



LAS August 2010 Headlines:

Blackfeet Reservation dig unearthing 1,000-year-old history

By Travis Coleman, Great Falls Tribune, Great Falls, Montana, August 8, 2010

BROWNING — Archaeologists are teaming with Blackfeet tribal members to uncover a vast and little-known former hunting complex and bison kill site along the Two Medicine River used at least 1,000 years ago.

Researchers say the 9-mile-long project area, containing a preserved system for driving bison over a cliff, bison bones and remnants of two campsites, could become one of the largest and most significant Blackfeet heritage sites in the region.

The Two Medicine bison jump site is located in the southeastern corner of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation on a remote plateau overlooking the river. Researchers, led by Dr. Maria Nieves Zedeno of the University of Arizona in Tucson, say they're eager to study how late prehistoric and later hunters — Blackfeet and others — used the land to kill bison. They also want to expand people's knowledge about this now extinct way of life.

"We really need to preserve this site for future generations," said Zedeno, an accomplished archaeologist from the University of Arizona's School of Anthropology and Bureau of Applied Research.

This project is unique in that it focuses on the land where the hunters worked, lived and engineered. It's not just an artifact excavation. The project focuses on communities that inhabited this area between AD 1050 and the 1600s.

For hundreds of years, Native Americans and other hunters in this region used bison jumps to kill herds of bison for food and hides. Typically, scouts located the herds and drove them toward the drive-lines, which were created to funnel the stampeding bison toward and over a cliff. Most of the bison were killed by the long fall, with the surviving animals killed by hunters who waited at the bottom.

One of the largest buffalo jumps in North America, the First Peoples Buffalo Jump, is located west of Great Falls near Ulm.

John Murray, the Blackfeet Tribe's historic preservation officer, said the ongoing research at the Two Medicine site will help tribal members understand their history, and integrate the tribe's creation stories with science and culture. The site is said to be near the birthplace of Blackfeet legend Kutoyuis. Murray said officials hope to build an interpretive center for this site, but that will come far in the future.

Project work, paid for by three grants totaling \$300,000, ended for the year last week, but it will begin again next year. The site, which is on land owned by the Blackfeet Tribe, will be secured.

The work done over the last six weeks has been rewarding, according to the researchers. Crews are finding evidence that goes beyond just a kill site, including clues to social interaction and religious significance. Crews also found 651 tepee rings at this site, which is a large amount, Zedeno said.

She added that the site has one of the best-preserved drive-line systems she has seen. Researchers can trace activity at this site back to at least 1,000 years ago, Zedeno said.

At times using just a brush because the soil is so loose, researchers are finding well-preserved bison bones at the bottom of the 30-foot jump. Digging is taking place at the bottom of the jump, where butchering is believed to have happened, and at another processing area 20 feet to the north.

Crews also are finding tiny artifacts, such as chopping tools that probably were used by women for food and hide processing, Zedeno said. Murray said they found parts of bison bones that were used by children as toys.

Crews have discovered that the bison scapulas, or shoulder bones, were lined up in an intentional manner, but the reason for that isn't yet known.

Archaeologists are attempting to map the area and pinpoint the dates the site was used from the bison bones they have found there. They also are trying to reconstruct what happened at this site after the kill and how the Blackfeet used the landscape as a weapon.



Some Blackfeet tribal members have known about this site, but it hasn't ever been researched in this manner, Murray said. With increasing oil-and-gas exploration happening on the reservation, officials realized that ancient cultural sites needed to be identified and protected quickly.

Initial fieldwork and surveying started in the summer of 2007. Zedeno said a magnetic survey helped crews find the site. Technology also allowed crews to minimize the impact on the area and maximize the potential for data collection, Zedeno said.

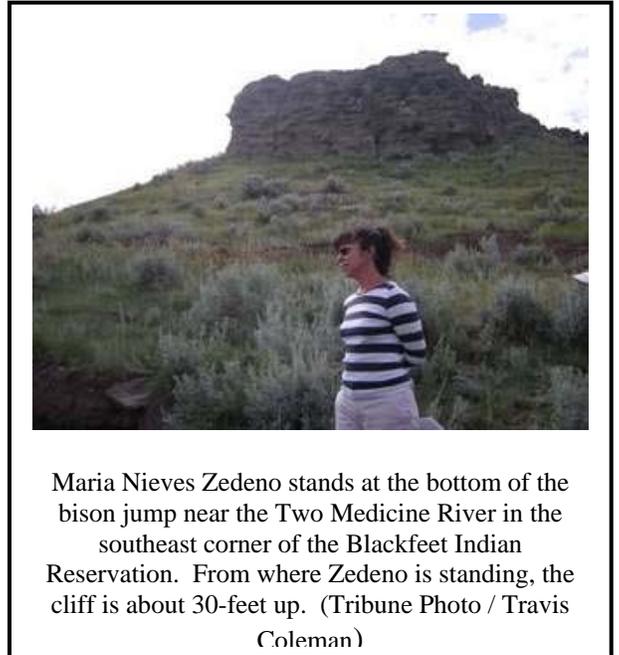
Murray said there have been many interviews with elders conducted by crewmembers in connection to this project. Zedeno said the project incorporates an underrepresented constituency, the Blackfeet Tribe, into archaeological research. It also promotes a process that is scientifically sound and compatible with traditional knowledge and practices.

The area previously was heavily grazed by cattle, eroding some of the land, so the project is as much about preserving the area as anything else. Bone collectors destroyed other similar kill sites on the reservation or west of this area. Additional sites are on private land or are damaged, Zedeno said.

The site also offers a great learning opportunity for tribal youth, from the Blackfeet and other tribes in Montana and Wyoming, who work with the paid crew as trainees. They learn to excavate, take measurements, map and illustrate findings, among other skills.

Crew leaders tried to recruit helpers from among the people who live along the Two Medicine River to get them interested about the history of their home, Zedeno said.

"The project is important to connect the culture and heritage," Murray said.



Maria Nieves Zedeno stands at the bottom of the bison jump near the Two Medicine River in the southeast corner of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. From where Zedeno is standing, the cliff is about 30-feet up. (Tribune Photo / Travis Coleman)

Historic dig ends in Neodesha

By Matthew Clark, The Morning Sun, Posted Jun 22, 2010

NEODESHA — For the first time in its history, the Kansas Archaeology Training Program brought its annual field school to southeast Kansas.

On Sunday, the group wrapped up its two-week venture into Montgomery County after conducting a salvage excavation of a prehistoric site along the Verdigris River.

Kansas State Historical Society archaeologist John Tomasic said that the dig was "successful."

The dig started with a project sponsored to stabilize a stream bank that was eroding. Severe flooding and erosion prompted the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop the plan and the KSHS was called to check the site for any historical value.

Much to the surprise of Tomasic, that is just what they found.

"We found a lot of things on the surface, like bone, cooking implements and things like that," Tomasic said. "The artifacts looked like they were about 2,000 years old."

He said that samples were taken and carbon-dating found that the objects on the surface were more than 2,200 years old.

"That was a very important time in Kansas history," Tomasic said. "Because the landowner was cooperative and the historical value, we decided to come back and do more."

So, on June 5, over 170 individuals — ranging in age from 10 to 85 years old — descended on Montgomery County to take part in the dig.



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And what was found at the site may have been even better than they expected.

"We found a lot of stone tools and big piles of burned rock," Tomasic said. "We were a little puzzled by what that meant."

Come to find out, during the time period, people cooked with hot rocks since ceramics were not around during that time.

But that was not the only thing that was found by Tomasic and other diggers.

"This is a time before the bow and arrow were invented, so we found a lot of spear points," Tomasic said. "It is kind of unclear as to whether the people during that time lived in temporary camps or houses. We found post holes, but we don't know what that meant."

In addition, Tomasic said the group is currently examining charred seeds to see if they are part of organized crops.

"In terms of research, we were very successful," Tomasic said. "Also, in terms of educating the public, it was great."

Those taking part in the dig were housed in Independence and Neodesha.

"There was nothing but positive things said about the event," said Karen Porter, executive director of the Neodesha Area Chamber of Commerce. "Everyone knew that the people were from out of town and everyone had nothing but good things to say about the people being here."

Porter said that one thing diggers did as an interesting part of their stay was to use \$2 bills to pay for items in Neodesha to let businesses know they were there.

"I thought that was a really neat thing," Porter said. "This was a great way to show off our town. I think we did a great job of doing that."

As for a potential return trip to southeast Kansas, Tomasic said: "Once this project happens, they are going to cut back the stream back a lot and we are going to be there for that. We would love to come back for another field school. It was a positive experience all the way around."

BYU archaeological field school is excavating a Fremont village site

Salt Lake City History Examiner, Rachel Quist, June 7

BYU archaeologists excavate 1,000 year old Fremont Village at the south end of Utah Lake in Utah County.

Named the Wolf Site, after the property owner, this Fremont village site dates to AD 1100. The site is relatively large and contains a mixture of adobe wall square house structures and round pithouse structures as well as adobe lined fire pits, fish and mammal bones, ancient corn, arrow points, arrow shaft straightener, shell beads, ground stone, and pottery fragments.

The ancient village is situated on a series of low hills surrounding streams and valleys, currently (and probably anciently) used for farming. Other than a few artifacts scattered on the ground surface and an occasional differentiation in vegetation, very few clues suggest the extensive amount of subsurface remnants of an ancient village.

Archaeologists believe that the Fremont culture occurred much of northern Utah and are contemporary with the Anasazi of the four corners areas. The Fremont were farmers of corn, beans, and squash, but also supplemented their diet with number of wild plants and animals; at the Wolf Site, this included fish from Utah Lake.

The field school students spend ten hours a day, five days a week learning how to conduct archaeological excavation, mapping, note taking, photography, and other skills. They have also called on the expertise of soil scientist to try and find



Archaeological excavation at Wolf Village, Utah County. Adobe walls and a storage pit are in view.



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the location of ancient corn fields. The soil scientist took samples around the site and will run carbon isotope analysis to determine the presence or absence of ancient corn.

The BYU archaeology field school will be excavating at the Wolf Village site until June 15, 2010.

LAS Find of the Month, August 2010:

Members can bring an artifact to be entered into the competition at the monthly meeting, which will be judged based on the following rules:

1. Must be a member of LAS in good standing.
2. The artifact must be a personal find.
3. It must have been found within the specified time frame, i.e., within the month prior to the meeting.
4. The artifact doesn't have to be a Colorado find—all that matters is that it was found in the last month.

The Find of the Month for August 2010 was made by Shane Skutvik.

Type: Eden

Material: Flattop Chalcedony

Location: S. Platte River in Logan County, CO

Note: Shane Skutvik's Eden is on top, and another Eden, also found on the S. Platte River in Logan County, CO is on bottom. The bottom point is made of Knife River Flint.



LAS News and Upcoming Events:

- September 4th-6th Loveland Archaeological Society Field Trip to the Harris Ranch at Bosler, Wyoming.
- September 7th September Meeting. Speaker: Mike Pearce, Project Director of the Lake Fork Archaeological Survey based in Lake City, Colorado. Mike will give a presentation on the archaeology of the Lake Fork Valley of Colorado.
- September 25th/26th Annual Loveland Stone Age Fair. A flyer was sent out with the July 2010 newsletter, but if you have any questions you may phone Kevin Zeeck at 303-682-0471 after 6:30 PM, MDT (kevin.zeeck@gmail.com), or Janet Wagner at 970-278-4049. As a reminder, there is no buying, selling, or trading of authentic artifacts, and no soliciting to buy, sell, or trade. For more information go to <http://stoneagefair.com>. Come help us celebrate the 70th year of the Stone Age Fair in Loveland!
- October 5th October Meeting. Speaker: TBD.