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Iiwalaawiiloxhbakaa (How We Lived): The Grant Bulltail Absáalooke (Crow Nation) Stories Collection

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Iiwalaawiiloxhbakaa:
The Grant Bulltail Absáalooke Stories Collection

Fife Folklore Archives at Utah State University in collaboration with
Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, Jackson, Wyoming
Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, Montana

Nick Gittins
Course Reserves Supervisor
Library Media Collection & Reserve

Andrea Payant
Metadata Librarian

ULA Fall Workshop – Sept. 25th 2020
About Me & Why I Was Selected

• Trained in Classical History with emphasis on the oral tradition, theater, and storytelling in the ancient world

• Folklore student of Grant Bulltail

• History of excellence at the Merrill-Cazier Library and interest in the Fife Folklore Archive and Special Collections

• Given an opportunity to intern in SCA beginning in the Summer of 2019 during which Randy Williams mentioned a collection of oral histories provided by Grant Bulltail, I jumped at the opportunity

• Little did any of us realize the immense size and scope of this amazing collection
Absáalooke/Apsáalooke - a giant bird, roughly "People who live like birds along the riverbanks."
Úuwuutashe - Greasy Mouth Clan
Ashiíooshe - Sore Lip Clan
Bishéessawaache - One Who Sits Among the Buffalo
Chief Plenty Coups, Chief Plent Coups Museum
Uuxhkaa – slayer of the last dinosaur
Akbindawoh – Knowledge of the Universe – title of Absáalooke knowledge keepers.

The last, His Heart is Black, was a distant relative of Grant's.
Complexity of The Metadata Process

• Massive Size, Different Formats
  ▪ 2 Hard drives containing video, audio, and images produced between 2002 and 2016, hand-written letters from Grant Bulltail, Heart Mountain Memory Sacred Tobacco Ceremony Scrapbook, and 9 DVMini video cassette tapes.
  ▪ Spring Ranch Grant Bulltail July 2015 U State U Fife Folklore Archives
    ▪ 212 video files, recorded over a 5-day period in July 2015 at Spring Ranch in Dubois, Wyoming.
    ▪ Run time: 14 hours, 55 minutes, 10 seconds
    ▪ All videos were .mov format and required conversion to .mp4
  ▪ 9 DVmini video cassettes
    ▪ Contained 9 videos recorded over 3 days in June 2011 at Utah State University.
    ▪ Run time: 12 hours, 56 minutes, and 24 seconds.
    ▪ All videos required conversion to .mp4 format
  ▪ Grant Bulltail 2002-2016 Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum Fife Folklore Archives USU
    ▪ 459 video or audio files, 100s of image files.
    ▪ Run time: 5 days, 6 hours, 2 minutes and 47 seconds.
    ▪ All videos and audio required conversion to .mp4 or .mp3 format, but there were many more formats here than on the Spring Ranch Hard Drive!
      ▪ Video - .mov, .mts, .mxf, .avi, ACVHD.
      ▪ Audio - .wav
Complexity of The Metadata Process

Ever changing cast of contributors/donors/filming locations

- **Grant Bulltail**, Crow Elder and Scholar, Crow Agency, project director
- **Sharon Kahin**, Historian, former director of the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, project director
- **John Mionczynski**, ethnobotanist, project support
- **Gary Wortman**, EveryMan Productions, videographer
- **Gary Westphalen**, EveryMan Productions, videographer
- **Dr. Larry Loendorf**, University of North Dakota, project support
- **Dr. Peter Nabokov**, UCLA, project support
- **Mary Keller**, University of Wyoming, project support
- **Tim McCleary**, Little Big Horn College, project support
- **Tim Bernardis**, Little Big Horn College, project support
- **Jeannie Thomas**, Utah State, English Department, project support
- **Randy Williams**, Utah State, former Curator of Fife Folklore Archives
- **Jennifer Duncan**, Utah State, Special Collections and Archives, project support
- **Nick Gittins**, Utah State, collection processing and metadata creation
- **Andrea Payant**, Utah State, collection processing and metadata QC
- **Becky Thoms**, Utah State, Digital Initiatives, project support
- **Shannon Smith**, Utah State, digital material management
- **Rebecca Nelson**, Utah State, digital material management
- **Garth Mikesell**, Utah State, digital material management

- Filmed on location at various places in: Utah, Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota.

- Fieldwork funded by: Utah State University, the Native Memory Project: Oral History and Storytelling Project with Grant Bulltail, Wyoming Arts Council's Folk and Tradition Arts Program, The Lucius Burch Center for Western Tradition at the Dubois Museum/Wind River Historical Society, The Greater Yellowstone Historical Society, Kessler Family Fund of Philadelphia, Dr Richard Stepp, retired Professor of physics at Humboldt University.
Complexity of The Metadata Process

Diverse Content

• Oral histories
• Myths
• Legends
• Rituals and ceremonies
• Crow Parade
• Hand games
• Conversations
• Modern history
• Ancient history
• Migration history
• Genealogies
• Treaties with US army and government
• Scenic footage of landscapes/wildlife
• First-hand experiences

• Traditions
• Edible and medicinal plant identification
• Music – both popular Crow music and traditional songs
• Dances
• Class lectures
• Presentations to elementary schools
• Battles
• Rivalries
• Interactions with Vikings and French and Spanish settlers

Other Difficulties

• Quality – fuzzy audio and/or video, sound in one ear, no footage in movie files, no audio in audio files
• Lectures from members of other tribes, not included in the MoU
• Audio files that mention nothing about the Crow
• Unknown Date Folder
• Missing Info and Duplicate footage
Crowdsourcing Metadata at USU Libraries

Metadata Interviews

Trip to Hardin, MT

Direct guidance from Grant Bulltail
Grant Bulltail Collection Metadata

- **Platform**
  - USU Institutional Repository
  - Other possibilities suggested
    - Mukurtu
      - Open source - built with/for indigenous communities

- **Collaborative effort**
  - Multiple library units
    - Special Collections & Archives
    - Cataloging and Metadata Services
    - Digital Initiatives
  - Outside groups/organizations
    - Little Bighorn College
    - Dubois Historical Society & Museum
Grant Bulltail Collection Metadata

• Quality Control
  ▪ Stage 1
    o Examples
      • Completeness
      • Correctness
      • Consistency
      • Roles defined for Creators and Contributors
      • Language - plan to incorporate Crow language when possible
        ▪ Methods and best practices require further discussion and planning
  ▪ Stage 2
    o Sharon Kahin to review a subset of records
  ▪ Stage 3
    o Grant Bulltail to perform a final review of a subset of records
Summary

- Grant Bulltail is a Crow historian and Elder, a member of the Crow Culture Commission, founding member of the Native Memory Oral History Project, a Lodge Erector and Pipe Lighter in his people's Sacred Tobacco Society, and a member of one of the last traditional storytelling families among the Crow.

- He has a long relationship with Utah State - as a young man, he was a student of folklorist, Austin Fife, and later in life, he worked as a visiting lecturer and adjunct faculty member.

- He donated over 6 days worth of non-stop oral histories to the Fife Folklore Archives that recount an untold history of how the Absáalooke lived. The account spans millennia, and comes from an overlooked perspective of the history of the U.S.

- Working with Grant and everyone involved with creating this digital collection, and really trying to center the voices and experiences of the Absáalooke has been an incredible honor for both Andrea and myself, and although the massive size and scope of the collection has caused us many difficulties, it has also taught us a lot. This collection is so dense with important information, that we would not have had it any other way.
Moving Forward

- Continue viewing content and creating metadata
- Intense metadata QC with Sharon and Grant
- Pending Conversations
  - Mukurtu – feasibility at USU
  - Little Bighorn College
    - Speaking with professionals working on Crow collection metadata
      - Incorporating Crow language
      - Involving additional Crow voices
- Dealing with Covid19
- Transition to the new Fife Folklore Curator
- Share the collection!!
Additional Grant Bulltail Resources

Further resources detailing the important work of preserving, digitizing, and celebrating Absáalooke history and culture:

PBS Special : Return to Foretop's Father, 2019
https://www.pbs.org/video/return-to-foretops-father-6hjx36/

Stories Told by Crow Historian & Story-Teller, Grant Bulltail – Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum

Digitizing Crow Oral History: Preservation, Perpetuation, and Access – John Ille, Danetta Holds, Tim Bernardis, Little Big Horn College

Grant Bulltail – National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship Bio/Video
https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/grant-bulltail
Questions?
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