

## Archeoastronomy

Feather (Kaye Robinson) was our presenter at this month's meeting. When the speaker we had planned on presenting became snowbound and was unable to attend, Feather graciously stepped up and filled in with a subject she knows well. She is passionate about the topic of archeoastronomy and is very knowledgeable.

The first site Kaye spoke about is located high in the Bighorn Mountains of Northern Wyoming, the centuries-old Medicine Wheel, aptly named Bighorn Medicine Wheel, seems to be a testament to astronomical applications used by people who lived in the Northern Plains long before white men came on the scene, or even the Crow Indians, but the structure remains mysterious.

The Bighorn Medicine Wheel sits at 108 degrees longitude, nearly 10,000 feet above sea level near the summit of Medicine Mountain. The Wheel is constructed of stones gathered in the vicinity of the landmark. The Medicine Wheel has a diameter of 80 feet (245 feet in circumference). Twenty eight stone "spokes" connect the central cairn to the outside circle, and around the circle lie six other stone cairns, some large enough for a person to sit in.

The six cairns arranged around the Wheel are definitely related to the night skies. Two of the cairns, when lined up with the center cairn, mark the rising and setting Summer Solstice sun.

Estimates regarding the age of the Bighorn Medicine Wheel vary, with 1200 A.D. being the time period when the star alignments with the cairns were most accurate.

The Majorville Cairn and Medicine Wheel in Alberta, Canada consists of a central cairn, which is linked to a surrounding stone circled by 28 spokes, and the cultural landscape which contains this monument. The designation encompasses 160 acres and sits at 51 degrees North latitude, which is the same as Stonehenge.

Avebury is a Neolithic henge monument containing three stone circles, around the village of Avebury in Wiltshire, in southwest England. One of the best known prehistoric sites in Britain, it contains the largest Neolithic stone circle in the world. It is also at 51 degrees North latitude. It lines up with the sun, moon, and stars.

The Goseck circle is a Neolithic structure in Germany. Its construction is dated to approximately the 49th century B.C. It is considered to be the oldest star observatory. It is also at 51 degrees North latitude and accurately measures the sun, moon, and stars.

The Nebra sky disk is a bronze disk twelve inches in diameter with a blue-green color and inlaid with gold symbols. These are interpreted generally as a sun, a lunar crescent, and stars.

The disc was discovered in Germany and is 3600 years old. The Nebra sky disk features the oldest concrete depiction of the cosmos yet known from anywhere in the world. It is one of the most important archaeological finds of the twentieth century.

Last of all, Feather told us about Newgrange, a prehistoric monument in County Meath, Ireland. It is an exceptionally grand passage tomb built during the Neolithic period, around 3200 BC, making it older than Stonehenge and the Egyptian Pyramids.

We find a new appreciation of the ancient cultures as we realize how much they learned by observing the sun, moon, planets and the stars.