

Guiding School Groups on the Wells Petroglyph Preserve

For those of you who may not have worked with school age children before, we have some suggestions to enhance your guiding experience at the Preserve. The school groups who come to us are usually very enthusiastic, energetic, curious, and tend to want to move quickly from one petroglyph to another. Your job is to slow them down and draw them into the experience, without lecturing. Your group may or may not have had the benefit of classroom lessons from our MPPP Curriculum Guide. The children will come with various levels of knowledge and you will often find yourself surprised and delighted by their observations and comments.

Please feel free to visit the MPPP office to familiarize yourself with the school 4th-7th grade curriculum *Discovering Mesa Prieta: The Petroglyphs of Northern New Mexico and the People Who Made Them*. This 280-page volume contains many fun activities and facts that even adults enjoy! You may also find the entire curriculum browse-able through our website.

We recommend reviewing Unit 8 - *Field Day on Tsikw'aye (Mesa Prieta) at the Wells Petroglyph Preserve* on the Docent Resources Webpage at this link:

<https://www.mesaprietapetroglyphs.org/docent-resources.html>

Getting Started: (If an educator docent is not there as lead docent)

1. When the bus arrives, find the head teacher and welcome the children.
2. **ONLY** adults will need to sign in and sign the release form. The school is responsible for the children (they collect permission slips and are the assumed responsible party).
3. Ask the teacher to divide students into groups, depending on the number of docents. Each group should have one caboose! Each school will have received the information that they should provide 1 chaperone for every 6 students.
4. Ask the teacher if the students have brought journals and pencils. If not, would they like to borrow clipboards and pencils? Hand out materials if needed. Teachers will have been provided a link with a suggested notebook activity. They will likely have this with them. Clipboards can be found in the docent box if needed.
5. **Establish a return time for the bus and a time for lunch if the groups plan to eat on the preserve. It is important for each docent to return at the assigned time!**

6. Suggested topics and discussion for the introduction -

a. Introduce the docents and give basic history of the Wells Petroglyph Preserve

“You are about to experience a living history. We often consider the preserve a treasure of the past. The Wells Petroglyph Preserve has a caretaker her name is Katherine Wells. She is the founder of MPPP, moved here in 1992 and purchased 188 acres on Mesa Prieta. She donated 181 of the acres she owned to the Archaeological Conservancy for their perpetual protection. Her mission was to protect and record all the petroglyphs on 32,000 acres on Mesa Prieta and to educate the local community of their importance. Today, we welcome you and encourage you to get a sense of respect and appreciation for our Pueblo and Hispano peoples, early and recent, and New Mexico's ancient heritage.”

b. Explain that over the history of this Mesa it has been called by different names

“The Ancestral Pueblo people called it Tsi kwa’ ye, (practice saying this name), the Colonial Spanish people called it Mesa Prieta and the Americans called it Black Mesa. We have chosen to call it Mesa Prieta.”

c. Respect! –

“It is important to respect the Mesa – the land, the plants, the animals and the ancestors who created these petroglyphs. Many of the petroglyphs were made for spiritual purposes. For that reason we are careful not to step on, touch or mark the petroglyphs. It is also important to take a moment before we hike to ask the ancestors in our heart for permission to be here and to thank the ancestors for allowing us to visit this sacred place. (Take a moment of silence)”

d. Orient students as to the location of the Mesa within the landscape. Establish through questioning, the cardinal directions, cities and basic geographic landmarks such as the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and Rio Grande.

e. Explain the basic geology of Mesa Prieta –

“Over 3 million years ago the land was much higher than today. On your way home notice how the top of the Mesa is covered with a dark escarpment (cliff). What is this dark layer of rock called? (basalt/hardened lava). How did it get there? About 5 million years ago there were many active volcanoes in the Taos area. Toward the end of that period there was a fissure eruption northwest of Pilar. Who knows what a fissure is? (Because of great pressure inside the earth a crack opens up and lava flows out.) Sometimes it is an eruption but it does not build a volcanic cone. This lava flowed from

present day Pilar and stopped where Chamita is today. When the lava cooled, it became what type of rock? (Basalt). Over the past 3 million years erosion has worn away the loose soil, except under the basalt cap rock. The cap rock protected the land underneath it from erosion. What causes erosion? (rain, wind, and running water) When the Rio Grande became a river the erosion process speeded up. How do we know that happened? (we find smooth river rocks all the way up the side of the Mesa.)”

f. Through questioning, establish safety guidelines: special caution about camouflaged cacti; snakes (if in season) – **Freeze, breathe and tell an adult**; the importance of staying on the trails (to lessen the erosion); respect for plants and animals (no picking flowers, catching lizards or taking rocks).

On the Trail

Whenever possible use enquiry, as opposed to lecture, to draw out information and encourage students to be the observers. Urge students to scan with their eyes, to make discoveries, notice what is around them. Remind them of what they may have learned in their classrooms. Look for opportunities and examples to share information about the following:

1. Observation vs. Inference
2. Time Periods, using Petroglyphs as examples – patination and repatination
3. Classification – i.e., flute players, quadrupeds, anthropomorphs, shields, circles, plants, etc.
4. Drawing – stop about three times for the whole group to draw. Encourage them to use double lines and infilling, as opposed to stick figures. At one stop look for boulder with a single petroglyph on it. Ask each student to make a large (full page) drawing, which they can then label with category and time period. Most students will be focused and enjoy drawing, but others may choose to write about the petroglyph.

Make sure students do not draw while walking.

1. Go with the flow and have fun!