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Bear Necessities: Sacred Wildlife, Indigenous Emotions,  
and Conservation Decision-Making

by

Blake E. Corvin

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## Committee Approval

To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of BLAKE CORVIN find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Dr. Morey Burnham, Major Advisor

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Dr. Katrina Running, Committee Member

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Dr. Katherine Reedy, Graduate Faculty Representative

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# Bear Necessities: Sacred Wildlife, Indigenous Emotions, and Conservation Decision-Making

Thesis Abstract--Idaho State University (2019)

The grizzly bear is an important species to many tribes, and is a symbol commonly associated with tribal medicine, spirituality, history, and knowledge. Using the 2017 removal of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's grizzly bears from the Endangered Species Act as a case study, and drawing from emotional political ecology and emotional geography, this paper investigates how conservation decisions concerning transboundary cultural resources affect the emotions of indigenous populations inside and outside of policy-targeted areas. Indigenous underrepresentation in conservation decision-making is well documented, though not much research has focused on the emotional outcomes of these decisions. While many studies have explored the emotional tolls of ecological change, they have largely concentrated on place-based subsistence-livelihood-environment dynamics. However, the emotional responses of spatially disconnected tribal communities concerning the perceived harm to culturally significant, non-subsistence wildlife remains largely unexamined. This paper also explores the emotional consequences of underrepresentation in conservation for tribal people.

Key Words: Conservation, Indigenous, Transboundary Cultural Resources, Emotions, Wildlife

We met with them (US Fish and Wildlife Service) and we asked for a full consultation and meaningful consultation with all the tribes. They said they would consult with us, but then they didn't do that. They held a conference call and it was really just one-way communication. Consultation means something different to us. We didn't get that. It seemed to be empty promises. – Ben Nuvamsa, former chairman of the Hopi Tribe of Arizona, Hopi Bear Clan member (Dickie, 2017)

I'm sure there's many right now that are upset and probably trying to do something right now, you know, but the thing is is that you know they're going to do this regardless and it's already been shown in Standing Rock that you know, those governing the laws and determining the numbers and the list and the conservation and all this, you know, that even though it upsets us, you know, at the end of the day they couldn't give two shits about our opinion anyway, you know? – Oneida Bear Clan member (interview, 2018)

The quotes above demonstrate the feelings of frustration and dismay echoed by many Native Americans as a response to a 2017 decision by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the US Department of the Interior (USDO I) to remove federal protections under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) residing in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). This decision, since reversed by a federal judge, would have transferred jurisdiction over the GYE grizzly from the federal government to the state fish and wildlife agencies of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, and hunting was expected to be a component of each state's management plan. Official statements in response to the GYE delisting and prior delistings from tribes throughout the current and historic range of the grizzly

cited the bear as a sacred and critical cultural, religious, and spiritual resource, and claimed the delisting was a threat to the long-term recovery of the species and the survival of tribal cultures (Breuer, 2017; Piikani Nation, 2016). In response to the decision, nine Native American tribes and three Native spiritual societies filed suit against the USFWS and the USDOJ, citing violations to their religious freedoms under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and to the Administrative Procedure Act, as the tribes claim they were not properly consulted before the decision to delist was made (Breuer, 2017). In broader terms, the opening statements above reflect a shared sentiment among indigenous peoples in the United States and abroad that they are generally ignored or underrepresented in the conservation decision-making processes of the larger countries that encompass their communities (Braun, 2002; Breuer, 2017). Inclusiveness in conservation decision-making is of paramount importance to indigenous populations because the outcomes of conservation policy have potential negative consequences for their livelihoods and ways of life (Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Ojeda, 2012).

Exclusionary state policy is often the result of indigenous underrepresentation in conservation decision-making processes, and there is much literature in political ecology linking the lack of indigenous access to political processes to their subsequent lack of access to critical subsistence resources like fish, game, forests, and water (Braun, 2002; Stevens and De Lacy, 1997; Thornton, 2010). In addition to the detrimental material and physical effects caused by underrepresentation, including dispossession and malnutrition, the struggles of underrepresented communities to obtain or access subsistence resources have also been linked to significant negative emotional consequences (Sultana, 2011, 2015). Emotions play a critical role in the development of both societies and individual lives and are inseparable from the human experience. The externalization and subsequent documentation of emotions from those suffering

through resource conflicts provides insight as to how these conflicts personally and intimately affect the actors embedded in them. Emotions do not only arise from the outcomes of resource conflicts. In addition, they are also enmeshed with the lands where these conflicts happen. Since many resources are mobile or have been extirpated from their original habitats, and since many Native cultures experienced dispossession, emotions stemming from cultural relationships with resources may transcend time and space. According to Smith and Anderson (2001, p. 7), “At particular times and in particular places, there are moments where lives are so explicitly lived through pain, bereavement, elation, anger, love, and so on, that the power of emotional relations cannot be ignored”. In this way, emotions are sometimes so powerful that they are the most effective and genuine way to provide context to actors in conflict and are very effective in communicating actors’ responses to conflicts to a broad audience.

Drawing from the literature on emotional political ecology and emotional geography, this research operates on the premise that the GYE grizzly delisting provides one such moment for affected Native Americans. Focusing on emotionally heightened spaces can prove useful in exploring the ways social relations are negotiated and understood by subjects, which is critical in the creation of equitable, representative, and inclusive policy (Smith and Anderson, 2001). Past research has shown that tribal dispossession from their ancestral lands and attendant loss of cultural resources produced significant mental and physical stress (Moore, 2005; Richmond and Ross, 2009). In some cases, the emotional toll of environmental change and loss of cultural resources is so extreme that it is believed to have led to death by heartbreak for some indigenous peoples (Richmond and Ross, 2009). Cultural resources are commonly defined as remnants of human history, such as a burial site, structure, landscape, or artifact, that is culturally significant to and closely associated with a specific living group of people (Knudson, 1999), but this

definition can also be extended to include the plants and animals currently and historically important to, and associated with, a culture or group (Cristancho and Vining, 2004). While studies have shown that indigenous people are frequently underrepresented in policy decision-making processes about cultural resources (Braun, 2002), little research has focused solely on the emotional effects of limited indigenous access to cultural resources because of underrepresentation in state policy-making. In particular, the importance of culturally significant, non-subsistence animal species in sustaining indigenous cultures, as well as the emotional effects of changes in conservation policy that negatively impact these species, remains largely unexplored (Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Cristancho and Vining, 2004; Wilson, 2015). Additionally, little consideration has been given to how conservation decisions and environmental change affect the emotions of tribal peoples who live *outside* of policy-targeted regions but place significant cultural value on some component of it. While the disciplines of emotional geography and political ecology have recently proliferated with works investigating the emotional tolls of ecological change (Bell et al., 2010; du Bray et al., 2017; Sultana, 2011, 2015), they have primarily concentrated on in situ subsistence-livelihood-environment dynamics and thus have largely ignored the spatiality of non-subsistence wildlife in emotive connections to places, cultures, and lifeways (Wilson, 2015). In this paper, I term mobile, non-subsistence resource *transboundary cultural resources* (TCRs), meaning a natural resource that does not yield to manmade boundaries, and that is of cultural importance to a people beyond the boundaries in which it currently exists. In other words, because wildlife are mobile resources, the cultural significance of a TCR transcends spatial limitations, and is important to people in many different places and at different scales. When animals have been a major focus of investigation, it has primarily been because of their subsistence or livelihood characteristics (Wilson, 2015), and

the dynamic emotional and spiritual relationships built between indigenous peoples and wildlife are ignored. Limiting the role of wildlife to food, clothing, and so on restricts the understanding of how state conservation decisions and policies concerning wildlife that is culturally significant and non-subsistence can affect indigenous identities and the long-term survival of indigenous cultures and knowledge. Further, limiting the scope of investigation to those who live inside policy-targeted areas ignores the mobile nature of wildlife and the ability of a single species to transcend time and space by shaping the history, knowledge, spirituality, and cultures of people based on where they are and when they are.

Accordingly, many members of indigenous tribes in North America are worried about the fate of their culturally significant wildlife, and many of these important species have been extirpated from areas where they are still considered integral parts of culture. Most tribes represented in *Crow Indian Tribe v. United States* live in or near the GYE, while others are headquartered as far away as the Dakotas and Arizona, the former ranges of the grizzly. Though the spatiality of resources can determine who is able to access and use them at a given time, these allocations often fluctuate; the significance and importance of a resource to a culture may persist long after its physical absence from a particular space or group of people (Preston and Harcourt, 2009). Many tribes in the American West and beyond, though separated by vast distances and diverse terrain, lived alongside the grizzly bear before it was extirpated from all but a few small pockets of its historic range, and most historically attached significant cultural value to the animal (Austin et al. 2004; Kellert et al., 1996; Pavlik, 1997; Preston and Harcourt, 2009).

Official documents concerning the delisting suggest that tribes situated in both the current and historic ranges of the grizzly remain culturally and spiritually connected to the animal, and

that those outside the bear's current habitat have a vested interest in its return to their lands (Breuer, 2017; Piikani Nation, 2016). Indeed, tribes from the southeast United States, a region grizzly bears have never occupied, have taken an official stance against the delisting (Piikani Nation, 2016). These documents show Native Americans have strong emotional reactions to the delisting. In response to the delisting announcement, Stan Grier, Chief of the Piikani Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy, referred to the grizzly bear as "a sacred being that protects our lands," and added with urgency, "this is a struggle for the very spirit of the land – a struggle for the soul of all we have ever been, or will ever become" (Montero, 2017). These feelings were echoed by Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Councilman Lee Juan Tyler, who expressed his opposition to the decision at a 2017 tribal meeting in Rapid City, SD: "It's sacred; our brother, our sister! It [hunting] would be like going out there and murdering" (Lundquist, 2017). These statements demonstrate the enduring importance of the bear to Native cultures and provides evidence that the grizzly is a critical transboundary cultural resource, one that is considered a relative, a sacred protector, and an essential component of Native identity.

Given that past research suggests people are emotionally affected by environmental changes and lack of access to conservation decision-making (Sultana, 2011, 2015), the emotionally-charged statements above provide evidence of possible negative impacts on the mental health and well-being of Native Americans who are concerned with the delisting. The importance of the grizzly bear to many Native Americans, and the emotional and urgent language used by many to express their fears associated with this issue, makes the GYE delisting an excellent setting to investigate how the personal effects of conservation decision-making on vulnerable tribal populations are expressed. Because many who are involved with and passionate about this issue live outside the area that would have been affected by this decision, the issue

provides a good opportunity to explore the emotional political ecology of conservation decisions and how they can have broad effects by transcending spatial boundaries. Though the grizzly bear is not a subsistence resource, the delisting of the species in the GYE is used to articulate the position that access to non-subsistence natural resources is linked to the emotional, thus physical, wellbeing of those who call the bear “brother,” and who prescribe a sacred cultural or religious status to the animal.

To examine the emotional dimensions of changes to transboundary cultural resources, this project draws from the frameworks of emotional geography and emotional political ecology using the delisting of grizzly bears in the GYE as a case study. This paper explores the knowledge gaps outlined above by investigating the following questions:

1. To what extent do Native Americans feel their cultural and spiritual values were included or not included in the decision to delist the GYE grizzly, and what are the emotional effects of their perceived inclusion or exclusion from the decision-making process?
2. What are the emotional effects of state-mandated conservation decisions regarding culturally significant wildlife on tribal people inside and outside policy-targeted areas.

In the next section, I provide a brief overview of cultural and transboundary resources and how they relate to Native American cultures, including the overlaps and differences between cultural and subsistence resources. I then describe how and why the grizzly bear is a cultural resource to Native Americans. Next, I summarize the literature that has shown how state-mandated conservation policies affect indigenous communities and explain how these issues and conflicts can be interpreted through the theoretical frameworks of emotional geography and emotional political ecology. Subsequently, I will outline the research questions and objectives

this paper seeks to address. Finally, I will state in detail the methods that were employed to answer these questions and to fulfill the outlined objectives.

## **Literature Review**

### **Cultural Resources**

In the context of North American indigenous societies, subsistence resources – those that provide or the means to provide minimal physical nourishment – can embody deep cultural meanings (McCorquodale, 1997). Some subsistence resources, such as various species of plants, fish, and game animals, are so critical for providing sustenance and physical stability to indigenous peoples that they become imbued with cultural significance and are prescribed sacred religious or spiritual status (Cristancho and Vining, 2004). Additionally, there are many cultural resources outside of those contributing to physical subsistence that are equally important to the survival of a people (Preston and Harcourt, 2009). Sacred sites, for instance, may have a long tradition of use by a people, whether utilitarian or spiritual, and are thus culturally significant to a group. In addition, certain non-subsistence animals, such as grizzlies, wolves, hawks, and so on, may be deified or worshipped for various reasons, including historical human-wildlife interactions and observance, the physical appearance of the animal, and the symbolism, e.g., ferocity, power, and beauty, that have been attached to animals through traditional folklore and medicinal practices (Cristancho and Vining, 2004; Pavlik, 1997). Whether or not indigenous peoples have access, defined by Ribot and Peluso (2003, p. 761) as “the ability to derive benefits from things,” to cultural resources affects the ability of tribal members to reconnect with their past and effectively pass down knowledge to future generations (Stapp and Longnecker, 1998). Because of this, the loss of such cultural resources can dramatically alter or affect the ability of a culture to practice both their traditional and contemporary lifeways and can result in a loss of

meaning for a culture, threatening its survival (Dressler and Roth, 2010; Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Ojeda, 2012). Considering the psychological attachment of indigenous cultures to culturally significant animal species, as well as how these species shape and influence the very foundations of indigenous cultures, it is likely that some negative psychological or emotional effects could present themselves if it is perceived that these species are being harmed (Cristancho and Vining, 2004). As with subsistence resources, lack or loss of indigenous access to cultural resources often results from decisions made by state actors and affects them disproportionately compared to those who are adequately represented in dominant or colonial cultures (Braun, 2002; Stoffle and Evans, 1990; Suagee, 1982).

While Native Americans have control over cultural resources situated inside their reservations, their decision-making power diminishes significantly for those located off-reservation (Stoffle and Evans, 1990). This becomes particularly problematic when considering many tribes were forcibly removed from their traditional homelands in the past, and in many cases, important or sacred cultural resources are located beyond reservation or even state boundaries and span multiple jurisdictions. Through extensive hunting and eventually extirpation from large swathes of the North American landscape by way of European settlers, the grizzly bear itself has essentially been dispossessed from the ancestral lands of many Native American tribes that once enjoyed spiritually fulfilling relationships with the animal. This led to the conceptualization of the grizzly bear as a TCR for this paper. In other words, because wildlife are mobile resources, the cultural significance of a TCR transcends spatial limitations, and is important to people in many different places and at different scales.

## **Transboundary Cultural Resources**

The transboundary characteristics of the grizzly are extremely important in the case of the GYE because three states, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, would have regulated the bear separately, and grizzly interconnectivity is a key concern for Native Americans in the long-term recovery of the species (Piikani Nation, 2016). Defining the grizzly as a TCR is central to the notion that the importance of the grizzly bear is not simply limited to areas in which the species resides, as the symbolic and cultural value of the animal extends well beyond its current pockets of habitat and affects Native populations throughout its historic range in the West (Breuer, 2017; Piikani Nation, 2016). Just as multiple cultures may have ties to a certain place, multiple cultures can have ties to a certain animal; though the grizzly is isolated from many of the tribes it is historically significant to, there remains symbolic value to many Native Americans in simply knowing the grizzly bear exists and that it may one day return to them (Breuer, 2017; Piikani Nation, 2016). The status of the grizzly as an endangered species is critical to the protections of in situ tribal cultural resources as well, as the ESA protects its habitats from extractive resource industries, in some ways making the bear a literal guardian of tribal lands. That the delisting affected multiple tribes at multiple scales and across multiple spaces lends credence to the idea that conservation decisions made within a particular region or space can produce consequences for certain groups that reside outside the political borders of those spaces (Walker, 2009), especially when the decisions involve TCRs.

## **The Grizzly Bear as a Cultural Resource**

Though Native American tribes in the American West typically view all life as sacred and believe all cogs in the wheel of an ecosystem are fundamental components of knowledge and life, the grizzly bear commands a vast amount of respect and importance. According to

anthropologist Lydia Black (1998), bears have been a symbol of ritual to humans living in North America since Paleolithic times, and have been used as a doorway to the spiritual realm since time immemorial. The Blackfeet consider the bear a god and would rather starve than eat or hunt the animal (Rockwell, 1991). The Flathead Tribe believe grizzly bears bestow powers to their medicine-men and grant them the medicinal knowledge they need to practice healing rituals (Kellert et al., 1996). The grizzly bear is at the center of Navajo spiritual and religious ceremonies, customs, and beliefs, as well. The Navajo consider the bear a holy being and took care to avoid the animal before its extirpation from their lands because of the mystical powers they believe the animal holds (Pavlik, 1997). Navajo, along with many other tribes, believe grizzly bears are the most powerful observable beings, and that they protect other spirits or deities from harm. Consuming the bear is considered cannibalism by Navajo, as grizzlies are said to be directly related to human beings (Pavlik, 1997). Tribes involved in the 2017 delisting lawsuit, including the Crow, Standing Rock Sioux, Arapaho, Piikani Nation, and Crow Creek Sioux, point to the grizzly bear as a critical component of their cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs, and contend that their ability to practice their religious and spiritual ceremonies were severely impeded by the lifting of the ESA hunting ban (Breuer, 2017). Further, these tribes believe that grizzly bears must be allowed to repopulate their ancestral lands, and that any attempt to limit or diminish the animal's numbers will result in emotional and spiritual hardships for tribes throughout the West who rely on the bears for protection and medicine (Breuer, 2017). Additionally, the over 170 tribes that signed *The Grizzly: A Treaty of Cooperation, Cultural Revitalization and Restoration* – an international treaty designed to create tribal solidarity in the protection of grizzly bears and tribal culture – believe the existence and proliferation of the grizzly bear is essential to securing a future for Native American and First Nations cultures. They

also believe the spiritual, religious, and medicinal practices of many tribes throughout the US and Canada are dependent upon a healthy and undisturbed grizzly population. In considering the immemorial and enduring importance of the grizzly bear to Native Americans, it is apparent that the existence and symbolic value of the grizzly is essential to the stability of Native culture, making the bear a culturally defined keystone species and irreplaceable cultural resource (Cristancho and Vining, 2004). Any decision that could potentially result in the decline of bear populations or harm individual bears in any way is an issue of access for Native Americans. If even one bear is killed for sport, the ability of Native Americans to access the grizzly both in the material and spiritual realms subsequently diminishes. Because of the bear's importance to Native lifeways, any decision made by the state that could affect the animal's wellbeing could also disproportionately and unjustly affect Native populations.

### **State Conservation Decisions and Injustice**

State conservation decisions often fail to incorporate inclusive and representative policy making processes, and frequently have negative impacts on racially or economically marginalized populations (Feldpausch-Parker et al., 2017; McCorquodale, 1997). As such, state mandated policies aimed specifically at preserving or exploiting natural or cultural resources frequently dismiss or ignore the concerns, cultures, values, and lifeways of the indigenous peoples who rely on these resources for physical, spiritual, and cultural sustenance (Braun, 2002, Peet et al., 2010; Perreault, 2001; Robbins, 2012). State-led natural resource policy typically favors economic development and the needs of the market over concerns for the environment or those who depend upon it (Jackson and Langton, 2012; London, 2016; McCarthy, 2009; Robbins, 2012). Similarly, natural resource policy tends not to distinguish between indigenous inhabitants and the resource-rich spaces in which they reside, thus indigenous peoples who live

in the typically remote or rural landscapes targeted by these policies are simply subsumed within nature itself and their voices are erased from decision-making processes, creating both physical and emotional hardships for those affected (Braun, 2002; Perreault, 2001). This erasure is wholesale; with the dismissal of indigenous peoples from the broader political discourse of a state, indigenous epistemologies, built upon centuries of intimate experiences with their lands and management of their resources, become isolated from national environmental discourses, and can eventually vanish altogether as tribes become more integrated into dominant or colonial cultures (Robbins, 2012; Stapp and Longnecker, 1998).

Like many other indigenous groups around the world, Native American tribes contend that their values are not and have not been represented in many US conservation decisions (Breuer, 2017). At the core of *Crow Indian Tribe v. United States* is the claim that tribes were not consulted prior to the decision, so their values could not have been considered during the process (Breuer, 2017). As described by Fraser (1997), misrecognition and underrepresentation is a cultural and institutional process of disrespect, insult, and stigmatization that devalues certain people in comparison to the culturally dominant class. Thus, the decision to not consult tribes prior to the delisting is a continuation of historical political and systematic tactics used culturally and institutionally in the United States and globally to insult, disrespect, erase, and degrade tribal people and their values while simultaneously upholding the values of the dominant culture (Bixler, 2013). Political decisions to reduce or restrict access to cultural resources can carry emotional consequences for those these decisions personally affect, thus a lens that encompasses both politics and emotions is needed to properly analyze this issue.

## **Emotional Political Ecology and Geography**

Contemporary political ecology rests upon a fundamental premise that studies of an ecological nature can no longer ignore the highly political, ever-changing and evolving relationships between the outside agencies responsible for natural resource and environmental policy making and the local actors who are impacted by it (Kawamura, 2004). The dynamic struggles among different actors to achieve control of or simply to access natural resources, and the nature of the relationships between these actors and resources, is the major focus of investigation of political ecology. In uncovering the roles of culture, power, history, and nature in the numerous discourses used to justify or to limit indigenous access to resources, political ecology becomes a mechanism for defining and explaining the motivations, interests, and actions of actors embedded in these conflicts at multiple scales (Biersack and Greenberg, 2006; Bixler et al., 2015). More recently, however, the decades-long push from feminist political ecologists and geographers to include subjectivities like emotion in discussions of power and nature led to an increase in interest from political ecologists in the role of emotions in environmental resource conflicts and power dynamics (Hidalgo, 2017).

As defined by Davidson et al. (2005, p. 3), emotional geography “attempts to understand emotion – experientially and conceptually – in terms of its socio-spatial mediation and articulation rather than as entirely interiorized subjective mental states”. Instead of viewing emotion as an entirely individualized and fundamentally internal realm, emotional geography scholars recognize the importance of social processes and ecological practices in the construction and externalization of emotions. The ways emotions are experienced depends partly upon the social position of a person and myriad intersecting factors, such as race, class, and gender that differentiate an individual’s emotional processes (Sultana, 2011). Additionally, relationships

between people and places, things, or politics coalesce to form specific emotions with a large degree of variance among individuals, thus creating a unique emotional life perspective for every person (Davidson and Bondi, 2004). Emotional perspectives determine how people navigate their lives, and affects how they construe their past, present, and future (Davidson and Bondi, 2004). Emotions also tend to shift based on the nature of relationships between people and external factors at any given time, making emotions fluid and dynamic (Davidson and Bondi, 2004; Davidson et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009). Because emotions are key components of how both individual lives and societies are constructed and experienced, analyses of social or political issues that lack an emotional component produce an incomplete understanding of the workings of the world (Neu, 2000; Pugmire, 1998; Smith and Anderson, 2001; Williams, 2001).

Dependent upon lived experiences, feelings, and embodied emotions, relationships between people and natural or cultural resources produce a plethora of differing emotional geographies (Sultana, 2011). Accordingly, Sultana (2011, 2015) and other political ecologists have begun to explore the ways emotions provide meaning and context in understanding the personal toll of peoples' struggles to access resources. Emotions are frequently expressed during times of struggle, especially over resources, and claims to resources are always embedded in perceptions of power and control. As noted by Moore (2005), emotional suffering is commonly used to legitimize land and resource claims and are often invoked as a rallying mechanism for social movements seeking restitution for past hardships or dispossessions. Considering the importance of emotions in shaping the processes, outcomes, and practices of resource access, use, and control is critical in analyzing nature-society relationships in any context, making emotions highly political (Sultana, 2011).

According to Arboleda (2015), environmental and resource struggles are so thoroughly engulfed in emotion that anyone spending time with those on the front lines of these conflicts can feel it themselves. This makes sense considering environmental resources are so closely linked to both physical and cultural survival, and people living through struggles over land, water, and environment are bound to be highly emotional. Environmental and resource conflicts host a diverse cast of actors at multiple scales, each placing different values on nature. These values often differ across these actors according to their race, class, gender, and religious affiliation (Biersack and Greenberg, 2006; Hidalgo, 2017; Robbins, 2012). Many of these values are based on the objective needs fulfilled by the environment, but some are highly subjective and emotional (Velicu, 2015). For instance, the objective values placed on access to clean water are obvious, as a lack thereof would cause considerable physical hardships, but people also may have fond memories and feelings associated with a stream, and their emotions alone might be a motivator to fight to keep the stream clean. As stated, resource struggles have actors at multiple scales, and the struggles themselves, along with the values placed on the environment and resources, are negotiated through emotional relationships built among and between these actors. If emotions are to be considered an integral part of power relationships, relationships in general, and environmental values, then conflicts over conservation decisions are negotiated and experienced through emotions (Sultana, 2011). The context in which emotions are felt is important as well; since conservation decisions are highly political, the emotional responses of actors involved are deeply embedded in politics (Hidalgo, 2017).

Sultana (2011, 2015) contends that emotions are useful when investigating resource access struggles because emotions are localized and embodied by actors, thus helping to reveal the intimate day-to-day dynamics of relations between resources and society. In other words, by

simply examining the objectivities of resource user and resource, the subtler aspects of these relationships, thus the complete picture, remains hidden. For example, Sultana (2011) uses emotion and place to illustrate how suffering is expressed by women suffering from arsenic-contaminated water access issues in Bangladesh. Similarly, Dallman et al. (2013) demonstrate how connections to place influence emotions and identity concerning tribal spirituality and how these factors mediate relationships during environmental conflicts. Their research signals the need to focus on emotion when investigating how populations or individuals are affected by environmental changes and access issues. Investigating emotional responses helps to develop and understand intimate human perspectives of those most affected by these conflicts. While emotions are important in understanding how both individuals and communities are affected by decisions, conflicts, and so on, they are also important in understanding how individuals and communities wish to move forward.

## **Methods**

### **Sampling**

Data for this project come from interviews with tribal members and tribal representatives. Several types of convenience-based non-probability sampling were used to identify interviewees. Some interviewees for this study led a tribal sovereignty seminar at Idaho State University and were solicited for participation afterwards. One participant was affiliated with Indigenous New Hampshire, an indigenous-led workshop facilitated by faculty at the University of New Hampshire. Others were located through official tribal websites or tribal activism, business/recreation, and support websites and Facebook groups. For each website or Facebook group, I initiated contact with tribal members that expressed interest in the delisting decision or conservation issues in general, and that were easy to reach, such as an official public relations

representative. Some participants were identified by direct quotes relevant to the delisting in news articles and contacted through organizations they are affiliated with. All participants were initially contacted by email and were followed-up with via phone call if possible. Upon completion of interviews, participants were asked to provide contact information for any people affiliated with a tribe that they believed would be interested in participating in this project. I also used relevant legal documents and inter-tribal treaties to identify potential groups or participants who expressed an interest in this issue. All interviewees were tribal people or tribal representatives that spoke on behalf of a tribe.

### **Semi-structured Interviews**

Ten face-to-face interviews were conducted with tribal members and representatives who lived in five different locations. One location had a current grizzly population, three were former grizzly habitat, and one location never had a grizzly population. Interviews were conducted over the phone when face-to-face meetings were not an option. The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a set of 24 open-ended questions. Structuring the interview in this fashion allowed interviewees flexibility in how they responded to questions and allowed me to probe interviewees on relevant topics or opinions as they were exposed (Bernard, 2017). Questions were designed to explore how participants have been affected emotionally by the delisting, and to uncover their general feelings towards the grizzly bear, the environment, conservation, and the importance or unimportance of these topics to their respective tribal cultures. Interviews were approximately 30-50 minutes in length. Since this project focuses on tribes located in the grizzly's current and former ranges, as well as areas the grizzly has never occupied, the majority of these interviews were conducted over the phone. There was also one group interview

conducted in Plummer, Idaho that followed the same 24 question interview guide. The tribes represented by participants in this study, and their respective locations are as follows:

- **Fort Washakie, Wyoming:** Fort Washakie is home to the cultural center of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe, and is located on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Grizzly bears are present in the area, and the tribe has taken an official stance against the delisting. The grizzly bear is an important character in the Eastern Shoshone's creation stories, and the tribe participates in bear-centered ceremonies like dances.
- **Plummer, Idaho:** Plummer is home to the Coeur d'Alene tribe's agency office. Though Plummer, about half an hour from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, is not necessarily current grizzly bear habitat, there are occasionally reports of grizzlies wandering into the area from the Bitterroot Mountains. Like the Eastern Shoshone, the grizzly bear is a prominent character in the Coeur d'Alene's sacred stories. The Coeur d'Alene have taken an official stance against the delisting.
- **Fort Hall, Idaho:** Home to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of southeast Idaho, Fort Hall is situated just outside the GYE and current grizzly territory. According to official statements from the Shoshone-Bannock, the tribes do not support the GYE delisting. The two participants I interviewed from Fort Hall, however, also identified as members of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. In addition, both participants were Oneida Bear Clan members. Bears are considered the highest form of medicine by those in bear clans.
- **Pinetop-Lakeside, Arizona:** Pinetop is located about two and a half hours south of Arizona's Hopi Reservation. The participant from Arizona is a member of the Hopi tribe and Hopi Bear Clan, both of which have taken an official stance against delisting the grizzly by signing the grizzly bear treaty. The grizzly is a religious icon to the Hopi Bear

Clan, and the group were plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the USFWS and USDOJ.

Though Arizona is in the former range of the grizzly, the bear is a very important and special component of Hopi history, culture, and spirituality.

- **Dover, New Hampshire:** One interview took place here to gain the perspective of tribal people from areas without a current or historic grizzly bear population. New Hampshire, and New England more generally, are home to the Pennacook-Abenaki people. The participant was of the Koasek Traditional Band of Abenaki. Though the Pennacook-Abenaki have made no official statements concerning the grizzly, the participant was known to be an outspoken member of New Hampshire's indigenous community, and bears were very important to them in general.

### **Data Analysis**

Each completed interview was transcribed verbatim. After the data were transcribed, I entered the interviews into ATLAS.ti, and followed the three-step coding and data analysis process outlined by Friese (2014). In particular, I began to conceptualize the documented data through inductive coding, which consists of analyzing the transcribed text line by line in search of emergent patterns or themes. Once a pattern or theme was recognized, short codes that contain quickly recognizable keywords were used to group relevant sentences, or lines, within emerging themes. To keep track of the codes used, a codebook was developed to create and designate a definition to each code. Data were flagged and reorganized based on meaningful patterns that formed and like data were grouped accordingly. Documentation and conceptualization began immediately after observations and interviews took place to better recognize different or emerging patterns of information that could be grouped together. The relationships between these data were examined and attempts were made to explain why relevant relationships exist.

Moving from simple descriptions of observations to building relationships among data provided a narrative that helped to describe the emotional dimensions of tribal responses to the delisting. Data derived from interviews was grouped further by creating causal matrices based on the relationships between different variables and obtained information. ATLAS.ti and my codebook were used to determine the frequency of emotional keywords such as “sad,” “angry,” and “happy,” for example. Percentages were assigned to these keywords based on how often they appear in interviews. This allowed me to analyze interviews deductively; the objectivity of keyword frequency aids in the construction of theory. In other words, themes were supported based on percentages. Lastly, I compared findings from both inductive and deductive approaches.

### **Results and Discussion**

Because of the sensitive nature of the topic and the current and historic marginalization of the peoples this paper focuses on, direct quotes from voluntary participants will be used whenever possible and will be followed by my own analysis. This is so the quote stands alone and is unsullied by any theoretical or personal spin the author may use to interpret them. Participants had an interest in the GYE grizzly delisting or conservation in general, and this paper in no way reflects all the diverse and dynamic opinions of Native Americans at-large on this issue or any other. The following section will begin with an analysis of general emotional content uncovered in interviews. Each following subsection will explore prominent themes found throughout the interviews and explain how emotions are affected in the context of each theme.

#### **Emotions and the Effects of the Delisting**

All interviewees expressed strong emotional associations with the bear and many reported being emotionally affected by the delisting. When asked to describe how they felt upon

hearing about the delisting, many used words like “dismayed,” “sad,” “appalled,” and “frustrated.” Conversely, words like “healer,” “caring,” “strong,” “protector,” “brother,” and “mother” were used to describe the grizzly. Members of Bear Clans, both Hopi and Oneida, spoke of the grizzly as a god, and referred to him as a “leader,” a “healer,” “the strong one,” and “our religious icon.” When asked to describe how they felt about the grizzly, participants responded using words laced with emotion, such as “reverence,” “respect,” and “love”. Though most interviewees had no desire to encounter a grizzly, all participants associated the grizzly with positive feelings; indeed, not a single interviewee uttered a negative word about the animal. The use of words like “dismayed,” “sad,” and “frustrated” provides evidence that resources are indeed prescribed significant emotional values (Sultana, 2011, 2015). Further, the delisting elicited emotions experienced by participants in past resource conflicts. For example, one Bear Clan member explained the emotional impact of the delisting in this way:

I think that [delisting grizzly bears again] would be a very sad day. I mean, I would, I would, I personally would be very sad. My family would be very sad. Our clan would be very sad, um, because it's just, they just keep coming and keep coming and it never stops. They don't have any regard for tribes or our religious beliefs. And they'll keep doing that. And this is just gonna be another example of how they don't regard, uh, the values of, Native American values, our traditional values, so we've had to fight many times as tribal nations to protect our shrines, our areas that we call sacred, and they just keep bulldozing over all of them. You know, this is going to be another mark where the white man is just, just too materialistic. It would be a very sad day.

For Bear Clan members specifically, the GYE delisting engendered both positive and negative emotional effects. For example, all Bear Clan interviewees felt the delisting had a positive effect because it strengthened their resolve to act against the delisting decision and future negative conservation decisions that they felt were inevitable. In this way, they felt motivated by the delisting to take future action against what they saw as imminent injustices to be wrought by federal and state conservation decisions. This suggests that emotions felt during resource struggles can indeed act as rallying cries to push back against a perceived negative decision or future decisions (Moore, 2005). For instance, as a result of the 2017 decision, as well as previous delisting attempts, one participant had become heavily involved with tribal legal efforts and inter-tribal solidarity initiatives meant to strengthen tribal opposition to conservation and cultural decisions they believed to be unjust. Interviewees also reported feeling positive about the opportunity the delisting gave them to spread their message on the issue, and to raise awareness. Further, they explained that since the delisting, the grizzly bear has become even more prominent in their prayers. However, all Bear Clan members reported feeling sad about the decision and believed that the extra time spent thinking about the delisting was causing them grief or affecting them negatively. One participant reported an increase in prayer for the bear's safety and said that though he had faith the grizzly would pull through, it had become hard on him to dwell and pray on decisions like this. These responses provide evidence that conservation decisions and injustices can elicit both positive and negative emotional responses, though much of the literature reviewed for this paper focused on negative emotional consequences (Braun, 2002; Perreault, 2001; Sultana, 2011).

Though all study participants disagreed with the delisting, many explained the decision itself was not their greatest concern, but that it was representative of the larger problem of Native

underrepresentation in virtually all federal conservation decision-making. Here, participants expressed anger that they are routinely not consulted about conservation decisions before they are made and felt especially upset that they are frequently not consulted by federal and state governments about decisions that affect their sacred sites, plants, and animals. In particular, they relayed anger that their values, cultures, and spirituality were routinely ignored or unconsidered in conservation decisions that affect their cultural resources. Much like these broader decision-making processes, no interviewees reported that they felt represented by the decision to delist, and most saw the non-consultation of Native Americans in the case of the GYE grizzly as simply a case of business as usual from the federal government. In this context, as well as many others, the emotions elicited by Native Americans from the delisting are unique in that they encompass lifetimes of experiential underrepresentation and marginalization, suggesting that emotional responses are distinct to a person's social position in a society (Sultana, 2011, 2015). It is well-established that indigenous non-inclusion in decision-making can result in a loss of access to resources (Braun, 2002; Perreault, 2001), and as demonstrated by the quote below, and in providing further evidence, loss of access to important resources can lead to emotional distress and frustration.

The thing is is that you know they're going to do this regardless, and it's already been shown in Standing Rock that, you know, those governing the laws and determining the numbers and the list and the conservation and all this, you know, that even though it upsets us, you know, at the end of the day they couldn't give two shits about our opinion anyway, you know?

Though the grizzly was more important culturally to some participants than others, all participants felt disrespected by the decision, and many empathized with and expressed solidarity with Native cultures who relied more on the bear for spiritual or religious fulfillment. For example, one interviewee who lives in New Hampshire expressed sadness and outrage for tribes the grizzly was very important to. When asked how she felt when she first heard about the delisting, she responded “appalled.” This demonstrates that even if a TCR is not explicitly important to a particular Native tribe or individual, the resource can carry emotional sentiments, such as empathy and solidarity, across boundaries and borders. Though the grizzly delisting elicited negative emotional responses for most participants, the broader theme of underrepresentation in conservation decision-making was universal for all participants, and it transcended tribal and regional boundaries and cultural representations of the grizzly bear. The next section explores the diverse ways the grizzly bear, wildlife, and nature are important to the cultures, spiritualities, and identities of participants in this project. This is meant to provide context as to why conservation decision-making can produce emotional consequences, and why responses from participants were often laced with emotional language. The following sections are centered on themes participants associated with being underrepresented in conservation decision-making, and each section explores the emotional characteristics of participant responses.

### **The Importance of the Grizzly Bear, Wildlife, and Environment to Culture, Spirituality and Identity**

Well, we see the bear as a leader in our culture, as a leader to Bear Clan members. You just, um, you use that healer, you use that medicine man. And so, when we do assemble,

we acknowledge and pray to his existence, and, and acknowledge all wildlife and plant life, the rains, and so on. The bear is the strong one. He's the healer and a protector.

When I think about grizzly bears, I, you know, I think that, just how important of a role that they play for, for me, specifically. I just, in my culture and ways they're looked at as the highest form of medicine for healing. They represent our ancestors, they represent strength. You know, the grizzly bear represents many things, many great qualities. When I think of grizzly bears, I think of me, you know, me as a part of things, in that same sense and way that I use them in my medicine... it's universal in all tribes, calling on that bear medicine either through songs or medicine men that carry that same vibrational quality of the grizzly bear to summon him forth, and they use it in the healing practice.

Participants discussed the importance of a variety of wildlife to themselves and their tribes, though few were as passionate about the grizzly as Bear Clan members. Bear Clan members were the only participants who directly prayed to the grizzly, explaining that they prayed for the wellbeing of the grizzly, their continued existence, and to their strength. During interviews, Bear Clan members explained they felt they had much to lose if grizzly populations fell below the point of recovery, and they were passionately opposed to the sport hunting of the bear. For Bear Clan members, the grizzly bear was extremely culturally important because of the spiritual and religious qualities they ascribed to the bear, and because of the critical medicinal aspects they attributed to the grizzly; in Bear Clan culture, the grizzly is the highest form of medicine, and is summoned to heal sicknesses. Through prayer rituals and ceremonies that several interviewees have participated in, the grizzly bear can be called forth to heal sicknesses,

and they are apparently very effective at healing illnesses associated with the brain because of the bear's natural ability to think introspectively during hibernation. According to participants, this is the universal interpretation of bear medicine across all tribes. Additionally, parts of the bear such as fur, bones, and claws are used in bear dances and other bear ceremonies, making the continued existence of the bear on the physical plane essential for Bear Clan members to communicate with the grizzly in the spiritual plane. Further, those of the Bear Clan felt honored to exist simultaneously with a living god. As stated by one Hopi Bear Clan member, the grizzly bear is the reason his Bear Clan ancestors settled in Arizona. According to legend, all Hopi clans travelling north into Arizona came across the same dead grizzly, but the Bear Clan saw the corpse as an omen that they had traveled far enough, so they settled where the bear had fallen and have remained there ever since. Bear Clan members also said that it was forbidden to consume the bear, signaling the importance of including non-subsistence wildlife in investigating the outcomes of resource decisions (Wilson, 2015). The cultural importance of the grizzly to Bear Clan members transcended time and space, as none of them had ever lived alongside them. All Bear Clan members lived in areas where the grizzly has been extirpated, showing the importance of considering time and space when decisions concerning TCRs are made.

Considering the importance of the animal to their identity, culture, and spirituality, Bear Clan members felt especially sad, angry, and disrespected by the hunting aspect of the delisting; the prospect of the grizzly being harmed, specifically for sport, was very sad for them. During their interviews, they explained that these feelings arose because their values were not considered in the decision. Moreover, they expressed these emotions because they felt they would not have been consulted even if decision-makers knew of the importance of the bear to their spirituality and culture. In our interviews, participants made clear that a threat to the

existence of the grizzly felt like a threat to the existence of the tribe as well, a sentiment that elicited feelings of frustration on the part of interviewees. The critical importance of the bear to Bear Clan members, as well as others, suggests that they would be disproportionately affected by changes in the bear's management compared to those who are adequately represented in the political sphere (Braun, 2002; Stoffle and Evans, 1990; Suagee, 1982). Though not as important spiritually to other interviewees, the grizzly played an important role in the tribal history, knowledge, and sacred stories of other participants.

And that's the, when you look at the stories and in records of bears there is this idea of the concept that you have to use your brain to be able to defeat and get around grizzly. And so, uh, I know there's always been that respect and that, that reverent fear. Reverent might be a bit of a strong word, but certainly, um, you know, that kind of a, just real respect for, hey, this is a serious thing...

Interviewees from other tribes also pointed to the bear as a key cultural or religious figure. For example, the grizzly is a character that appears several times in the sacred stories of the Coeur d'Alene. One participant enjoyed telling a story that featured Coyote and Grizzly, where Coyote had to outwit Grizzly in order to face an animal-eating monster named Kamiah, who kept Grizzly as his slave. Coyote's defeat of Grizzly and the monster would eventually lead to the creation of multiple tribes in their area, making Grizzly an important component of their creation story. The participant described how the story portrayed Grizzly as fearsome with god-like power and strength to warn listeners that Grizzly must be tricked in order to defeat him, and that it is never wise to charge at him. Not necessarily because the grizzly is unintelligent, but

because he is freakishly big and freakishly strong; the embodiment of fear and power. This, among many other examples, including the medicinal practices of Bear Clans mentioned above, demonstrates how tribal knowledge was and is passed down through generations via the creation stories and tribal practices that include the grizzly (Stapp and Longnecker, 1998). In this way, the grizzly has been woven into the fabric of the Coeur d'Alene tribe's history through their sacred stories. This interweaving of the grizzly into the cultural fabric is similar for many of the other tribes interviewed who had creation stories, making the existence of the bear important to the survival of tribal cultures (Dressler and Roth, 2010; Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Ojeda, 2012).

Deep connections like these explain why decisions like the delisting carried negative emotional consequences for those interviewed. Several participants noted that the grizzly delisting was justified using numbers and measures but ignored how TCRs like the grizzly were essential facets of their cultures and identities. Ignoring the important historical and cultural values of TCRs, or resources more generally, to marginalized groups leads to conflicts of access and representation, and these struggles typically produce emotional hardships (Sultana, 2011, 2015). In the USFWS' decision to remove the GYE grizzly from the ESA, grizzly bears are written into the plan as numbers. Measurable characteristics of its population, including population density, potential for establishing connectivity between isolated populations, food requirements, likelihood of human-bear conflicts, and so on, are used to justify actions or changes to the management of the animal (Fish and Wildlife Service, 2017). While this is representative of US wildlife conservation policy more broadly, the grizzly bear represents much more than a number to many. Like all other wildlife, there are social and emotional constructions surrounding grizzly bears, and the grizzly itself is, or is perceived as being, very emotional and social. According to participants as well as past research, conservation policy often fails to

capture these feelings and emotions, and typically fails to represent wildlife as anything more than data (Wilson, 2015). One participant was “diametrically opposed” to the use of baseline measures to determine the recovery of a species for this reason, as numbers did not relay the importance of an animal’s right to exist. Further, the representation of wildlife as merely subsistence resources fails to capture the potential spiritual importance of an animal (Wilson, 2015), a sentiment expressed by participants in discussing the content of their prayers.

I live out in the country and it's, it's like, it's, it's, it's evident that, you know, we have occurrences with bears, cougars, bobcats, different, like, wildlife and it's, it's comforting, you know, because those are our people. Those are our people too. And so, it's just comforting to know that they're still in existence, that our prayers are being answered, that they're still there, you know?

Prayer was a very common way participants celebrated or lamented wildlife, or more generally, nature. Many interviewees described prayer as an emotional and introspective method of communication with themselves, their land, and their Creator, and used the time to ask for the safekeeping of those they loved and for all living things, and to reflect on matters that worried them. In our interviews, the importance of participants’ relationship with nature was reflected by the personal importance and power they attributed to prayer, as many participants reported praying for the health of the earth. Indeed, all participants spoke powerfully of their spiritual and emotional relationship with nature. For many, this relationship was heavily influenced by their culture, and stemmed from their connections to their sacred stories, their religion and spirituality, their lands, and their ancestors.

Participants expressed their intimate emotional connections to the environment through prayer, and many prayed that they would not lose access to their environments or components of their environments as they know them. Nearly all participants discussed praying to or for the earth or components of the earth more broadly, and most participants mentioned praying to and for some combination of the following: The Creator, their ancestors, wildlife, animals, grizzly, buffalo, water, rain, air, sky, sun, roots, berries, and plant life. A few mentioned praying for their sacred sites, such as Bears Ears, a landscape that is culturally significant to Native Americans that was recently reduced in size resulting from a decision spearheaded by the United States Department of Interior. Participants explained that they prayed for the continued existence of and access to both their cultural and subsistence resources and for all that had been lost. They also prayed for resources in danger of being lost, like the grizzly or other wildlife, or their traditional foods, demonstrating the critical and emotional importance of spiritual and cultural sustenance as well as subsistence (Braun, 2002, Peet et al., 2010; Perreault, 2001; Robbins, 2012). Some of those who lived in the grizzly's historic range, like one Hopi participant, prayed for its return, while others, such as the Eastern Shoshone, prayed to ensure the grizzly remained on their lands. For our interviewees, prayer seemed to enable direct communication with places and things that were sacred to them. In addition to prayer, many felt more connected to The Creator and the spiritual realm through interactions with their respective environments. Though participants' prayers were holistic in that they encompassed many diverse aspects or attributes of nature, their ancestral lands were especially important to them.

We recognize it's a major part of what distinguishes us from everybody else. There's nobody else around here that can say that's where my ancestors did this for thousands of

years. And so, um, and we want to make sure that we continue to have that emotional connection. So, so it is an emotional connection, and it's, it's more than just like, hey, I, it's beautiful, you know? That's what we always hear about this area is 'oh it's so beautiful,' and 'it's why we live here.' And you're like, 'well, we're here and that's not why we live here. We're here, and the reason why we're here is because the creator put us here,' and, but, but you have just that strong sense of responsibility to take care of it.

As the quote above demonstrates, the Idaho panhandle, where the participant lived, is a tangible source of pride for him and others in the interviews, and the lands where interviewees lived invoked a strong sense of emotional connection and stewardship responsibility that comprised part of their identity. For many, their land now is the land of their ancestors, belonging to them since time immemorial, and that knowledge is unique and special to them and it cannot be taken away. Research suggests that emotions are partially developed through and contingent upon relationships with spaces (Davidson et al., 2005), and the unique and intense relationships participants had with their lands demonstrates why this relationship is so emotional and so critical to their identities. Their relationships with their lands, and the ability of state-led conservation decisions to change this relationship, eludes to how and why the decisions are immensely political (Sultana, 2011, 2015). Conservation decisions that affect their lands or components of their lands not only had personal and emotional consequences, but many believed they could essentially alter the cultural ways in which participants experience their ecosystems, as many believed their cultures were tethered to the living world around them.

Well, that's the reason why I got involved with that effort to fight the administration on the delisting because we all have, we all have our prayers. When we pray, we remember those species, and we also remember the shrines where our people have lived, and they're still living and we still want them to be there because we acknowledge the value of being they have. If the bear was, was exterminated, decimated, I should say, by like trophy hunting, the loss of their wildlife, who's there, who's going to be there to fight for the bear. And I think that's why we stepped up to do that. Um, because, because our religion, our culture, our beliefs have sustained us for thousands of years, you know, and we need to continue to, um, look up to them, for our mission, for the future.

Most interviewees saw decisions that could erode their historic relationships with their lands, such as the potential for sport hunting the grizzly to extirpation, as an erosion of sovereignty and an erasure of their history, knowledge, and culture. Decisions that could affect TCRs like the grizzly were especially frustrating for participants, as they believed they could potentially diminish or prohibit access to them on their ancestral lands. Further, for those living in the former ranges of the bear, a central wish was for the grizzly to be restored to their surrounding environment so both it and they could feel whole again. Though most participants did not want to encounter a grizzly, many believed they would be happier if the possibility existed to see one from a distance, or if they simply knew they were "out there," signifying the importance of access to emotional well-being (Sultana, 2011, 2015). This was especially salient for some living in areas where bears once roamed, including the Bear Clan members. As one Bear Clan member who lived in the former ranges of the grizzly and described multiple encounters with grizzlies during time spent abroad working at Yellowstone National Park

explained, each encounter was special to him, and each one was a moment that made him feel joy. In each encounter, he felt that he was spared an attack because the bear sensed his positive intentions towards it and towards the environment in general. Others who never had direct experiences with grizzlies felt their presence or absence, too, and interviewees who live in the bear's former ranges expressed feeling a great sense of loss for the grizzly. Several reported that despite never having live alongside the grizzly, it felt like something was missing from their lives and landscapes because they knew their ancestors had coexisted with the bears. Though several participants focused on the grizzly, wildlife in general were a fundamental component of their ancestral lands and participants explained that they were critical to the health of those lands and to the health of themselves.

Animals in general, especially when you look at, you know, the creation of life, they have important meanings. You know, the Native Americans, our people, see them as, as representatives of nature, of our own well-being, you know? They have innate value in our culture and ways.

The quote above demonstrates the importance of animals not only to the cultures of most participants, but to their material well-being. All species of wildlife were believed to be critical and irreplaceable components of a healthy environment, and many participants believed their own personal wellness was dependent upon the wellness of their environment. As noted earlier, for some, just knowing that certain species of wildlife still existed was a comfort to them, and it made them feel happy and hopeful to think about wildlife being nearby. These sentiments are central to how conservation decisions can produce negative emotional consequences (Sultana,

2011, 2015), as participants believed their own health was connected to their surrounding ecosystems. Disruptions in an ecosystem's wildlife populations, like delisting the grizzly and allowing it to be hunted, was viewed as a diminishment of ecosystem health, and, thus, as the diminishment of their own health. Interviewees found prospects like this worrisome. With the participants' perceptions of their cultures and lives at stake when decisions like the delisting are made, there was an abundance of frustration stemming from the belief that their environmental values and ethics were often at odds with those of the states'.

### **Conservation Ethics, Environmental Values, Trophy Hunting, and State Motivations**

We butt heads with the state almost on every issue: religion, natural resources, and, and that's proven by the fact that we were the, we were the leaders. We had to be. Especially in regard to suing mining companies and stuff like that when they started to destroy the environment. And so, but the, but our environment, the way we looked at it was 'this is really critical. This is where we live, this is our lives, this is what we do.' And um, you know, our leaders have echoed that for since, since I can remember. And so, so it's, it's been a consistent message sent down to us since time immemorial that this is, this is our land and we're the caretakers of this land. Where that message started... I have to assume it's from the Creator, you know? All I know is it's been passed down to us forever, so.

For many interviewees, environmental stewardship had been woven into the fabric of their cultures not only from the values espoused by their elders and ancestors, but out of necessity. Because of this, conservation was an emotional topic for many due to its implications for life and death, as demonstrated by the latter quote above and past research (Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Sultana, 2011, Ojeda, 2012). The Coeur d'Alene, like most other participants

felt they had an unshakable duty to conservation, and as demonstrated by the latter quote above, decisions made concerning the environment were perceived as life or death. It also demonstrates that participants have frequently had to take matters of conservation into their own hands when the state ignores them, and they have often had to fight back against state decisions just to maintain safe access to their environmental and cultural resources. For the majority of those interviewed, the goal of species conservation, grizzly or otherwise, was not to recover one area or another, but for the total reoccupation of a species. Most believed a species can be considered recovered once it is at or close-to pre-European levels and can regulate itself, making the grizzly recovery goals set by the USFWS inconsistent with their own beliefs and partially explaining how their values are underrepresented. For many of those interviewed, the grizzly delisting was a road block to any hope they had about the grizzly reclaiming their old territory and living alongside them. As one interviewee explained, why would any effort be made to expand the population if they were delisted and considered recovered? For those in the Coeur d'Alene tribe, this was especially relevant, as they said there were occasionally reports of grizzlies wandering through the nearby Bitterroot Mountains. They felt the delisting was sure to diminish their chance to have them back, a thought that was attended by feelings of sadness and grief for some of them. Further, many believed the delisting would lead to the eradication of the grizzly in the United States altogether.

Um, they think they belong only in a museum. Put them in museum so people can come look at them, and stuff them up and put them in a museum, so they can say 'this is what it used to be like. This is what our religious icon used to be like,' but he's not breathing, he's not, he's not reproducing, he's not contributing to ecology. And then it just becomes kind

of artificial. We're all supposed to try: our population, mankind, plants, animals, wildlife, we're all supposed to increase. That's what, this is what we pray for in our prayer songs. So, it would be very devastating if they do delist them.

Since the delisting would allow individual states to manage the grizzly and hunting was to be part of the states' management plan, all participants feared the prospect of the grizzly being opened to trophy or sport hunting, as the quote above eludes to, and some expressed anger when discussing the possibility. According to a representative of the Eastern Shoshone, who live in the current range of the grizzly, the delisting, along with the potential for hunting, was an urgent matter because it represented yet another threat to their sovereignty, to their right to enjoy their grizzlies and their lands as they are, and to their right to freely practice their spirituality. This is indicative of the broader effects and emotional sentiments of underrepresentation for indigenous peoples around the world (Braun, 2002). For them, any disturbance to grizzlies meant these access rights would be eroded. More broadly, all interviewees described themselves as opposed to the trophy hunting of the grizzly, and most reported being opposed to sport or trophy hunting in general. When participants spoke about hunting, the theme of morality emerged. All who spoke on it believed hunting required a certain set of ethics, and that animals should be taken to satisfy only base needs. One participant specifically mentioned she did not understand the hunting of predators at all, and participants frequently mentioned that Native Americans typically do not hunt bears for any reason, especially the grizzly. Participants believed the only purpose of hunting grizzlies would be to take trophies, to clear obstacles for industry, and to remove threats from ranching and livestock operations, suggesting that decision-makers are more concerned with the interests of the dominant colonial class (Braun, 2002; Stoffle and Evans,

1990; Suagee, 1982). This preference also suggests that indigenous underrepresentation in these types of decisions is purposeful, racist, and disrespectful (Bixler, 2013; Fraser, 1997). As the quotes below demonstrate, participants believed that other interests were more valuable than those of Native Americans.

It's greed. And the underlying reason, I think, about the, using the increasing numbers, is so they can get into their environment, start drilling, start mining, get to the water, things like that. So that corporations can profit from it. And that's the underlying reason.

I am basically, it's whoever is squeaking the loudest, that's what they're going to end up managing by. So, there's no real principle involved there other than, you know, who's crying, crying around the loudest. That seems to be the, the way that states manage, and I don't have any respect for that, so.

Their sole intent is to, um, destroy the habitat by mining, extraction, you know, grazing, but that's their, that's their motive, right? They try to mask it by other things like saying the population has grown sufficiently, let's go ahead and start destroying their ecosystem. What happens, what's going to happen when that remaining, whatever the number they said it was supposed to be, when they reduce the population to that, to that size, what's going to be the future of that population? They're probably going to diminish and eventually die away because they, because they, because it affected the, the, the land that they live on.

Though participants stated the official reason the bear was removed from the ESA had to do with their increasing numbers in the area, they also opined that money or greed were the actual motives behind the grizzly delisting. Some believed that politicians would benefit by appeasing powerful ranching lobbies. Though empathy was expressed for ranchers or livestock farmers who lived alongside predators, interviewees believed that they were aware of the threat from predators when they chose to set up their operations in predator country, so any losses suffered could not be blamed on wildlife. Further, the delisting was seen as an attempt by politicians to remove protections from grizzly habitat so that the extractive industries they were beholden to would have access to once off-limit resources such as oil, gas, minerals, timber, and water. These beliefs align with conclusions from past research positing that a state will favor economic and market concerns over the environment or those who directly depend on the environment for physical, spiritual, and cultural nourishment (Jackson and Langton, 2012; London, 2016; McCarthy, 2009; Robbins, 2012). According to most participants, wildlife had a right to exist wherever they were, especially because they were undoubtedly there first.

### **Ignored Values and Desires**

I think, I think that, yeah, I mean this is typical. The typical federal government, they have already predetermined what they want to do, what their plans are, what their motives are. They just go through the motions. In fact, they did not consult with us. We asked specifically for full and meaningful consultation. They said, you know, 'okay we'll do it,' then they don't do it, right? You know, that Zinke is lying, blatantly lying that he consulted with the tribes, and that's reflective of what he did with the Bears Ears National Monument, and I was involved in that one too. But, but um, uh, they, they just, they, they only just set their, uh, their, their motives and then put it in the, they say 'we've got to

check that box there that says the tribes were consulted,' and they say 'yes, we did it.' You know, one thing about that is, they say 'okay, we're going to consult with you,' and I remember that, that meeting in DC with them, and their solution to consultation was a series of webinars, and we said, 'that is not consultation, this is one-way communication.' We needed them to come to the table with a blank sheet of paper and say 'okay let's start.' Instead they come in with volumes of things that they've already done without consulting with us. And I still think, you know, managing the species, managing our natural resources along with the federal government as co-managers is probably a better way to do things than just, you know, because then we would, we would, we would realize that there's a, whatever the numbers are, that there's a better way to manage things than what they want to do. Just tear up the land, that's what they want to do. So, we offered the same thing with the Bears Ears land. We offered to do a co-management of the resource. They don't, they don't listen.

I'm sure that what went into it are the ranchers' concerns and stuff. Um, nothing much more than that. No idea and concept of, hey, let's listen to those people that want them to reach the Bitterroots.

Only one participant had been directly consulted about the grizzly delisting. This participant traveled to a meeting in Washington, D.C. centered around the delisting issue to speak about the importance of the grizzly to himself, his tribe, and his clan. However, after making the trek to D.C. all the way from Arizona, he found that the "meaningful consultation" the USDOJ promised him and others in attendance was actually just a series of webinars aimed at

disseminating information to tribal people about the research and actions the USDOJ had already initiated or completed without consulting them. According to the participant in attendance, they were all let down and disappointed by the meeting. Other participants familiar with the federal government's tribal consultation practices described it as "checking a box," explaining that the federal government's definition of meaningful consultation was entirely different from their own. According to several participants, the process usually involves a letter being sent to them notifying them that a change will be occurring or that a decision has been made regarding an issue. There is no real avenue for tribal input and no opportunity for a conversation to happen in response to a decision. Some said they had never been meaningfully consulted with on any issue, and it subsequently led them to believe that those making decisions had no clue as to what their values were to begin with.

No one involved in this project believed their personal values were represented in the delisting decision, and many stated that they did not believe the values of their family, friends, communities, or tribes at-large were represented. Most said they did not believe the federal government cared about them or their values, culture, or spiritual beliefs, and participants generally believed the federal government was more interested in appeasing powerful groups like ranching and protecting the interests of capital than working with them to protect natural resources. Instead, many pointed to how their tribes have had to fight many environmental decisions made by the federal government in court in hopes of reprieve for their tribes and their natural resources. Past research suggests acts of non-consultation like participants described is meant to erase indigenous voices from the decision-making process and the political process more broadly (Braun, 2002; Perreault, 2001). Scholars suggest that the erasure of indigenous peoples from the political process, and their subsequent underrepresentation, ultimately leads to

the erasure of indigenous epistemologies altogether (Robbins, 2012; Stapp and Longnecker, 1998).

The fact that many tribes traveled to Washington for the meeting mentioned above signals their desire to work with the federal government to protect what is important to them. The desire to work with the federal government on environmental issues was a common theme throughout the interviews. Several participants believed that working together would yield immense and positive changes for wildlife and the environment in general. Though only a few participants mentioned it, there was also a sentiment that because the tribes occupied the land well before Europeans, and because their spiritual practices and cultures were so heavily centered around the ecosystems in which they lived, they have an inalienable right to be involved in decision-making processes like the grizzly delisting.

### **Conclusion**

The USFWS' and USDO's decision to remove the GYE grizzly bear from the ESA was shown to have significant emotional effects on Native Americans interviewed for this project. Participants reported being saddened and frustrated by the decision, and believed the delisting was symbolic of the current and historic underrepresentation of indigenous voices and values in conservation decision-making; none believed their cultural values were represented in the decision. The grizzly was a critical figure to diverse aspects of participants' lives, such as their sacred cultural and creation stories, religion and spirituality, medicinal practices, and their connection to their ancestral lands. This was the case for those living both inside and out of current grizzly habitat, lending evidence to the suggestion that the transboundary nature of many cultural resources, especially wildlife, is critical for future works analyzing the social components of both cultural resources and conservation decisions involving cultural resources.

Further, it demonstrates that cultural resources for many do, in fact, transcend the boundaries of space and time, and that emotional connections can be made to cultural resources in places where a resource has never existed through cultural practices similar to those in areas where it does exist or did exist. Because of this, the emotional impacts of a decision can proliferate outwards from an area subjected to a decision involving cultural resources. Lastly, this project contributes to the theoretical bodies of both emotional geography and emotional political ecology in demonstrating that there are indeed emotional effects wrought from changes in access to resources, and that these consequences can stem from the cultural, spiritual, and spatial values associated with or prescribed to resources by the peoples these decisions affect.

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