

INDIGENOUS ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE 69TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

By Rudy Reimer/Yumks

On the afternoon of this past April 3rd while attending the annual SAA conference in Montreal, a very interesting session of papers was presented in a symposium titled *Coming Home to Roost: Practicing Indigenous Archaeology*. This theoretical/practical section of archaeology is rapidly growing as indicated by the large attendance of this session and the discussion it generated afterwards. Additionally there have been sessions at other conferences, a growing number of published books and journal articles, class room discussions in colleges and universities who have expanded their programs of anthropology and archaeology to include First Nations studies. Many of these institutions are beginning to recognize and incorporate Indigenous archaeology within their practice and curriculum. A total of six papers were presented in the session and will be summarized here.

The session began with Michael Wilcox presenting his paper "Integrating Native American Perspectives: Working with Educational, Professional and Cultural Barriers to Multivocality." Wilcox presented an interesting dilemma asking "Why are there so few Native American archaeologists?" and addressing the resulting problem of attempting to integrate indigenous views in archaeology when they lack the traditional (academic) credentials. Wilcox has successfully collaborated archaeology, education and cultural hurdles in his time while working at Stanford University. Wilcox's model is interesting in the sense that it could be used as a template for other universities and institutions to build on in the future and build trusting relationships between Native American groups and archaeology in the post-NAGPRA age.

Co-authors Clair Smith and Heather Burke of Flinders University presented

the second paper in the session titled "Mediating Place on the Colonial Frontier." Smith and Burke have spent the past 10 years examining the role of cultural contact between European settlers and Indigenous peoples in the Barunga region of the Northern Territory of Australia. Through this research the authors have noticed the change in the social and political practice of archaeology in historic archaeology of Indigenous peoples. An interesting insight of this paper is that it is very similar to changing legal, social and political agendas of native peoples and archaeology not only throughout Australia but North America and the rest of the world.

Leonard Forsman presented the third paper in the session titled "Cultural Resource Management and Indian Tribes: Who Should Manage the Past?" With over ten years working with the Suquamish tribe in Washington State, Forsman offered interesting insights on Cultural Resource Management (CRM). With the growing interest of many native groups in the western US to co-manage and/or completely manage cultural heritage issues in their traditional territories, this paper offered suggestions on how CRM archaeologists, state archaeologists, native tribes and project proponents can work together in order to best manage archaeological sites. Forsman mentioned that communication, proper consultation and information sharing were some of the key factors of the practical side of Indigenous archaeology.

Desriee Renee Martinez from Harvard University presented the fourth paper in the session titled "The More Things Change, The More They Stay the Same: Continuing to Protect Indigenous Traditional Cultural Sites." Martinez presented that Native Americans and archaeologists often

share two very important interests: (1) protecting sites and (2) telling the story of how people used those sites in the past. Where Native Americans and archaeologists come into conflict is how these two interests are met and implemented. Working with groups in the Northwest Martinez has implemented Indigenous archaeology by combining Traditional Protection practices and legal obligations of governments to protect sites. Perhaps Martinez model can be altered to suit archaeological site protection here in British Columbia.

Dorothy Lippert of the National Museum of Natural History presented the fifth paper in the session titled "Building a Bride to Cross a Thousand Years: Indigenous Archaeology as Applied to Collections and Consultation." While NAGPRA has established Native American rights towards collections the consultation of how to deal with those collections usually only applies to those that are under repatriation. Lippert presents that this does not always have to be the case in that collections can be readily available to view by Native Americans by applying Indigenous archaeology. The strength of conducting Indigenous archaeology is that it implements a connection between living peoples and the ancient collections that their ancestors created. Lippert has successfully applied this in the workplace.

James Pepper Henry from the National Museum of the American Indian presented the final paper in the session titled "Collections Management of American Indian Human Remains and Funerary Objects: Acknowledging and Addressing Cultural Sensitivities." Pepper Henry illustrated that over the past 150 years, thousands of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects have been

collected from sites and stored in museums and academic institutions. Pepper Henry states that Native American groups are very concerned with the standards of practice on how these items are handled and presented and that those standards are often in conflict with Traditional Cultural Protocols. Pepper Henry suggests that it is the responsibility of those holding the human remains and funerary object to incorporate Indigenous archaeology in the handling and presentation of those items.

The session had three diverse discussants: Sonya Atalay of the University of California Berkeley, Randall McGuire of Binghamton University and Dorothy Lippert of the National Museum of Natural History. Each stated that the common themes of site protection, management practices, handling and presentation of human remains and artifacts, and practice of archaeology has become better but there is room for more theoretical and practical Indigenous archaeology in the future. Key to the discussion was that the field of archaeology needs to change in order to have a more symbiotic relationship with First Nations peoples.

A similar session to this one was recently organized by Rudy Reimer at the past British Columbia archaeology forum at University of Northern BC. Session presenters Eldon Yellowhorn, Nola Markey and Rudy Reimer all illustrated similar points as to the SAA session that in BC archaeology there is the need for collaborative research designs, co-run field schools, honest consultation and accommodation.

Resulting from this session was the initial interest in the formation of a First Nations Heritage Network to work with other associations and organizations to address the common concerns and information sharing on how to implement Indigenous archaeology in British Columbia in a practical sense. Hearing and voicing similar concerns bodes well for Indigenous archaeology in such common theoretical and practical applications are begin to come to light. The trail winds its way ahead of us, we only have to follow it together.

Some Recent Literature on Indigenous Archaeology

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Nicholas, George 2004 The Persistence of Memory, The Politics of Desire: Archaeological Impacts on Aboriginal Peoples and Their Response. In *Decolonizing Archaeological Theory and Practice*, edited by C. Smith and H.M. Wobst. Routledge. In press

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Rudy Reimer is a member of the Squamish Nation and principle of First Heritage Archaeological Consulting. Rudy has worked in BC archaeology over the past 12 years and lists interests in Northwest Coast archaeology, the interior Plateaus, Great Basin and Sub-Arctic culture areas, lithic technology, regional land use, settlement and resource patterns, rock art and ideology in archaeology and First Nations involvement and participation/ implementation of Indigenous archaeology. Rudy is also the Field Editor for *The Midden*.
