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Protecting and sharing "the past"

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An international team of experts in archaeology, anthropology, museum studies and law will meet this weekend at SFU to begin collaborative work on a sweeping study on intellectual property and access to ancient materials and research data.

SFU archaeology professor George Nicholas is leading the $2.5 million, seven-year project involving a collaboration of experts from eight countries. He says the study will focus on such issues as who has the right to benefit from "the past."

Experts will look at how to develop new protocols to protect and share cultural heritage information – steps that will help many different stakeholders, from aboriginal communities and scientific organizations to government agencies.

Nicholas says there has been no thorough analysis of the issues to date, even though they increasingly shape the nature of research, access to information, First Nations policies and the public domain.

Among those attending:

- Joe Watkins, director of Native American Studies at the University of Oklahoma, who specializes in ethics in anthropology;
- Sven Ouzman, a senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, who is studying rock art and its relationship with graffiti;
- Eric Kansa, University of California, Berkeley, who developed the online Alexandria Archive for archaeological items and information access;
- John Welch, SFU associate professor in the archaeology department and school of research and environmental management, and a Canada Research Chair who specializes in community and landscape archaeology; and
- Dave Schaepe, of the Sto:lo Research and Resource Management Centre, who will speak on the importance of the project to the Sto:lo community.

The project, *Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage: Theory, Practice, Policy, Ethics* (IPinCH), is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

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