BILISSHISSAANNUUA / TO GO WITHOUT WATER: THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING AMONG THE APSAALOKE

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BILISSHISSAANNUUA / TO GO WITHOUT WATER:
THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING AMONG THE APSAA LOOKE

By

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Bilisshiissaannuua: The Importance of fasting to the Apsaalooke

Dr. Gregory R. Campbell, Chairman

Abstract

The Apsaalooke nation of Montana is one of many tribes in the Great Plains that practice the ritual of fasting (Vision Quest). In this document I will explain Apsaalooke fasting also called *Bilisshiissaannuua* To Go Without Water. This will be done by explain some core elements of Apsaalooke belief to give the reader a string knowledge base, so that one can contextualize fasting with in Apsaalooke culture.

This documents also highlights the Dryhead Preservation and recordation project during the summer of 2013, funding and conducted by the Bureau of Land Management, Custer National Forest and The Crow tribal Historic Preservation Office.

This Survey was conducted in hope to preserve the Archaeology of fasting that was found on the Dryhead, East Pryor Mountain and help use to understand this Apsaalooke Fasting and landscape.
Acknowledgements

The document would not be possible without the help of the Apsaalooke people, the Bureau of Land Management and Custer national forest. I would also like to thank Dr. Gregory Campbell, Dr. Douglas McDonald, Dr. Jeffery Bendremer and Dr. Timothy McCleary for assisting me throughout my academic career and my thesis.

Special acknowledgement to Tim Urbaniak for his help on the Dryhead project, also the Apsáalooke Historians and elders that contributed to this document without those contributions this document would have not happened, Marvin Stewart, Walter Old Elk, Elias Goes Ahead, Winona Plenty Hoops and Beverly Big Man.

It is Important to note the importance of Apsáalooke language in this document. The spelling and translation of all Apsáalooke words were done with the help Elizabeth Pretty On Top, Crow Language Instructor, Dyanna Wilson of the Montana Indian Languages Program Director for the Apsaalooke. This two Apsaalooke woman were a great resource and thanks to Woodrow Brien's contributions in translating the Plenty Hoops interview this was a great help.

Also the Big Lodge and Whistling Water clans for all the good Wishes and to the Bigman, Brien, Birdinground, and Wilson families and to my amazing family for being patient with me during this project, Misty, Ivory, Luke and Matia. Aho!
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Chapter One
Introduction

This research explores the importance of Bilisshiissaannuua (To Go Without Water) or fasting among the Crow or Apsáalooke people, Stuart Conner, an archeologist from the Billings Montana area, wrote about Apsáalooke fasting referring to the practice as “vision quests” and fasting beds as “vision quest structures.” (Conner, 1993: 1) this paper, I will refer to “fasting”, “to fast” or “fasting bed” or will use Apsáalooke term Bilisshiissaannuua “To Go Without Water.”

Fasting rituals could and can be done individually or in the Sun Dance Lodge. This document will discuss methods of fasting, within a particular cultural context, specifically, this research focuses on fasting among the Apsáalooke, although further ethno-archeological research can and should be done on other tribes’ practices. The goal of this research is to create a more a complete record of the cultural importance of fasting among the Apsáalooke, the forms it took and how these practices shape the archaeological record and impact the landscape.

For these purposes, Apsáalooke oral histories are the most valuable resource and are used as much as possible in this document. Stuart W. Conner conducted many interviews from 1967 to 1993, some of the transcription were used. The author conducted other interviews over the last few years. The results of this research will be a valuable reference for cultural resource management professionals and tribal government officials who wish to better manage
Apsáalooke cultural/heritage resources as it pertains to the fasting sites as potential traditional cultural properties.

In general, fasting for the northern Plains Indian is an act of going without food, water, shelter and companionship for several days, more often three to four days. There are many cultural reasons why a person would fast and many reasons for picking a location as well. These will be presented in the following pages.

Much of this ethnohistoric research was done in Montana State Archives. Secondary sources and all the field survey was conducted by the author with the help of the Bureau of Land Management, the Custer National Forest and the Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Office. For the purposes of this study, the author conducted an Archeological Class 3 survey under BLM protocol. The crew surveyed the East Pryor Mountain, south of Billings, Montana just off the Crow Indian Reservation.

The project area to the Apsáalooke is called Bishiáxpe Alíkuua, “Where They Saw The Rope”. This survey identified and documented forty-seven stone features. Of the forty-seven features recorded and mapped, eighteen features were categorized as fasting beds.

The main objective of this survey is to recontextualize these isolated sites and begin to understand them as an Apsáalooke cultural and ethnographic landscape. This would force us to view the entire area as one site; a more accurate emic conception. Within the context of Apsáalooke worldview.
The reader will get a proper understanding of the morphology of the stone features and the ways they were utilized by the Apsáalooke people who built and used them.

This project strives to view Apsáalooke cultural resources and Apsáalooke landscapes in a holistic manner. The author felt it was critically important to investigate the oral history of the project area and Apsáalooke fasting. The Apsáalooke have a strong connection to the land in this study area and to the histories that are attached to them. In order to properly contextualize these oral histories, it is important to understand Apsáalooke worldview and life ways presented in this report. With this knowledge, the reader can better appreciate Fasting and project area (Where They Saw the Rope) cultural landscape. For this purpose, I will present an overview of the common Apsáalooke cultural elements, goes as follows but is not limited to: the clan system, the sweat lodge, the sacred pipe and, the tobacco society. These elements are the foundation of Apsáalooke belief, and fasting is vehicle that can be used to perpetuate them or vice versa. Every aspect of Apsáalooke life has connection to fasting and at any point when one is feeling the need to fix or situation the act of fasting can be taking up to right the situation.

Fasting is not limited to any certain time or place. In chapter four I give example of the different kinds of fasting beds found on the Dryhead preservation and recordation project but it would wise to assume that this document is not a deep look at fasting beds and that would make a great topic for future research. It is only to give the reader and stronger understanding of fasting archeology.
Chapter Two
Apsáalooke Culture & Lifeway’s

2.0 Introduction

The contemporary Apsáalooke people have held on to a large proportion of their culture of their ancestors. The tribe has many cultural traditions and conventions that have to be understood to truly comprehend this study. The Apsáalooke have gone through many changes in their history and the modern era is no different. Briefly, the prehistory of the Apsáalooke political organization is structured as follows:

Table 2.1: Showing the band organization through the Apsaalooke history. (McCleary, 2008: 6)
There are four main elements that contribute to the Apsáalooke worldview and life ways: The Ashammaliaxxiia Clan System, Aawusuua Sweat Lodge, lipche Waxpee Sacred Pipe and, Baasshussuua Tobacco Society. To the Apsáalooke, all things are viewed as sacred. Everything in all of creation is seen as holy. No part of creation exists outside of First Worker's realm (McCleary, 2012: xvii). Robert Lowie document an old Apsáalooke stories tell us about this for thing in relation to four brothers and the ways they chose to worship.

A long time ago there were four brothers among the Crow who grew up to be men. One of them said, "We are going to do four different things." One was going to pray to the Sun. Every morning when the sun rose this man would make an offering to him. The second went out to fast and thirst. This man would stay out one, two, three, or four days. When he came back he only stayed in camp about ten days, then went out to fast again. The third one built sweatlodges. He called certain men to come in. He did this every day. When they were going to move camp, he went to the campsite and made a sweatlodge there once more. As soon as they were camped, he would invite men to the sweatlodge again. The fourth one gave feasts to his clan fathers (i’saUkzia) whenever he had deer or buffalo meat. He fed them nearly every day. The brothers worshiped in four different ways to see who would be wealthy and get along in the world. (Lowie, 1918: 244)

In this narrative you can see that there is one brother (The sweater) who utilizes the sweat lodge, the second brother (He That Makes Offerings) uses the daily prayer, which the Apsáalooke use the pipe for this, The third brother (The
Hunter) feeds his clan and finally a brother (He That Kills With His Mother) goes fasting to find his success. All brothers became wealthy and successful. As the Apsáalooke become successful because of these practices.

This practices will be explained in greater details in the fowling section to give the reader a stronger understand of the tribe and therefore

2.1 *Ashammaliaxxiia* Driftwood Lodges/The Clan System:

The word for the Apsáalooke clan system is *Ashammaliaxxiia*, which translates to “Driftwood Lodges.” As the name implies, the purpose of the clan system is to provide both spiritual and material support to one another, just as driftwood bands together in turbulent waters, so does the clan system. The clan system holds the tribe together as a cohesive unit. Some scholars and Apsáalooke Historians debate the exact number of clans that exist or have existed, it is hard to say giving that some clans have nicknames sometimes giving the appearance of more clans. Age does not matter in the clan system, as your clan children may be older than you. All Apsáalooke are clan mothers or fathers from birth. In Apsáalooke culture, you are born into responsibility. All Apsaalooke are bon a mother and father. When you are child of a clan that means you have clan mothers and father and your success is in large part to them.

The Apsáalooke have ten matrilineal clans, *Uuwuutasshe* Greasy Mouth, *Ashiiiooshe* (Sore Lips), *Akchihpawaaitche* (Wealthy Gophers) which went through a name change and are called today. The *Bilikóoshe* (Whistling Water),
Ashxâhche (Hair Remaining Lodge) also went through a name change. Ashkâpkawia (Bad War Deeds), Xúhkaalaxche (Ties in a Bundle), Uússaawaachiia (Bring Home Game Without Shooting), Isaashkahpaleeté (Crop Eared Domesticated Animals), which adopted a new name Ashpeennuushé (Dung Eaters), this clan is no longer in existence. Ashbatshúa (Treacherous lodge) in more recent times are called Ashkaámne/Ashkaánne (Blood Indian Lodge), Ashshitchíte (Big Lodge) and finally Ashhilaalío (Newly Made Lodge).

This system is complex and has roots going back to the origins of the Apsáalooke, in the following except Dr. McCleary summarizes how the clan affiliation and use of the clan operates.

The Apsáalooke, being matrilineal, receive their clan affiliation from their mother. The mother’s clan takes care of the physical and emotional needs of the individual. The relationship with the father's clan was also important, since this clan promoted the status of the individual through public announcements of their achievements, and, more importantly, by providing prayer-blessings for a long, happy, and successful life. Clan mothers and clan fathers are considered sacred. The Apsáalooke credit Old Man Coyote for saying, "No matter how poor, no matter how pitiful, no matter how unaccomplished your clan father maybe, whatever he says on your behalf to the spiritual realm will come true". The clan fathers, therefore, have two roles for their clan children; to speak on behalf of the clan children in the spiritual realm and speak on behalf of the clan children to the people, so that the people would know about their clan children’s accomplishments. (McCleary and Old Horn, 1995: 69)
This way of wish making (figure 2.1) is done for everything and at all events in Apsáalooke belief, contemporary birthday parties, and graduation and historically before war parties set out, in the sweat lodge and before one would go on a fasting expedition. The Apsáalooke hold the clan in high regard and have done everything possible to keep the clan as sacred element of everyday life.

The clans were important for a variety of reasons, but especially because they were the focus of an elaborate system of reciprocity that constituted the fabric of social life. A child was born into the mother’s clan, but remained a “child of” the father's clan. This implied a lifelong relationship of reciprocity with those he called “father.” Typically “children” supported their “fathers” with food and “giveaways”, which involved large-scale transfers of property. This aspect of the matrilineal kinship system has remained intact among present day Crow, despite the fading of taboos on intra-clan marriage and the replacement of Crow nomenclature with English cognatic kin terminology. (McCleary, 2008: 3.)
The clan system, as Dr. McCleary made clear, has evolved with modern times. Even in the cases of inter-tribal marriage, the strains of today’s American culture on the traditional Apsáalooke couples, this was something the author came across in conversation and informal discussion with many Apsáalooke, they all voiced this concern. In cases where the mother is not an Apsáalooke tribal member, her children have no clan membership. In that case, they are allowed to use their father’s clan affiliation. In some cases, the wife is adopted by an older couple of a different clan, making the children members of their mother’s new clan. Also, a member of a clan can give permission to the non–Apsáalooke mother to use her clan and this is often done without formal adoption and has become very common. At this point in Apsáalooke history, the clan system is still functioning but is fading at a rate that is alarming to many. It is argued by some that the District System is in part to blame for the increasing lack of clan self-identification in relation to the clan as it is becoming more common for a Crow Indian to identify with their district.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Name</th>
<th>New Name</th>
<th>Nickname</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uuwuutasshe</td>
<td>Axxaashe Akiaxapáalia</td>
<td>Whose Spiritual Power Is The Sun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greasy Inside The Mouth / Greasy Mouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashílooshe</td>
<td>Ashkápkawía</td>
<td>Chihpashikáake Gopher Boys</td>
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<td>Hair Remaining Lodge</td>
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<td>Ties in a Bundle</td>
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<td>Uússaawaachila</td>
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<td>Crop Eared Domesticated Animals</td>
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<td>Ashbatshúa</td>
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<td>Big Lodge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newly Made Lodge</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Showing the clans names both in Apsaalooke and English. (McCleary, 2008:8)
2.2 Aawusuua or the Sweat Lodge:

*Aawusuua* or Sweat Lodge as seen in figure 2.3 is said to be the first and most sacred medicine given to the Apsáalooke by the Creator *licheribbaahile* (First Worker or First Worker). In fact, the sweat is used for every event in life no matter how big or small. “The sweat bath was the first medicine First Worker and his two boy servants gave us” (Nabokov, 1967: 23) said Two Legging a respected Apsáalooke War Leader. This holy ceremony has direct connection to the stars and, in fact, many Apsáalooke say it was a gift from the Seven Stars *Ihka Sahpu*, which are known as the Seven Buffalo Bulls *Chiilapsahpuua*. There are variations of the Big Dipper story and the seven buffalo bulls. “To many Crow
Apsáalooke people the origin of the sweat lodge is associated with a variant of the Big Dipper story that features the Sacred Seven Buffalo Bulls” (McCleary, 2012: 85).

In the sweat lodge many prayers and wishes are made, during the era of intertribal wars historically many of the wishes were directed toward in war and battle success. Today there wishes for example, made for school, sports and health, etc. There are many references to the Stars Ihka, it is believed that one way of conducting the sweat ceremony came from the stars. In the lodge, the door is closed and the first ceremonial act is to put smudge on the red-hot rocks in which the smoke rises from them. Then, the participants bathe in the smoke to cleanse themselves before the ceremony begins.

Those who were to participate in the sweat entered and sat down…passed in the heated stones, one at a time. Not a word was spoken inside as the first three were handed in, but when the fourth was received by the old leader at the door and placed in the pit, each man made a feint as if seizing it in his hands and drawing it to him, at the same time expressing some wish, such as, "May I take a horse!" "May I kill an enemy?!" "Here comes the enemy’s gun!" When all the stones were in and the cover down, water was poured on from a horn cup four times, and as the steam arose… (Curtis, 1909: 55)

It is believed that whatever is asked for in the sweat will come to pass, even currently many Apsáalooke practice the sweat way regardless of the religion convection. All the elders that were interviewed for this project confirmed
this faith in the sweat lodge. “When in the sweat, what you pray for will come true, that’s what I was told.” (Old Elk, Personal Communication, 2011)

The conductor of the sweat will say “I’m going to warm it up”. At this point, hot water is poured onto the hot rocks and steam fills the lodge, a wish is made for the spring rains to come and nourish the land. “Now, it is time for the sweat to begin. We must count the dippers of water that are poured onto the rocks in each quarter, but the April showers don’t count. After the April showers, we all switch ourselves so that sweat will break out, then we are ready to pour the regular dippers onto the rocks.” (Fitzgerald, 1994: 108) explained the late Tom Yellowtail of the Mighty Few district. He shared much of his knowledge with Cornelius Fitzgerald and it was put into a biography title “Tom Yellowtail, Medicine man of the Crows. (Fitzgerald, 1994: 108) “April showers” is a reference to the beginning of the sweat ceremony.

The first round begins and four dippers are poured onto the rocks. This round represents many things. The most common view is that it represents the four winds that bring good luck or good fortune. Another view is that the four represent the arms and legs of the Creator lichihkaahile or legs of the Bishee Buffalo. “The four represent the legs of the Buffalo, that’s what I was told many years ago.” (Old Elk, Personal Communication, 2011) Two Leggings tell another variation in Two Legging: making of a Crow Warrior. “The first four cupfuls are the first worker’s arms and legs. They are also the four main supporting willows of the sweat lodge” (Nabokov, 1967: 24). After these are poured, a wish is made. Then the door is raised open to conclude the first round. After the door closes,
The start of the second round begins in which sometimes a short prayer is given or a short variation of the Big Dipper story is told. This story is told through Apsáalooke country even today. The Seven Stars play a major role in the spiritual life of the Apsáalooke. The Apsáalooke have been able to keep much of the oral histories, Dr. McCleary was able to document much of the known star history from elders and the names of five of the seven bulls.

The seven buffalo bulls are mentioned a lot of times when we go in the sweat lodges. Those seven are called. Wait, the leader is Chiilapbaalaaxaachish, Crazy Bull, then there is Chiilapish, [the bull], Aashisasaaash [Horns turn forward], and laxaapaahush [Thin Hair Places on the Hide], and, [Brave Bull], and Chiilapkalishtachiash [Young White Buffalo]. Those are ones they mainly use in the sweat lodge (McCleary, 2012: 85).

This elder goes on to tell more about the second and the third round of the sweat ceremony. He stats in the third round is for the gathering of stars which happens to be the same constellation known Pleiades which has nine star associated with it, the Apsáalooke associate ten.

The second round of the sweat reminds the Apsaaloke of these Seven Buffalo Bulls. In the Third round of this sweat the Apsáalooke pour ten dippers on to the hot rocks. This is done for what is called Ihkaxaxua “the gathering of stars”. “There are no elaborate stories about this constellation” (McCleary, 2012: 84).
“The ten cupfuls represent the cluster stars, and the countless number means the Other Side Camp, where we live after we die” (Nabokov, 1967: 24).

After the water is poured on the rocks and a prayer or wish is made it will conclude the third round and in the fourth and final round, there are an uncounted number of dippers poured onto the rocks, which also represents the never ending amount of stars. The sweat for many Apsáalooke is the most important and the most used today. No matter the person, the sweat is central to all Apsáalooke people’s daily lives. There are many reasons why one will build sweat, such as for sickness in family, clan feeds, thankfulness, a great undertaking and the most common reason is “to keep a good thing going”, also in preparation of a great undertaking as a Sundance or Fast. The sweat is central to the fast in many ways. Before and after the fast, the faster will perform a sweat ceremony with his clan fathers. It is important for the faster to validate his fasting experience and this is done by the use of the Aawusuua or Sweat Lodge ceremony.

2.3 Iipche Waxpee or the Sacred Pipe

Iipche the pipe is very important; it is used before many ceremonies as an offering to First worker. Tobacco is the most scared plant among the Apsáalooke and the pipe is the vessel in which the tobacco is used and therefore making it just as holy. The Apsáalooke use the pipe for many things and have many terms related to the pipe. Iipche is a generic term for all pipe, but all pipe are seen as
holy or scared. Someone who carries a pipe or holds a pipe for a ceremony is referred to as *lipche Akkulee* Pipe Carrier, but a more specific term is used for a war leader which carries a pipe is *Akduxxiikuchki* War Leader Pipe holder or *lipchiiakee* pipe owner, but those two term only relate to war they are not use for social reason.

The pipe came to Apsáalooke as a gift from the seven stars through *Bisheewiash* Buffalo Woman, as McCleary explains “Besides providing one form of the sweat way to the Crow, the seven Buffalo Bulls also are believed to have brought the sacred Arrows and the Sacred Pipes to the Crow” (McCleary 2012: 88). As explained above there are different terms for the pipes and uses for them, the daily prayer pipe was not used for the war leader’s pipe and the war leader’s pipe was not used as *lipche Waaxpee* Sacred Pipe. This pipe was very special and is said to be a product of the stars. Marvin Stewart an elder from the Valley of the Chiefs District, explained this pipe and other pipe related to Apsáalooke. We meet just outside the lodge grass dance arbor during the lodge grass fourth of July powwow, I asked him in passing about a land mark there related to old Apsáalooke battles and he went on to explained the site and also about the war leaders pipe and in doing that explained what he knew about Apsáalooke pipes.

The regular pipe; this pipe is used for personal prayer in the daily life or for prayer before ceremonies, sometimes used in the sweat lodge. The second can be the pipe for regular (social) smoking; this was more common in the past (pre-reservation times). The third
pipe was used for war. This is known as the *lipche akkulee* war leader's pipe and was carried by one person of a war party who had good medicine. This is no longer used because we don't fight like that anymore. The fourth kind of pipe is the most rare and revered of all and is also the hardest to get. This is the Sacred Pipe *lipcha Waxpash*. My dad had that one, it has a duck head on it, and I have it now. (Stewart, personal communication, 2011)

There are many rules or taboos related to the pipe. The pipe, for example cannot touch the ground. “The pipe comes from the stars, so it’s part of the stars, and it’s not allowed to touch the ground because of that.” (Stewart, personal communication, 2013) A woman is not permitted to touch the pipe and the pipe is not to be near woman during the monthly cycle, this is the case for many scared objects.

Oral tradition contends Buffalo Woman and the Big Dipper gave these pipes to Apsáalooke. *lipcha Waaxpee* is the sacred pipe and is the most revered and at one time had an elaborate ceremony associated with it. According to Lowie “Many were afraid to own it, for fear of breaking some of the taboos. In 1910, there were twenty six owners in the whole tribe” (Lowie, 2004: 296). Currently, only one is known to be in existence among the tribe. Marvin Stewart owns this and He received the pipe from his father Francis Stewart. Francis describes the pipe: “On the end of the pipe stem is a mallard’s head. You know where the head is blue that is what is on the pipe stem. The reason they used the mallard head is because of its significance at the time of creation” (McCleary, 2012: 99). At one time, there was *lipcha Waaxpee Dissua* or Sacred Pipe Dance
was a society that had the responsibility of caring for the Sacred Pipes but this society is no longer active among the Apsáalooke. Sun Dance leader Tom Yellowtail describes the society: "When the Crow talk about "The Sacred Pipe," they are referring to one of the sacred pipes used by the Sacred Pipe Society. The use of the sacred pipes is reserved for members of the Sacred Pipe Society" (Fitzgerald, 1994: 123). Wildschute speaks in great length about the Sacred Pipe Society:

In this ceremony a buffalo skull is placed facing the rising sun. A feast is prepared, representing the food given to Tattooed-in-the-Face and Young-Buffalo-Calf-Head in the enemy's camp. A small piece of food is held up as an offering to the four corners of the earth, to the sun, the pipe, the feathers, and the skull, and it is finally deposited inside the buffalo skull. Then four songs are sung, the words consisting of a repetition of the word "Eat". The pipe is then placed on the buffalo skull, which in turn rests upon a tanned hide, as the pipe itself must not be allowed to touch the ground. The leader of the ceremony then takes the pipe in his hands, holds it again to the four corners of the earth, while singing four times, "Father, give us luck always." (Wildschute, 1975: 115)

Pipes, much like many sacred objects, were kept in the care of men. Apsáalooke regard men as the spiritual head of the home while the woman is the physical owner of the home, the pipe holder points the pipe in all four directions and then to the earth and then up toward the place of the Big Dipper. This why many Apsáalooke refer to the Seven Stars as the Pipe Pointer Star,
lipchalapaachuoo, and also because the Big Dipper is the place of its origin.

(McCleary, 2012: 69)

The sacred pipe is at very important piece of Apsáalooke culture and many continue the practice of “daily prayer pipes.” The one “Sacred Pipe” the tribe does own at present is inactive. The pipe is for prayer and fasting is a time sacrifice and prayer, they work together and give the faster spiritual tools, which the faster will need through life.

The most important teaching we get from the pipe is we must pray and prayer is the Apsáalooke’s spiritual center. God still wants us to pray even if we can’t be certain we will see the answer to our prayers. It may be something you have prayed for that will not come to pass. If so, it is because of a greater purpose that we cannot know and we must resign ourselves to God’s judgment.”

Tom Yellowtail (Fitzgerald, 1994: 128)

2.4 Baasshussuua or Tobacco Society

Baasshussuua refers to soaking, which some believe comes from the mixers ritual before the planting; the term is what the Apsáalooke used to call the Tobacco Society. Some older Apsáalooke say the word means “Soaking”; this is the single entity that makes the Apsáalooke Tobacco according to Curtis.

…is a sacred plant, regarded with absolute awe. It is a person, a spirit, different from other plants, which to be sure have spirits, but are not in themselves mahpe. It not only possesses power to bless,
but is capable of working bodily harm. To one who should lay a
defiling hand upon It: for Its seeds, touching the skin, would cover it
with horrible sores. No person not a member of the Tobacco order
would even now think of planting tobacco or even of touching the
seeds or gathering the leaves. The plant has a sacred name
reserved for ceremonial use. (Curtis, 1909: 61)

There are many things that make this like the Adoption Dance which was
used to inducted members into the society, the Mixing Ceremony, this ready the
seed for planting and then the Tobacco planting. There are many positions in the
society: Pipe Lighter, Owner of the Lodge, Mixer, Babysitter, Singers, Song
Givers and many more. Although there are many more details regulating the
Society and its activities, this is a basic understanding of the most important
ceremony among the Apsáalooke today.

It is believed that in the mid-1600’s the Apsáalooke were a part of their
mother tribe, the Hidatsa of the upper Missouri. At this time, the Apsáalooke were
known as Biiluuke “Our Side,” a term the Apsáalooke still use. Two brothers went
fasting near present day Devils Lake, North Dakota and were given similar gifts.
The brothers’ names were Shiipteetish “No Intestines” and Chiitdeehisshish “Red
Scout”. No Intestines was given the gift of tobacco seeds and Red Scout was
given the gift of the corn seed. After this, the two brothers went their separate
ways in search for the holy plants. The location of the split was said to be near
Devils Lake in present day North Dakota. From Devils Lake, the Billuuke made a
long trek across the western United States. Along the way, they made four stops
to pray for the discovery of the place where the tobacco seeds would grow.

Those who followed No Intestines would become the Apsáalooke.

No Intestines received a pod of seeds and was told to go west to the high mountains and plant the seeds there. These seeds were sacred, and the proper way to use them would be revealed. First Worker promised No Intestines that his people would someday increase in numbers, become powerful and rich, and own a large good and beautiful land (Nabokov, 1967: 20).

McCleary found while conducting doing his fieldwork for his The Stars We Know, One of his informants confirms Two Leggings story. "When the seeds grew it is told that the tobacco appeared like stars on the side of a mountain that would become known as Awaxaawakusswishe, Extended Mountain in present day Big Horn Mountains in northern Wyoming. Ihkaxaaxaheetak, Twinkling Stars, is what they were called when first seen" (McCleary, 2012:17).

To this day many Crows still call the tobacco seeds Ikha or Stars. "No Intestines received a vision that told him to seek the seeds of Sacred Tobacco, Ihchichiae" (Nabokov, 1967: 23). It is from this search that the Tobacco Society began. It is told that No Intestine adopted his own son and thus he became the first member of the Tobacco Society. This represents leaving the old life and becoming something new, like the Biiluuke did when they separated from the Hidatsa all those years ago. The Adoption is still performed to this day the ceremony and is called Baassheelaakbisuua or Tobacco Dance Adoption. This adoption is a reenactment of the great migration of the Apsáalooke. After
attending four introductory ceremonies, you symbolically leave your “old self” and become born again as No Intestine as the newly formed Apsáalooke did. There are many chapters (sub groups) within the Society and when one is inducted, you become a part of the chapter that your adoptive parents are members of: the Otter, Weasel, Yellow Tobacco, Star, Beaver, Hawk, Buffalo, Strawberry and White Bird to name a few. At present, there are only two chapters functioning, the Weasel and Otters. The main function of the society is to plant the tobacco seeds. It is said that as long as the plant grows, the Crows will always fare well. The last known planting ceremony was in 1997 and the harvest was minimal (Plenty Hoops, personal communication, 2011), The Apsáalooke refer to this as Oopawuussiio or planting of the tobacco seed. Before the planting happens, the seeds must be mixed and one must have the “right” to be a Mixer, Akbiliishkshiale or The One Who Prepares, Ms. Plenty Hoops is only person who has the right to mix today. I had the honor of interviewing her about the importance of the society and her role as Mixer. Members of the society believe it is the Mixer and the medicine they possess that helps the seed to grow. Everything is completely dependent on the Mixer for the Tobacco Society to serve its primary function. After Winona’s passing, her family believes her duties were given to her daughter. Not long after this interview, Ms. Plenty hoops fell ill and passed away. The author is not aware whether or not an Akbiliishkshiale (Mixer) has been appointed to take her place.
2.5 Tying It Together:

As previously stated, these elements make up the core of Apsáalooke belief and are essential to any understanding of Apsáalooke ritual and ceremony. These Apsáalooke cultural traditions also have an important role in the practice of fasting. Before and after a fast, the faster will consult with his/her clan mothers and fathers as well as participate in a sweat ceremony, the Tobacco Society was founded a fast, and the sacred pipe is used for daily prayer during the fast. All elements are either needed or created by Bilisshiissaannuua.
Chapter Three
Apsáalooke Fasting & the Project Area

3.0 Introduction

The Apsáalooke have a strong connection with the spiritual world delineated chapter two each of those practices have direct connection with fasting. The sweat, pipe, clan and tobacco society have a reciprocal relationship with fasting. Much of Apsáalooke landscape are related to fasting, such as the Clouds Peak in the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming and the medicine wheel laying just off the reservation today.

One area the Apsáalooke view as a special place are called the Pryor Mountains that extend both on and off the Reservation. The Pryor Mountains extend over the Crow Reservation, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and Bighorn Canyon National Recreation area. In this chapter, I will explore the practices associated with fasting and some of the oral histories, which provide context for this sacred act.

The Pryor Mountains are considered by the Apsáalooke to be a central feature of the landscape. There are many Crow place names that are still used today. However, I will focus on the eastern edges of the Pryor Mountains facing the rising sun. At the very north of the east Pryor Mountain there is a place known to the Apsáalooke as Bishiáxpe Alíkuua – Where They Saw the Rope. This landscape has been utilized for fasting for countless generation.
3.1 *Bilisshiissaannuua or To Go Without Water*

To really understand the profound significance of the Dryhead area as a fasting site, it is important to understand the act of fasting and how the Apsáalooke see it. Throughout the history of the Apsáalooke, fasting has been an important cultural practice in both the men and women’s lives. Fasting involves putting the act of going without food or water for a set number of days, most often three to four days in hope of encountering a spiritual helper given by the creator or the ritual is as done to fulfill a vow.

Vision quest were conducted individually by both men and women in an effort to obtain spiritual power. These were carried out in special places that had unique geologic characteristic such as the summits of mountains, high points in the landscape, or thermal features. Fasting, going without sleep and self-mutilation was used to gain the pity of spiritual helpers. Guardian spirits were usually supernatural manifestation of animal species, but could also be other sorts of beings, such as little people…Upon obtaining supernatural power the individual entered into a lifelong relationship with the donor, which entailed obligation as well as benefits. Spiritual powers were used in all aspects of life, but especially in warfare, hunting and healing. (McCleary, 2008: 8)

These special powers can also be passed down through family members and clan relatives. Also these powers had physical representations that many people would use as protections or in medicine bundles. But how these powers were told were through a dream and vision, in many cases these were prophetic.
No matter the type of vision or dream received they are considered sacred and are held in high regard.

Through visions men and women claim to have revealed to them events of the future, and how they shall conduct themselves to better their own lives and to promote the welfare of their people. Visions are experienced by those who fast in the mountains, and are not in any way to be confused with dreams. When a man fasts, he wails, "He That Hears always, hear my cries. As my tears drop to the ground, look upon me." While he moans thus in his despair, he grovels on the earth and tears up grass and weeds in anguish of spirit. (Curtis, 1909: 53)

Many Apsáalooke have practiced fasting to become successful in Apsáalooke society. “The ordeal was not mandatory, but voluntary. While nearly all young men, particularly the aspiring warriors...the Crow called this spiritual experience “going without water” (Medicine Crow, 1992: 80). To go without water or Bilisshiissaannuua continues to be a major and sacred life event and in many cases defining individual experience, as stated earlier these visions or what happens to the faster while he sleeps is very important and any visions become an important part of the faster's life.

While the body of the faster sleeps, there comes to the soul AkbaiSivekyati, Little One That Tells Things, a spirit so small as to be invisible even to the soul. It stands behind the ear and instructs the soul what it shall look for; as for example, "When he comes, watch his feet. See how many steps he takes for each act." While
no one has ever seen one of these spirits, of which each malipi! Has one as its messenger, all men that have had clear visions have heard their voices. Following Akbafsivekyat appears the earthly representative of the spirit that has chosen the faster for his child, and either tells the soul all that the spirit wishes to say, or merely announces that the father himself is coming to bestow his powers. After the spirit or its representative has minutely described the way the faster is to conduct himself, - to paint, to dress, to sing, what plants to gather if he is a medicine-man, what things he is to avoid, - the soul returns to the body and informs it of these things; or, as some express it, "Perhaps the conversation takes place in the heart of the faster, and he knows what is being said." (Curtis, 1909: 53)

In above excerpt, Edward Curtis mentions an Apsáalooke word that appears as “Akbafsivekyat”, he is most likely referring to Akbaaiiaseeiiakaate, which means “Something Small that Tells Things”. Although in my interviews this was not explained clearly to me, it was assumed that if one owns this medicine, then he/she will understand this little voice. In other words, Akbaaiiaseeiiakaate is the voice of the faster’s future medicine or power. Being that the medicine will become the faster’s father, then it would be more accurate to assume Akbaaiiaseeiiakaate is the voice before the medicine comes or is giving to the seeker. In some cases this would not be the voice of the father but just a messenger for the faster’s medicine father. The vision of No Vital it would be safe to assume that he heard Akbaaiiaseeiiakaate. In the case of the Apsáalooke, the migration west leaving the Hidatsa near Devils Lake in present day North Dakota, the entire reason for the migration was based on a fasting experience of No
Vitals who would later be recognized as the first Apsáalooke Chief (see Chapter 2). The famous Apsáalooke warrior Two Leggings told William Wildschute a researcher from the early 20th century the following in relation to the No Vitals Vision. The manuscripts of Wildschute collected by the Dr. Peter Nabokov who created a book on a Crow Indian warrior named Two Leggings.

No Intestines received a pod of seeds and was told to go west to the high mountains and plant the seeds there. These seeds were sacred, and the proper way to use them would be revealed. First Worker promised No Intestines that his people would someday increase in numbers, become powerful and rich, and own a large good and beautiful land (Nabokov, 1967: 20).

Wildschute also explains in a separate document about Crow Medicine Bundles, how people would prepare themselves for the fasting ordeal. Readying themselves both mind and body for this major undertaking, he wrote.

Preparation for a vision quest required purification of both mind and body. The Indian cleansed his body by thoroughly scrubbing it, being careful that no dirt remained even under his fingernails and toenails. He prepared a sweat-bath and prayed to "First Worker" to send him one of his powerful helpers. Then he purified his body again in the smoke of pine needles. From this moment he took no food or water until the completion of his vision quest. He believed that suffering would assist him in arousing the pity of a supernatural being, causing it to give him its medicine and thus to become his sacred helper. Abstinence from food and water also eliminated the
odors of them. Odors that the Crows believed were objectionable to the "Without Fires". (Wildschute, 1974: 7)

During such time one might encounter yet another spirit or animal spirit this can come in forms called, baaibilaaleete or Animals without fires. Some Apsáalooke say that the “night belongs to the baaibilaaleete”. I cannot stress any more the importance of the fast to the Apsáalooke in all periods of the tribes history, This powerful experience of fasting among the Apsáalooke, which is held in high regard among the historic Apsáalooke as were during the prehistory of the tribe.

Doubtless the most usual was to fast and thirst for several days, a procedure designated as birictsandud, (not drinking water). The would-be visionary generally retired to a lonely peak, theoretically for four days, in consonance with the mystic notions clustering about that number, possibly in addition chopping off a finger-joint as an offering to conciliate the spirits invoked. (Lowie, 1922: 332)

Bilisshíissaannuua or To Go Without Water, which Lowie writes as birictsandud, many times in the early days of studying the Apsáalooke language, the sound of the “N” in Crow would often be written down as a “D” as is the case in this instance.

When the fast took place, according to Crow elder Stewart “the faster would have a pipe, sweet grass or something similar. In the old days they used a buffalo rope while now they take a bedroll”. (Stewart, personal communication,
When fasting, they will go three or four days without food, water and shelter in a location picked out either by the faster or the Clan fathers of the faster. In some cases, the faster will have had a dream of a location. When it comes to these dreams, it is important to note that dreaming and fasting work hand and hand. Apsáalooke elder Roger Stops stated: “The word dream we say *Baashiale* which accompanies with fasting, but we know that a man is going out to dream, we say he’s going out a not drinking water, *Bilisshiissaneek.*” (Conner, 1967: 22) When Mr. Stops mentions the word for dream, *Baashiale* or To Dream, he implied that it is only used in reference to or in the context of fasting. While fasting, the faster hopes a “Without Fires” will visit him. These are supernatural beings that are sent by *Iichihkbaahile*. They will adopt him and give him power known as “Medicine” or “*Baaxpee.*” This can be understood as spiritual power or holy or sacred power. Obtaining medicine is one important reason why one would fast, but in some cases the faster will be fulfilling a vow. For example, an Apsáalooke elder related in an interview that he made a vow to fast for a relative’s sick child until they were cured. He fulfilled his vow but did not receive a vision, as that was not the reason for the fast (Stewart, personal communication, 2013). This is one reason as the ethnographic research reveals that do not refer to fasting as a vision quest because visions are not the goal in many cases.

Women were not excluded from fasting although it was done for different reasons in many cases, on very common reason for the Apsáalooke women fast is in times of mourning a great loss of a loved one. Through fasting woman
gained lullabies, which are referred to as *liwaaaksiatlaciio* or to rock a child.

Bigman relates this story as it pertains to woman fasting.

My grandma *Ishbinnaachi Itchish* Pretty Shield fasted after losing a baby girl, they would mourn and fast at the same time in those days. She walked up to a bluff… kind of a cliff and she saw a dried up old buffalo, so she walked to it, to just give up and die. She heard the voice of an old man from the other side of the dead buffalo, she looked over and it was a tall eagle, *Deaxkaashisaahke* old Man Eagle she called it. That eagle told her to “wipe your tears away and go home, you’re going to grow old and have many children and grand children”. So she listened and went home. You know she did grow old and raised two groups of grand children. I wanted to give that name *Deaxkaashisaahkhish* Old Man Eagle to Jessie (Jacinto Brien, Beverly’s Great grandchild) but there is a guy in Lodge Grass with that name, so I gave the name Talking Eagle to him, named him after what my grandma told me. (Bigman, Personal Communication, 2015)

This information also informs on one way the Apsaalooke name and confirms the important of fasting family history through the generation.

The late Roger stops comments on woman fasting. “Woman, when they fast, they generally do it at home…” (Connor, 1967: 11). From this, it seems clear that the fasting practices for woman were different than those of their male counterparts.

When young men would go up to a high place, they would build a rock bed and wait for the without fires or any spirit helper that may bring them a medicine.
Goes Ahead received his medicine power as a young man. He had a place up toward the Wolf Mountains; going toward what is Wyoming today one of those peaks there above what is the Jeffers ranch now. He would just go right up through those coulees, go on up to the Wolf Mountains, to a peak there where he had made a bed of rocks. (Matthews, 2000: 46)

As the late Alma Snell explained in the above except, those places become much like family landmarks, important places in the history of each family. There is one place in Apsáalooke Country that is known for its fasting history, “Where They Saw the Rope” is that sacred place.

3.2 Bishíaáxpe Alíkuua Where They Saw the Rope

Figure 3.1 - Apsaalooke Elder Marvin Stewart investigating the fasting bed on "Where They Saw the Rope". (Aaron Brien Collection, 2013)
Bishiàxpe Alikuua is located on east Pryor Mountain approximately two hours and forty-five minutes south of Billings Montana. This landscape overlooks much of Apsáalooke country. Many Apsáalooke elders know of this place and it is well known in the oral history. Peter Nabokov and Lawrence Loendorf worked together on an ethnographic history of the Bighorn Canyon Recreation Area, which includes the Pryor Mountains. They also came across the Dryhead Vista and wrote the following.

On the eastern rim of east Pryor mountains in another important vision quest location associated with a specific individual. The place, identified by Euro Americans as the Dry Head Overlook, is known to the Crow as “Where they saw the rope”. The Crow name was bestowed after some Crow Indians below the mountain saw a man fasting there. In his ordeal, he was dragging a bison skull which was attached to the end of the ropes that were fastened to his chest. The incisions in his body to attach to ropes were bleeding and it was this blood running down the ropes, glistening in the sun, that allowed the people below to witness as “where they saw the ropes”, and at least one author has credited white man runs him with being the individual whose thongs flashed for over a hundred miles, but this is refuted by Joe medicine crow (Nabokov and Loendorf, 1993: 49-52).
Crow oral history illustrates a strong and dynamic history, which connects the Apsáalooke to the land. In the summer of 2013, I had the chance to interview several Apsáalooke historians on the Dryhead. I met Elias Goes Ahead (figure 3.4) in the morning. He is a respected Apsáalooke historian and his contribution was vital to the overall tenor of this study. During July we conducted the interview at Plenty Coups State Park at his request. During the interview, which was more of storytelling session, he told me this:

Many years ago before the horse had come to the Apsáalooke, at this time the Apsáalooke was camped in the Bighorn canyon area on the flat between the Bighorn Canyon and what is now known as Dry Head Mountain. A young man named Shows the Lance decided he was going to go fast and pray on top of Dry Head Mountain. So he informed the camp of this although it is unknown why he was fasting but, as we know most fasting was done for personal reasons. So Shows the Lance went and was gone for four
days but while he was up there, the people could see him and noticed a powerful event. Shows The Lance was fasting and decided to pierce himself, which was common practice among the Great Plains tribes. He tied two buffalo ropes to himself then tied the other end to a tree that was close to him. He began to dance in place and pull on the ropes as it begins to rip his skin. He was in deep prayer and it ripped but he was not fazed and continued to dance. And like I said, the people from the bottom could see him from the bottom and noticed that the ropes started to dance along with him. And it’s from this event that the Apsáalooke refer to Dry Head overlook as *Bishiàxpe Alikuua* Where They Saw the Rope… *Kakee Xxiisee* Shows The Lance…Shows The Lance, that was his name. (Goes Ahead, personal communication, 2013).

Mr. Goes Ahead said this was in the time before horse. In my research, Dr. Joe Medicine Crow stated that Whiteman Runs Him fasted up on the *Bishiàxpe Alikuua*, Where They Saw the Rope. Whiteman Runs Him was well known for his role in the Battle of the Little Bighorn as a scout for the 7th Calvary. “When Whiteman Runs Him, a Custer scout, fasted in the Pryor Mountains, they named his peak Where they saw the rope, because the white clay – painted thongs attached to skewers in the chest were visible to the villager below.” (Nabokov, 1967:101) The variant to the place name add an interesting dynamic to the overall narrative of the Where They Saw The Rope site, Stewart Connor also conducted an interview with a respected Apsáalooke tribal member and went even further and placed one more figure in association of Where They Saw The Rope. Roger Stops of Crow Agency explained this version of *Bishiàxpe Alikuua*. “That place is not where Whiteman Runs Him fasted…The one that
does that is a grandfather, great grandfather, of mine, Boy That Grabs, Shi’ka: kdutchish was the one that was up there where they seen the rope. Where they see the rope. That’s Boy That Grabs. I’ve inquired around and they say it was Boy That Grabs, Shi’ka: kdutchish” (Conner, 1967: 20). Conner attempts to spell Boy That Grabs’ name in the Crow language. But at that time of the interview, which was 1967, the Apsáalooke language was not yet written. What he was trying to write in the modern Crow would be Shikaaka Dutchish Boy That Grabs. Although there is different stories and histories related to who exactly fasted on that ridge all those years ago, it is agreed that it got its name from a fast and this seems to be the beginning of the fasting history of the Dry head vista area. The time frame seems to differ as well the late roger stops point to an ancestor that is in more recent time. While Elias Goes Ahead states that this event took place in “Time before the horse” which would put this in the late 1600s or early 1700s. It would seem that prior to Boy That Grabs fasts this landscape had been used extensively for fasting. All narratives point to fasting and provide a rich and dynamic history of the area and make for a better overall understanding of the Where They Saw The Rope.
3.3 Thoughts on Where They Saw The Rope

Where they saw the Rope has great history to apply to the Archeology that was recorded there. This place is special and the Apsáalooke must and will reincorporate it back into the everyday thought process and after working there it is much more than a Cultural Resource is a true Montana treasure.
Chapter Four
Dryhead Overlook Recordation & Preservation Project

4.0 Introduction

This an Archeological Class 3 survey for the Bureau of land Management (BLM) / Custer National Forest (CNF) in partnership with the Crow Tribal Historic Preservation office (THPO). During July and earlier August a total of 6 weeks 2013 I along with three Crow Tribal THPO monitors conducted a survey of East Pryor Mountain Landscape south of Billings Montana, In the Pryor Mountain Range. This project came about as an effort to understand Apsaalooke Cultural Landscape as well as Apsáalooke fasting. The BLM and CNF entered into “Participation Agree (Figure 4.1) with the Crow Tribe. “The Purpose of this Agreement is to document the Cooperation between the parties to inventory, record and evaluate the Dryhead Overlook” (Custer National Forest, 2013: 13-PA-11010800-011).

I. PURPOSE:
The purpose of this agreement is to document the cooperation between the parties to Inventory, Record and Evaluate the Dryhead Overlook proposed Traditional Cultural Property District to preserve and protect this important cultural site, in accordance with the following provisions and the hereby incorporated and Financial Plan, attached as Exhibit A.

II. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTERESTS:
The Forest Service is dedicated to the preservation and protection of heritage resource sites located on the lands they administered. The Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Office seeks to preserve and protect their prestigious cultural sites. With this agreement, the Crow Tribal Historic Preservation Office will share information and assistance on the Dryhead Overlook with the Forest Service and, together, will develop a preservation plan and draft nomination form that will be used to nominate the site as a district to the National Register of Historic Places. This information, along with other materials will used to educate the Public on the importance and the protection of these sites.

Table 4.1: This image was taking from the actual Participation Agreement. (Custer National Forest, 2013: 13-PA-11010800-011)
The project location as stated earlier is located in the Pryor mountain Range, specially the East Pryor Mountain, the far east edge of the mountain going from north to the south. The Very north is known as the Dryhead vista.

The project crew surveyed the BLM portion first working from mid way down east Pryor mountains edge going south, stopping where the landscape change from cliffs edge to forest where it was no longer relevant landscape for fasting. Once the BLM portion was surveyed then we worked from the mid point again going north to Dryhead vista. The Project team mapped by drawing all identifiable features as well as Global Positioning System (GPS) those same features, Taking photos facing north and a second photo facing west. Those Photos are not used for this document; those images and GPS information is house at the BLM and CNF in Billings, Montana.

Unfortunately the majority mainstream society feels these landscapes are as important to them as to the Apsáalooke, also the overall knowledge is not very much in terms of traditional cultural properties, it is not uncommon for visitor to this site to destroy features (unknowingly in most cases) so for that reason the specific location of the Project area and Location of features will not be put in the document as to protect the site. Being that the project area is on within public land boundaries the reader gain additional information at the BLM Billings field office or CNF Pryor District, Billings Montana.
Figure 4.1 top image: A broad view of Montana showing the route from Missoula, MT (green dot) to the Project area (red dot) to get the reader some orientation. (Google earth, 2013, accessed spring 2013)

Figure 4.2 bottom image: Red line showing the surveyed area. (Google earth, 2013, accessed spring 2013)
4.1 Natural Environment

The cultural heritage of the Pryor Mountain is not the only element that makes this landscape special. Natural features also contribute to the overall cultural use of this land both Tribal and non-tribal people from and era.

The Pryor Mountains have millions years of geological information, according to Gary Thompson, PhD. “Pryor Mountains is a drive back through 400 million years of geologic history” (Thompson. 2011:1). The Pryor Mountains are a part of the Rocky Mountain formation, and is primarily Madison limestone bedrock. (formontana.net assessed, may 2013)

The Pryor Mountains approximant elevation is 8,200ft to 9,000ft, the project area being around 8,675ft at the very north to 8,365ft at the very south. The entire project areas mostly consist of Madison limestone bedrock. Most of the survey area did not have tree cover but the area surrounding the project area sub alpine forest. “The Pryor Mountains and the north end of the Bighorn Range. The region encompasses the northern part of an extensive, high-elevation

Figure 4.3: Top of East Pryor Mountain, Showing Conifer Forest. Just west of the survey area. (Aaron Brien Collection 2013)
forested upland surrounding Yellowstone National Park; this upland is capped by large alpine plateaus in Montana and Wyoming” (Arno, 1979:18).

There is pine tree cover (figure 4.3) on much of the Pryors White Bark Pine standing out in the Project area, grass cover but mostly limestone bedrock with the project area.

The primary big game species found in the PMWHR are mule deer, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, elk, and black bear. Mule deer are the most abundant of these species and most widely distributed. The sagebrush, juniper/ mountain mahogany belt at lower elevations in the southern foothills is considered crucial mule deer winter range. The most recent counts of bighorn sheep estimated populations in the Pryors at 160. Elk do not utilize the area on a regular basis. The elk primarily utilize the national forest lands to the west and north, but have been occasionally observed in the spring and summer on the meadows on the north end of PMWHR (Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Herd). Black bear are abundant in the north-central portions of PMWHR where terrain is rugged and forested. (BLM, 2009:80)

The wild life is abundant in the area with deer and elk bear, etc. What makes this area unique is the Pryor mountain wild horse heard (figure 4.4), giving the project are large numbers of tourist and onlookers, this wild horse herd is managed by the BLM and are all within the BLM side of the Project area.

The most recent genetic tests conducted by Dr. Gus Cothran concluded the Pryor horses are descendants of New World
“Spanish” breeds (saddle type horses) and related to European “Spanish” breeds. Some of the Pryor horses carry a rare allele variant Qac that is traced back to original New World “Spanish” type horses that were developed from the original Spanish and Portuguese (Iberian) horses that were brought to the Americas, conversely these horses carry no genetic markers other horse breeds don’t have. BLM, 2009:52)

The Cultural Heritage of the Pryor Mountains is not the only element that makes this landscape special. All of these natural features contribute to the overall cultural use of this land both Tribal and non-tribal people from any era.

4.2 Cultural Setting

The archeological information of the Dryhead is relatively little but there is some. The Project area has never been thoroughly surveyed until this project. Meaning the information was not uniform and always done as site isolates.

Archeologist like Stuart Connor was one of the first non-Apsáalooke researchers to record any information related to the Dryhead in any modern
format. I say non-Apsáalooke because the tribe as always maintained some knowledge of the area, also Dr. Joe Medicine Crow had recorded some Apsáalooke fasting sites on the dry head.

Some of the recorded site formation is the Dryhead Vista 24CB419 and Where they saw the rope Site 24CB420 and the Horn Blowers Vision Site 24CB421. These 3 sites were previously recorded and were the only ones recorded prior to our findings. This area has be looked at many times by different archeologist, and agencies but was never recorded and studied in depth till now. The main objective of the survey was to redefine these isolated sites into a cultural and ethnographic Landscape, which would force us to see the entire area as one site; this would be more accurate. This document will aim toward a scientific analysis of some of the 18 stone features, so that reading will get a proper understanding of the features and the use of them. These features will be referred as fasting beds for the rest of the report.

Figure 4.5: Dryhead Vista, Custer National Forest. (Aaron Brien Collection)
4.3 Research Methods

As stated in the introduction we decided to treat the entire project area as one site, more of a cultural landscape. Cultural landscape is defined as "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values" (Birnbaum, 1996: 1). If we subscribe to that definition it would then put all lands that the Apsáalooke occupy or have used within the aboriginal territory as cultural landscape. This project sought out to achieve more of an Apsáalooke appropriate survey. In George Reed's (Former Chairman of Crow Cultural Resources Department) letter to the Supervisor of the Custer National Forest he states, "All the mountains ranges in the territory of the
Apsáalooke (Crow) Nation are sacred…”(Reed, 2007). In the broadest sense he is right but for this project we decided be specific to the surveyed landscape.

The recordation was done by GPS mapping, Drawing every feature and photography. Also it was most important to collect oral histories (see Chapter 3). It was the goal to apply those histories to the archeology to give an over picture and stronger understanding of Apsáalooke cultural landscape.

After selecting a location for the fast, the faster will build a rock structure know as a bed Alaxape, in a U shape or some case in an oval shape I was unable to find any reasoning for the different shaped beds is unclear, but it may simply been the fasters choice. Marvin Stewart, an Apsáalooke elder, made mention that perhaps the horseshoe beds high backs, were built during a time of intertribal warfare. This design may have provided a place for a faster protection (Stewart, personal communication, 2013). These were made from rocks. It is in this structure that the faster will be in for the duration of the fast only leaving to for bathroom breaks, sometimes it is ok for the faster to leave the bed but to stay close is a must. In the following page the top image is of an oval fasting bed and the bottom is of a U shaped fasting bed. Alaxape were made from rocks, each faster would build his own bed. Goes Ahead a leader amongst the Apsáalooke and renowned 7th Cavalry scout during the battle of the Little Big Horn build his Alaxape in the Wolf Mountains, his granddaughter, Alma Snell, related his story:

Goes Ahead received his medicine power as a young man. He had a place up toward the Wolf Mountains; going toward what is
Wyoming today one of those peaks there above what is the Jeffers ranch now. He would just go right up through those coulees, go on up to the Wolf Mountains, to a peak there where he had made a bed of rocks. (Matthews, 2000: 46)

It is in this structure that the faster will stay for the duration of the fast, only leaving to for lavatory breaks. In some cases, leaving an *Alaxape* was permitted, but the faster was expected to stay near the bed (Stewart, personal commutation, 2013).

### 4.4 Findings: Alaxape, Fasting Beds

When fasting Viewshade plays a major role, when selecting a place to fast many Apsáalooke select a location great view of the natural world. """"View shed"" is defined as: The physical area of land, air or water that is visible to the human eye from a fixed vantage point""""(Trupi, Jones & Jones, 2010:8). For this project viewshed was defined as a location with view of the natural world. Importance would be determined by the faster.

The Dryhead recordation team recorded 47 stones features and we categorized 18 of them were fasting beds. For this document I will not included all eighteen of them. This document will feature the best examples of the beds to give the reader a good understanding of the differences in them.
Given the size of the fasting beds we can determine the size of the Plains Indian of the 1800’s, a study was conducted by Richard H. Steckel and Joseph M. Prince and conclude that size of Crow Indian man during that time they would sit perfectly in the fasting beds. He found in his study that Crow male average height was 173.6 cm (Steckel and Prince, 2013: 1).

Putting them near 5’6, although features 12 and 15 are shorter than those results in length. According to Crow oral history and fasting practice they would sit in the bed throughout the day so it would not be uncommon for the bed be to shorter in length. During the night when they sleep it was permissible for the legs to be sticking out. According to the analysis all the Fasting beds are made of limestone and most have lichen growth of an Orange Color. In a study called “A Study of Lichens and Lichenometry by Megan Nylund” she defines this orange lichen, as “Crustose” this lichen comprises of about 75 percent of all the lichens

Table 4.2: Data taken from the 2013 field Survey of Where they say the rope. (Created by Aaron Brien for this project)
in the world, they vary in color like orange, yellow, green, brown, gray, or black. These lichens are encrusted in the stone. They grow so tightly to the rock that it is nearly impossible to pull them off. Crustose lichens are the most commonly used in dating and stonewall because they have the slowest growth rate of all lichen species. "They grow about one millimeter per year, making artifacts easier to date. "Sometimes Crustose lichens can show no increase in size for ten years. "In dating a lichen, for example, if the radius is about fifty millimeters across, or five centimeters, one could assume that the rock had been there for at least twenty five years" (www.primaryresearch.org accessed April 2014).

Figure 4.7 - Google Image of the entire Dryhead Preservation & Recordation Project Area. (Created by the Dryhead preservation & Recordation Team)
Figure 4.8 - U shaped fasting bed, located on BLM land. (Aaron Brien Collection, 2013)
Feature 11 (Figure 4.7 – 4.8) is a great example of a horseshoe fasting bed and is nicknamed “The Lazy Boy”. This bed has a high back which tapers down to the front. The height is 70cm, length is 210cm and the width is 220cm. As you can see it had a great deal of lichen and vegetation growth inside the bed. The lichen growth over where the rocks connect has not been disturbed. This shows the rocks have been in this position for long periods of time. The bed is located on the BLM portion of the project area and is inches from the edges that dropped approx. 7 meters, then leveled out and then again dropping off nearly 60 meters. This bed is placed on limestone bedrock giving it a hard
surface. Feature 11 faces nearly 90 degrees east. Its viewshed being the widest western end of the Bighorn Canyon, overlooking Davis Creek.

Figure 4.10: Categorized as oval shaped bed. (Aaron Brien Collection 2013)

Feature 5 (Figure 4.10) is an example of the common Oval bed; this bed has a small opening, which was fasting west. The bed was facing southeast. It is much larger then feature 11 and is much more recent based on lichen growth being that is very little to none. Fewer than 10 percent lichen growth on this bed. Feature 5 is 20cm in height, 250cm in width & 220cm in length. Feature 5 has a much lower profile. It is sitting on limestone bedrock, very little tree cover around the bed and sits on Custer National forest. Feature 5 is placed closer to what is commonly referred to as the Dryhead vista.
Phillip's Bed: (Figure 4.11) shows a bed that was made of cobble limestone, located right at the Dryhead vista. No lichen growth proving that is very recent and is in amazing shape. This bed faces northeast from the point of the vista. There is oral history that goes with fasting bed and a reason why it is under the vista. Out of respect for that family I did not put that information in this document, I didn’t receive permission from the family.
This bed (Figure 4.12) was on CNF side, which on the north end and was the best example of the Oval Fasting bed. On a field trip to this site Marvin Stewart suggested that this bed was newer based on bed that are more recent on the reservation. Leading me to believe that the circle or Oval beds are reservation era beds. It does have a higher back, which makes it more similar to figure 4.8.
4.5: Thoughts on the Project

Overall this project was success and we have shown that Apsáalooke fasting has a great impact to the landscape. In this case we can see that all the features were important to that faster, they showed this by constructing them with great care. The CNF, BLM and THPO have proved by working together a great project like this can be accomplished, and done in hope future archeology, Cultural Resource manager and most importantly Apsáalooke tribal members will have learned from this project and will continue their use of this landscape.
Chapter Five
Conclusion

Where They Saw The Rope is subject to all standard Cultural Resource Management laws: Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) 1990, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) 1966 & Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) 1979 and The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 1970…etc. The Custer National Forest does not have any current Programmatic Agreements or Memorandum of Agreements with the Apsaalooke but for this Project a “Participation Agreement” was used to make the project happen. The BLM has not returned to me wither or not they have any existing agreements with the Crow Tribe, I would speculate that the State BLM office does have a agreement set in place when it comes to Cultural Resources. Being that this was still a federal undertaking the federal Agencies still had to undergo tribal consultation.

The history between the federal government and tribal nation have always been on good standing, and with this project although small in scale, is meaningful in building relationship with the tribe or tribes in future work. My goal with this project was to get the Apsaalooke involved as much as possible.

The archeology shows us extensive use, also the ethnographic landscape should defined by the tribes themselves this is the best way to determine this, the Apsaalooke have shown us without any doubt the level of importance of this area and by creating this document it serve as a guide to understanding other cultures and how they might see their own landscape, also how federal agencies can
managing them. It would be the recommended that the travel be limited to hiking in all the way to the edge and that every spring and summer when fasting occurs the most that through notification the fasting areas be close to allow for this practice to continues. Public lands have the responsibility for all members of the public and that includes the very tribes that the land once had belonged to.

This document was set out to give a understanding of fasting in specifically to the Apsáalooke as well as fasting archaeology and it is strongly encourage for more research to be done on this topic for any region or tribe. The understanding of spiritual life and religiousness practice of the Apsáalooke will give cultural resource/heritage managers and specialist as well archeologist knowledge of how and why the Apsáalooke view land and the use of beliefs system on the land. It is the hope of the author that this document will fill a void in the anthropological record and I am confident that is does just that.

5.1 For Future Research

During this project other question arose that were not able to answer the time frame giving for this project. In many case the fasting beds has tree growth in the center of them, it appeared that the beds had white bark pine trees growing out of them. This white bark pine did not grow in large amounts on east Pryor Mountain and also the trees took root and grew from the point when the beds were made, the researcher can find a method to date the trees that would give a strong timeframe and context of the beds.
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