

E.S.R.A.R.A. NEWSLETTER

Quarterly of the Eastern States Rock Art Research Association
30th member of IFRAO - International Federation of Rock Art Organizations

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News from Machias Bay...

A Vision



"I was to be there when the sun came up. I was facing the east. I was given a rock to place in front of me. Then the sun opened the door and the petroglyphs were there."

(Joanne Dana to Katherine Cassidy of the Bangor Daily News, 10/24/06)

At high tide on a cool cloudy day last October, the Passamaquoddy Tribe celebrated the return of the "Picture Rock" petroglyph site on Birch Point. The site lies at the center of former Passamaquoddy territory, which, in 1600 ADE, extended from the Kennebec River in Maine to the St. Johns River in New Brunswick Province. The land transfer of 5.5 acres was in exchange for cash earned through a conservation easement on 300 acres of Tribal land. Negotiations between the Tribe, land owners, Pete and Ann Gommers and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust were facilitated by the volunteer Malusahikon Committee.

The youth of the Tribe, represented by seventh graders at the Pleasant Point School, were given the job of consulting with elders on what and how ceremonies should be done. Two hundred people, native and outsiders, participated

Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Don Soctomah, and the Malusahikon Committee are now applying for grants to develop a long term management plan for "Picture Rock" and eight other known petroglyph sites in Machias Bay.

Ray Gerber generously provided photographs of the ceremonial transfer.



Joanne Dana on ledge with eagle wing and smudge shell and Martin Francis with pipe, Blanche Sockabasin and friends on shore with drum, singing.

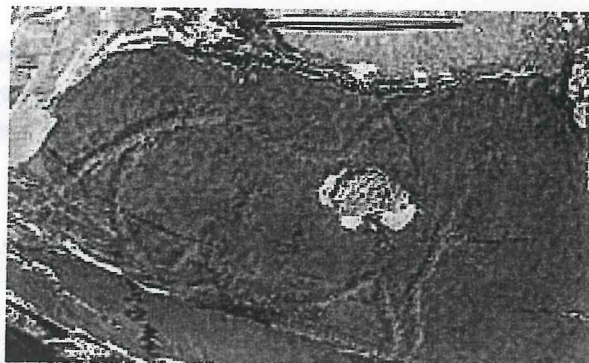
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XV UISPP Congress (International Union for Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences), September 2006 (Lisbon, Portugal). Reported by Dr. Denise Smith/

ESRARA had a large delegation attending the 2006 Congress in Lisbon. Members who attended include Robert Bednarik, Donna Gillette, John and Mavis Greer, Jane Kolber, Bob and Evelyn Mark, Dario Seglie, Denise Smith, Ben Schwartz and Alice Tratebas.

Besides all the wonderful sessions, the highlight for most of our group was the field trip up the Tagus Valley to the Ocreza River area. We toured a new photographic exhibit at the lovely museum in Macao, then headed into the valley. For those who could not walk about a mile or so In the 100-plus degree heat, our guides were kind enough to provide jeeps to access the deep valley. Once we climbed down to the river, we walked along the swiftly rushing water to see the petroglyph sites. Unfortunately, the water had just been released from a dam upriver, which submerged two of the sites we had planned to see. However, Ocreza's famous paleolithic horse

submerged two of the sites we had planned to see. However, Ocreza's famous paleolithic horse was still visible.



After seeing another petroglyph boulder further down river, we headed back up that steep valley in the searing heat. About halfway back, the delegates were treated to a thunderstorm. When the rain changed from refreshing to drenching, we were picked up by the jeeps and taken back to the bus. Most chalked up the day as interesting. For an official report about the next IFRAO congress, please see Dr. John Greer's article

Dr. John Greer

While ESRARA's official representative, Denise Smith, was off drinking *vinho verde* down by the river (because she can't read a schedule), John Greer represented our organization at the official meeting of IFRAO (International Federation of Rock Art Organizations) on September 9, 2006 and reported briefly on activities of members of the organization. As a consensus, it was decided that the next IFRAO meeting, and sponsored international rock art conference, would be in Sao Raimundo Nonato (Serra Capivara National Park) in Piaui, Brazil, about mid-March, 2009. The meeting will be announced. In the meantime, the Park will also put on the Peopling of the New World Conference in December 2006 (www.fundham.org). This, of course, is the area of the Pedra Furada rockshelter (with the oldest dated sequence of human occupation in the Americas) and 900+ other rock art sites within the Park, plus hundreds of sites in surrounding areas. It is on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

John and Denise also represented ESRARA at the *State of the Art* summary of world rock art by region the following day. During that meeting there was an extended discussion of the deteriorating situation of one of the largest accumulations of rock art in the world being needlessly destroyed by poorly planned industrial expansion. The Dampier petroglyphs, consisting of over a million figures in a huge extended accumulation of boulders, are on the northwest coast of Australia. IFRAO voted for and produced a short petition to the Australian government and other interested parties to plan subsequent development in consideration of preserving what is left of this site of overwhelming world importance. In the name of ESRARA, John seconded the motion and signed the petition in that capacity.

Book Review: *Talking With the Past, The Ethnography of Rock Art*. 2006. Editors: James D. Keyser, George Poetschat and Michael Taylor. 380p, Illustrations, Maps. Oregon Archaeological Society, Publ. 16, Portland

"Shamanic trances are undertaken in the context of a body of knowledge and beliefs handed down from generation to generation through an apprenticeship that ensures contemplative rather than psychedelic states." J.Clottes & D.Lewis-Williams (2006:123 after Turpin 1994:80).

"You have to go on your own. If there's two of you, you get talking..." Willie Selam from notes by Robert Layton (2006:82),

The format of this volume interweaves traditional voices and insights on rock art with modern scholarly presentations. The scholarship is informed by critical attention to original sources, to iconic aspects and to how the petroglyphs were placed. The essays, on the whole, constitute balanced assessments of how information on visionary practices and shamanism are integrated in various traditions and how these insights may be applied to petroglyphs for which we have no living or reported ethnographic context.

The arrangement of this book grew out of a suggestion by Phillip Cash Cash, a native researcher on rock art of the Columbia Plateau. When Jim Keyser discussed the prospect of a symposium that would involve international researchers, Cash Cash remarked that such an event "might be a unique opportunity for knowledgeable Native Americans to share their knowledge with international scholars while at the same time providing a chance for the traditionalists to learn about rock art from other areas of the world..." Keyser picked up on the idea and found backing. The symposium was held in Portland, Oregon in 2002. The conversational feedback between scholars and traditionalists was carefully recorded and incorporated into the book.

"Talking with the Past" starts with a summary of remarks by elder traditionalists as they and several scholars visited three petroglyph locations in the area. The elders had grown up along the Columbia River. Their comments on the contributed papers are included. The list of scholars includes major players in petroglyph research in North America (Hays-Gilpin, Keyser, Loubser and Sundstrom), South Africa (Lewis-Williams), Australia (Layton) and Europe (Clottes, Fossatti). The words of the traditionalists were trenchant and nuanced to native viewpoints. Pervasive throughout is a sense of how the concepts implicit in the petroglyphs are integrated into daily experience.

Comments and examples from the presentations below illustrate how a multiplicity of approaches can narrow the range of interpretations of specific petroglyphs (Lewis-Williams, Loubser and Whitley). Careful examination of the situation of petroglyphs in their setting can distinguish between rough forms made by the young and the more elegant and finished work of experienced adults (Cf. Contributions by Layton, Loubser and Whitley). Implicit in many examples is the wide distribution and long term persistence of core beliefs in oral traditions (Cf. Hann, Fossatti, Lewis-Williams.). Less clearly delineated but present are examples of an

evolution in traditional forms that can be related to a change in lifeways over time (Hays-Gilpin, Layton).

In the opening presentation *Rock Art and Ethnography*, David Lewis-Williams finds that ethnography helps rock "art" researchers avoid applying "western notions" of "art" to petroglyphs, and leads to awareness of "socially constructed concepts specific to particular times and places." Clues to the meaning of petroglyphs do not "explain" the iconography of the images and signs used. They reference it to a "belief system".

Linea Sundstrom discusses Sioux petroglyphs in the Black Hills of South Dakota. She concentrates on two themes expressed in Lakota, Mandan and Hidatsa traditions: 1) the disappearance of buffalo herds in winter; 2) the concept of "Double Woman". "Double Woman" expresses a very modern dilemma. From the Sioux perspective, the concept expresses an ancient conflict between the social "good" and the social "evil" roles that a woman might play. The "good" role is the fulfillment of being caregiver and bearing and raising children. The "bad" role is construed as a life of promiscuity and isolation. Women who go towards the "bad" aspect may achieve recognition for great skill and originality in creating beautiful quilled robes and clothing.

In the stories, buffalo is associated with the "good" role; "Deer" woman with the "evil" direction. The Cave Hills area was said to be the refuge of Deer woman and the buffalo in winter. Ludlow Cave, in particular, features a petroglyph at the entrance of a large buffalo cow giving birth, symbolizing the return of the buffalo in spring. Another petroglyph site has two tall females connected by an umbilical (?) cord and interpreted as a visual expression of "Double Woman".

The modern traditionalists' perception of petroglyphs produced by earlier generations, are the subject of Robert Layton's *Habitus and Narratives of Rock Art*. In northern Australia, petroglyphs related to clan totemism are distinguished by larger size, better quality, and prominent placement from rock art made for other purposes. From North America, he examines interviews with Anne York, recorded in the 1960s, that concern 'Nlaka'pamux practices associated with rock paintings in the Stein River valley of British Columbia. In the words of York, "(Young people) go up there (into the forests) and they sleep, and this dream tells them. . . He writes his dream on the rock. That's left there forever." A few of the dreamers (men and women) were chosen to undergo further training to become shamans (Layton, p80).

From notes he took during the Symposium field trip with the traditionalists to see petroglyphs, Layton paraphrased the words of traditionalist Willie Selam: "Each child has his own time, his own creative power..", "When a child is ready, there's people to see. They gather their momentum and when they're ready, they send them out into the mountain. Some people take a lot of years to figure out their purpose in life. Others find it right away... You have to go on your own. If there's two of you, you get talking..."

On the difficulty of interpreting petroglyphs, Layton (p85) quotes Daly (York, A., R.Daly, and C. Arnett, *They write their Dreams on the Rock Forever*, 1993, Vancouver): "The most informed readers, shamans, would understand a painting in terms of the general theme or story portrayed. All adults shared a common foraging tradition, regional culture and artistic

tradition. The gestural sign language, iconography of artifacts, and exposure to psychic training would have enabled the art to be read "in a meaningful way". However, "in such a system...no two readers will arrive at exactly the same interpretations...even though the theme and iconography are known to both."

On geometric forms as "entopics", Layton (p93) cautions against interpreting them too narrowly as simply "indictative" of ASC experiences. York attributed iconic significance to some geometric forms in the Stein River area.

Phillip Cash commented that "Entopics or geometric shapes would be a distraction to the healer's clear vision." Willie Selam followed with "You see with your mind's eye the power in everything, even in a blade of grass. That's why people become singers. The world is too beautiful for even our language to describe..."

In "After the 'Shamans of Prehistory'" (CH. 6), Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams offer a spirited defense to critical attacks on their 1996 volume, *Shamans of Prehistory*. Their work proposed that ASC experiences lie at the root of prehistoric conceptions of interactions with the spirit world. The presentation, translated from the French, represents the only version of their defense in English translation. Some quoted attacks reach the absurd.

Phillip Cash discourses in his native Nez Perce language (with English translation) on "*Ti'im'enin*: Indigenous Conceptions of Columbia Plateau Rock Art" (Chapter 7). He identifies vertical series of staple-like marks above the heads of human figures as recognized "coups" or "hits" on enemy warriors. The marks indicate the prowess and rank of the associated petroglyph figure. Three figures, each with vertical arrays of "coups", stand side by side with arms outstretched on a site at Butte Creek, south of the Columbia River. The side by side arrangement indicates the solidarity of the native leaders and their people against invaders. On another surface at the same location, three other figures show warriors bearing round shields walking towards men mounted on horses. Cash relates this scene to an oral tradition about the coming of horses to the Middle Columbia. The story, recorded during the late nineteenth century, tells of a war party starting out to raid the Shoshone to the south. The scouts reported that the Shoshone were mounted on strange animals. Instead of attacking, the war party piled all their weapons and, defenseless, gave everything they had to the Shoshone. In return, they obtained a stallion and mare.

The formality and clarity of Nez Perce discourse are displayed in the presentation. Keyser remarked that, in contrast to the biographic displays of individual warriors on the Plains, the use of several warrior figures to represent corporate entities is distinctive for the Columbia Plateau.

In "The Beaver Bowl" (CH.8) Keyser and Oregon Archaeological Society members George Poetschat, Helen Hiczun, Pat McCoy and Betty Tandberg focus on a bedrock beaver effigy bowl. Stone bowls with zoomorphic images have been found from the area of The Dalles, on the Columbia River to the Coast and northerly along the Coast and rivers as far as central Alaska.

also of growth and the promise of future abundance, the continuation of families and the whole ritual system they support".

Contrary to popular impressions, "*Kookapili*", the Hopi robberfly/trickster figure, does not carry a flute but often does have a prominent penis." *Lenhoya*, flute boy, is a totem of the Hopi Flute clans. *Maahu* is a cicada whose fluting brings warmth. Neither *Maahu* nor *Lenhoya* necessarily has an erect phallus...The humped back (detail) may refer to the actual shape of certain insects, such as the robberfly and cicada or to a backpack filled with seeds of all kinds.

A possible evolution from an earlier iconic significance is suggested by a cited presentation by Ann Phillips (2002). The curving headgear of many flute-player images are more like mountain sheep horns, rather than insect antennae. Petroglyphs of flute-playing mountain sheep have been recorded along the San Juan River. Phillips posits a transition from earlier rain-making practices associated with mountain sheep helpers, a practice probably shared by Hopi ancestors and other Uto-Aztecan speaking groups of the Southwest, Great Basin and California.

Finally, (CH 14), David S. Whitley discusses rock art, puberty rituals and traditional methods of inducing ASC in California, the Great Basin and the Columbia Plateau. Traditional methods may include various combinations of fasting with physical ordeals and ingestion of hallucinogens (jimsonweed, red ants, stinging nettles, and native tobacco). Whitley distinguishes between group puberty rituals characteristic of California and the Southwest and the individual vision quests found on the Columbia Plateau. In all areas, group or individual initiations were under the care and supervision of elders.

The preparatory pattern learned for the Columbia Plateau vision quest by puberty initiates of both sexes was followed in the later years of life by shamans and adults during crises. Rock art and rock structures (stone walls or cairns) were created during vision quests "but not always in the same location" (p.317). Whitley suggests that ritual movements during the vision quest follow routes from high elevations (where stone cairns were made) to lower ground (where rock art was placed). *

Talking with the Past demonstrates many times over how insights into the significance of traditional petroglyphs can come from critical reading of existing ethnographic sources, from listening carefully to the words of elders who learned the traditions, and from attention to how the petroglyphs may have fit into a traditional landscape. My thanks to Jim Keyser and his colleagues for sharing this work with us.

Mark Hedden, 2007

[**Editor's Note:* In support of Whitley's last proposition on ritual movements during vision quests, I observed a similar pattern of separation between rock piles and vision related paintings in The Dalles area. In 1953 I searched through a progression of high terraces north of the head of the Long Narrows on the Columbia River for paintings similar to what I had found below. On the highest terrace still within view of the Long Narrows, I found several cairns of water-worn pebbles piled up four feet with grass growing out from the interstices. Reaching the terrace with

cairns involved difficult climbs up a dry wash. I did not find an immediate nearby source for the pebbles. Several hundred feet lower, at the base of rimrock that borders what is now Horsethief Canyon State Park,, were weathered traces of red and white concentric circles and radiant arcs hidden from public view.]

***Talking with the Past: The Ethnography of Rock Art* retails for \$30 soft cover and \$40 hardcover; add \$4, shipping and handling, plus \$1 for each additional book ordered. Send check or money order to the Oregon Archaeological Society, PO Box 13293, Portland, OR 97213. For wholesale prices contact Cathy Poetschat at Poeschat@msn.com. Or contact website - oregonarchaeological.org and click on "Store".**

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***Book Review: Australian Apocalypse, The Story of Australia's greatest cultural monument.* By Robert G. Bednarik, Melbourne, 2006. Occasional AURA Publication No.19. 64pp, 139 Figures (69 in color). Available for ESRARA members @ a 50% discount (\$A 20 plus postage) from AURA P.O.Box 216, Caulfield South, VIC 3162, Australia OR at <http://mc2.vicnet.au/home/dampier/web/AA.html>**

"The public arena and the media, in particular, remain the only bastion against corrupt politics and the archaeological establishment, because both these entities fear public opinion, being highly dependent on it..."

Robert Bednarik 2006:43

Bednarik presents a narrative history of aboriginal massacre, of corporate heedlessness, of the inherent corruption and failures of governmental oversight by public servants eager to promote development, and of the massive ongoing environmental degradation that has resulted in just 35 years from these "developmental" insults in the Dampier Archipelago. The richest cultural heritage of rock art in the world is in NW Australia, estimated at "over a million" rock surfaces with petroglyphs and stone alignments, much of it destroyed, buried or displaced out of context on the edges of an industrial wasteland. These depressing aspects are balanced somewhat on the positive side by excellent illustrations of the petroglyphs, and a summary of Bednarik's innovative and exacting fieldwork and analysis since 1967.

Bednarik makes the case for Stone Age sea voyages between Timor and the Australian Continent by circa 60,000 years B.P.. He described the making of bamboo rafts, using only stone tools. He demonstrated the feasibility of crossings of the Timor Strait by successfully voyaging on these Stone Age rafts. He proposed deep time depths for certain Dream Time narratives which describe crossing on foot to islands by land

Spiritual significance is implicit in the choice of animal subjects that appear on these bowls. The species chosen can cross natural boundaries- e.g. from land to water (beaver, frog, turtle); air to land (birds) or who hunt from day to night (owls). Such bowls were part of the shaman's paraphernalia, and are used in tobacco ceremonies, curing rituals, pigment grinding and girl's puberty rituals. The beaver may have special relevance for obtaining the critical water levels needed during the salmon runs. Owls are metaphors for shamanic transformations. The beaver bowl discussed was identified in historic accounts as "Temana Wis Rock".

James Selam commented that the word *Tahmanawis* referred to "a spiritual power in a person. It's not in an object or anything. But making faces on an object will bring it. The face is this power. This is *Tahmanawis*."

Filed ethnographic notes in the Smithsonian that had been gathered during the nineteenth century, are used to understand petroglyphs and rock features in SW Oregon. In "House of the Rising Sun: Klamath Basin Rock Art" (CH 9), Don Hann and Gordon Bettles applied the words of "*Koalak'aka*", the daughter & granddaughter of Modoc chiefs, "who had in her mind all the lore her people possessed." Her stories recorded in 1883 by BAE linguists Jeremiah and Alma Curtin, in Indian Territory, Oklahoma during the Modoc Exile, She did not live to return to her homeland.

A cave feature with petroglyphs in or nearby, located in the center of Modoc territory, is identified as "The House of the Rising Sun". The associated petroglyphs feature... "curvilinear meanders, zigzags, V-shaped designs, circles and concentric circles...consistent with "phosphenes observed during altered states of consciousness (ASC)". However, the concentric circles were icons related to the disk/spirit of *Gmokam'*c, the sun and (the) sun-halo of his brother *Wawn'a'k*, culture heroes in Modoc myths.

Traditionalist Viola Kalama commented that "their religion was like ours (with).. medicine singing and the winter signing..."

Using an interpretative clue from Phillip Cash Cash, Jim Keyser & Mike Taylor in "The Blade Cuts Two Ways" (CH 10) analyzed the recently defined "Columbia Plateau Scratched Style". The style includes random scratches, incised abstracts, conventionalized iconic forms, modified natural rock cracks or fissures and modified edges (usually in the form of saw-tooth notches). These marks are related to accounts of "ritual gashing", practiced historically as "personal rituals, religious rites, contact with spirits, the acquisition and use of various types of supernatural power and other shamanic practices.(p210). Men, women and lay persons were documented doing such ritual gashing. At The Dalles an 1846 account observed gashing during shamans performances at the Winter Ceremony and the Chinook Wind Dance. Lewis & Clark observed a woman shaman gashing her arms in 1805 ...(She) may have been one of the "most widely feared and specialized shamans in the Plateau, known as *ixlipin*, said to receive their powers from the spirit of a dead shaman (p212-213). They conclude that "Scratched rock art and ritual gashing behavior co-occur spatially in the region and are likely temporally linked as well"...

Johannes Loubser (CH 11 "Rock Art, Physical Setting and Ethnographic Context") proposes a variety of approaches to "interpret very ancient rock art without an ethnographic context." He summarizes and applies the procedures to rock art contexts in South Africa, Tanzania, and the Columbia Plateau with insights into function and significance drawn from regional ethnographic clues. For example, the San shamans of the Kalahari Desert and the Sandowe of Tanzania danced to achieve ASC in public near large well made paintings on the walls of inhabited rock shelters. The Bantu Irangi agriculturalists of Tanzania painted with little care, often over earlier Sandowe work, and often hiding images in hidden recesses of rock surfaces that were away from their villages and difficult to access. The Irangi paintings were made during puberty rituals and other special occasions.

On the Columbia Plateau, Loubser found a pattern of motif placements and qualitative differences that take in the extremes between Sandowe and Irangi Bantu art. A majority of rock art on the Columbia Plateau, typically rough simple forms in hard to reach places often hidden from direct view, Loubser attributes to the work of adolescents on vision quests. However, petroglyphs placed on prominent rock features that exhibit high skill and visibility may be the work of shamans (men and women). The shamans used multiple spirit quests to obtain more powerful spirit helpers to cure sickness, control weather, locate game and lead public ceremonies.

On the distinctions between the "rough" marks (shamanistic) of adolescents, and the fully developed (shamanic) work of adults, Phillip Cash commented (p251): "What (the Nez Perce) call a trance is *Tuyakeen* and they say that the young medicine people, when they first come out with their songs, they revisit the experience they had when they were a child and the *Tuyakeen* is the trance they go into. It is the same experience repeated over, only now they are a mature adult and they tell them that the trance will better themselves in the days ahead, each time they experience that, it becomes more and more meaningful. So when they are children what they experience at that time does not mean anything. Only later in life --in adulthood-- does it become meaningful."

A European component (CH 12) on petroglyphs in North Italy is presented in "Nymphs, Waterfowl and Saints". Angelo Fossati develops a fascinating and plausible connection between Celtic oral traditions of heroes, Cu Chulainn, associated with the sun, and, Cernunnos, the hero of the forests and rock art in Camonica Valley. In oral traditions, he traces their translation into Christian hermit saints, and the persistence of the identification in local oral accounts into the 1930's.

Kelley Hays-Gilpin (CH 13) examines concepts of sexuality and fertility among the Pueblos of Southwestern U.S. She follows a discussion of Hopi and Zuni rock art with an analysis of two iconic figures: the maiden with butterfly hair whorls and phallic flute players. Each gender has its role in Pueblo society and ritual but sexual distinctions have little to do with rank or power. The sexual bias of nineteenth century ethnographers has skewed published ethnographies by downplaying or missing completely the reciprocal roles of women. "Images of the 'maidens' are a metaphor for all kinds of potentiality - primarily of the growing corn plant, but

corridors that have been submerged 10,500 years. He writes of aborigine elders who lived through the devastation of their culture and the environment they cared for and their despair. The despair became traumatic as the elders realized, through the total massacre in 1868 of unoffending Yaburrara, custodians of sacred sites with petroglyphs, that there was no reason for any traditional aborigine to expect a better fate. In the 1960s, Bednarik gained the trust of elders of neighboring groups (who were then in their eighties) and learned many sacred stories related to the petroglyphs. The traditions were always told with the injunction: "This is only for you, and you can only pass it on to one honest man.", a stricture he has obeyed.

The latter part of the book is devoted to the history of how he learned to influence public opinion and the media and how to apply what he has learned over thirty years. The book serves as a practical primer on what to expect and how to effectively counter the destructive forces of modern corporate society through attention to media and careful use of public opinion.

*

Please send spring newsletter items (Research and news articles, announcements, awards, endangered sites, book reviews, etc.)

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributor or the editor and not those of the **ESRARA** organization

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