Introduction

In the last weeks of his presidency, Barack Obama designated 1.35 million acres in southeastern Utah as the Bears Ears National Monument. The designation comes after a coalition of five tribal governments came together to seek protection for the area, proposing collaborative land management between tribes and the federal government. As this unprecedented mode of management is implemented—and challenged—it is more important than ever that we hear Native voices.

The Bears Ears landscape holds the past of over thirteen Native tribes. It is a land of cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance that records the continuous presence of people for more than ten thousand years. In Edge of Morning: Native Voices Speak for the Bears Ears, Native writers bear testimony to the fragile and essential nature of this sacred landscape in America’s remote red rock country. Through poems, essays, and interviews, these often-ignored voices explore the ways many Native people derive tradition, sustenance, and cultural history from the Bears Ears. From seasoned writers like Heid E. Erdrich and Oregon Poet Laureate Elizabeth Woody to young activists, the voices in this collection inspire and educate.

“Utah has been my home for over half a century. Native Americans have inhabited these landscapes since time immemorial. The writers in Red Rock Stories capture that bond in essays and poems that run as deep as the canyons of the Colorado River.”
—ROBERT REDFORD

“In voices as rich and varied as the land itself, Red Rock Stories converges upon a vision for a relationship with the living land which is both ancient and urgent, a healing vision where the land and the people are linked by mutual responsibility.”
—ROBIN WALL KIMMERER, author of Braiding Sweetgrass and founder and director of the SUNY Center for Native Peoples and the Environment
Red Rock Stories
Conversation Starters

• Brooke Larsen claims, "It’s not revolutionary to say my generation needs wildness more than ever." Do you agree? If so, why?

• What do you think the overall impact—or intended impact—is of bringing together three generations of stories on Utah Public Lands?

• Charles Wilkinson claims that Utah is bound to the idea that conservation is wrong. Do you agree with that viewpoint? Do you have differing insights about Utah’s overall viewpoint of conservation?

• After reading Red Rock Stories, do you think that only native Utahans are impacted by Utah public lands? Why or why not?

• What was your favorite story? How did you relate to it and why was it your favorite?

• Did each individual story tie into the theme of conservation of Utah public lands? Use a specific story to illustrate your answer.

• Do you think the reasons to protect Utah public lands can also be related to other environmental issues throughout the nation?

• How do you feel about conserving and protecting Utah Public Lands? Did your perspective change after reading this book? If so, why and how?
About Stephen Trimble

Jacqueline Keeler is a Navajo/Yankton Dakota Sioux writer living in Portland, Oregon. She has been published in Salon.com, Earth Island Journal and The Nation. Keeler co-founded Eradicating Offensive Native Mascotry, which seeks to end the use of racial groups as mascots. She is finishing a collection of essays called Not Your Disappearing Indian.

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Trimble is available to discuss Red Rock Stories with reading groups in person or via Skype. For more information, email brooke@torreyhouse.com.

Torrey House Press

Voices for the Land

Torrey House Press is an independent nonprofit publisher promoting environmental conservation through literature. We believe that culture is changed through conversation and that lively, contemporary literature is the cutting edge of social change. We strive to identify exceptional writers, nurture their work, and engage the widest possible audience; to publish diverse voices with transformative stories that illuminate important facets of our ever-changing planet; to develop literary resources for the conservation movement, educating and entertaining readers, inspiring action.

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