Conflict over the Future of the Past

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Introduction

Native Americans\(^1\) and American archaeologists have long had a tenuous and quarrelsome relationship. Both groups have come to see one another as having diametrically opposed goals. Confrontations between the groups have been waged in universities, museums, courts, and in the halls of public opinion. This process has led to a fundamental lack of understanding and misrepresentation of each group’s intentions and interests. A brief history of American archaeology will be presented in an attempt to set the background for subsequent explorations. Next, attention will be turned towards a specific instance of conflict in the battle for Kennewick Man/The Ancient One. This specific conflict will provide the basis for an explanation as to why Native Americans are so dissatisfied with most archaeology. Finally, an exploration of potential solutions to the conflict will be presented. In particular, the case will be made for the inclusion of oral histories in archaeology as well as the creation of a “Native American archaeology.”

\(^1\) Native American and/or Native is used to denote, and in preference to, both American Indians and Native Hawaiians. American archaeologists is used to denote all archaeologists in the United States. These terms are used for convenience and because of popular usage. One should note that these monolithic categorizations often obscure the differences between many different, often competing groups. Although this essay does not focus on relations in Canada, many of the statements could apply. Conversely, because of the different historical, legal, and political circumstances, many statements will not apply. Please see Ferris (2003) for an examination of the Canadian situation.

A Brief History of Archaeology

The discovery of a new, unexpected “race” of people in the New World proved to be a shocking event in the halls of Europe. Existing world-views were unable to explain who these

\(^2\) As the history of American archaeology is so extensive, a thorough analysis cannot be presented. Rather, this history is ad hoc and designed to emphasize conflict so as that the modern day reader understands the contemporary debate and Native American grievances. Any number of more thorough histories are available including Trigger (1989) and Kehoe (1998).
“Indians” were and how they had come to look and live so differently. Efforts to explain these people became one of the driving forces of anthropology. Indeed, Yanagisako (2005) has argued that the quest to explain the Indigenous “other” has served as the unifying goal of the four-fields approach to anthropology. For a significant period of time anthropologists attempted to explain these groups of people with their unilinear schemes of evolution that portrayed them as primitive, static, and inert (Ferguson 1996; Hamilton 2004). A more specific look at the conflict-ridden relationship between Archaeologists and Native Americans follows.

The Euroamerican interest in collecting artifacts and remains—objects thought of as valuable in and of themselves—from Native American sites dates back to the time of initial contact and has continued up until the present. Prior to the development of professional archaeology and museums, Pilgrims are known to have exhumed Native graves shortly after arriving at Cape Cod in 1620 (Nichols, Klesert, and Anyon 1989). Other individuals like Thomas Jefferson conducted their own excavations of remains that they unearthed—intentionally or otherwise (McGuire 1989; Riding In 1992). One of the first and most infamous examples of the abuse perpetuated through the field of archaeology is revealed in the “mound builder myth.” In the late 1800s, archaeologists argued that these magnificent earthen structures of the Southern United States—approaching if not rivaling the sophistication of the structures found in Mexico—were built by a non-Aboriginal race (Kehoe 1998). Most writers of the time-period felt that the Native American inhabitants of the area were incapable of such engineering feats and thus must have migrated in and violently eliminated the creators. Not only was the debate scholarly, it was political. Archaeological material and “expertise” testifying to the complexity of the shapes and slopes of the mounds as well as the burials within some of them was used to assert that Native Americans of the Southwest did not and could not build the structures. Rather, archaeologists argued that the current inhabitants had violently displaced the previous architects. Such a myth was used to assert the “savagery” of Natives and to justify driving them from their land and ensure that they would not be allowed to flaunt a history filled with monumental architecture (Watkins 2000; Kehoe 1998). Trenchantly, Watkins (2000:5) states of the mound builder myth that, the extermination of American Indians by westward moving settlements of the United States was made morally easier by the apparent primitiveness of the natives, and the controversy served well as a justification for exterminating the Indian groups that had destroyed North America’s only ‘civilized’ culture.

Other abuses of Native Americans at the hands of anthropologists were not uncommon. Several prominent individuals—especially at the Bureau of American Ethnology—used archaeological evidence to argue that modern Natives were not descended from those who had left material traces in the archaeological record (Trigger 1989). Similarly, the work of influential “four-field” anthropologists like Kroeber suggested that Natives were too “primitive” to change and thus effectively dehistoricized them (Trigger 1989). Likewise, numerous skeletons and sacred objects were pilfered by leading anthropologists and museologists like Franz Boas (Trope and Echo-Hawk 1992). Further, the “salvage” anthropology of Boas and his students as well as the theft of Native American objects and remains by them created the myth of the “vanishing Indian” which drove government relocation policies and has plagued Natives ever since (Hamilton 2004).

More recently, the repatriation of Native American ancestral remains and funerary objects under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) has been

5 Although it is not the case now, anthropology and museology used to be closely aligned. Numerous anthropologists, including Boas, were employed by or worked in collaboration with museums (Jones 1993).

6 NAGPRA became law on November 16, 1990 after being passed by the United States Congress. This law requires that all federally funded universities, museums, and agencies inventory their archaeological collection of Native American

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1 In this paper, anthropology will refer to the Americanist four-field configuration. Statements will thus apply to all sub-fields. When statements pertain only to particular sub-fields, they will be identified.

2 Henry R. Schoolcraft and Samuel F. Haven were two notable exceptions to this statement (Watkins 2000).
Native Americans faced a considerable amount of legislation that would force institutions and academics to return their cultural patrimony, creating conflict. In attempting to lobby for that has been precipitated by repatriation. Such assertions and continue to assert the great tragedy that has been of opposition from archaeologists and physical anthropologists. For example, Native Americans were vigorously branded as anti-scientific and archaeologists (see, for example, Meighan 2000) asserted and continue to assert the great tragedy that has been precipitated by repatriation. Such statements have been proven factually incorrect (Rose, Green, and Green 1996; Dongoske 1996).  

In discussing such matters, it is always critical to note the significant power differentials between Native Americans and the wider social, economic, political, and cultural spheres that they are contained within. Discussions of these topics must always be located in their specific historical context. Though one may like to think of the above as historical events with no relevance today, many Native Americans do not. To these groups, this troublesome relationship has continued through to the present and is epitomized in the recent Kennewick Man/The Ancient One debacle. Many of the historical events outlined above have analogs in the events that are described below.

remains and funerary objects and prepare them for repatriation. Further, the law provides a procedure to be followed when Native American remains and objects are unearthed or intentionally excavated on federal land. The law stipulates that Native American groups must be consulted when relevant material is found (Dongoske 1996). NAGPRA has played a significant role in redefining the relationship of Native Americans and Archaeologists. It has been of such significance that a serious exploration of it would necessitate its own essay. For further information, please see Dongoske (1996), Trope and Echo-Hawk (1992), and United States Congress (1992).

There may be an economic motivation to resisting repatriation. One may note that a great number of scholars have made their entire careers exploiting the graves and sites of various Native American groups. Arnold (1999) has asserted that archaeological material may be conceived of in similar ways to mineral resources in that they are appropriated (often by colonial governments) and managed. In a similar example, one “pothunter” remarked that the only difference between himself and a “professional archaeologist is that I sell what I find” (Mihesuah 1996:233). Though these statements may be extreme, they do seem to contain an element of truth.

### Kennewick Man/The Ancient One

On July 28, 1996, two young boat enthusiasts walking nearby the Columbia River at Kennewick, Washington discovered a skull protruding from the water. The police were contacted and James Chatters, owner of Applied Paleoscience, was brought in to perform forensic skeletal analyses. Chatters unearthed what turned out to be a nearly intact male skeleton (Chatters 2001).

On account of the unusually well preserved nature of the remains as well as the associated objects of the site, Chatters initially believed that the skeleton was that of a relatively recently deceased European settler. Chatters also reported that the physical characteristics of the remains resembled those of “Caucasoid” populations rather than “Mongoloids”—a group to which Native Americans are usually classed. Caucasoid and Mongoloid are terms used to denote the phenotypic expression of certain characteristics that are associated with certain populations.

Chatters began to question this classification because the colour of the remains are often associated with great antiquity. Furthermore, a Cascade projectile-point was found imbedded in the right ilium. Cascade projectile points are typical of Southern Plateau assemblages from 8,500 years before present (B.P.) to 4,500 B.P., though similar styles were used up until the nineteenth century in parts of the western United States (U.S.). Adding to the confusion were the physical characteristics (such as the shape of the eye orbits) of the remains that are associated with neither European nor Indian populations (Chatters 2000, 2001).

In an attempt to resolve these ambiguities, Chatters ordered radiocarbon and DNA testing. Radiocarbon dating performed on the left fifth metacarpal (the “pinky finger”) returned an isotopically-corrected age of 8,410 +/- 60 years B.P (7,300 – 7,600 B.C.). Although DNA from the skeleton remained intact, testing was inconclusive (Chatters 2000).

Four days after the radiocarbon dates were returned, the Army Corps of Engineers, the group with authority over the Federal lands where the remains were found, halted any further scientific research on the remains and took possession of the skeleton. The corps published

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8 Though not seen in popular usage, “The Ancient One” is the name that Native Americans have applied to remains discussed in this section that are most commonly identified as Kennewick Man. The conjunction of the two terms is used as an inclusive gesture to both Native Americans and others.
their intention to repatriate the remains in the local Tri-City Herald on September 17 and 24, 1996 to a group of five tribes—the Umatilla, Yakama, Nez Perce, Wanapum, and Colville—as outlined by provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (United States Congress; The Tri-City Herald 2006). These groups, filing a joint claim, intended to immediately rebury the remains in an undisclosed location. Remains discovered by the tribes with little problem.

Similarly, within days of Chatters examination of the remains, local media picked up the story and were followed shortly by major media outlets. Within a very short period of time, stories about the remains—now dubbed “Kennewick Man”—circulated around the globe. Problematically however, the press frequently misrepresented the remains as “Caucasian” as opposed to “Caucosoid” (Johansen 1999).

With the rising popularity of the story, the corps became inundated with requests to study the remains. American scientists wanted to study the skeleton to gain insight into a myriad of questions that have driven anthropology since its inception. Moreover, the Asatru Folk Assembly—a California-based group practicing a pre-Christian Norse religion—also hoped to acquire the remains because they believed that the skeleton was indicative of a European presence on the continent at an earlier date than is often assumed. The group even believed that they might be able to establish the remains as those of an ancestor (Johansen 2001).

With the corps still intending to repatriate the remains, a group of high-profile American archaeologists, physical anthropologists, and other scientists launched a legal challenge against the corps on October 17, 1996. Likewise, the Asatru Folk Assembly launched a lawsuit on October 26, 1996 (The Tri-City Herald 2006). The case appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge John Jelderks.

After much legal wrangling and testimony, Jelderks eventually ruled in favour of the scientists on August 30, 2002. In his decision, he criticized the government for their hasty decision to repatriate and their slow movement throughout the ordeal. Further, he cited the insufficiency of oral tradition and geography in attempts to repatriate material as old as the remains (The Tri-City Herald 2006; Watkins 2000).

On October 29, 2002, four tribes—the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Colville, and Yakama—launched an appeal of Jelderks’ decision. Similarly, the U.S. Justice Department filed an appeal of the Jelderks’ decision on October 29, 2002. On February 4, 2004, the court upheld Jelderks’ decision citing the lack of adequate means or evidence to establish cultural affiliation. The court subsequently refused a request by the tribes to have the case reheard in front of a full court on April 20, 2004 (Bonnichsen et al v. United States). Shortly after the tribes declared that they would not continue their legal battle, the U.S. Justice Department declared that it would not appeal the decision on July 22, 2004 (The Tri-City Herald 2006).

Scientists subsequently began to study the remains. Within the past several weeks, information has been released on the finding of the studies. Additionally, it has also been reported that the remains have finally been reburied at an undisclosed location. Because the events are so recent, little scholarly attention has been given to this. Some popular attention has been devoted to the subject, in the March 13, 2006 issue of Time, for example (Lemonick and Dorfman 2006).

The Implications of the Kennewick Man/The Ancient One Controversy

The conflict for access to the remains essentially polarized the different camps involved. Native Americans and archaeologists, groups that had been attempting to mend bridges, were left standing further apart than ever before. Likewise, many within academic disciplines were divided over ethical fault-lines as well as those between science and humanism. Relationships are only recently being bridged again. Other implications are glaringly evident.

The use of population based racial identification and its frequent portrayal in the popular media as racial essentialism remains one of the most controversial aspects of the ordeal. This is particularly true for those groups—including many Native Americans—who reject the value and relevance of notions such as race. For example, many Native Americans have historically adopted members into their groups that have little resemblance to themselves, including Europeans (Johansen 1999). These racial concepts could have significant political implications at a time when race has significant social and political relevance in the U.S.
Evidence of this is seen, amongst other places, in a recent article in *American Antiquity*. Authors Owsley and Jantz⁹ (2001:566) state that, when comparing early skulls with available modern populations, we note that most of them fall far outside the normal range of recent population variation. More specifically, they especially fall outside the range of American Indian populations and are so different that it may be more correct to refer to them as Paleoamerican rather than Paleoindian as many do.

Though the authors may or may not have a political agenda, their attempt to identify and define Native Americans clearly has a political edge. Their revision has the effect of distancing present day populations from their ancestors, thus undermining their 'Indigeneity' and could serve to limit their political agenda (Watkins 2004). Native Americans may be especially suspicious of the motivations and actions of physical anthropologists and archaeologists, as it was they who previously refined the concept of race and insisted on hierarchies between and amongst different sorts of people (Dewar 2001; Hamilton 2004).

Further, the battle for Kennewick Man/The Ancient One also reminds people that there are, contra many in archaeology, political aspects to the study of and access to the past. The assertion that Kennewick Man/The Ancient One represents a European presence on the continent at an earlier time than is generally assumed has been used as a means to weaken Native American claims to land and specific rights, including the ability to build casinos as well as gain access to remains under NAGPRA. Kennewick Man/The Ancient One and several other skeletons of great antiquity have been used as a means to undermine Native Americans' political interests. This is glaringly apparent in popular media, including major newspapers and television programs like *60 Minutes* where it is suggested that present day populations are somehow less Indigenous (Dumont Jr. 2001; Johansen 1999).

The controversy surrounding Kennewick Man/The Ancient One has also served as a rather stark reminder that archaeology has and seemingly continues to marginalize Native Americans. Bruce Trigger (1980) has convincingly argued that the practice of archaeology has served to portray Native Americans in a pejorative light. Other scornful critics, including Vine Deloria Jr. (1992) have made analogies between the practice of archaeology and some practices of Nazi Germany.¹¹

### Why are Native Americans Dissatisfied with Mainstream Archaeology?

A number of the aforementioned practices and events in the historical relationship between Native Americans and archaeologists explain a lot of the antipathy between the groups. There are, however, a number of other complex reasons that help to explain why Native Americans have found that archaeology has nothing to offer them. An exploration of several of these issues follows below.

Archaeology’s inability to respond to Native concerns lays partly in its inability to understand Native American voices from the historical record. The archaeologist uses his or her own values, beliefs, and moral vision as implicit controlling forces of Native American representation and voice. Though it may not be made explicit, archaeologists ask their readers to accept that they have the authority to speak for those being investigated or that they have some esoteric knowledge gleaned from their recondite investigations (Zimmerman 2001). On one level, Native American voice provides the authority from which archaeologists speak about the past. Some archaeologists even go so far as to suggest that they speak for the people of the past and are the only ones capable of doing so. Native Americans who challenge the usurping of Native American voice challenge the very nature of knowledge about the past (Zimmerman 2001).

Native American views vary quite markedly from those outlined above. Though it

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⁹ It should also be noted that these authors played a role in the Kennewick Man/The Ancient One controversy. Both individuals work at the Smithsonian Institution, have worked with the remains of Kennewick Man/The Ancient One, and were members of the group of eight scientists that sued the U.S. Army Corps for access to the remains (Dewar 2001).

¹⁰ It should be noted that most contemporary anthropologists reject any biological notion of race.

¹¹ In this particular episode, Deloria was criticizing the use of "scientific" authority to identify and define Native American cultural groups. Deloria is known for his scathing critique of anthropology from his first major publication in 1969, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, through to his recent death.
is difficult to generalize, Native American views of the past appear to share several common themes. The idea that the past is only knowable through discovery is deemed absurd. For traditional Native American world-views, the past lives in the present, with the present being viewed as the only real temporal realm. Past events may provide illustrations for present action, but human nature does not change. Situations only differ from the past in observable factors such as people involved or the location of events (Zimmerman 2001). To essentialize, the past is the present; they are not separate realms but are in a continuous process of becoming. The past is used as a unifying spiritual knowledge that cannot be constrained by any version of time made by humans. This is not to suggest that Native Americans lack the ability or desire to use chronologies. Instead, they do not have a rigid chronology. Such chronologies are not critical when time is viewed as eternal, cyclical, and endlessly repetitive (Zimmerman 2001). The Native American approach to knowledge of the past is through orality—a nearly complete emphasis on the spoken word. Oral history recounts the "mythic" and makes the past and the present the same. It places emphasis on the lives of people and events, not objects, and takes precedence over other kinds of knowledge about the past, including Euroamerican historical and archaeological methods. Many Natives know their past exclusively through traditional histories transmitted by oral performances, ritual observances, dances, and other means (Watkins 2003).

These contrasting world-views have strong implications for archaeological research. The Native American focus on people leads them to reject the fetishism of archaeologists that treats objects as sentient or animate. Further, the archaeological use of Native American voice is a matter of cultural survival. For Native Americans, the past lives in the present and does not exist as a separate entity. To say that the past is gone or lost unless archaeological research is performed suggests that Native Americans are themselves gone (Zimmerman 2001). Similarly, if the past is still alive, excavated human remains are still alive and must be respected as living persons. Native American ways of knowing the past are as rigid as those of archaeology’s. When issues become politicized, the issues easily become overt battles over control of the past. However, history can never be reducible to claims of truth (Zimmerman 2001). As Kelly says, “in the postmodern world, truth seems to be elusive…truth arises from multiple perspectives” (Kelly 1999).

The above is not to suggest that Native Americans are opposed to archaeology, physical anthropology, or museology in every form. Rather, they are opposed to practices that ignore their concerns, violate their beliefs, and usurp their voice. As Don Sampson, a one-time representative of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla—quoted in Watkins (2003:72)—says, we do not reject science. In fact, we have anthropologists and other scientists on staff and we use science every day to help in protecting our people and the land. However, we do reject the notion that science is the answer to everything and should take precedence over the religious rights and beliefs of American citizens.

Likewise, a simple survey of tribal archaeology programs reveals that there is a substantial amount of archaeology that is practiced by Native Americans. Some Native groups like the Chumash, for example, have made arrangements for reburial that allow for continued access by archaeologists and physical anthropologists. Likewise, groups such as the Onondaga have reacquired wampum belts while acknowledging that they “should continue to be made available for research by qualified scholars” (Sullivan 1992). Further, some Native groups—the Hopi for example—are interested in osteological analysis of remains and how it may benefit them (Baker et al 2001; Dongoske 1996). It is simply not accurate to suggest that all Native Americans are anathema to anthropological analyses. Many groups fund their own archaeology programs and a number of non-Native archaeologists make their living in the employ of Native groups (White Deer 1998; Dongoske 1996). Moreover, there are presently over 150 tribal museums in the U.S. (Gulliford 2000). Not only do these establishments display items for tribe members and tourists, they are also able to preserve cultural artifacts and perpetuate the tribe’s culture in a way consistent with their beliefs, values, and desires (Erikson, Ward, and
Wachendorf 2002; Jones 1993). Native Americans want to gain control over the construction of their culture-history, even through the deconstruction of that history, if necessary.

**Indigenous Archaeology?**

Many archaeologists have increasingly come to realize and respond to their role and their discipline’s complicity in the marginalization of Native Americans as well as the erasure of their history and the misappropriation of their cultural patrimony. Further, the post-processual, post-colonial, post-modern, scientific constructivist, and Native American critiques have made significant inroads into archaeology and have helped to reorganize museums, collections, and behaviour. Many archaeologists now assert that the relevance of the discipline hinges on the ability of practitioners to engage the various communities that their work impacts (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2004). This is especially so of the descent communities that archaeologists work around. Integrating Native Americans into archaeology is a means to achieve this goal. There are, however, a number of possible ways to go about this. The use of oral histories as well as fostering the development of a uniquely “Native American archaeology” are two possible means amongst many others. These approaches will be considered below.

Oral history, as outlined above, is the Native American approach to knowing their past. This differs sharply from the European tradition that has been virtually institutionalized in archaeology. A number of late nineteenth-century archaeologists (including Thomas Jefferson) accepted the traditional accounts of Native Americans and thought they provided a viable and a valuable link between archaeological sites and contemporary populations (Thomas 2000). In the early twentieth-century, however, prominent archaeologists like R. H. Lowie strongly denounced oral tradition. Thomas (2000:240) quotes Lowie as stating that, “I cannot attach to oral histories any historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever.” Attitudes like this were dominant in the majority of twentieth-century archaeology and are still strong academic currents today. Ronald J. Mason (2000:264), for example, asserts oral histories are to be respected, but are “challengeable when they are thought of as data roughly on par with, say, dendrochronology, seriation, or site distribution maps.” Moreover, he asserts that oral histories are roadblocks, rather than aids, and that his view is more or less representative of a great many of anthropologists (Mason 2000). There are, however, a growing number of researchers that have begun to concern themselves with oral history and its application to historical matters, including archaeology.

The reconciliation of oral history with archaeological material has been a desirable goal to many Native Americans with a conciliatory attitude (Mihesuah 1996). This goal has finally come close to fruition, though is largely in its infancy. A number of historians, anthropologists and archaeologists have begun to critically examine the subject. Such authors have often found that document sources are no more accurate than oral histories. When recalling that all documents are produced by humans of varying agendas, beliefs, ages, sex, class, language, culture, et cetera, it becomes glaringly apparent that documents are little, if any, more reliable than other sources. In discussing this issue, Vansina (1985) provides an example of a battle that the author observed in Libya. Vansina found that participants of differing location and roles recounted the events of the battle differently. Moreover, they often incorporated their idiosyncratic emotional states into their recounts. Any documentary sources that occurred from this battle would thus be highly suspect. The point of the above is not to show the irrelevance of documentary sources, but rather to depict their tentative and variable nature.

Rather than saying that oral histories are less accurate than any other source, as per Mason (2000), it seems more accurate to suggest that they are less valued. This is likely due to the prestige that is given to archaeologists and their “scientific” credentials as well the bias that is explicit in marginalizing another culture’s epistemology. In fact, Deloria (1995) has gone so far as to suggest that oral history actually guarantees that information will not be contaminated as will scientific material.13

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12 This is also the way in which a number of groups in Africa, the Pacific, and Asia have traditionally recounted their history. Oral history is often also referred to as oral tradition. I avoid this use, however, because of the negative connotations of this word, especially in the light of the problematic stereotypes that have plagued Native Americans.

13 Deloria has been a long-time critic of—amongst other things—the notion of scientific neutrality. He suggests that...
Archaeologists of the "New World" do not generally have to work with any documentary sources. Rather, they make inferences based on the evidence via analogs (see Wylie 1985). Archaeologists particularly unsympathetic to the post-processual critiques of the previous decades (e.g. Mason and Meighan) are generally reluctant to acknowledge the multiplicitous interpretations that are possible from any number of artifacts or burials and other material in the record. Likewise, though such individuals generally acknowledge that archaeology is a 'weak' or 'small' science, they often do not want to acknowledge the tentative nature of the interpretations, the human tendency to err, or that 'truth' is not an objective condition (Clark 1998). Those adhering to a positivist paradigm must realize that no one individual or group has a monopoly of the truth. Likewise, they must acknowledge that all interpretations of the past are political. Advancing cooperation as well as developing a dialogical and fruitful relationship depends upon concessions from all sides.

Acknowledging the limitations of oral history—just as with documentary sources or analogy—is an important place to begin if it is to be productively engaged. Lack of rigid chronologies and the selectivity of information are frequent characteristics of oral histories. However, the single best means to confront these shortcomings is through the use of diverse sources that cohere with one another (Vansina 1985). In this way, oral history could be viewed as one of many heuristic devices in the archaeologist's tool-kit. A number of studies have found that use of oral history holds a significant amount of promise for archaeology and other historical studies.

The recently emerged field of ethnohistory is one example of the integration of oral history, archaeology, and other fields of research, including linguistics and documentary sources. In one example, Kerry Abel (2005) uses archaeological evidence as well as oral history to eloquently illuminate parts of the distant history of the Dene of Northern Canada. Not only does such an interpretation about, in this instance a catastrophic flood, lend strength to the archaeological data, but the oral history as well. Abel manages to use Dene oral history and correlate it to a known volcanic eruption that helps explain population migrations, such as that of the Navajo and Apache. Moreover, she also recounts Dene oral history that talks of strange people traveling through their land that do not resemble them at all, which may have some relevance for archaeologists interested in migration patterns.

In another example, Whitely (2002) has found that Hopi oral histories about the emergence of genealogical lines correspond very well to the location of known archaeological sites. Likewise, their histories refer to events (droughts, migrations, and hardship, etc.) that can be examined in the archaeological record or used as interpretive tools. Further, these events are often associated with named sites and can thus explain particular events at these sites. Whitely goes on to suggest that even though oral histories may be associated with mythical creatures as well as compress the time of events, these can still be interpreted metaphorically, for they are often rich in meaning and message. Lastly, Whitely notes that the Hopi oral history may be labeled genealogical, in contrast to the analogical practice of archaeology. This approach is of value because it can often recount the introduction of various practices (religious, subsistence, etc.) to a single location and group. It thus stresses the string of events that are relevant to archaeologists looking to provide rich and meaningful accounts of past.

In yet another example, authors Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T. J. Ferguson (2004) conducted research along the San Pedro Valley in Arizona. Though they acknowledged the strong foundation that previous archaeological research had provided about the history of the indigenous inhabitants (Zuni, Navaho, O'odham, Hohokam, Western Pueblo, and Apache), they noted that all such studies were fundamentally limited in that they ignored the oral histories of these groups. In consulting the descendents of these groups, the authors

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14 Indeed, this may be the biggest reason that the post-processual critique was so successful in its recent advance
15 This is not to suggest that various 'schools' of archaeological thought have made little contribution to archaeology, but rather, to promote dialogue. It must be remembered that these statements border on generalizations and that many archaeologists, even adherents to various paradigms, may not identify with these statements. Also, it should be noted that the estrangement of oral history and scientific anthropology may also be seen as part of the larger "science wars" or recent years that rearranged many anthropology departments in North America (Whitely 2002).
16 One may note the similarity to Wylie's (1985) suggestion for strengthening the quality of analogy.
attempted to use oral history as well as archaeological interpretations to bridge the gap between science and history. Taking a very conciliatory route, the authors organized the project with the direct consultation of the relevant tribes. A committee was formed to mediate between competing demands and to ensure that no one party would dominate. Further, and perhaps most relevant to this discussion, the authors invited the input of Natives. In their scheme Native Americans were not subjects but rather colleagues that made valuable contributions to the project. The interaction proved most valuable, perhaps, in that it allowed for a measure of education about both parties. For example, Natives were able to learn about archaeological interpretations while archaeologists were able to learn about the value of language.

Another means by which to address the marginalization of Native Americans is through the introduction or creation of a uniquely “Native American archaeology.” Though there is a possibility for the incommensurability of scholarship, there is no reason to think that a “Native American archaeology” would be anything other than a benefit. Likewise, though some may find the growing chorus of voices in archaeological debates to be disquieting, others realize that the diversity of thought is beneficial for the discipline in that it can create dynamism and pushes research forward (Hodder 2005). Of all the academic disciplines, anthropology would benefit most from a Native American perspective. Further, it is the field that is most likely to be amenable to the accommodation of alternative voices, especially from those groups that they work especially closely with.

Using feminist archaeologies as an analog for the introduction of Aboriginal voices to archaeology, one can see the potential for the great advancement of understanding and the commencement of previously ignored areas of scholarship. The inception of feminist archaeologies in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, provided new insights on the archaeological record. It has shown that “better and more accurate ‘stories’ about the past can be told when women and men, and perhaps additional genders where appropriate, are considered” (Nelson 1997:20). Similarly, various “alternative” archaeologies are practiced with little or no problem (e.g. archaeologies of colour and archaeologies of sexuality). Though such a label would hardly be appropriate for a Native American contribution to archaeology, it merely suggests that the possibility exists for the genesis of fruitful explorations.

It remains merely speculative to suggest what a “Native American archaeology” would look like, though numerous individuals have attempted to contribute discursive threads (Ferguson 1996, 1999). What Native American scholars want most, however, is a more inclusive version of the past and present that does not make such an extensive use of historical and anthropological theories (Miheesuah 2004). Often, Natives find that archaeologists are so concerned with general classificatory schemes or fitting data into their theories that they cannot answer specific questions about a particular site that is of general interest or relevance (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2004).

Progress towards a “Native American archaeology” has remained impeded largely by laws that privilege archaeologists, the pedagogy of academia that ignores Native American voices, publishes repetitive monographs that offer nothing to Natives, hires unqualified faculty, graduates unprepared students, and devalues Indigenous programs and concerns on campus (Watkins 2000; Miheesuah 2004; Trigger 1980). Slowly, however, more and more Native Americans are being included in archaeology. Natives are graduating from university programs in record numbers and there are numerous professional Native archaeologists with an excellent scholastic record, including Joe Watkins, Arthur C. Parker, and Edmund J. Ladd (Ferguson 1999). Similarly, Native Americans now routinely attend professional archaeological meetings and multiple groups operate their own

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17 The authors found that the use of their terminology could be offensive. In describing a site as abandoned, for example, the authors learned that this was contrary to the beliefs of the collaborators in that they believed the spirits to still occupy the area as well as because they had left spirit offerings on regular occasions. Moreover, the authors also found that the use of the Native languages allowed for the conveyance of very specific experiential meanings that other languages could not.

18 Many examples of the successful concomitant use of oral history and archaeology exist. For example, Thomas (2000:244-253) has compiled several convincing examples of oral history’s value and accuracy. It should be noted that there are numerous approaches to this subject, as denoted by the use of “archaeologies.” These varied approaches are all similar, however, in their break with previous non-feminist approaches and their focus on issues relating to women and gender.

20 In spite of these criticisms, use of classificatory schemes may often be necessary to organize data and answer specific questions.
historic preservation programs or engage in cooperative efforts with archaeologists to preserve cultural material (Ferguson 1996). University curricula are beginning to address the ethics and skills required for successfully engaging and interacting with Native Americans. Of those academics inhospitable to Native Americans, Stapp and Longenecker (2000) argue that this “old guard is on the way out” and that this “radical segment of the profession is out of touch and behind the times.” The time has come, as McGuire (1992:828) states, for archaeologists to initiate a process of dialogue with Indian peoples that will fundamentally alter the practice of archaeology in the United States. This dialogue will alter our perceptions about the past, how we deal with living Native Americans, how we train students, and how we present our results to each other and the general public.

Dialogue, inclusion, and cooperative efforts—especially as initiated by anthropologists—are the only way that archaeologists can have accountability to the various publics that have interests in their work. Similarly, it is the only way that archaeologists can eliminate the competitive atmosphere that has characterized the relationship between themselves and Native Americans for sometime (Watkins 2003). Working together, archaeologists can educate affected cultural groups about a project so that they can have an informed understanding of the reasons for the project, the types of information being sought, and the implications and the utility of the study to the group as well as the archaeologists. Similarly, cultural groups can educate archaeologists about their wishes, the kind of information that they are interested in, information not to be released to the general public, and so forth (Watkins 2000).

**Conclusion**

Archaeologists and Native Americans have long had a troubled and conflict ridden relationship. Archaeology has frequently been used as an oppressive weapon with which Native Americans have been marginalized legally, economically, socially, demographically, and historically. The discovery of human skeletal remains on the Columbia River at Kennewick, Washington provoked one of the most recent conflicts between Natives and archaeologists that served—alongside NAGPRA—to polarize the groups. Reflecting upon the reasons why Native Americans are dissatisfied with archaeology found that their concerns and beliefs are ignored. This invited the advancement of particular solutions that would address Native American concerns. The introduction of oral history was illustrated to hold great potential for archaeological scholarship as well as Native peoples themselves. Likewise, pressing for the introduction of a uniquely “Native American archaeology” was illustrated to be another means by which the conflict could be resolved. Both of these means of resolving the conflict hold great potential for advancing archaeological understanding of the past. Though no one knows exactly if or how these suggestions will be incorporated into archaeology, the possibility certainly exists and the thought is invigorating. It must also be remembered that introducing Native American practices and concerns into archaeology need not alter all archaeological scholarship. Individuals committed to their specific approaches need not necessarily abandon them. As mentioned by Hodder (2005), a diversity of voices is always advantageous in archaeology because it creates dynamic scholarship and relationships. It may thus be said that the future for Native Americans is bright, and more so for archaeology because of it.

**Works Cited**


Nichols, Deboarh L., Anthony L. Klesert, and


