Public outreach and the "hows" of archaeology: archaeology as a model for education

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THESIS APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT


Title: Public Outreach and the “Hows” of Archaeology: Archaeology as a Model for Education

There is growing awareness of the importance of public outreach in archaeology. Many professional archaeologists argue that in order to ensure continued funding we must communicate the relevance of our discipline to the public in a more effective manner. Furthermore, it is often argued that public outreach and education provides perhaps the only reliable defense against looting and rampant pseudo-archaeology.

Current outreach activities, however, tend to focus on what archaeologists have discovered about the past. While this type of outreach is important, a more effective model for public outreach would focus on the methods of archaeology, rather than the results. Archaeology, with its focus on multiple lines of evidence, intertwining of the sciences and humanities, and multi-cultural perspective provides a unique model for addressing and answering questions, a model which could serve as a base for education. Promoting the methods of archaeology as an educational model, or at the very least, remembering the methods in our outreach activities, may be, in the long run, the most effective method for establishing the relevance of our discipline.
PUBLIC OUTREACH AND THE "HOWS" OF ARCHAEOLOGY:
ARCHAEOLOGY AS A MODEL FOR EDUCATION

by

JON DARIN DAEHNKE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
ANTHROPOLOGY

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Harold and Dede Daehnke. Instead of giving me the answers, they taught me to search for them. That has proven to be a wonderful gift.
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All things being equal, archaeology could be justified on the basis of its inherent interest. But all things are rarely equal, and therefore archaeological activities and their relevance to today's world do need justification. To what is archaeology pertinent? —Jeremy A. Sabloff (1998: 871)

Chapter 1
Introduction

The importance of public outreach in archaeology and heritage issues has long been recognized. Numerous works have been dedicated to the topic (e.g., Jameson 1994, 1997; Knudson et al 1995; McGimsey 1972; Merriman 1991; Tilden 1977; Uzzell 1989) and the Society for American Archaeology regularly produces an online newsletter, Archaeology and Public Education, devoted to public outreach. The most recent edition of The SAA Archaeological Record (Volume 2:2, 2002) also focused exclusively on public outreach. Nonetheless, there continues to be concern that archaeologists are not doing enough to promote their profession to the public. Few archaeologists would consider public outreach as one of the most important responsibilities of their job, and graduate programs in archaeology rarely incorporate outreach training into their curriculum. The approach that many outreach efforts take may also be a cause for concern.

In 1996 Archaeology and Public Education carried an editorial by Charles Blanchard. In this editorial, Blanchard laments the fact that not everyone shares the same sense of value for the past as he does. He argues, therefore, that the focus of
public education should be on establishing the value of the past and making it personally important to everyone. He hopes to achieve this by

First developing some viable educational vectors for the wonderful information that archaeology contributes to our knowledge of history and prehistory (i.e., teaching what we know); and eventually progressing to the techniques of archaeology (i.e., how we know) only when the ethical precepts of genuine archaeology were better understood and more generally shared . . . this is the proper order for introducing archaeology to the public: what we know first and how we know only when the importance of the Past and the preciousness of its intact remains are better appreciated (1996: 6).

Therefore, in terms of public outreach the “whats” of archaeology take precedence over the “hows,” and current outreach activities tend to reflect this.

Blanchard may not be right. While it is important to educate the public about the information that archaeologists have learned, I argue that a more effective model of public outreach would stress the “hows” of archaeology as much as the results. Public outreach should focus on that which makes archaeology unique – the method behind the archaeology. Archaeology, with its focus on multiple lines of evidence, intertwining of the sciences and humanities, and multi-cultural perspective provides a unique model for addressing and answering questions. This model can serve as a framework for education. Presenting archaeology as an educational model may be, in the long run, the most effective method for promoting the value of archaeology to the public.
What is Public Outreach?

It is reasonable to assume that most archaeologists obtain a certain amount of personal pleasure from their jobs. The intellectual challenge of interpreting the archaeological record, as well as the fact that research occasionally occurs outside in scenic and exotic places, makes archaeology an attractive career. But the practice of archaeology does not consist of isolated researchers hoarding away information and artifacts for their own personal satisfaction. Archaeology is public: much of it occurs out in the open, it is predominantly supported by public funds, and it is part of an academic tradition that requires public access to results. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those engaged in the profession to participate in public outreach.

In its most basic sense public outreach is simply educating the public about archaeology. Public outreach can take many forms and covers a broad scope of activities, from formal educational programs and curriculum development to site tours. It encompasses editorials in the local paper as well as multimedia presentations on the World Wide Web. It can be as monumental as the Field Museum in Chicago or as humble as a small interpretive sign at a national wildlife refuge. A professor giving a talk about his or her research at a public forum or publishing a book on the topic is engaging in public outreach. But it is also outreach if this same professor talks about archaeology to the person standing next to him or her at a cocktail party.

Just as there is no one form of outreach, there is also no singular audience. McManamon (1991) notes that there are several “publics” that should be learning
about archaeology. These include the general public, students and teachers, legislators, public administrators, and Native Americans. There is obviously overlap between these audiences – members of one audience may, at another time or in another position, belong to a different audience. But in general these audiences differ, and McManamon argues that different outreach messages and different means of delivery need to be developed for each. But if appropriate outreach messages are to be designed for these audiences then there must be some sense of public attitudes and perceptions toward archaeology.

What are Public Perceptions and Attitudes About Archaeology?

Survey research consistently indicates that among the general public there is a high level of interest in archaeology. Polls show that a large segment of the public is fascinated by the past and by the work that archaeologists do. These same polls, however, also suggest that the public has a misunderstanding of the archaeological record and the current legislation that protects it.

Harris Interactive conducted the most recent survey on public attitudes toward archaeology (Ramos and Duganne 2000). The survey was initiated by a number of archaeological organizations, including the Society for American Archaeology, the Archaeological Conservancy, the Archaeological Institute of America, various departments of the Department of the Interior, and the Society for Historical Archaeology. The goal of the survey was to learn how well Americans understand the
practice, results and values of archaeology and archaeological laws, as well as the public’s level of interest and participation in archaeology and archaeological activities.

The results of the poll suggest that, in general, the public supports archaeology and has a sense of what it is that archaeologists do. A high percentage of respondents (99%), when read a list of possible topics of archaeological study, recognize that archaeologists study past civilization. Unfortunately, 85% of this same group also believe that archaeologists study dinosaurs, validating a fear among archaeologists that this is a common misperception among the public. As expected, people with a high level of interest in archaeology, or who have visited a site, are more knowledgeable about archaeology than those with little interest or experience.

Only 3% of all respondents state that they are uninterested in learning about archaeology, and a large majority (90%) believe that students should learn about archaeology as part of the school curriculum, with 43% of this group believing that archaeology should be included as part of the curriculum as early as grades K through 4. Respondents are most likely to learn about archaeology through television programs (56%), followed by books and encyclopedias (33%), magazines (33%), and newspapers (24%).

Nearly all respondents (99%) state that archaeological sites have educational and scientific value, and a clear majority of the public (96%) believes that there should be

---

1 When asked the open-ended question, “What do you think of when you hear the word ‘archaeology’?” only 10% gave “dinosaurs/dinosaur bones” as a response, perhaps suggesting that this misperception, while still widespread, may not be as prevalent as seems.
laws to protect archaeological resources. Interestingly, more respondents (85%) think that there should be laws to prevent the construction of a house or business on the site of a prehistoric Indian village than think there should be laws to prevent construction on the site of a former Revolutionary or Civil War battle (73%). But while most people feel that there should be laws protecting archaeological resources only 69% think that there should be laws that prevent the general public from selling artifacts found on their property, a result not surprising given the strong views on private property rights in American society. And less than 60% of respondents support laws prohibiting the removal of arrowheads found on public property for private use. In all instances, however, over half of the public holds the view that there should be laws protecting archaeological resources on private as well as public land.

While the public may support the enactment of laws protecting archaeological resources, few are aware of current laws already on the books. Slightly more than a quarter of respondents (28%) know of laws protecting archaeological sites, while less than a quarter (24%) are aware of laws protecting unmarked human burial sites, shipwrecks (22%), and laws regulating the buying and selling of artifacts (23%).

The results of the Harris Interactive survey taken in the United States closely mirror the results of surveys taken in British Columbia, Canada (Pokotylo and Mason 1991; Pokotylo and Guppy 1999). Like the American survey, results suggest that in general the Canadian public supports archaeology and archaeological laws. But when asked if governments currently have laws to protect archaeological sites and artifacts,
68.2% were uncertain (Pokotylo and Guppy 1999: 410). Furthermore, nearly half (47.9%) of the respondents, when asked if they would buy an object from an archaeological site, said they would (1999: 416). The most recent survey also indicates that when it comes to Aboriginal peoples' stewardship of their own archaeological heritage, the response is generally negative. But, as Pokotylo and Guppy note, it is difficult to determine whether this is due to ignorance about and/or lack of support for Aboriginal claims, or due to the public giving priority to its own interests in archaeological sites (1999: 411).

These surveys present a view of mainstream archaeology and heritage management. The discipline of archaeology, however, attracts a fringe audience that is more interested in UFO's, conspiracy theories, hyper-diffusionism, moundbuilders, and the coexistence of humans and dinosaurs than in changes in subsistence patterns of ancient cultures (unless, of course, the change in subsistence is due to alien agency). This more speculative side of archaeology is prevalent and long-standing. One need only to turn to the Discovery Channel to see Leonard Nimoy discuss the lost city of Atlantis, or peruse some of the books found in the archaeology sections of popular bookstores (e.g. von Däniken 1970, 1972, 1974; Cremo and Thompson 1993).

Archaeologists have long been concerned about this fringe element of archaeology, and numerous articles and books have been written about it (e.g. Feder 1999; Williams 1991). In 1984 Kenneth Feder conducted a survey of college students at Central Connecticut State University (Feder 1984). Feder's primary goal was to
assess students' knowledge of archaeology, and in specific to determine how views on archeology had been influenced by “pseudoscience.” In part, the results of the survey are similar to the surveys discussed above – while students display some ignorance concerning archaeology, most are interested in learning about it. The survey also notes, however, that 27% of respondents believe in the prehistoric visitation of our planet by extraterrestrials, 29% believe that there is good evidence for the Lost Continent of Atlantis, and 12% believe that a curse from King Tut resulted in the deaths of archaeologists. The survey was given again in 1994 (Feder 1995), and results were similar except for the fact that the percentages in two of the categories, extraterrestrials and King Tut’s curse, actually increased. Feder concludes that while students are interested in learning about archaeology they are “largely ignorant of archeology and related topics” and “are a ripe audience for pseudoscientists and charlatans who parade as archaeologists and would have the public accept all sorts of unacceptable nonsense about the past and its study” (1984: 536).
Chapter 2
Why Should We Do Public Outreach?

One of the reasons that archaeologists ought to participate in public outreach is to correct the type of pseudoscientific misinformation just discussed. But why should archaeologists care about the pseudoscientific fringe? What is the harm in stories about mummified giants, lost races, or pyramids as runways to the stars? Feder (1999) points out that in most cases there is no harm. He notes that he used to own a Ouija board, read books on flying saucers, and analyze handwriting. Furthermore, many people read tabloids like *The Sun* and the *Weekly World News*, but most do so for entertainment value and realize that the stories are not true. Pseudoscientific archaeology, however, has not always been so benign. Stories of moundbuilders or hyperdiffusionism diminish the cultural accomplishments of aboriginal groups. Fringe archaeology has also at times become mainstream nationalistic archaeology, used to promote one race or culture over others (e.g. Arnold 1990, 1992; Arnold and Hassmann 1995; Fawcett 1995; Schmidt 1999; Trigger 1989, 1995). But perhaps the most important reason to care is that pseudoscientific archaeology is speculative and unsubstantiated – it has no method for verification. Without the requirements of testable evidence, archaeology becomes a series of “just so” stories.

A second reason for public outreach is that it may help to protect and preserve sites. Looting, site destruction and the illegal selling of artifacts is a prime concern in
archaeology and heritage management (e.g., King 1991; Lerner 1991; Nickens 1991).

Public outreach may help this problem in a few ways. First, as previously noted, the public is often unaware of legislation protecting archaeological sites. While many looters are aware that their actions are illegal, there may be those who, out of ignorance, innocently engage in illegal activities. Educating the public about current legislation and the importance of preserving sites can correct this. Secondly, there is a logistical problem in protecting many archaeological resources: large areas combined with small staffs. Constant policing of sites is simply not feasible. An informed public can serve as an additional set of eyes and ears, and in fact many tips on illegal activities come from concerned citizens. Public outreach can also create a sense of community pride in an archaeological resource, such as the residents of Ridgefield, Washington feel for Cathlapotle, a Chinook village site located near the town, or that has been established at the Sannai Maruyama site in Japan (Habu and Fawcett 1999). This fosters a sense of protection for a site and aids in its preservation.

Some archaeologists argue, however, that for site protection the opposite approach should be taken—information on archaeological sites should be kept away from the public. And in practice this is how most site information is handled. State Historic Preservation Offices are not required to give the public access to site records, as information on archaeological sites are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). However, the belief that secrecy protects sites may, at best, be naive and may in fact hurt the field of archaeology:
In the United States and many other countries, site management programs traditionally have been built around the concept that adequate preservation can be achieved by simply keeping site locations secret and the public away. While there certainly is a positive correlation between site visitation levels and degradation, the issue is not as clear-cut as most archaeologists would like to believe. In fact, evidence suggests that the site secrecy strategy is not working very well. First, it is failing as a means of keeping the public away from sites, one of its major purposes...The second and most critical way that the site secrecy strategy is failing concerns its ultimate inability to prevent vandalism and site destruction, its most fundamental goal...The third and final way that the site secrecy strategy has failed us is slightly more complex but, for this reason, all the more serious. It results in financial strangulation, and it concerns the way that bureaucratic funding is allocated and resource importance established...Resources used by the public (such as campgrounds) receive funding (Whitley 2001: 27-28).

Whitley cogently raises a third reason for public outreach – securing adequate funding. Archaeology is a time-consuming and expensive process, and unlike research and development in the business world, there is rarely, if ever, a financial return on the initial investment. While financial support for archaeological work occasionally comes from private citizens, government agencies serve as the primary source of funding. Many archaeologists, however, believe that politics and the science of archaeology do not mix. This is an impractical and naive point of view:

Why are politics important to archaeology? The short answer is because archaeology is almost totally dependent on politics, whether we like it or not. The overwhelming majority of the archaeology in the United States is done by,
because of, or paid for by some part of the government which consists of people
elected to office ("politicians"), the people they appoint to office, and their staffs
(Bense 2000:83).

Lobbying is big business in capitol hallways and there is a limited pool of funds from
which to draw. If archaeologists do not educate legislators about the importance of
archaeological preservation they will ultimately be overlooked when resources are
allocated.

A fourth reason for public outreach is professional obligation and duty. This
takes a variety of forms. First, there is the legal obligation for archaeologists to engage
in public outreach. Most cultural resource management (CRM) work centers around
complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). But
while Section 106 is a reactive law, designed to protect potentially threatened sites,
Section 110 of the NHPA is a proactive law, requiring federal agencies to develop
programs to detect and promote cultural resources. Additional legal mandates for
outreach exist:

The Antiquities Act was enacted more than 90 years ago to regulate how
archaeological sites were to be treated on public lands. The statute emphasized
expert, systematic excavation and recording as part of any archaeological
investigation on public land. To receive a permit, the applicant had to ensure that
any material excavated or collected would be placed in a "public museum" and
that the finds should be "accessible to the public" (43 CFR 3.17). From the very
beginning of government efforts to protect archaeological resources, the
importance of public outreach and accessibility of archaeological information
was recognized (McManamon 1998: 3).

Federal laws, however, are not the only reason that archaeologists are obligated to engage in public outreach. In their role as researchers and as members of a body of scholars, archaeologists are also obligated to make their work public. It may seem that this is not really public outreach at all, and is instead just a dialogue between members of a rather exclusive group. And unfortunately, in practice this may be the case. Members of the general public rarely read detailed site forms, and if they did the forms may be so heavily laden with jargon that it may appear unintelligible. Nonetheless, published reports are available to the public for scrutiny, and it is this public presentation of findings that helps to separate archaeologists from pothunters.

It has also been argued that archaeologists are in a unique position as stewards of a very important resource. As a result of this position archaeologists carry an important responsibility:

We all have a right to our past, and our past is the worldwide record of the human experience...A public trust is an individual or group responsibility to protect other people’s rights to these heritage values and to the things (artifacts, ecofacts, sites) that embody these values. Because things and ideas are involved, they can be considered property – common property held in a common trust (Knudson 1991: 3; see also Knudson and Keel 1995).

Knudson argues that as stewards of the “public trust” it is the role of the archaeologist to protect and preserve the human community’s past, and part of protecting and
preserving includes education of the general public, both children and adults.

Perhaps the most important reason for public outreach encompasses all of the reasons just discussed: archaeologists engage in public outreach in order to establish the relevancy of their profession. Archaeology, as a profession, does not need to exist. Interest in the past is a leisure activity (Merriman 1991: 83-93), and as such, archaeology is really a creation of an affluent society. The salaries of archaeology professors and cultural resource managers are not mandated by law. If doctors were to go on strike people would notice. If garbage collectors went on strike people would notice. Airline personnel were ordered by the President not to strike. If the Society for American Archaeology ordered a walkout of all archaeological personnel it is doubtful that life for most Americans would be drastically altered.

The issue of relevancy haunts the discipline. Many archaeologists have probably experienced at some point in their career that little voice which says “Is this really important?” Adding to the moments of self-doubt are the views of those who not only think that archaeology is irrelevant, but actually harmful:

Then there are those who regard archaeologists as an irrelevant nuisance, as people who are determined to hold up industrial development at all costs just to save “a few rubbish heaps.” This school of thought resents the expenditure of some $200 million a year on cultural resource management, for which it sees little tangible return, and regards the whole exercise of archaeology as an irrelevant and useless luxury...One can hardly blame a financially pressed administration for looking hard at the relevance of archaeological expenditures to the general scheme of things...the people who are scrutinizing American
archaeology often have little comprehension of why the taxpayer supports research into the past (Fagan 1984: 177).

Many Native Americans also question the validity and importance of archaeology. The relationship between archaeologists and Native Americans has a long and troubled history. This troubled past has led many Native Americans to understandably view the practice of archaeology with a certain amount of suspicion:

Even though archaeologists ought to work in partnership with Native Americans, not all Indians want to make friends with “arkies” and “anthros.” American archaeologists have not typically sought to cultivate good relations with Indian tribes, and many archaeologists have felt justified in purposefully ignoring Indian sensibilities in conducting archaeological research, particularly in the treatment of Indian graves and human remains. University anthropology departments have shown little interest in recruiting Native American archaeology students (or professors), and consequently, very few Indians have become professional archaeologists in this country. Under these conditions, it is easy for some Indians to reject archaeology as an unacceptable form of inquiry (Echo-Hawk 2000: 3).

Public outreach, then, is a way to respond to those who see archaeology as an “irrelevant nuisance” and an “unacceptable form of inquiry.” Public outreach is necessary in order to answer the question posed by Jeremy Sabloff at the beginning of this paper, “To what is archaeology pertinent?”.
Chapter 3
What are the Challenges to Public Outreach?

The preceding reasons for engaging in public outreach are all important and legitimate. Nonetheless, it is widely recognized in the discipline that archaeologists are not entirely effective in their outreach efforts or may not be doing sufficient levels of outreach. Why might this be the case? First, quite simply, it is not our area of expertise. Most archaeologists are not journalists, marketers, or public relations experts. Archaeology, like any discipline, has a training program – years of schooling, training in field work, and a body of models and theories tested to determine which work and which do not. Someone without this experience could not simply walk off the street and obtain employment as a professional archaeologist. Likewise, the field of public relations also has a training program, with its own sets of tested models and theories. There is a reason why these types of departments exist on most college campuses – they produce knowledgeable public relations experts. For instance, consider the following:

The one unifying element of all the sections and stories in any newspaper, regardless of size or prestige, is that editors aim their copy at the readership in their circulation areas...This is important to keep in mind and is stressed heavily because scientists tend to see their research as important to everyone. Your investigations may, in fact, be vital to archaeology but newspaper editors and publishers are more concerned with how many persons in their circulation area are interested in reading about archaeology (DeCicco 1988: 847).
This may seem rather obvious after the fact, but it might not have even been considered unless one had some understanding of the workings of newspapers.

The fact that public relations and marketing is a field to itself has led some archaeologists to conclude that we would be better off as a discipline if we left outreach to the experts. Bill Lipe has noted that “archeologists are sometimes involved in making their field accessible to the public, but for the most part that job is done better by specialists – journalists, TV producers, museum exhibitors, teachers, park rangers” (Common Ground 2001: 31). Furthermore, the practice of archaeology requires such a broad set of skills and knowledge that adding “public relations expert” as a required skill may simply not be practical.

But not all archaeologists are ignorant when it comes to public relations – some are quite good at it. Additionally, the fact that archaeologists are not “specialists” in public relations does not mean that they cannot improve their outreach skills. A number of excellent “how to” manuals have been written on the topic (e.g., DeCicco 1988; Potter 1990; Shields 1991; Watkins et al 2000) and Mary Kwas, editor of Archaeology and Public Education, recently began a series of “Communicating with the Public” articles that run in the SAA Archaeological Record (Kvas 2001a, 2001b, 2002). Also, regardless of the archaeologist’s skill or comfort level, outreach may simply be too important to ignore:

Interpreting the archeological record is simply too important to leave to others. We are fortunate that archeology has inherent appeal. This provides fertile ground, but even fertile ground must be cultivated to bear fruit. An active,
informed public is an essential source of political and economic backing. If sites are to be preserved for the long term, and archeological programs and projects supported, public education and outreach must be an actively pursued, highly regarded part of the discipline (McManamon 2001: 6).

McManamon has noted another of the challenges facing outreach efforts: some archaeologists simply do not want to engage with the public, or feel that outreach is a necessary component of their profession. As DeCicco (1988) argues, the idea of public relations too often conjures up thoughts of untruthful advertising, or attempts to whitewash or cover up a negative image. DeCicco further states that “archaeologists, so sorely in need of good relations with the public, often break out in a cold sweat at the mention of PR, considering it beneath their dignity” (1988: 840). In reality, public relations is simply the use of information to create a favorable public image. It does not have to be untruthful or undignified. And as for the necessity of public outreach, DeCicco notes that the success currently enjoyed by the discipline is only relative to the anonymity and obscurity under which previous generations of archaeologists labored. Furthermore, those who wish to avoid contact with the public, and simply focus on the science of their profession may have a misperception about the practice of archaeology:

Medical Science as a discipline is distinguished from the practice of medicine. The family practitioner or internist rarely carries out science, but rather applies the knowledge and skills gained in formal training, in subsequent study, and on the job. Similarly, archaeology as a discipline is distinguished from the practice
of archaeology, a point not always understood or appreciated in academically oriented archaeology training programs. Unless one is lucky enough to be totally preoccupied with field and laboratory research (a very small percentage of practicing archaeologists), the practice of archaeology, as in medicine, involves the application of knowledge and skills gained in formal training, in subsequent study, and on the job (Jameson 1994: 11).

Another problem that may occur with public outreach, and one closely related to the problems just discussed, is one of communication. Many archaeologists are not good at translating their ideas to a lay public. This has led Sabloff to state that “while archaeologists may think they are talking clearly to the public, what the latter often hears, I believe, is ‘blah, blah, blah, tomb, blah, blah, blah, sacrifice, blah, blah, blah, arrowhead” (Sabloff 1998: 869). While there are certainly some who are excellent popular writers, David Hurst Thomas and Brian Fagan come immediately to mind, public writing is a skill many archaeologists do not have.

Why is it that researchers who can publish prolifically in scientific journals struggle when writing popular works or avoid it altogether? The inability to communicate with the public may be an artifact of the academic environment. First, graduate programs place emphasis on writing for the academic community, not the general public. This has lead some to argue that there needs to be changes in how students of archaeology, especially students in graduate programs, are trained:

Existing graduate educational programs in anthropology and archaeology need to be modified to provide the needed kinds of expertise and experience...The
ability to express oneself clearly and translate between the necessary professional jargon of archaeology and everyday English are useful skills for all archaeologists. These abilities are critically important for archaeologists working in public agencies because these professionals are called upon daily to interact effectively with nonarchaeologists...for those graduate students who aim for public-sector positions, professors must take special care that the learning of specialized terms, methods, and techniques does not replace existing abilities for common communication (McManamon 2000: 65-66).

Therefore, along with courses in field methods, laboratory analysis, and archaeological history, graduate students, especially those headed into the public sector, should be expected to take courses in public communication.

Second, the academic community gives few rewards for public writing. Decisions on tenure and hiring are not based on public outreach, but rather based on academic publications. Therefore, in a competitive market outreach becomes a low priority:

With all the advances in method, theory, and culture historical knowledge, archaeologists are now in a position to make important and useful statements about cultural adaptation and development that should have broad intellectual appeal. Ironically, though, one aspect of the professionalization of the discipline, what can be termed the academization of archaeology, is working against such broad dissemination of current advances in archaeological understanding of cultures of the past. The key factor, I am convinced, is that since World War II, and especially in the past few decades as archaeology rapidly expanded as an academic subject in universities and colleges throughout this country, the competition for university jobs and the institutional pressures to publish in
quantity, in general, and in peer review journals, in particular, has led in part to
the academic devaluation of popular writing and communication with the
general public. Such activities just don’t count or, even worse, count against you
(Sabloff 1998: 870-871).

Outreach activities are often low-priority in non-academic settings as well. In
these instances it is often due to time constraints and under-funding, rather than job-
competition. For instance, the vast majority of my work as an archaeologist for the
U.S. Fish & Wildlife is dedicated to Section 106 compliance with little time available
for outreach. In a situation where there are more acres to be surveyed for Section 106
compliance than there are archaeologists to survey them, outreach activities become a
luxury.

These public outreach problems are problems of professional limitations, under
funding, and competing priorities and can be addressed through additional funding and
training, and by a greater willingness to incorporate PR-minded non-archaeologists
into the profession. There are, however, theoretical problems with current public
outreach approaches. As previously discussed, archaeologists engage in public
relations to establish the relevance of the discipline and to secure continued public
funding. With this in mind public outreach is often approached as the dissemination of
what it is that archaeologists have discovered, and leads to the “whats” of archaeology
taking precedence over the “hows” (recall the Blanchard quotation in the
introduction). In part this is a reflection of the fact that the public is interested in the
fascinating objects archaeologists find, as surveys suggest. But it is also a reflection of
a model of public outreach that presents archaeologists as providers of useful
information.

McGimsey (1984) argues that there are three primary rationales for the
expenditure of public funds on archaeology. First, there is a deep-seated human need
to know about our predecessors and an innate curiosity about the past. Second,
archaeology and archaeological research challenge our ability to think and to come up
with answers. His third rationale, however, is presented as being the most important:
arheology increases the size and scope of the social scientist's laboratory. In this
sense, archaeologists are scientists who discover information about the past that is
useful to the present. It is clear that some archaeological research accomplishes this:

Archeology can contribute greatly to understanding the effects of
environmental degradation and climate change on human society. Using
dendrochronological data, for example, it is possible to compare recent weather
patterns with those for the past thousand or more years in the southeastern and
southwestern United States, and how annual rainfall variation affected both crop
production and political stability in a wide range of local societies. Examining
the impacts of the mid-Holocene warm interval may help us better understand
what we might have to look forward to given global warming, and finer scale
analyses may help resolve the effects of El Niño and other periodic climatic

There are many cases where the link between past and present is clear, such as the use
of zooarchaeological studies to help inform current wildlife management practices. For
instance, recent research by Virginia Butler and Michael Delacorte uses archaeological evidence to demonstrate that native species of fish in Owens Valley, California have been threatened more by the introduction of predatory species than by changes that have occurred in their aquatic habitat (Butler and Delacorte, in press). Lee Lyman (pers. communication) hopes that research on faunal materials recovered from the Cathlapotle Site, in Ridgefield, Washington will help to determine how habitat has been altered by damming of the Columbia River.

These cases provide clear examples of how archaeology can inform current practice. In many cases, however, the link between past and present is tenuous at best. Archaeological research often focuses on obscure and highly specialized topics, topics that will never impact the lives of the average citizen. Academic arguments over whether early societies were chiefdoms or incipient states, whether flintknappers stood or sat while knapping, or whether petroglyphs are hunting scenes or examples of attempts to control the weather are meaningful to only a few. In cases like this it is difficult to argue that providing useful information to the public is the main value of archaeology.

Another problem with this model is that it does not accurately represent the current state of the profession or the direction that the field is moving. Bill Lipe states that

Archeology’s main contribution to society is producing and disseminating information based on systematic study of what’s left in the ground. Most sites gain value according to their potential to contribute knowledge. Therefore, one
measure of a preservation program’s success is whether anything useful is learned. Excavation is one of the main ways we go about learning (Common Ground 2001: 26).

While it is likely that excavation and information gathering will continue to be a part of the archaeological process, emphasis within the discipline has shifted:

Many Native Americans consider archaeology unnecessary, an unwarranted intrusion into their lives, their world, their history. But they have a common cause with archaeologists in preserving sacred places, burial sites, and the settlements of the ancestors intact...The archaeology of 2010 will be very different from that of 1994, one in which the conservation ethic, the issue of stewardship, will be all-pervasive (Fagan 1995:A3, A5).

In this sense archaeologists acts as stewards and preservationists as much, or more than they do as information gatherers.

Additionally, outreach efforts that stem from a model of archaeologist as the provider of useful information tend to focus on the results of research. Outreach materials created under this model focus most often on reconstruction. What archaeologists have found out about the past is what is presented to the public, and it is the academic “expert” who determines the message. Emphasis on reconstruction, without also demonstrating the methods that inform the reconstruction, can be a cause for concern:

The message is: ‘This is science!’ It preserves the hegemony of those who are allowed to select the objects to be put into the glass cases, who put labels on
objects and claim that they confer knowledge. In such a case the choice of experts cannot be criticized (Sommer 1999: 166).

In some situations reconstruction has served as propaganda (Schmidt 1999).

Explaining the methods used to arrive at conclusions, and opening the methodology up to criticism, can serve as a buffer against this.

At times archeological method is left out of the outreach message because it is believed that the audience either has no interest in it, or that it would be above their heads. I believe the public is more interested in the methods than we give them credit for, and certainly more intelligent. The experience of Martin Schmidt supports this:

Normally the results of academic research are not presented in such a way as to give the ‘man in the street’ the opportunity to understand and criticize them. In spite of this there is considerable interest in how archaeologists arrive at their conclusions and models...Most visitors agree that it is more satisfying to learn about methods and problems than to be simply fed the so-called ‘facts’ about how ‘our forebears’ used to live...An ‘objective’ fact that remains unexplained is as shabby and intellectually dishonest as a Nazi lie (Schmidt 1999: 154-155).

A model of outreach which focuses on the “whats” of archaeology and presents archaeologists as scientists who discover useful information suffers from another problem: it instantly places archaeologists in competition with all of the other scientific disciplines that profess to provide useful information. In a situation of limited public funds this is an important consideration. Furthermore, archaeology faces an uphill battle in this competition. First, in arguing that they are relevant to today,
most other scientific disciplines do not have to overcome the intervening hurdle of history – the research is already current. Second, the impact of much archaeological research is often not as apparent as other types of scientific research. The value of appropriating public funds to protect an early 20th century can dump or to determine the subsistence base of 4th century cultures is not as readily apparent as medical research to prevent strokes or engineering work to make bridges safer. Finally, there is the practicality of economics. In many fields money initially invested into research results in not only an increase in knowledge, but a financial return as well. This is rarely, if ever, the case in archaeology.

The public is interested in the "whats" of archaeology. But it may be that they are interested in the "whats" because they like artifacts, not because they believe the "whats" will have an impact on their lives in anything other than an aesthetic sense. Polls suggest that the public values archaeology, but what the polls do not determine is how much they will pay for it, especially if choices between archaeology and other sciences need to be made, a point made by Knudson:

While I believe archaeological resources have more scientific, humanistic, and spiritual value than generally is perceived, their apparent inertness and inability to do work means that the average citizen sees them as curiosities but not a significant factor in tradeoffs that do have economic benefit (Knudson 1995: 19).

Public outreach in archaeology is important. But the inability of many archaeologists to communicate effectively with the public might lead to an outreach
message that is obscure. Furthermore, an approach to outreach that focuses on what archeologists discover presents archaeology as just another science, and archaeology may not be able to compete in this arena. A more effective approach to public outreach, and an approach which might, over the long run, better establish the relevancy of the discipline, is an approach which focuses on the uniqueness of the discipline — the “hows” of archaeology.
Chapter 4
Focusing on the “Hows”:
Archaeology as a Model for Education

Outreach is about education. Therefore, it is not surprising that a great deal of outreach effort is focused on elementary and secondary schools. As previously noted, the majority of the public feels that archaeology should be introduced into the elementary and secondary curriculum. Numerous works have been dedicated to this topic (e.g., Smardz and Smith 2000; Stone and MacKenzie 1990; Wolf et al 1997) and a number of excellent examples of educational efforts exist (e.g., Parks 1995a, 1995b). Archaeology and Public Education (available online at www.saa.org), a newsletter of the Society for American Archaeology, contains lesson plans in each issue.

In many schools, however, archaeology is not part of the curriculum, or if it is included it is usually treated as simply a sub-field of anthropology or as a component of geography. Kehoe (1990) argues that this is because history and social studies curriculums in U.S. public schools are focused on producing citizens and promoting the national myth of liberty, uniformity and destiny. As a result, public schools have little use for archaeology. Because the myth constructs the precolonial past as a primeval, virgin wilderness, it cannot recognize, much less seek, evidence of purposeful human activities in the past. Because the past it describes is a heroic narrative of destiny fulfilled, it needs no evidence from material culture to support its story (Kehoe 1990: 207-208).
Additionally, when archaeology does find its way into the curriculum emphasis is too often placed on finding artifacts, with little stress placed on the methods of archaeology (as may be the case in many “sandbox digs”).

In order to promote the relevance of the discipline, however, it is incumbent that archaeology become an integral part of school curriculums, even at the primary level. But rather than presenting archaeology as simply a sub-field of history or social studies, I believe that archaeologists must be more forceful, and more grandiose, in their efforts. I believe the most effective method for promoting archaeology to educators is to present archaeology as a model for the educational process, a model which can serve as the base and unifying theme of a curriculum. This would best be achieved by focusing on the “hows” of archaeology: How do archaeologists go about their business? How do they discover what they discover? How do they know what they know? Archaeology can serve as an excellent model for how students should be educated. Why is this the case?

First, archaeology is multidisciplinary. With its clear connection to history, its scientific approach, and its use of statistics, archaeology incorporates three important educational fields. Within the sciences alone, archaeology incorporates geology, geography, biology, and botany, to name only a few. Perhaps no field is as interdisciplinary as archaeology. Why is this important?

Recent theories on intelligence have focused on the multiplicity of human cognitive abilities. The theory that is currently the most in vogue in educational circles
is Howard Gardner’s theory of “multiple intelligences.” Gardner (1983, 1999) argues that intelligence is not static and that humans have ten or more different types of intelligence potentials. These intelligences include verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematic, body-kinesthetic, musical rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, and naturalist. Two of these intelligences, verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical, are the ones typically stressed in educational programs and IQ tests. Other types, such as spatial and interpersonal, are typically not stressed. But as Gardner argues:

The uniform school is based on the assumption that all individuals are the same and, therefore, that uniform schooling reaches all individuals equally...no two people have exactly the same kinds of minds, since we each assemble our intelligences in unique configurations. As educators, we face a stark choice: ignore the differences or acknowledge them (Gardner 1999: 150).

Archaeology allows educators to acknowledge the differences. Inferring cultural behavior from artifacts, running statistical analyses, and writing site reports of course focus on the logical-mathematical and verbal-linguistic intelligences typically emphasized in classrooms. But drawing site maps, visualizing the spatial relationships between artifacts and features at a site, excavating a test-pit, understanding the importance of the natural world surrounding a site, and navigating the relationships between different parties involved in the archaeological process stress other types of intelligences, allowing students to focus on their strengths.

Additionally, there has been much debate about the quality of the science and
The nation is demanding improved science and mathematics education for all students...during the past few years, we have seen an increasing concern for identifying key factors for success. For example, subject matter standards – sets of criteria about what students should know and be able to do at certain grade levels – have been published in education. Mathematics standards came from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; science standards came from the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences (1999: 1-2).

Levels of scientific literacy have been questioned (Cuilliton 1988; Zimmerman 1995), and attacks on science have come from various sources (Ross 1996). Similar debates have occurred concerning the history curriculum (Gagnon 1989; Nash et al 1997).

As noted in the above quotation, there was a dramatic change in the American education system during the 1990s. Educational reform became a national issue, and calls for standards and assessments, especially in science and mathematics, were at the forefront of the debate. This was fueled by the belief that American students, in comparison to students from other countries, were performing poorly. By the mid-nineties national standards were in place. Students were now expected to meet subject specific standards for their particular grade level. States were expected to comply to these standards and, in fact, most established their own that closely mirrored those at the national level (Heath 2002).

Along with the new state and national standards came tools for assessment. In some states the assessment process is extremely stringent and certain levels of
performance must be met by a pre-determined percentage of students. If the appropriate level of performance is not met the teacher and/or the school might face disciplinary action (Heath 2002). But how can the methods of archaeology assist teachers and schools with the new standards?

As noted, the new standards place primary emphasis on science and mathematics. Archaeology attempts to discern what happened in the past, but it does so through the scientific method. As Feder notes

Science is a series of techniques used to maximize the probability that what we think we know really reflects the way things are, were, or will be. Science makes no claim to have all the answers or even to be right all the time. On the contrary, during the process of the growth of knowledge and understanding, science is often wrong. The only claim that we do make in science is that if we honestly, consistently, and vigorously pursue knowledge using some basic techniques and principles, the truth will eventually surface and we can truly know things about the nature of the world in which we find ourselves (1999: 19).

Archaeologists are scientists concerned with history. They ask questions about how people lived in the past, develop hypotheses and models, and then gather data and use observation to test whether or not these models work. Occasionally, as Feder notes, these models are wrong. But, as Feder also notes, this is how science works and proceeds. Archaeology, then, presents to students an applied (and interesting) example of the scientific method in process and demonstrates how a variety of disciplines and
talents can be used to address and answer questions.

Another reason that archaeology can serve as a model for education is its multicultural nature. The idea that this country and its history has been shaped by multiple groups and ideas has gained increasing acceptance in recent years, and this has been reflected in the curriculum:

There is a growing movement in U.S. elementary and secondary education to address, appreciate, and understand the multicultural nature of our population. In many areas this is a mandated addition to the curriculum. Multicultural education addresses the reality that countries such as the U.S. are a plurality of peoples, that, in fact, "we are the world," and that we must help our children respect the commonalities of being citizens of one country while respecting the varieties of cultural differences within it. We are not so much a melting pot as a multi-ingredient salad or a cultural mosaic (Messenger and Enloe 1991: 157).

What role does archaeology play in promoting a multicultural perspective? Smardz describes it in the following manner:

Multiculturalism is about understanding and accepting cultural diversity. It is not about being afraid of cultural, ethnic, or religious differences between ourselves and the other people around us, for fear is at the heart of racism and intolerance. Archaeology cannot escape having an educational, and hence political, role to play in our modern global village. Exploring similarities and differences in how people cope with given situations in varying places and times disturbs long-held

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2 A side benefit to this is that while the standards tend to emphasize science and mathematics, history is often devalued. A focus on the scientific nature of archaeology would allow educators to sneak history back into the standards.
myths and prejudices. Archaeology educates us not only about our human past, but about current societal composition as well. Public archaeology is an educational device through which we learn tolerance, banish fear of diversity, and acquire knowledge that helps us deal with the multicultural populations that make up our present world (1995: 15).

A closely related idea is that education is not only about math, science, and history. It is also about teaching students social skills – how to get along with others, how to compromise when necessary, and how to act civil even when getting along is not possible. Archaeology can serve as a model for this. Modern archaeology, especially since the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), consists of consultation, cooperation, and at times conflict resolution as much as it does excavation and lab work. Examples of archaeologists and Native Americans working together can be presented to students as models for how conflicts can be resolved (see Dongoske et al 2000; Swidler et al 1997; Thomas 2000).

Of course, not all efforts at working together succeed. Sometimes there is simply too much distrust between groups, or the ideological differences are too wide to be crossed. But this is how life sometimes is and this serves as a valuable lesson. Archaeology has a long and troubled history, and archaeologists have at times engaged in very questionable activities (Thomas 2000). While efforts have been made to repair the damages caused between archaeologists and Native Americans by this shameful history, modern day events, such as the Kennewick Man debate, reignite the fears and
mistrust. In this sense archaeology can be used as a launching pad for discussions of ethics (Is it right to study human remains?), politics (What are the politics behind NAGPRA?), and philosophy (What is the relationship between science and religion?).

Another value that archaeology would provide to school curriculums is its ability to raise environmental consciousness. As Brian Fagan points out "we live in a time of environmental crisis, of global warming, and massive human exploitation of our ecosystems" (Fagan 1995: A5). Archaeology is well suited to address environmental issues:

Archaeologists trained in the United States are particularly well suited to transmit a historical-ecological perspective to policymakers and to the public. We are trained in the scientific method yet steeped in the critical, comparative discipline of history. We use the methods and techniques of empirical science, yet we ultimately produce narratives of what happened, how, and when. Our field is inherently fascinating to many nonarchaeologists, and people are predisposed to consume stories of the unknown, potentially adventurous past (Marquardt 1994: 205).

And while other disciplines, such as geology, also help to increase environmental awareness, archaeology has an advantage because it is the only science "which studies human interaction with the natural environment over both long and short periods of time" (Fagan 1995: A5).

Archaeology is a unique process. To search for answers it incorporates science, math and history. But once it finds answers it challenges rather than accepts them.
uncritically. And along the way it forces us to work with others and take other’s beliefs into consideration. For these reasons archaeology should not be relegated to a supporting role in school curriculums. Instead, it should serve as the base.
Chapter 5
Conclusion:
Working Towards Putting the Model in Practice

Promoting archaeology as a model for education may ultimately be the most effective method of public outreach. First, while many archaeologists do not understand the language of public relations, all should understand the methods of the discipline in which they practice and be able to address it. Second, this model, by focusing on the "hows" of archaeology, rather than focusing on what archaeologists have discovered, promotes that which makes archaeology unique – a broad-based method of searching for answers that incorporates numerous disciplines and multiple perspectives. Archaeology would no longer need to compete head to head for relevancy against other sciences. Third, promoting archaeology as a model for education allows archaeology to separate from the past. This may sound strange given that archaeology is the study of past cultures. But too often it is difficult to see the connections between studies of the past and their implications for the present. Maybe the public is interested in archaeological discoveries, but they might be more willing to pay for things which directly affect them today. Promoting archaeology as a model for education allows us to focus on the role and relevance of archaeology in the present.

Challenges to the Model

Unfortunately, a number of challenges need to be overcome before this model
could be put into practice. One major hurdle is that there is too often a disconnect, and occasionally even distrust, between archaeologists and educators. Graduates of schools of education see themselves as education experts and may be wary or defensive about curricular advice coming from outside sources. Archaeologists, for their part, often view education programs as soft, or fear that teachers do not have the appropriate background to introduce archaeology into their classrooms. Lack of communication also stems from archaeologists who hold an opposite, more benevolent view of educators. These archaeologists take the position that teachers are education experts, and therefore curriculum development should be left to them. But as Fawcett and Habu note, such a neutral stance may be naive:

Archaeology is not done in a vacuum...When archaeologists take an apolitical stand the interpretation falls on the shoulders of politically dominant groups, for example, government bureaucrats who write textbook guidelines or politicians who dictate educational policy (Fawcett and Habu 1990: 227).

If the lack of communication between educators and archaeologists continues, or if archaeologists refuse to participate in education development, it will be difficult for archaeology to make further inroads into public school curriculums3.

3The lack of communication between archaeologists and educators was a major topic of discussion at the “Archaeologists as Educators: Techniques for Classroom Explorations and Public Outreach” workshop held at the 2002 SAA Conference in Denver. Susan Dixon Renoe, a presenter at the workshop, had wished to pursue a PhD in Anthropology at the University of California-Santa Barbara. When she noted that she wished to specialize in education and outreach the Department of Anthropology suggested to her that she apply to the Department of Education instead. She is now pursuing her PhD in education.
An additional challenge to this model comes as a result of the implementation of state and national educational standards. Margaret Heath describes the problem in this manner:

Following on the heels of standards came assessment tools. In some states these assessments are extremely stringent and certain levels of performance must be met by certain numbers of students or the teacher and/or school face disciplinary action. This means that teachers are “teaching to the test” and may feel that they cannot add additional materials, such as those offered by archaeologists. (Heath 2002)

In this sense, archaeologists need to be aware of the practical issues that teachers in today’s educational environment face. Teachers who would otherwise be sympathetic to introducing archaeology into their lesson plans may, due to a lack of time or even fear of losing their job, be unwilling to alter their curriculum.

**Overcoming the Challenges**

The challenges of educational standards and lack of communication between archaeologists and educators do not need to serve as a roadblock to effective outreach efforts. The work of Virginia Parks, outreach specialist for the Region 1 Cultural Resource Team of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife, provides an excellent example of how to overcome these challenges. Parks is the primary creator of the “Discover Cathlapotle!” educational kit, a kit designed to introduce the methods of archaeology and the lifeways of the Chinook Indians of the Pacific Northwest to elementary school
students. Parks was well aware that the state standards would be a concern, and that communication with teachers would be extremely valuable. Parks' solution was to incorporate teachers into the kit creation process from the very beginning, so that concerns with standards would be addressed at the forefront. Parks also asks teachers to continually evaluate the usefulness and appropriateness of the kit (pers. communication with Virginia Parks). The result is an educational kit which fosters a stewardship of natural resources and promotes an understanding and appreciation of archaeology and the past, while at the same time providing curriculum based and “standard friendly” materials that emphasize critical thinking skills in the language arts, social studies, math and science.

Despite this success story, lack of communication and time constraints imposed by standards are still large hurdles to overcome. It is unrealistic to think that a curriculum based on the methods of archaeology will soon find its way into public schools. Does this mean, therefore, that this model is irrelevant? While wholesale adoption of this model is unrealistic, there are steps that can be taken to move outreach efforts in the right direction. Perhaps the first place to start is within anthropology departments themselves. As previously noted, public outreach is rarely emphasized in graduate training. Graduate course work typically focuses on lab and field methods, geographic area studies, and seminars on the history of the discipline. If there is any training in outreach activities it usually comes from on-the-job experience gained through internships, not as part of the curriculum.
I argue that if archaeologists hope to expand their outreach efforts and make further inroads into school curriculums some form of outreach activity must be a requirement for graduation with an advanced degree in anthropology. Currently, few schools do this. One notable exception is the University of California at Berkeley, where public outreach activities are required of all graduate students. According to Dr. Margaret Conkey, who oversees the outreach program at Berkeley, graduate student response to the requirement has been overwhelmingly positive (pers. communication with Dr. Conkey). Rather than viewing the requirement as an extra hoop to jump through before graduating, many students view it as one of the perks of the program. In fact, Berkeley has even designated one Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) position solely for outreach coordination.

Elena Aguilar, an elementary educator with the Oakland Unified School District, is currently working with the outreach program at Berkeley. Initially, outreach efforts consisted of a few graduate students leading an occasional class session. Presentations were usually on the particular interests of the presenter and did not necessarily relate to the presentations of other graduate students. Plans are currently being developed, however, for a year-long program that would consistently focus on archaeology (pers. communication with Elena Aguilar). Archaeological method would serve as a platform from which a number of topics and lessons could be addressed. This is the type of program that brings the methods of archaeology directly and consistently into the classroom, and should be held up as an example of the future of public outreach.
Berkeley is also beginning to introduce the importance of outreach to undergraduates. Anthropology 128-01, *Special Topics in Archaeology—Practice in a 6th Grade Afterschool Program*, has been offered for the Spring semester of 2002. The course was created by Dr. Conkey and according to the syllabus “is designed to provide an opportunity for undergraduates to work with 6th graders in exploring the worlds of archaeology, history, and computer-based technologies.” Berkeley students work with middle school students who are enrolled in “Expedition,” a voluntary after-school program offered at the Roosevelt Middle School in the San Antonio neighborhood of Oakland. The Expedition program is designed to bring the archaeological experience to 6th graders through a variety of media, including computer games, web browsing, and hands-on exploration of artifacts. Along with working with middle school students, Berkeley students are expected to keep field notes on their experiences, give a presentation on their observations, and write a final research paper.

Anthropology departments across the United States should emulate the program at Berkeley. We may have little control over primary and secondary school curriculums, but as archaeologists and as members of an academic community we do have control over how our graduate programs train future archaeologists. We can, as a profession, commit to placing more emphasis on outreach and education during training. In this way we can create a group of archaeologists who view outreach as an integral part of their job, not something which is best left to others or done only when
time allows. We can work to create a group of professionals who believe that developing a plan for outreach is as important as developing a research design.

**Remembering the “Hows”: An Outreach Example**

I have argued in this paper that the most important aspect of our discipline, that which best establishes the relevancy of archaeology to the public, is the methods that we employ. A model has been presented that portrays archaeology as a suitable base from which we can educate students. Not all outreach activities, however, occur within a classroom setting. Furthermore, I have noted at the beginning of this chapter some of the challenges that face the implementation of this model on a large scale. Given these concerns, the question is how do we move outreach efforts in the proper direction. I believe the answer is quite simple: we must always remember the “hows” of archaeology. All outreach activities, whether they be an interpretive sign at an archaeological site, an article for a newspaper, or a presentation to high school students, must include the methods of archaeology as a component.

The appendix of this paper contains a preliminary draft of a public outreach booklet that I have written and developed with the methods of archaeology in mind. The booklet is on Cathlapotle, an archaeological site occurring within the boundaries of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, located just to the west of Ridgefield, Washington. Cathlapotle (45CL1) was excavated under the direction of Dr. Kenneth M. Ames of Portland State University, and was one of the largest Chinook villages
along the Columbia River. Lewis and Clark first noted the village on November 5th, 1805, as they sailed down the Columbia River. After spending the winter of 1805-1806 at Ft. Clatsop on the Oregon coast, the Corps of Discovery headed back up the Columbia. On March 29th, 1806, Lewis and Clark spent a few hours at Cathlapotle, and recorded their observations.

Four hundred years ago Chinook villages lined the Columbia River. But since that time erosion, looting and development have destroyed the remains of nearly all of them. Preservation at Cathlapotle, however, was excellent and stratigraphy at the site was intact. Furthermore, the site lay on federally protected land, within the boundaries of a refuge, and was tied to a major historical event. This provided for excellent research and outreach opportunities.

Excavations at Cathlapotle were guided by a series of three goals: 1) management and scientific goals, 2) outreach goals, and 3) public education goals (Ames et al 1999). To help address goals two and three, Dr. Ames and Anan Raymond, Regional Archaeologist for the U.S. Fish &Wildlife Service, had wanted for some time to produce a booklet about Cathlapotle for the general audience. Due to my connection with both Portland State University and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, as well as my interest in public outreach, I gladly took the opportunity to develop and write the booklet as a portion of my thesis. The booklet was developed with three primary goals in mind:

1. The Lewis and Clark bicentennial begins in earnest in 2004. Hundreds of new
visitors, all retracing the trail of Lewis and Clark, may potentially visit the refuge. A booklet describing the importance of the site and the role of archaeology would have the advantage of tapping into a large audience.

2. While Lewis and Clark may be the initial hook to gain the attention of the reader, the real story of the site is the Chinook who lived there. Many people may have never heard about the Chinook, and this booklet can teach them about the Chinook and their importance to the history of the Northwest. This is especially important given that the Chinook continue to fight for formal recognition. The Chinook Tribe has been supportive of this project. Charles Funk, a Chinook artist, illustrated the booklet, and the aesthetic feel of the book is primarily due to him. The final version of the booklet will go through the cultural committee of the Chinook Tribe before it is published.

3. Most importantly, at least in terms of this paper, the booklet would provide an example of how the methods of archaeology can be incorporated into a public outreach effort.

To accomplish this third goal each chapter of *Cathlapotle: catching time's secrets* 4, was written with two separate stories in mind. One story focuses on the "whats" of archaeology, reconstructing for the reader what life would have been like for the people of Cathlapotle. The second story within each chapter focuses on the methods that archaeologists employed to discover what they know about this site.

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4 The title comes from a line in a poem written about Cathlapotle by the late Chinook poet, Ed Nielsen. Nielsen wrote the poem after visiting the site in 1995.
These two stories, while running separately, are linked by the larger theme of the chapter. For instance, the “what” story of the chapter on households describes the physical structure of the houses and how they were built. The “how” story discusses the evidence and methods that archaeologists used to figure this out, i.e. soil stains showing locations of post holes and wall trenches, as well as historical evidence from written accounts and paintings. The two stories are separated within the text; the stories of archaeological method are placed within sidebars. I did this in order to place emphasis on the methods of archaeology and demonstrate that the process of archaeology is worthy of being a story by itself.

During development of the booklet I encountered a number of challenges. The planned distribution centers for the final version of the booklet include the refuge and various locations throughout Ridgefield, Washington. This means that the potential audience is quite large and diverse. Writing for such a broad-based audience is not an easy task. Second, moving from an academic style of writing into a general style was difficult. Translating topics that I am used to discussing in jargon-laden academic prose into language suitable for the general public was, at times, tremendously frustrating, and I am still not entirely satisfied with the results. There were many days when I stared at the computer screen, fingers at rest, wondering why I had not chosen to do a more purely academic thesis project. In the end, however, this only emphasized to me the importance of including outreach training in graduate curriculums. Finally, there were the challenges of compromise. Compromises were made about what would
be included in the booklet and what would be left out, the amounts of money spent for
the project, and the overall length of the project.

In the end what I hoped to achieve in this booklet—along, of course, with telling
the important story of the Chinook at Cathlapotle—was to present a picture of
archaeologists as scientists concerned with history, as professionals who use multiple
lines of evidence and multiple disciplines to address and answer questions. What I
wanted to present was a public outreach document that remembered the methods of
archaeology. While this may not be as dramatic as getting archaeology into the
classroom on a daily basis, it is still a step (and a very realistic step) toward increasing
the public’s awareness of archaeological method.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have argued that archaeology, due to its focus on multiple lines of
evidence, intertwining of the science and humanities, and multi-cultural perspective, provides a model that can serve as a framework for education. It must be noted,
however, that this model is not designed to replace all other outreach efforts. In fact,
all forms of public education in archaeology should be more heavily promoted. Any
effort at informing the public about the work that archaeologists do is a move in a
positive direction. Rather, this paper is merely intended to point out the areas in which
this discipline might encounter problems with its current outreach efforts.
Furthermore, this paper argues that the most effective way for us to establish our
relevance in the modern world is by promoting the unique methods that archaeologists use to address and answer questions, and, when possible, applying these methods as a base for education. Focusing on the “hows” of archaeology would allow us to answer Jeremy Sabloff’s question: To what is archaeology pertinent? It is pertinent to perhaps the most important issue of all...educating young people.
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APPENDIX

Cathlapotle...catching time's secrets:

An Outreach Example
Cathlapotle...
catching time's secrets

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Cathlapotle...
catching time’s secrets

Jon Daehnke
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Jon Daehnke
May 2002
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November 5th, 1805. The Corps of Discovery, led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, neared the end of the westward leg of their historic voyage. As they headed downstream along the Columbia River, near the present day location of Ridgefield, Washington, they saw a thriving village along the river bank:

I observed on the Chanel which passes on the Stard Side of this Island a Short distance above its lower point is Situated a large village, the front of which occupies nearly 1/4 of a mile fronting the Chanel, and closely Connected, I counted 14 houses [NB: Quathlapotle nation] in front here the river widens to about 1 1/2 miles. Seven canoes of Indians came out from this large village to view and trade with us, they appeared orderly and well disposed,
This piece of pumice, found at Cathlapotle, had been shaped and etched to look like a face.

This river cobble had been ground and shaped into the form of an animal. Producing such objects would have taken a fair amount of time, and it’s likely this object was considered a valuable to its owner.

they accompanied us a few miles and they returned back. (Moulton, vol. 6, p. 23)

This “large village” was, in fact, one of the largest on the Columbia River. Lewis and Clark estimated that it was the home to as many as 900 people. They were the Cathlapotle People, one of a larger group known as the Chinook. There is some evidence to suggest that the village was actually called Nahpooitle by the people who lived there. But through inaccuracy and the intervening years of history, this village has come to be known as “Cathlapotle.”

Cathlapotle was a popular trading site and an influential Chinook town. Long before Lewis and Clark observed the plankhouses of Cathlapotle in 1805, the residents of this village actively traded goods between the Pacific coast and the interior plateau. The Columbia River served as a highway of exchange, and the people of Cathlapotle took advantage of their location along the river’s banks. They traded goods such as canoes, eulachon oil and wapato with other Native American groups throughout the greater northwest. Contact with Europeans, which occurred as early as 1792, brought a new set of trading partners and goods.

Unfortunately, over time new settlers and new diseases took a toll on the village of Cathlapotle. Chinook villages all along the Columbia River and on the coast were devastated by smallpox, malaria and measles. Within years the Chinook population, which had been in the tens of thousands, dwindled to perhaps less than a thousand. The village of Cathlapotle was not immune to this onslaught and by the mid 1800’s
Cathlapotle, a village that had existed for hundreds of years, was abandoned.

Although Cathlapotle had been abandoned, the memory of it had not. As early as 1948 archaeologists had reidentified the general location of the village site. Archaeologists had been assisted in their search by William Carty, whose family had acquired the land in the 1840s and who was aware of the location of Cathlapotle. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired the land in the 1960s and today the land upon which Cathlapotle stood is now located on the Carty Unit at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge near Ridgefield, Washington.
But while the general location of Cathlapotle had been known for some time, there had been disagreements for decades as to its exact location. Then, in 1991, archaeologists from Portland State University, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Chinook Tribe, instituted a project to locate the exact location of this historic site. Through survey, excavation, and the help of William Carty’s son James, archaeologists rediscovered Cathlapotle. The area that was once a thriving village of 14 plankhouses and nearly a thousand people was now heavily forested, inhabited by dense pockets of stinging nettles and guarded by unforgiving mosquitoes. Where massive plankhouses once stood only slight depressions in the landscape remained, meager evidence of their past existence. But the meagerness of the evidence was only superficial. Below a thick layer of vegetation and leaves the story of a people was written in the soil.

Since 1991 archaeologists have been working to uncover the story of Cathlapotle. Cathlapotle is a significant archaeological site. The Chinook played an integral role in the history of the Northwest, but unfortunately few Chinook town sites are left on the Columbia River. Four hundred years ago Chinook villages lined the Columbia River from the Dalles to the coast. A voyage along the river at night would have been lit by thousands of fires burning brightly in villages along the banks. But since that time most archaeological evidence for these villages has been destroyed through erosion, development, and looting. The deep deposits at Cathlapotle, however, contain a rich record of a people who have long made the river their home. Using trowel, screen, oral history and written word, archaeologists are piecing together the story of this important site. Excavation has uncovered the foundations of cedar plankhouses and artifacts used for daily living. Ongoing research focuses on how the Chinook people who lived at Cathlapotle interacted with their environment, how they organized their society, and how they responded to contact with other peoples.

This booklet is designed to share with you the story of Cathlapotle. Actually, this booklet contains two separate, yet connected, stories. One story relays the rich history of Cathlapotle. It describes what the
village looked like, the life-style of the Chinook who lived there, and the environment that they called their home. The other story, contained in side-bars throughout the chapters, describes the story of archaeology. It is the story of the methods and clues that archaeologists are using to learn about this important historical site.

**How did archaeologists rediscover Cathlapotle?**

Some archaeological sites are easy to locate. For instance, the Great Pyramids are difficult to overlook. But usually the locations of archaeological sites are much more concealed. This is especially true in areas like the Northwest, where heavy vegetation hides the landscape and the damp climate causes materials like wood and cloth to rot. The clues that would show where people once lived are often either covered or destroyed.

This doesn't mean, however, that archaeological sites are only found if they are obvious or by chance. Clues still exist, even if it takes some work to uncover them. For instance, archaeologists used a number of clues to help them discover the location of Cathlapotle. First, they had historical accounts of the general location of the village, including maps charted during the Lewis and Clark expedition. They also used information given to them by James Carty, whose family owned the land before it was sold to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and who was intimately familiar with the landscape. Additional clues were uncovered through survey of the area. During survey archaeologists observed long oval depressions in the ground. They proposed that these might be the imprints of Chinookan plankhouses. To test this proposal, they used augers to bore small holes into the ground. Evidence for past human occupation, such as stone flakes, projectile points and charred material from hearths, turned up in many of these auger holes, suggesting to archaeologists that they were, indeed, on top of the remains of Chinookan plankhouses.

Interestingly, some previous archaeological accounts had placed the location of Cathlapotle more than a mile up river and/or right on the water’s edge. In fact, based on these earlier assumptions the archaeologists who eventually located the site first tested a different set of depressions that were much nearer the water. They were disappointed to discover, however, that these were natural swales in the landscape and not evidence for plankhouses at all. But they continued their search and through the use of multiple pieces of evidence, observation, and testing, the location of this important site was eventually uncovered.

This map of the Portland area comes from the Lewis and Clark expedition. North is pointing toward the bottom of the page. Clark has noted Cathlapote (Quathlalpote Nation) just below the North arrow. The “Multnomah River” is today’s Willamette River (Map by William Clark, 1806, Missouri Historical Society Archives).

\[5\]
Cathlapotle was surrounded by nature. Runs of salmon swam in the nearby rivers and streams, elk and deer roamed in the forested uplands, and useful plants covered the landscape. The people of Cathlapotle were well aware of the natural resources around them. To make a living they not only gathered these resources, but also actively managed the landscape in an effort to enhance them.

The Cathlapotles chose an excellent setting for their town. Located in what is now the Carty Unit on the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, the village sat at the confluence of three rivers: the Lake, the Lewis, and the Columbia. This location offered a vantage point from which they could gather the resources of all three rivers. Of these three the Columbia was the most important. The Chinook called the Columbia “Yakaitl-Wimakl” and have made it their home for
A large “mule-eared” knife from Cathlapotle. The knife was continually re-sharpened by taking small flakes from its edges. Knives like these would continue to be used until they were too small to be effectively re-sharpened.

The river not only provided fish from its depths and wildlife from its wetlands, but it served as a highway for transportation and trade as well. Cathlapotle, strategically located between peoples of the coast and the interior, served as an influential trading center. And while the river occasionally flooded, the people of Cathlapotle placed their town on a ridge that stands a few feet above annual flood levels, thereby minimizing the risks of flood damage.

The people of Cathlapotle were hunters, fishers, and gatherers. Archaeologists have found evidence for the use of a wide variety of plants, fish, and game at Cathlapotle. Salmon, of course, were one of the most important resources. The first run of salmon began in the spring, with runs continuing through the summer and into the fall. To the Chinook salmon meant life. Salmon were highly venerated and the first salmon catch of the year was the focus of important ceremonies.

Salmon were caught using a variety of methods. Nets, fishing weirs, spears, harpoons, and hook and line were all employed to catch the spawning salmon. During excavation at Cathlapotle archaeologists discovered evidence for some of these fishing techniques. Numerous stone weights, which would have held nettle fiber fishing nets in place, were recovered from the site. A pair of bone harpoon valves, lying next to each other, were also found. Once caught, salmon could be eaten fresh, smoked and dried on smoking racks or in the rafters of houses, or pounded into cakes in order to be stored for winter use.
While salmon were clearly an important resource for the people of Cathlapotle, the value of other fish should not be overlooked. Zooarchaeologists (archaeologists that study animal remains from archaeological sites) have recovered the bones of sturgeon, eulachon (smelt), trout, minnows, suckers and stickleback from the soils of Cathlapotle. In fact, Dr. Virginia Butler, a zooarchaeologist at Portland State University, has stated that basically every type of fish available in the Columbia River has been found during excavation at Cathlapotle.
Over 1000 projectile points were found during excavation at Cathlapotle. The many different types of points were made from a variety of stone, including chert and obsidian.

A large perforated stone net weight. Weights were tied to nets to hold them vertically below the water’s surface.

Fish were not the only resource used by the people of Cathlapotle. Ducks, geese and numerous other waterfowl, still so prevalent at the refuge today, thrived in the wetland environment around the village. The bones of a wide variety of terrestrial animals -- such as beaver, muskrat, raccoon, mink, bear and cougar -- have also been located at the site. Archaeologists have even found the remains of harbor seals. While harbor seals no longer venture this far upriver, Lewis and Clark did note their presence upriver in the early 1800s. The presence of these remains at Cathlapotle helps to confirm Lewis and Clark’s account.

The two terrestrial animals that were most heavily utilized at Cathlapotle were deer and elk. Their remains at the site outnumber all other non-fish animals. Elk, in particular, served as a one-stop shopping market. The meat was consumed, foot bones were shaped into chisels and wedges for woodworking, antlers were crafted into fish hooks, barbs and needles, glue came from the hooves, and sinew bound projectile points to shafts. The thick hides were used to make robes and even a type of armor, called a clamons. Clamons were purportedly strong enough to stop a musket ball, and were therefore an important item of trade, especially after contact with Europeans.

Animals were primarily taken through the use of the bow and arrow. A number of arrow points, made first of chipped stone and later of metal, are contained in the deposits at the site. Wood for arrow shafts and bows has long since deteriorated, but we know from historical accounts that bows were often made of white cedar and were about 21/2 feet long. The bow string was made from elk sinew and was held in place by glue made from sturgeon. Arrow shafts were often designed to float, so that errant shots at waterfowl would float back to the surface where they could be recovered and reused. Pit traps and deadfall traps were also employed to capture animals.

The lush vegetation surrounding Cathlapotle provided a garden of useful plants. Although plant material decays rapidly, microscopic pieces of plants are sometimes preserved in the soil, especially if they have been charred during processing. These particles of charred plants can be sorted from other material through a process called flotation. Soil samples from the site are placed in water. Lighter plant materials float to the top while heavier materials sink. Using this flotation process archaeobotanists -- archaeologists who study plant remains from archaeological sites -- have recovered a wide range of plant materials from Cathlapotle. Pieces of camas, salmonberry, blackberry, salal berry, blue berry, oregon grapes and acorns were all used as resources at Cathlapotle.
Nearly all plants had more than one use. A good example is the stinging nettle. While students excavating at Cathlapotle viewed this painful plant as a nuisance second only to swarming mosquitoes, the people of Cathlapotle viewed it as a useful resource. Nettle fiber creates a strong and silky twine. The twine is used to make fishing nets, clothing and baskets. A yellow dye can be made from the roots. Tea brewed from nettle can help to alleviate cold symptoms and rubbing its leaves on the body supposedly reduces aches and pains. Many other plants also had medicinal properties. Thimbleberry was applied to burns to avoid scars. Salmonberry was the pepto-bismol of the Chinook world and was used to treat various intestinal disorders. Europeans who weren’t used to the richness of a salmon-heavy diet first learned to use salmonberry to treat diarrhea from the Chinook. Additionally, broth made from boiling salmonberry bark was used to clean infected wounds.

Probably the most important plant resource for the people of Cathlapotle was wapato. Wapato is a small wetland tuber that was a staple for both consumption and trade. Lewis and Clark found the taste of wapato quite agreeable, and give this description of the plant:

he invited us to a lodge in which he had Some part and gave us a roundish roots about the Size of a Small Irish potato which they roasted in the embers until they became Soft, This root they call Wap-pa-to which the Bulb of the Chinese cultivate in great quantities called the Sa-gi ti folia [NB: we believe it to be the same] or common arrow head -- it has an agreeable taste and answers verry well in place of bread. we purchased about 4 bushels of this root and divided it to our party (Moulton, vol. 6, p.17)

The plant was so abundant in the areas surrounding Cathlapotle that Lewis and Clark dubbed the area “Wapato Valley.” Urban development in the Portland metropolitan area has drastically reduced the range of this plant. Some stands of wapato, however, can still be found on the refuge.

After visiting Cathlapotle Lewis and Clark camped about a mile and a half upriver, in a meadow just west of what is now known as Carty Lake. Here they witnessed women from Cathlapotle gathering wapato from the lake:

encamped on a butifull grassy plac, where the natives make a portage of their Canoes and Wappato roots to and from a large pond a Short distance. in this pond the natives inform us they Collect great quantities of pappato, which the womin collect by getting into the water.
Wapato grows vigorously in the wetlands of the Portland Basin. Its tasty tuber can be roasted or pounded into a powder. It was a staple food and trade item for the people of Cathlapotle (drawing by John Ellis).

Sometimes to their necks holding by a Small canoe and with their feet loosen the wappato or bulb of the root from the bottom from the fibers, and it immediately rises to the top of the water, they Collect & throw them into the Canoe, those deep roots are the largest and best roots. (Moulton, vol. 7, p. 30)

Wapato was an extremely important trade item for the Cathlapotles:

they had also an abundance of sturgeon and wappetoe; the latter they take in great quantities from the neighbouring bonds, which are numerous and extensive in the river bottoms and islands. the wappetoe furnishes the principal article of traffic with these people which they dispose of to the nations below in exchange for beads cloth and various articles. the natives of the Sea coast and lower part of the river will dispose of their most valuable articles to obtain this root. (Moulton, vol. 7, pp. 27-28)

Oddly, despite the importance of wapato for both trade and consumption, no remains of wapato have been located at the site. This is one of the mysteries of Cathlapotle that archaeologists are trying to unravel. It could be that during the cooking process wapato is completely broken down, and therefore, leaves no remains. Or it could be that wapato is there but archaeologists just haven’t found it yet. Either way, the lack of this most important of plants is an intriguing puzzle.

Archaeologists have been a bit surprised by other findings from Cathlapotle. For instance, archaeologists knew that the people of Cathlapotle used a wide variety of resources from their surroundings. They were a bit surprised, however, at just how many types of plants and animals were utilized. Basically, if a resource was in the environment, the people of Cathlapotle found a way to use it. Archaeologists were also shocked by the size of some of the recovered plants and animals. For instance, elk bones at Cathlapotle come from elk that were much larger than any living in the area today. The same also holds true for acorns. Some archaeologists believe this is due, at least in part, to active management by the Cathlapotles. We know that some native groups intentionally burned forests to create better habitat for such things as oak, deer,
and elk. If this was happening at Cathlapotle it would help to explain the large size of these specimens.

The people of Cathlapotle were intimately tied to their natural surroundings. They had a connection with and knowledge of the surrounding natural world that surpasses what we have today. Part of the importance of the archaeological work at Cathlapotle is to try and learn a little bit of what the Cathlapotles may have understood about the world around them. In this way maybe the people of the past can teach the people of the present.

Archaeological excavation is destruction. Every time an archaeologist removes a shovel full of soil from the ground he removes a small part of history that can never be restored. This is an argument against archaeological excavation with caution. So it is not surprising that archaeologists are very protective of the sites they work on. For instance, we know from written accounts that salmon and sturgeon were extremely important resources for the people at Cathlapotle. But less is said about other types of fish. That's why zooarchaeologists were so surprised when they sifted through some of the dirt from Cathlapotle. The dirt contained thousands of bone fragments from the tiny threespined stickleback. In fact, in one 10 liter sample of soil (an amount less than 1 gallon of milk) more than 400 individual sticklebacks were identified. The soil also contained high numbers of minnows and large suckers. The use of these three types of fish could not be mentioned in the written accounts. Yet here they are, in tremendous numbers, in the houses at Cathlapotle. Zooarchaeologists still aren't exactly sure how the people of Cathlapotle used these fish, but they do know that a lot of them were there!

Written accounts also tell us that elk were very important to the people at Cathlapotle. Elk were used for everything from food, to armor, to tools. But what the written accounts don't tell us is that these elk were huge! The elk bones that come from Cathlapotle are so much larger than bones from any elk in the area today. Zooarchaeologists don't know if these elk were so large because they are a different type of elk than the ones living in the area today, or if it is because they lived in a more abundant environment which allowed them to grow to their maximum size. Regardless of the reason, this is a detail that the written accounts don't provide.

When written records about an important site are available they can serve as useful tools for understanding history. But written accounts are, at best, incomplete, and often inaccurate. Archaeology provides a different and independent set of tools which can provide a more complex and complete picture of the past.

Hundreds of tiny stickleback bones were found in the soils of Cathlapotle. Archaeologists were not expecting to find this and still are not sure how the people of Cathlapotle used these tiny fish.
It was once believed that only societies who practiced agriculture could achieve high levels of prosperity and complexity. Only farming could provide the necessary stability and resources that a populous society needed. The Chinooks are proof that this belief is wrong. The people of Cathlapotle, who made their living by trading, hunting, fishing and gathering, lived in a wealthy society with complex social and political systems and a rich artistic tradition.

The Chinook nation, which stretched from the Pacific coast to the Dalles, was united more by similarity in language and culture than by any formal ties. The Chinook were divided into a number of smaller groupings, usually centered around a village, of which Cathlapotle was one. These smaller units operated as individual actors, both in terms of trade and in terms of politics. The economic
strength and political influence of a group or village was primarily determined by its size and the wealth and influence of its chief.

Prior to contact with Euro-Americans the area now known as the Portland basin contained not only some of the highest population densities in North America, but some of the highest in the world at the time. The wealth of Chinookan society helped foster and support these high population levels. Living in an abundant environment, surrounded by salmon, elk and deer, certainly contributed to their wealth. They primarily acquired their wealth, however, through trade.

Archaeologists are meticulous about keeping track of things. Archaeologists dig square holes recording the context of artifacts, because it is the easiest way to record the location of an artifact in three dimensions. Why is context so important? As Kerif Flannery once said, archaeologists are interested in two main questions: First, is the artifact located near, or associated with, informants in the course of their research? For instance, is a projectile point lying directly next to some elk bones, or was it lying with a lot of other projectile points in a storage pit? Second, is the artifact located above or below other artifacts? Usually, layers of the earth are like cake layers. The lower layers were put down first with the upper layers being more recent. This means that usually the artifacts found in upper layers are more recent than the ones in lower layers (archaeologists call this the law of superposition). The answer to these two questions gives the location of an artifact both in space (the horizontal plane, i.e. right or left of other artifacts), and time (the vertical plane, i.e. above or below). The artifact's location, or provenience, gives archaeologists no context. Context is extremely important because it is through context that archaeologists can begin to reconstruct the activities of a site over time. Also, archaeologists can use the context of an artifact to determine whether different activities were going on at different locations during the same time (for an example of the information and clues that context can give archaeologists about the lives of past people see the section on social ranking on p. 19). Square holes work fantastic for recording context because they give this important, so that the context of artifacts can be surfaces, both horizontally and vertically, be precisely reconstructed even after the excavation is complete.
Well before Europeans ever arrived on the shores of North America, the Chinook were part of an established large-scale trade network that stretched between Canada, California and into the plains and interior plateau. The Chinook controlled the banks of the Columbia River from the coast to the Dalles. This was very advantageous, as it allowed them to serve as the primary middlemen in trade between the coastal and interior groups. The arrival of Europeans brought additional goods to trade, and only strengthened Chinook control of the river.

While both men and women participated in the trade network, the practice was usually reserved for the elite members of society. Chinook society was strictly divided among class lines. There were two primary social classes: those who were free and those who were slaves. Free members of society were further divided into elites and commoners. The elite class consisted of few members, most of whom were relatives of the chief, traders, or warriors. The majority of Chinook society were commoners, who, while free, were still assigned tasks that the elites would have felt beneath them to do. All free families were ranked in relationship to other free families. Typically, one was born into elite status, although occasionally a commoner could move up the social scale through hard work or marriage.

Although free commoners held lower status than the chief, they were still free to ignore him if they wished. Chinookan chiefs did not have the power of life or death over free members of the society (although they did have this power over their own slaves). The source of the chief’s power came from the productivity and wealth of his household and his ability to persuade others. Some village chiefs were able to secure tremendous influence, both in their village and throughout the region.

Slaves were the lowest class of Chinook society and were owned by both elites and commoners. Slaves were sometimes acquired during raids on distant non-Chinook villages, decreasing the chance that a relative would be captured. Women and children were the ones most often captured. The Chinook, however, tended to gain their wealth through trade, not war. And while wars with other groups did occur, most slaves were bought or sold.
through trade networks. Slaves could also be won or lost through gambling, used as payment for a debt, or serve as currency to purchase goods. Occasionally, a free member of Chinook society would become a slave due to inability to repay debts, or by marrying a slave. Slaves often had the opportunity to buy their freedom at a later time, although some were only enslaved for specified periods of time. Treatment of
slaves varied, determined more by the temperament of the owner than by any social customs.

Rank and class distinctions were very important, strictly enforced and communicated in a number of ways. For instance, slaves and free people were segregated within the house, living at opposite ends within separate compartments. One of the most dramatic outward signs of status difference, however, came from the practice of cranial deformation. Lewis and Clark noted this during their voyage:

*the most remarkable trait in their phystognomy is the peculiar flatness and width of the forehead which they artificially obtain by compressing the head between two boards while in a state of infancy and from which it never afterwards perfectly recovers (Moulton, Vol. 6, p. 433).*

Cranial deformation was widely practiced among Indians of the Northwest, although the exact form it took varied from group to group. Among the Chinook, head flattening was a marker of free status, as slaves were not allowed to flatten the heads of their children. The process began in infancy and took nearly a year to complete. Paul Kane, who travelled the Columbia River in 1846-1847, gives this excellent description:

*Infants are strapped to a piece of board covered with moss or loose fibers of cedar bark, and in order to flatten the head they place a pad on the infant’s forehead, on the top of which is laid a piece of smooth bark, bound by a leather band passing through holes in the board on either side, and kept tightly pressed across the front of the head, a sort of pillow of grass or cedar fibres being placed under the back of the neck to support it. This process commences with the birth of the infant, and is continued for a period from eight to twelve months. (From the Journals of Paul Kane, 1846-1847, p. 180)*

As a result, free members of Chinook society had flat sloping foreheads, a trait quickly recognizable to any visitor and an outward manifestation of social rank.

The Chinook also demonstrated their wealth through their material goods. They worked stone, shell, bone and antler to create objects that were both beautiful and useful. Cedar was probably the most important material to the Chinook, as they used it to make everything from baskets, to boxes, to bowls. Cedar was used to create what is probably the best example of the Chinook combination of beauty and functionality...
An elaborate canoe burial, as sketched by George Gibbs. The Chinook were expert wood-carvers and their canoes were often exquisitely carved (drawing copied from Ruby and Brown, 1976).

Canoes and paddles of the Columbia River, as painted by Paul Kane. The Chinook crafted canoes of various designs and sizes, all suited for specific purposes.

canoes. Lewis and Clark first noted the beauty of Chinook canoes at the Dalles:

I observed on the beach near the Indian Lodges two Canoes but full of different Shape & Size to what we had Seen above wide in the middle and tapering to each end, on the bow curious figures were Cut in the wood...these Canoes are neeter made than any I have ever Seen and Calculated to ride the waves, and carry emence burthens. (Moulton, Vol. 5, p. 328)

The Chinook had a variety of canoes. Dr. Kenneth Ames has suggested that the Chinook used different canoes in the same ways we use different cars...some canoes were like commuter vehicles, some served as family vehicles, and some were for cargo transport. Regardless of the purpose, Chinook canoes were expertly crafted and often ornately decorated.

The bow and stern, at least on the larger canoes, carried magnificent carvings of animals and figures. The Chinook were excellent canoeists, as attested to by Lewis and Clark:

the natives inhabiting the lower portion of the Columbia River make their canoes remarkably neat light and well adapted for riding high waves. I have seen the natives near the coast riding waves in these canoes with safety and apparently without concern where I should have thought it impossible for any vessel of the same size to lived a minute...some of the large canoes are upwards of 50 feet long and will carry from 8 to 10 thousand lbs. or from 20 to thirty persons. (Moultion, Vol. 6, pp. 262-263)

Patrick Gass, one of the members of Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery, gave his highest compliment when he suggested that the Chinook should get credit for making the finest canoes, both in beauty...
and use, perhaps in the world, both as to service and beauty. Lewis and Clark were so fascinated by Chinook canoes, and so upset that they were unable to attain one, that they ended up stealing one (although they rationalized that it was merely payment for six elk that they claimed the Chinook had stolen).

The skills of Chinook artists and craftsmen were demonstrated in other ways as well. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the houses at Cathlapotle were elaborately ornamented and carved. Beautiful bowls and ladles shaped from wood and bone, and baskets woven from cedar bark, filled the inside of houses. One of the more interesting items made by the Chinook were their swords. Lewis and Clark give this description of the swords during their visit to Cathlapotle:

*I saw in Several houses of the Cath la poh te Village large Symeters of Iron from 3 to 4 feet long which hangs by the heads of their beads; the blade of this weapon is thickest in the Center tho' this even there, all its edges are Sharp and its greatest width which is about 9 inches from the point, is about 4 inches...this is a formable weapon.* (Moulton, Vol. 7, p. 36)

The people of Cathlapotle made no effort to hide their wealth. Their ornately carved plankhouses, their formidable swords, and their expertly crafted canoes were all outward symbols of an affluent society, and a reminder to visitors that it was they who controlled this part of the river.

Chinook carved bowl (left) and ladle (below). The bowl and ladle pictured were carved from solid pieces of wood. Such utensils, however, were also made from sheep horns (photos copied from Ruby and Brown, 1976).

The Chinook tribal logo, created by Chinook artist Tony Johnson, demonstrates the beautiful Chinookan art style.
In most societies the house is the center of life. It is the area where eating, sleeping, socializing and, at times, work takes place. It was no different for the people of Cathlapotle. For them, and the Chinook in general, houses were much more than simply structures made out of wood. They were the center of the community and a reflection of the organization of society.

Lewis and Clark noted 14 houses at Cathlapotle stretching along a 1/4 mile of the river. Of these at least six have been located by archaeologists. The wood that built these houses has long since disappeared and shallow oval depressions in the ground provide the only surface evidence for their past presence. Even this evidence is difficult to see because cottonwood trees and dense patches of stinging nettle now obscure the surface. But below the ground there...
is ample evidence for the past. Soil stains show the locations of walls and corner posts, and pockets of ash, heated rock, and bone give signs of fireplaces that served as gathering places and kitchens.

What would Lewis and Clark have seen as they paddled past Cathlapotle? The primary type of house for the Chinook, and for most other coastal Northwest people as well, was the cedar plankhouse. These structures were extremely sturdy and provided excellent shelter from the damp and dreary climate of the Northwest. Plankhouses were generally rectangular in shape and their size varied greatly. Some were as small as 14 feet wide by 20 feet long, while others reached more than 40 feet in width and 200 feet in length. The size of the structure was determined primarily by the wealth and influence of the owner.

As noted earlier, Chinook society was highly stratified. Society was divided into free individuals and slaves and rigid distinctions existed between these groups. Free people were also ranked. As a result, some free families held more power and wealth than others. The organization of the plankhouse reflected and reinforced these divisions. Carved walls and painted hanging mats separated plankhouses into compartments. A number of families resided within each house, but probably two families lived within each compartment. As you entered the house, and moved through the compartments toward the back end, status of families increased. Therefore, the end of the house nearest the door was the low-status end, containing either the lowest ranked family of the house or the slaves owned by the house chief. The highest status family within the house lived as farthest from the entrance. Houses were aligned in rows running parallel to the river. The highest ranked house was usually in the rear row and was the largest house in the village.

We are fortunate to have a number of first hand accounts of Chinook plankhouse construction. One of the best is offered by Gabriel Franchère, a Canadian fur trader who lived on the Columbia River from 1810 to 1814:
The native houses, built of cedar, are remarkable for their form and, above all, for their size. They are nearly a hundred feet long and thirty to forty feet wide. They are constructed in the following manner: The Indians sink some posts into the earth about seven or eight feet apart, between which they set some planks that they tie at the top with strong cords. At each end of the building they place a pole about fifteen to twenty feet in height. These have notches at the top to hold the ridge pole. The rafters, attached by two, are placed below the ridge pole and hang down across the edges of the planks which, in turn, rise to
about five feet from the ground. The roof is made of planks laid across, and attached to, the rafters. Fires are made in the middle of the house and smoke escapes through a hole in the roof. Several families, separated from each other by partitions, live in one of these large buildings. The doors, raised well above ground level, are oval and very small. (From the journal of Gabriel Franchère, 1810-1814, p. 114)

Plankhouse styles varied throughout the Northwest. Chinook style plankhouses had gabled roofs with small oval doors, often only at one end. The roof was made from thin split cedar planks laid either vertically or horizontally, and was occasionally covered with cedar bark. As Franchère describes, the roof was supported by a central beam, or ridge pole, that ran the entire length of the house and sometimes extended beyond. The ridge pole was supported at each end of the house by large posts.

Franchère was impressed by the size of these Chinookan structures, but at least two of the houses at Cathlapotle were larger than those he described. House 1, the house furthest to the north and east, was roughly 200 feet long and more than 40 feet wide. House 2, just to the south of house 1, was more than 150 feet long and nearly 40 feet wide.

The interior of the houses at Cathlapotle primarily consisted of three areas. The central area contained a row of hearths running down the middle of the house. There may have been as many as five or six hearths in some of the larger houses. The hearths were used for cooking, warmth and light. The hearth was also a community center. People gathered around them to eat, socialize and tell stories, especially during the long, dark and rainy winters. Hearths were placed about a foot below floor level and were contained within framed "hearth boxes," which served to keep the fire from spreading to other areas of the house. Each hearth was likely shared by two families. A second area of the house was the bench. This area went around the sides of the house. Platforms (for sleeping and other activities) were built in this area and ran along at least two sides of the house. Sometimes the platforms were vertically doubled, like bunk beds. A third area was the cellar. Within the cellar were storage pits.
holding stockpiles of food and other necessary items, such as stone for making tools. Personal items were also sometimes stored in this area. Archaeologists have found evidence that the storage pits at Cathlapotle were located under the sleeping platforms. Chinook plankhouse at other locations, however, had cellars that ran in the area between the bench and the hearths. Floors were often dirt (sometimes covered with cedar mats) or, when the cellars ran between the hearths and the bench, probably planked.
A stone maul from Cathlapotle.

Mauls were often used with chisels to work wood and split planks. The fact that many mauls are sculpted and decorated suggests that they were considered important and valuable possessions (drawing from "Cedar," by Hilary Stewart).

Lewis and Clark give an eyewitness account of the interior of the houses at Cathlapotle:

the floors of most of their houses are on a level with the surface of the earth tho' some of them are sunk two or 3 feet beneath. the internal arrangement of their houses is the same with those of the nations below. they are also fond of sculpture. various figures are carved and painted on the peices which support the center of the roof, about their doors and heads. they had large quantities of dried Anchovies strung on small sticks by the gills and others which had been first dried in this manner, were now arranged in large sheets with strings of bark and hung suspended by poles in the roofs of their houses; they had also an abundance of sturgeon and wappetoe. (Moulton, Vol. 7, p. 27)

As Lewis and Clark note, houses served as processing centers for food. The "anchovies" hanging from the roof were actually smelt (also known as eulachon). Salmon, smoked and dried by the heat and smoke coming from the hearth, would also hang from the rafters along side the smelt.

Art adorned most Chinook plankhouses. The Chinook have a fantastically rich artistic tradition. As Lewis and Clark mention, the houses at Cathlapotle were full of sculptures and painted figures. Humanlike faces were painted on the outside of some of the houses, often with the doorway serving as the mouth of the figure. While the Chinoook did not make totem poles, like some groups on the northern northwest coast, they were excellent wood carvers. The support posts and beams of the house were often elaborately carved into beautiful shapes of humans, animals, and geometric designs.

Plankhouse construction requires a considerable amount of labor and material. The first step in the process was preparing the foundation for the house. As Lewis and Clark note, and as archaeologists have found as well, some of the houses at Cathlapotle were sunk about three feet underground. This means that nearly 900 cubic yards of soil were removed to prepare the foundation for House I at Cathlapotle. This is equivalent to roughly 125 dump trucks full of dirt!

The amount of lumber invested in these houses is amazing. Dr. Kenneth Ames, a professor at Portland State University and the principal investigator of the Cathlapotle site, has estimated the amount of wood that would have been necessary for building a large plankhouse. For a plankhouse 45 feet by 115 the amount of necessary lumber was probably at least 40,000 board feet (a board foot is 1 inch by 12 inches by 12 inches). In comparison, a modern three-bedroom American house uses, on average, somewhere between 10,000 and 12,000 board feet of lumber. Houses 1 and 2 at Cathlapotle are even larger than this. Plus,
these houses may have stood for nearly 400 years. This means that planks and posts would have occasionally needed repair and replacement. Dr. Ames has estimated that a large plankhouse may have required between 500,000 to a 1,000,000 board foot of lumber over a 400 year period.

Cathlapotle, at the confluence of three rivers, is situated in an area where floods are always a potential threat. When floods occurred, and rising waters threatened the town, the people of Cathlapotle may have removed the planks from the house. These would have then been strapped to canoes and floated on the river until the waters receded. Once the flood was no longer a threat the people would return and quickly rebuild their houses.

The Chinook didn't necessarily live in large plankhouses year around. During the summer temporary camps were often established in order to be nearer to elk, deer, berries and salmon runs in upland streams and creeks. Shelters at summer camps were small movable enclosures made from lashed together poles. These poles were then covered with rush mats. In some Chinook villages the walls and roofs were removed from plankhouses, leaving only the permanent frame standing. The planks were then stored in swamps or water in order to preserve them and drown any vermin that may have infested the wood. It is likely, however, that the houses at Cathlapotle were occupied, at least by some members of the town, year around.

The town of Cathlapotle existed long before Europeans ever sailed the waters of the Columbia. Canoes made at Cathlapotle cruised the river by at least 1500 A.D. and the Chinooks had lived along its banks for thousands of years prior. Eventually, however, visitors from foreign lands arrived. The Chinook called these visitors “Suyapee,” or upside-down face because of their beards. The arrival of these visitors altered and upset a way of life that had existed for generations.

A certain mythology has grown around the idea that Lewis and Clark were the first non-indians to see the west coast. This is far from true. Hwui Shan, a buddhist monk from China, may have entered the mouth of the Columbia in the 5th century A.D., but this cannot be confirmed. What can be confirmed is that Europeans had entered
the mouth of the Columbia by the late 1700s and reached Cathlapotle by 1792, years before Lewis and Clark arrived. The first evidence of foreign contact with Cathlapotle comes from the travels of Lt. William Broughton. Broughton, working for Captain George Vancouver, sailed the Chatham into the mouth of the Columbia River in 1792. He moored the Chatham near the present day location of Knappton, Washington, and continued upriver in a smaller vessel. On October 28, 1792, Broughton reached the northern end of Sauvie Island, a place he called Point Warrior; in consequence of being there surrounded by twenty three canoes carrying from three to twelve persons each, all attired in their war garments and in every other respect prepared for combat. On these strangers discoursing with the friendly Indians that attended our party, they soon took off their war dress, and with great civility disposed of their arms and other articles for such valuables as we presented to them, but would other neither part with their copper swords nor a kind of battle axe made of iron. (Broughton, in Vancouver, p. 21)

The canoes had come from a village just upriver:

On the banks of Rushleigh's River was seen a very large Indian village and such of the strangers as seemed to belong to it strongly solicited the party to proceed thither; and to enforce their request, very unequivocally represented that if the party persisted in going to the southward they would have their heads cut off. (Broughton in Vancouver, p. 22)

"Rushleigh's River" was Lake river and the village that he refers to is Cathlapotle.

The people of Cathlapotle were savvy traders. For years they had been trading goods between the coast and the interior and the arrival of European visitors simply provided new opportunities. Trade with the newcomers quickly flourished, and by the time Lewis and Clark reached Cathlapotle evidence for trade between Europeans and the Chinook was abundant. In fact, on the day that Lewis and Clark visited Cathlapotle they noted a Chinook wearing a European sailor's coat and hat. Therefore, the arrival of Lewis and Clark would not have awed the people of Cathlapotle.
They simply would have been curious why these strangers were voyaging down the Columbia from the wrong direction.

Cathlapotle was in a prime location to serve as a trading center. The waters of the Columbia, Lake and Lewis rivers were easily accessible. Furthermore, a fur trading trail that began at nearby Fort Vancouver ran right next to the village. Archaeologists have found abundant evidence that trade with Euro-Americans was an important activity at Cathlapotle. During excavation a number of glass trade beads were recovered from the soil. Glass beads were used as trade items from the time of first contact to the period dominated by the fur trade. Lewis and Clark carried glass beads, as did employees of the Russian American Fur Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company. Beads, because they were made in only a few places and during specific periods of time, can provide archaeologists important clues about a site (see ... What can glass beads tell us about time?

Archaeologists have found over 1000 historic trade beads at Cathlapotle, most of which are made of glass. Glass beads were used as items of trade from the time of the first contact between the Chinook and Europeans in the 1700s through the period dominated by the fur trade. Trade beads were carried by Captain Cook and by Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery. Most individuals working for the trade companies carried them as well.

Historic trade beads are extremely important to archaeologists studying Cathlapotle because they can help to determine when the site was in use. Beads are very time sensitive. Glass beads were produced in only a handful of places, with most beads being produced in Venice or Holland (although certain styles were also produced in China). Depending on when they were made, beads were of different styles and produced by different methods. Through both library research and by studying the collection of beads from nearby Ft. Vancouver, archaeologists learned that some of the beads found at Cathlapotle were made as early as the 1600s. A large number of the beads, however, were made after 1840. This can’t tell us how early Cathlapotle was in use. For instance, just because a bead was produced in 1640 doesn’t mean that it showed up at Cathlapotle right away. It can tell us, however, how long the site continued to be used. Two of the beads were of a style not produced until after 1840. This means that the site was in use in some way into the 1860s.

Archaeologists also discovered that the beads show up abruptly and only in the upper levels of the site. This would be expected given that Usually, the beads in upper levels of archaeological sites have been deposited more recently than the levels below, and that they contain more recent artifacts (archaeologists call this the principle of superposition). The appearance of glass trade beads also gives archaeologists a good marker for separating those levels of the site that existed prior to contact with Europeans, and those levels that existed after contact. This is important, however, through comparing the differences between the two, archaeologists can look for clues as to how the lives of the Chinook were affected by contact with Europeans.

Archaeologists also discovered that the beads were of a style not produced until after 1840. This means that the site was in use in some way into the 1860s.
Phoenix buttons found at Cathlapotle. Additionally, the abrupt appearance of beads in the archaeological record also demonstrates just how quickly the people of Cathlapotle tapped into a worldwide economy.

Other artifacts also provide evidence of contact and trade with foreigners. Chinese coins, gun barrels, metal knives, historic ceramics, and metal projectile points have all been recovered from the upper layers of Cathlapotle. One trade item carries with it an interesting history. Phoenix buttons were originally designed to be part of the uniforms of Haitian soldiers serving under King Henri Christophe, who ruled Haiti from 1811-1820. The buttons had been ordered from New England merchants who were awaiting payment before shipping them out. Unfortunately, King Christophe committed suicide before payment was made, and the merchants were left with thousands of now useless buttons and coats. Eventually the coats were sold to traders and the buttons made their way into the Northwest during the 1820s and 1830s. A few of these buttons made it to Cathlapotle.

Unfortunately, buttons and beads were not the only thing the new visitors had carried with them. Smallpox, measles, malaria, influenza, and various other illnesses were brought to North America by Europeans. The Columbia River, which had served for so many years as a highway for trade, also served as a highway for disease. Smallpox may have reached the northwest as early as the 1500s, and well-documented epidemics occurred in 1775, 1801, 1836-1838, 1853 and 1862. One of the worse epidemics to hit the Columbia River began in the summer of 1830. This epidemic, most likely caused by malaria, raged for two years through the Portland Basin and the Willamette Valley. By the time it had run its course it had claimed over 90% of the native population. Whole villages were devastated by the outbreak, and it is likely that Cathlapotle suffered as well. In 1835 Meredith Gairdner, a doctor from the Hudson Bay Company, listed Cathlapotle as one of the few remaining Chinook villages. This raises the possibility that Cathlapotle was not as hard hit by the epidemic as other Chinook villages, or, at the very least, served as a refuge for survivors from other villages.

The epidemics didn’t stop. Further outbreaks, as well as displacement by new settlers, continued to take a toll on an already dwindling population. Cathlapotle was not immune to this onslaught. Paul Kane, a wandering artist who visited the area in 1846 to 1847, noted that by the time he arrived the village of Cathlapotle was “extinct.” The area, however, continued to be used into the 1850s by surviving native groups. A General Land Office map from 1853 notes an “Indian Lodge” on the southeastern bank of Gee Creek, in the general vicinity of Cathlapotle, and a few trade beads not made until the 1860s were
recovered from the site. But it is unknown whether the beads or the lodge were in any way connected to the former village or even the Chinook. By the 1870s an American family, the Cartys, owned the land where Cathlapotle once stood. Cathlapotle, once one of the largest villages on the Columbia River, was no more.

The arrival of Europeans and Americans to the Northwest brought new settlers and new trade. But it also brought devastating diseases for which the native populations had no defense. The number of Native American lives lost due to European introduced disease is staggering, and unmatched in any other era. Cathlapotle was one of the casualties. Over a relatively short period of time disease and displacement nearly resulted in the extinction of the Chinook people and culture. And for those that survived a way of life that had existed for generations was tragically and forever altered.

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terrible epidemics that swept through the Northwest in the 18th and 19th centuries nearly destroyed the Chinook and their way of life. In fact, it was falsely believed by many that the Chinook had actually become extinct.

The Rev. Stephen A. Meriwether, a Chinook who grew up in Washington, recalled this example from his grade school days:

*As a small boy going to school in Ilwaco, a fishing village nestled between the forest and the waters of the Columbia River, I was startled to learn that I was unique among my classmates -- I was extinct!* (Ruby and Brown, p. ix)

The Chinook, as Meriwether's existence points out, had not gone extinct. In part, this false belief was fueled by the fact that the
Chinook, unlike many other tribes, were never formally recognized by the United States Government. They had been part of a treaty negotiated at Tansey Point, just west of Astoria, in August of 1851. That treaty, for reasons that are still unclear, was never ratified by congress. After the Washington territory was created in 1853, treaty negotiations began anew. In February of 1855, a council of 350 Indians, representing the Chinook, the Upper and Lower Chehalis, Quinault, Satsop (Salish), and Cowlitz, met with new Washington governor, Isaac Stevens. Stevens planned to place all these groups on one reservation extending from Grey’s Harbor to Cape Flattery. This treaty, however, would have moved the Chinook north of their home lands and into territories of their historic enemies. They refused to sign. By the end of that year seven treaties had been signed with other tribes and most of western Washington had been ceded to the United States. The Chinook never formally ceded their lands.

The Chinook gradually dispersed throughout Oregon and Washington. Ultimately, a few moved to the Shoalwater and Quinault Reservations, but most stayed in their home lands or ended up in towns and cities throughout the Northwest. Today, there are over 2000 enrolled members of the Chinook tribe. Their main tribal office is located in Chinook.

While shovels, trowels and screens are an important part of any excavation, perhaps the most important tools are pencils and paper. Excavators need to keep meticulous records of the dig, mapping all located artifacts and features, as well as any changes in soil.
Washington, which also serves as a center for government and social gatherings. Still, the Chinook continue to fight for formal recognition. Kevin Gover, in one of his last acts as Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs in the Clinton Administration, officially recognized the Chinook early in January, 2001. Issues of tribal recognition are terribly complex, however, and since that time formal recognition of the Chinook has been appealed. As of the date of this writing, and after more than 20 years of struggle, the process continues and the Chinook have still not been granted tribal recognition. As the Lewis and Clark bicentennial approaches it is ironic that the people who gave these voyagers of the Columbia River so much assistance are not recognized by United States Government.

The focus of much of this booklet has been on the methods that archaeologists are using to uncover the secrets of Cathlapotle. Archaeologists, however, could not have done all of this work alone. They have been assisted along the way by various groups, and none more important than members of the Chinook Tribe. "The Chinook Tribe has been essential to the work that has been done at Cathlapotle. Chief Cliff Snyder, Tribal Chairman Gary Johnston, his son Tony Johnson, Charles Pulk (whose artwork graces this booklet), Steve Tollick, and numerous other tribal members have given their knowledge, time and efforts to keep the Cathlapotle project successfully moving forward. Early in the excavation a special day was set aside for members of the Chinook Tribe to visit the site. During the visit one of the tribal elders borrowed a wheel harrow from the excavation and used it as a drum as he sang traditional Chinook songs. Meanwhile, a young Chinook girl accompanied him with a deer hoof rattle (photo at right). As one tribal member commented, this may be the first time Chinook songs have been sung in this place for 150 years!" Another tribal member, the late Ed Nielsen, was so moved that he wrote a poem about his experience that day at Cathlapotle. It is included at the end of this chapter.

Artifacts from Cathlapotle have been carefully recorded, cataloged, washed and intensively scrutinized. At times the intensity of study can make us forget that the objects we hold and the features we scored were made and used by other living and breathing human beings. Some of the descendants of the people who made those artifacts continue to live in the area today. As archaeologist Brian Fagan has pointed out, "all too often, even archaeologists themselves will call such objects just "artifacts." We have forgotten they are the voices of the past, voices with an important message of respect to tell." Cathlapotle does not represent a static past. It represents a connection to people in the present, and it is through a partnership between the Chinook and archaeologists that we have been able to learn so much about this important site.
This is part of why archaeological research at Cathlapotle is so important. The soils of Cathlapotle hold a wealth of information about Chinook culture—how they lived, what they ate, how they interacted with the surrounding environment, how their lives were changed by the arrival of foreign visitors. Members of the Chinook Tribe have worked closely with archaeologists from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Portland State University from the beginning of the project. Information gathered by archaeologists at the site is combined with the stories and customs that have been passed down through generations in an effort to restore the important legacy of the Chinook. Research at Cathlapotle has reaffirmed the integral role that the Chinook played in the history of the Northwest, and members of the tribe hope that this is a positive step toward gaining federal recognition.

Formal excavations at Cathlapotle last occurred during the summer of 1996. But although the excavations have ended for now, the research continues. Excavation is only a small part of the archaeological process (see side-bar below). Thousands of artifacts have been recorded and analyzed in the lab, and a number of masters theses and doctoral...
dissertations on the site have either been completed or are in progress. Research on the site will continue well into the future, however, as there are still thousands of artifacts waiting to be analyzed and numerous questions that remain unanswered. And although there are no current plans for further excavation, the possibility of future excavations at the site continues as the soils still hold many secrets.

What do archaeologists hope to gain from their research at Cathlapotle? As previously noted, part of the importance of the research is the reconstruction of Chinook lifeways and a reaffirmation of their important legacy. But archaeologists are also interested in what the site can tell us about the past environment, especially in comparison to our environment today. For instance, Dr. R. Lee Lyman, a zooarchaeologist from the University of Missouri, is interested in the presence of harbor seal remains at Cathlapotle. Harbor seals no longer venture that far up the Columbia River, and Dr. Lyman is trying to determine if this is due to ecological changes caused by 20th century damming of the river. This issue is also being addressed by Dr. Virginia Butler, of Portland State University, who is studying fish remains from the site. Geological research at the site is attempting to answer questions about how the people of Cathlapotle adapted to recurring floods, and what possible influence volcanic eruptions may have had on the flow of the Columbia River, its tributaries, and the formation of the landform upon which the site sits.

Excavation can be an extremely enjoyable part of the archaeological process. But it can also be hard, backbreaking, and tedious work.
Not all of the efforts at Cathlapotle are purely research oriented. As mentioned in the first chapter, few Chinookan village sites are left along the Columbia River. Erosion, looting and development have damaged or completely destroyed most of them. Cathlapotle, as one of the few village sites remaining, is an extremely precious cultural resource. Furthermore, federal regulations require that important archaeological sites found on federal lands be protected from both destruction due to development and looting. Therefore, archaeological sites are not simply excavated and then forgotten. Continuing stewardship is necessary. Archaeologists, along with Chinook tribal members and staff at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, are developing plans for the long-term management of the site. This includes determining how to best protect this important historical site, while at the same time sharing with the public the fabulous wealth of information about the history of the Northwest that this site has given us. Plans include the development of a Discovery Center, located on refuge grounds, which would serve both as curation center for recovered artifacts and an interpretation center for the public.

Cathlapotle, which went from a center of trade activity to a center of archaeological activity, is again covered by dense vegetation and swarms of mosquitoes. Added to slight depressions in the ground left by Chinookan plankhouses are slight depressions left by archaeological pits and trenches. Cathlapotle contains in its soils the story of a great and prosperous people. It also contains the story of people who wish to learn its history and the valuable lessons it can teach. The soils of Cathlapotle hold many stories and secrets.
At Cathlapotle

by Ed Nielsen,
Chinook Poet.,
1995

Chinook poet Ed Nielsen visited the excavation site in July, 1995, and then captured his experience in this poem. It is a celebration of the discoveries the archaeologists at Cathlapotle have made about the culture of his people.

Brown, duty field
what secrets does
the ancient soil yield?
Ghosts superimposed
upon the living...
In shadows of trees
students of Archaeology
bring to present light
the past people’s living.
These are My People’s
lives buried in this
Sacred Land, Sacred Soil!
This is the Chinookan History
coming to a very different
Time’s sight
green tree limbed
shadow summered light
in the digs, ridges of
long extinct fires
soil shadows
layers of debris
we stand in this place
of past living
but life is here again
The Chinookan History
is once again
given back to life!

Maybe only tools
once held
but the silent whispers
as hands slice the air
what lies behind all?
The living and spirits
superimposed
time and space
studying soil,
sedate pace
soil on hands and face
rectangular space
The Past is real.
As real as the sweat on my brow
As real as the hard-packed
Earth’s surface against
sandaled feet
As real as the time limits
limited time to excavate,
uncover
discover the distant (past)
truths
quietly picking my way
through digs, stringed off
areas, wheelbarrows.
soil shifters, smeared notes,
shovels, buckets,
corners and squares
Memories catch time’s secrets
Humanity shares
care, attention to detail
scrutiny so scrupulous
The layers of time in the soil
rotted timbers
the ashes of the fires
bits and pieces of the
animals they ate
These people bring them
Alive!
They help the memory survive!
All their dedication,
patient, oh, infinite patience
work, hours of work
statistics, lab work
boxes, buried homes
reconstruct the homes
that stood, the lives of
The Chinook People
Of Cathlapotle!
The Chinookan People’s
Spirits superimposed
in these same spaces with the
living!
The Chinooks Of Cathlapotle!
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