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## Keeping CRM Archaeology Relevant: Presenting an Archaeology of Children and Childhood in the Past

Katelyn E. Mather

*University of Western Ontario*, [kmather9@uwo.ca](mailto:kmather9@uwo.ca)

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# Keeping CRM Archaeology Relevant: Presenting an Archaeology of Children and Childhood in the Past

## **Abstract**

The industry of cultural resource management (CRM) has been criticized for its failure to communicate research results publicly, and to make contributions on a local and global scale. In this paper, I suggest that school-based archaeology programs – either through mock archaeological digs, participation in actual excavations, or the use of specific material culture types to tell stories about the past – provide a means to make CRM archaeology relevant to a wider audience. I also propose that an effective teaching tool about local archaeology would be to create a program on the archaeology of children and childhood. This would be an engaging method for teaching history, making history accessible and relatable, and helping students to understand past populations and change over time. CRM archaeologists would be well suited to present this unique and engaging program. Furthermore, this would present students with an opportunity to learn about the pre-European-contact period of North America, an area of history that many consider to be excluded from formal curriculum.

## **Keywords**

cultural resource management, education, archaeology of children

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## **Keeping CRM Archaeology Relevant: Presenting an Archaeology of Children and Childhood in the Past**

**Katelyn E. Mather**

### *Introduction*

In this paper, I suggest that school-based archaeology programs – either through mock archaeological digs, participation in actual excavations, or the use of specific material culture to tell stories about the past – provide a means to make CRM archaeology relevant to a wider audience. I also propose that an effective teaching tool about local archaeology would be a program on “the archaeology of children.” First, I plan to review some of the approaches that archaeologists have taken to showcase archaeology to school aged children. Next, I review the existing literature on the archaeology of children and childhood, including how archaeologists identify the material culture of children in the archaeological record. CRM archaeologists, I argue, would be well suited to present this unique and engaging program. Furthermore, school-based archaeology programs would present students with an opportunity to learn about the pre-contact period of North America, an area of history that may not typically be covered during the standard course of study, and which some have labeled “the excluded past” from formal curriculum (Stone and Mackenzie 1990).

Archaeologists working in the field of cultural resource management (CRM) have often contemplated how to keep the discipline relevant, particularly to the general public. As Mackey (2011) argued, how the public perceives the contributions of the field should be the main concern for archaeologists, given the often publicly funded nature of the work. A poor perception of the results of CRM will inevitably lead to questions about whether the

outcomes of heritage pursuits are worth the costs, and as Downrum and Price (1999) acknowledged, it has become increasingly common for careers in archaeology to include some type of applied component, in an effort to keep the discipline relevant (227). Thus, a number of solutions have been proposed regarding the contributions that archaeology can make, particularly on a regional or local scale. These include such applications as: cultural and heritage tourism; resolving land or resource claims (Downrum and Price 1999); reconstructing and understanding past climates and environments (Downrum and Price 1999; Mackey 2011); incorporating past agricultural techniques into modern rural settings (Erickson 1998); contributing knowledge about groups who have been marginalized or excluded from historical accounts (Deetz 1996); or through public education and participation (Downrum and Price 1999; Watson 2011).

Despite the many contributions that archaeology can make on a local and global scale, lack of public outreach and communication of research results is one of the issues plaguing CRM in Canada and abroad (King 2010; Williamson 2000). Engaging with the public and communicating the results of local archaeological research is a goal of many archaeologists, however finding the means to generate interest and present findings in a clear manner is often difficult or time-consuming. One area where archaeologists are generally successful in generating interest about the field is through outreach programs directed at school children, including the incorporation of hands-on experience in archaeological methods into school curriculum. CRM archaeologists are well suited to this type of outreach as they are knowledgeable about local history, which may be particularly relevant to communities, and can provide hands-on training for students within a local setting.

### *Teaching Archaeology*

Archaeology's contribution to public education, particularly through the unique perspective it can provide on important events, transitions and processes throughout history, has been one of the key applications of the discipline to a wider audience (Downrum and Price 1999). This application of archaeology is typically carried out through museum exhibits or heritage sites; however, the methodology and results of archaeological endeavors have proved increasingly useful in an educational setting, through the development of curricula for K-12 schools (Downrum and Price 1999:229). Such programs can emphasize both learning from the past and caring for heritage (Henson 2004). Using archaeology in the classroom has a multitude of benefits: students learn practical and critical thinking skills (Cooper 2003), and must employ a multi-disciplinary perspective (Smith 1998a), using mathematical and scientific methodologies, while gaining communication and problem-solving skills (Owen and Steele 2005). Students also understand multi-cultural perspectives, and engage in cooperative learning (Gardner 1997; Smith 1998a). Furthermore, archaeology programs for school-aged children have been applied successfully in a variety of places including Australia (Nichols et al. 2005; Owen and Steele 2005), India (Pappu 2000), Iceland (Jóhannesdóttir 2009), the United Kingdom (Henson 2004), Canada (Doroszenko 2007; Lea and Frost 2011), and the United States (Black 2001; Chisholm et al. 2007; Geiger 2004).

Scholars have noted that understandings of archaeology vary widely among school-aged children, particularly in regard to the time periods that archaeologists work within (Black 2001; Owen and Steele 2005). Confusion exists with regard to the differences between the work of the archaeologist, historian, and paleontologist. While the inclusion of

history in school curriculum is well established, the perspectives and time-depth provided by archaeology has made relatively recent strides in grade-school settings (Black 2001) and is not a formal part of most curricula in North America (Ellick 2007; Pokotylo 2002). Educators have been receptive to incorporating archaeology into their teachings, even participating in excavations themselves; however, archaeologists have not always played a large part in advocating for the inclusion of archaeological concepts and results in a classroom setting. Holm and Higgins (1985) noted that:

Some educators have been... motivated to share their enthusiasm for archeology, and for archeology in precollege education, with other teachers and educators through the educational literature. Professional archeologists, perhaps pre-occupied with research and with the instruction of advanced students, have made a much smaller contribution to this literature. (Smith 1998a:114)

It seems likely that this trend has continued, especially given the additional requirements placed on CRM archaeologists, whose time and resources are often stretched thin by the demands of running a business and satisfying the interests of multiple stakeholders. However, as Smith (1998a) argued, when professional archaeologists (CRM or academic) are not involved in the development of programs, the impression may be given that archaeology can be done by anyone, anywhere (114-115). Furthermore, the production of up-to-date and well-developed lessons can be best achieved through the collaboration of educators and archaeologists (Smith 1998a:114-115).

Archaeology programs in an educational setting typically take three forms: students participate in mock excavations set up by instructors (Chisholm et al. 2007; Gardner 1997); actual excavations with careful supervision and instructions provided by facilitators (Doroszenko 2007); or material culture and other forms of archaeological information is employed in a classroom setting, to provide lessons on archaeology itself, or specific aspects of the past (Morris 2000). Programs that provide students with opportunities to participate in archaeological excavations have been successfully run by numerous organizations in Ontario, including the “Can You Dig It?” program, which was run by the Cataraqui Archaeological Research Foundation and Centre in Kingston since 1998, the Ontario Heritage Trust’s summer camp in Toronto (Doroszenko 2007), the Boyd Field School run by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority since the 1970s, and the Museum of Ontario Archaeology’s educational and summer programs in London (Lea and Frost 2011). The longevity of many of these programs highlights the successful nature of including students in archaeology. The hands-on nature of many of the programs, and the chance to participate in an archaeological excavation, has often appealed to students. In fact, the nature of archaeological excavation, which enables participants to use a variety of learning styles, has meant that willingness to participate is not limited to any particular age or socio-economic status. For example, Watson (2011) found through her engagement with the public during a community excavation in England that a wide range of community members had an interest in the project and volunteered to participate in the dig. Watson (2011) credits the way that archaeology deals with discovering objects, understanding the past, and presenting heritage in a museum setting, for generating interest among a variety of community members of differing ages and socio-economic groups.

In addition to these “in-the-field” approaches to teaching archaeology, archaeologists are regularly contacted by schoolteachers seeking a presentation on archaeology to compliment a particular topic being explored in class (Ellick 2007). Classroom presentations have the added benefit of being able to include a more diverse collection of artifacts from a range of site types and time periods, as opposed to excavations which are typically only conducted on Euro-Canadian sites (Doroszenko 2007), sites that are in disturbed contexts, or sites that have minimal archaeological significance (Smardz 1997). Successful classroom presentations are those that can appeal to all learning styles, including auditory, visual and tactile learners, and should foster class participation through the use of open-ended questions (Ellick 2007:250, 252). These techniques are well suited to presentations on archaeology, and are particularly useful for helping students to retain information.

Morris (2000) suggested that artifacts have been used to successfully teach history and other social science topics in a classroom setting. Educators emphasize that artifacts can stimulate a student’s interest in a topic and can help a young learner to actively understand and analyze the past. Morris (2000) emphasized the importance of comparing two similar objects, one modern and one from the past: students question the differences between the two objects, and “through their questioning, the children grasp a major historical theme – that of change over a time” (32). Artifacts serve to provide a more visual and tactile link to the past, and can help students visualize a different time or place. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that children employ knowledge of material culture in order to make history more accessible and to establish chronologies (Levstik and Barton 1996). CRM archaeologists typically have access to a wide array of material culture, and provided that the artifacts used are appropriate to be handled and studied

in the classroom, could provide this tactile link to the past for students.

### *Archaeology of Children for Children*

A unique way for CRM archaeologists to help students to connect to teachings on archaeology would be to present the material culture of fellow children and adolescents. The archaeological study of children and childhood has become an increasingly popular topic in recent years. The feminist movement in archaeology, and its push for a more inclusive approach to the record, saw the beginnings of the discipline's examination of children in the past (Kamp 2001). By turning attention to those who have historically been ignored during reconstructions of the past, feminist scholars highlighted the neglect of the discipline to focus on the household level, and include the practices of women and children (Conkey 2003). Lillehammer (1989) first drew attention to this neglected field of study, with later researchers taking up her initial call to arms (Baxter 2005; Kamp 2001; Sofaer Derevenski 2000). Researchers began to realize that although children made up a significant number of any site's inhabitants, and thus were users, if not producers of unique categories of material culture, these features and artifacts tended to be excluded from archaeological analysis (Baxter 2005). Furthermore, although some diaries and other writings have provided the voices of children in the past, children have largely been excluded from historical accounts (Bugarin 2006).

It is important to note, as these researchers have acknowledged, that concepts of children and childhood are dependent on the cultural and temporal context (Baxter 2005:18-19). There may also be many types of sites where evidence of children cannot be detected, for example temporary hunting or butchering camps. Furthermore, children's material culture may be more of a reflection of

the adults who produced such items, particularly in the case of manufactured toys and other items that appear in the more recent record (Brookshaw 2009:367). Although limitations to studying children and childhood must be acknowledged, when it is possible to detect evidence of children, these analyses can inform the archaeologist on a multitude of aspects of past life. Among the various aspects of childhood that archaeologists have attempted to trace, children and play, and children and work, are two important aspects of the record for archaeologists to pay close attention to (Kamp 2001). These represent highly informative aspects of research that can speak to as much about the wider culture of which children are a part as they can about the lives of the children. The types of material culture that children engage with through play can provide insight into the gender roles that adults attempted to reinforce (Porter and Ferrier 2006:388). For example, by the nineteenth century in Europe and North America, gender specific toys, such as dolls and tea sets for girls, were used in order to tie female identity to the domestic sphere (Porter and Ferrier 2006).

Consultant archaeologists in Ontario are in a unique position to provide this type of information and to design engaging programs based around the archaeology of children. The material culture of children is regularly recovered from archaeological sites from the post-contact period, and although it may be less recognizable, can also be detected on pre-contact sites. Children's toys are frequently collected from nineteenth century sites in Ontario, particularly on domestic sites. Toy soldiers, dolls and doll parts, glass and earthenware marbles, tea sets, balls, and gaming pieces, are all common to nineteenth century sites (Feister 1991). Activities that children engaged in the past were not limited to play. Children have also been the producers of material culture; active participants in the economic sphere, producing

crafts, foraging for food, helping with the cultivation of crops and livestock, and working in factories (Baxter 2006:2).

In a pre-contact archaeological context, evidence of children can be seen in the presence of novice attempts at pottery or lithic tools (Lennox 2000; Smith 2006; Timmins 1997). For example, on many Huron village sites evidence of juvenile ceramic vessels have been recorded and analyzed (Smith 1998b; Smith 2006). These juvenile vessels are believed to represent the work of children, based on the following lines of evidence: application of motif/design, socialization and craft learning, life skill required of children during this time, and the small size of the vessel (Smith 2006:68). This demonstrates that childhood was a time of learning, with children often included in similar tasks and activities as their parents and grandparents. In a study of the ceramics from the Calvert site, an early Iroquoian village from southern Ontario, Timmins (1997) found that certain aspects of the pots, such as motifs and decorative techniques, differed between the adult and juvenile ceramics – suggesting that not only were juveniles learning the craft, but may have been innovators of new ceramics designs. This finding makes young people much more active participants in cultural change over time.

Discerning traces of children may become more difficult the further back into the past we go. For example, in the Canadian Arctic and in Greenland, the material culture of Thule children is recognized by miniature versions of such items as cooking pots, snow knives, harpoon heads, arrow shafts, dolls, cross-slats for a toy sled, and lamps, similar to those used by adults (Park 1998, 2006). Miniature versions of houses have also been detected; indicated by relatively small tent rings and the presence of coloured pebbles (Hardenberg 2010). These findings are consistent with

ethnographic examples of modern Inuit peoples; however, researchers acknowledge the challenge of separating children's toys from miniature objects used in shamanistic activities or as grave offerings (Park 2006:57). Miniature lithic artifacts found from the Paleo-Indian Parkhill site in Ontario were interpreted not as children's toys, but as ideotechnic objects, due to the spatial clustering of the objects at the site and the lack of use-wear on the objects themselves (Ellis 1994).

Despite the difficulties of studying children in the distant past, as examples from more recent archaeological sites demonstrate, getting at the roles and activities of children at archaeological sites is possible in the context of CRM, provided that archaeologists are knowledgeable on how to discern the material culture of children during the recording and analysis of artifacts. These artifacts can inform us about the lives of children in the past, and could be useful to demonstrate wider cultural trends and transitions, particularly in a classroom setting. Juvenile pots and miniature stone or bone artifacts can demonstrate the important role that children had in daily tasks, and the types of learning that they would have engaged in. They also highlight the role that children may have had in the cultivation and procurement of food resources, and can inform us about wider trends such as the increasing importance of maize agriculture in settlement and subsistence patterns.

In a classroom setting, students may be able to recognize and relate to these artifacts, especially those that are small in size. Elementary school children may be particularly interested in learning about the lives of people in the past if they can relate to the types of artifacts being presented to them, and can learn about the daily roles and tasks of children. Additionally, older students, such as those in a secondary school context, will understand the differing roles of young people in the past, and

may understand that childhood is a concept that varies depending on the temporal or cultural context. In contrast, finding toys such as dolls or figurines on sites from both the pre- and post-contact periods can demonstrate continuity of play across time, and may provide students with familiar objects on which to base their understandings of the past. Lastly, the archaeology of children during particular historical events, such as the finding of doll parts and dishes, marbles, whistles, and whizzers from Revolutionary war sites in the United States highlights the presence of children during times of societal unrest, particularly in the camps of soldiers (Cohn 1983). This creates a much more vivid picture of past events, and could help students to imagine and understand what life would have been like during such events, where the experiences of children and adolescents are typically excluded or non-existent in historical writings.

#### *A More Inclusive Past*

The presentation of archaeological information and the use of artifacts in a classroom setting have the additional advantage of providing multi-cultural perspectives, and can promote tolerance and respect for both past and present human populations (Gardner 1997; Whiting 1998). Archaeology has been able to contribute to a more complete picture of the past by studying the lives of people whose voices and experiences were excluded or marginalized from historical writings (Deetz 1996). In places with a past of colonization, the histories of indigenous populations have been labeled “the excluded past” due to the purposeful exclusion of particular accounts of the past, and the exclusion of archaeology from curricula (Stone and Mackenzie 1990). In a school setting, formal curricula of history is established on the basis of written accounts, which leaves little room for other forms of knowledge about the past, such as oral histories or archaeological findings (Stone 1997). In a Canadian context, many history lessons

begin at the time of European contact, excluding over 10,000 years of human history on the continent. Reynolds (2000) reported that no widely accepted or used strategies exist in Canadian social science curriculum for teaching First Nations culture and history. For many Canadians, exposure to the history of First Nations peoples may only be achieved through a trip to a local museum or one of the many reconstructed longhouses in Ontario or Quebec.

CRM archaeologists are well suited to provide a more inclusive picture of the past, particularly of the region where they work. Most CRM archaeologists are familiar with a regional history that spans the entire period of human presence: from the first peoples to the time of European settlers. Although not specialists on the diverse histories of all First Nations of Canada, CRM archaeologists would nonetheless be able to provide students with an introduction to this topic, which may interest students and inspire them to pursue further studies on Canada’s First Nations. CRM archaeologists also frequently collaborate with First Nations peoples, and could work with groups to develop curricula, workshops and presentations. In Australia, for example, one effort to include the 50,000-year archaeological record into the national narrative involved a youth program, which attempted to bring together students, teachers, archaeologists and Aboriginal elders (Westaway et al. 2008). Archaeology was only one aspect of the program, but it helped students appreciate the complexity of the past in a way that was engaging and interactive.

Lastly, archaeology has the potential to expose students to multiple versions of the past, particularly since the discipline itself has become more inclusive of alternative perspectives. As Atalay (2010) argued, archaeologists typically study the past through the lens of Western epistemologies, neglecting to understand differing lifeways, practices and

worldviews (79). Indigenous archaeologists have highlighted the need for the discipline to consider differing epistemologies, worldviews, methodologies, and concepts of time and archaeological sites. Therefore, a discussion on alternative ways of understanding history, heritage, and the past, and an emphasis on these worldviews as legitimate and valuable ways of viewing the world should be included in any lesson on the history of the First Nations of Canada. Atalay (2008) advocated for educating the public on the importance and value of multivocality, particularly through the teaching of children (37). Public education, she argued, can shape the mindset of people on a wider level (Atalay 2008). She argued:

Public archaeology...plays a central role in any pursuit of multivocality as it becomes our responsibility as archaeologists concerned with multivocality not to teach what the *right* interpretation is, but rather to help people understand that many interpretations are potentially valid, and that it is our cultural worldview that determines how we evaluate, and what we respect and choose as valid...Such pursuits of educating the public can occur on many levels, but would most effectively involve advocacy on the part of archaeologists at the K-12 educational level. (Atalay 2008:28).

Furthermore, as Stone (1997) argued, by failing to acknowledge and incorporate indigenous methodologies, worldviews and knowledge in education systems, the majority of indigenous students continue to feel alienated from their own cultural heritage (33). In Manitoba, the Treaty Education Initiative will soon ensure that all students across the province will be taught about the treaties and treaty

relationships (CBC News 2014). The program is a testament to the recognition that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students have a need and a desire to learn about First Nations history in Canada. In order to promote further collaboration between First Nations communities, indigenous archaeologists, and Western archaeologists, an inclusive approach to the past must start from the beginning, and should be included in any educational programs.

### *Conclusion*

CRM archaeologists are in a unique position to provide dynamic and informative programs on the practices of archaeology, the regional record of past human activities, and the many histories, traditions and worldviews that shape how we view the world and the past. By incorporating the material culture of children, students may be engaged to consider the varying roles and experiences of children in the past, and the processes of cultural change.

Including the broader public in archaeological excavations, interpretations, and results, gives more people the chance to be included in the production of knowledge about the past. Archaeologists and educators who have included students and the general public in archaeology reported that participants felt a deeper connection to heritage, and an appreciation for “the tedious and dedicated work of professional archaeologists” (Geiger 2004: 171). Students often report considering archaeology as a potential career option after participation (Geiger 2004:171). These results highlight the potential for public archaeology endeavors as a means to ensure that the discipline continues to be relevant to a wider audience. As Owen and Steele argued:

Personal experience is often one of the best ways for students to become aware of archaeology and its uses. Therefore it can not [sic] be left

solely to the school educators to create access to archaeology for their students, it is also up to us as professionals to extend the invitation to 'experience' the past through archaeology. (Owen and Steele 2005:69)

An example from London, Ontario is the Fugitive Slave Chapel project, a volunteer-driven initiative to preserve the building of the chapel and conduct archaeological testing on the property. The building, which dated to 1848, and served as a stopping point along the Underground Railroad, was saved from demolition and relocated, while the property was subjected to archaeological excavation (Dubinski 2013). Local CRM firm Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants led the project, and the dig was opened to community members who were interested in learning more about archaeology and local heritage. Volunteers of many ages stepped up to participate in the archaeological dig, the washing and cataloging of artifacts, and the formulation of an exhibit for the Museum of Ontario Archaeology, also in London.

The push to include teachings on archaeology in schools will not be without its challenges, particularly in light of the fact that the amount of Canadian history that is taught in schools has declined in the past few years (Pokotylo 2002:124). However, in a survey of Canadian and American attitudes about archaeology, the majority of respondents agreed that archaeology should be taught as part of school curriculum (Pokotylo 2002:121). Furthermore, as Smardz (1997:113) and Mackey (2011) have both argued, the results of public archaeology efforts create a positive feedback loop: with increased public appreciation for archaeology the field receives political support, sites can be better protected from development and looting, and increased funding may be

available for research and further public outreach.

In this paper I have positioned CRM archaeologists as ideal candidates for promoting archaeology in a classroom or public excavation setting due to their specialization in local history, their access to artifacts and suitable sites, and their knowledge of human activity on the landscape over a considerable depth of time. This is not to say that academic archaeologists would not be equally suited to promote public archaeology; they could in fact bring their own strengths to engagement with the public, such as familiarity working in a classroom setting. Furthermore, it is important to note that many of these suggestions take time to organize and implement, making it challenging for any one archaeologist to undertake alone. Rather, it is my hope that the archaeological community continues to make strides to promote our discipline, keep heritage accessible, and seek input on interpretations of the past. As we move toward more engagement with the public, and greater participation by community members, archaeologists must remember to foster an atmosphere where feedback, interpretations, and multiple ways of understanding and viewing the past are welcomed. This perspective is especially important to promote when we present archaeology to children, as their understanding of the past will set the tone of the next generation of archaeologists.

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