



Map by Stephanie Smith

Opponents of the Bears Ears National Monument often promote the idea that the Tribes, or Indigenous peoples in general, are not “local;” this line of reasoning posits that local voices know best how to manage these lands within the current boundaries of the Bears Ears National Monument and that Tribal members are not local and therefore do not know how to manage these lands.

Local input in land management planning and day-to-day decision making is important. However, we disagree with the seemingly racially-based dog whistle that claims that Native people are not “local.” As a matter of fact, over 47% of San Juan County’s residents are Native American. Also, there would be many more “local” Indigenous residents of San Juan County had their access to these lands not been forcibly cut off by the United States in the late 19th and early 20th century.

These lands have been stewarded for thousands of years by Tribal ancestors, and the evidence of their stewardship and habitation is everywhere. Tribes have the strongest ties to the region and they have the longest track record of utilizing knowledge, learned over millennia, to care for these lands and protecting all the “resources” within the region.

The Coalition Tribes don’t see the region as being separated by state lines. Connections to these traditional and ancestral homelands transcend modern-day political boundaries. - Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition