglala Sioux Tribe today in order to understand what they hope to get out of the Tribal National Park. While the changes to infrastructure and facilities mentioned above will bring economy-boosting tourism to the Reservation, there are other goals to be considered as well. The new Tribal National Park must protect sacred sites and preserve fossils. The history of the land needs to be shared with the visitors, so that Tribal members might be able to begin healing. Above all else, however, the Tribal National Park is being pursued for the good of the Tribe, which can mean a multitude of things on the ground.

### **PROTECTING SACRED SITES**

The South Unit is home to many sites that are sacred to the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Many respondents mentioned that in the past a certain group of Lakota had a standoff with the National

Park Service on the Stronghold Unit concerning the preservation of sacred sites. The trouble was ended peacefully, but the legacy remains. To avoid future conflicts like that one, policies will have to be put in place to keep people away from sacred sites. One Oglala Lakota man remembered trying to negotiate with the protesters on the South Unit while he was working with OSPRA. Their main argument was that the United States Government had no right to control access to the South Unit. This Lakota man brought a number of medicine men to the Stronghold Unit to talk with the protestors and explain the ways that the sacred sites have been protected in the past, and how they will continue to be protected in the future. As he said,

The major issue is that in that area there are some spiritual places, sacred places, places where, you know, there are vision quests. Each medicine man, there's about fifty, sixty of them, each of them, not all have the same kind of requirements for their clients, I guess. So there's a lot of areas up there that is considered a place for vision quests and there are places where back then in the 1890s where people who stood their ground were killed and buried so you don't go near that place (Personal interview, 5/31/12).

In the future it will be essential that Lakota elders and medicine men continue to participate in the formation of the Tribal National Park because they know the history of the area better than anyone else, and they know where the sacred sites are that must be saved from development.

## PRESERVING FOSSILS

In addition to protecting the sacred sites of the South Unit, many of the Oglala Lakota Tribal members interviewed expressed concern for the fossils. As one Lakota woman noted, "There has to be some kind of restrictions and rules for those that come in and take whatever they want without knowing the kind of value it has on it, not just money value, but the sacredness of it" (Personal interview, 6/1/12).

The fossils on the badlands offer insight into the future preservation policies that the Oglala Lakota will enact on the South Unit. Obviously, a very large part of the National Park Service idea is centered on the protection of natural resources. Indeed the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 remarks that the Service's purpose is "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" (16 U.S.C., §§ 1).

Importantly, in the interviews I performed, the Oglala Lakota had very little to say about specific future preservation policies. They also had very little to say about exploiting the land. The simple fact is, as far as preservation goes, Oglala Lakota perspectives line up with National Park Service perspectives. The only difference can be found in motivation. The White River Badlands of South Dakota are a rich repository of significant natural history. To the National Park Service, this history should be preserved in some places, and extracted for protection in museums in other cases. For the Oglala Lakota, the specimens to be found in the badlands should be protected because they are their relatives. In the Lakota tradition of *mitakuye oyasin*, we are all related (Black Bonnet 2010). To disturb the fossils on the Badlands would be to disturb a grave. Any worries that the National Park Service may have about the future protection of the land in the South Unit should be assuaged when they consider both the respect that the Oglala Lakota have for nature, as well as the deep spiritual connection that they feel for the badlands.

The development of a repository could help to preserve fossils that have already been removed from the land. Additionally, one OSPRA law enforcement ranger that was interviewed suggested that more law enforcement patrols take place on the South Unit. The purpose of these would be,

Basically that which entails everything from making contact with people to citing people for certain violations...that would be my goals, to let people know that there's a task force team that directly deals with the South Unit and any other fossil poaching violations through the Rez where they'd become experts in paleontology and identifying animals, taking it all the way criminally to Federal court....And also on the patrols, the goal, you'd be, once you'd find a specimen, a fossil, you'd document it. So you're not only just looking for criminals, but you're also gonna be looking for fossils, intact fossils (Personal interview, 5/21/12).

These goals of stopping fossil poaching were extremely important to many respondents. While many would like to see fossils returned to the Tribe with the building of a repository, others want more active preservation of the fossils still in the badlands. One Lakota woman stated, "well, I'd like to see us salvage what we can because there's a lot of resources leaving that nobody hears about basically because nothing's being done" (Personal interview, 5/31/12). Through a concerted effort at documenting the location of fossils on the South Unit, Tribal members will be able to protect their natural resources.

#### REMEMBERING THE PAST

While the Tribal National Park will be precedent-setting, it cannot erase the contentious past. The loss of the land in 1942 still stings sharply, and many Lakota want to see the future park address the taking of the land, a history that is not often told to visitors of Badlands National Park. In addition to providing information about the loss of land, some interviewees hope that with the future park will come repayment for the past. One Lakota woman said,

I would really love to see some compensation, and I think in the legislative process that should be written in because when you read that information they were paid for the land, those that did get money, but they weren't paid for if they built a house, they had a well, fences, chicken coops, barns, nothing like that. If there was anything like that, there was no compensation (Personal interview, 5/31/12).

This same woman also discussed the possibility of developing a buffalo herd on the badlands. Currently much of the South Unit is held in agricultural leases to Tribal members and non-Tribal members alike. However, many of the respondents hope to see a decrease in the leases, and the beginning of a restorative buffalo program. Tribal members could buy into the program and benefit from it. This Lakota woman sees such a program as an effort towards compensation and reconciliation, an opportunity for Tribal members to benefit.

The reintroduction of buffalo onto the South Unit badlands is contentious. It has been attempted in the past, but because of yearly erosion it is difficult to maintain fences on the badlands, and the buffalo often escaped their enclosures. A former OSPRA employee remembered past efforts at restoring buffalo, and offered changes that could help such a project in the future,

In my way of the thinking it would be better to just have the buffalo by the side of the road there on that scenic road...You know if they get out in the badlands, the buffalo, the people won't see them anyway because they can't get out there to see them, and it will be hard to round them up, it will be hard to cull them every year, otherwise you end up with too many animals. It's just gonna be a huge problem, a costly problem. But if they put them next to the road the tourists could see them and they could round them up more easily....I would like to see everybody enjoy that experience....You need to accommodate the visitor coming in. You can't just stuff your buffalo out in the middle of the badlands where nobody can go....It just isn't feasible economically to do it otherwise (Personal interview, 5/4/12).

In this man's way of thinking, a restorative buffalo program could bring in visitors as well as provide economic benefits through the yearly cull. Buffalo are present in other parts of the Reservation, but by putting them front and center on the South Unit, tourists would have the opportunity to learn about the Lakota relationship to buffalo, and about modern techniques for maintaining herds.

## FOR THE GOOD OF THE LAND, FOR THE GOOD OF THE TRIBE

Although specific policies were not discussed, almost everyone did mention that preservation must occur. One man argued, “it’s probably the last semi-wilderness area that there is on the Reservation so it needs to be really protected” (Personal interview, 5/4/12). Another man commented that,

It’s kind of a unique area around here that it’s not very heavily populated... I don’t wanna see really commercialized ‘cause it’s kinda pristine, I guess would be the word. There’s roads and stuff out there, but there’s no other development. It’s kind of a neat, unique area. If you get out there, you’re in a sense kind of in the wilderness. If you break down or get lost it’s gonna take a while to hike out or it’s gonna take a while for someone to come get you... I think a lot of people are kind of looking for that experience (Personal interview, 5/17/12).

Many Tribal members agree. The South Unit is a unique and desolate place full of spiritual sites and distinctive natural history. It is a tourist destination to be sure, but it is also a source of Tribal pride.

The Tribal National Park will work to create a haven of preservation for the many unique fossils and geologic formations found in the South Unit, but it will also offer a unique cultural experience. As one woman noted,

I’ve always said I would love to see that the resources be managed better and that they be able to educate people, not only people visiting but our own Tribal members. And that in that whole concept it also has the cultural pieces. And that it become a distinctly unique park and that’s how you get your draw of visitors is that it’s just different than any other park because it has a cultural perspective (Personal interview, 5/31/12).

Many of the respondents mentioned the importance of the cultural perspective. The future Tribal National Park will have dual preservation goals. Natural resources will be maintained, but so will cultural resources.

For the members of the Oglala Lakota Tribe that I spoke with, future park policies can be built using Tribal knowledge. One Lakota man contended,

There's a lot of local people that live around the badlands. They're just as good as any archaeo-paleo people coming out of colleges and coming down here because they know how to do this, they know how to prepare it, they know how to prep it, they know the whole system, and I have seen such beautiful work (Personal interview, 6/8/12).

The Tribal National Park can offer jobs to the Lakota who already have knowledge of the land.

The youth of the Reservation can aspire to work in the park. Everyone that I interviewed mentioned the jobs that this venture would bring to the Reservation, and the good that it would do for the local economy.

Many people also mentioned that the Tribal National Park could change outside perspectives on Native Americans. One Lakota man stated, "To have it actually be Tribally controlled would be great. To see, to let the world know that Native Americans can do something instead of being dependent on the Federal Government for handouts" (Personal interview, 6/11/12). Another respondent talked about her childhood when she travelled around the country with her father, an artist. She said, "We drove, us kids, we drove, we went to these art shows. We set up, we had to take down, we sold. That's where we was inhibited in the beginning. We was bashful and shy, but in the end you became salespeople, you talked to the public, and you weren't afraid of them...that's the way we need to raise our kids" (Personal interview, 6/14/12).

A number of interviewees felt very strongly that the Lakota are ready for the Tribal National Park. One woman contended, "we can run it, we got the people, we got the resources, more of our people are graduating into environment, and biology, and everything like that....We have people that I know would do it, and I think they would do a darn good job because their heart would be in the right place" (Personal interview, 6/1/12). Others remarked on how the new park would offer a way to showcase Tribal values. After mentioning the importance of jobs, one man said,



The way our life, the way we grew up, we knew about this daily. Generosity, courage, bravery, we lived by that daily. So I think it'll be in there already, just people won't see it. It'll be just the way we live already... You've got to be courageous to go out and actually speak to people. You have to be brave to get out there. So all these values that we live by will be there already (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

Other respondents also mentioned the importance of expressing Lakota values through a Tribal National Park. For most this seemed like a given. To them Lakota values should be evident in all interactions. Others recognized that these values might need to be re-taught, especially to the youth of the Reservation.

#### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

The respondents had many goals for the future Tribal National Park, but none was more pervasive than the goal of getting the youth involved. In many cases, interviewees described the job opportunities that await the youth when the Tribal National Park becomes a reality. For instance one man said that the youth will be,

Archaeologists, biologists, what do they call them? Paleontologists. You know all those. We'll be looking to them in the future. Since we're on the Reservation it will be Indian preference, you know? And they'll be able to get hired. If they go right to school and do that, and once they get done with it, they'll have a job. There'll be a lot of other job opportunities there too. I just want things better for our children (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

Another respondent has a daughter who currently wants to be a paleontologist and the mother is excited about the prospect of the Tribal National Park because, "she would have a job to come to or she could even get training, and people out here could be doing that...that is their own land" (Personal interview, 5/31/12).

Besides the job opportunities, the Tribal National Park could offer youth an education because, as one man suggested, "they're so out of touch, the youth here are so out of touch to

what's going on around them" (Personal interview, 5/21/12). The woman who recalled travelling around the country with her father said that the youth have "got to get out and hustle. They've got to get out and develop their own business sense. That's what I think. And that's what I want for my daughter, to be able to have her own business...and I'd like for our kids to be able to learn from everything that's on this Reservation" (Personal interview, 6/14/12). Many Lakota mentioned the importance of a business education and one man said,

I'd like to see some young entrepreneurs getting in there too....I'm kind of, I don't know what you'd say, but that's the thing about this world, everything's a business. Even if you've got to mind your own, that's business. But the thing is, there's opportunities here....Hopefully it'll bring families together (Personal interview, 6/8/12).

While the youth are training for these jobs, however, it is important that the management of the Tribal National Park keeps the younger generation in mind. As one Lakota man responded, "We need good leaders, not to be thinking about themselves, thinking about their future....You know, we need somebody in there that's gonna take the business part of it and run the business part of it thinking of our kids" (Personal interview, 5/18/12).

In the end, many respondents recognize that though the Tribal National Park may be created in their time, it will be the youth of the Reservation who have to take care of it. Despite the many obstacles that must be overcome before the creation of the Tribal National Park, the Oglala Lakota that I interviewed remain optimistic, "because whatever happens with this it's gonna, we hope, it's gonna be the next 100, 150 years that our kids and our grandkids and our great grandkids are gonna benefit from it and see something that is beneficial to our people" (Personal interview, 6/1/12).

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Formation of an Interactional Past and an Interactional Potential**

The interviews described in the last chapter offer unique insight into the making of a Tribal National Park. Nothing like this has ever happened in the United States. However, this means that there is no manual to work from, no map to guide the way. Both the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe recognize that this is a precedent-setting project. Because of this, they want to make sure that it is done right, which is the reason for the South Unit interview project.

Many of the people I interviewed felt that their voice was often unheard in the raucous noise of such a precedent-setting government project. However, it is my hope that these interviews have allowed for their voices to be heard loud and clear.

The relationship between the Oglala Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service has been changing with every new step in the Tribal National Park process. To move forward, they must elicit areas of sustained discord in order to find a way to continue working together. To understand the changing relationships, it is important to understand the ways in which the Oglala Lakota perceive the badlands. This is where my research comes in.

The members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe that I interviewed have a strong place attachment to the South Unit of Badlands National Park that has developed through decades of interaction. Using the information gleaned from the interviews it is possible to understand how this place attachment has been formed in the past and how Tribal members hope to re-create a sense of place in the future.

## **Interactional Past**

By considering the responses to three questions, we can begin to look at the interactional past. These questions are what is your personal relationship with the badlands of South Dakota, what did the loss of the land in 1942 mean to you personally, and what is your personal relationship with Badlands National Park and the South Unit?

These questions helped form the groundwork for the interviews. To see where we are going in the future, we must understand the past. The past for the Oglala Lakota in relation to the South Unit has been one of dispossession, and their relationship with the National Park Service is colored by that past. However, even though history has been none too kind to the Oglala Sioux Tribe living on the badlands, they have still developed a deep connection to the land.

Sartre contends that “when knowledge and feeling are oriented toward something real, actually perceived, that thing, like a reflector, returns the light it has received from it” (Sartre 1965:89, quoted in Basso 1996b:55). Many Oglala Lakota, especially those I interviewed, have constantly been focusing their knowledge and feelings on the badlands, and in turn, the knowledge and feelings that they have about themselves is received from the badlands. This constant interaction between place and people has created place attachment.

Milligan (1998) suggests that memories and past experiences associated with a site can affect the meaning created through symbolic interaction. This is called the interactional past. The question “what is your personal relationship with the badlands of South Dakota?” offers a view into how this group of Oglala Lakota have created a sense of place in the past. Milligan (1998) contends that more meaningful interactions create more meaningful attachments. Some of the interactions that the Oglala Sioux describe may seem insignificant to the outsider, but they have helped to build place attachment. For instance, some respondents mentioned going horseback

riding on the badlands as a child or as an adult. To someone who does not go horseback riding, or who only does so through organized stables, this activity may seem like nothing more than a recreation activity. However, for the people interviewed, this activity is a constant in their lives. Perhaps they spend every weekend riding the badlands. Maybe something significant happened while they were riding, such as a sudden thunderstorm or a wildlife encounter, which colored their experience. No matter the specific event, for a few of the Oglala Lakota that I interviewed, past horseback rides contributed to the interactional past of the South Unit.

Others developed a connection to the badlands through oral histories passed down by their parents and grandparents. Though they may not know the exact parcel of land that was owned by their ancestors, they still recognize that the land in the South Unit is where they come from. Even those who do not have a family history associated with the badlands still have a Tribal history in that area. The events leading up to Wounded Knee and the resulting flight to the land that would become the South Unit are common knowledge on the Reservation, and the Oglala Lakota I interviewed have very deep feelings about that struggle. Through that history, they are connected to the South Unit.

Wounded Knee is not the only history that has worked to create an interactional past for the people of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The loss of the land in 1942 had a dramatic effect on the people of Pine Ridge Reservation. Hundreds of families were forced off of their land with very little notice. For the people that I interviewed, the loss of land in 1942 is perhaps felt even more sharply than the struggle for survival in The Stronghold following Wounded Knee. This is because they only have to go back one or two generations to find someone affected by the bombing range. For many respondents, it was their parents, aunts and uncles, or grandparents who were kicked off of the land and were never able to return.

Milligan contends that “when continuity is disrupted, it acts to close a category of past experiences, but it also acts to alter one’s expectations for the future” (Milligan 1998:9). For the Oglala Lakota, the creation of the bombing range in 1942 disrupted their spatial continuity. Everything that they had come to expect based on years of experience was altered by their forced relocation.

Place attachment is a growing topic in disaster studies, and in its own way the loss of land in 1942 was a disaster to the Oglala Sioux Tribe. However, forced relocation was not new to the Tribe, and through many years of broken treaties it is possible that they had developed a resilience to these types of situations which allowed them “to face a threat, survive and bounce back or, perhaps more accurately, bounce forward into a normalcy newly defined by the disaster related losses and changes” (Cox and Perry 2011:395-396).

In disaster studies, researchers have learned that following a disruptive event community members will take one of three paths. They might choose to remain in the affected area and rebuild their place attachment, relegating their former experiences to the interactional past and opening up the future to the interactional potential. They could choose to leave the affected area and rebuild somewhere else. They might decide to stay in the affected area, but never rebuild the sense of place that they had before the disaster.

For the Oglala Lakota that I interviewed, remaining on the badlands was impossible for their ancestors because of the bombing range. However, they did remain on the Reservation. Although the badlands and the Reservation cannot be considered as the same place, they do have a lot of common ties. To have a place attachment to the land of the South Unit often means having a place attachment to the Reservation. For many of the people who were forced to leave,

they continued to maintain a close connection to the badlands, even though they were not living directly on them.

The taking of the land certainly colored the interactional past. For those who were forced to leave, it was no longer their home, and it never would be again. However, houses on the badlands were not the only connections that they had to the land. Like their descendants who have developed a sense of place through continued interaction with the South Unit, Oglala Lakota Tribal members in 1942 had deep connections to the South Unit land. The spiritual significance of the badlands influenced them daily, just as it influences their descendants.

All past interactions with the land have affected the interactional past of the South Unit. Interactions with people also have the ability to affect sense of place, and this can be seen through the respondents' personal relationships with Badlands National Park.

Many of the people I interviewed contended that the relationship they have with employees of Badlands National Park has been tenuous at best. They feel like their voices are not being heard, and that their histories are not being told. However, because the National Park Service focuses heavily on the natural history of the badlands rather than the human struggles, the Oglala Lakota Tribal members I talked with have deepened their connections to the land in order to remember their past so that they can educate future generations about their struggles over the land.

When these three questions are considered, outsiders may wonder why the Oglala Lakota would continue to attach themselves to a place that has caused them so much strife. However, the struggle over land that the Lakota have endured for centuries has the ability not to break place attachment, but to strengthen it. Sense of place is made of both good and bad interactions.

Though the loss of land may seem overwhelmingly bad, every little experience, every camping trip or horseback ride, can restore the balance to create a positive place attachment.

### **Interactional Potential**

The interactional potential of the South Unit as seen by Oglala Sioux Tribal members is best elicited through the question, “what are your goals for the South Unit?” As mentioned previously, every action that occurs in a place has the ability to shape the future and create an interactional potential. The future experiences that people anticipate happening at a particular site contribute to this potential. While interactional past is deeply connected to events that occurred in a place, interactional potential can be connected to specific physical characteristics of a place.

With the National Park Service offering guidance, the Oglala Sioux Tribe have many plans for the South Unit. The first step will be to improve roads in the badlands, and build trails for hiking and horseback riding. Eventually they hope to build a heritage center to replace the White River Visitor Center. Infrastructure and facility changes are just the beginning.

In addition to offering better accessibility to tourists, as well as entertainment opportunities, the Oglala Sioux Tribe members that I spoke with see the future Tribal National park as an opportunity to teach the world about their culture and preserve it for future generations. The park can express Tribal values, while providing jobs to Tribal members. Under Tribal management, the sacred sites that have been so important in creating an interactional past will continue to be protected for the future. Additionally, fossils will be protected for posterity.

The future goals for the Tribal National Park are all extremely optimistic, and as such they build an interactional potential that contributes to a positive place attachment. However,



many respondents felt that the most important goal for the South Unit was to increase youth involvement in the Tribal National Park. This venture could offer youth on the Reservation job opportunities in the long run, but in the short term it can work to educate them about their own culture. In their study of socio-ecological resilience to community-based natural resource stewardship on Pine Ridge Reservation Sherman et al. (2010) found a similar call for youth involvement. Through a seven year study, 300 Lakota households were surveyed about their views on “natural resource use and conservation ethics, spiritual perspectives, land sharing and ecological restoration of reservation lands” (Sherman et al. 2010:511). When the study was completed the researchers found that of all the responses they received, “the desire to create institutions for youth education, youth stewardship, and the inter-generational transfer of ecological knowledge was most intently expressed” (Sherman et al. 2010:515). Ninety-six percent of the respondents to the surveys agreed that youth programs concerning stewardship should be developed on the Reservation. The responses that I acquired from my interviews in 2012 seem to show the continuation of this desire to increase educational opportunities for the youth in relation to stewardship.

The youth of the Reservation may be more removed from the history of the South Unit than their parents and grandparents. One respondent bemoaned the technology that has consumed the lives of the youth, and turned them away from traditional values. However the older generations of Oglala Lakota see the Tribal National Park as an opportunity to get the youth involved in natural resource management as well as cultural preservation. During one of my interviews I was able to get a glimpse into how the adults and the youth will have to learn to communicate in the future. One of my respondents noted that her daughter would like to be a paleontologist. When she first mentioned that goal, however, it created quite an uproar in her

family. The adults believe, as mentioned previously, that the fossils on the South Unit are their ancestors. Because of that, they should not be disturbed, even for paleontological pursuits. The young girl took the time to explain her interest in paleontology, and why the fossils should be studied and preserved. In the end she was able to win over her mother and some of her other relatives. Now they look forward to the day when this young girl becomes a paleontologist and begins to study the fossils of the badlands.

By getting the youth involved, the Oglala Lakota that I spoke with hope to re-create a sense of place in relation to the South Unit. While the adults that I spoke with have developed a place attachment based on an interactional past that considers their personal experiences and the resiliency of their ancestors, they hope to help the youth create their own interactional past based on a Tribal National Park. This precedent-setting park can offer educational, recreational, and cultural activities to the youth while also allowing them to be at the forefront of a movement that could change the way that the National Park Service interacts with Tribal communities throughout the country. While the past struggles of Wounded Knee and the 1942 bombing range will still be told, and thus still influence the interactional past, the youth will have the opportunity to create their own experiences on the badlands.

For the adults of the Pine Ridge Reservation the interactional potential of the South Unit is made up of goals and experiences that will shape the future of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. They recognize the importance of making the Tribal National Park a success because what is now their interactional potential will one day be the youth's interactional past. It is their goal to make sure that the future interactions with the land of the South Unit will build a positive place attachment between the youth of the Reservation and the badlands of South Dakota.

## **Conclusion**

The Oglala Lakota of the Pine Ridge Reservation have interacted with the badlands for hundreds of years. Whether through recreation, culture, or spirituality, members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe have developed a place attachment to the badlands based on years of experience. The importance of the past to this sense of place cannot be underestimated, but future goals in relation to the South Unit badlands also affect the attachment that the Lakota feel for this land. The past of the South Unit includes negative experiences, including the forced relocation of many families following the creation of the bombing range in 1942. Through the goals that the Oglala Lakota have for the future Tribal National Park, they are hoping to create a new sense of place for the youth of the Reservation that is not shadowed by such negative past experiences.

However, much remains to be done before the Tribal National Park can become a reality. The Record of Decision signing that took place in June 2012 officially selected the preferred management alternative of a Tribal National Park. Additionally the Record of Decision signified the start of legislation creation for the new park. By this time, many of the Lakota I spoke with had hoped that the legislation would have passed through Congress, or at least be in Washington, D.C. garnering support. However, at this time forward motion on the Tribal National Park process has stagnated. There is no current timeline for the completion of the Tribal National Park.

This does not mean, though, that the South Unit process should be pushed aside until forward motion can be resumed. Instead, this downtime offers the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe the opportunity to examine this precedent-setting process. The history of the national park idea in the United States has often been one of dispossession of Native groups from their lands. The South Unit process is unique in that it is seeking to turn management of a unit

of the National Park Service back over to a Native group. This repossession is being watched intently by other tribes throughout the United States.

In many ways this process can be seen as a positive move by the National Park Service to right past wrongs. However, as with any working relationship, there are continued areas of discord between the Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The interviews that I performed help to elicit these areas of remaining conflict while also pointing out the good that has come from this entire process.

In the past, the Oglala Sioux Tribe has often been coerced into following the example set by the National Park Service. Some Lakota feel that there is little give, but a lot of take. They feel like they are not being heard. Indeed one of the people that I interviewed discussed his ideas about a future buffalo restoration program on the South Unit and ended by saying, “but nobody asked me” (Personal interview, 5/4/12). These interviews serve to right past neglect. The Tribal National Park will be owned and managed by the National Park Service. It is essential that their voices are heard.

This interview project is one way to spread the voices of the Lakota, but it also works to reassure the Oglala Sioux Tribe that the National Park Service does care about their opinions. My research partner and I worked very hard to set up interviews and arrive prepared and on time. We offered gifts to those who shared their stories, and made sure to let them know how thankful we were for their help. One of the most startling moments in all of the interviews was when one Lakota woman was discussing all of the literature that she has concerning the South Unit. She had not gotten the information out for us to look at because, as she said, “I just, I really didn’t think you were gonna come, to tell you the truth...[My husband] said, ‘Oh, people are always saying that and then they never show up’” (Personal interview, 6/1/12). It was our job as

researchers and equal participants in this interview project to make sure that we helped to change these conceptions of researchers as information collectors who get what they want, and then leave without ever looking back.

The information that my research partner and I gathered through these interviews will find its way back to the people of the Pine Ridge Reservation and to the employees of Badlands National Park. The future success of the Tribal National Park rests squarely on their shoulders, and continued cooperation between these two entities is essential.

My analysis of the past creation of place attachment and future efforts to re-create a sense of place for new generations on the Reservation is, I believe, extremely important to the South Unit process. When the Tribal National Park is considered in the context of the South Unit General Management Plan, it becomes little more than a formal process to create a new unit of the National Park Service. However, to the Oglala Sioux Tribal members that I interviewed, the South Unit is much more than a park. It is home to spiritual sites and cultural identity. It is not a piece of land to enjoy on the weekends or on vacations, but rather a constant part of their lives. In this way, the Oglala Lakota have a very different perspective about the badlands than the National Park Service. Both entities want to see the land preserved, but they have different motivations for that preservation. To move forward with the Tribal National Park process, the National Park Service must understand the motivations of the Oglala Sioux Tribe in order to help them best manage the future park.

Future preservation policies must be equally built around National Park Service and Oglala Sioux Tribal ideals. One method for employees of the National Park Service who will be part of this precedent-setting process to learn about Lakota ideals is to consider the interviews that have been collected. The interviews, however, cannot tell the entire story, and future

collaboration must be built around real conversations, not just pages of transcribed interviews. Still, these interviews and the information contained within them offer a starting place for future cooperation between the National Park Service and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Through a better understanding of how the Lakota perceive the badlands of South Dakota, the National Park Service can work with the Tribe to create a venture that will maintain current preservation efforts while also telling the story of the relationship between the Oglala Lakota and the badlands of South Dakota to the world.

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59<sup>th</sup> United States Congress  
1906 The American Antiquities Act of 1906, 16 U.S.C., §§ 431-433.

64<sup>th</sup> United States Congress  
1916 National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C., §§ 1.

95<sup>th</sup> United States Congress  
1978 Badlands National Park; Establishment, 16 U.S.C., §§ 441.

## Appendix I

## **An Exploration of the History and Future of the South Unit**

Ashley Cobb and Amanda Bills

### **Interview Guide**

#### *History of the South Unit*

- What is your personal relationship with the badlands of South Dakota?
- What is your personal relationship with Badlands National Park and the South Unit?
- From your experience, how has the relationship between the Tribe and Badlands National Park changed during the South Unit process?
  - What is the character of the relationship between the Tribe and the Park currently?
- What did the loss of the land in the South Unit in 1942 mean to you personally?
  - What did it mean to the Lakota people?

#### *Future of the South Unit*

- How might Lakota values be expressed through a Tribal National Park?
- What are your goals for the South Unit?
- Are there any issues remaining before a Tribal National Park can be created?
  - How could we address these issues?
  - Personnel
  - Finance
  - Public Outreach
- What are some reasons the Tribal National Park might fail?
- In your opinion, would it be worthwhile for other tribes to pursue a similar co-management relationship with their neighboring national parks?
- Who is currently involved in the South Unit process?
  - Who else should I speak with to gather a variety of voices about this process?
- **Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the South Unit process?**

## Appendix II

## Facesheet and Consent

The Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority (OSPRA) and Badlands National Park want to explore how the process of managing the South Unit has evolved to better understand the expectations of all stakeholder groups regarding the creation of a Tribal National Park. In this case, stakeholders are defined as individuals, groups, organizations, or agencies who affect or can be affected by the South Unit project.

Respondent ID:

Gender:

Location:

Education:

Date:

Ethnicity/Race:

Time:

Place of Birth:

Age:

Occupation

Unless you specify otherwise all of your responses will be kept confidential and your name will not be connected with your responses. There will probably be publications about the results of this research. These publications will not identify you directly unless you specifically request to be identified by checking the box below. [If you have no objection, your answers will be audio recorded. The tapes will be stored at the Ethnographic Lab at Colorado State University and used for purposes of this research only. The tapes will be labeled by number and date without reference to your name.] Your participation is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. There are no experimental aspects to this research. There are no known risks inherent in this research. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

Your signature acknowledges that you consent to participating in this research.

- 
- ☐ I agree to have the interview audio recorded.  
☐ I do not want to have the interview audio recorded.  
☐ I request to be identified in the study.

Your name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_