

FIRST PERSPECTIVE

First Perspective is a new offering in The Midden. Focusing on contributions and perspectives from First Nations in British Columbia, this column will provide a forum for an Aboriginal voice in relationship to matters related to archaeology in its many forms and presentations.

The Museum of Anthropology and the Partnership of Peoples

Neil Miller & Wayne Point

In the spring of 2006 the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (UBC) began a multi-year project co-developed with three First Nations organizations: Musqueam Indian Band, Sto:lo Nation and the U'mista Cultural Society on Vancouver Island. The goal of this collaboration is to create a research network that would enable communities and individuals to access material within the Laboratory of Archaeology (LOA). Named the Reciprocal Research Network, this project, once finished, will provide a database of at least 500,000 artifacts from the LOA collection. The first phase of this project includes the employment of two First Nations people who will be participating in the data entry of the archaeological collection at the university. Wayne Point of the Musqueam Band and Neil Miller, Penelakut Tribe member have been working since the beginning of this project. Asked about their role within the project from a First Nations perspective, Wayne and Neil offered the following responses in relationship to the Partnership of Peoples Project.

With substantial exposure to university life and urban communities, Wayne perceives his role not exclusively as a First

Nations person, preferring to see himself as a member of the team who shares interest in the past, valuing the careful manner in which these things, much of which is his history, is taken care of. Sharing Wayne's background, Neil agreed, recognizing the merits of the project. "Wayne and I are examples of the theme of the project, the collaboration between First Nations and UBC" Miller said while reflecting on the Partnership of Peoples. Speaking on the benefits of the project, Point indicated that having a more educated public would hopefully facilitate the protection and conservation of archaeological sites in British Columbia. Point added that this would be true for the general population in addition to his own community where collaboration happens frequently with the university.

Building on the information sharing aspect of the project, Miller added that this type of project and development can be seen as a step towards reuniting First Nations with their material past. With the university's internationally known Northwest Coast collection and the challenges of storing and managing such a diversity of items, the creation of this research network can provide the tools for First Nations to see and have access to their history. What

does that mean on the ground for those partner organizations? Miller notes: "The infrastructure and resources of a large institution like the University of British Columbia can facilitate the flow and dissemination of information in relationship to archaeological research." On a more direct level, the project and the data created will put in the hands of many First Nations information that has been sequestered away for many, many years.

Wayne Point calls the territory around UBC his home. As a Musqueam member, he has represented his band frequently with the university and professional organizations. Wayne has worked on many community projects within the framework of anthropology and archaeology.

Neil Miller is a Penelakut Tribe member from Vancouver Island and holds a Bachelors Degree with a major in anthropology. He has worked in field settings in a variety of roles for the past 9 years on select Gulf Islands and the big island.
