

Journal #6189 from sdc 2.27.26

18,000 years of memory dismissed as myth - until DNA proved they were right all along

AI writes the code now. What's left for software engineers?

Robots rule: At CES humanoid helpers that do your dishes were all the rage

Cardrooms staring at thousands of layoffs as gambling rule changes near

Trump administration ends protections for rare dancing prairie bird

New Mexico launches investigation of forced sterilization of Native American women

Hundreds of corrections being issued for Texas' Bible-infused curriculum

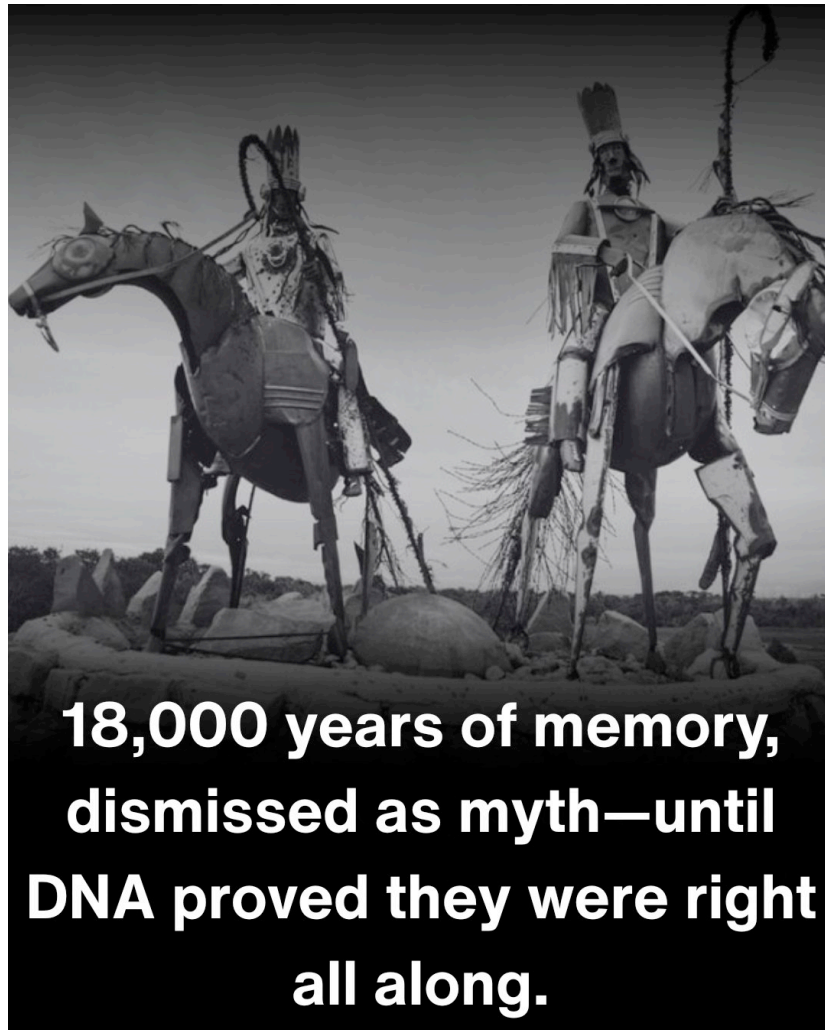
Erasure on the Map: Defending Indigenous History

With only 3 women left, an Amazon tribe faced extinction. An unexpected birth now brings hope

The Earth is Speaking; Do you have a ticket?

Washington, Oregon and Tribes get partial victory in Columbia River Basin salmon battle

Reclaiming Sacred Ground



For 10,000 years, they knew. It took DNA to make the world listen.

The Blackfoot people have always known their connection to the northern Plains runs deeper than memory. Their oral traditions speak of "time immemorial"—of ancestors who hunted bison across glacial valleys, who witnessed ice retreating from mountains, who survived when ancient floodwaters receded and reshaped the land.

But for nearly two centuries, Western anthropologists told a different story.

Based on linguistic similarities to Great Lakes tribes, scholars theorized the Blackfoot had migrated westward sometime in the last thousand years. Never mind that Blackfoot oral history contained no memory of such a journey. Never mind the archaeological evidence suggesting far older presence. Never mind the detailed knowledge of landscapes that no recent arrival could possess.

The theory became textbook fact. And it threatened something crucial: land and water rights that depend on proving ancestral connection to territory.

So the Blackfoot Confederacy did something remarkable. They partnered with geneticists to let science test what their ancestors had always known.

In April 2024, the results were published in *Science Advances*. And they didn't just challenge the migration theory—they obliterated it entirely.

DNA analysis revealed that modern Blackfoot people belong to a previously unknown genetic lineage that diverged from all other studied Indigenous groups approximately 18,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age.

Let that sink in. While most Native American populations studied share common ancestral lineages, the Blackfoot split off into genetic isolation nearly 18 millennia ago—and remained in their homeland ever since. Eighteen thousand years of unbroken connection to the same land. Eighteen thousand years of memory.

The study was led by Blackfoot community members—Dorothy First Rider, Anna Wolf, and others—working alongside archaeologist Maria Zedeño and geneticist Ripan Malhi. They analyzed DNA from six living Blackfoot individuals and seven ancestral remains dating back 100-200 years.

The findings confirmed genetic continuity: today's Blackfoot are directly descended from those who lived on this land at European contact, who descended from those who lived there through thousands of years before that.

But here's what makes this truly extraordinary: Blackfoot oral traditions contain memories that align perfectly with this deep Ice Age ancestry. Dreams and stories passed down through countless generations describe standing in caves watching glaciers melt. Accounts of crossing ice

to reach better lands. Knowledge of extinct megafauna like giant beavers and camels that disappeared 10,000 years ago.

"The Blackfoot can dream of the Ice Age," explained Andy Blackwater. "Through dreams, people are able to recollect the deep past by bonding to ancestral spirits from long ago."

This isn't mysticism. It's the transmission of ancestral knowledge across timescales Western science once deemed impossible. It's human memory preserved with a fidelity that rivals sediment cores and carbon dating.

Gheri Hall, archaeologist with the Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Office, captured the moment perfectly: "This really confirms what we already knew. Now we can use the new science to fight the old science."

Because here's the critical point: This wasn't about science finally admitting Indigenous people were right. This was Indigenous communities using scientific tools on their own terms to generate evidence for legal battles over land, water, and sovereignty.

The Blackfoot Confederacy has fought for decades to protect their ancestral territories from governments and energy companies. In 2023, they won a major victory when Solenex LLC relinquished drilling rights in the sacred Badger-Two Medicine area. Studies like this provide crucial legal evidence for treaty rights and territorial claims. *

But they also expose something uncomfortable: How often has Indigenous knowledge been dismissed as "myth" or "legend" until Western methods confirmed it? How many other truths are waiting to be "discovered" by science—truths that communities have known all along?

The Blackfoot didn't need DNA testing to know who they are or where they belong. But in a world that values certain kinds of evidence over others, they used the tools available to protect what has always been theirs.

The question isn't whether science should lead conversations about the past.

The question is: When will we start listening to the people who never forgot?

Fun Fact: Blackfoot oral traditions describe Ice Age landscapes with stunning accuracy—glacial floods, retreating ice sheets, and extinct megafauna—thousands of years before archaeologists mapped these same events. Knowledge preserved through storytelling proved as reliable as any instrument we've invented to study the past. Perhaps it's time we recognize that some forms of evidence have been valid all along.

****Any tribe that does not have copies of their ICC Claims documents, particularly those exhibits that mapped significant sites, cultural practice areas, etc. is doing their future generations a disservice. Along with attorneys, tribes hired a bevy of accountants and archeologists/anthropologists to promote their cases. (The Bureau hired the same to counter).***

Needless to say, some of these “professionals” were brilliantly strategic; others were worthy of the apurtanant professional jokes.

In any event, the oral histories and mapping that were collected are absolutely priceless and since most of those that contributed to those documents are now gone, having the paper produts are the only way to pass on a lot that knowledge.

One of my favorite stories on myself is missing a SCOTUS reception one day because guided by one of those incredible employees who know what is going on in their unit, even if management doesnt, I found a “lost” collection in an underground storage area (across the street from the White House and I’m sure connected underneath) high, and I mean at least 12 feet, up in a unit caged with fencing.

The fun part of searching for archives is the treasure hunt; the joy is being able to present them for a useful end.

~~~~~  
[AI writes the code now. What’s left for software engineers?](#)  
~~~~~

Robots rule: At CES, humanoid helpers that do your dishes and keep your kids company were all the rage

Cardrooms staring at thousands of layoffs as gambling rule changes near

California’s \$5.6 billion cardroom industry may be holding a losing hand. California Attorney General Rob Bonta proposed new rules that would drastically alter how casinos run blackjack, baccarat, pai gow and other card games. The changes are so disruptive that the cardroom industry says it will be forced to close down all blackjack-style games in California, pull back on card game tables generally, and target layoffs of nearly 13,000 to its statewide workforce. [Read more](#)

Trump administration ends protections for rare dancing prairie bird



A lesser prairie chicken is seen amid the bird’s annual mating ritual near Milnesand, N.M., on April 8, 2021. (Adrian Hedden/Carlsbad Current Argus via AP, File)

<https://apnews.com/article/lesser-prairie-chicken-endangered-species-threatened-23c6694e0d4759f1ac09ac5125ed7865>

New Mexico launches investigation of forced sterilization of Native American women

EDGEWOOD, N.M. (AP) — In the 1970s, the U.S. agency that provides health care to Native Americans sterilized thousands of women without their full and informed consent, depriving them of the opportunity to start or grow families.

Decades later, the state of New Mexico is set to investigate that troubling history and its lasting harm.

New Mexico legislators approved a measure this week to have the state Indian Affairs Department and the Commission on the Status of Women examine the history, scope and continuing impact of forced and coerced sterilizations of women of color by the Indian Health Service and other providers. The findings are expected to be reported to the governor by the end of 2027.

“It’s important for New Mexico to understand the atrocities that took place within the borders of our state,” said state Sen. Linda Lopez, one of the legislation’s sponsors.

It’s not the first state to confront its past. In 2023, Vermont launched a [truth and reconciliation commission](#) to study forced sterilization of marginalized groups including Native Americans. In 2024, California began [paying reparations](#) to people who had been sterilized without their consent in state-run prisons and hospitals.

[Indian Health Service to phase out use of dental fillings containing mercury by 2027](#)



The New Mexico Legislature also laid the groundwork to create a separate healing commission and for a formal acknowledgment of a little known piece of history that haunts Native families

Sarah Deer, a professor at the University of Kansas School of Law, said it’s long overdue.

“The women in these communities carry these stories,” she said.

Outside of a 1976 U.S. Government Accountability Office report, the federal government has never acknowledged what Deer calls a campaign of “systemic” sterilizations in Native American communities.

The Indian Health Service and its parent agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, did not respond to multiple emails requesting comment on New Mexico’s investigation.

A troubling history

In 1972, Jean Whitehorse was admitted to an Indian Health Service hospital in Gallup, New Mexico, with a ruptured appendix. Just 22 and a new mother, Whitehorse said she remembers experiencing “extreme pain” as providers presented her with a flurry of consent forms before rushing her into emergency surgery.

“The nurse held the pen in my hand. I just signed on the line,” said Whitehorse, a Navajo Nation citizen.

A few years later when she was struggling to conceive a second child, Whitehorse said she returned to the hospital and learned she had received a tubal ligation. The news devastated Whitehorse, contributed to the breakdown of her relationship and sent her spiraling into alcoholism, she said.

Advocates already were sounding the alarm about women like Whitehorse who were entering IHS clinics and hospitals to give birth or for other procedures and later finding themselves unable to conceive. The activist group Women of All Red Nations, or WARN — an offshoot of the American Indian Movement — was formed in part to expose the practice.

In 1974, Choctaw and Cherokee physician Connie Redbird Uri reviewed IHS records and alleged that the federal agency had sterilized as many as 25% of its female patients of childbearing age. Some of the women Uri interviewed were unaware they had been sterilized. Others said they were bullied into consenting or misled to believe the procedure was reversible.

Uri’s allegations helped prompt the GAO audit, which found that the Indian Health Service sterilized 3,406 women in four of the agency’s 12 service areas between 1973 and 1976, including in Albuquerque. The agency found that some patients were under the age of 21 and most had signed forms that didn’t comply with federal regulations meant to ensure informed consent.

GAO researchers determined that interviewing women who had undergone sterilizations “would not be productive,” citing a single study of cardiac surgical patients in New York who struggled to recall past conversations with doctors. Because of the lack of patient interviews and the narrow purview of the GAO’s audit, advocates say the full scope and impact remains unaccounted for.

A venue to tell their stories

Whitehorse didn’t share her experience for nearly 40 years, she said. First, she told her daughter. Then, other family.

“Each time I tell my story, it relieves the shame, the guilt,” Whitehorse said. “Now I think, why should I be ashamed? It’s the government that should be ashamed of what they did to us.”

Whitehorse now advocates publicly for victims of forced sterilization. In 2025, she testified about the practice to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and called for the United States to formally apologize.

Whitehorse hopes New Mexico’s investigation will offer more victims a venue to tell their stories. But advocates like Rachael Lorenzo, executive director of the Albuquerque-based sexual and reproductive health organization Indigenous Women Rising, say the commission must be careful to avoid re-traumatizing survivors across generations.

“It’s such a taboo topic. There’s a lot of support that needs to happen when we tell these traumatic stories,” said Lorenzo.

In a New Mexico legislative hearing earlier this month, retired Indian Health Service physician Dr. Donald Clark testified that he has seen patients in their 20s and 30s “seeking contraception but not trusting that they will not be irreversibly sterilized” because of stories quietly passed down by their grandmothers, mothers and aunts.

“It’s still an issue that is affecting women’s choice of birth control today,” Clark said.

A pattern of disenfranchisement

A 1927 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Buck v. Bell* upheld states’ rights to sterilize people it considered “unfit” to reproduce, paving the way for the forced sterilization of immigrants, people of color, disabled people and other disenfranchised groups throughout the 20th century.

According to Lorenzo and Deer, the sterilization of Native American women fits into a pattern of federal policies meant to disrupt Native people’s reproductive autonomy, from the systemic removal of Indigenous children into government boarding schools and non-Native foster homes to the 1976 Hyde Amendment, which prevents tribal clinics and hospitals that receive federal funding from performing abortions in almost all cases.

In Canada, doctors have been [sanctioned](#) as recently as 2023 for sterilizing Indigenous women without their consent.

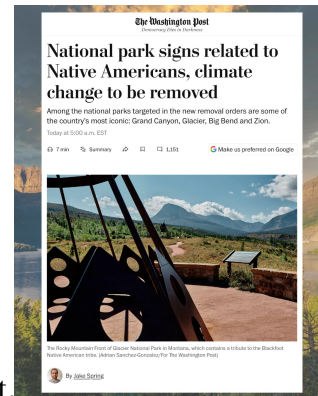
Deer said New Mexico’s investigation could pave the way for accountability. But without cooperation from the federal government, Deer said the commission’s fact-finding abilities would be limited.

~~~~~

- 
- [Hundreds of corrections being issued for Texas’ Bible-infused curriculum](#)

## Erasure on the Map: Defending Indigenous History

Our National Parks are often called "America's best idea," but for Indigenous communities, they are more than just scenic vistas; they are ancestral homelands, sacred sites, and living history.



Today, that history is under a coordinated and direct assault.

Under the guise of "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History," the current regime has launched a dystopian campaign to systematically strip Indigenous names, stories, and historical truths from our public lands. From the renaming of iconic landmarks to the physical removal of educational signage, the message is clear: MAGA wants to sanitize the American narrative by erasing the people who were here first.

One of the administration's first acts was to reverse the hard-won recognition of Denali, the highest peak in North America. By executive order, the mountain was reverted to Mount McKinley, a name that honors a president who never visited Alaska, while discarding the name used by the Koyukon people for millennia. This isn't just a change on a map; it is an act of symbolic annihilation, signaling that federal authority supersedes the deep, cultural ties of Alaska Natives.

The erasure extends far beyond mountain peaks. Internal directives have recently ordered the removal of interpretive signs across several National Parks, including:

- **Grand Canyon:** Signs detailing the forced displacement of Tribes to create the park have been removed.
- **Death Valley:** Informational plaques honoring the Timbisha Shoshone, the only Tribe with a legal co-stewardship agreement within a park, were pulled just as they celebrated their 25th anniversary of land return.
- **Glacier National Park:** Descriptions of the Marias Massacre, where the U.S. Army killed over 200 Blackfoot people, are being scrubbed from brochures and displays.
- **Little Bighorn:** Displays that provided the perspectives of the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho are being targeted for revision.

When they remove signs that mention settlers' mistreatment or forced removal, we aren't restoring truth; we are state-sponsored gaslighting. History is not a comfort project; it is a record of our collective journey, including the chapters of displacement and resilience.

### What We Can Do

**We cannot let this history be buried. Here is how you can help:**

1. **Support the Lawsuits:** Legal teams have already filed federal suits to challenge these directives. Your donations directly fund the experts and lawyers fighting this historical revisionism in court.
2. **The "People's Map":** Help us document what is being lost. If you visit a park and notice a sign has been removed or covered, [upload a photo and location here] to help us maintain an independent record of the truth.
3. **Contact the DOI:** Use our template to send a message to the Department of the Interior demanding that public lands tell the *full* American story, not a sanitized version.
4. **Amplify Indigenous Voices:** Share stories from Tribal leaders and historians who are resisting this erasure. True environmental justice requires historical honesty.

**At **Green and Just**, we believe that true environmental justice cannot exist without historical honesty. We stand with Tribal nations and the National Parks Conservation Association in demanding that our public lands reflect the *full* story of America.**

**<info@greenandjust.com>n**

~~~~~

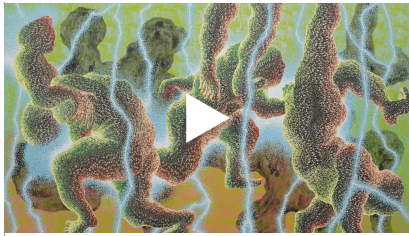
With only 3 women left, an Amazon tribe faced extinction. An unexpected birth now brings hope

SAO PAULO (AP) — Pugapia and her daughters Aiga and Babawru lived for years as the only surviving members of the Akuntsu, an Indigenous people decimated by a government-backed push to develop parts of the Amazon rainforest. As they advanced in age without a child to carry on the line, many expected the Akuntsu to vanish when the women died.

That changed in December, when Babawru — the youngest of the three, in her 40s — gave birth to a boy. Akyp's arrival brought hope not just for the Akuntsu line but also for efforts to protect the equally fragile rainforest.

“This child is not only a symbol of the resistance of the Akuntsu people, but also a source of hope for [Indigenous peoples](#),” said Joenia Wapichana, president of Brazil’s Indigenous protection agency, known as Funai. “He represents how recognition, protection and the management of this land are extremely necessary.”

Much more: <https://apnews.com/article/brazil-amazon-akuntsu-indigenous-deforestation-rondonia-2833ceada04a9922935e4869ce66317a>



The Earth is Speaking. Got a Ticket?

2026 Art + Environment Summit: Under Pressure

April 16 – 18 in Reno, Nevada

It's almost here. This gathering for the planet, this essential convening of artists, Indigenous leaders, writers, designers, and thinkers exploring the collective possibilities for a sustainable and regenerative future.

Gather for [three eye-opening days of conversation, bold proposals, and wide-ranging perspectives](#) with a who's-who lineup including Kim Stanley Robinson, Rose B. Simpson, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Land Art Generator Initiative, Jeffrey Gibson, Andrea Bowers, Johanna Burton, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Katie Paterson, and many more.

Tickets are still available. Get yours and be part of this historic happening.

Washington, Oregon and Tribes get partial victory in Columbia River Basin salmon battle

“In a win for a coalition of conservation groups, tribes and the states of Washington and Oregon, a federal judge on Wednesday partially granted their request for a preliminary injunction in a long-running lawsuit regarding the recovery of salmon in the Columbia Basin. “For decades, the battle for the life of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead has not been fought at the end of a hook and line, nor in the woven threads of a fishing net, nor even based on the appetites of sea lions, avian predators, or killer whales. Instead, the greatest battle has been waged in the courts,” U.S. District Judge Michael Simon, a Barack Obama appointee, wrote in a 47-page opinion. The lawsuit over fish conditions began in 2001 and had reached an agreement until the Trump administration in June abruptly withdrew from the Biden-era 2023 Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement, which promised to spend \$1 billion to protect endangered steelhead and salmon. ... ” [Read more from Courthouse News Service.](#)

Reclaiming Sacred Ground

On February 27, 1973, approximately 200 members of the American Indian Movement and local Oglala Lakota activists occupied the village of Wounded Knee on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation. They chose this site deliberately—it was where U.S. troops had massacred between 250 and 300 Lakota men, women, and children in 1890, marking the final spasm of the Indian Wars. The activists' grievances were both specific and sweeping: corrupt tribal leadership they believed was imposed by the federal government, broken treaties dating back over a century, and broader patterns of discrimination and poverty afflicting Native communities across America.

What followed was a 71-day standoff with federal authorities that transfixed the nation. FBI agents, U.S. Marshals, and National Guard troops surrounded the village, while activists inside demanded genuine tribal sovereignty and a review of treaty violations. Firefights erupted sporadically; two activists were killed and a federal marshal was paralyzed. National media coverage brought Indigenous issues into American living rooms with unprecedented intensity. The siege ended in May with negotiated surrender, but its impact reverberated far beyond Pine Ridge. The occupation catalyzed reforms in federal Indian policy, inspired a generation of Native activists, and forced Americans to confront uncomfortable truths about broken promises and ongoing injustice. Wounded Knee became both a literal and symbolic reclamation—of land, of history, and of the right to be heard after centuries of being silenced.



At Wounded Knee, activists reclaimed sacred ground and demanded justice long denied