

# An exchange of knowledge about the land and way of life between the Apsaalooke and the people of the Darhad Valley of Mongolia

Yellowstone Altai Sayan Project—Montana State University

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## Introduction

Language and culture loss is a growing problem among native tribes in the United States, largely due to globalization and western ideals. Culture loss ensures the loss of connection to the land. Documenting cultural practices that involve components of and relationship to the land, such as water, makes the importance of the relationship between the people and land more apparent. Mongolia and regions of Montana share many similarities, environmentally and with indigenous people's practices. Therefore, Indigenous Research Methodologies and Indigenous sciences were utilized. This research works to connect the importance of ceremony and customs with the land through language and local knowledge.

## Methodologies

Methodologies used in this work include implementation of Indigenous Research methodologies and holistic management approaches. Methods were as applicable in the Darhad Valley as they were at the Crow Nation. The methods included open ended interviews, snowball interviews, and significant time spent in both communities. An important part of this study's success are the ongoing relationships already established in the Darhad Valley through BioRegions International, as well as the ongoing relationships with members of our home communities.



## Objectives

The objectives of this work are:

- 1.) To create a cultural connection between the people of the Darhad Valley and the Apsaalooke Nation by collecting information that can be shared about ceremony or rituals related to water or a parallel substance; and
- 2.) To share knowledge about important water bodies and their significance in a map created for local use in the Darhad Valley, where locals can update it with new and relevant information, and use it as a decision making tool.

## Preliminary Results and Conclusions

Many notable and exceptional similarities exist between Mongolians and the Apsaalooke people. Language loss and declining traditional relationships with the land are apparent among the Crow people, as they are among herders in Mongolia. Sharing the significance of documenting those relationships and traditions with our Mongolian counterparts by telling them about Crow traditions, and inquiring about any similar traditions they had, was revealing. Crow traditions and beliefs surrounding water were mirrored by Mongolian beliefs and practices surrounding milk rather than water.

## Future

The Yellowstone Altai Sayan Project hopes to host more knowledge sharing opportunities and has been invited back for summer 2017 to share the results of research from Summer of 2016, including the map constructed from the collection of the group's research.

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