

# DISCUSSION ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES: A FORCE OF CHANGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

## *Discussão*

### *Patrimônio arqueológico e comunidades locais: uma força de transformação no mundo contemporâneo*

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#### ABSTRACT

The 2016 conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, held in Montréal, Canada, posed the question “What Does Heritage Change?” A session organized by Allison Bain and Réginald Auger focussed on archaeological aspects, under the title “What Does Heritage Change? Case Studies in Archaeology.” Presented papers had an international scope but provided a common message: contemporary archaeology best serves humanity when governments protect archaeological sites with legislation, funding, and effective management; heritage ownership is acknowledged; community-based research is followed; and archaeologists become long-term partners with local communities. Archaeology can be a force of change in the contemporary world, especially to the health and well-being of local communities.

*Keywords:* community-based archaeology; Indigenous peoples; heritage management

#### RÉSUMÉ

Le congrès de l'Association of Critical Heritage Studies tenu à Montréal au Canada en 2016 posait la question suivante : « Qu'est-ce que le patrimoine change? » La séance intitulée «

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Qu'est-ce que le patrimoine change? Études de cas en archéologie», organisée par Allison Bain et Réginald Auger, se consacrait aux aspects archéologiques du patrimoine. Les conférences présentées, à portée internationale, avançaient toutes un message commun: l'archéologie contemporaine sert le mieux les besoins de l'humanité lorsque les gouvernements protègent les sites archéologiques par une législation, un financement et une gestion efficaces; lorsque la propriété du patrimoine est reconnue; lorsque la recherche communautaire est suivie; et lorsque les archéologues deviennent des partenaires à long terme des communautés locales. En ce sens, l'archéologie apporterait des changements bénéfiques dans le monde contemporain, en particulier pour la santé et le bien-être des communautés locales.

*Mots-clés:* Archéologie communautaire; peuples autochtones; gestion de patrimoine

## RESUMO

A Conferência da Associação de Estudos Críticos de Patrimônio de 2016, ocorrida em Montreal, Canadá, colocou uma questão “O que o patrimônio muda?”. A sessão organizada por Allison Bain e Réginald Auger teve como objetivo analisar os aspectos arqueológicos sob o título “O que o patrimônio muda? Estudos de caso na Arqueologia.” Os artigos apresentados, de escopo internacional, passam uma mensagem comum: arqueologia contemporânea serve melhor a humanidade quando os governos protegem sítios arqueológicos com legislação, financiamento e gestão; quando a propriedade patrimonial é reconhecida; pesquisa comunitária é realizada; e quando arqueólogos estabelecem parcerias de longa duração com a comunidade local. Arqueologia pode se tornar um instrumento de mudança no mundo contemporâneo, em especial para o bem-estar das comunidades locais.

*Palavras-chave:* Arqueologia comunitária; população indígena; gestão de patrimônio

## *Introduction*

Asking the question “What does archaeological heritage change?” is essentially the same as asking “What are the practical benefits of archaeology?” Aside from the obvious popular appeal of archaeology as a form of time travel to the past and the search for buried treasure, as captured in headline news stories, TV shows,

National Geographic, and Hollywood films, the majority of people worldwide have received little benefit from the investigation and development of heritage sites, and a number of Indigenous and descendant communities see archaeology as cultural appropriation of and interference with their ancestors, history, identity, and collective rights (Chirikure et al., 2010; Dawdy, 2009; LaRoche, 2012; McNiven & Russell, 2005; Smith, 2006). These justifiable critiques are the cumulative result of archaeologists and related heritage institutions having claimed exclusive and privileged stewardship of archaeological heritage for more than a century and having ignored the local and descendant communities on whose lands the archaeological sites and remains are situated (Smith, 2006). Over the past three decades, however, archaeologists have adopted an ethical responsibility to local and descendant communities, both directly, in response to political action and new legislation requiring consultation with and involvement of the public and descendant communities in archaeological projects, and indirectly, in response to the neoliberal demand of governments and taxpayers for accountability (e.g., World Archaeological Congress <http://worldarch.org/code-of-ethics/> ). Archaeologists are in the process of relinquishing their monopoly on archaeological heritage and engaging in public and community-based projects in close partnership with and for the benefit of the people, with a high degree of success (Atalay, 2012; Atalay et al., 2014; Colwell-Chanthaphonh & Ferguson, 2008; Little & Shackel, 2007; Lyons, 2013; LaRoche, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2011; Pratap, 2009; Schmidt & Pikiřayi, 2017; Smith, 2006). Archaeology can be a force of change in the contemporary world, particularly at the local community level.

Archaeology is entering a new era, exemplified by the papers from the session “What Does Heritage Change? Case Studies in Archaeology,” at the 2016 conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS). Presented papers had an international scope but provided a common message: contemporary archaeology best serves humanity when governments protect archaeological sites with legislation, funding, and effective management; ownership (control and stewardship) of heritage is shared equitably with local communities and put entirely in the hands of descendant communities (Zimmerman, 2013); community-based research is followed; and

archaeologists become long-term partners with communities. Archaeology can be a force of change in the contemporary world, especially to the well-being and identity of local and descendant communities (Schaepe et al., 2017). The papers were published in two separate issues of this journal and all of the papers are bound together by two mutually reinforcing themes: ownership and management of archaeological heritage and public (community-based) archaeology.

## *Ownership and Management of Archaeological Heritage*

Archaeological heritage in its raw state is embedded in the land. Modifying George Orwell's oft-cited quote from 1984, "Who controls the past [...] controls the future: who controls the present controls the past," we can argue that who controls the land controls archaeological heritage, and who controls archaeological heritage controls the past and the future. In nation states without Indigenous populations (those in much of Europe, Asia, and Africa), archaeological heritage is managed and protected by the state for reasons of national interest (i.e., national identity and history). In colonial states (New Zealand, Australia, and states in the Americas and parts of the other continents) that assumed control of Indigenous lands, archaeological heritage privileges the history of the colonial power at the expense of Indigenous history. In both types of nation states, land is developed for private gain (e.g., housing, industry, forestry) and the public good (e.g., transportation and power corridors), and archaeological remains on the land are frequently salvage excavated to make way for the future. Until recently, nation states have had exclusive control over in-situ preservation or removal of archaeological heritage, sometimes taking into consideration the wishes of local and descendant communities. Globally, Indigenous communities, a special category of descendant communities, have had little control over the fate of their ancestral sites. However, the 2007 adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirmed that Indigenous peoples have an inherent right to maintain, protect, and develop their archaeological heritage; the declaration thereby challenges state ownership or control of Indigenous heritage (Warrick, 2017).

Archaeological heritage is typically protected and managed by nation states through legislation. From a Western perspective, cultural heritage in general is considered the property of humanity (e.g., UNESCO) or a nation because it represents human achievement and links the present to the past, which is a pillar of national identity. In most nation states, archaeological sites and remains are legally the property of the state and protected from destruction by land development or looting. As state property, archaeological heritage is carefully managed by government and professional archaeologists. Access to archaeological sites and remains is legally restricted and in the hands of government bureaucrats (e.g., planners), trained archaeologists, and museum curators. In the context of land development, archaeological sites are evaluated for their contribution to knowledge of the past. Only archaeological sites deemed to be regionally, nationally, or internationally significant (i.e., old, authentic, grand, and monumental, to use terms from the “authorized heritage discourse” [Smith, 2006]) are protected from land development and preserved as national treasures. Laurajane Smith (2004, 2006) and John Carman (2005) have characterized contemporary state-managed archaeology as Orwellian, serving the dominant political structure and elites and excluding the average citizen.

Most archaeological sites threatened by land development are excavated in the context of cultural resource management (CRM). Globally, CRM archaeology constitutes well over 90% of all archaeological survey and excavation (Williamson, 2018). Prior to the 1990s, there was little opportunity for involvement of local or descendant communities in CRM. In fact, CRM archaeology has been labelled capitalist archaeology (La Salle & Hutchings, 2012; McGuire, 2008) because it is driven by public- and private-sector land development, facilitated by the government (in order to promote the economy), and carried out by private sector archaeologists (seeking gainful employment). CRM archaeology seldom includes local or descendant communities, except for Indigenous peoples in some

nation states. Archaeological heritage and expressed community value for that heritage rarely result in a stop to development.

However, while archaeological heritage is tightly controlled by the state, archaeological remains are tied to a place and mean the most to the local community living on or near them. Indigenous communities claim ownership of archaeological sites in their traditional territories, supplanting claims of nation states. In nations such as Canada, Indigenous sites and artifacts constitute more than 85% of significant archaeological remains and cover the landscape, but more than 99% of archaeologists are non-Indigenous and more than 90% of the archaeology is CRM (Williamson, 2018). In the course of land development, archaeological sites are identified and, typically, excavated to make way for construction. Better protection of archaeological heritage from land development should be the goal of every nation state, especially those with Indigenous communities.

One clear example of inadequate protection of archaeological heritage (particularly Indigenous) is the province of Québec, Canada. The province has a rich archaeological record, but the majority of archaeological work is conducted on previously known sites in the course of land or tourism development (CRM) (Desrosiers, 2018; Moss, 2018; Savard & Beaudry, this volume). Heritage legislation in Québec privileges protection and tourism of historically important French colonial sites, especially in UNESCO-designated Quebec City, at the expense of Indigenous sites, effectively ignoring the heritage of Indigenous communities and highlighting Québécois heritage (Moss, 2018). In fact, Québec heritage legislation generally does not require archaeologists to examine a development property to find sites. If the site has not been previously reported and is not already included on a plan or has no visible ruins, it is not systematically checked or surveyed for the presence of sites as required in other jurisdictions. Note in this context that almost all Indigenous archaeological sites in Québec have no visible surface indication (Desrosiers, 2018; Moss, 2018). Fortunately, some Indigenous nations in Québec, such as the Huron-Wendat (Hawkins & Lesage, this volume; Lesage, personal communication 2018) and the Waban-Aki (Treyvaud et al., 2018), have partnered with university research archaeologists to undertake their own archaeological surveys in an effort to demarcate ancestral territories,

travel routes, and land use patterns, indigenizing and decolonizing the Québec landscape in the process.

Archaeological heritage in modern states is managed for the public good, but this management often does not serve the best interests of local communities and can sometimes displace and harm community members. Normally, the key stakeholders in the management of archaeological heritage are government, private developers, tourists, and local and descendant communities. In addition, international pressure can be brought to bear on nation states to preserve and develop tourist potential of highly significant archaeological sites, especially those worthy of designation by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. An excellent example of win-win archaeological research and development is Patara, in western Turkey (Tanaka, 2018). Patara is an ancient city with standing ruins on the shores of the Mediterranean. Local residents were initially opposed to archaeologists excavating the site because it was declared a highly significant heritage site by the Turkish government, hindering their livelihood and prohibiting land development. However, the uncovering of Patara and the rustic, undeveloped nature of the local community became tourist attractions. The local residents now embrace archaeology as a contributor to their economic sustainability (Tanaka, 2018). Another success story in research and development of archaeological heritage is the case of Ferryland. Barry Gaulton and other archaeologists and students from Memorial University, Newfoundland, have conducted community-based research with the residents of Ferryland, formerly a cod fishing community that experienced economic disaster with the closure of the fishery in 1992. Spanning two decades, archaeological research at Ferryland, one of the first English colonies in North America, has involved community members in fieldwork, museum, interpretive events, and tourism, not only revitalizing the local economy, but instilling the importance of archaeological heritage in future generations (Gaulton & Rankin, this volume).

Unfortunately, not all archaeological heritage development benefits communities economically. Local communities can be seriously harmed by archaeological site development when they are not included as equal partners with the state and its heritage institutions. In China, for example, world-class archaeological sites

are managed by multiple levels of government or museums, in a complex spider web of interconnected and overlapping responsibilities, with little regard for the lives of local residents. Residents near internationally significant sites are relocated without fair compensation and rarely benefit from tourism. Funding is inadequate, and some sites are maintained through ticket sales (Wang and Nakamura, 2018). Wang and Nakamura (2018) suggest that development and interpretation of significant large-scale archaeological properties is best achieved by committees whose members are archaeologists and both government and local authorities. They also note that educational and economic benefits must be provided to the local community. Another example of local residents being harmed by archaeological site development is Luxor, Egypt (Hesham & Baller, 2018). The Egyptian temples and sphinx-lined avenue of ancient Thebes are a UNESCO site, and increased tourism development is planned. Sadly, this site has a long history of displacing local residents and preventing them from participating in the local economy. Medieval-era buildings and homes are being demolished to enable the construction of modern hotels and an IMAX theatre. No heritage impact assessment has been carried out on the physical, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental problems created by tourism development of the archaeological site. Hesham and Baller (2018) recommend that development of ancient Thebes must engage and benefit local residents as full partners, minimizing relocations and increasing economic and cultural life, as well as avoid environmental and economic damage. Heritage impact assessments must become a standard feature of developing internationally important archaeological sites as tourist destinations.

### *Community-based Archaeology*

Community-based archaeology or community-oriented archaeology is a subset of the more encompassing public archaeology. Broadly speaking, public archaeology “is any endeavour



in which archaeologists interact with the public, and any research (practical or theoretical) that examines or analyses the public dimensions of doing archaeology” (McDavid & Brock, 2015:165) or “practice and scholarship where archaeology meets the world” (Moshenska 2017, p. 3). The international journal *Public Archaeology* publishes papers that address “archaeological and heritage issues as they relate to the wider world of politics, ethics, government, social questions, education, management, economics and philosophy.” For the purposes of this discussion, public archaeology will be more narrowly defined as archaeology done collaboratively and ethically with stakeholders (government, private sector, local and descendant communities, and archaeologists) that provides real benefits to as many people as possible. In this sense, public archaeology is about social justice and making change in the world. It is best achieved by practicing archaeology in close collaboration with local and/or descendant communities, empowering those communities to lend their voice to the archaeological process and end products, and disseminating the results of the archaeological work to as broad a public as possible (McDavid & Brock, 2015; Richardson & Almansa-Sánchez, 2015).

Community-based archaeology is public archaeology in which archaeologists and local and/or descendant communities work together equitably in some form of archaeological practice ranging “from the pursuit of intentional research partnerships to the (often) more circumscribed consultations that arise from commercial development, government practice, resource management by Indigenous communities, and other contexts” (Lyons & Blair, 2018). Community-based archaeology offers a direct challenge to state control of archaeology because it puts archaeology in the hands of a local or descendant community that rightfully claims control or ownership of its ancestral past (Marshall, 2002). Community-based archaeological projects are collaborative and participatory-action oriented, and most often with descendant communities (Atalay, 2012; Colwell, 2016).

Community-based archaeology in Brazil is an excellent example of archaeology as a form of empowerment of previously oppressed or marginalized peoples and as a tool of social justice, through the righting of the wrongs of the past. Brazilian archaeology

honours the multicultural history and citizenry, and local communities are regularly involved. Since the establishment of democracy in 1985, Brazilian archaeologists have been educating the general populace about the importance of archaeology and reinforcing this through community-based projects. Garraffoni et al. (this volume) provide a couple of case studies that demonstrate efforts made by Brazilian archaeologists to make archaeology more socially accessible and inclusive, such as instilling archaeological values in school children using easy-to-read booklets, training underprivileged students in field and lab techniques, and feminizing museums. Those of us working in North America should take some lessons from Brazil in public archaeology.

The benefits of the discovery, ownership, management, and use of archaeological heritage are most clearly felt at the local community level. For local and descendant communities (often one and the same in Europe, Africa, and much of Asia), archaeological sites are touchstones to the past and can facilitate commemoration of people and events and enhance socio-cultural identity (Chirikure & Pwiti, 2008). Réginald Auger's (this volume) research on a 17th–18th century Jesuit plantation and cemetery in French Guiana offers a fascinating example of how archaeology motivated archaeologists to challenge the French colonial government to acknowledge the multi-cultural nature (African, Indigenous, and French) of French Guianese history and heritage. Despite 20 years of archaeological research on the plantation, the local community showed no interest in the archaeology. However, the 2012 testing of an associated cemetery, which revealed a mix of burials of the enslaved, Indigenous people, landowners, and missionaries, generated enormous interest because it mirrored contemporary French Guianese society. The cemetery has become a “space to discuss history” and a locus of commemoration of African ancestors, the abolition of slavery, and the historical evolution of contemporary French Guiana (Auger, this volume).

The myths of local and regional history can be confirmed or overturned by archaeology, and local communities construct and maintain their history through storytelling. Stories about the past become enshrined as truth among local residents and are rarely scrutinized. Development of archaeological sites for tourism purposes often generates interest in knowing the truth about the past. Nadine

Béague (this volume) provides a clear example of how archaeological research can challenge local history. In southeastern France, archaeological work in advance of restoration of the Morlanne castle as a tourist site discredited the myth, propagated by the rich owner and his friends, that Gaston Fébus, a 14th-century aristocrat, built a series of castles in a particular style to defend French borders in the Hundred Years War. Archaeological work revealed that the castles were not new fortresses but, rather, older castles remodelled as symbols of seigneurial domination of the region. Fébus was not the heroic figure who saved France from English invaders. Another example of the importance of archaeological work in the validation of myths of history is the research of Manon Savard and Nicolas Beaudry (this volume) on l'île Saint-Barnabé (Rimouski, Québec). At the request of Tourism Rimouski, Savard and Beaudry conducted a field school on the island with the goal of confirming the presence of an 18th century hermit, a local legend. While definitive archaeological evidence of the hermit's dwelling was not found, 18th century artifacts confirm an occupation or use of the island. A noteworthy feature of this project is the fascination of local residents in witnessing the performance of archaeology and sometimes participating in the excavation, connecting them to that mythical past and making it real.

Archaeology carried out in full partnership with and for the benefit of an Indigenous people, that is, Indigenous archaeology, has developed over the past 20 years, mainly in Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand (Nicholas et al., 2011). Ideally, an Indigenous community should be in control of any archaeological work in its territory, as enshrined in the aforementioned principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In practice, however, Indigenous peoples only have control of archaeology on lands reserved for their exclusive use (i.e., reserves or reservations) or under their territorial jurisdiction (e.g., the Inuit territories of Nunavut and Nunatsiavut, in Canada). Public and private lands situated on former Indigenous lands (i.e., lands under treaty or stolen lands, such as the Cherokee homeland in the southeastern USA) are subject to development with little real effort made to preserve Indigenous archaeological remains on the land (Warrick, 2017). Fortunately, this is beginning to change (Supernant, 2018).

There are several examples in the session papers of praiseworthy archaeology being carried out under the control of Indigenous nations. The Nunatsiavut and Southern Inuit of Labrador, in partnership with archaeologists and students from Memorial University, Newfoundland, have taken control of their archaeological heritage and are using archaeology to assert their Indigenous rights to land, resources, and cultural identity (Gaulton & Rankin, this volume). La Nation Waban-Aki (Bureau du Ndakinna) is using archaeological data to enhance data from other disciplines (e.g., geography, wildlife biology, fisheries, history) and Indigenous knowledge (oral history) to demarcate its territory and to manage natural resources (Treyvaud et al., 2018). Similarly, the Huron-Wendat (Bureau Nionwentsio) are collaborating with archaeologists to gain control of ancestral sites and human remains, to decolonize archaeology and their history, and to strengthen territorial and resource sovereignty (Hawkins and Lesage, this volume). Lastly, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (Tribal Historic Preservation Office) is engaged in archaeological research to map the pre-colonial Cherokee landscape, locating town sites and trail networks as a form of “landscape justice,” in an effort to re-establish a Cherokee presence on the land in the southeastern USA from which their ancestors were removed in the 18th and 19th centuries (Sampeck & Griffin, this volume). Archaeological heritage is changing the Indigenous-settler political landscape in the 21st century, and indigenous peoples are employing a colonial discipline (archaeology) as a tool of decolonization – a brilliant irony.

One critical area that was not covered by any of the papers in the session is the threat to and destruction of archaeological heritage from climate change. Arctic communities of Indigenous peoples are at risk over the next few decades of losing tens of thousands of archaeological sites to shoreline erosion and loss of permafrost (Hollesen et al., 2018). Sites are threatened in other parts of the world as well, particularly in riverine, coastline, and alpine regions, as well as in areas prone to wildfires. There are simply not enough archaeologists and funds to mitigate all sites threatened by climate change. The most effective way of identifying and saving as many sites as possible lies in partnerships among government agencies, archaeologists, and local citizens – effectively recruiting and training

local community members as citizen scientists (Dawson et al., 2017). Ameliorating the impacts of climate change on archaeological heritage will demand community archaeology on an unprecedented scale over the coming decades.

## *Concluding Comments*

The discipline of archaeology has changed dramatically from its late 19th century roots. The pith-helmeted colonial archaeologist peering through a magnifying glass to decipher inscriptions on an Egyptian tomb, the stereotypical image that most people hold and that is reinforced by popular magazines and Hollywood films, is an artifact of the past. In the 21st century, archaeology has abandoned its pith helmets and ivory tower elitism and has become a force of change in the contemporary world. The set of papers from the “What Does Heritage Change? Case Studies in Archaeology” session at the 2016 ACHS conference relay a common message: archaeological heritage is most important to descendant and local communities and is an important tool of social justice. Furthermore, nation states and international organizations (e.g., UNESCO) must work toward sharing the ownership, control, and management of archaeological heritage with descendant and local communities. At present, most people have no awareness of the archaeological record in their local community because it has been exclusively controlled and managed by government heritage bureaucrats and professional archaeologists and because this information is rarely shared. Public archaeology and community-based archaeology over the past three decades have begun to democratize archaeology through popular media (books, websites, TV shows, and films), education, and public involvement, but there are still too many examples (captured in a number of the session’s papers) where the professional heritage elite in government and their political masters are reluctant to share the reigns of power and control with the people – descendant and local communities.

Archaeology is a political endeavour, and it is as much about living people as it is about sites and things of the past (Smith, 2006).

The ACHS 2016 papers demonstrate that archaeological heritage has the capacity to make changes for the benefit of local and descendant communities. The legislation and management of archaeological heritage in most nation states is outdated and does not serve the average citizen. They must be changed to conform with the realities of 21st century archaeology. The archaeologists in this session have a unified voice: archaeology must engage descendant and local communities that have a vested interest in the protection, control, and management of the past, and archaeological heritage is best conserved, examined, and interpreted through collaborative partnerships of archaeologists and community members, in which ownership (control of and access to) and production of knowledge of the past is shared. If archaeological heritage must be sacrificed to private and public land development, local and descendant communities deserve a voice in the decision making and compensation for loss of that heritage in the form of educational resources and tourism and museum facilities. And if community member livelihoods are impacted as a result of archaeological site preservation and tourism development, compensation must be offered with the guarantee of no net loss of personal property or income. Archaeological heritage can and should provide tangible benefits to local or descendant communities (e.g., economic, social justice, education and skills training, empowerment, and identity). Archaeologists have an ethical responsibility to the people for whom heritage matters the most, often the descendants of those who created it.

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Conference participants in the ACHS session "What does Heritage Change?  
Case Studies in Archaeology"\*



Front row, left to right: Maria Aparecida de Almeida, Dongdong Wang, Nadine Béague, Eman Shokry Hesham, Chief Christine Zachary-Deom.

Back row, left to right: Allison Bain, Barry Gaulton, Steve Pendery, Pierre Desrosiers, Eisuke Tanaka, Réginald Auger, William Moss, Pedro Funari, Manon Savard, Susan Rowley, Sophia Perdikaris, Nicolas Beaudry.

\* Alicia Hawkins and Kathryn Sampeck also presented papers and are absent from this photo.