



Clara Maryboy, Diné elder  
© Lynn Hoffman-Brouse

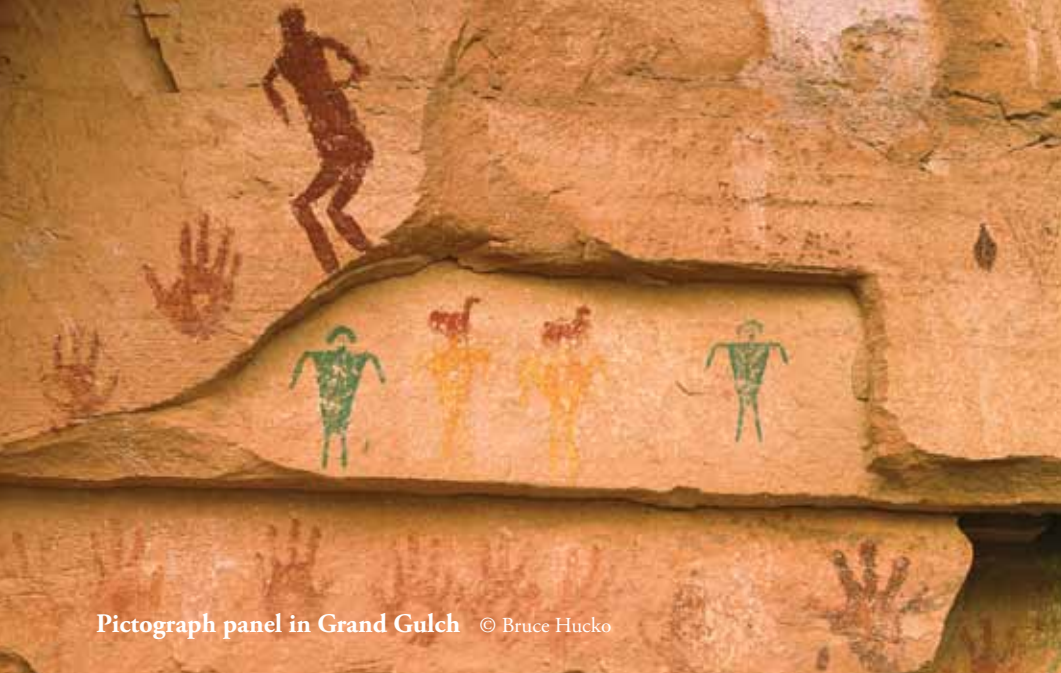
# *Bears Ears* A NATIVE PERSPECTIVE

*on America's most significant  
unprotected cultural landscape*

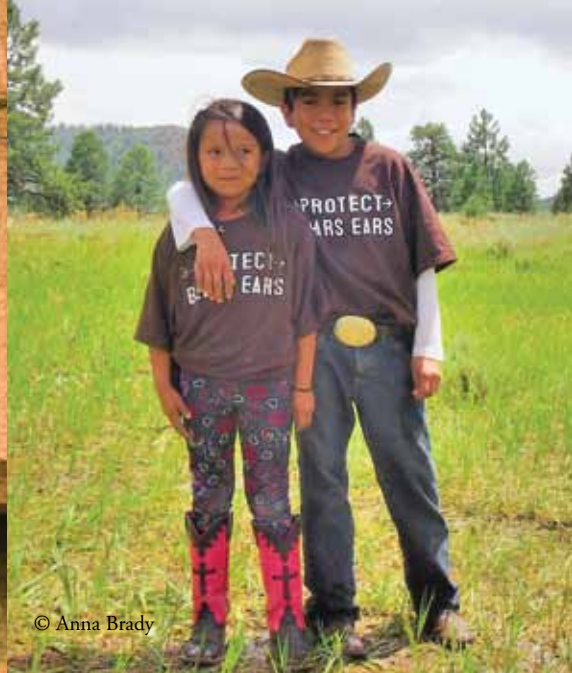


Ancestral Pueblo dwellings on Cedar Mesa  
© Don Rommes





Pictograph panel in Grand Gulch © Bruce Hucko



© Anna Brady



Archaeologically rich canyons on the slopes of the Abajo Mountains  
© Adriel Heisey



# A sacred landscape

© April Chabries Makgoeng



**D**ear Friends,

I would like to express my heartfelt support for the work of the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. At the museum I direct, we are committed to discovery and knowledge gained from our collective history, our unique cultures, and the environment. To build an informed and competent citizenry and a sustainable future, we believe our work must encompass and be accountable to both people and place.

This report modestly describes an incomparable and priceless place, a place with irreplaceable cultural resources, a place called Bears Ears. It is a place many Native peoples in the Four Corners area continue to define as home, soul, and the setting for the cultivation of cultures.

Unfortunately, this landscape and its ancient shrines, petroglyphs, plants, animals, minerals, and cultural artifacts have become a center of desecration, looting, and disrespect. The proposed Bears Ears national monument will provide much needed protection for this nation's most rich cultural landscape

so that we can care

for it in perpetuity. Through an Inter-Tribal coalition, five area tribes are proposing the Bears Ears Monument that would be managed by the tribes and the federal government, where planning, authority, and decision-making are shared equally.

In addition, a Bears Ears monument will serve as a unique learning place where science and tribal traditional knowledge will work to manage Bears Ears equally, a place with shared and balanced knowledge systems, a sanctuary for cultural, social, and intellectual mediation.

Please take a moment to read this report and learn more about why it is vitally important to make Bears Ears this nation's next glorious national monument.

Thank you,

**Jim Enote, Director**  
A:shiwi A:waan Museum and Heritage Center  
Zuni, NM

Navajo/Ute Ceremony © Gavin Noyes



Grinding slicks © Gavin Noyes





## Bears Ears National Monument

*"It's not just because it's land. It's our heritage, it's our elders. We've created a family based on trust. We're working collaboratively now. It's not just for each tribe, it's for everyone, for next generations, for what we leave for them. We need to unite in sovereignty".*

**– Alfred Lomahquahu,  
Vice Chairman of the Hopi Tribe**



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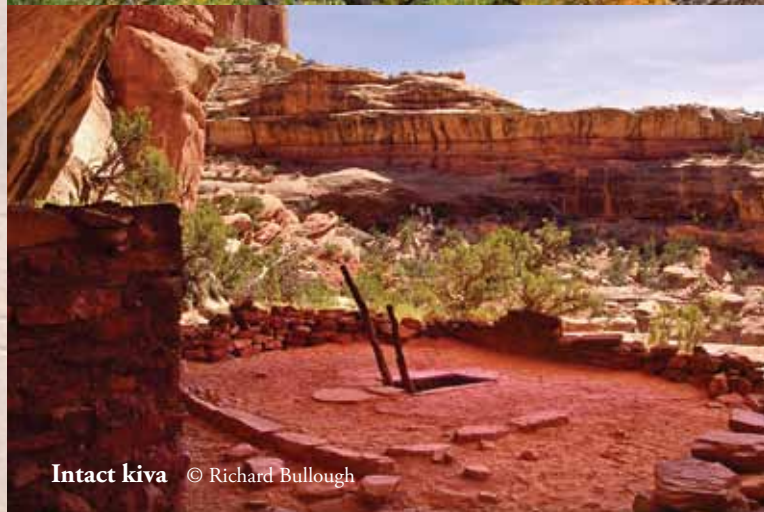
**T**he ancient past makes itself undeniably present in a few places on earth – the Giza pyramids, Machu Picchu, Stonehenge, and Angkor Wat come to mind. And the Bears Ears region ranks right up there with them. Picturesque cliff dwellings confront the senses as we try to imagine how and why people would choose to live in such precarious and spectacular places. Striking, mysterious figures etched and painted on stone faces many hundreds of years ago touch our souls. The archaeological and cultural treasures of Bears Ears are ours to protect, preserve, and embrace.

### What will the monument protect?

- Hundreds of thousands of archaeological sites
- One of the most spectacular and unspoiled archaeological landscapes in North America
- Thousands of ancient artworks, including what may be the oldest rock image in North America
- Cliff dwellings, great houses, pueblos, shrines, standing stone towers, cathedral-like caves and rock shelters
- Burials and sacred artifacts belonging to our ancestors
- Ancient Chacoan roads still visible for miles on the landscape
- A rich history of continuous cultural presence going back over ten thousand years



Cliff dwellings on Comb Ridge © Dick Pick



Intact kiva © Richard Bullough



Cooking vessel in situ © Josh Ewing



*"We have enough roads in the county. New ones do not need to be built. Roads where our ancestors used to live would be the right places to close off the roads."*

**– Joe Ben**



**Projectile point** © Richard Bullough



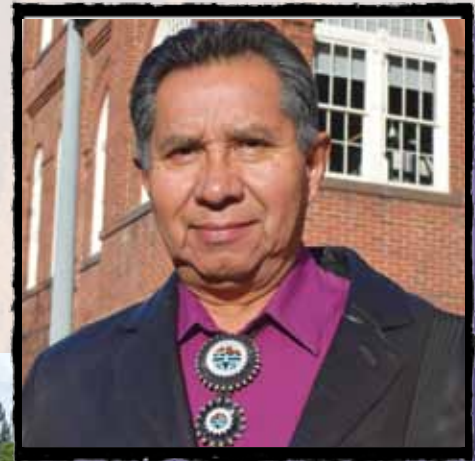


Ancestral Pueblo handprints and dwelling  
© Jonathan Bailey



## A coalition proposal

*“The cultural resources here, the petroglyphs, the structures, all of this, is evidence of the Native people who lived in and passed through the Bears Ears. It provides a link to our ancestors, from long ago. This cultural information is important for all Native people. This is why tribes have set aside any differences and come together: if this information is lost, it’s lost forever. It is devastating to think of that loss. We must protect Bears Ears”*  
**– Octavius Seowtewa, Zuni Elder**



© Gavin Noyes



**Summer Gathering at Bears Ears**  
 © Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition



A coalition of five tribal governments – Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Ute Mountain Ute, and Uintah & Ouray Ute – has asked the Obama Administration to designate a national monument to preserve

where more than thirteen Tribes trace their lineage. Today, this landscape is open to all Americans, yet it is under the protection of only one full-time federal law enforcement officer.

The proposed Bears Ears National Monument is a celebration of Native American connections to the land. It is a well-spring of fulfillment for the human spirit, and will remain open to all members of the public. Management will be collaborative between Tribes and federal government agencies, making Bears Ears National Monument a place where the wisdom of traditional stewardship is combined with the best of federal land management to ensure that the land and its heritage resources are well cared for, forever.

America’s most significant cultural landscape.

Bears Ears is a rugged landscape of 1.9 million acres containing more than 100,000 archaeological sites. It is a place





Petroglyphs of procession or migration  
alongside Milky Way © Marc Toso



Traditional Native American structure © Gavin Noyes



Powwow Dancers at Navajo Fair in Bluff, UT  
© Gavin Noyes



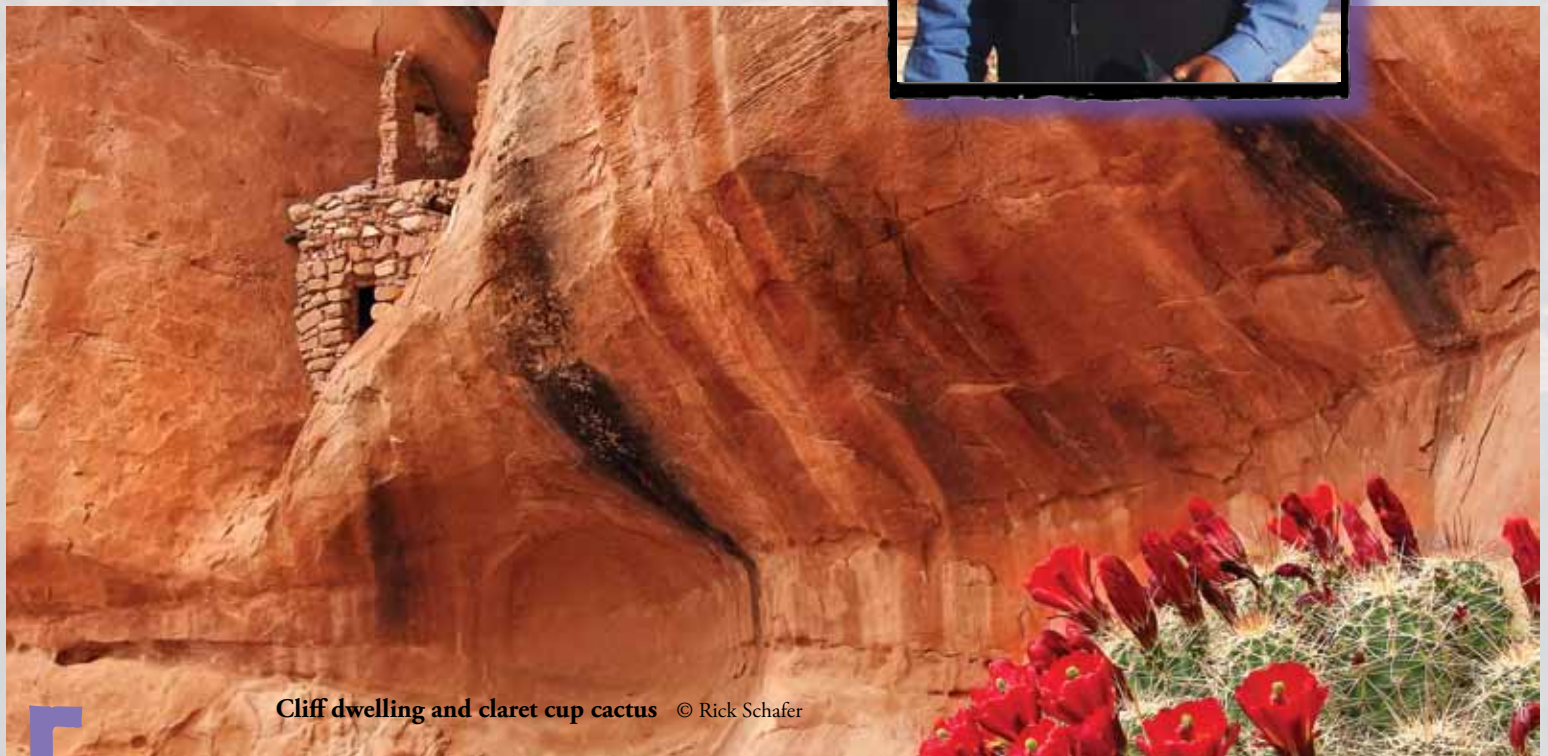
# Relationship with the land

*“Native People relate to rock art with our hearts.  
I regularly visit one rock art site that is a holy site.  
It provides us knowledge of our past and future.  
We do not view these panels as just art, but almost like  
a coded message that exists to help us understand. This  
knowledge informs our life and reality as humans.”*

– **Malcolm Lehi,**  
**Ute Mountain Ute Council Member**



© Gavin Noyes



**Cliff dwelling and claret cup cactus** © Rick Schafer

**F**or thousands of years, our ancestors lived within Bears Ears landscape, hunting, foraging, and farming it by hand. They knew every plant and animal, every stream and mountain, every change of season, and every lesson important enough to be passed down through the centuries. We understood this place and cared for it, relating to the earth literally as our mother who provides for us and the plants and animals to which we are related. The Bears Ears landscape is alive in our view, and must be nourished and cared for if life is to be sustained.

We are a spiritual people. However, our holy practices happen right here on earth, not in a church, but in special places like Bears Ears. We sometimes talk to the plants,

others sing to the mountains, and we seek out our ancestors, who still roam this land, and we ask them for guidance in a language they can understand. In times long past, the ancient ones sanctified the land and its special places, and the blessings remain in force today. To our people, the kivas of the ancient ones are as sacred and deserving of respect as are the altars of cathedrals to Christian churchgoers.

Today, we visit Bears Ears for the power that exudes from the spirit of the land and its inhabitants. It saddens us to see the looting and destruction taking place today which is why we are determined to re-establish peace to give our ancestors the comfort they deserve.



## Threats & destruction

© Gavin Noyes



*"We bring to the table direct ties to the land; with many of the tribal customs it all lies in the verbal delivery of what was. It's very important that we take every step in protecting our heritage. We are of the land, we don't quite own it but we're here as caretakers. If we can help protect that and justify where our native cultures and customs come from we can protect it in the face of new challenges."*

**– Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk, Ute Mountain Ute Council**



Deteriorating tower structure © Josh Ewing

**T**his is a land with natural as well as cultural resources. We believe that if we treat the land with respect, care for it, and act as good stewards, its resources can enrich and enhance our lives. But we must not just take, we must act with care, and also give back.

For thousands of years of constant human occupation, the Bears Ears was unscarred by bulldozers, dynamite, and chainsaws. The ancestral homes and sacred places were treated with respect, not looted for artifacts. No pipelines drained its nourishing water, no drilling rigs pierced its quiet soils to suck hydrocarbons from the dark underworld.

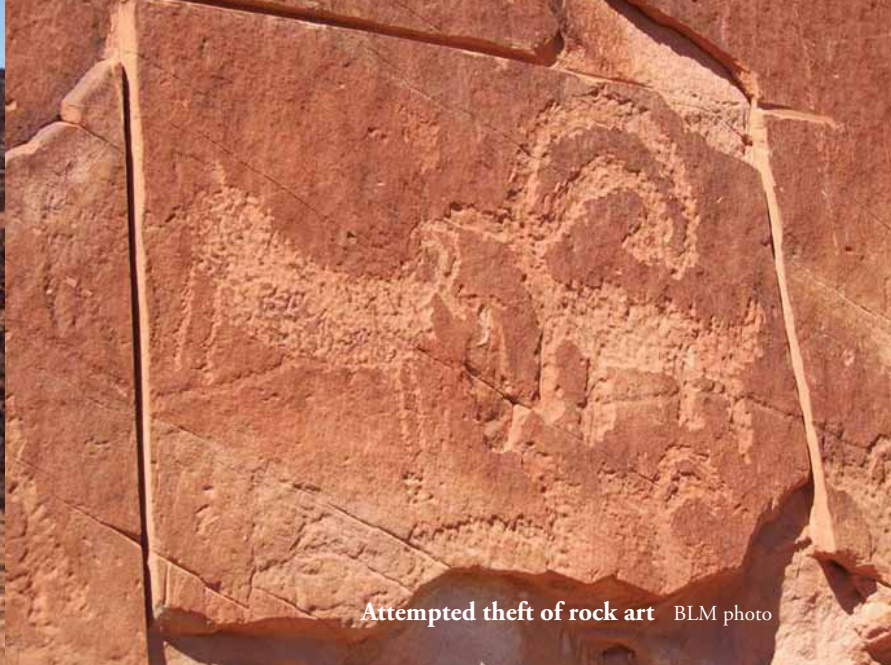
Only in the past few generations have these special lands been marred; the damage done is substantial, but most of it is reversible.

Tears of grief over industrial indifference and callous looting are not enough. Protections and enforcement are needed. There is still time to keep the cultural heritage of this exceptional place intact, but without swift action, we fear that the archaeological and cultural riches of the Bears Ears will suffer shameful, disgraceful, dissolution and obliteration.





Off-road vehicle damage in Recapture Pocket © Josh Ewing



Attempted theft of rock art BLM photo



Now defunct oil well drilled in 2013 near Bears Ears © Bob Helmes



Looted structure BLM photo



Traditional structure later burned by vandals  
Comb Ridge Heritage Initiative Project photo



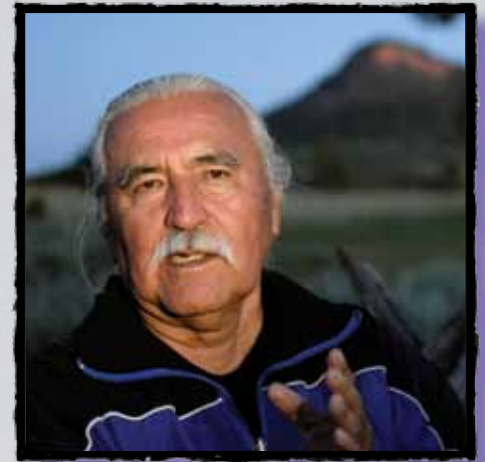




## Healing the land

*"Protecting Bears Ears is not just about healing for the land and Native people. It's for our adversaries to be healed, too. I truly believe we can all come out dancing together."*

**– Willie Grayeyes, Chairman,  
Utah Diné Bikéyah**



© Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition

**M**onument designation will be the first step in righting the wrongs of the past and halting the continued destruction.

Ecological resiliency is strongest in places that are the least disturbed and most biodiverse. Bears Ears is a resilient landscape. Navajo people have a term for such places of ecological rejuvenation: we call them *Nahodishgish*, or "places to be left alone." These intact landscapes are

thought to be the healthiest of all lands, from

which plants and animals spread and repopulate surrounding lands. There are few places left on earth that the hand of man has not scarred. Bears Ears is one such place, where healing of the earth can begin. The scars and wounds of industrial exploitation will be smoothed over. Native plants and animals will proliferate.

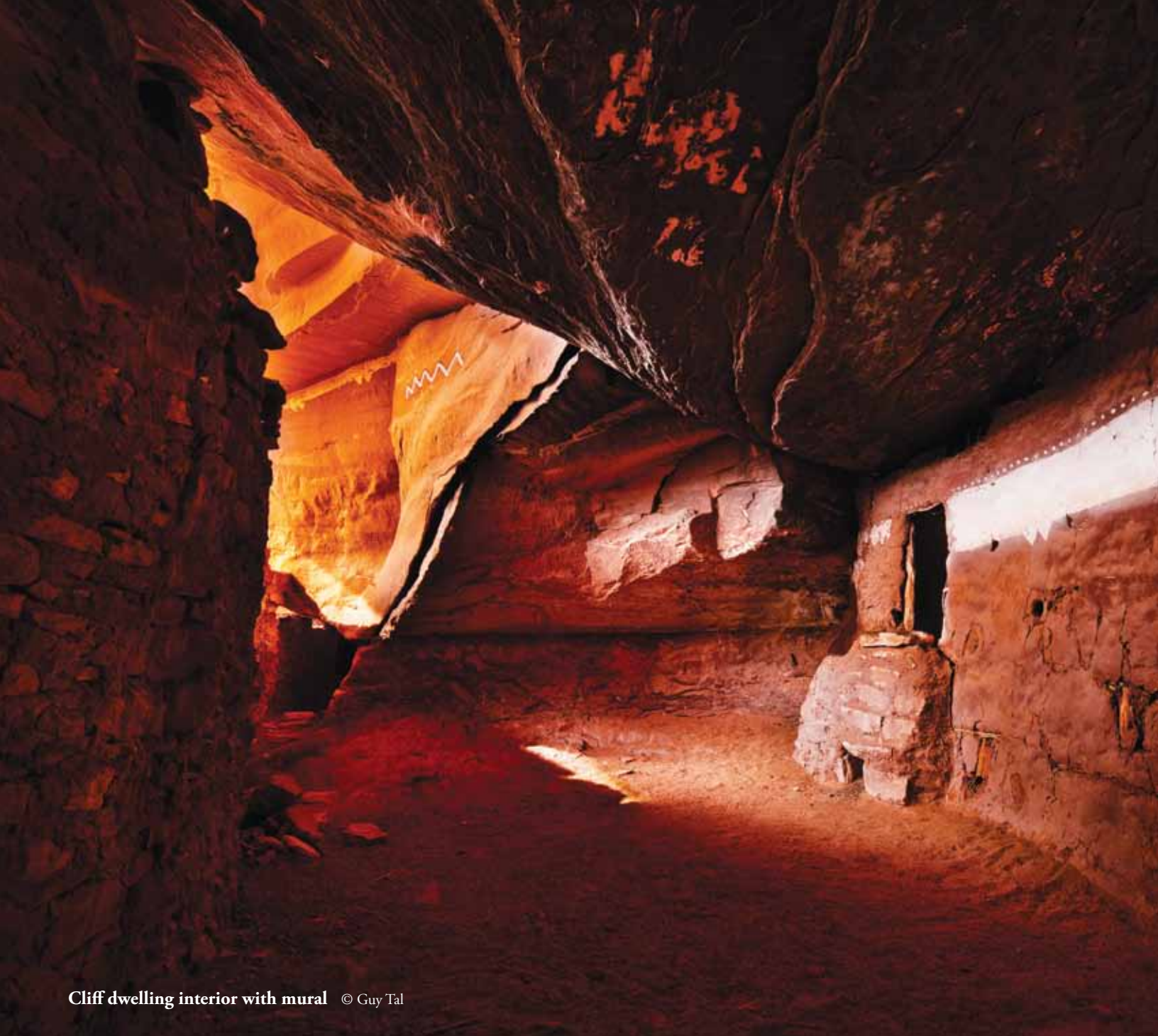


© Leslie Scopes



Rain clouds over Comb Ridge © Josh Ewing





Cliff dwelling interior with mural © Guy Tal



© Gavin Noyes



Revered elder Ute Stella Eyetoo & family © Anna Brady



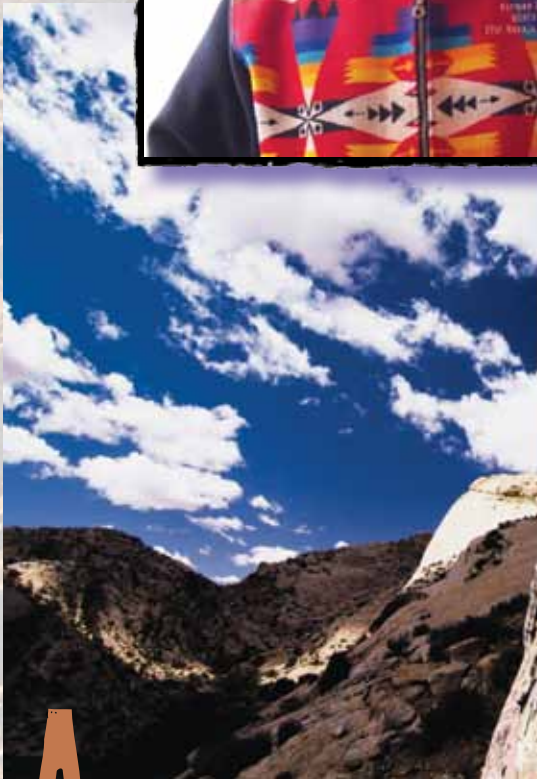
# Healing the people

© Gavin Noyes



*"We have already spoken, and with overwhelming unity we have asked for Bears Ears to be protected. Local Navajo communities have the sovereign support of the Navajo Nation government and we understand that other tribes are similarly supporting their grassroots people. What we have said, and continue to say, is this: It is time to protect Bears Ears."*

**– Herman Daniels Jr., Navajo Nation Council Member**



Bird petroglyph © Josh Ewing



**Dancers at Summer Gathering**  
© Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition

**A**rchaeological sites damaged by looting and neglect cannot be healed. They will never regenerate. But the damaged sites can be mitigated through stewardship, through education, and through shared appreciation. In the case of archaeology, prevention is the only medicine that will heal the People.

Spiritual leaders will bring healing to the mesas and canyons, and as children visit the homes and special places of the ancient ones, the bonds to the past will be strengthened, and a new future will come to these places of the past.

*"Older Utes would say that all of San Juan County was special. That is why they never left this area. A lot of the Ute families roamed the whole county. No one really owned the land. It was as if the land owned us – the Ute people"* – **Billy Mike**

*"I made a speech at Fort Sumner about 'Tiná [Life]. 'Tiná doonti'da [Life does not end, it goes on]. I wanted to teach my people to hold on to the future with all of our strength."*

**– Headman Manuelito (1818-1893) as remembered by his son Bob Manuelito**





**Bears Ears Inter-Tribal leaders in Washington DC** © Gavin Noyes

## Protect Bears Ears

**For more information on the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, to learn how to help protect Bears Ears, or for media inquiries, please visit:**

***[www.bearscoalition.org](http://www.bearscoalition.org)***

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