

One with the Animals

By: Ray Urbaniak

During a recent visit to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and experiencing their strong commitment to animals I was reminded of an incident which happened 35 years ago.

I was in a bar in Florida and struck up a conversation with a Sioux Indian from South Dakota. He related that he was in Florida because he needed the work. As the conversation progressed he started to weep and said he “missed the animals”. I thought I appreciated animals but this deep connection to animals was something new to me. Native Americans refer to “All My Relations”, meaning we are all connected in the circle of life.

The encounter left a lasting impression on me. Some 25 years later when I moved to Southern Utah and was photographing and studying Petroglyphs and Pictographs I started to stumble on some glyphs that depicted this intimate connection to the animals. The glyphs also reminded me of my long ago encounter in Florida. The Anasazi and Paiute Indians who inhabited this area of SW Utah and the Arizona Strip had an intimate connection with the animals, in particular the Big Horn Sheep (as the Plains Indians had with the Bison). They were one with the sheep. There was no separation. In Buddhist terms, they refer to this as non-duality or inter-being.

They were one with the sheep especially, but also one with all the animals as well as Corn. I can appreciate this connection but only superficially since I am not an Anasazi, Paiute, or Sioux and I am not intimately dependant on the local animals and plants for all of my physical and spiritual sustenance.

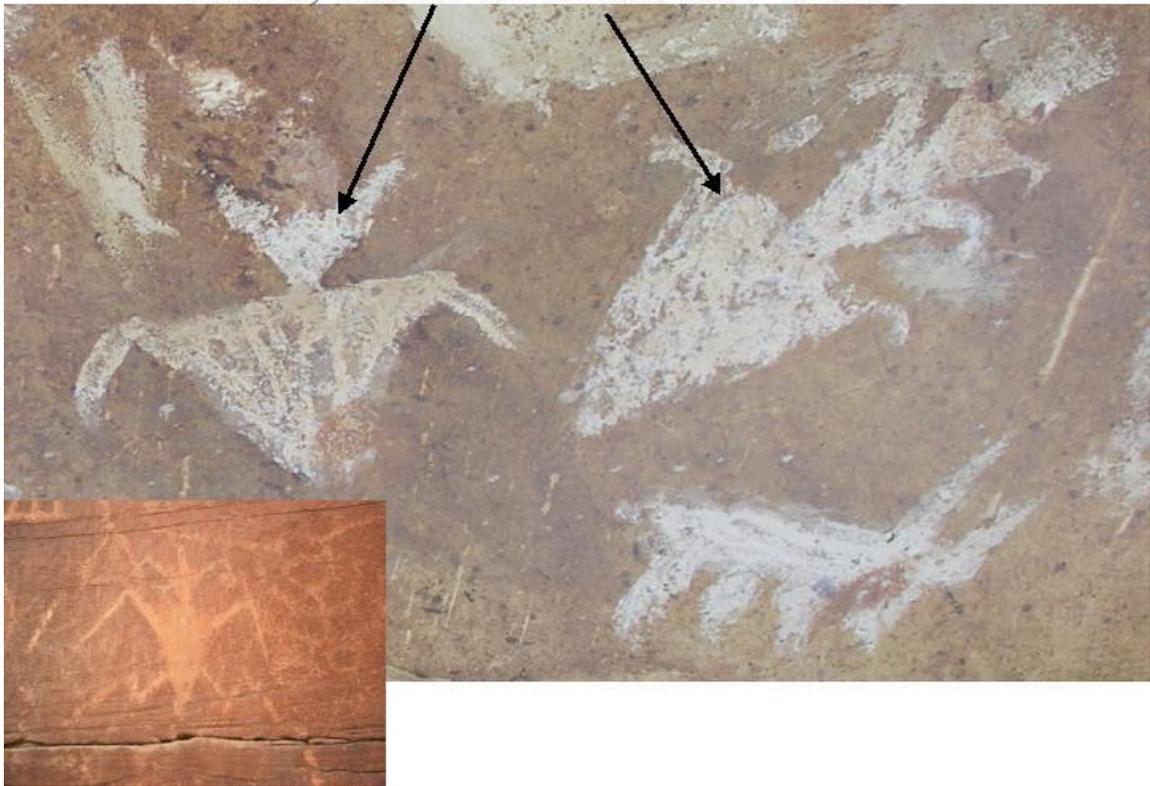
This is a photo I took of a big horn sheep behind a rock along with petroglyphs and pictographs showing them as 2 leggeds or with other human features. They could not separate their identities since they were one.



RU 9/22/08

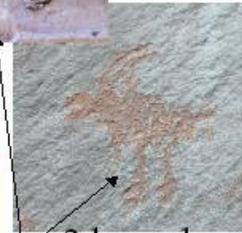
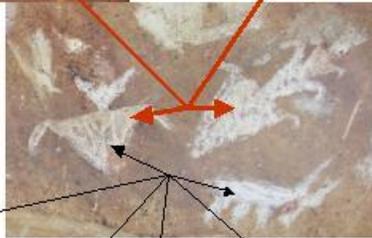


Also, Man & Corn are One



**Man & Corn
are one**

**Man & Sheep
are one**



2 legged
sheep

RU 11/7/08

2 legged deer & elk



This pictograph appears to show an inverted dead person. His feet form the 2 mirrored sheep(back to back). Man in death provides life to sheep through interconnected cycle of life. The person's body decomposes to provide nutrients to the soil which produces grass & other plants that nourish the sheep which once again nourish man.



Man shown right side up.

Hooved Sheep-Man as Hunter



The Native Americans in SW Utah and the Arizona strip consumed the Big Horn Sheep and other animals, but with a deep Spiritual respect for the animals.

I heard an Inuit Native American from Canada say on TV that the Caribou are “my Meat & my Magic!”.

This is a present day confirmation that Man & the Animals are still one to many Native Americans.

Native American’s in the past, and many in the present, still have that strong interconnection to Nature.