Community-Sourced Archaeology and Relinquishing the Inception of Research

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Abstract. Is archaeology of service beyond archaeologists? Part of a Mitacs Elevate Postdoctoral Fellowship developed in conjunction with Sustainable Archaeology at Western University and Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants Inc., the Research Portal (www.insituated.com/research-portal) is a web-based platform capable of soliciting and communicating community-sourced research to potential academic partners. Designed to augment local capacities, foster relationships, and achieve socially meaningful and disseminated academic outcomes, the Portal inverts conventional community-based research conception. Non-academic organizations outline research objectives to which academic partners adapt or design research. Originally conceived to assist commercial archaeologists in promoting additional research related to commercial projects, the Portal's pilot implementation quickly expanded to include other heritage communities, including Indigenous communities, not-for-profits, and a municipal government. Demand for the inclusion of additional research sectors outside of heritage suggests that this archaeology-based initiative may have wider implications. This paper explores representations of conventional collaboration, and the presumptions and promise of a more service-oriented and community-driven academic mandate.

Résumé. Les archéologues sont-ils capables de pratiquer une archéologie de service? Dans le cadre d'une bourse postdoctorale Mitacs Élévation en partenariat avec Sustainable Archaeology, l'Université de Western et Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants Inc., le Portail de Recherche (www.insituated. com/research-portal) constitue une plate-forme permettant la mise en ligne et la diffusion, à destination du monde académique, de projets de recherche d'initiative communautaire. Ce portail, conçu pour encourager les initiatives locales, développer les partenariats et encourager l'aboutissement et la diffusion de projets de recherche ayant une portée sociale, bouscule l'approche conventionnelle sur les projets de recherche communautaires. Il encourage les partenaires universitaires à adapter et concevoir la recherche en fonction des objectifs définis par des organisations non-académiques. Créé, à l'origine, comme un outil permettant d'aider les archéologues à promouvoir les recherches liées aux projets commerciaux, le pilote du Portail s'est rapidement enrichi pour inclure d'autres communautés liées au patrimoine, des Premières Nations, des associations à but non lucratif et une municipalité. Et ce projet à l'initiative de la communauté archéologique pourrait avoir de plus larges répercussions, comme le suggère la demande croissante d'inclure d'autres secteurs de recherche, en dehors du patrimoine. Cet article explore les représentations des partenariats conventionnels, ainsi que les ambitions et les promesses que pourraient offrir une recherche académique plus axée sur le service et à l'écoute de la communauté.

I N RECENT DECADES, LARGE PARTS OF the archaeological landscape, both physical and philosophical, have under-

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gone fundamental transformations. The emergence of commercial archaeology in the 1970s and the broadening integration of archaeology into state heritage management regimes created a practice focused on efficient fieldwork and reporting rather than reflective of an orthodox archaeology premised on answering research questions (Everill 2007; Ferris 2002; Hamilakis and Duke 2007; McCarthy and Brummitt 2013; McGuire 2008; Schiffer and Gumerman 1977; Smith 2004; Zorzin 2011). From my experience straddling both the commercial and academic worlds in Ontario, commercial archaeology has become more proficient at conducting fieldwork and generating boilerplate reports across multiple sites. Over the same period, academic archaeology has developed new analyses and field methodologies allowing for more time to be spent on the same sites and artifacts. There are, of course, exceptions but this characterization helps explain why, through commercial archaeology, we are aggregating massive volumes of archaeological artifacts, sites, and data while academics are simultaneously doing more specific research on fewer of those same materials.

The inherent logics behind the retention and protection of archaeological resources threatened by development have been framed around the potential to realize cultural and intellectual value from a finite resource (Dent 2016; Hutchings and La Salle 2015; Schiffer and Gumerman 1977; Smith 2004; Welch and Ferris 2014). Notwithstanding very legitimate reasons why certain cultural information should not be shared (Kovach 2009; Smith 2012), the intellectual value of archaeological materials is characterized as only unlocked through subsequent research and communication of results. This intellectual convention privileges Western research paradigms over the diversity of Indigenous and Descendant community worldviews and research agendas (Smith 2012:127) in the heritage sector. For example, culture-historical State oversight of heritage preservation reifies archaeological conventions into law. The result is a very colonial system of intellectual intervenors negotiating between a Descendant community and the management of, and often access to, their heritage[1].

The cultural value of sites and artifacts often remains inaccessible to the Descendant communities most capable of defining and contextualizing that value. In commercial archaeology, the combined, realized intellectual and, sometimes, cultural values of these collections are often confined to their moments of rediscovery. For a brief time, people are paid, social capitals are gained and expended, relationships shift, the moment passes, and the materials and data produced are relegated to shelf or file. There they grow more inaccessible with each passing year as methodologies fall out of favor, as formats, and sometimes even as artifacts themselves, fade (Society for American Archaeology 2003). Consequently, because of increasing regional emphases on the preservation of archaeological sites in situ derived from a combination of Indigenous advocacy and developer avoidance strategies, archaeology is starting to feed off itself, as we try and discern meaning from excavations and analyses past (Beisaw 2010; Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants Inc. [TMHC] 2019). This "snake eating its own tail" model is a sustainable vision for archaeology, and in the near term, certainly a necessary one as so-called legacy

collections from the first generation of commercial archaeologists fall from living memory (Sustainable Archaeology 2011). However, many archaeologists, both commercial and academic, would likely think of this as an unsatisfying vision of the discipline's future.

Recognizing the problems inherent in the status quo division between academic and commercial work, how can archaeology more fully realize the value of its subject matter? Or, perhaps more appropriately, how can others realize value from archaeology? This paper explores conventional collaboration in archaeology and reports on a pilot project intended to further unsettle[2] the community-based paradigm in heritage research generally.

The Collaborative Continuum in Archaeology

The increasing role of some form of collaboration or engagement between archaeologists and non-archaeologists is a consequence of a variety of internal and external factors. The influence of these factors on archaeological practice varies between commercial and academic sectors. Commercial archaeology's interaction with non-commercial archaeologists has been central to the discipline since its inception. Developers, state-regulators, the interested public, and Descendant communities have all seen their exposure to commercial archaeology grow in recent decades. To varying degrees, this exposure has confronted archaeologists with a need to adapt practice and generate meaningful engagement. Academia's recent forays into a collaborative archaeology are not necessarily new either. However, the significant degree to which issues surrounding collaboration currently influence the perceived core identity

or ontology of archaeology is a recent phenomenon (Alberti 2016; Atalay 2012; Cipolla et al. 2018; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2008; Gosden and Malafouris 2015; Nicholas and Andrews 1997). Much of academic discourse grapples with defining and evaluating collaborative practice as manifested under a variety of terms consistent with postmodern disciplinary fracturing. Among others, these terms include "Indigenous archaeology(ies)", "public archaeology", and "community/community-based archaeology(ies)".

Rather than simply proceed by discussing the aspects of collaboration in archaeology as academically defined and understood (Atalay 2006; Cipolla et al. 2018; Nicholas and Andrews 1997), I will extend the rubric of collaboration to include aspects of engagement and consultation as practiced in various non-academic settings, specifically cultural resource management. This extension reflects Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson's (2008:1) "collaborative continuum":

> …we see that collaboration in practice exists on a continuum, from merely communicating research to descendant communities to a genuine synergy where the contributions of community members and scholars create a positive result that could not be achieved without joining efforts. Collaboration, then, is not one uniform idea or practice but a range of strategies that seek to link the archaeological enterprise with different publics by working together.

Conceptualizing an applied version of this spectrum provides context for the second half of this paper.

Genuine Synergy: True Collaboration

At its most collaborative, Colwell-Chan-thaphonh and Ferguson's (2008:1) continuum exhibits what they describe as "genuine synergy". Deploying Nicholas and Andrews's (1997:85) "with, for and by" characterization of Indigenous archaeology in describing collaboration more widely, genuine synergy exhibits all three of these characteristics and more. Research goals, methodologies, and results are established, executed, and shared by, for, and with the subject communities involved. Successes are mutually enjoyed, and failures universally lamented. At the heights of collaboration, genuine synergy involves a symbiotic relationship between the researcher and the researched. Arguably, this form of collaboration cannot be the product of any one instance of partnership and instead represents its own continuum of relationship-building and mutual understanding resulting in a series of partnerships. The most immediate example of continuum to my mind, is the work of the Tłįchǫ Government and Tłįchǫ Elders, such as John B. Zoe and the late Harry Simpson with former territorial archaeologist (Northwest Territories) Thomas Andrews (Andrews 2004; Andrews and Zoe 1997; Zoe 2007). In the early 1990s, Andrews, Zoe, Simpson, and other Elders began surveying traditional travel routes within the Tłįchǫ Lands. Their approach combined archaeological and traditional information, correlating and sometimes contrasting traditional place names and functions with archaeological findings. The resulting series of comprehensive archaeological/traditional knowledge understandings became the route for a place-based learning trip conducted annually by Tłįchǫ Elders with Tłįchǫ youth called *Trails of Our Ancestors* (Zoe 2007). When interviewed as part of previous research (Dent 2016), Andrews emphasized the profound effect the collaboration and ongoing relationship with the Tłįchǫ Elders had on him personally and on the wider relationship between archaeology and the Tłįchǫ in the Northwest Territories.

Participation

If genuine synergy is with, for, and by Descendant communities then participation is *for* and *with* Descendant communities. In Canada, participation can be considered alongside another term, consultation; although doing so introduces new, but necessarily understood, complexities. Consultation is surrounded by legal implications imposed by repeated Supreme Court of Canada decisions establishing the "duty to consult" under Section 35 of the Constitution Act (Newman 2009). The diversity of consultative practice established in Canada mirrors similar patterns in the United States. Stapp and Burney (2002:119) use a definition employed by the Children's Health Initiative Program:

> Consultation is an enhanced form of communication which emphasizes trust, respect and shared responsibility. It is open and free exchange of information and opinion among parties which leads to mutual understanding and comprehension. Consultation is integral to a deliberative process which results in effective collaboration and informed decision making.

Acknowledging this definition as a preferred version of consultation, Stapp and Burney (2002:118) also reference an outdated version known as "decide and defend" whereby:

... an agency or government decided what it wanted to do and then "consulted" with a tribe by explaining the decision and answering questions.

In both cases, consultation is characterized as a form of communication rather than of mutual action. Varying degrees of consultation acknowledge the interpretation of relevant legal decisions summarized by Newman (2009:18) as constituting a "spectrum". Consultation *with* communities explicitly references the communicative function, while consultation *for* communities references the fiduciary obligations of the State. The myriad of state interactions with Indigenous communities, notably those of the National Energy Board, represent variably successful examples of consultation/participation imagined here[3]. The academic equivalent of this collaborative approach would constitute inquiries directed from researchers to Indigenous communities and individuals, whether through interviews and other means, together with ongoing conversations about the interpretation of data and production of results.

I will reinforce that in Canada, the legal definitions surrounding consultation make the term difficult to apply without invoking the obligations imposed by the term's jurisprudence. Although sometimes framed as consultation, participation of Indigenous communities in the commercial, as opposed to the state, domain of heritage management is often and specifically referred to as engagement, a term that does not correlate with the final point on Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson's (2008) continuum, resistance. Resistance represents a complete absence of cooperative participation by Descendant communities in research relating to their interests. Unfortunately, this form of what amounts to anti-collaboration is common in academic and heritage management settings (Dent 2016). For much of the remainder, particularly in heritage management, a new term occupying the space between participation/consultation and resistance was necessary.

Engagement

Engagement represents collaborative practice *with* and *by* Descendant communities. Notably absent here is the *for* element. Engagement has been entrenched as the terminology blanketing interactions between archaeologists and Indigenous communities in the Canadian context. In this environment, the research conducted is done, in the CRM context, for the developer and to a lesser extent, for the archaeology. In academia, research objectives are more flexible, although the prevailing focus is the realization of intellectual, and during community-based projects, cultural values. The participation of community members in various roles (observers, monitors, participants), up to and including the primary researcher on a specific project (George 2010; Nicholas 2010) constitutes the by and with aspects of collaboration. Engagement distinguishes itself from consultation not only in being inclusive of community participation, but in spanning both communicative and physical actions. Engagement can be represented by simply communicating intentions and results or can be representative of physical participation by community members in the actual archaeological project.

It is under this rubric of terminology that critical epistemologies operate to confound the colonial, social class, and

other elitist structures within archaeology with the objective of arriving at an "emancipated archaeology" (McGuire 2008). Archaeological projects "with, by and for" (Nicholas and Andrews 1997) communities outside the formal bounds of the academy, especially Indigenous communities, are conventionally first conceived of by academics who then look for communities who may be interested in participating. Archaeology "with, for, and by" communities is therefore often an archaeology already imagined by archaeologists. That is not to say these are neither worthwhile projects nor capable of realizing community-generated objectives, only that the agency to conceive research conventionally lies in the academic realm. To achieve, forgive the redundancy, *true* genuine synergy in collaboration, archaeologists must undertake projects not just with, by, and for but *from* communities as well. The remainder of this paper describes a pilot project facilitating community and non-academic generation, definition and communication of their own research projects to academics to provide this missing piece of genuine synergy.

The Research Portal Pilot Project

In 2016, Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants Inc. (TMHC), Sustainable Archaeology at Western University, and I pitched to Mitacs—a national funding agency—a postdoctoral fellowship theorizing a comprehensive digital heritage platform with opportunities to create functioning components where possible. Sustainable Archaeology at Western, much of which is now under the jurisdiction of the Museum of Ontario Archaeology, was a multi-million-dollar project with a mission to consolidate the physical archaeological record of Ontario (archaeological collections)

and associated archaeological data and convert these elements into "accessible information" [4,5].

Our successful application led to work beginning on three components of that imagined platform: digital field forms with office/lab-side data management (TMHC 2018), a multi-jurisdictional site inventory tool (Dent 2019), and a research networking service, initially and simply named, the Research Portal (Dent 2017). The Portal was originally conceived of as means for TMHC to identify materials and data produced through commercial archaeology that the company felt deserved more attention. This attention might be warranted through a recognition of intellectual value held by certain sites, collections, or datasets. It may also emerge from the cultural value perceived by other communities, institutions, or individuals involved in a project. Descendent communities were often also interested in further investigation of the heritage subject matter revealed or produced during commercial work, as too were clients sometimes.

The project sought to create a means to define these potential research projects, outline what resources could be coordinated, and then communicate these as opportunities to academics in an increasingly community-based research paradigm (Atalay 2012; Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; Nicholas 2010; Smith 2012).

Portal Design

To recap, the archaeological motivations for initiating this project were to extend the research potential of commercial archaeology, address the research gap with academia, and provide a means to communicate non-academic projects to

academics. However, there were other considerations that factored into the pilot's technical design.

The testing version of the Portal was built within the Wordpress content management environment. It consisted of a user identification and permission system or "widget" (since removed), a backend adapted job listing widget, and a suite of informational webpages, documents, and contact forms. The Wordpress environment was selected because it was an efficient way to pull together these various, open-sourced components. These components were adapted through adjustments to their operational code and design, and the development of content that addressed several pre-existing conditions of objectives the Portal could accomplish.

Foremost were two reflections of conditions of Indigenous engagement outlined during my doctoral research (Dent 2016) and identified by others (Connaughton et al. 2014; DeVries 2014; Markey 2010; Mason 2013; Zacharias and Pokotylo 1997), community capacity and relationships. Extending these conditions to academic/non-academic interactions writ large, produced several factors the Portal's design needed to consider.

First, that many of the Indigenous communities, not-for-profits, and consulting firms that might be interested in submitting projects to the Portal operate within very constrained and finite operational capacities. In other words, when a not-for-profit does not even have enough staff to answer phones daily, what mechanism would encourage them to take on a research partnership? This capacity deficit, particularly in Indigenous communities, affects not only the ability of communities to participate in academic research, but in heritage management roles (Klassen 2013; Markey 2010; Mason 2013; Supernant and Warrick 2014:583; Zacharias and Pokotylo 1997). A limited overview of Indigenous community websites in 2016 (Dent 2016), reinforces this deficit. Of 638 communities surveyed, only 53 (8.3%) listed a dedicated heritage department on a website (not all communities maintained a website). It should be noted here that departments responsible for lands and resources, treaty, and intergovernmental affairs may also include heritage concerns within their, often wide-ranging, mandates. In compensating for this capacity deficiency in compliance settings where Indigenous communities have a role, development proponents and government-agencies have sporadically provided capacity-building funding up front to facilitate this participation (Dent 2016). Should the Portal continue operating, we will, and have to-date, consider similar up-front funding mechanisms.

Second, that encouraging long-term relationships between academics and non-academics is more mutually fulfilling than any "get-in, get-out" mentality (Dent 2016). To address capacity issues, the Portal's pilot project implemented several features. First, we developed a process to aid the creation of non-academic-sourced projects through in-person consultations. Information meetings were held with local municipal and First Nations governments and with heritage-based not-for-profits. Either during those meetings or through follow-up discussions, we worked with organizations to figure out where their research needs or interests aligned with the current academic research environment. We identified local resources, community-side contacts, and with one First Nation, developed a memorandum of understanding and a community-side process

for Chief and Council to pre-approve projects. Before scaling back our outreach after high demand, we generated 16 projects from Southwestern Ontario: nine from not-for-profits such as museums, research institutes, and community heritage organizations; two from TMHC itself; four from local First Nations; and one from the City of London. With an original target of 12 projects, it was clear that there was a significant appetite among these communities and organizations to realize self-defined research objectives (Figure 1).

Part of this appetite could be attributed to another Portal design feature created to address capacity, the provision of a digital space communicating research outcomes. A recurring theme in previous research was the gap between a community's points of contact with researchers and the rest of the community's membership (Dent 2016). Few Indigenous communities have a museum such as the Secwepemc Museum in Kamloops, even if they have the administrative capacity to participate in archaeological engagement. Recognizing this internal communication deficit, the Portal encourages research partners to create a brief non-technical synopsis of their project for a unique Portal Outcomes page. The page's content is determined by research participants but built and maintained within the Research Portal's online infrastructure.

The last capacity feature likely contributed to one of the more significant challenges of the Portal thus far. Recognizing that community agencies and

Masters   📍 Hagersville, Ontario   📅 Posted 2 years ago

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation – Archaeology GIS Platform

Working with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation's (MCFN) Department of Consultation and Accommodation, the researcher will populate a GIS platform with existing data from archaeological sites in MCFN traditional territory. The researcher will conduct an environmental scan of other Indigenous community heritage GIS applications and, together with department staff, theorize/design/train best practices for the use and maintenance of this information.

Project Community/Organization: Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Consultation and Accommodation Department

Start Date: 2019/2020

Project Contact: Megan DeVries; Email: megan.devries@mncfn.ca (Please note this is not a job ad)

Partner Resources: GIS Software; Expertise; Archaeological Site Data

Research keywords: Human Geography; Space Appropriation and Management; Artistic and Cultural Heritage
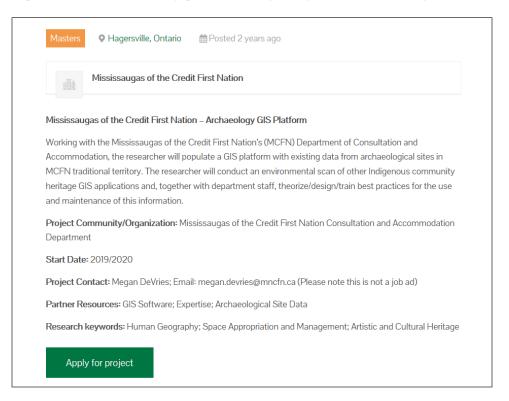
Apply for project

FIGURE 1. Individual portal project listing example.

organizations do not necessarily have the time or resources to screen potential research partners, the Portal's entire project listing was user restricted. During the pilot phase, researchers wanting to use the listing were required to first register with the site. This was used as a means of screening the potential applicants who would be contacting the communities directly for anyone not affiliated with a recognized institution with research ethics policies and procedures.

At this point, it is important to emphasize that the Portal does not determine which researcher ultimately partners with which community. That decision is left entirely to the community. However, the digital nature of the listing meant we could restrict who had access to project and contact information.

Portal Pilot Operation and Resulting Insights

The Portal's test platform went live in September 2017. Preliminary projects collected over the summer months were combined with new projects on the listing until December 2017. At this point, the Portal had exceeded the original target number of 12 projects leading to a halt in active outreach for new projects. Focus shifted to securing academic partners for the remainder of the pilot, although we did add a couple of projects to the listing when requested by our existing partners.

We recognized early the potential of limited accessibility to curtail researcher involvement. Predictably, at the end of the pilot in October 2018, we had only nine registered individual researchers and six registered academic departments. This despite sustained outreach to Geography, Anthropology, History, and Indigenous Studies departments

at six Southern Ontario universities. Of the three projects that realized either an outcome or partnership during the pilot, only one researcher was a registered user. The other two partnerships were the result of targeted communications. Due to this experience during the pilot, the listing's accessibility was adapted in consultation with partner communities and institutions. The current Portal maintains both a public listing and a private listing[6].

It may also have been that we were experiencing the effects of a reluctance on the part of some academics consistent with a strain of discourse resistant to the incorporation of multiple ontologies beyond the academy, most succinctly represented by McGhee (2008) with respect to Indigenous participation in archaeology. Given that the point of the exercise was the development of the Portal and not the ethnographic exploration of academics' opinions of multiple ontological approaches—an extensive, sensitive, and worthwhile project in and of itself—these effects were considered outside of the scope of the project.

Another potential reason for the minimal academic research interest could relate to the geographically confined nature of the pilot project. On several occasions, university faculty noted that they already had relationships with local organizations, particularly, local First Nations. In one instance, researchers suggested that a First Nations-generated project was not worth undertaking because there was a pre-existing formal relationship and set of protocols in place. Ironically, the same First Nation generated the project to grow the capacity needed to engage those very same formal mechanisms. Eventually, it emerged that there may have been a miscommunication about the nature

of the Research Portal as an intermediary listing projects, not an independent research entity seeking to undertake them. It may be that these issues shift, if the geographic reach of the Portal expands and communications about the Portal's functions are refined. The present status of the Portal remains localized to Southwestern Ontario and decisions about where, when, and whether to expand await necessary review of resources.

It is the geographic expansion of the Portal that could hold the most promise. The larger the pool of researchers each project is exposed to, the more likely a project will align with a specific researcher's intended or existing area of interest. More remote communities without a sustained continuum of involvement with research institutions will also have an opportunity to connect with a wide array of researchers with minimal effort on their part. Should a national research network prove effective and sustainable, the resulting relationships could help develop long-term conduits between individuals, institutions, and communities. The digital nature of the Portal allows, even encourages, this scale of network, although the more participants the network gains and more expansive it grows, the more difficult it will be (without significant regional infrastructures) to generate these projects through in-person consultations. However, any expansion of the network could run contrary to some of the very elements that made collaborations, like the one represented previously between Andrews and the Tłıchǫ, successful (e.g., proximity, capacity for in-person meetings, etc.).

As implementation progressed, one faculty contact suggested that we start a newsletter to communicate what the Portal was, suggest collaborative best practices, and promote individual projects (Figure 2). We have produced four issues to-date and will revisit the continued release of issues moving forwards. Despite the limited scope of participation, the response from universities has been largely positive and constructive. The current research funding and institutional outreach environments have resulted in a proliferation of research outreach departments at various universities, many of whose efforts are directed at Indigenous communities (MacDonald 2016). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, developing legal jurisprudence, and commitments to adhere to international declarations such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), have cascaded through governments and their arms-length bodies[7]. Institutions that rely on these governments for grant funding are unsurprisingly attracted to an easier means of accessing projects originating from Indigenous communities.

The pilot project also sought to better qualify the benefits to researchers and communities for these types of partnerships, while also communicating the risks. Risks surrounded the potential for listed projects to never be realized or to take years to find a partner, and for projects or partnerships to fail once undertaken. To the extent that the Portal's design was capable, we tried to mitigate some of these risks. We explored the active promotion of projects through targeted communications to academics with an identified interest in the subject area. We emphasized the importance of negotiated research agreements delineating the terms of partnerships and addressing issues such as intellectual property and sensitive information. We were explicit about the processes and

THE RESEARCH PORTAL NEWSLETTER

The Research Portal
www.insituated.com/research-portal
September 2018
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THE LAST ISSUE OF THE PORTAL TEST

Last year, around this time, the Research Portal began its preliminary testing phase. Several community-sourced projects were posted and more were added as the year went on. As of today there are 12 open projects, many of which have been on the listing for close to a year. Nine months ago, we suspended actively soliciting new community projects while we gauged academic interest that never really materialized. The next phase of the Portal will seek to reduce barriers to and encourage academic participation.

Nevertheless, the Portal has enjoyed some success. Two listed collaborative projects found partnerships, a third project was completed almost immediately, and because of a fourth project, a suite of important but largely forgotten maps to archaeology were reconnected to the discipline. These last two projects' outcomes have been posted to the Portal to share with others. What these projects demonstrated was that the Portal functions as much as a network of knowledge as a network of people. Going forward we will explore how best to accommodate both functions.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH PORTAL?

The Research Portal was first conceptualized in 2016 as part of a postdoctoral fellowship grant application to the Mitacs Elevate program with the support of Timmins Martelle Heritage Consultants and Sustainable Archaeology @ Western. Once awarded, postdoctoral fellow Dr. Joshua Dent began working on the technical design and community networking necessary to realize a test version of the Portal.

The Portal Pilot Project is a free listing service for community-based research opportunities which originate from an non-academic organization's own research objectives. This listing is provided to institutional researchers (faculty, graduate students, direct studies, etc.) to encourage research partnerships capable of achieving both academic and non-academic research goals.

Community-based, participatory research is nothing new. Conventionally, this research is initiated by academics approaching non-academic individuals and organizations with more or less fully-formed research projects which these communities review and then choose whether or not to participate. The Portal inverts this process by instead querying and listing community-sourced projects that can be adapted to academic research. Interested researchers contact designated community liaisons who then decide if the researcher is the right fit for their project.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Featured Projects
  - Faunal Analysis
  - Historical Representation
  - Repatriation Model
  - Linguistics and Heritage
- Featured quotes in this issue are intended as trailheads to other literature.

FIGURE 2. Final newsletter of the pilot project.

expectations of academic research. The original access-restricted nature of the listing also gave the Portal some teeth in terms of withdrawing credentials from problematic participants.

Balancing against these risks were the benefits as we initially saw them and as they manifested during the pilot. Benefits such as, promoting a project-based (as opposed to publication-based) research

portfolio for academics by referencing the outcomes pages[8], alternative funding sources through grants available exclusively to one group or another (e.g., the Ontario Trillium Foundation), networking and mentorship, potential future employment (one project has indicated they will likely hire the right research partner), and, most importantly, the real-world implications of realizing community-sourced research. Conventional academic research, particularly in the social sciences and especially in archaeology, rarely has an immediate social impact or realized value outside of the discipline. What the Portal has reiterated are localized manifestations of long-standing demands for realizing socially significant, heritage research objectives in the immediate term (see Atalay 2012; Kovach 2012; Nicholas 2010).

Take these proposed projects as examples:

- the GIS platform that will more effectively inform land management decisions affecting archaeology for the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN; currently looking for partners);
- exploring the MCFN repatriation of certain collections from the Smithsonian (project nearing completion);
- Sustainable Archaeology's interest in exploring Indigenous place-naming conventions for archaeological sites in Southern Ontario (looking for partners); and
- a hydrological study for Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (COTTFN; project completed).

For the last project in that list, the Portal was approached by the Canadian Environmental Law Association and COTTFN in Fall 2017, asking if we could list a non-heritage project that needed a research partner, as soon as possible, before the end of that year. Although the Portal's pilot focused on heritage projects and imagined a less time-limited posting, through our relationship with COTTFN we took this on as an opportunity to gauge interest from other disciplines outside social sciences and to test the effectiveness of actively promoting projects through direct outreach to potential researchers.

A partnership with Western University researchers was initiated 11 days after posting the project on the listing service and reaching out to a preliminary group of three Environmental Sciences departments in southwestern Ontario. A week later, another university also expressed interest[9]. The hydrological project was completed in 2018, and its success led to further funding and a second phase partnership between researchers and the community. The dialogue surrounding the COTTFN project emphasized the potential of Portal-like services to faculties outside of the social sciences.

One MCFN project involved exploring the repatriation of the Dr. Peter E. Jones collection currently held by the Smithsonian in the United States (Smithsonian Institution 2020). The collection is recorded as being donated to the Bureau of American Ethnology by Dr. Jones, a noted Mississauga physician and chief in the nineteenth century[10]. Dr. Michelle Hamilton from the Public History program at Western University undertook the project and proceeded to study the historical context within which the collection was originally compiled and donated. Once completed, Dr. Hamilton's study will be a key element in an eventual MCFN decision about pursuing the repatriation of this

collection. The eventual intent is to create a heritage repository and museum on MCFN lands; this collection could perhaps form part of the core of such an institution.

Conclusion

It is important here not to suggest that archaeology is a model in how to undertake collaborative research. The discipline has a long, often problematic history of interaction with Descendant communities, particularly when that interaction intersects with State oversight of heritage. However, there is a growing body of critical discourse about that interaction that could help inform disciplines without that collective experience (Atalay 2006; Atalay et al. 2014; Biolosi and Zimmerman 1997; Hutchings and La Salle 2017; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; McNiven and Russell 2005; Nicholas and Hollowell 2007; Scarre and Coningham 2013; Smith 2004, 2006). Archaeology is often practiced in much more liminal social environments than other disciplines. Not often will a passerby have an opportunity to poke their head into a chemistry lab window and quip, "Find any gold?" Certainly, there are the much more profound interactions with Descendant community members with a direct lineage to, sometimes even memory of, the sites we work on (Atalay 2012; Nicholas 2010). Increasing numbers of us are recognizing the colonial foundations of our work, embracing the multivocality of differing conceptions of the past, and, often awkwardly, trying to find a place where our passion for understanding this past can be of service to those who lay claim to it; problematizing our own claim in the process.

When the pilot project ended, the Research Portal shifted to a more public listing (Figure 3) and was renamed to distinguish it from other listing systems with similar names. There are still unanswered questions about the newly named Heron Research Portal, how it will ulti-

FIGURE 3. Screen capture of recent Heron Research Portal projects (July 2019).

mately function and what sort of funding model can support and maintain the service. Still, even in its pilot phase, the Portal contributed to the ongoing unsettling of archaeology by seeking new reasons for conducting research not originating in academia. The Portal suggests that a systematic means of generating research objectives originating from non-academic communities may be possible. Whether the combination of community- and academic-user interests and available operational resources are sufficient to pursue this or a similar approach, remains to be seen.

Notes

1. That is not to say that Indigenous communities are simply passive actors in this arrangement. Indigenous communities and individuals have successfully undertaken a variety of formal and informal actions in shaping and reshaping archaeological processes.
2. Unsettle is used here to infer both the continuing process of decolonization and the disruption of conventional community-based practice.
3. See https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/bts/nws/rgltrsnpshts/2016/25rgltrsnpsht-eng.html for a summary of the NEB's role in consultation with reference to specific examples.
4. http://sustainablearchaeology.org/about.html#mission
5. Ontario, prior to this, did not have a conventional system of centralized repositories for archaeological collections resulting in most collections being held and stored by those responsible for their excavation or by the local archaeological offices of the provincial government.
6. https://insituated.com/research-portal/projects
7. As of the writing the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls recently released their Calls to Justice which, we hope, should receive similar attention.
8. Traditional academic publications are not typically accessible (in both formats and language) to partner communities. Conventional academic credentials also prioritize publications and often do not consider project out-

comes as constituting their own form of credential.

9. Through subsequent discussions with faculty from science departments, it was impressed upon me how ill-equipped these bodies are for the contemporary emphasis on community-based research. The paradigm of having non-specialists participate in research as more than subjects is a significant departure from conventional scientific research.

10. https://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=%22Dr.+Peter+E.+Jones%22

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