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## Teaching Heritage Values through Field Schools: Cases Studies from New England

Elizabeth S. Chilton

### Introduction

While heritage protection and management is not new to archaeology, thinking about heritage values in the context of inter- and intra-cultural meanings is, especially in the United States (see the chapters by Altschul; Bruning; Holtrof; Okamura; Russell; and Soderland in this volume). As Smith (1994) argues, post-processual debates in archaeology have proven to be more introspective than productive when it comes to heritage. However, one could argue that in North American archaeology, post-processualism—with its emphasis on multivocality—paved the way for American archaeologists to consider the wider publics and stakeholders of archaeology. More recently, indigenous archaeologies and other theoretical developments worldwide have led to a greater consideration of the role of archaeology in the politics of identity—with the goal of “decolonizing archaeology” (see Atalay 2008; Smith and Wobst 2005; Thorley 2002; Watkins 2000). These changes in theoretical positioning in archaeology have greatly affected the practice of archaeology as well—from the selection of projects and building of a research design, to things as traditionally unquestioned as field methods, disseminate of information, and curation (see Chilton 2006).

I have been teaching archaeological fields in New England, a sub-region of the Northeast U.S., since 1989. There are a wide variety of archaeological field schools taught all over the world, and these vary a great deal in pedagogy, philosophy, duration, and range of skills learned. The overarching and explicit goal of the field schools that I direct is to teach and promote heritage values and management to multiple stakeholders, including: (1) students; (2) research community; (3) landowners and local residents; (4) state and other government constituencies; and (5) Native American and other descendant groups. Of course there are unequal power and socio-economic relationships among these groups, and in our case, the Native peoples are the central “ethic client” (Blakey 2008). While the often-cited goal of an archaeological field school is to teach archaeological field methods, we do a disservice to students of archaeology (and the community of stakeholders) if field methods are taught outside of the context of heritage values. Field schools are unlike other archaeological excavations in that one must try to balance what are often competing priorities among the stakeholders listed above, and all in the context of an educational experience. However, if promoting a community-based archaeology is kept at the core, balancing the needs of these stakeholders becomes part of the process of engaging multiple publics in preservation, site management, and public histories. Here I define a community-based archaeology as one that moves beyond consultation, and includes community members in decisions about research foci, sites, analysis, curation, publication, and dissemination of information (Clarke 2002:251; Hart 2006a). In this chapter, I discuss my experience working with each of these groups of stakeholders in turn, emphasizing the role of teaching and learning heritage values.

### Field School Students

Field schools are not like other excavations in that I believe the needs of the students must come first. I have been criticized for saying this, but after all, students are paying what may amount to thousands of dollars, and they are expecting a degree of “credentialing” from the field school experience. Many an excavation has been funded by the tuition received from field school students, and many universities in

the U.S. make a significant profit from all summer programs. This requires us to evaluate the student experience perhaps before all other considerations. Students often give up employment over the summer to take six or eight weeks out of their lives to participate as—sometimes—unpaid labor on an archaeological research project. Field schools consist of students who wish to become professional archaeologists, but many students are there to fulfill other degree or professional requirements, such that we often have a team of students with wide-ranging experiences and goals. Certainly there are other (and perhaps less time-consuming) ways to fund an archaeological excavation and research project, so one should consider first and foremost whether a particular site makes a good case for a field school. I believe strongly that sites should not be excavated as a simple educational exercise.

Field School students should be introduced to basic field and lab methods and obtain a wide range of archaeological skills. I take the responsibility of teaching methods very seriously, since many of my field school students are soon employed as professional archaeologists in a cultural resource management context. I typically have four supervisors for every 16 students. Students learn basic field survey (using total station) and mapping, test unit excavation, soils and stratigraphy (including the Harris Matrix soil recording technique), feature excavation, field recording, soil sampling, flotation, and identification of material culture. We also do a unit on glacial geology/geoarchaeology.

If teaching methods was the only goal, however, one could teach an archaeological field school in the classroom or in one's own backyard. Aside from field methods per se, students should learn about the political, ethical, and legal contexts of archaeology, which include public education, community relationships, and cultural resource management. In many field schools, students are sheltered from the "messiness" of landowner negotiations, disagreements with avocational archaeologists, the wishes of local Native American tribes, and the like. However, sheltering students does not provide them with the kind of mentoring that they really need to do or to understand "real" archaeology, whether they become future professionals or stakeholders in some other capacity. In the field schools that I direct, I distribute the research design and permit applications to all students before they arrive for the first day of class. During the first week, before we put a shovel in their hands, we discuss which archaeological site we will be working on, why we chose the site, who the landowner is and how they feel about our work, what the local residents or avocational archaeologists know or don't know about the project and why, and which Native American descendant communities have been involved, how, and why. These are important preparations, but, as I will discuss below, community archaeology needs to go beyond the academic and into practice.

Another aspect of my approach to teaching students about the importance of heritage is that I only choose archaeological sites for field schools that are threatened in some way, either from erosion, construction, farming, or avocational digging, and I choose sites for which there is a group of stakeholders which is more or less involved in or concerned about these particular archaeological sites. That way the students' work takes on a practical and serious implication: they are participating in community archaeology and not simply reading about it. Readings and weekly discussion are, nevertheless, important ways that we keep students engaged in the bigger questions and implications of our work—reminding them why things like line levels and mesh size matter in the bigger picture.

Students are also involved in producing knowledge that is brought forth to these larger constituencies through our public field lab (discussed below). This opportunity and their reflective journals oblige them

to be self-reflexive and think critically about how knowledge about the past is produced and how it is used.

### **Research Community**

Aside from the students' educational needs, another important stakeholder is the archaeological research community. Field schools are not necessarily the most efficient or technically excellent way to excavate a site. Thus, while directors of field schools often try to combine their research with field school teaching, as I do, sites must be chosen that balance ethical and professional responsibilities with the needs of the students and with the needs of other stakeholders (discussed below). By working on threatened sites that would not be excavated otherwise, the research value of field school sites is greatly enhanced. Even if one is not working on a threatened site per se, educating students about cultural resource management is critical—even in the context of what might otherwise be a “purely academic” excavation.

Another aspect of research that might appropriately be called professional ethics is the treatment of lab work and curation in the context of field schools. Many field schools in the past—and some today—did not adequately train students in responsible excavation from the perspective of the proper analysis and care of collections. Many a field school student has got the impression that archaeology is primarily about digging and has not given a thought as to how the artifacts will be used and cared for by archaeologists after the field school ends. About ten years ago, I decided to incorporate more lab work into the context of the field school itself, in part to provide an opportunity for students to learn more about material culture, but also to be able to have a complete inventory of all materials before the end of the excavation. I also teach a follow-up laboratory methods class each fall following the field school. Thus, many field school students are also engaged in the dissemination of the research results, either through their individual analysis projects, by taking photographs of artifacts, or otherwise contributing to the final report or publications. But since not all students take this follow-up class, the lab experience during the field school is critical. In that lab context, we discuss proper curation and storage of artifacts as well as the importance of accessible digital inventories. Because the lab is open to the public, these messages are then communicated to the broader community (see below).

### **Landowners and Local Residents**

For those of us who conduct archaeological fieldwork in a particular town, valley, or region over many years, building strong relationships with local residents and landowners is critical to building a larger heritage management community. In the U.S., not only are archaeologists legally dependent on landowners for permission to conduct archaeological field schools, we are also dependent on local communities to help build networks of stakeholders committed to preserving and protecting heritage properties and teaching these values to others. Developing and maintaining such relationships take an inordinate amount of time and energy and cannot be taken for granted. Community residents will not “naturally” understand or agree with the value of archaeology or heritage, and this is where the relationships among the stakeholders become the most complex. As an aside, academic institutions do not always recognize and reward this type of engaged scholarship and instead see this as “public service”—something not all that important in most tenure reviews, for example. Thus, it is imperative for us to educate our institutions about the importance of building these relationships as a way to produce ethical scholarship and valuable teaching.

## **State and Other Governmental Constituencies**

In virtually every part of the world, field schools take place in a context where there are laws or local statutes protecting at least some archaeological sites and there are often procedures for applying for permission to conduct an excavation. Because I work at a State-funded institution, I am especially self-conscious about following all state-level protocols for conducting archaeological fieldwork and for curating collections. However, in the U.S., archaeological standards and review vary a great deal from state to state. Archaeologists often forget, too, that the people in state agencies that review archaeological projects have their own priorities. These priorities by their very nature will not be exactly the same as someone conducting a field school, nor will they be static over time or across geographical areas. It has been important and rewarding for me to discuss potential field school projects with state and local officials (and federal officials if appropriate) well before beginning a field project. This, again, builds stronger and broader heritage management communities with shared interests.

## **Native American and Other Descendant Groups**

Because my fieldwork and field schools have focused on pre-Contact and colonial sites, the descendant communities I have worked with have been largely Native American tribes and individuals. When I directed a field school project on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, as part of the Harvard Archaeological Field School in 1998 and 1999, I worked with the Wampanoag Tribe of Gayhead (Aquinnah) more than a year before the field school began. The Aquinnah are a federally-recognized tribe, and the archaeological site was already well known to them. A few years prior to my beginning the project, two late prehistoric human burials had been discovered to be eroding out of a cliff face overlooking the ocean. In both cases, the state archaeologist's staff excavated the remains, and they were eventually repatriated to the Aquinnah. However, because this site is on a town beach, the location is not secure, resulting in a great deal of anxiety for the town, the state, and the Tribe. Thus, I undertook the project to better identify site function, site, integrity, and to work with the Tribe on either a salvage or preservation plan (Chilton and Doucette 2002a, 2002b).

I directed two field schools on Martha's Vineyard, as well as two other salvage excavations at the site. In all cases, the Tribe evaluated our research design. I appeared before the Tribal Council on a few occasions to answer questions about the research design and to seek their support before beginning excavations. My position was that, regardless of cultural resource laws and protocols, I would not participate in the project without the full support of the Tribe.

Field school students learned about this consultation and collaboration throughout the field schools in 1998 and 1999. Harvard University gave an Aquinnah student a full tuition waiver for the field school each year. The participation of these students, as well as field visits from Tribal members, made this particular stakeholder group both highly visible and clearly central in the minds of the students.

Field schools do not and cannot always have as direct a relationship with descendant communities. Due to the diasporic nature of New England Native communities after the 17th century, not all sub-regions of New England have clearly-defined descendant communities. I have been directing and co-directing an archaeological field school in Deerfield, MA, since the late 1980s. Siobhan Hart, a doctoral candidate at UMass Amherst and the co-director of the project, has made community archaeology in Deerfield the subject of her dissertation (Hart 2006b). Deerfield, and the middle Connecticut River Valley in general, is

a region where there are no resident, federally-recognized tribes, tribally-held lands, or sole descendant communities; descendant communities are dispersed, but nevertheless maintain connections to ancestral homelands (Chilton and Hart 2009). Thus, we work with representatives of descendant communities through the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA). The Commission was created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 6A: Section 8A) in 1974 to assist Native American individuals and groups in their relationships with state and local government agencies and to advise the Commonwealth in matters pertaining to Native Americans (Chilton and Hart 2009). Among many other responsibilities, the Commission represents Native communities with interests in archaeological sites in the Commonwealth (Chilton and Hart 2009). For decades, the Commission has played an important role in archaeological projects and repatriation efforts in the Commonwealth, particularly in areas where there are no resident descendant groups, such as Deerfield (Chilton and Hart 2009). Similar to the work that I did with the Aquinnah, the MCIA reviewed and discussed our research design well in advance of any archaeological field school. Representatives of MCIA have also visited the site and lab several times and we have kept in close communication throughout the project.

In this case, no tribal members participated in the field school directly, and our meetings with MCIA were primarily limited to before and after the field school session. Thus, field school students felt their presence as stakeholders primarily through reading our research design, through assigned readings and discussion, and through our informal discussions during the field school itself—not through direct interaction. Nevertheless, my sense from their journals and from conversations is that students come away with a sense of the importance of Native American communities as stakeholders.

### **Public Education**

Public education has always formed a major component of all the archaeological field schools that I have directed. In part, this is because I was taught that this is what you do in field schools: you have students talk to the public about what we are doing and what we have found as part of “teaching” students to talk to the public. If the project is sensitive, and if some of the stakeholders do not support media coverage, then this type of public education can become difficult, or at least mini-mal. However, if it is supported by the above-mentioned stakeholders (particular descendant communities, landowners, state officials, and sponsors), then “public education” can become part of the core mission and learning experience for students. It also has the potential to teach local residents about the importance of heritage management and build stronger community archaeology. For example, in the case of the Deerfield project, historical writings have essentially erased Native American history from the Connecticut River Valley or at least seriously underplayed it. For the past several years, we have had an open field lab in Historic Deerfield, Inc., a large history museum, which also helps sponsor our annual field school. Students rotate through the public lab each week and talk to visitors about archaeology, the general overview of the project, and about site preservation and stewardship. Students process and inventory artifacts and samples, and small displays are assembled for lab visitors. Each year we advertise this “open lab” through the museum’s newsletter, local newspapers and radio, and through our field school website. Having field school students essentially run this open lab serves two main purposes: (1) it prompts students to think about clear messages and to learn how to communicate them effectively to the public, and (2) it helps build supportive community relationship and (hopefully) builds new communities of stakeholders. For example, many lab visitors have reported previously undocumented archaeological sites, many of them threatened. An added bonus to having a lab open throughout the field school is that most years we have a

complete and accurate inventory and basic analysis of all artifacts by the end of the season. Personally, I think it is important to teach students what happens after the digging, especially if this is the last archaeology class they take before being employed as a professional archaeologist, or if they decide not to go on any further in archaeology.

### **Field Schools and Community Service Learning**

Over the past two years we have incorporated the pedagogy of community service learning (CSL) into the field school (Chilton and Hart 2009). The main principle of CSL is that the service needs are defined by the stakeholder communities. CSL has served as a useful pedagogical tool to approach archaeological field schools in the context of community archaeology, stakeholders, and heritage values (e.g., Nassaney 2004), and to move beyond public education to scholarly engagement. In our case, students carry out their service in the context of a cycle of reflexive writing and reevaluation. Students keep a journal throughout the field school, and the field school staff reads these journals each week and asks further questions for reflection the following week. These journals have been enormously helpful to us as teachers and as archaeologists because they allow us to continuously reevaluate our pedagogy, our field methods, relationships with community partners, and our public education efforts throughout the six weeks of the field school—while we still have the chance to make changes that will positively affect the educational experience of the students and the larger stakeholder context of the fieldwork.

### **Conclusions: De-Centering Archaeology**

In sum, by choosing projects that are part of building a community-based archaeology, one can better teach heritage management to students because: (a) the project itself embodies the message, (b) their work is embedded through the praxis of building stakeholder groups, (c) the students themselves are integral to the process, and (d) they are asked to reflect and in turn, educate others about it. This is not to say that opening the door to stakeholders is easy or that all of its consequences are predictable.

Whenever one engages in community archaeology, indigenous archaeology, or community service learning, there is a certain loss of control over every detail of the project. Being sensitive and responsive to community needs and wishes means that “pure archaeological questions” need to be rationalized and contextualized. In some cases, I have not been able to do everything I wanted to in terms of field testing, and in some cases I was deterred from working on particular sites because of stakeholder objections. McDavid (2003:57) suggests de-centering archaeology and archaeologists, along with historians and government employees, as the sole authorities on Native pasts and presents and the sole stewards and interpreters for archaeological sites (see also Trigger 2008). The process of “de-centering archaeology” is also much more time consuming than traditional (colonialist) archaeology. If you want to properly engage multiple stakeholders, you must organize many meetings, be available to talk on the phone, answer more emails and consider more opinions. This takes a considerable amount of time above and beyond the typically intensive preparation for a field project and a field school.

So if archaeology (as a profession and a type of inquiry) is de-centered, then what is at the center? The answer to that question will depend on who initiates this kind of community archaeology. In my case, the silent partner at the center of my field schools is the archaeological record itself, and the goal of ethical and responsible heritage management. That is at the core of what I try to teach to my field school students and that is a major part of the mentoring process of the graduate student Teaching Assistants (TAs). It is

also at the core of all of the interactions we have with the wide variety of stakeholders we have invited into this project.

Nevertheless, not all of the stakeholders necessarily hold preservation as their central priority as concerns archaeology. Tensions can, and do, arise between avocational and professional archaeologists, between landowners and archaeologists, between landowners and historical societies, etc. In the 1980s, when I was directing field schools, we would shelter students from much of this messiness. Now we discuss these tensions openly and involve students in problem solving. In this way students learn, perhaps, the two most important lessons concerning heritage values and archaeology: (1) not all stakeholders share the same values and priorities even as concerns the same archaeological project; and (2) archaeological methods are only a toolkit—they are not a cookbook for archaeological practice. That is, no two archaeological projects are exactly the same when it comes to field methods, lab methods, ethical concerns, stakeholder groups, or the process for navigating all of these interests. Learning that heritage values and the role of archaeology in those values is situational and ever changing is perhaps the most important lesson that can be taught through an archaeological field school.



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