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Public and Community Archaeology in the Pacific Northwest

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Public archaeology in the United States' Pacific Northwest entangles academics, public and Tribal agency archeologists, contractors, educators, students, museum curators, and volunteers. While the connections between these players have changed through time, the regulatory, research, and community aspects of public archaeology have always been linked in some fashion. The foundation of this connection is the laws and policies that protect archaeological resources at the federal, state, and Tribal levels, and through local city, county, and Tribal ordinances (Griffin and Churchill 2003; Deur and Butler 2016). The practitioners give agency to public archaeology, including the many who contribute to research in public spaces and interact with the public in a variety of ways. Museum curators and exhibitors also have embraced public archaeology, highlighting artifacts and belongings of past generations, and interpreting them in anthropological and other ways (Moyer 2006; Flexner 2016; Kale 2017).

While published programming on public archaeology is rare in urban settings in the Pacific Northwest (Warner et al. 2014; Wilson 2015), there has been a continuous, albeit sporadic, program of public engagement tied to archaeology. Some of the earliest historic preservation work in the Pacific Northwest was tied to the Smithsonian Institution's involvement in the planning of Bonneville Dam, which led directly to the founding of the Oregon State Museum of Anthropology and the first archaeological permitting law in Oregon (Griffin 2009:92). This connection among cultural resource management (CRM),

the public, and museums, carries through to the present, although with changes in attention to the curation crisis, collections management, and other issues (Moyer 2006; Childs and Benden 2017). Further, the ways in which archaeologists have interacted with the "public" has changed with shifts from more educational and public outreach to increasing critical and multivocal approaches (Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez 2015). The development of American Indian tribal capacity to provide CRM services including archaeology has increased dramatically over the past 30 years, and partnerships among agencies, academics, and Tribes are now more common.

An excellent example of the integration of multiple communities of Pacific Northwest archaeological practitioners in a single setting is Portland State University's (PSU) Archaeology Roadshow. Pioneered by Dr. Virginia Butler, since 2011 this program has integrated agencies, tribes, museums, private-sector CRM firms, archaeology volunteers, elementary schools, and the students of PSU's Public Archaeology class, to provide exhibits, hands-on activities, and an opportunity for collectors to interact with experts in artifact identification. The author and other National Park Service (NPS) archaeologists and curators have participated as exhibitors and experts every year in the Portland, Oregon, version (Figure 1). The one-day event has also been held in Burns and Bend in eastern and central Oregon. As an archaeologist who straddles the academic and agency sides, I believe the Roadshow is an invigorating arena that allows cultural resources specialists and



Figure 1. The author and Amy Clearman at the National Park Service booth at the 2017 Archaeology Roadshow, Portland State University (Portland State University, Anthropology).

volunteers to engage in outreach with the public while visiting with the many friends and colleagues who attend as exhibitors and experts. Its outward educational and interpretive goals reinforce the building of a diverse community of archaeologists, cultural experts, and museum practitioners. In a microcosm, it is the breadth of archaeological performance and practice in the Pacific Northwest.

Another important focus of archaeological outreach occurs at protected historical sites throughout the region. Fort Vancouver has a long history of public archaeology, including the integration of multiple communities of practitioners within a program of research guided by professional archaeologists (Wilson et al. 2020). While theoretical and methodological approaches have changed, the connection to the public at Fort Vancouver has continued. Archaeology was initiated by NPS archaeologist Louis Caywood in 1947. Caywood employed unskilled laborers and university students in his search to relocate and document the fur trade fort (Wilson et al. 2020:49). Caywood's explorations garnered considerable

newspaper buzz and stimulated public interest (Wilson 2015:225). Kardas and Larrabee's 1969 excavations at the Fort Vancouver Village included professional archaeologists and students of Bryn Mawr and the University of Washington (Kardas 1971). The massive excavations in the 1970s by Hoffman and Ross included the use of volunteers as laborers, including students from the Multnomah School of the Bible and the Oregon Archaeological Society. Lester Ross (1975) even tried his hand at interpretive writing during this project exploring a "hypothetical narrative" of the gentleman's dining customs at Fort Vancouver for the sesquicentennial edition of *Clark County History*.

The massive contract archaeology project associated with the Interstate 5/State Route 14 Project integrated university salvage/contracting arms with federal transportation archaeology. David and Jennifer Chance wrote their first report on the excavations at the Fort Vancouver Village and Vancouver Barracks with the "lay public" in mind, suggesting a desire for public outreach (Chance and Chance 1976). Many university

students participated as paid workers in this project and much of the artifact identification work was conducted by students at the University of Idaho.

Avocational archaeologists have had a major role in public archaeology at Fort Vancouver. Harvey Steele and Charles Hibbs (1985:1) identify the Jail Project as a “milestone in citizen archaeology,” with the role of direct public involvement identified as necessary to garner public support for archaeology, including legislative funding of programs related to archaeological sites. Another field school in the 1980s was conducted at the Carpenter Shop by Oregon State University. The current NPS public archaeology program began in 2001 with a field school that embraced interactions with the visitors to the park. The Northwest Cultural Resources Institute (NCRI) was created as a cooperative partnership based at Fort Vancouver and its affiliated properties. NPS staff, university professors, and subject matter experts facilitate research and training, offer expertise, and support other educational endeavors using National Parks and other protected spaces as laboratories.

An important partnership of the NCRI is with PSU, for cooperative research and training. This partnership conducts research that contributes to the public understanding of Oregon’s and Washington’s historic period (including at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site and other NPS parks); develops public understanding of archaeology and history; and stimulates scientific research on NPS-protected sites and areas. It expands the education of students in historical archaeology and heritage management (Wilson 2015:231).

As part of the development of the NCRI, the public archaeology field school was created. NPS interpreters and archaeologists trained students in public interpretation, using NPS guidance and a unique model of public engagement (Marks 2011; Wilson 2015). As part of this program, NPS staff developed a “Kids Dig!” program that introduced children to archaeological field

work and interpretation, using a mock dig site. Field school students served as assistant interpreters in this program (Wilson 2015). In addition, students engaged with the visiting public to share with them the academic research goals, field methods, and educational values of the work. They were encouraged to develop a dialogue with the visitors to seek their personal connections to the site (Marks 2011; Wilson 2015). A variety of partnerships with educators, disadvantaged communities, and Tribes has brought different stakeholders into contact with archaeology as members of the public or as heritage interpreters (Figure 2). Of note, the use of archaeology to explore the Fort Vancouver Village has brought new perspectives on this essential and diverse community of fur traders (Wilson 2015, 2018). Sixteen field schools have been run with numerous partners and anchored by its academic partners: PSU and Washington State University Vancouver.

While there are many other public and community archaeology examples in the Pacific Northwest, the Archaeology Roadshow and Fort Vancouver’s public archaeology programs demonstrate the entanglement of government, agency, academic, and private sectors in connecting archaeology to the public. These public partnerships with agencies, universities, Tribes, and community partners can improve understanding and stewardship of heritage sites and their constituent archaeological resources. These partnerships can engage many diverse stakeholders tied to traditional, Indigenous, and other narratives about place (Wilson 2015, 2018). Partnerships allow archaeologists to bridge gaps between stakeholders and archaeology and create new means to interpret and discuss objects.

Increasingly, interpretation of archaeological resources emphasizes the role of audience-centered interpretation and the engagement of diverse audiences as “stakeholders and primary contributors to the meaning-making process, rather than as passive consumers” (NPS 2017:1). Archaeologists should embrace this goal in public



Figure 2. Portland State University student, D. Woolsey, interpreting to visiting children at the 2010 Public Archaeology Field School at the Fort Vancouver Village (National Park Service).

archaeology to explore different meanings and the truth of past historical narratives. Plumer (2018) has found that the public in the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area has a high awareness of archaeology but with varying perspectives on its relevance or how they connect with it. Archaeologists are well positioned to explore how the past has relevance to different segments of the population. As students of people's past practices based on their belongings, archaeologists can explore contemporary significance and diverse audience perspectives recognizing that historical, cultural, and environmental legacies evolve through time.

Beyond exposing myths associated with social/collective truths, archaeologists should have a stronger role in connecting people's history, identity, and perspectives to the social practices of ancestral peoples and illuminating aspects of heritage that have been silenced or are hidden (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012). Archaeologists have begun and should continue to directly engage with Indigenous and other stakeholder communities to decolonize interpretation,

seek social justice and equality, and address shared research goals (Kryder-Reid et al. 2018; Cody 2019; Gonzalez and Edwards 2020). Other projects should build on the engagement of artifact collectors and private property owners to aid in CRM, like Tipton's (2020) recent study. Others should explore the heritage values of communities tied to colonial sites like Clearman (2020) has done at the "first" Fort Vancouver.

The prospects for public archaeology in the Pacific Northwest are great. The community I see at the Archaeology Roadshow is the core of a growing movement. By engaging in partnerships with diverse stakeholders and increasing the connectivity of these practitioners and segments of the public, archaeology will continue in its varied roles and likely become more relevant in the future. Archaeologists will address, in a material way, the changing notions of what is important about heritage, what is worth telling, and what should be preserved.

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