The Cultural Importance of Obsidian in the Upper Gila Area
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Introduction
The Western Apache, whose ancestral lands closely border the Upper Gila region, still have many profound and direct cultural ties to the landscape. Though an exact time period for when Apachen people enter the Upper Gila remains unclear, printed, oral creation accounts link the Apache as a whole to multiple locales all through present day Arizona, New Mexico, and Northern Mexico.

Methods
Analysis of multiple historical accounts, ethnographic works, personal field notes, and unrestricted translations of the Apache language create a clearer picture of the region and the Apache people’s connection to it.

Translated History
The eastern most group of the Western Apache, the White Mountain Apache, (Dził ligai siyan Ndeé), printed creation story places them in a region where “black metal was placed in the east” as part of the process that would shape their world. By the time this oral account was dictated in the early 20th century, western influence is evident by the use of “metal” in the story. This incorrect translation of an oral history ignores the geographical dimensions of the once vast ancestral landscape of the White Mountain Apache but simultaneously protects sacred elements of the story.

Nadasái
• Pre-reservation geographical names across much of the southwest still have their indigenous names intact; the Gila Wilderness is no exception.
• The White Mountain Apache word for this mountain range is Nadasái. Definitions are known, however current ceremonial references to this place do not allow for the release of such information.
• Modern boundaries have severed ancestral ties to the area but the knowledge of the lessons the land teaches continues to be taught.

Conclusion
Indigenous languages have long been brushed aside in favor of written records, when the reality is language alone carries a highly detailed record of place and space. When correct language definitions are applied to specific, unrestricted, portions of Western Apache history a vivid geographical map of pre-reservation life can be reconstructed. This reconstruction directly corresponds with modern geological and archaeological features found directly in the Upper Gila area.

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References Cited