

best efforts to control our every surrounding).

However, Native practice gets its strength from tradition, whereas rockclimbing gets its strength from spontaneity.

Tribal traditions attaches meaning specifically to Devils Tower and to ceremonies performed there at particular times of year. Climbing is

powerful particularly because it is detached from these types of rituals.

Our rituals can be performed anywhere there is solid rock, any time the weather is just the slightest bit permitting. We have the ability to climb at different crags, to travel with the weather.

The voluntary ban is not a

violation of the First Amendment. In fact, it is in place particularly because the Amendment has failed to protect Native people. We live in a country founded on principles such as the freedom of religion. Yet for years Tribal groups have been restricted from using their sacred lands.

What we can do:

1.

If we're going to ask another group to respect our spiritual needs, then we have to be willing to respect theirs in return. Yes we live in a country of religious freedom, but freedom for both groups means compromise. If some of the Native groups had their way, there would be no climbing on the tower at all. But there is. All that's being asked for is a single month free from climbing. That sounds like compromise to me. Now it's our turn to offer it back.

2.

Go climbing at other places. Devils Tower offers incredible climbing, this is true. But there are 47 other Wyoming climbing areas listed on Mountain Project alone. Nearly 30 of these are considered major, developed crags; plenty of climbing to keep you occupied for the lone month of June. Then weather-permitting, you can climb the tower the other 11 months of the year. Heck, Frank Sanders climbed it 365 times in 360 days (and the five days off were not due to weather). April, May, July, August, and September all offer sweet temps.

3.

Be respectful as a climber. For most of us, climbing is a way of life. We should embrace and protect it. Our sport works best when we have the support of those around us. Let's foster that support. Keep the tower clean and educate other climbers about the conflict. Don't let this become an access issue just because of poor climbing ethics. Share Devils Tower and keep it open.

