

Archaeology News

The 2008 BC Archaeology Forum—in Review

Marina La Salle and Natasha Lyons



This year's Forum was hosted by the Stó:lo Research and Resource Management Centre in Chilliwack over the weekend of October 17 to 19th, 2008. After a reception on Friday evening, presentations began Saturday morning at the Richard Malloway Memorial Longhouse with a welcome and introduction by Stó:lo Elder and longhouse host, Frank Malloway. Frank discussed the contributions of anthropologists, such as Oliver Wells and Brent Galloway, to recording the history of the Chilliwack people, and suggested that memories like those recorded of Chief Louie remain very valuable to his descendants. Despite the subtleties and difficulties of translating between Halq'eméylem and English languages and cultures, Frank stressed that members of the Stó:lo community are grateful for the historical and ongoing role played by anthropologists in aiding the process of recording and renewing their cultural knowledge.

Community Partnerships

Frank's words foreshadowed one of the recurrent themes in most presentations at the Forum, that of relationships—between objects, places, stories, and especially between people. Within the broader context of archaeology, the last few decades have born witness to an increasing awareness of the incalculable value of evaluating archaeological evidence alongside traditional knowledge, oral histories, and local anecdotal stories, to achieve a more holistic understanding of the past and its role in the present. This awareness has often resulted from the forging of relationships between archaeologists and descendant communities. Indeed, building partnerships between archaeologists and local First Nation communities on field projects was certainly stressed by the academic community at this year's Forum.

Presenting on behalf of the 2008 University of Northern BC, Farid Ra-

hemtulla described the Field School held at Stuart Lake that has been developed collaboratively with Nak'azdli First Nation and the Cariboo Tribal Council. Farid noted that the UNBC field school is providing a unique opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to participate in the heritage of the Cariboo Tribal Council, by bridging the gap between traditional ecological knowledge and methods used in archaeology to try to understand the past. This has in part been accomplished by incorporating Indigenous Elders as instructors and by exposing students to such skills as dipnetting, pit cooking, bark stripping, plant use, and the construction of northern Secwepmec dwellings. Additional goals of the field school included providing archaeological training to community members to build employment skills, as well as developing a basic culture history sequence for the region. This year, there were six UNBC and seven Nak'azdli First Nations students on the field school, which involved excavation at Sowchea Reserve focused on probable earth oven which may have been used to heat-treat chert.

Other university-led field projects presented at the Forum showed that such community partnerships are becoming "the norm." Sarah Johnston reported on this past summer's joint Simon Fraser University and Tla'Amin First Nation Field School, which represents the first year of a collaborative and interdisciplinary heritage project designed to contribute to the Nation's heritage agenda. While traditional use knowledge of Tla'Amin territory has been relatively well documented, it is considerably less well-known archaeologically. The field school excavated at Kleh Kwa Num (Scuttle Bay), revealing artifacts from the 1920s and 30s stretching back to precontact times, as well as smoking rack-like features. The site itself, being fairly accessible, attracted a great deal of local attention, with school

tours and media coverage drawing several hundred visitors. Meanwhile, the survey portion of the field school focused on Grace Harbour. Twenty-seven kilometres were traversed by foot survey and three sites cored for dating and stratigraphic assessment; several intertidal features referred to collectively as "sea gardens" were also identified. A variety of microblade cores were recovered during this survey, as well as strange "blue obsidian," which the SFU team is eager to investigate further.

Douglas Hudson presented on his recent work at University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), where he has been working for several years with the In-shuck-ch (Douglas Lake) people at the head of Harrison Lake. Through precontact and contact times, this has been a very active area for travel between Coastal and Interior Salish cultural areas. Recent fieldwork located a 1200-year-old village at the head of the lake and a 6200-year-old fishing site along Sloquet Creek, as well as documented the traditional use of grease trails. Building on this year's research, Doug is looking towards organizing a field school next year to add to the culture historical narrative of the region.

The CRM Community

Several presentations highlighted the different aspects of cultural resource management (CRM) in the province. CRM represents most of the archaeology done in BC, and is in a sense a mixed blessing insofar as this work provides the chance to learn more about ancient history, yet destroys the record in the process of keeping one step ahead of development. This work provides the most immediate, on-the-ground archaeological results in our region, which can in turn inform how heritage, and the environment generally, should be dealt with in the future.

Representing the only consulting firm in the 2008 Forum line-up, Simon Kaltenreider, Senior Archaeologist at I.R. Wilson, presented a year in review for this firm and the 196 projects it handled over the last twelve months. These included a survey of the Northern Gateway Pipeline from Edmonton to Kitimat, the excavation of site DdRu-81 in Victoria where two to three dozen cobble hearths were discovered, and the excavation and monitoring of DcRu-1151 in Esquimalt Lagoon, which

revealed a range of features including a possible house structure, a roasting pit, and a picture-perfect cobble hearth dating 2400 to 2800 years BP. The firm also worked on excavations at the 4000 year old Park Farm site (DhRq-22) in Pitt Meadows—a site which, the SFU team may be interested to know, also yielded a strange blue obsidian....

Dave Schaepe provided an update on recent work at the Stó:lo Research and Resource Management Centre. Operating within the Stó:lo heritage policy protocols, staff at the centre are working on repatriated and donated collections, in addition to traditional use, traditional knowledge, and applied archaeology studies. Within this framework, archaeology is viewed as part of a broader set of relationships to history, culture, and language, reflecting a broadly "holistic" approach. The current permitting process has generally been quite successful, with fifty to seventy permits issued each year over the last eight.

Daryl Fedje presented the 2008 field research of Parks Canada, which was particularly focused on coastal survey, including intertidal and subtidal testing. At Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve (NPR), a cave 100 m above present sea level revealed a hearth dated to 11,000 years BP. Elsewhere in the area, linear boulder arrangements thought to be clam gardens were identified, features previously unknown in this region. In Pacific Rim NPR, Parks mapped the degree of coastal erosion at 52 sites, while in Gulf Islands NPR, intensive field survey was completed to develop a sea level curve for this area. This research identified several new sites, such as at Sidney Hook spit, a stretch of beach that was stable land for over 4000 years. In this area, a slate point was recovered 1.5 m into the intertidal, and six of nine beach sites had intact deposits. Overall, 21 new sites were recorded, and 20 previously identified were revisited; of these, several sites are eroding and require stabilization, especially the well-known site at Pender Canal.

Peter Locher, presenting on his graduate research completed at SFU, provided a geoarchaeological review of Pitt Lake and Pitt River post-glacial land forms. By coring through 30 m of Katzie slough, Peter was able to recover good environmental data, fresh and salt water layers, and ash to date these deposits.

Indeed, dates of 10,000 to 8,000 BP were retrieved in layers 12 m lower than the present-day sea level, prompting Peter to stress that "sterile" glacial till isn't necessarily sterile at all, since early beach deposits can lay underneath. It is thus critical to do a thorough review of the local geology well before doing an impact assessment to identify buried land forms that shovel tests can't reach. These issues need to be pressed with the Archaeology Branch, since deeply buried landforms with intact archaeological material may remain unknown unless investigated.

Inter-Community Outreach

Finding ways to relate archaeological news and increasing awareness of heritage conservation amongst the public has been a mandate of the Archaeological Society of British Columbia since its inception. Therefore, it was a pleasure this year to have Nick Russell provide an overview of a recent book entitled *Victoria Underfoot*, edited by Nick alongside Brenda Clark and Nicole Kilburn. Nick started the *The Midden* for the ASBC, now 40 years ago, and has been involved in public awareness of heritage in Victoria for years. *Victoria Underfoot* looks at the geology, geography, environment, flora, fauna, and archaeology of the Victoria area; as Nick said, "the point of the book is to make archaeology accessible to the layperson." Nick hopes that this book will serve as inspiration for others to produce local histories that garner public interest in and support for heritage conservation in the province.

Brenda Gould and Kim Berg of the British Columbia Association of Professional Archaeologists (BCAPA) reviewed the recent plans and activities of this organization. Membership is up in all categories, with more than a hundred members, of which 50% have professional status. Benefits of membership include building community and awareness through workshops, networking, advertising, and having a protocol for grievance procedures. The BCAPA's short-term goals include partnering with Kwantlen First Nation on a field school and forging closer ties with the Archaeological Society of British Columbia. Longer term goals include raising membership amongst First Nations, students, and academics, along with raising the professional profile of the association. Towards these ends, the BCAPA

participated in the Society for American Archaeology 2008 meeting, published a series of newsletters, and formed new legislation and CRM committees to address the lack of heritage conservation in the province. These and other topics will be on the floor for discussion at the BCAPA's AGM coming up on the 28th of February 2009 in Victoria (see <http://www.bcapca.bc.ca/>).

Sue Rowley and her team provided an update on the Reciprocal Research Network (RRN) at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC. The history of artifact collecting in British Columbia over the last three hundred years has meant that cultural heritage from this region is dispersed globally in museums and private collections. The RRN project seeks to reconnect these geographically estranged collections with local communities through a digital forum, built on the cornerstone principles of collaboration, co-development, and ensuring a user-friendly interface to enable social networking and researching. For more information on the RRN and its progress, visit http://www.moa.ubc.ca/RRN/about_overview.html.

Michael Blake outlined recent fieldwork at the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses of UBC. Local field schools were held both at Myra Canyon in the Okanagan Valley, led by Rick Garvin and Maury Williams, and at Musqueam IR 1, directed by Andrew Martindale, Sue Rowley and Leona Sparrow of Musqueam. Sandra Peacock and David Pokotylo have partnered with Brian Kooyman (U. Calgary) and Richard Hebda (RBCM) to investigate root-roasting features and ancient plant use in the Hat Creek Valley; this summer's excavations focused on the White Rock Springs (EeRj-226) locality. Further afield, Garvin is also involved in Jane Kelley's Chihuahua Archaeology Project in Northwest Mexico; Mike Blake and colleague Bruce Benz (Texas Wesleyan) were awarded a SSHRC to investigate the distribution, antiquity, and dispersal of maize in ancient Latin America; Zhichun Jing is currently working at Huanbei, a middle period Shang Dynasty capital in China; and Thomas Hikade is investigating Hierakonpolis, the pre-dynastic capital of Upper Egypt. Still, most graduate students at UBC are focused on archaeology back home in British Columbia, and we look forward to

hearing more about their work at UBC's Archaeology Day on March 14th.

The last act of the day was a panel discussion hosted by George Nicholas of SFU, who is directing an MCRI-funded project studying "Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage." George reviewed some of the more common commercial uses of cultural heritage—from Ancient Grains cereal to rock art T-shirts, and beyond—followed up with statements from the panel speakers, and then the discussion was opened to the floor. Dialogue was at times emotionally charged, with participants expressing concern over the new Archaeology Branch policy requiring that report authors sign over copyright to the Branch (or they won't be able to access RAAD), which was described by one person as "forced reciprocity." Participants also expressed frustration over not knowing who to ask for permissions in publishing research, especially in areas where First Nations territories overlap. By the end of the discussion, it was clear that there are many different opinions and questions about exactly what "intellectual property" is. George stressed that this project seeks to understand these various perspectives within and outside of Western legal definitions, rather than dictate what "the answers" are, and that the above issues will form part of ongoing discussions (for more information, visit <http://cgi.sfu.ca/~ipinch/cgi-bin/>).

The Forum Mandate

The 2008 Forum was, as always, a coming-together of people working in and concerned about heritage in the province. The day's line-up was well-attended by the academic community, particularly SFU and UBC; however, there were notably fewer CRM archaeologists present than in past years, and only a few First Nations representatives in the audience. The Archaeology Branch was also absent from the presentations.

Last year's review of the 2007 B.C. Archaeology Forum (*The Midden* 39.(4):3-6) stated that "archaeological heritage in this province is in a state of crisis." This situation has not changed.

In the absence of federal legislation concerning heritage conservation, and with an unenforced *Heritage Conservation Act* in this province, what this year's Forum demonstrated was just how critical

it is for archaeologists, First Nations, and local communities to unite together in our shared concern for how archaeology is managed. The swell of community partnerships between First Nation communities and archaeologists, and the increased focus on positive media attention of these projects, highlights that these relationships can be very productive in effectively garnering support for heritage stewardship amongst local communities and the wider public. It is just as important to ally with the Archaeology Branch rather than against it, for its staff has faced the same crisis as archaeological professionals, through a systematic decrease in funding and governmental support. However, for the Forum to be successful, all affected communities need to come together to relay their perspectives and dialogue about critical issues. When significant sectors of the heritage community are absent from discussions, one has to ask if the Forum is performing its mandate. More discussion is needed on this issue, in addition to pressing heritage concerns in the province.

In light of the foregoing, it is worth repeating a message from last year's Forum review:

"In the face of both private development and a government looking to extract more dollars out of BC's resources, it is critical that archaeologists and First Nations come together to share in the stewardship of archaeological heritage, for it is through these partnerships that we will create a united front, strong in its ethos of conservation. In this charge, the role of the Forum is clear."

On this note, we thank all who made the 2008 Forum possible, and sincerely look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Marina La Salle is a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia, studying issues resulting from community control over, the legal use of, and public involvement in, archaeology on the Northwest Coast of British Columbia.

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