“Relational Landscapes: Teaching Chaco Canyon with Immersive Technology”

Abstract:

This presentation will highlight a lesson plan for blending an immersive experience with teaching art history. For an undergraduate introductory survey of Native North American arts and architecture, an immersive 360 image experience has been created to encourage students to understand and experience of Chaco Canyon (850-1150CE) monumental architecture as a relational landscape. Considering many programs do not have courses in Native North American art history, variations for general surveys of North American arts will be offered. In addition, components of this approach could be adapted to a one-shot instruction session related to frameworks such as “Research in North American Arts with Primary Sources”.

Humans often design their environments to organize social relations and to teach or reinforce knowledge about their worlds; this is a felt, as well as visual, experience. According to Santa Clara Pueblo architect and historian Rina Swentzell (1990), Pueblo stories, songs, and prayers present a house not as an inanimate object but as part of a cosmological world view that recognizes interconnectedness and cyclic temporality. In order to convey Swentzell's theory, an immersive visual experience of Chacoan structures offers a pedagogical advantage over conventional slides or other two-dimensional representations. It further advanced Indigenous perspectives over their cultural heritage.

The associated assignment has students evaluate varied perspectives on Chaco Canyon using a small selection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous authored primary sources.