



I Am the Grand Canyon: The Story of the Havasupai People

Stephen Hirst

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I Am the Grand Canyon is the story of the Havasupai people. From their origins among the first group of Indians to arrive in North America some 20,000 years ago to their epic struggle to regain traditional lands taken from them in the nineteenth century, the Havasupai have a long and colorful history. The story of this tiny tribe once confined to a too small reservation depicts a people with deep cultural ties to the land, both on their former reservation below the rim of the Grand Canyon and on the surrounding plateaus.

In the spring of 1971, the federal government proposed incorporating still more Havasupai land into Grand Canyon National Park. At hearings that spring, Havasupai Tribal Chairman Lee Marshall rose to speak. "I heard all you people talking about the Grand Canyon," he said. "Well, you're looking at it. I am the Grand Canyon!" Marshall made it clear that Havasu Canyon and the surrounding plateau were critical to the survival of his people; his speech laid the foundation for the return of thousands of acres of Havasupai land in 1975.

I Am the Grand Canyon is the story of a heroic people who refused to back down when facing overwhelming odds. They won, and today the Havasupai way of life quietly continues in the Grand Canyon and on the surrounding plateaus.

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