

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

As archaeologists, we know that hunter gatherer cultures around the world have made their homes in mountain landscapes since time immemorial. We are good at understanding how hunter gatherers moved through the landscape to procure resources. We are beginning to understand how populations used the mountain environment both logistically and tactically.

Due to the subtle nature of the hunter gatherer archaeological record in the mountains, we have been less successful at understanding how this terrain became entangled into peoples' worldviews, stories, and histories. However, In the northern Rocky Mountains that compose the continental divide in Montana, USA, Archaeologists with the US Forest Service have identified a new archaeological feature type. In consultation with our First Nations partners, we believe that studying this feature type will provide a window into the cultural role that mountain environments played in the lives and histories of Indigenous peoples, past and present.

We hypothesize that these sites, which consist of an isolated stone circle in shallow depositional context with external stone features that align to cardinal directions and landscape features, provide tangible and complimentary evidence for Indigenous people's oral histories. Using GIS spatial analyses, including viewshed analyses and landscape level least-cost path models, we present current hypotheses of the roles these sites played in the socialization of mountain landscapes.