Native Americans and Archaeologists

Stepping Stones to Common Ground

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Governmental Efforts at Improving Relations With Tribes

President Clinton's 1994 memorandum instructing federal departments and agencies to improve relations with tribes set off numerous intensive efforts by federal agencies. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was directed in April 1994 by the acting assistant secretary for civil works of the U.S. Army to hold tribal workshops. The Corps of Engineers formed a Native American Intergovernmental Relations Task Force composed of 18 representatives from headquarters, division, and district offices. Only one-third of the working task force were archaeologists, but they played a strong role in shaping the format of the tribal workshops. The director of civil works at headquarters instructed 12 division offices to hold Native American workshops nationwide.

Between February and June 1995, field offices met with government representatives of 186 (47 percent) of the federally recognized tribes in the lower 48 states and reported the results of these meetings in after-action reports. The workshops emphasized listening to tribal leaders and resulted in lists of issues and concerns to be addressed by local districts and affected tribes. This experience raised the visibility of tribes within the federal bureaucracy and has led to quick resolution of many longstanding issues at the local level. The effort has also served to market Corps of Engineers programs. Within the Pacific Northwest, workshops were held in Seattle and Anchorage. The Seattle workshop invited 41 tribes, and 94 persons representing 26 tribes actually attended. Every participating tribe was left with names of specific persons to contact regarding future issues. The task force compiled a report to the Directorate of Civil Works at Corps of Engineers headquarters to summarize tribal issues and concerns and make recommendations for improving tribal relations (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1996).

Another regional governmental effort to improve tribal relations includes Washington Governor Spellman's Centennial Accord with federally recognized Indian tribes in August 1989. This document, signed by all but one tribe, acknowledges tribal sovereignty and commits state agencies to carry out a government-to-government relationship with tribes in conducting state business. In June 1996, the Oregon governor issued a similar proclamation to promote better tribal relations.

Funding Tribal Efforts

Funding for tribal cultural programs has been an abiding problem. Most tribes depended on funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the National Park Service. The Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act (as amended 1994) and reduced federal budgets have shifted the monetary burden to the tribes.
The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1984 provided a major boost for cultural programs of the Yakama, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes, with a focus on the cultural program at the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford Site. This program offered the first direct funding to tribes for cultural resources within this region.

Federal agency contracts with Native American tribes in the Northwest for technical services began in 1985 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contracted with the Colville Confederated Tribes, Nespelem, Washington, for the accessioning and curation of archaeological collections from sites impacted by the pool raise at Chief Joseph Dam. The Corps of Engineers funded training for tribal staff, equipment for storage and curation, and part-time operation for each facility. The tribes provided the building, the technical staff, and the ongoing maintenance cost. The Corps of Engineers soon extended this approach to meeting its curation needs by initiating artifact accessioning and curation contracts and cooperative agreements starting in 1991 for archaeological collections from Libby Dam–Lake Koocanusa with the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation at Pablo, Montana, and in 1993 with the Yakama Indian Nation, Toppenish, Washington, for curation of artifacts from the North Bonneville Dam archaeological project on the lower Columbia River. These accomplishments are doubly significant in view of requirements for artifact inventories under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1991. Under this curation arrangement, the tribes can be contracted to produce the artifact inventories in a respectful fashion, using their own trained personnel.

Many tribes, notably the Colville, Kalispel, Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Yakama, have hired professional archaeologists as part of their tribal staff. A few tribes, like the Shoshone-Bannock at Fort Hall, Idaho, have professionally trained Native American archaeological staff. All of these tribes have sought contracts with federal agencies to take over certain cultural resource management activities on federal lands within their ceded territories. The Corps of Engineers has contracted with all of these tribes for archaeological monitoring, burial issues, and oral histories on project lands.

**Some Examples of Constructive Contacts With Tribes**

In 1992 the Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, and the Corps of Engineers invited 14 federally recognized tribes to participate in a joint agency study of Columbia River Federal Hydropower System Operation. Because of the special cultural and subsistence interest of the tribes in the Columbia River system, and because the three-agency Cultural Resources Work Group needed specific information from the tribes, contracts were issued in 1993 by the Bonneville Power Administration to six tribes for cultural resources information. Much of the information supplied by tribes concerns traditional cultural properties and is being
incorporated into reservoir management plans for the protection of cultural resources. Later in 1993, the three agency study managers for the Columbia River System Operation Review met with representatives of the 14 tribes in an effort to solicit tribal participation and to improve communication. Funding was made available to tribes for their general attendance and participation in Columbia River system study meetings. Finally, five government-to-government meetings were held by the three agency study managers with tribes that requested them. Long-term agreements between the three federal agencies and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation hold promise of continuing opportunities for active tribal participation in federal agency cultural resource management programs at Columbia River reservoirs. Current ideas advanced by the tribes include funded site erosion monitoring studies, recommendations for cultural site protection, sacred site surveys, and cultural geographies of traditional place names.

During the early 1930s, archaeological investigations were conducted by the U.S. National Museum in and around the proposed Bonneville Dam reservoir on the lower Columbia River. The artifacts and human remains ended up at the Smithsonian Institution. In addition, the ancestral human remains recovered from The Dalles reservoir at upper and lower Memaloose Island are claimed by both the Yakama and Warm Springs tribes. Unable to resolve this issue, the remains were held by the government for more than 20 years. Owing to tribal consultation efforts by the Corps of Engineers under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the Smithsonian collection of human remains was returned to the tribes and finally reburied along with the human remains from the reservoir.

In December 1994, the Yakama and Warm Springs tribes resolved their differences through joint reburial of the 143–173 human remains at an Indian cemetery in Washington. The Corps of Engineers in the Northwest has now established nine agreements with regional tribes for repatriation of human remains under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Between 1936 and 1956, when the Corps of Engineers flooded the lower Columbia River reservoirs at Bonneville Dam, The Dalles Dam, and John Day Dam, the treaty tribes lost important usual and accustomed fishing sites established by treaty. In 1981, due to tribal efforts, Congress directed the Corps of Engineers to create 17 in-lieu treaty fishing sites to compensate for this loss. These fishing sites were acquired and access was developed for the tribes by the Corps of Engineers in November 1995. Another 6 sites are planned for acquisition for tribal treaty fishing in Bonneville Dam reservoir. These sites will be held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on behalf of four Columbia River treaty tribes, Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce.

Regional tribes have identified the need for professional training in field archaeology, laboratory methods, collections accessioning, and archaeological curation. Opportunities for on-the-job training in all aspects of field archaeology abound
through federal agency cultural resources survey and mitigation programs. In a current example, the Corps of Engineers identified five prehistoric archaeological sites within planned highway rights-of-way on the Army's Yakama Training Center near Ellensburg, Washington. Site avoidance through project redesign eliminated potential impacts to ancestral graves pointed out by tribal elders. Excavation of the five sites, however, was approved by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as acceptable mitigation. Formal tribal coordination was conducted, including site visits and reviews of proposed data recovery for the contract statement of work. Tribes were reluctant to comment on the data recovery project formally. Nevertheless, the Corps of Engineers required the archaeological contractor, Eastern Washington University, to hire archaeological trainees from each of the affected tribes, Yakama and Wanapum. These tribal members, working on each field crew, reported back to their respective Indian communities daily on the archaeological work being conducted. Tribal members learned about professional archaeological techniques, and field archaeologists learned much about Native American perspectives and insights about the habitation features being unearthed. Mutual respect was achieved. Representatives of tribal governments periodically visited the field sites but never formally acknowledged the work being done. Upon conclusion of excavations, tribal members invited all the field archaeologists to participate in a traditional religious ceremony that asked the Creator for forgiveness for digging in the earth and requested protection for crew members on their homeward journey.

Cultural resource site protection at Columbia River system reservoirs has usually been accomplished by federal agency staff or through contracts with professional archaeologists. In 1995 the Corps of Engineers shifted these efforts to interested tribes whose ceded lands were affected by hydroelectric projects. Contracts have been negotiated with the Nez Perce Tribe for survey and site evaluation at Dworshak reservoir in Idaho; the Colville Confederated Tribes are conducting a preliminary archaeological reconnaissance of Chief Joseph Dam reservoir in Washington; and the Kalispel Tribe will monitor reservoir fluctuations at Albeni Falls Dam–Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho. All tribal staff meet required archaeological qualifications. These changes in tribal role from passive to active signify meaningful measures of trust, cooperation, and increased common ground shared by archaeologists and Native Americans within this region.

What Can Archaeologists Do to Promote Better Relations With Tribes?

Although some common understanding now exists between tribes and professional archaeologists, a wide gulf in cultural values still separates them. The gulf does, however, provide a potential benefit to the developing field of archaeology. This can come about if archaeologists are willing to recognize that their discipline is regarded
as both a science and a humanity by the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Professional archaeologists have developed elaborate procedures for designing and implementing sophisticated scientific methods and analyses for archaeological studies. The humanistic aspect of archaeological study has not been equally well developed by practicing archaeologists, and it has been used by academic practitioners principally to interpret scientific findings and results for the public. One of the humanistic skills includes the development of new perspectives for consultation with tribes. In addition, plans for future archaeological study should include a balance of humanistic studies such as oral histories, place name studies, and sacred site surveys to complement scientific studies such as proton magnetometry, X-ray diffraction, and radiocarbon dating analyses. Acceptance of humanistic study means acceptance of its practitioners, including tribal elders, and their findings. The validity of humanistic data in its own right is foreign to the scientific mind and requires some accommodation. Federal archaeologists need to identify, in consultation with tribes, appropriate roles for tribal members in cultural resource management. Many of these roles may be defined through participation in humanistic studies to complement the rigor of contemporary archaeological science. This trend in Native American archaeology is reminiscent of Walter Taylor's (1948) "conjunctive approach" and supports the close association of American archaeology and anthropology, as argued by Willey and Phillips (1958). One current recommendation is for professional archaeologists to incorporate more humanistic methods of study into a truly conjunctive approach that includes the opportunity for tribal perspectives, religious values, worldview, and linguistic contributions to be expressed in cultural resource program planning and execution. The future prospect for more common ground between Native Americans and archaeologists depends on our willingness to accept broader paradigms than science as our justification for studying the past.

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