



SUMMER ADVENTURES

ON THE ROAD

Indigenous Origins



YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

DID YOU KNOW?

Native American tribes roamed and camped in what is now Yellowstone for thousands of years before it became a national park. Ancestors of the Kiowa, Crow, Blackfeet, Shoshone, and Nez Perce, among others, hunted, fished, collected wild plants, quarried volcanic glass, and used the thermal waters in the area. Archeologists have found evidence of the earliest Natives in artifacts such as stone tools and arrow heads, including prehistoric bowls known as Intermountain Ware that indicate the Shoshone lived in the area by approximately 700 years ago. Some archeologists estimate that Native Americans lived here as far back as 11,000 years ago.

By the late 1700s, Native Americans' way of life had changed dramatically, not only in Yellowstone. During this time, fur trappers and hunters entered Yellowstone to trade with the tribes and to hunt for hides. About this time, several tribes started using horses, which gave them a way to travel farther and faster. In 1872 a congressional act established Yellowstone as the first national park. A few years later, in 1877, the Nez Perce fled the U.S. Army through the park. Today, Native Americans actively participate in sustaining the park's environmental integrity and share their stories and knowledge.

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[A Crow Story](#)

Ages 4-8

PG 5

[Star Map](#)

Ages 9+

[Book List](#)



READY TO EXPLORE?



A CROW STORY

ACTIVITY | Ages 4-8

Before Yellowstone became a national park, Native Americans roamed for thousands of years in what is now Yellowstone. The Crow, Nez Perce, and Blackfoot, to name a few, fished and hunted in the area and used its thermal waters for religious and medicinal purposes. Telling stories is one of the ways generations of Native Americans passed on their histories, traditions, and skills. Another way was through drawings, and archeologists have found ancient Native American drawings on cave walls and pottery shards.

TO DO

Listen to an excerpt from *Plenty-coups: Chief of the Crows*, from the Crow tribe. After listening to the story, discuss with a friend or family member what you think the story is about and how it connects to your own life. Then, draw a picture of a scene from the story.

What scene would you like to draw? Here are three suggestions:

- ▶ Traveling to Crazy Mountain
- ▶ The Crow leader's dream about the fierce storm
- ▶ The Crow leader's three friends who helped him stand up



A CROW STORY



STAR MAP

ACTIVITY | 9+

MATERIALS

Device with internet connection
Pencil
Paper
Compass



“Astronomy played an important role in the early Native American cultures; it was even the basis of governance and agricultural practice. The study of stars has also led tribes to theorize about the origin of life in the universe.”

When the night skies are clear in Yellowstone, the stars and planets shine bright. Before there were compasses, Native Americans depended on the stars for direction and tracking time. Also, the stars were central to their legends and origin stories. In this activity, read about archaeoastronomy and learn about why the stars were important to Native American cultures. Then, make a star map of your own.

TO DO

- 1 Read *Native American Astronomy: Skidi Pawnee* and *Astronomy and Mythology in Native American Culture* and take note of the Skidi Pawnee map and how the stars are charted. To learn more, study images of other maps by conducting a search for **Native American constellation maps**.
- 2 Choose a clear night to view the stars. Take a compass, paper, and pencil with you. Using the compass, face north and study the sky. Optional: use [sky maps](#) to help find constellations and planets.
- 3 Chart the brightest stars, star patterns, and those you find interesting. Refer to *The North Star: Polaris* for additional information about star maps.
- 4 Compare your chart to the Skidi Pawnee [map](#) and other Native American maps found in your search. Look for the following on the Skidi Pawnee map and as you study the sky:
 - A ring of stars the Skidi Pawnees called the *Council of the Chiefs*
 - The *Chief Star* or what we call Polaris or North Star today.
- 5 Listen to *Star Stories: The Never-ending Bear Hunt*. Make up your own star story about a star or star cluster on your star map.

Adapted from [Ancient Astronomers - The Skidi Pawnee Star Chart](#) by the National Indian Education Association.

STAR MAP



FULL LINKS

PG 3

<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/plains-belonging-homelands/crow-nation>

PG 5

<https://pages.vassar.edu/realarchaeology/2019/11/24/native-american-astronomy-skidi-pawnee/>

<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-astronomyculture/>

<https://in-the-sky.org/skymap2.php>

<https://www.space.com/15567-north-star-polaris.html>

https://www.windows2universe.org/the_universe/sky_maps.html

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bH2mCcivliQ>