PART II

Reaching for Epistemic Humility
At a community event some years ago on an Indian Reserve in British Columbia, I overheard a Secwepemc elder say to a young man who was fooling around, “You can’t listen when your mouth is moving. So be quiet and learn.” He was suitably embarrassed in front of his peers and thanked her for the important lesson. This chapter is about what can be learned when we, as archaeologists, stop talking and listen—advice I have long taken to heart.

Over the course of 30 years of working with and for Indigenous peoples, my view of archaeology has changed in significant ways. Steeped in an archaeological orientation that combined culture history with processualism, my research was (and is) strongly oriented to early postglacial land use and the human ecology of wetland-rich environments. However, I soon found my worldview changing as I taught archaeology in a post-secondary institution on an Indian Reserve in Canada for 15 years. That formative experience led me to a second avenue by which to engage with archaeological questions and heritage values. The interplay between these two distinct ways of approaching and engaging with the past has subsequently strongly influenced the archaeology that I do and the heritage research and activism that I engage in, providing a sometimes uncomfortable but always productive tension.¹ This has instilled a degree of pragmatism about the nature of archaeology and its often-privileged position but also a sense of optimism that it can be made more relevant and representative while still maintaining scientific rigor.

I have spent much time considering the challenges that both descendant communities and archaeologists are confronted with in trying to reach common ground. When asked to speak at the ḥl̓ə̱l̓ał̓ k̓ aʔ ṭaʔ Traditional Knowledge
gathering in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, several years ago, I distilled what I have learned in a presentation entitled “Why Heritage Is Not Just about ‘Things.’” Namely, heritage is not just about things; it is not limited to the past; it permeates the fabric of indigenous societies; it is largely intangible; heritage research may have unintended consequences; and heritage objects and places are best managed by the heritage holders (Nicholas 2014a).

Each of these six points reflects conceptions, values, and uses of heritage that transcend the familiar cultural historical and neoevolutionary dimensions of contemporary archaeology. Descendant communities, especially indigenous ones, have long had concerns about how their heritage has been treated by archaeologists and others, especially when used in inappropriate, unwelcome, or harmful ways. Areas of concern include the consequences of modern and ancient DNA research; the question of control over, benefits from, access to, and protection of heritage objects, places, and information; efforts to repatriate cultural patrimony and human remains and the information derived from those; the inappropriate display of sacred objects; and the selective acceptance of traditional knowledge by archaeologists, climatologists, and others (Nicholas 2018). What is important is that understanding how and why these issues emerge at the intersection of archaeological goals and heritage values is not a unilateral process but requires listening to community members (see Cusack-McVeigh 2016).

In this chapter I describe the value of what can be learned from indigenous community members as well as how ethnographic archaeological studies contribute to a fuller understanding of heritage, directly benefit community needs and interests, and make substantial contributions to archaeology and heritage preservation. I focus on efforts undertaken by the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project, an international initiative that I directed from 2008 to 2016. I begin by addressing the familiar concept of heritage and why it is problematic.

Why “Heritage” Is Problematic

Archaeology is how we learn what happened in the past, while heritage is that set of values given to or possessed by objects, places, and information derived from archaeology and other means. We are most familiar with these scientific and historic meanings but less so with local values and specific needs of descendant communities, especially in the case of Indigenous peoples, whose knowledge of how things were or came to be may be rooted in different epistemologies
and ontologies. Without talking with and listening to community members, both archaeological inquiry and heritage management policies remain incomplete, if not skewed to outsider interests. This tends to perpetuate Western perspectives and expectations rather than provide opportunities to learn about decidedly non-Western ways of life, both past and present, via local heritage values. In British Columbia, for example, Hul’quîmi’um elder Arvid Charlie referred to this difference:

When new sites are a few years old they’re called heritage. Our sites have been here thousands of years. Their sites, if they’re old, may be a hundred and fifty years. They say it’s old, but to us that was yesterday. Our ancient sites—since time immemorial. They value their places that have a few years old. To us, our old, much older sites are very important to us. Many of these places have our old people buried in them. So it’s not only a heritage site, it’s a graveyard. . . . If they [white people] can have important places that are only few years old, why not? Why can’t we say our places are important to us? Because they are our culture, our heritage. It’s about our past and it’s our future. (McLay et al. 2008:17)

One challenge here is to discern how Western and indigenous conceptions of heritage actually are different. To put it simplistically, the former tends to emphasize the tangible, while the latter is defined not just by the intangible (Nicholas 2017) but also by relationships and responsibilities aligned with knowledge, objects, and places (Noble 2008). Even when acknowledging that one’s engagement with the world may be grounded through material culture, it is always filtered through the society’s collective knowledge, experiences, traditions, social obligations, and origin stories that both shape and reflect what people do and why they do it. A distinct concept of “heritage” may also be absent in many indigenous societies, since what it represents is entwined with all other facets of people’s lives. As one Yukon elder said, heritage is “everything that makes us who we are” (Carcross-Tagish First Nation et al. 2016:30).

The knowledge that shapes and guides each person’s life is learned, earned, shared, cared for, and embedded in objects or places (Figure 8.1). This means that fundamentally there is no difference between the place and the stories and knowledge that location holds, nor between an object and the historical continuity it may exude or the social obligations it may convey. Under such conditions, the archaeological (or other) analysis of cultural property and the management of such heritage (including determination of significance)
impose great responsibility on those who not only engage with but often make decisions about other people’s heritage.

It is essential that we as outsiders commit to engaging with indigenous knowledge systems if we are to understand a community’s needs and concerns. But this is challenging. As Bell and Napoleon (2008:6–7) note:

The very terms “culture,” “property,” and “ownership” are Western legal, social, economic, and political constructs that are imposed on First Nations . . . [to many] . . . these terms are still incomprehensible (i.e., no equivalent concept in First Nations languages), inappropriate (i.e., disrespectful of First Nations concepts), or inadequate (i.e., too narrow).

The archaeological corollary of this concerns the problematic nature of some terms (e.g., “abandoned,” “ruins,” “prehistory”: Zimmerman 2010:474–475), for example, compared to the use of more respectful terms such as “belongings” (vs. “artifacts”) and “person” or “ancestor” (vs. “skeletal remains”). This extends to the practices of labeling important heritage sites by terms (or numbers) of
convenience, rather than by local names, such as the Marpole Midden site vs. čəsnaʔəm (Wilson 2016) in Vancouver, British Columbia. In non-Western contexts, we must not only become familiar with another syntax but ultimately learn another way of thinking. This is where listening becomes critical, too, if we are to understand other ways of thinking and being.

Adjusting the Ethnographic Lens

Archaeologists and anthropologists have long depended on living peoples as a means to make sense of the cultural world, past and present. Ethnography in its many guises has provided a means to suggest modern analogs for ancient peoples (e.g., Wilson 1851) or to observe objects in action to identify the function of a particular artifact type (e.g., Kroeber 1961) or to correlate house structure with residence patterns (Porcic 2010). A major field of archaeological research, ethnoarchaeology, emerged in response to the growing use of ethnographic data and the opportunities to illuminate aspects of past human behavior—but also in recognition of the need to develop appropriate strategies for collecting and using (or not) the information obtained (see David and Kramer 2001).

What characterizes these approaches is the use of local knowledge to address archaeological goals. Lewis Binford’s Nunamiut land-use studies in Alaska (1982) contributed a suite of new ideas and data about technological organization and annual/lifetime range, while his work with the Alywara of Australia (1986) sought insights into tool-manufacture strategies. Notably, these particular studies were based more on observation than conversation. Indeed, Binford privileged his views over local ideas, thus virtually ignoring his community “partners”—an example of how not to do ethnoarchaeology. While this strategy did not arguably limit his land-use study, some types of information require direct community input, as illustrated by the example of Richard Gould’s (1980:154) “righteous rocks.” In seeking to interpret the lithic assemblages at Puntutjarpa rockshelter, Western Australia, Gould learned from Ngatatjara men that they collected for tool manufacture a particular chert not for its flaking properties (technically inferior to more readily available chert) but for its association with a Dreaming place. Such ethnoarchaeological projects, whether situated in the neoevolutionary goals of processual archaeology or the direct historic methods of culture history, are aimed at obtaining local information for the benefit of archaeological inquiry. In the examples above, it was the need to address archaeological questions that led to seeking local information. Such
projects may nonetheless yield insights (to outsiders) into local values or world-
views that are not directly evident in material culture alone if the right questions
are asked (as in Gould’s case).\textsuperscript{5}

What has generally gone unremarked is that ethnoarchaeology and similar
uses of ethnoarchaeological information have too often been a one-way ex-
change of information (Hollowell and Nicholas 2008).\textsuperscript{6} For many archaeolo-
gists, ethnographic opportunities are simply an additional and often unique
source of information, but Indigenous peoples may respond differently. As
Deloria (1969:81) stated in his inimitable tongue-in-check but very serious cri-
tique, \textit{Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto}:

The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are objects
for observation, people are then considered objects for experimentation,
for manipulation, and for eventual extinction. The anthropologist thus
furnishes the justification for treating Indian people like so many chess-
men available for anyone to play with.

The massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists
attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed
to the invisibility of Indian people today.

Such a perspective, shaped by decades (if not centuries) of suffering un-
der state colonialist and assimilationist policies, disenfranchisement, or worse,
portrays archaeological and anthropological research continuing the legacy
of scientific colonialism. That observation is not unwarranted: archaeologists
have contributed to this by controlling flows of information, extracting cultural
capital as raw data, claiming right of access to data and property rights over
the knowledge produced, and otherwise transforming data into social and eco-
nomic capital, with benefits rarely shared with the source communities (Hol-
lowell and Nicholas 2007).

Concerted efforts have been made to redress this situation, as well as the un-
derlying power imbalance, through a variety of approaches that include commu-
nity-based participatory research (e.g., Atalay 2012; Schmidt and Pikirayi 2016),
critical discourse (e.g., Lydon and Rizvi 2010), activist archaeology (e.g., Atalay
et al. 2014), indigenous archaeology (e.g., Nicholas 2014b), and public archaeol-
ogy (e.g., Skeates, McDavid, and Carman 2012). These provide opportunities for
communities to benefit directly from research on their heritage but also identify
and challenge inequities in decision-making, site significance assessment, and
other elements of archaeological practice and heritage management. Another
approach is archaeological ethnography, which is described as “an emerging space of thinking, engagement, dialogue, collaboration, and intervention, rather than merely a scholarly practice at the interface between archaeology and anthropology” (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009:83; see also Castañeda and Matthews 2008). Taking a more reflexive, self-critical, and community-driven orientation transforms ethnographic research from an extractive process to one that enriches. This is illustrated by a growing number of examples in which heritage research is done by the community, for the community (e.g., Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Lyons 2013; Schmidt 2017; Schmidt and Pikirayi 2016). I add to these a set of community projects funded by the IPinCH Project.

Heritage Is Living

The Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) Project (www.sfu.ca/ipinch) was an international, multidisciplinary research project (2008–2016) that examined intellectual property-related issues emerging within the realm of heritage, especially those affecting Indigenous peoples. These included complex and often difficult questions about who has rights and responsibilities relating to the use of and benefits from tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including artifacts, archaeological sites, and associated traditional knowledge and values. To address these issues, IPinCH was designed to assist scholars, institutions, descendant communities, policymakers, and other stakeholders to negotiate equitable, appropriate, and successful research policies and practices involving cultural heritage, including archaeology.

To help develop a fuller understanding of local conceptions of heritage ownership and rights, the IPinCH project funded a series of community-directed projects and special initiatives in Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Kyrgyzstan, and elsewhere, addressing pressing cultural heritage challenges in specific contexts (http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/project-components/community-based-initiatives/). In each case, community values and needs were foregrounded by research where the community was in the driver’s seat. Each study was developed with the community. Community members determined research goals, identified the most appropriate methods to employ, reviewed research products and data to determine what information could be shared, and retained full control of project from start to finish. Most importantly, the community was the primary beneficiary of the research. I offer four examples below of projects seeking new understandings of heritage, not by digging but by listening.
Yukon First Nations Heritage Values and Resource Management

This initiative was developed to identify the nature of heritage from the perspectives of four participating Yukon First Nations (YFN): the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, the Ta’an Kwach’än Council, and the Trondek Hwëch’in First Nation. It had four goals:

1. document how “heritage value” is defined by Yukon First Nations Elders, heritage workers, youth, and other members; and to characterize the different aspects or categories recognized by our community as having heritage value (e.g., peoples, places, stories, ways, and things);
2. learn about who (individuals, families, clans, governments, organizations) has stewardship responsibility for the different aspects of Yukon First Nations heritage;
3. learn what constitutes stewardship of the different aspects of Yukon First Nations heritage; and
4. learn about other values, norms, laws, or practices that may affect heritage resources; and management practices by self-governing Yukon First Nations. (Carcross-Tagish First Nation et al. 2016:2)

Information was obtained through interviews, small focus-group discussions, and a workshop with individuals and cultural workers within the Yukon First Nation communities. Both youth and elders were included in these sessions. Although participants identified various archaeological or heritage objects and places as culturally important, what was most highly valued were the relationships—the experiences and the stories attached to them—that established their significance (Figure 8.2). As the report authors note:

[U]nderstandings of what constitutes a “direct relationship” between YFN and an item for the purpose of establishing YFN ownership and management may vary with the nature of an item, spiritual powers or practice, or stewardship responsibilities derived from YFN laws; the latter may or may not place emphasis on the age of an item, geographical location, or ancestral connection through acts of creation or prior physical possession. (Carcross-Tagish First Nation et al. 2016:29)

Community members noted that the process of sharing traditional knowledge derived from or associated with objects, and the aggregate of experience shared between people, was often given greater significance than the objects
or places themselves. Here significance is based not on the type, age, or rarity of objects, as so often measured in archaeological site evaluations, but in the “foundational concepts of YFN heritage (e.g., responsibility, community, spirituality, sharing, and its holistic nature)” (Carcross-Tagish First Nation et al. 2016:53). Thus, when one Yukon elder stated that there is a “real sense of spiritual connection. . . . Our ancestors are here, you know. You look up the hill there at the gravesite, those are all our ancestors up there. They are here with us today” (Carcross-Tagish First Nation et al. 2016:45), he was referring to a profound connection between past and present.

Moriori Cultural Database

The Moriori of the Chatham Islands, New Zealand, developed a cultural database for traditional knowledge, a management plan based on Moriori aspirations and tikane (cultural protocols and obligations) to protect a sacred grove
of rakau momori (living tree carvings), and ethical protocols and guidelines for research and fieldwork. This project was led by Maui Solomon and Susan Thorpe, of the Hokotehi Moriori Trust. For this community, traditional knowledge research is ethical and appropriate only when: (1) it is carried out “in country”; (2) there is an intergenerational component (i.e., youth and elders); and (3) the work is centered on a premise of reciprocity (Thorpe and Solomon 2014:21).

Moriori heritage management is situated at the nexus of reconciliation, respect, and responsibility, as exemplified in the proper course of action for caring for the rakau momori. From an archaeological perspective, these are culturally modified trees; for the Moriori, those images constitute living beings. Within the sacred groves, some of the trees are diseased, so the images on them were laser scanned to record and preserve information important to the community. The team also developed a cultural knowledge database for recording elders’ traditional knowledge in an indigenous methodological and ethical framework to better make land-use decisions. In this process, the project also helped reconnect youth to elders through their participation (Figure 8.3). Indeed, as project

Figure 8.3. Moriori youth and family members used digital recording of laser scanning work at the Manukau urupā (cemetery) to sensitively preserve valued information, Chatham Islands, New Zealand. Photo courtesy of the Hokotehi Moriori Trust.
member Victor Steffensen noted, “when the young ones are behind the cameras recording elders they are listening and listening without interruption or distraction” (Thorpe and Solomon 2014:24).

Material culture retains a significant role in Moriori society. As Thorpe and Solomon note (2014:48), “If we think of the carvings as signifiers and accept that archaeology is a study that gives meaning to material evidence, then we are better informed if we understand those signifiers. We learn about culture through understanding its signifiers—the means by which we understand concepts.” An important priority that developed out of this work is to obtain and preserve oral records. Solomon and Thorpe (2012:254) write:

Hokotehi’s recording work is now centred on the words, names and memories of our elders. Naming and knowledge of place is known to be strongly connected to retention of guardianship roles and duties—“a sense of place.” Despite problems caused by poor or inappropriate research in the past, Hokotehi has also consciously adopted an approach in line with its core values of “sharing, unity and listening.”

The Journey Home

For many Stó:lō (People of the River) of southwestern British Columbia, the process of repatriating their ancestors from the Laboratory of Archaeology (LOA) at the University of British Columbia is informed by a desire to learn as much as possible about the lives of those individuals, and to respectfully bring them home. A collaboration between Stó:lō Nation’s Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre (SRRMC) and the LOA led by David Schaepe, Susan Rowley, and the Stó:lō House of Respect Caretaking Committee provided an opportunity to determine the types of anthropological research and scientific analyses that may be applied to answer community-based questions (Figure 8.4): Who decides which questions to ask and which means of research to implement? Who interprets the results? Who owns those data? How do “scientific” and “cultural” ways of knowing interrelate? And who is allowed to share in and benefit from this knowledge? Engaging these questions through long-term dialogue is central to the Stó:lō’s relationships within and between their communities, their ancestors, and the LOA.

Participants in the House of Respect Caretaking Committee include Stó:lō community-based researchers, cultural leaders, cultural practitioners, and shxw³lə:m (Indian doctors) who advise on repatriation and museum-related is-
Issues. Discussions between the committee members, and LOA archaeologists and bioarchaeologists facilitated the SRRMC’s development of culturally appropriate guidelines for research on Stó:lō ancestors’ remains. These guidelines address the community’s control over processes of analysis and repatriation, including knowledge produced from such research, supporting outcomes developed “in a good way.” Committee members and project partners engaged in dialogue for over six years, sharing knowledge, listening carefully, and building on each other’s knowledge as they worked through framing repatriation and research processes in a Stó:lō way.

Speaking of what has been learned through the authorized studies of his ancestors, Herb Joe, a member of the Stó:lō House of Respect Caretaking Committee, stated:

What comes to mind for me is the gift of knowledge [and] awareness that is happening for use [in working] with the ancestors. The amount of knowledge that we’re acquiring and will continue to acquire with the DNA samples and all that, that’s going to be a gift to the Stó:lō people . . . our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, they’re going to be healthier people with the gift of this knowledge about who they are and where they came from. (Schaepe et al. 2015:32)
Grassroots Resource Preservation and Management in Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz people are passionate about their heritage and eager to share it with visitors, but their knowledge of the rich archaeological record of Kyrgyzstan is limited. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in economic challenges and ethnic divisions that have affected how their history has been told and by whom. As Kubatbek Tabaldiev notes, “since Soviet Time people did not have a full understanding of the meaning and values of the cultural heritage objects. Usually, researchers came and conducted their own research, published outcomes, but did not work with local communities. . . . In general, local people know nothing about them” (Abdykanova et al. 2016:44).

The goal of the “Grassroots Resource Preservation and Management in Kyrgyzstan: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Heritage on a Human Scale” project was to develop, promote, document, and evaluate a set of small-scale heritage and cultural property preservation/education projects designed by citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic (Abdykanova et al. 2016) (Figure 8.5). Initiatives developed by the Kyrgyz team included: (1) developing a management plan for an internationally significant heritage site that is an ancient architectural masterpiece with local spiritual significance; (2) preserving oral traditions unknown to younger Kyrgyz generations by reconnecting young people to their heritage and their country’s resources, inspiring them to be better stewards of their material and spiritual heritage; and (3) developing plans to develop and promote cultural tourism in ways that promote but also protect important heritage places (http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/project-components/community-based-initiatives/grassroots-resource-preservation-and-management-kyrgyz/). These projects emerged from local interests and desires, with assistance provided by Kyrgyz and American team members. Reflecting on what was accomplished, team co-leader Aida Abdykanova noted that “the process of communication with local communities is one of the essential values. Another is an ideology. I have to value and understand the concept of cultural heritage in order to share your knowledge and conviction” (Abdykanova et al. 2016:46).

What is evident from these and the other community initiatives is that what we call heritage is linked to multifaceted and often complex notions of stewardship, responsibility, spirituality, and identity. Yet none of these are evident or accessible
without talking with and listening to elders and other knowledge holders, and that is true even for community members. Indeed, for Yukon First Nations, “the heritage value of an object is not necessarily related to its age, rarity, or uniqueness, but rather it is determined largely on the basis of connection to community” (Carcross-Tagish First Nation et al. 2016:68).

There are also great responsibilities for both those caring for and studying heritage objects and places. The Stó:lō are enriched when ancestral human remains are studied respectfully and refer to these studies also as biographies and artifacts as belongings—a two seemingly simple word substitutions that make a world of difference to them.

The need to work with and for communities must be based on respect, including respect for other sets of values. Anne Pyburn notes:

Figure 8.5. Anne Pyburn and members of the Kyrgyzstan project meeting to share information and learn about archaeological ethics, heritage museums, and cultural centers. Photo courtesy of Caroline Beebe.
Local people and Indigenous scholars live with archaeological materials throughout their lives and know what issues are related to their past that could be addressed or undermined by archaeological interpretations. Genuine respect for local people and their traditions and their human rights to use and interpret their heritage resources means that foreigners, such as me, should begin with the idea that they are working for the community, not with the community, and certainly not as project directors. (Abdykanova et al. 2016:46)

As these four examples illustrate, learning is inseparable from both the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and the cross-cultural understanding of heritage values. Being able and willing to consider unfamiliar types or conceptions of heritage leads to more effective and meaningful management or care, at least at the level of individual archaeologists and their community partners. In North America, however, heritage management decisions are generally made by government agencies implementing policies that foreground Western science-based notions of significance. The long-standing challenge for Native Americans, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit is to get the government(s) to take their fingers out of their ears and confront the legacy of colonialism.

Moving from Talking to Doing

At a 2014 workshop in British Columbia for the IPinCH-funded Secwepemc Territorial Authority (STA) initiative (http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/project-components/community-based-initiatives/secwepemc-territorial-authority-honoring-ownership-ta/), our community partners spoke of their commitment to regain control of their heritage sites and much more—a struggle that had lasted 150 years. Chief Wayne Christian stated: “We are tired of talking; we want action.” To them, heritage sites are historical, spiritual, and political points of reference and now figure prominently in their efforts to assert jurisdiction over their traditional lands, in part by forcing the provincial government to acknowledge a landmark shift from consultation to consent to usher in a long-awaited government-to-government relationship. In November 2014 several of the scholars and grassroots people associated with the STA collaborating community were invited to work with the Tsilhqot’in Nation leadership not long after the Supreme Court of Canada’s landmark Williams Decision and declaration on
Aboriginal Title. The court’s decision in favor of the Tsilhqot’in is monumental in Canadian legal history and has helped undergird the territorial authority of the Tsilhqot’in people, as it will for many First Nations in terms of land and heritage protection efforts.

The granting of title also demonstrates that the First Nations’ arguments were not only heard but understood. Such changes in the legal landscape, coupled with the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Canada recently becoming a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are important steps in addressing the historic disenfranchisement of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis and the ensuing loss of culture, language, and sovereignty.

For the most part, I have found that indigenous communities are genuinely interested in what archaeology and other research practices can reveal about ancestral lifeways, as well as what ethnographies have captured concerning traditional customs prior to the impact of colonialism. In Canada and elsewhere, many indigenous groups are actively involved in archaeology, traditional knowledge recording, and even studies of ancient human remains (Brownlee and Sym 1999; Hebd, Greer, and Mackie 2017; Sym 2014). However, serious concerns loom large when research results reveal or threaten information that is not meant to be shared or cause cultural, spiritual, or economic harm. I witnessed one striking example of this at the 2008 World Archaeological Congress in Dublin, Ireland, when an Aboriginal man from the Kimberlys in Western Australia stood up during a presentation on rock art in his territory and said to the presenter, “How dare you show that image; I could die for having seen it!” (referring to the most severe level of traditional punishment for breaking customary law and revealing secret-sacred knowledge).

More broadly, there is potentially much at stake regarding academic/scientific versus community access and ownership of knowledge, restrictive versus inclusive modes of resolution, the rights of knowledge holders versus knowledge users, and legal versus customary definitions of intellectual property, along with the legal and ethical challenges of new technologies (e.g., digital repositories, 3D scanning and printing) and research initiatives. It is thus our obligation as archaeologists, heritage managers, policy-makers, and members of the public to acknowledge that we have a great responsibility here. It is not an exaggeration to say that we should conduct our research “as if someone’s life is on the line,” for that is exactly the case when heritage research affects a person’s or group’s identity, well-being, and sense of history.
Conclusions: The Politics of Listening

Heritage research has typically been oriented toward scientific goals and/or the preservation of objects and places of historical or other significance. Archaeologists, ethnoarchaeologists, and ethnographers have long worked with local communities to observe activities, ask questions, and otherwise glean knowledge of that society’s way of life, past or present. This has greatly enriched anthropology’s understanding of the human condition in terms of generalizing trends but has also revealed much about diversity in lifeways, past and present. Yet these efforts, which are dependent on local knowledge, have done little to benefit the descendant communities. Even those approaches oriented to meaning, such as phenomenology, are primarily directed to an archaeological audience. One could argue that this dependency even represents yet another type of appropriation of indigenous knowledge.

Efforts have been made to turn this around, generally within the context of postcolonial, critical, Marxist, and indigenous archaeologies. These orientations acknowledge that descendant communities should have decision-making roles in how their heritage is cared for and that they should be the primary beneficiaries of such research (Hollowell and Nicholas 2009). Efforts to reformulate ethnographic research to foreground community needs (i.e., ethnographic archaeology, among other strategies) demonstrate that this can also yield fuller and more nuanced understandings of heritage—and the meaning(s) of cultural property—that benefit the community, outside researchers, policy-makers, and even the public.

Implicit in this discussion is the need for a fuller understanding of what heritage is in different cultural contexts and, importantly, for recognizing that, to heritage holders, the physical expressions of heritage may be less important than their intangible aspects. In a sense, this places anthropologically oriented archaeologists between the proverbial rock (i.e., artifacts) and a . . . soft place (i.e., the values that give objects and places their meaning). This has presented considerable challenges to protecting indigenous heritage objects and sites. Overcoming these is not an insurmountable task, but it does require a willingness to think outside of the box (of Western values). To develop effective, equitable, and meaningful ways to acknowledge and protect heritage objects, places, and information—whether our own or anyone else’s—local values and understandings must be sought out. Whether we speak of “cultural property” or “heritage,” ultimately we are dealing with the essence of who
people are—and that is something that deserves great care and respect. This is what I have learned by listening.

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Notes

1. After years of puzzling over what could possibly connect these two seemingly disparate research areas—processual approaches to hunter-gatherers and wetlands (Nicholas 2012) and indigenous archaeology (e.g., Nicholas 2008)—I realized that there were two distinct threads. The first is “cultural landscape and sense of place,” a topic central both to archaeological research questions and to contemporary indigenous lifeways and ontology. The second is “representativeness,” essential not only for doing good science (re sampling) but also for integrating multiple voices and perspectives in archaeology.

2. Indeed, because archaeologists can never directly observe the behaviors that they seek to understand (as is the case with astronomers and cosmologists), the discipline has long been dependent upon analogy to make bridging inferences and draw conclusions about the archaeological record (Hodder 1982; but see Wylie 2002).

3. Along with its progeny, especially behavioral archaeology (Schiffer 2010).

4. Compare this to Jarvenpa and Brumbach’s (2006) more thoughtful approach.

5. For anthropological examples of unanticipated insights, see Bohannan (1966) and Lee (1969). Working at the interface of archaeology, ethnohistory, and oral traditions, Hall (1997) sought a new understanding of ancient ceremonialism informed by Native American beliefs, which provides a foundation for more recent studies of Hopewell ritual and belief.

6. There are notable exceptions. For example, Schmidt (1997) has shown that significant benefits accrued to the local community after ethnarchaeological study of iron smelting, ranging from overcoming negative, “primitive” representations of African technology to enhancing psychological well-being.

7. See Wilson 2016 for a comparable Musqueam Nation (British Columbia) example.

8. Also known as the Tsilhqot’in Decision, this grants Aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot’in Nation to a portion of their traditional territory and shifts the standard from “consultation” to “consent” (https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14246/index.do; accessed July 17, 2017).

10. This is in stark contrast to an earlier land claims case in British Columbia, *Delgamuukw v. Regina* (1991), in which oral testimony of both the plaintiffs and their anthropologist experts was clearly “not heard.” In his closing remarks, Chief Justice Alan McEachern (incredibly channeling Thomas Hobbes) rejected the oral histories and stated that the Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en had no economy and that “pre-contact Aboriginal life in the area was ‘nasty, brutish, and short’” (McEachern 1991:75). This was challenged in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997), in which the court ruled that oral evidence was given equal if not greater weight than written evidence.


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