

## A Consideration of Theory, Principles and Practice in Collaborative Archaeology

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One of the primary goals of decolonizing archaeology is addressing the imbalance that exists between the discipline and descendant communities regarding who makes decisions about, who has access to, who controls information and who benefits from archaeological endeavours. Of the many so-called stakeholders in this discourse—from artefact collectors and sellers to the public at large (e.g. Renfrew 2000; Waxman 2008)—descendant communities have the most at stake regarding their heritage (e.g. Langford 1983; Watkins and Beaver 2008). This is especially true for Indigenous peoples for whom identity, worldview and well-being may depend upon retaining, protecting and using the tangible and intangible aspects of their cultural heritage.

Addressing the heritage concerns of descendant communities has been very much in the spotlight in recent decades and has contributed to many modes of engagement known variously as Indigenous archaeology, postcolonial archaeology, participatory archaeology and the like.<sup>1</sup> Often characterized as ‘working together’ in Indigenous archaeology,<sup>2</sup> cooperative initiatives have contributed positively to capacity building and the increasing involvement of members of descendant communities in the process of archaeology (Nicholas 2010), to the development of alternative heritage management strategies (e.g. Byrne 2008) and to greater cross-cultural understandings (e.g. Spector 1993).

Achieving an even more mutually satisfying and relevant archaeology requires moving from participation to collaboration. Although ‘collaboration’ is a form of ‘working together’, it takes a distinct trajectory. It differs not just in the degree of descendant community members’ participation, but also in their roles in project development, direction and decision-making.<sup>3</sup> This is one end of Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson’s (2008) ‘collaborative continuum’—with ‘participation’ at the other end. In the context of archaeological initiatives, involvement by various parties may be expressed by a range of responses, from *resistance* (goals developed in opposition) to *participation* (goals developed independently) to *collaboration* (goals developed jointly) (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008: 11; also Nicholas et al. 2010: 126–129).

Collaboration can be a challenging enterprise, requiring considerable investment of time and energy. It must recognise the contingencies of historical interactions between descendant groups and the colonial enterprise, and acknowledge the power imbalance that is often the legacy of those interactions (Nicholas and Hollowell 2008; Lydon and Rizvi 2010). Finally, within the context of archaeology, there are often substantially different worldviews and values to consider. For example, for many Indigenous peoples, there may be little if any distinction between

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1 For a summary of terms relating to ‘community projects’ (see Smith and Waterton 2009: 15–16).

2 For examples of Indigenous archaeology (see Davidson et al. 1995; Dongoske et al. 2000; Nicholas 2008; Nicholas and Andrews 1997; Roberts 2003; Swidler et al. 1997).

3 Also between institutions (e.g. the Reciprocal Research Network [Rowley et al. 2010]).

tangible and intangible heritage. This has profound implications for the management of heritage in a locally/culturally appropriate manner (see Brown 2008; Byrne 2008).

We see collaborative initiatives as vital to making archaeology more relevant and satisfying to descendant communities, whomever they are. While some communities look to archaeology as a means to learn more about their history, for others it is a means to address current issues (Mortensen and Hollowell 2009). These range from Dowdall and Parrish's (2002) collaborative approach to cultural resource management that incorporate the Kayasha Pomo sensibilities and values into highway development mitigation, to community collaborations with archaeologists to also effectively engage tourism, in which, as Ray (2009: 4) notes:

Indigenous groups request help to develop archaeological resources for public display, which helps small communities attract cultural tourism and governmental funding as well as raising the community's profile and claims to a particular identity.

No less important is collaborative archaeology's engagement with the discipline itself. One goal of collaborative field schools, Silliman (2008: 4–5) notes, is to “redirect contemporary archaeology in many ways that are more methodologically rich, theoretically interesting, culturally sensitive, community responsive, ethically aware, and socially just”. In that same context, Lightfoot (2008: 211) identifies two challenges to collaborative archaeology: “identifying the specific transformations that need to be made...to make [North American archaeology] a truly collaborative endeavor” and “implementing those changes...so that the entire field of archaeology may be touched and eventually transformed”.

In this article we explore the nature, means, and goals of collaborative ventures in archaeology. We begin by noting why collaboration is different from other approaches. Next, we provide examples of some effective methods to address community needs relating to cultural heritage,

illustrating different approaches to collaborative research. We conclude with a brief discussion on the future of collaborative research in archaeology, including challenges faced and benefits gained.

## **Collaboration in Action**

Three very different examples frame our discussion of collaborative archaeology. These involve: (1) Flinders University researchers and the Mannum Aboriginal Community Association in South Australia; (2) the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council of British Columbia; and (3) the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project. We point to real and practical issues that may play a significant role in the development of collaborative ventures such as opportunities for community economic development; long-term relationships between practitioners and communities; holistic approaches to cultural heritage management; understanding the legal, political and ethical contexts in which archaeology takes place and the benefits of multidisciplinary approaches.

### **Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Inc. Initiatives**

The Ngaut Ngaut Interpretive Project provides an example of ‘collaboration in action’. Ngaut Ngaut, known in the archaeological literature as Devon Downs, is one of Australia’s iconic sites. The Aboriginal community only refers to this significant place by its traditional language name, *Ngaut Ngaut*—an ancestral being.

Located on the Murray River in South Australia this rockshelter site was the first in Australia to be ‘scientifically’ excavated. The excavations, conducted by Norman Tindale and Herbert Hale, began in 1929 (Hale and Tindale 1930). Their research provided the first clear evidence for the long-term presence of Indigenous Australians in one place.

Prior to Hale and Tindale’s excavations little systematic research had been conducted in the field of Indigenous Australian archaeology. In fact, the thinking of the day was that Indigenous Australians were recent arrivals to Australia and consequently it was generally believed that the material culture of Indigenous Australians had not changed over time.

Hence, the research at Ngaut Ngaut provided a turning point in the way the Indigenous Australian archaeological record was viewed. Over 80 years have elapsed since this juncture in both Australian and archaeological history. These years have seen many changes in the archaeological discipline and cultural heritage management, as well as changes to the Ngaut Ngaut site. Tourism, for example, has since emerged as an economic development opportunity for the Indigenous community to share their culture to facilitate broader cross-cultural understanding and wider respect, as in many other Australian Indigenous communities.<sup>4</sup>

The principal collaborators in the project are the Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Inc. (MACAI) and researchers from Flinders University's Archaeology and Cultural Tourism Departments. Many factors contributed to this successful collaboration, which has achieved concrete results in less than 12 months. The most important factor was

the community's desire to continue the cultural tourism work started under the leadership of the late Richard Hunter, an important senior man from the Mid Murray, Riverland and Mallee Aboriginal community (fig. 1). Under Hunter's leadership MACAI constructed fences, boardwalks and other infrastruc-



Fig. 1. The late Richard Hunter, former chairperson of the Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Inc. and developer of Ngaut Ngaut as a cultural tourism site (photo reproduced with permission of Adam Bruzzone Photography).

ture to facilitate safe visitor access (and prevent further damage to the area) and as a result the park has become a popular tourist destination (Department for Environment and Heritage 2008).

4 Also see Indigenous Tourism Australia 2010; Mortensen and Nicholas 2010; Timothy and Nyaupane 2009.

The second important factor was the prior relationships between the researchers and the community. The long-term collaboration between community members and archaeologist/anthropologist Amy Roberts facilitated the development of more detailed interpretive materials by combining 'scientific' and cultural understandings. Roberts' scholarship and years of engagement with the community gave her the knowledge base and relationships to work with the community to identify the stories that needed to be told and importantly the ones that the community felt comfortable sharing with the public.<sup>5</sup> Years of development and negotiation with community members and other stakeholders would have been necessary without this cultural context. In this case other stakeholders included State government agencies with interests in the site and its ethno-historical materials. These agencies also provided financial and other forms of assistance.

Because of prior knowledge and relationships, it was possible not only to present the well-known 'scientific' archaeological history and relevant concepts for a public audience, but also to present the many intangible values that are at the core of the community's connections to this cultural landscape, such as Dreaming, oral history, Aboriginal group boundaries, 'totemic' issues, the cultural context of the rock art and 'bushtucker'.

There was a period of considerable thought and discussion surrounding appropriate content and what stories could or should be told. Addressing cultural sensitivities and related intellectual property issues has become increasingly important to cultural heritage practitioners in recent years (Brown 2008: 27; Mortensen and Nicholas 2010).

Additional discussions determined that a suite of interpretive materials would benefit the community's cultural tourism ventures and improve the educational outcomes for site visitors. These materials included tourism brochures, metal on-site signage, online publications and posters

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<sup>5</sup> Reflected by over a decade of reports (e.g. Hagen and Roberts 2008; Roberts 1998, 2003, 2007, 2008; Roberts et al. 1999).

for public educational purposes. Further community ownership of the project was strengthened through community artwork for the signage and related materials. The community also agreed to the publication of certain materials for an academic audience. As such, the project has employed multiple methods to present the interpretation of the site to the public (see Pearson and Sullivan 1995: 302).

A vital part of the negotiations about the interpretive themes involved MACAI members taking the researchers 'on-country' to explain where each story should be told and the required placement for each on-site sign along the boardwalk trail. The community views were given precedence on sign location over those of the tourism researcher, Lyn Leader-Elliot, which were based solely on considerations of visitor management and interaction.

### Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council Initiatives

The Stó:lō of British Columbia reside in the Fraser River Valley, a place where the 'land question' remains unresolved and without institutional structures reconciling the relationship of Indigenous and colonial rights and title (Harris 2002). The Stó:lō community, while diverse and complex, is commonly bound together in Indigenous activism and resistance and by efforts to rectify global legacies of colonialism as it affects them locally. A fundamental element to this framework of Stó:lō anti-colonialism is expressed in the *halq'eméylem* statement *S'ólh Téméxw te ikw'elò. Xyólhmet te mekw stám ít kwelát*<sup>6</sup>—"This is our Land. We have to take care of everything that belongs to us" (McHalsie 2007). The first part of this statement attests to Stó:lō land title; the second is a statement of caretaking responsibilities asserting that Stó:lō must look after everything that belongs to them. Cultural heritage, including archaeological resources, represents a significant set of those 'things' constituting *S'ólh Téméxw* (McHalsie 2007). Archaeology represents a politico-economic field where these efforts are being played out (Schaepe 2007). A result

6 This phrase, and others in this section, is written in *halq'eméylem*, the upriver dialect of the Halkomelem language spoken by Stó:lō.

of Stó:lō activism of the past two decades is an increase in collaborative relationships.

Starting from the 1980s the Stó:lō Tribal Council hired archaeologists and historians as staff members, embedding collaboration within their organizational structure and mandates. Justifying the value of and need for archaeology resulted from the recognition by Elders and cultural leaders that Stó:lō heritage was coming under increasing threat of destruction by rapid urban expansion and development affecting the cultural landscape of the Fraser River Valley (fig. 2). Archaeology and archaeologists brought tools for protecting and gaining recognition for their Stó:lō heritage, both tangible and intangible.

Acceptance of archaeology and its practitioners was not a given. Long-standing negative community-based perceptions of archaeology and archaeologists needed to be addressed. An effective means of controlling behaviour and counteracting negative perspectives was through developing and administering Stó:lō-founded heritage principles, policy and protocols that guide and place archaeological practice within a Stó:lō perspective.



Fig. 2. Stó:lō Nation archeology team members Riley Lewis (foreground) and Larry Commodore on high-elevation survey in the North Cascades, 1997 (photo by David Schaepe).

The Stó:lō Heritage Policy Manual (Schaepe et al. 2003), building from the preceding Stó:lō Heritage Policy (Stó:lō Tribal Council 1995), itemizes core principles, or *halq'eméylem* teachings, derived from *sxwōxwiyám*. *Sxwōxwiyám* refers to a period of the distant

past and the narratives of *Xexá:ls*, ‘the Transformers’. *Xexá:ls* travelled through *S’ólh Téméxw*, encountered individuals who were acting improperly and transformed them into stone—thus ‘making the world right’ (McHalsie et al. 2001). These transformation narratives establish laws of the land and guidance for proper behaviour. Some of these principles are included in the Stó:lō Heritage Policy Manual beginning with *xaxastexw te mekw’stam* (respect all things). Other *halq’eméylem* teachings are included in principles of policy and practice that establish a framework of Stó:lō governance and administration of their archaeological heritage. They also provide archaeologists working in *S’ólh Téméxw* with standards for achieving a respectful working relationship with the Stó:lō.

The policy provides a mechanism for ‘occupying the field’ of archaeological and cultural heritage management, situating the Stó:lō in a regulatory position as administrators of the Stó:lō Heritage Investigation Permit system. Although this system is currently not recognized by the government, respect for the system is generally realized by the archaeological community working in the area.

Protocols established within the policy integrate Stó:lō traditions of acknowledging the need to maintain good relations with the ancestral community. The understanding that ancestors still inhabit ancestral villages and still own the things they made (i.e. archaeological artefacts) requires archaeologists to follow Stó:lō protocols when excavating to maintain good relations between living and ancestral worlds.

The past 20 years have witnessed increasingly close relations between the Stó:lō and academic researchers. The Nation has co-hosted field schools in history, ethnography and archaeology with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, University of Saskatchewan and UCLA. This increasingly direct involvement in academic research has led to the identification of research questions relevant to the Stó:lō. Building and maintaining these relationships has resulted in increased capacity in the knowledge economy and broad-based awareness of Stó:lō culture and history. The sharing of this

knowledge is manifest in First Nations-based academic literature and conferences such as *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Carlson et al. 2001) and the biannual *Stó:lō—People of the River Conference*.

The Stó:lō recognize and have experienced a range of collaborations: shallow to deep; good to bad; near to far; short and long term. These collaborations need to be managed on a case-by-case basis, as unique relationships. Stó:lō management ideals are based on a theory of existing right, title and ownership of Stó:lō heritage and from a position of equality.

To understand *S'ólh Téméxw* and its operative principles is to open the door to recognize archaeology as a discipline that can build knowledge and aid in 'knowing one's history'—a basic principle of self-determination within Stó:lō social and political relations. Collaborative engagement represents one strategy taken by the Stó:lō in moving long-standing colonial barriers and shaping relations of archaeological practice in *S'ólh Téméxw*, their world.

### IPinCH Project Community-Based Initiatives

A different approach to collaboration is represented by the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project. This seven-year international, multi-sectoral research collaboration provides research, knowledge and resources assisting academic scholars, descendant communities and others in negotiating equitable terms of cultural heritage research and policies. The membership, of which we are a part, come from 8 countries and include more than 50 archaeologists, museum and cultural tourism specialists, lawyers, ethicists, and others, along with 25 partner organizations. IPinCH is exploring the diverse values that underlie attitudes, decisions and actions to facilitate fair and ethical exchanges of knowledge relating to cultural heritage, especially that of Indigenous peoples.

The project takes a ground-up approach to identifying community concerns over their intangible heritage through case studies that utilize

a community-based participatory research methodology (Hollowell and Nicholas 2008). A community partner identifies issues of concern and works with IPinCH team members developing a proposal. A case study may include focus groups, community surveys, archival research, elder interviews or other information-gathering activities. Once the study is complete, the community vets the research products and data to determine what information can be released to the IPinCH team to assist with its research agenda. Community retention and control of the raw information ensures that no sensitive or secret/sacred information is released. The results of the studies will be published and/or disseminated by the case study teams, and also feed into eight IPinCH working groups for broader theoretical and philosophical analysis to aid in refining and reformulating theory, practice, policy and ethics at critical intersections of knowledge, culture and rights.

Currently eleven community-based projects are underway, with others in development.<sup>7</sup> These address a variety of intellectual property-related issues. Four are briefly described here:

*A case of access: Inuvialuit engagement with the Smithsonian's MacFarlane Collection*

The Inuvialuit of northern Canada have had little contact with hundreds of artefacts made and used by their ancestors that were collected 150 years ago and now reside in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Natasha Lyons and partners, including the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre, Parks Canada, the Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center, and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre are working with the community to reconnect Elders and youth with those cultural items (fig. 3). The project will allow these Elders an opportunity to study the items, including clothing, pipes, and tools, record their knowledge, and then return that knowledge to the Inuvialuit.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information, see [http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/project\\_components](http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/project_components) (also Mortensen and Nicholas 2010).

### *Developing policies and protocols for the culturally sensitive intellectual properties of the Penobscot Nation of Maine*

For the Penobscot Indian Nation of Indian Island, Maine, not all knowledge is created equal. Knowledge and information related to ancestral sites, sacred places and places of cultural significance hold a special status within the Penobscot community. This culturally sensitive information has been impacted by even the most well-intentioned archaeologists, planners and government agencies working with the Nation. Martin Wobst and Julie Woods of the University of Massachusetts will collaborate with Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Bonnie Newsom and the Nation to identify issues it faces regarding intellectual property associated with the Penobscot cultural landscape. Results will include strategies for negotiations of agreements and protocols, cultural sensitivity workshops for non-tribal members, and a long-range stewardship and management plan for Penobscot cultural information.

### *Moriari cultural database*

Moriari, the Indigenous people of Rekohu (Chatham Islands, New Zealand), have developed a multi-layer database to tie together research on Moriari identity, cultural heritage protection, land use, and resource management in culturally sensitive ways. This study, led by Maui Solomon and Susan Thorpe, promotes economic sustainability and informs land use decisions, to make heritage and intellectual property protection relevant, respectful and ethical for Moriari (fig. 4). Its vital element is the Indigenous structure, grounded in Elder knowledge, which ensures the research methodology, ownership and uses are controlled and cared for by Moriari.

### *The journey home: Guiding intangible knowledge production in the analysis of ancestral remains*

This study stems from the Journey Home Project, a repatriation of ancestral remains from the University of British Columbia Lab of Archaeology (LOA) to the Stó:lō Nation/Tribal Council of southwestern British Columbia, Canada. This collaboration includes Susan Rowley (LOA), David Schaepe and Sonny McHalsie (Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre)



Fig. 3. At the Smithsonian Institution, Mervin Joe and Karis Gruben examine an Inuvialuit fishing rod from their community collected 150 years ago (photo reproduced with permission of Kate Hennessy).



Fig. 4. On Rekohu (Chatham Islands, NZ) IPinCH Workshop attendees register *taonga Moriori* (artefacts and treasured items) for a new exhibition inside Kopinga *marae* (photo reproduced with permission of Susan Thorpe).

working with the Stó:lō House of Respect Care-taking Committee as cultural advisors in this dialogue. For the Stó:lō, knowing as much as possible about these ancestors informs their process (fig. 5). Opportunity recently arose for scientific study, stimulating a Stó:lō-LOA dialogue touching on multiple issues of scientific process, knowledge production and intellectual property. Numerous questions central to the Stó:lō's relationship with both their ancestors and the LOA are essential to this study's aims to provide guidelines for generating knowledge within a mutually acceptable framework of authority, control and use.

These and other initiatives vital to achieving the goals of the IPinCH project relate to understanding and resolving intellectual property issues. They also reflect a new model of constructive engagement that: (a) addresses the needs of communities and scholars in a fair and equitable fashion; (b) prioritizes community values and needs in research processes; (c) ensures community partners benefit directly from the research; and (d)



Fig. 5. Reciprocal Research Network Community Liaison Workshop 2009 (l-r): Lillian Hunt, Ulrike Radermacher, Lawrence Isaac, Susan Rowley, Wendy Ritchie, Dave Houghton, Frank Andrew, Herb Joe Jr. (hidden), Jody Felix, June Sparrow, Joanne Kienholz (photo reproduced with permission of David Campion).

guarantees local values are upheld throughout the flow of research data that is generated during the case study.

## Moving Forward

Within the realm of archaeology and cultural heritage studies, there are substantial challenges to understanding issues relating to tangible and intangible heritage. These have played out in various ways and in different contexts around the world, including reburial and repatriation, concerns about dissemination of research results and questions about who benefits.

Collaborative research can provide a means to address some of these issues in new ways, and has proven to be effective in some cases in achieving an archaeology that is culturally sustainable, more relevant, more equitable and more satisfying to all parties involved. Projects that are based on more cooperative, less hierarchical methods (e.g. Conkey and Gero 1997; Denzin et al. 2008; Spector 1993; also see special issue of *Collaborative Anthropologies* 2009) may yield a deeper understanding of community values and perspectives, essentially re-anthropologizing archaeology by reminding archaeologists that material culture is the means, not the endpoint. The result of a collaborative project may (a) provide a sense of personal satisfaction by those engaged; (b) have recognized value to community; (c) facilitate subsequent interactions with community by others; (d) benefit participants and the larger community; and (e) support a commitment to a long-term relationship (Nicholas et al. 2007: 293).

At the same time, the challenges of developing and implementing collaborative projects can be substantial. Collaboration is difficult because it requires sharing, building trust and respect. It involves losing some element of direct control, and is also time and resource intensive (Nicholas et al. 2007: 291). Accustomed to developing project goals and results in an academic vacuum, archaeologists often do not know how to involve groups in the process of creating the research goals, methodological approaches and ultimate products. The realities of collaboration

are that (a) it may be difficult to achieve a willingness and ability to share/relinquish control of project; (b) community priorities may be very different and require a change in research orientation entirely; (c) academics seeking tenure have a lot riding on obtaining and completing grants; (d) granting agencies may be wary of 'collaborative' projects; (e) it can be very difficult to transfer grant funds from university to community; and (f) the eventual outcome may be uncertain (Nicholas 2010).

Collaboration is not for everyone, and in some cases it may not be the best or most appropriate approach. Also, collaborative archaeology is not necessarily any more ethical than other approaches, but it does recognize ethical concerns. However, archaeologists should not resist collaborative endeavours due to a perceived 'loss of control'; they should instead consider the richer transformations that may occur as a result of a real engagement with communities. Indeed, as illustrated by the examples presented here, collaborative projects offer an important avenue for developing new understandings of cultural heritage. They can also provide a stronger sense of engagement between the local community and the academy.

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