

*Puha Po* to Kavaicuwac: a Southern Paiute Pilgrimage  
in Southern Utah

Kathleen Van Vlack



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● **Kathleen Van Vlack**  
Living Heritage Anthropology  
Kvanvlack82@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

For many cultural groups around the world the act of pilgrimage serves as a ceremonial way of acquiring knowledge and enlightenment. For the Southern Paiutes of the American Southwest, since time immemorial the religious have used the act of pilgrimage for the purpose of gaining knowledge. Some Southern Paiute religious leaders would travel to a place known as Milk Mountain or Kavaicuwac, a large volcanic peak that rises above large Navajo sandstone ridges in South-eastern Utah. The pilgrimage to Kavaicuwac involves visiting and interacting with a series of places along the 30-mile trail. In order to conduct ceremonies at Kavaicuwac, pilgrims, or *Puhahivats*, followed a trail that started near their home communities and ended at the top of Kavaicuwac. This analysis provides a discussion of places visited during the pilgrimage and ways in which the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians have taken steps to protect and preserve this trail for future generations of Southern Paiute people.

## Keywords

Southern Paiute, pilgrimage, cultural landscapes, Native Americans, Kavaicuwac, Kaibab, *puha*, *puha po*, *puhahivat*, *puha'gant*, American Indian Sacred Site, heritage trail, Utah

Understanding how pilgrimages and associated performances manifest themselves physically leads to interesting questions about how places and people are connected and how trail systems manifest themselves across a landscape. For those who have an interest in heritage conservation, identifying pilgrimage trails and their performance characteristics present unique challenges in preservation planning and environmental impact assessments. This issue is prevalent in the American South-west. Milk Mountain, known as Kavaicuwac in Southern Paiute, is a large mountain that is located in the southern portion of the Grand Staircase-

Escalante National Mountain in southern Utah. The pilgrimage to Kavaicuwac involves visiting and interacting with a series of places along the 30-mile trail which has been used by Southern Paiute *Puha'gants* since time immemorial.

Traditionally, Southern Paiute pilgrimages were unique ceremonial and ritual activities occurring outside the normal bounds of worship and were not done as part of a daily habitual cultural activity, like prayers said every morning to greet the sun. In Southern Paiute society, only a select group of shamans or *Puha'gants* made pilgrimages,

and they travelled on behalf of the entire community as well as for themselves. Those who went on these journeys were medicine men or medicine men in training. Due to the great physical and spiritual risks involved, these spiritual journeys were not intended for everyone. While ceremonial activities such as ritual cleansing and daily prayers occurred in a pilgrim's home community, most of the rituals associated with pilgrimage took place far away from their daily living space in very controlled settings along the trails.

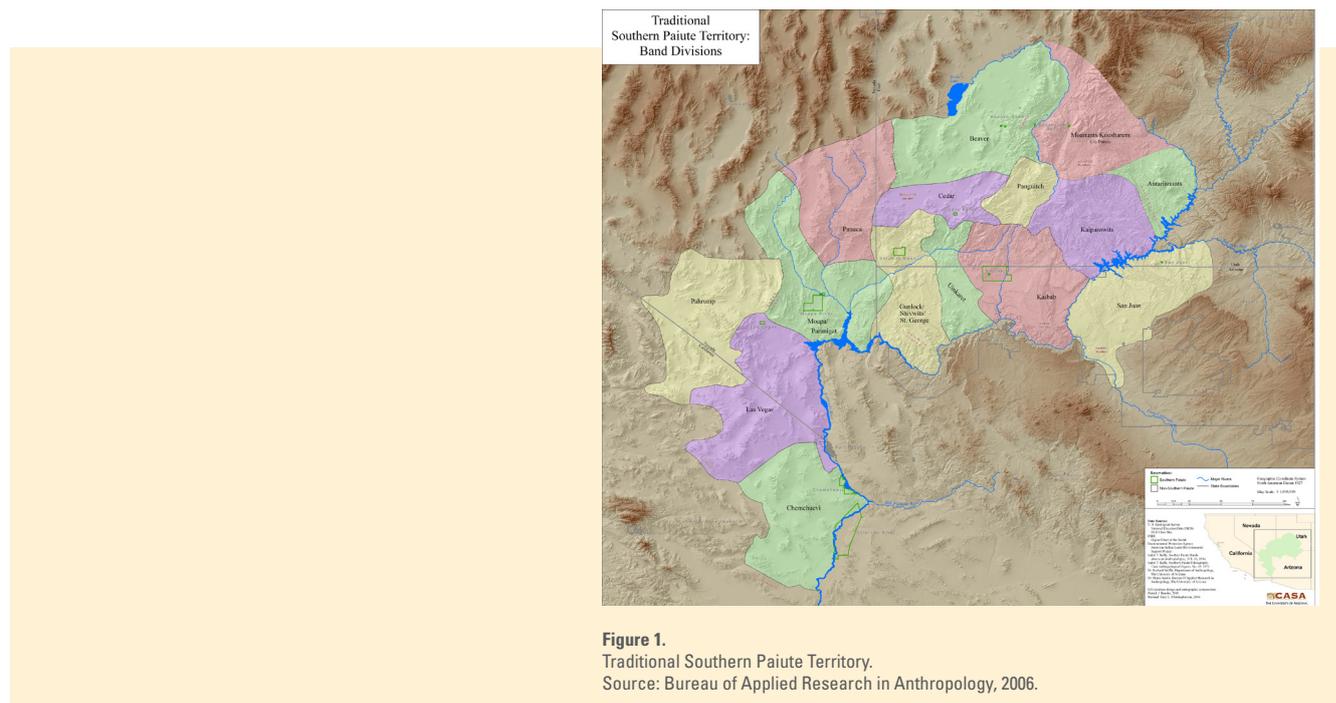
Southern Paiute people stipulate that when Paiute *Puha'gants* sought *Puha* (an energy force found in all elements of the universe) and knowledge, the people-to-people interactions were not the only important part of the pilgrimage. People-to-place and people-to-object interactions also were equally important and necessary to make the pilgrimage complete. This analysis focuses on one pilgrimage trail located in present day Utah to a mountain known as Kavaicuwac.

It is important to note that due to having lost control of 99% of their traditional territory (Figure 1), Southern Paiute people have not been able to engage in pilgrimage as they once did, prior to colonisation and encroachment. It is important to note that due to a near total loss of their traditional territory, Southern Paiute people have not been able to engage in pilgrimage as they did prior to colonisation and encroachment. Despite this, the Southern Paiute still possess a deep cultural understanding about pilgrimage

ceremonies, places, and relationships. Southern Paiute people believe that pilgrimage places and the offerings left behind contain the prayers forever and they continue to send their *Puha* across the landscape long after the pilgrim has finished his or her pilgrimage. This forever links, people, places, and ceremonial objects together to Southern Paiute history and cultural memory. The Southern Paiute tribes have, and continue to develop new and innovative ways to pass on cultural knowledge through programmes such as language classes, cultural camps, and other interactive education programmes. These programmes serve as an important means to help the young people reconnect to, and learn about ceremonial places throughout their traditional homeland.

### Southern Paiute epistemology - *Puha*

To understand the Southern Paiute perspective on heritage management and how places and resources are ascribed meaning, it is essential to examine Southern Paiute epistemology. Christopher Tilley explains that people are immersed in a world of places where they aim to understand and preserve those places as recorders of human experiences. These experiences are constructed in movement, historic memory, encounter and association (Tilley: 1994, p.15). Cultural narratives that link people to places are at the core of ontological and epistemological understandings, historic memory and traditional ecological knowledge. For Southern Paiutes, places retain memories of human interactions in the same manner that



**Figure 1.**  
Traditional Southern Paiute Territory.  
Source: Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, 2006.

people retain memories of places and their associated interactions. The memories held by both places and people influence how socio-ecological interactions take place.

As explained by Liljeblad (1986: 643-644), to the Southern Paiutes, *Puha* is everywhere and is *a source of individual competence, mental and physical ability, health, and success*. This concept is common amongst many different tribes living throughout the western United States such as the Ute, Western Shoshone, Owens Valley Paiutes, Northern Paiute, Mojave, Hualapai, and Havasupai. *Puha* is a fundamental principle of their epistemologies as well.

*Puha* is derived from Creation and permeates the universe, which resembles a spider web. Sometimes it is like a thin scattering; at other times, it occurs where there are clusters of life in definite concentrations. *Puha* exists throughout the universe but varies in intensity from person-to-person, place-to-place, element-to-element, and object-to-object, similar to how strength differs among humans. *Puha* can also vary in what it can be used for and it determines the tasks certain elements (air, water, rocks, plants, animals) can perform or accomplish. *Puha* is networked; it connects, disconnects, and reconnects elements in different ways. This occurs because of the will of the elements that have the power. *Puha* is present in, and can move between the three levels of the universe (Stoffle et al. 2001).

*Puha* mimics the movement of water in a watershed, it flows from the point of creation to every corner of traditional Southern Paiute territory. When *Puha* is dispersed, it clusters in certain types of places such as narrow and constricted areas, stone water tanks, mountain peaks, caves, and at the point of convergence of hydrological systems. *Puha* also is found in places associated with volcanic activity, such as hot springs, basalt lava flows, and volcanic mountains (Stoffle et al.: 2015).

The Southern Paiute people's belief in a living universe and the notion that everything has *Puha* shapes how they engage with the landscape and how they approach the act of pilgrimage. In Southern Paiute culture, pilgrimage has always focused on the acquisition of *Puha*, the spiritual transformation of *Puha'gants*, and building relationships and communities.

The act of pilgrimage, the associated cultural landscape, and a person's actions are linked together

as part of the ritual performance. These linkages are intentionally directed towards the transformation of that person or pilgrim and the world around him or her (Turner: 1969). Each ritual that takes place along a pilgrimage trail is understood as a performative and transformative act, aimed at communicating and enacting a greater truth (Tuan: 1997). Archaeologist William Walker (1995, 1999) adds that ritual involves a given action or a sequence of actions designed to achieve an observable or measurable transformation that will have a lasting effect. Pilgrims perform such rituals in special and powerful places. Sequential prayers, songs and activities must be performed at specific places and times along the pilgrimage trail in order for the pilgrims to be properly prepared to reach their destination. Pilgrimage destinations, or ceremonial points en route, are powerful areas that only privileged individuals are allowed to visit and use.

Morinis and Crumrine (1991, p.8) describe pilgrimage destinations as physically and socially separate from the pilgrims' homes – *the sacred place participates in the sacred/profane opposition by representing the sacred within the profane sphere*.

For the Southern Paiutes, places found throughout their traditional homelands are connected through songs, oral history, human relations, ceremony, and both physical and spiritual trails. These connections create synergistic relationships between people, places, and objects. During pilgrimage, *Puha'gants* knew that places and objects were key actors in the ritual process due to their levels of *Puha*, so *Puha'gants* needed be attentive and respectful of the places they visited and of the objects they used. The ways these relationships were negotiated through prayers and offerings, affected the long-term success of the pilgrimage, and the ceremonies performed by those with the newly acquired *Puha*. Places and objects knew that the long-term outcomes of a successful pilgrimage would ultimately benefit them and the people who used them. These synergistic relationships caused the formation of deep spiritual connections and bonds which were required in order to keep the world in a balanced state (Van Vlack: 2012b).

## **Kavaicuwac Pilgrimage Trail in its ethnographic context**

Kavaicuwac is a large mountain located in the southern portion of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Mountain in southern Utah. This mountain is a

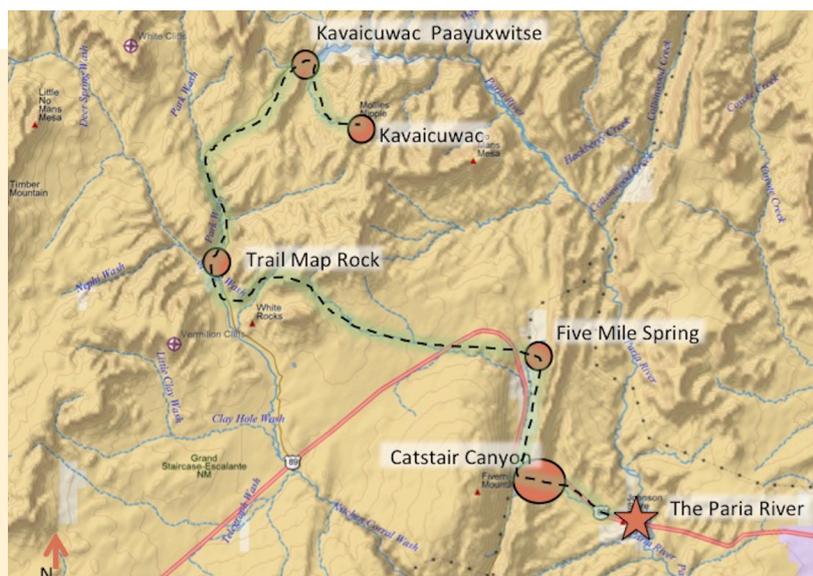
volcanic peak that rises above large Navajo sandstone ridges. Kavaicuwac is visible from a great distance, which contributes to its overall cultural importance to Southern Paiute people. According to Southern Paiute tribal representatives, Kavaicuwac has always been a destination for those seeking *Puha* and knowledge. In order to conduct ceremonies at Kavaicuwac, pilgrims, or *Puhahivats*, followed a trail that started near their home communities and ended at the summit of the mountain. For the purposes of this essay, this analysis focuses on the trail that begins along the Paria River and heads west then north to Kavaicuwac, and on the associated performances that the *Puhahivats* participated in during their journeys.

Kavaicuwac is a Southern Paiute word that means 'Mountain Breathing' or 'Mountain's Breath'. At the request of the Southern Paiute representatives and the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians' Tribal Council, appropriate Southern Paiute terms are used in this essay whenever possible, especially when the discussion deals with pilgrimage trails and sacred places. They believe that Southern Paiute names properly reflect the cultural significance of a place and landscape, and protect the integrity of these areas from people who could cause damage to cultural resources associated with these locations. In this case, the name Kavaicuwac emphasises the idea of mountains as living entities in Southern Paiute culture. The mountain is alive and it breathes.

The Southern Paiute pilgrimage trail or *Puha Po* to Kavaicuwac is located within the Kaibab District of the Southern Paiute Nation (see Figure 2) and situated in the Five Mile Valley-Telegraph Flat hydrological system. This hydrological system starts in the high peaks and mesas of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Kavaicuwac is one of the predominant features in the area which attracts rain and snow. Water flows from Kavaicuwac into Telegraph Flat and Five Mile Valley before moving southward into House Rock Valley and ultimately into the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River. As noted previously, the flow of water and the interconnectedness of water and *Puha* are important foundations of Southern Paiute epistemology.

### Following the Kavaicuwac, *Puha Po* and place analysis

The pilgrimage to Kavaicuwac involves visiting and interacting with a series of places along this trail. Southern Paiute pilgrimage trails, *Puha Pos*, include pilgrims engaging with physical places and intangible elements of the universe such as spirit helpers, portals into the spiritual realm, and the presence of *Puha*. This particular pilgrimage begins in Southern Paiute communities along the Paria River and passes through Catstair Canyon before crossing over the Cockscomb into Five Mile Valley and turning north towards the mountain. Each place and



**Figure 2**  
Map of the trail to Kavaicuwac.  
Source: Delorme and K. Van Vlack December 2017.

associated segment of the trail were of critical importance for the successful completion of the pilgrimage ceremony, with each offering the *Puhahivats* knowledge and materials they needed to reach their destination.

## **Home communities along the Paria River**

*Puhahivats* began preparing for their ceremonial journey to Kavaicuwac in their home communities. While people from surrounding Southern Paiute districts and communities probably visited Kavaicuwac, this analysis focuses on agricultural communities in the Kaibab District, particularly those along the Paria River.

Tribal oral histories, explorers' accounts, and contemporary ethnographic reports have long documented the Paria River as a major Southern Paiute agricultural area. Since the late 1700s, explorers and settlers have noted the Southern Paiute use of the river system. For example, in 1776 Fathers Dominguez, Escalante and their party travelled along portions of the Paria River as they returned to Santa Fe having failed to find a suitable route to California. In his diary Dominguez described an encounter he had with a Southern Paiute *Puha'gant* (medicine man or shaman) in one of the Paria River communities. Dominguez noted that one of their expedition members had fallen gravely ill and they turned to this *Puha'gant* for help. The *Puha'gant* sang over the sick Spaniard all night in an attempt to cure him (Euler: 1966, p.111). This account is important because not only did the Spaniard live, but it also documents the fact that Southern Paiute people had communities in this area and that these communities had *Puha'gants* who had knowledge and healing powers.

Anthropologist Isabel T. Kelly documented fourteen villages in the Paria River region during her ethnographic survey in the 1930s (Kelly: 1971, pp.18-20). She noted that Southern Paiute farmers grew a variety of crops such as corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and amaranth. They inter-planted these crops to protect the soil from becoming nutrient poor. Wild plants also grew near the fields; some of these plants were used for medicine, food and building. These farming villages were stable, permanent communities that provided necessary support for the *Puhahivats* on the pilgrimage trail. According to some Southern Paiute elders, *Puhahivats* and *Puha'gants* in general served their communities, districts, and the entire Southern Paiute Nation, and they understood that their spiritual tasks had a wider social and cultural meaning.

They were given this ability by the Creator to aid the Southern Paiute people by keeping the world in balance, healing the sick, and calling upon natural elements like the rain, all for the betterment of the Southern Paiute way of life. During interviews, Southern Paiute representatives said that the support the *Puha'gants* received from community and family members helped them during their journey to their destination, because everyone prayed for the *Puha'gants'* safe return. Additionally, community members knew that a successful pilgrimage brought with it the knowledge needed to deal with any imbalances or impurities that existed in their communities. The *Puhahivats* began their preparations for their journey in their home communities. This often included some form of ritual purification, with *Puhahivats* participating in a ceremonial sweat or other type of ritual purification prior to departure.

## **Tumpituxwinap - Catstair Canyon**

Once their ritual purification was complete, the *Puhahivats* left their communities for Kavaicuwac. They travelled approximately four miles from the river to Catstair Canyon, the first identified stopping point along the trail. Southern Paiute representatives believed that this site was an important place due to the presence of powerful symbols and cultural features. A representative commented on the resources found at this site and how this place was connected to others along the trail and throughout the region:

*The markings and the grinding stone in addition to the plants in that area led to the conclusion that it is used as a medicine place and therefore sacred. It appears to have a connection to the rock formation to the northwest of the trail. I have come to this conclusion because in the journey for honouring a sacred place, water would be used as an offering and if a person had water from the Colorado River and the Paria River it could be seen as seeking power for particular ceremonies or great healing. (Van Vlack: 2012a, pp.127-128)*

The entrance to Catstair Canyon is a narrow opening in the Cockscomb Ridge which allows *Puha* to collect and attracts powerful elements such as medicine plants and *tumpituxwinap* (the Southern Paiute term for rock art) (Plate 1). Because the canyon is so close to the Paria River communities, it represents an entrance into the spiritual state. As the *Puhahivats* entered the site they would have encountered a steady stream flowing through the

canyon towards the Paria River. Water is attracted to *Puha* places and powerful elements such as *tumpituxwinap*, plants, and offerings are attracted to the water. Once inside the canyon, the *Puhahivats* interacted with these elements that are located along the southern wall. One representative added (Van Vlack: 2012a, p.128):

The *tumpituxwinap* panel tells a story about Paiute travel and gives directions to travel. It shows a water baby and red and yellow painted *tumpituxwinap*. Look at the surrounding area. Take in the beauty around the area. Breathe the air. It is a power source only to Paiutes and all who want peacefulness. Sacred plants are at this area too.

Some images have been carved or chiseled into the rock while others have been painted in red, yellow, and white ochres. The method in which the images were placed on the canyon wall does not suggest one technique is more culturally valuable than the other; instead, the two methods demonstrate long-term use of the place by Southern Paiute *Puha'gants*. The painted figures were added to the canyon wall more recently. While carved images can last for thousands of years, painted figures are more susceptible to weathering and therefore have a shorter lifespan. Since a paint or mineral source has not been identified along the trail, it is likely that the *Puhahivats* gathered paints at other places and brought them with them. Such paints are found throughout this portion of traditional Southern Paiute territory at places like Kanab Creek and the Grand Canyon.

The images placed on the canyon are symbols associated with *Puha* and its acquisition. Southern Paiute representatives identified a number of 'water babies' along the canyon wall; some were carved and others were painted in red ochre (Plate 2). Water babies are spirit helpers who live in water sources (springs, rivers, creeks, etc.) and are extremely powerful *Puha'gants* called upon them to assist in ceremonies. In times of extreme drought, water babies were called upon during rain-making ceremonies. Water babies are so extremely dangerous that most Southern Paiute people learn to avoid them and treat them with respect. Special *Puha'gants* interacted with water babies in ceremonies because they had the ability to take on that high level of power and use it properly. Mountain sheep carvings are also present. *Puha'gants* frequently use mountain sheep in ceremonies as spirit helpers, and mountain sheep carvings are indicative of several kinds of ceremonial activity. It was common for mountain sheep spirit helpers to be acquired during a pilgrimage. They helped the *Puhahivats* in acquiring *Puha* along a trail and during the ceremonies performed, once the pilgrims reached their destinations. Tribal representatives identified 'Ocean Woman's net' in one of the panels. This image links Catstair Canyon to Southern Paiute Creation and to the Southern Paiute song trail to the afterlife.

Located below the *tumpituxwinap* are a series of grinding slicks and traditional use plants. The *Puhahivats* used the grinding slicks to prepare paints and medicines to be used during ritual activities at Catstair Canyon. It is possible that they then took the prepared medicines to other places along the trail.



**Plate 1**  
The Entrance to Catstair Canyon.  
Photo: K. Van Vlack, September 2010.



**Plate 2**  
Water Babies found at Catstair Canyon.  
Photo: K. Van Vlack, May 2009.

## Upper Catstair Canyon

After visiting the *tumpituxwinap* at the entrance to Catstair Canyon, the *Puhahivats* travelled through it to reach Five Mile Valley. High rock walls bound the narrow canyon and as one moves from east to west, it gains in elevation before descending into the neighbouring valley. Prior to the construction of Highway 89, the route through Catstair Canyon was the logical choice for crossing the Cockscomb Ridge which is a large sandstone ridge that extends south from the Vermillion Cliffs.

Narrow canyons and constricted spaces such as Upper Catstair Canyon influence how *Puha* and other natural elements move and collect in specific places throughout the canyon. Water flows from the upper portion of the canyon to the entrance and towards the Paria River, linking these places together. *Puhahivats* pass through this narrow space because the canyon is a place where *Puha* converges and collects. The *Puhahivats* interacted with the canyon by saying prayers and leaving offerings as part of their preparation to reach Kavaicuwac. As the *Puhahivats* travelled along the trail, they formed a relationship with the place. The canyon became, in a sense, a partner in the ceremony because the canyon amplified their prayers and provided the pilgrims with *Puha*, not only from the feature itself, but also from the memories of previous pilgrimages.

## Five Mile Spring

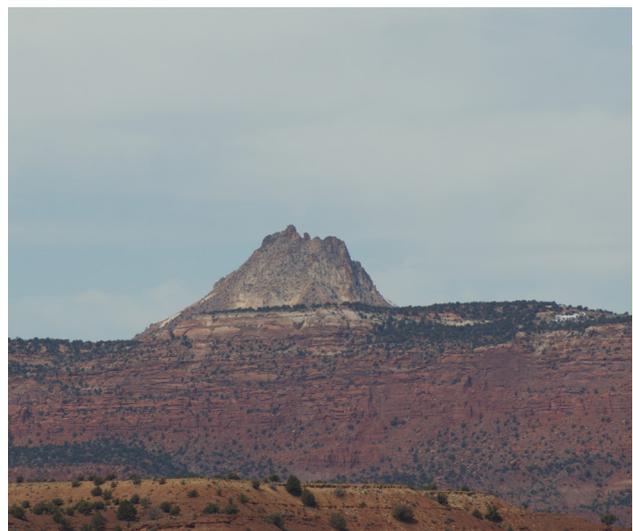
After travelling roughly 3.8 miles from Upper Catstair Canyon, the *Puhahivats* reached Five Mile Spring. It is located at the north end of Five Mile Valley just west of the Cockscomb, and south-east of Kavaicuwac. During a recent ethnographic study, Southern Paiute tribal representatives requested that time be spent examining this site because they believe it was one of the areas visited by those on pilgrimage to Kavaicuwac. The spring was the first permanent water source located along the trail after the *Puhahivats* left the Paria River.

The area around the spring contained evidence of traditional use including a large deposit of archaeological materials. The majority of the artifacts found at the site were located atop a one hundred foot tall sand dune, located west of the spring. The presence of artifacts on top of the dune is directly linked to the unobstructed view of the top of Kavaicuwac. Southern Paiute people stated that one can always find archaeological materials that were

deposited as offerings at places where *Puhahivats* would have unobstructed views of their destination. (Plate 3).

When the *Puhahivats* saw the destination for the first time it marked a significant moment in the pilgrimage journey as they had their first chance to interact directly with the mountain. They talked, sang, and prayed to the mountain, letting it know the purpose of their visit. During previous Southern Paiute ethnographic studies it was common to find sites similar to Five Mile Spring along pilgrimage routes. These sites often contained a large number of lithics scattered among pieces of pottery, unique and rare stones, crystals, grinding stones, and glass beads (Carroll et al.: 2006; Stoffle et al.: 2009). The materials found at these first sighting places were not left accidentally, but were placed there on purpose as gifts to the site and to the pilgrimage destination, as was evident at Five Mile Spring (Plate 4).

The *Puhahivats* also collected water that could be used for future offerings along the trail. After activities at the spring were complete, the *Puhahivats* travelled west across Telegraph Flat, towards the Grandmother Tree and Kitchen Corral Wash, and then northward toward Trail Map Rock before turning towards Kavaicuwac. From Five Mile Spring, Southern Paiute representatives believe that the trail follows the natural flow of water and traverses the side canyons and washes.



**Plate 3**  
The pilgrims' first view of Kavaicuwac.  
Photo: K. Van Vlack, March 2010.

## Trail Map Rock

After interacting with Five Mile Spring and its surrounding area, the *Puhahivats* travelled approximately 10 miles across Telegraph Flat and northward up Kitchen Corral Wash. The next place they visited along the *Puha Po* was Trail Map Rock which is located to the south-west of Kavaicuwac, near the junction of the Park and Kitchen Corral Washes. This site contains numerous cultural resources that were important for ceremonials associated with the pilgrimage.

Trail Map Rock is a twenty-five-foot tall sandstone boulder with one large panel of incised images found on its western face. According to tribal representatives, this *tumpituxwinap* represents a map showing the *Puha Po* to Kavaicuwac. One Southern Paiute representative noted that this place would have served to give directions to Kavaicuwac and as a resting spot before the final portion of their journey. Southern Paiute representatives also explained that this carving with multiple images shows how regional water sources are connected to each other and to the mountain. One representative further explained:

*This site is connected to Five Mile Spring. There are possibly other sites along the way that may not be along the road that Indian people would have used for rest and to orient themselves. There are possibly other markings that are unknown along the trail with site offerings (Van Vlack: 2012a, p.138).*



**Plate 4**  
Offerings found at Five Mile Spring.  
Photo: K. Van Vlack, March 2010.

Numerous medicinal plants, such as the big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and Indian Tea (*Ephedera spp*), are located throughout the valley and immediately surrounding the rock. These plants are important elements in ceremonial activities and are used not only to heal sickness but also for ritual cleansing. Big sagebrush is often used in smudging (using smoke to ward off any spiritual impurities) and Indian tea acts as a diuretic which physically cleanses a person's body.

Evidence at the site suggests that *Puhahivats* prepared medicines while visiting Trail Map Rock. Tribal representatives found two grinding slicks located along the base of the southern edge of Trail Map Rock. They believed these slicks were used for preparing medicines either to be used at Trail Map Rock or later when the *Puhahivats* reached Kavaicuwac.

The narrow opening along the eastern side of Trail Map Rock is another important place. The opening is wide enough to allow a person to enter and reach the centre of the boulder. Once inside, a person's voice is amplified and projected outward and throughout the canyon. The acoustics aided the *Puhahivats* in sending prayers and songs across the landscape.

## Kavaicuwac Paayuxwitse

*Puhahivats* travelled 6.5 miles to the northeast to Kavaicuwac Paayuxwitse (Kavaicuwac Lake). The lake is located approximately 2.07 miles to the north of Kavaicuwac. Southern Paiute representatives believed Kavaicuwac Paayuxwitse was the last place the pilgrims visited before ascending the mountain. The lake is naturally occurring and it flows into Kitchen Canyon. This canyon slopes southeastward towards the Paria River. Kavaicuwac Paayuxwitse is 3.9 miles to the east of Kitchen Corral Wash and about 6.5 miles north-east of Trail Map Rock. The lake sits in Navajo sandstone, which is known for being white, pink and brown in colour, and is common throughout the Grand Staircase area. This type of sandstone acts as a natural water filtration and storage system. Kavaicuwac Paayuxwitse is the only naturally occurring lake in the Grand Staircase and in this part of the Southern Paiute homeland. Due to the presence of water and its location at the north end of Kavaicuwac, this place is a powerful location that would have been part of pilgrimage activities.

Near the lake, the *Puhahivats* established a ceremonial support camp. The camp would have been far enough removed from the destination that the person going to the mountain had enough privacy to seek *Puha*, but close enough in case the supplicant needed assistance from the more experienced *Puha'gants* in the group. Representatives also noted that the lake shores were home to many important traditional-use plants further linking it to the support camp. Some plants like big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja ssp.*) are known medicinal plants and could have been used by those making the ceremonial journey to Kavaicuwac.

Surrounding the lake are large deposits of alluvial sands that are approximately 60 to 80 feet high. Above at least two of these sand deposits were lithics and pieces of pottery, and they were found at places where a person would have a clear view of Kavaicuwac. For example, along the northern ridge, from the edge of the ridge to about three feet in, pieces of different types of pottery were found. As one moves away from the ridge, the density of pottery lessens. A similar pattern is found along the eastern ridge where instead of a high concentration of pottery, numerous lithics were present. In a similar manner to the pottery, the lithics were only located near

the edge. *Puhahivats* had left these items as offerings to Kavaicuwac.

After the *Puhahivats* deposited the offerings, they asked the mountain for permission to ascend it to seek *Puha*. The mountain would then provide some sort of signal to let them know they were welcomed. Not all of the *Puhahivats* went to the mountain top; some stayed behind in the support camp and began preparing medicines for post-vision questing ceremonies.

### Destination - Kavaicuwac

Kavaicuwac is located to the south of Kavaicuwac Paayuxwitse and is the destination for this *Puha Po* (Plate 5). The mountain is connected to seven other sites that together compose the Kavaicuwac cultural landscape. *Puhahivats* travelled to Kavaicuwac to obtain power and knowledge to be used in various ceremonies (doctoring, rain-making, etc.) and the vision quest lasted for a period of three to four days. From the top of Kavaicuwac, the *Puhahivats* could see for great distances in every direction. The panorama allowed the vision seeker an opportunity to interact with surrounding landscape features in addition to Kavaicuwac.



**Plate 5**  
View of Kavaicuwac with Kavaicuwac Paayuxwitse in the Foreground.  
Photo: K. Van Vlack, October 2010.

From the peak, one could see places such as Mount Trumbull, Navajo Mountain, Bryce Canyon, Kaibab Plateau, and the mountains in present-day Zion National Park. The vision seeker could talk and sing to these mountains and draw upon their *Puha* to help him acquire his power. Once vision questing was completed, the *Puhahivats* would begin the transition needed to return to their home communities by reversing their steps and revisiting places along the route for exit prayers.

## Conclusions: heritage and development

The *Puha Po* to Kavaicuwac currently is under threat from a proposed large-scale development project. Southern Paiute people and their respective tribal governments have been vocal in expressing a deep concern regarding protecting the cultural integrity of both the physical places along the trail and the associated spiritual elements. In the case of the Kavaicuwac *Puha Po* Southern Paiute representatives involved in this research believed that it was necessary to document all aspects of the trail and provide a detailed ethnographic description in order to help understand what is at risk. Southern Paiute people have consistently stated the need to treat this trail as one integrated cultural resource. Questions have arisen as to how to manage and protect this pilgrimage trail in a manner that makes sense both culturally and legally. It is appropriate to conclude this analysis with a discussion about the options available to the Southern Paiute tribes for protecting these trails, places, and resources associated with pilgrimage.

In trying to find a management approach that best matches pilgrimage trails and associated resources, it is necessary to explore and work within the current governmental framework to understand the tribal-federal relationship in regard to cultural resources and making decisions about land management. Because tribes are sovereign entities within the boundaries of the United States, this framework allows the tribes to be powerful voices and active participants in management decisions.

Pilgrimage trails present mitigation and management complexities for land managers, project proponents, and associated tribes. In the case of the pilgrimage trail to Kavaicuwac, places along the trail are linked through ceremonial events associated with vision questing. This connection was only made through conducting on-site ethnographic interviews with Southern Paiute people. The

ethnographic data collected allows tribes and agencies to discuss ways to best protect these resources. For Southern Paiutes, everything is sentient, has agency, and will talk to humans who are prepared to respect and properly use the knowledge. From a Paiute perspective, cultural resources are bound together in broad categories based upon function, interdependency, and proximity rather than physical characteristics. In order to understand a place and the meaning associated with it, interpretation includes what is found at the site and where it is located in reference to other places.

Southern Paiute representatives from the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, and the San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe were proactive in recommending that the trail be nominated as an American Indian Sacred Site under Executive Order 13007. This presidential act allows tribes simply to declare an area on federal land, within their traditional territory, as sacred. Federal land management agencies must accept the declaration and consult with tribes in protecting and managing the area's cultural integrity, and the land managers cannot deny tribal members access to these places. The order was designed for the purposes of protecting and preserving Indian religious practices. It says that federal agencies must *accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners, and avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites. Where appropriate, agencies shall maintain the confidentiality of sacred sites* (EO 13007). The Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians tribal council passed a resolution declaring the Kavaicuwac *Puha Po* a sacred site in 2011. The sacred site declaration has provided the trail with protections that go beyond what is defined in the National Historic Preservation Act and the various laws that protect archaeological resources.

Currently, the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians is exploring ways in which they can add another level of protection to the Kavaicuwac *Puha Po* within the current legal frameworks of the United States. In March 2011, through the recommendation made by tribal representatives who participated in the Southern Paiute ethnographic study for the Lake Powell Pipeline EIS, the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians decided to support nominating this pilgrimage trail to the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property. The participating tribal representatives and the Kaibab tribal government have gone on record numerous times expressing serious concerns regarding

potential impacts to Southern Paiute heritage resources along the proposed pipeline route. If the pipeline were approved, construction would cause irreversible damage. The Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians have taken a stance that they want their heritage places and resources to receive heightened protections in order to maintain their cultural connections and to prevent, or greatly reduce, any potential impacts.

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