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*The Ceded Strip Dispute: A Case Study of Indigenous Use Rights in Glacier National Park*

Indigenous land use rights on the "Ceded Strip," an 800,000-acre region of forestland within Glacier National Park, have been a longstanding source of conflict between the Blackfoot Tribe and the U.S. National Park Service. When the Tribe sold the tract to the U.S. Federal Government in 1895, it was with the explicit stipulation that Tribal members would retain the rights to hunt, fish, gather timber, and pass freely through the land. In 1910, the Ceded Strip was included in the landmass that was demarcated as Glacier National Park, which launched a new management regime over the tract. In keeping with developing concepts of a pristine, non-human wilderness, the Blackfoot Tribe's treaty-ensured use rights to the land were summarily extinguished. This decision severely limited Tribal members' ability to derive food and timber from the land, and also altered their access to sacred sites and areas in which to carry out Vision Quests.

Since the establishment of the Park, disagreement over the Blackfoot's use rights has festered, in one instance flaring up into days of public protest. My work examines the history of these use rights and the contemporary repercussions of the Park's failure to meaningfully acknowledge them. This research is based on several months of fieldwork, including unstructured interviews with Blackfoot Tribal members and National Park Service employees, as well as research in the Glacier National Park Archives in Montana. Through historical and anthropological analysis, I will show how the Park Service's failure to acknowledge treaty-granted rights has spurred more than a century of conflict between the Tribe and the Federal Government, and has foreclosed the possibility of forest co-management.

The history of the Ceded Strip adds to a growing body of literature that critiques the role some conservation projects have played in dispossessing local people. My hope is that by understanding flaws in this example of American large-scale conservation, practitioners working in newly formed conservation sites can avoid top-down management approaches that may disenfranchise local stakeholders and engender ongoing clash. I also hope that this history of conflict can open up conversation about what effective and equitable co-management of conservation spaces could look like.