

Problematic Terms

As ambassadors of the Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project, we ask you to avoid the use of the following problematic terms.

Rock Art - This term is widely used in the archaeological community, and is the most instantly recognizable word for a petroglyph to the general public. We have decided to use this term for marketing reasons in select scenarios. However, as an organization, we have historically avoided the term, and we ask you to use the word petroglyphs with your guests. Here's why: The term 'rock art' places an assumption on the cultures that came before ours of the same meaning we now have for 'art'. Modern people widely think of art as an individual's creative expression. As respectful scholars of the Archaic and Pueblo Time Period peoples, we know that the petroglyphs of Mesa Prieta and beyond were likely made in ceremony. They are cultural imprints of moments in time left by overlapping and interwoven cultures of striking sophistication. We want to impart that understanding with our guests, and not encourage them towards the kind of thinking that lessens their importance.

Instead of 'Rock Art' - Use 'Petroglyphs'

Historic Period - Though still widely used, many in the archaeology world have replaced this term with the more accurate, Post-Contact Period, meaning the period beginning upon initial European contact. The term historic period can be used very broadly to describe a period of importance or to describe a period from which there was a written record. Some believe this use of the word "historic" ignores the oral histories of indigenous peoples. We do not place specific importance on any of the time periods over another. In study of the immense cultural shift brought to the region after the arrival of the Spanish, we are also very aware of the realities of Spanish Colonization and the one-sidedness of Spanish written records.

Instead of Historic Period - Use Post-Contact Period

Kokopelli - MPPP has long avoided the use of the term Kokopelli, and strives to educate our guests on its misuse. In MPPP's book, *Silent Music: The Animal Flute Players on the Wells Petroglyph Preserve*, the inaccuracy of this term is addressed in an excerpt by John Kincheloe: "In American popular culture, the petroglyph flute player is dubbed 'Kokopelli,' but this is an unfortunate misnomer. The Puebloan Hopi People honor a traditional katsina (respected spirit) named Kookopolo, but though humpbacked, he does not carry a flute. The traditions of that Hopi katsina clearly have no connection with ancient Southwestern flute player petroglyphs. Nevertheless, despite the facts of mistaken appropriation of name and image, 'Kokopelli' is omnipresent at tourist and entertainment destinations throughout the Southwest."

Instead of 'Kokopelli' - Use 'Flute Player'

Shaman - The word 'shaman' is a very specific, but very loaded term. It was originally coined to describe Siberian traditional healers who used song and medicinal plants to enter trance in order to heal patients through spiritual interventions. In the first half of the twentieth century, anthropologists began using the word to describe people who used similar practices found in

indigenous cultures around the world. Since the word 'shaman' entered into popular use in the 1960's and 1970's, however, it has been used to primitivize many non-Western doctors and religious leaders, ignoring the great knowledge and skill these individuals spent years developing. We prefer to use the term 'ritual specialist' to denote someone who is a skilled religious leader, and you can find many depictions of ritual specialists on the Preserve.

Instead of 'Shaman' - Use 'Ritual Specialist'