Working Internationally with Indigenous Groups

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Several edited volumes detailing the problems and benefits of conducting collaborative research with descendant communities have recently been published (e.g., Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Kerber 2006; Silliman 2008), but most of these are written from the perspective of North American archaeologists. Smith and Wobst (2005) offer a more international perspective, as do Phillips and Allen (2010), and other volumes such as Smith and Burke's *Digging It Up Down Under* (2007) provide more regionally based suggestions for archaeologists. More recently, Sonya Atalay's *Community-Based Archaeology* volume (2012) provides broad information on working with Indigenous groups. These titles are just a handful of the more recent works that approach collaboration, and the reader should recognize that more are being issued each year. As such, this article is intended to provide broad suggestions toward initiating or increasing international collaboration and is not intended to be an encyclopedic entry on such collaborations.

KNOW THE REGULATIONS

If you are considering research on or directly involving living humans, it is imperative that you follow the regulations in effect in the country where you will conduct your research. For archae-

ABSTRACT

North American archaeologists working with Native American or First Nations communities, whose culture often forms the basis of the archaeological record, are becoming increasingly aware that they face a differing set of concerns and issues than those archaeologists who work with non-Native communities. Although their work is not as widely reported in the literature, North American archaeologists who have been fortunate enough to conduct research with Indigenous communities in other parts of the world are often overwhelmed by the variety of issues that may crop up. They often find that their experiences highlight the challenges but also the fulfillment involved in working with Indigenous groups. In the following paper, I offer suggestions based on practices that helped to alleviate issues I faced when working internationally. By broadening the discourse concerning working with Indigenous groups, I hope that these suggestions may also prove relevant to improving the practice of archaeology in North America as well.

Los arqueólogos norteamericanos que trabajan con comunidades nativas de América (también llamadas Primeras Naciones), cuya cultura a menudo constituye la base del registro arqueológico, son cada vez más conscientes de que se enfrentan a un conjunto de preocupaciones y asuntos diferente del que enfrentan los arqueólogos que trabajan con comunidades no indígenas. Los arqueólogos norteamericanos que han tenido la suerte de realizar investigaciones con comunidades indígenas en otras partes del mundo frecuentemente están abrumados por la variedad de asuntos que pueden surgir; sin embargo, esto no ha sido reportado tan ampliamente en la literatura. A menudo encuentran que sus experiencias ponen de relieve los desafíos y los logros implicados en el trabajo con grupos indígenas. En el siguiente artículo ofrezco sugerencias basadas en prácticas que ayudaron a aliviar los problemas que enfrenté en trabajos de este tipo a nivel internacional. Al ampliar el discurso relacionado con el trabajo con grupos indígenas espero que estas sugerencias también puedan resultar relevantes para mejorar la práctica de la arqueología en Norte América.

Advances in Archaeological Practice 2(4), 2014, pp. 366–374
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DOI: 10.7183/2326-3768.2.4.366

https://doi.org/10.7183/2326-3768.2.4.366 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ologists working within academic institutions (and depending upon funding sources), the activities covered by regulations are generally limited to information gathering through interviews (e.g., ethnoarchaeology) and obtaining biological samples in aid of ancient DNA (aDNA) research. However, it is better to ask about the process specifically than to assume that your research does not require human subjects review and then be denied permission to proceed. Start with your local Institutional Review Board (IRB) or contact a university in the area where your research is happening and ask for guidance; another option is to contact people who are working in the area for guidance. It is also worth noting that laws and regulations provide a minimum standard for ethical conduct.

Within the United States, research that involves living human subjects (at least within an academic setting or when funded or subject to review by federal entities) generally requires researchers to submit information regarding the impact of their research on the intended individuals and community through an IRB set up to ensure that participants were given adequate information to allow them to make an informed decision about participating in the proposed research. In the U.S., training for researchers is generally done through an online program through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) on 15 separate topics related to the impact of research on human subjects. When working internationally, most U.S. academic institutions require researchers to follow IRB protocols if the locations in which they work do not have their own regulations in place, a common occurrence in the developing world. Moreover, the CITI training and IRB protocols can help archaeologists take ethical considerations into account when designing research that involves living people anywhere.

Not all countries have national legislation, even in the developed world. In Canada, for example, such regulation is done on a regional or provincial basis. In Canada, Research Ethics Boards serve roughly an equivalent function to IRBs in the U.S. Similarly, no national protocols exist in Australia, but the various states have requirements; Burke and Smith's Tables 1.1 and 1.2 (2004:23-29) present legislation relating to heritage studies. Other models are in use, and researchers should be aware of protocols within the country where research is anticipated. A quick comparison of methods used in Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Shea 2004) shows how similar or different processes might be.

TALK WITH THE COMMUNITY

Even in countries where there are regulations in place that govern the interactions between the researcher and the Indigenous community, it is important that researchers follow the guidelines of the professional organization(s) to which they belong regarding contact with the community with which they wish to work. Most major anthropological and archaeological organizations, and many professional organizations as well, have codes of ethics that govern how researchers should interact with communities; they are important guidelines that should be followed as much as possible. Principle 2 of the Society for American Archaeology's Principles of Archaeological Ethics tasks the archaeologist to undertake "an acknowledgement of public accountability and a commitment to make every reasonable effort, in good faith, to consult actively with the affected group(s), with the goal of establishing a working relationship that can be beneficial to all parties involved" (SAA 1996). The World Archaeological Congress code of ethics proposed in 1990 is even more appropriately related to Indigenous cultural heritage (WAC 1990). The American Anthropological Association's Principles of Professional Responsibility also provide guidance to researchers working with Indigenous communities (AAA 2012). In addition, researchers should be aware that Articles 11 and 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples contain language that applies to research and intellectual property rights (UN 2008).

The international researcher, however, should recognize the wide variability within these codes of ethics and be informed in advance. While professional organizations' ethics statements are meant to guide "good research," it is extremely important that the researcher follow any guidelines and protocols established by the groups or communities where they hope to conduct research. In addition, some communities have their own research permitting processes and may also have their own Institutional Review Boards and associated review processes in place. The extra review process might contribute extra time constraints, and so the researcher should build in additional time to deal with these extra processes. Again, the researcher should delve into any community requirements at the initial stages of research development, rather than as an after-thought.

It is important not to confuse "contact" with "consultation." Contact is merely the first act of communicating with a community or organization. Initial contact can be in the form of a letter, a telephone call, or even an email. Consultation, on the other hand, is a problematic term with implications concerning legal responsibilities (inherent in heritage legislation) and moral obligations. Consultation, in its best form, is two-way communication concerning issues of importance to all parties involved; in its worst, it is a bureaucratic approach archaeologists follow merely because they are legally obligated to do so. Good consultation is essentially a process of negotiation between the interested parties, conducted with mutual respect working toward an equitable and mutually beneficial outcome. It should be designed to communicate information about possible impacts on areas or resources of importance to both parties, to negotiate the actions that each party will take to alleviate concerns about those impacts, and to attempt to reach an understanding of the roles of each party in the process (c.f. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008).

It is also important to realize that consultation is not the same as reaching an agreement regarding research; many Indigenous groups review project applications, as part of the process, and offer their comments and concerns for consideration, but often their actions have little impact on the proposed project. More and more communities are beginning to request or require participation in decisions about how information gained through research is disseminated and who owns or controls access to it, as well as to express concerns about copyright and benefits (Figure 1). Also be aware that many communities have widespread distrust of archaeologists and others who, in many countries, may be seen as agents of the state or colonial government.

https://doi.org/10.7183/2326-3768.2.4.366 Published online by Cambridge University Press



FIGURE 1. Ainu ceremonial practitioner Mr. Koji Yuki observes bear remains in an excavation unit at Shari, Hokkaido, Japan (photograph by Carol Ellick).

Burke and Smith (2004:12, emphasis added) note that in Queensland "*proper* consultation must be demonstrated before you will be granted a survey permit even to look for sites, and Indigenous permission must be obtained to view archaeological reports in the government database (including reports on historical archaeological sites)." While there might not be a law that requires a particular form of contact, documentation of consultation with the community is often required. The Australian Heritage Commission offers guidelines for researchers who wish to work within Indigenous communities in its *Ask First: A Guide to Respecting Indigenous Heritage Places and Values* (AHC 2000). The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies offers "Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies" (AIATSIS 2011) and an "Informed Consent Menu and Template for a Plain English Research Statement" (AIATSIS 2009) as a means of increasing the likelihood that communities will be less impacted by, and better informed about, proposed research.

Above all, be prepared to be flexible. International research often involves trying to find ways to "make things work" in cases in which there might be conflicting ways of doing things. As such, it is important that the international researcher recognize that what works in one's home country might not work in another (Figure 2).

INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

Community based participatory research (CBPR) is becoming a popular model for researchers wishing to collaborate with Indigenous communities at a deeper level than is generally required by relevant regulations. The Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research of the United States National Institutes of Health defines CBPR as "an applied collaborative approach that enables community residents to more actively participate in the full spectrum of research (from conception - design - conduct - analysis - interpretation - conclusions - communication of results) with a goal of influencing change in community health, systems, programs or policies" (NIH 2014). In this manner, community members and researchers partner to develop models and approaches to building communication, trust, and capacity, with the final goal of increasing community participation in the research process (Figure 3). CBPR endeavors to equitably

https://doi.org/10.7183/2326-3768.2.4.366 Published online by Cambridge University Press

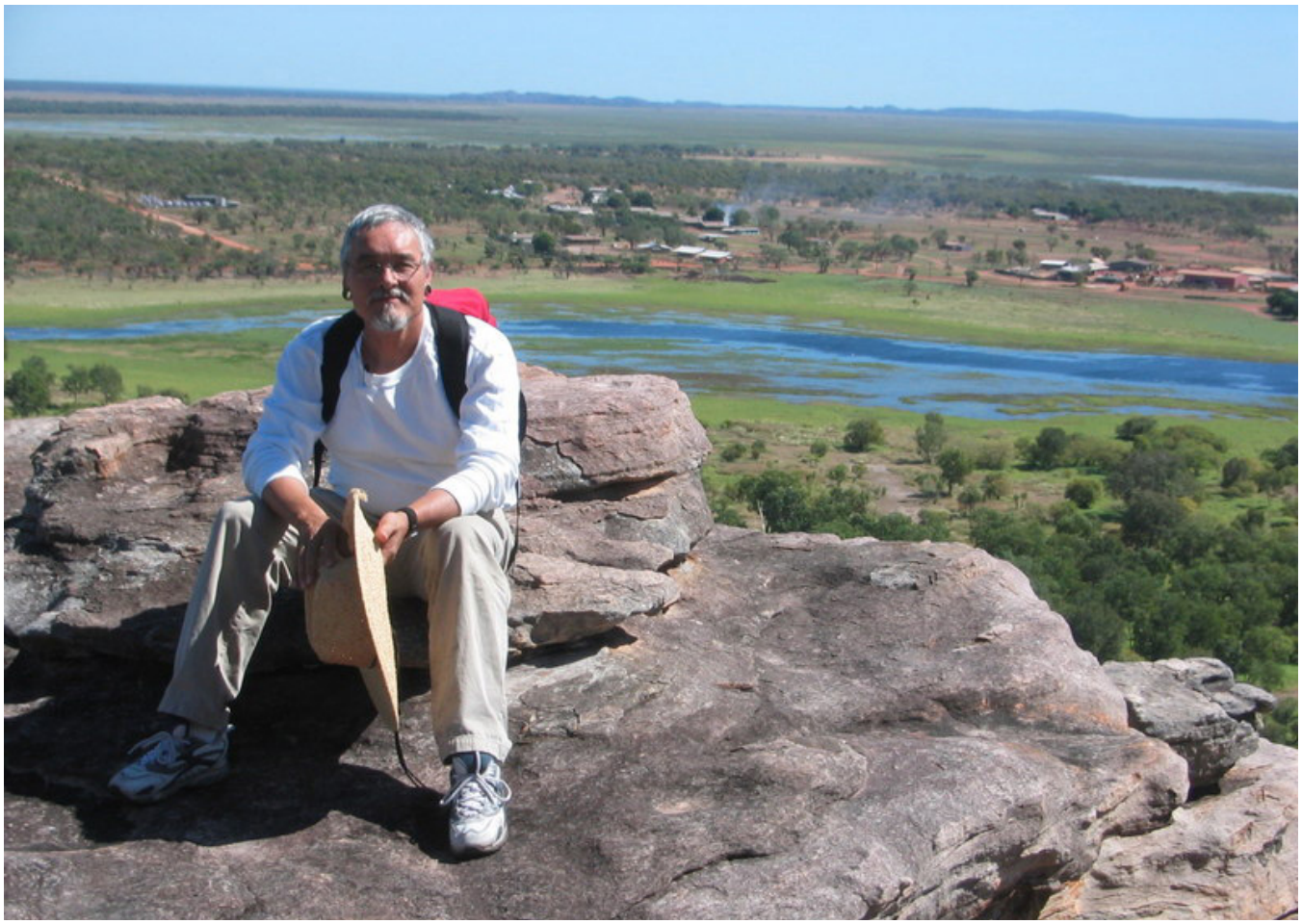


FIGURE 2. Joe Watkins in the field at Oenpelli, Northern Territory, Australia (photograph by Carol Ellick).

involve all partners in the research process and to recognize the unique strengths that each brings; benefits accrue to the researchers in terms of academic tenure and promotion and the community gets tangible benefits from the research. While CBPR has been most often used in health-related projects, more and more anthropologists and archaeologists are using it as a means of redefining the research enterprise.

Nicholas et al. (2011) provide a good discussion of how to practice collaborative archaeology on a broad scale. While the article does not offer a topical approach to doing archaeology with communities, it offers examples of work undertaken as part of a programmatic approach to identifying community issues in heritage management. In Australia, Jackson and Smith (2005:329) discuss "the contemporary and political environment within which archaeological research is conducted" in the Northern Territory. They offer a good primer on the processes involved in initiating and maintaining long-lasting relationships with a Northern Territory community, but their insights can also apply to conducting good research elsewhere.

KNOW HOW TO COMMUNICATE

It's important that the researcher understand that different societies have different ways and means of communicating. I have written about this topic previously (Watkins 2006; Watkins and Ferguson 2005) and will only graze the surface here.

Edward T. Hall (1976) differentiated between low- and high-context communication as a means of explaining cultural differences in the ways things are presented and accepted by human populations. Low-context communication occurs when "the mass of information is vested in the explicit code" (Hall 1976:70), while high-context communication occurs when "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (Hall 1976:79). Both high-context and low-context communication are used in all cultures, but one form tends to predominate. As Gudykunst (2005:8) notes, high-context messages and indirect communication are more often used by members of collectivist cultures, while low-context messages and direct communication are preferred by members of individualistic cultures. With cultures that use high-context communication, it is generally up to the listener to filter the valuable information from the conversation. People rely less on the *literal* meaning of the words. For example, "yes" in high-context cultures can mean, "Yes, I hear you," rather than "Yes, I agree with what you said or propose." In the same vein, silence (saying nothing) should not be considered a tacit agreement with your

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FIGURE 3. Working with a community involves interaction outside of the research enterprise, often including transportation of local community members to special areas (photograph by Carol Ellick).

statement. This is particularly true of cultures where high-context communication predominates.

Indirect high-context communication also lessens the likelihood of conflict by minimizing the outward appearance of aggression—criticism, disagreement, and other unsettling things often go unsaid and are not openly addressed. People who operate with low-context communications, on the other hand, tend to be explicit, fact-filled, and often repetitive, with more direct communication leading to a higher possibility of conflict, given that disagreements are more often openly stated or called to attention. Neuliep (2006:43-92) explains these concepts in great detail and offers numerous examples to facilitate understanding. I have found that the book *Culture Matters* (Storti and Bennhold-Samaan 1997), an extensive cross-cultural workbook for Peace Corps volunteers, offers important insights concerning indirect/high-context and direct/low-context styles of communication.

In working with international communities, it is also important to recognize cultural differences regarding nonverbal communication, such as interpersonal space, touching during conversation, eye contact (or lack thereof), and loudness of voice. There are also cultural differences governing how the different genders interact in public; what might be permissible in one context might not be permissible in another. For example, I went for a walk with the only other non-Australian in an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory of Australia. She happened to be a young student visiting from the United States. The local people presumed that we must be married, since we were walking by ourselves in broad daylight, unchaperoned. Be aware of how your unfamiliarity with local customs might impact your ability to develop and maintain good intercultural communication.

It is important to recognize that working with communities is not easy, even in supposedly familiar environments. In the United States, a study aimed at recognizing the consequences caused by the gaps in collaboration and communication styles identified and presented generalized collaboration styles of African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic American, and Anglo American communities. The study noted great differences between each minority community and the Anglo American community, with the differences created by variations in expectations, styles, assumptions, values, body language, and privilege. It showed that persons from minority communities often perceive that they are treated disrespectfully by behaviors

https://doi.org/10.7183/2326-3768.2.4.366 Published online by Cambridge University Press



FIGURE 4. The anthropologist as "other": Carol Ellick and Joe Watkins in traditional Ainu clothing at the Ainu Kotan, Lake Akan, Hokkaido, Japan (photograph by Carol Ellick).

that, to the Anglo American community, are common and normal. An outgrowth of this study is *The Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration* (Elliot et al. 1999), a useful guide for collaborators offering insights into ways that differing communities approach similar situations.

FORM PARTNERSHIPS AND LEARN FROM THE DOERS

It is no longer considered appropriate to show up unannounced in someone's community and begin conducting research. Even if all the logistical hurdles were somehow eased, it would be difficult to begin a new research program. However, it is rarely necessary to begin new research programs from scratch; there are very few places where no one is working and few researchers who are unwilling to collaborate or partner with another researcher.

In 1972, I wanted to dig in France. I wrote a letter to François Bordes and asked if I could work with him. He said "yes." He got free labor and I learned how to excavate in the Old World. In 2007, I received an invitation to present a paper at a conference on repatriation and Native American methods of determining tribal membership at the Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan. I had always wanted to go to Japan but never knew how to get there. Hirofumi Kato and I have worked together since then to try to interject the Ainu more firmly into their own history. While this is not my own research program, I could use this partnership to develop one (with appropriate consultation with the community, regulatory processes, and so forth). While I have not had to undertake the process of getting permission to initiate research in Japan on my own, I believe that Dr. Kato would be an insider who could mentor me through the processes involved.

Local researchers will also be able to help you to understand the lay of the land, so to speak—the local values that you should respect and acknowledge. These local values may be strongly influenced by different worldviews, ontologies, or conceptions of time that we, as non-locals, might not understand (Figure 4). For example, the Hul'qumi'num of British Columbia consider archaeological sites—even small lithic scatters—to be comparable to cemeteries because ancestors are still present there (McLay et al. 2004). Australian Aboriginal groups consider

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FIGURE 5. View from Injalak Hill, Northern Territory, Australia (photograph by Carol Ellick).

ancestral beings to be a part of *this* existence, not of another dimension. For members of these groups, rock and land formations are the visible manifestation that their ancestors are still here among us.

Good international research can be developed through collaborations that involve both research partners and academic partnerships. The Internet has made it much easier to find people anywhere in the world who might be good partners in a research setting. These partners can help you overcome unfamiliar hurdles to initiating research and can also add insights to your research questions and ideas. Almost everyone benefits from such arrangements, even though one sometimes might lose a bit of autonomy.

ACT RESPONSIBLY

While this does not seem to be something that anyone should have to reaffirm, it is important for visitors in another culture within another country to realize that many communities have very limited engagement with archaeologists. Working in a responsible and respectful manner can open the door for those who follow. Conversely, it doesn't take much to have that door slammed shut.

It is also important to understand the impact of outside researchers on local communities. An influx of strangers can place the community in the curious position of having to deal with housing and food supplies, as well as potentially difficult social situations. In Australia, for example, strangers can be seen as dangerous because they don't have any local kin who can be responsible for any damages they cause. In my case, the local community responded by giving visiting researchers appropriate kinship terms that firmly placed us within a culturally prescribed web of interactions. In this manner, we were "safe," and the locals knew what was expected of us and of themselves during social interactions (Figure 5).

CONCLUSIONS

It is important to remember that these are just general guidelines; specific strategies must be developed relative to the

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locality and people with whom the researcher is working. There is no cookbook approach that will work equally well with every community—each community has a different history of engagement with researchers, industry, and the state. Act in a respectful and responsible manner in all archaeological endeavors. Please undertake extensive background research prior to initiating fieldwork. A great start is to discuss research plans with individuals who have been involved in the areas where your research interests lie. Take advantage of your contacts, and remember that people with local experience should be able to offer suggestions concerning obligatory and preferential processes. If, as Willey and Phillips remarked more than 50 years ago, "American archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing" (1958:2), then American archaeologists must exercise their anthropological skills. Even if the people we might be working *on* are no longer alive, we need to be better anthropologists when working *with* their descendants.

Data Availability Statement

No original physical or digital data were developed or used in the production of this manuscript.

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https://doi.org/10.7183/2326-3768.2.4.366 Published online by Cambridge University Press