

Repatriation and Community Anthropology

The Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center¹

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COMMUNITY ANTHROPOLOGY AT THE SMITHSONIAN

As a museum anthropologist with the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center (ASC) I have been humbled by the collecting zeal of the nineteenth-century anthropologists who ranged the world to fill their respective institutions with the curiosities and trash from distant lands and distant epochs. Such things were once daily household objects but have, through the alchemy of time and the miracle of preservation, become the treasures of today. Much of the world's patrimony that hasn't been scattered and shorn of its history and provenance has found shelter in museums. Once the purview of a few scholars and a small cadre of museum professionals charged with the curation and care of these collections, the museum world has been transformed within the last decade or so by the enthusiasm and interest of Native groups, artists, and scholars who have, and are in the process of, rediscovering their cultural patrimony.

In part this awareness has emerged as a consequence of the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) that finds museums throughout the United States and Canada reconsidering their roles vis-à-vis Native Americans. Concurrently, many Native communities are experiencing a burgeoning awareness of their cultural heritage as evidenced by the construction of local and regional cultural centers and by the growth of initiatives like Keepers of the Treasure. These new laws, new concerns, and new initiatives have the potential of realigning relations between Native Americans, museum professionals, and others concerned with the preservation of the physical patrimony and intellectual heritage of Native American and First Nations peoples.

As an anthropologist (archaeologist, ethnohistorian, ethnographer) working in the North (Labrador, Alaska, the Aleutian Islands), it has been my privilege to experience something of the drama, intensity, and integrity of community life in Arctic villages. In the North, many Native villages still retain a strong community identity based on hunting and fishing subsistence economies and an ideology that includes a special reverence for elders who retain their cultures' traditional ecological knowledge and spiritual reverence for the land and for the animals on

which life depends. These shared sentiments are leading communities throughout the Canadian Arctic and Alaska to develop cultural preservation programs that include an appreciation of archaeological and ethnological collections, many of which now reside in museums throughout the world.

Yet in the North today the distinction between past and present—and the dichotomy between archaeology and ethnography—is frequently blurred. For Native American and Inuit families, the cyclical nature of subsistence resources and the strong inter-generational bonds instill a profound recognition of cultural continuity and land tenure that is pervasive, spiritual, ideological and often at variance with the perceptions of archaeologists and other non-Native interpreters of culture. Northerners fear the loss of their culture, land, and language, and they recognize that knowledge of the past is critical for determining group identity and land tenure. Partly because of the Smithsonian's long involvement in the North (and the resulting outstanding collections and archives), and partly because my colleagues and I recognize a responsibility to facilitate and nurture an awareness and appreciation for museum collections (as well as for archaeological and historical research) we have made a commitment to what we have taken to calling "community anthropology".

As part of the Arctic Studies Center mandate, we have sought to develop programs that combine the knowledge and experience of program personnel, the archival resources and objects in the Smithsonian's collections, and the needs, interests, and expertise of Northern communities. The goals of the community anthropology initiatives at the Smithsonian include 1) providing training for Native land managers and community cultural affairs administrators who are able to articulate community needs with governmental bureaucracies and administration; 2) providing an opportunity for community scholars, artisans, elders, and young people to discuss the use and significance of museum collections; and 3) instilling in young people knowledge about the accomplishments of their ancestors. The integration of museum professionals' knowledge of archaeological, ethnographic, and photographic collections housed in the museum with the knowledge, wisdom, and skills of participating community representatives and elders is arguably among the most interesting developments in the field of Northern anthropology today.

What I refer to as "community archaeology" differs from institutional academic initiatives primarily because of its commitment to addressing community agendas, interests, and needs. The approach combines the expertise and training of professional archaeologists with the insight and knowledge of community leaders and educators. The principal goal of community archaeology is to provide experiences and training for Indian and Inuit young people. The participation of and reliance on elders is a critical component of such endeavors. Throughout the North, communities revere and honor their elders recognizing them as the principal authority on matters of history and heritage. Elders provide interpretations of archaeological features and assemblages, while the knowledge and beliefs they convey in interviews and stories reaffirm community values and testify to the validity and significance of traditional knowledge. Community archaeology hopes to stimulate and empower cultural, historical and community values. In

In addition to the products of traditional archaeology, that is, publications, community archaeology projects often result in local exhibits and school programs. In some cases, the collections resulting from the collaborative endeavors remain in the North.

Such initiatives start with the recognition that the goals and interests of Native communities may not coincide *exactly* with those of the academy and the museum. This is especially apparent in matters of archaeology where the distant past, so dear to archaeologists, carries considerably less allure for Northerners than the stories and trails of more recent ancestors with whom the bonds of land, kinship, and animals are more tangible and more meaningful.

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION IN LABRADOR

The Smithsonian Institution's grandest passion has always been its collections. Under the inspired leadership of Secretary Spencer Baird, mid-nineteenth century naturalists scoured the continent for specimens shipping boxcars full of rocks, minerals, fossils, bird eggs, plants, shells, mammals, bones, antiquities, curiosities, and ethnographic objects back to the nation's capital. These collections provided tangible evidence of the wealth and breadth of the North American continent and offered scientific vindication of the idea of manifest destiny as the United States took its place as a world power. This acquisitive fervor was especially prevalent within the young discipline of anthropology whose practitioners were driven by the assumption that Native American cultures were rapidly disappearing and might soon be gone altogether. Anticipating by less than a decade the subsequent "rush" to acquire traditional Native materials, Smithsonian collectors made the first large, systematic ethnographic collections. In this pursuit, literally thousands of objects were acquired, from the mundane to the sacred, from Florida to British Columbia, and Alaska to Labrador.

Smithsonian collectors were especially successful in the North, where Western economic and religious systems had not yet made severe inroads. These intrepid pioneer naturalist-ethnographers included James Swan, George Gibbs, T. D. Bolles, and F. M. Ring, among others on the Northwest Coast; P. Henry Ray and John Murdoch at Point Barrow, Alaska; Edward Nelson along the Bering Straits; and Lucien Turner in northern Quebec and Labrador. Together these men and their contemporaries constructed what is now one of the world's most important repositories of traditional material culture pertaining to Northern Native peoples.

The Smithsonian's interest and research in Labrador dates back to the winters of 1882-1884 when the Museum representatives, together with the U.S. Signal Corps, participated in the First International Polar Year in which more than a dozen expeditions were sent to remote northern stations across the Arctic (Barr 1985). The Smithsonian participated in two of these expeditions, one to Point Barrow, Alaska, and a second to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Chimo (Kuujuuaq) in northern Quebec. In charge of the northern Quebec station was Lucien M. Turner, a trained meteorologist and one of America's most gifted field naturalists. While his atmospheric observations kept him close to his instruments at the Hudson's Bay Company post, Turner nevertheless was able to assemble impressive collections of birds, mammals, plants, crustacea, mollusca and fish for

the Smithsonian. During Turner's stay at Ft. Chimo, he cultivated the friendship of the Innu and Inuit families who visited the HBC post and camped nearby. This association enabled him to assemble the earliest and most complete collection of ethnographic material from northern Quebec and adjacent Labrador ever made (Turner 1890). When the collection was finally shipped to the Smithsonian in 1884, it contained well over 500 objects (fig. 13-1).

While a tiny portion of the Turner collection has long been on display in the North American Indian Hall at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, there have been few opportunities for Innu, Quebec Inuit, or Labrador Inuit community members to examine the collection and little discussion on how it might be used to address contemporary Native issues and concerns. With a burgeoning interest in and knowledge of museum collections, material culture studies, and cultural patrimony, Native people in Labrador, as throughout the North, have begun to show considerably more interest in the Turner collection. At a very basic level, nineteenth-century material culture provides a tangible link with the past, with community traditions, and with one's own cultural identity.

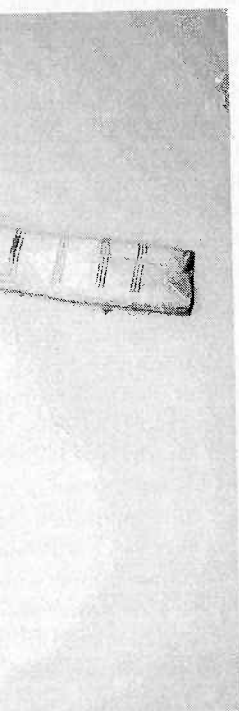


Figure 13-1. Innu coat collected by Lucien Turner in Kuujjuaq (Ft. Chimo), northern Quebec, 1883, (cat no. E74457). The painted design was the symbolic rendition of an individual hunter's quest for game. Photograph courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution/SI 74457.

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In addition to its collections of Innu and Inuit material culture, the Smithsonian also houses four very important archival collections pertinent to Labrador Native history. These include (1) Lucien Turner's photographs of Innu and Inuit people and camps in the vicinity of Ft. Chimo (1883–1884); (2) William Brooks Cabot's collection of photographs, journals, and maps pertaining to his extensive travels with the Innu between 1899 and 1923 (Loring 1986/1987, 1987); (3) the notebooks and journals of William Duncan Strong from the winter of 1927–1928, when he camped with the Innu near Davis Inlet and Nain (Leacock and Rothschild 1994); and (4) the photographs, journals, and notes of E. Pep Wheeler (Morse 1977), the pioneering geologist who worked in Labrador from 1927 to 1974.

Although some incidental archaeological research had been conducted in Labrador prior to about 1950 (Bird 1945, Leechman 1943, Strong 1930), it wasn't until William Fitzhugh began his sustained archaeological and paleoecological research in Hamilton Inlet and later along the central and northern Labrador coasts that the prehistoric cultural sequence of the region was revealed (Fitzhugh 1972, 1976a, 1976b, 1978a, 1978b, 1980). After more than two decades of sustained archaeological and ethnohistorical research in Labrador by Fitzhugh and his colleagues and students (e.g. Kaplan 1983, Jordan 1978, Nagle 1978, 1984; Cox 1977, 1978; and Loring 1988, 1992), the Smithsonian has become indelibly associated with studies and interpretations of Labrador prehistory and paleoecology.

One of the attractions of archaeological research in Labrador for me was the opportunity it provided to meet and travel with members of the region's three indigenous communities: the Inuit, Innu and Settler. Local hunters and fishermen invariably provided hospitality and information about resources, settlement and subsistence strategies, weather, and game-related phenomena. They often conveyed this information in stories, weaving a rich tapestry of history and experience. Family members would occasionally guide us to archaeological sites, and over the years a number of young people worked with us as crew members. For all intents and purposes, however, archaeology in Labrador prior to 1990 was largely conducted as an independent enterprise with little community involvement or participation.

By the early 1990s, the framework of Labrador's fascinating prehistory had been well established. Archaeologists had revealed nearly 8,000 years of alternating and sometimes overlapping Indian and Inuit cultures. I myself had devoted nearly a decade to working out the late prehistoric sequence of Indian cultures in Labrador ancestral to the Innu (Loring 1992). While this research mainly addressed academically-minded questions about the boundedness of hunter-gatherer societies and the emergence and maintenance of ethnic identities, I was mindful of its political ramifications. In other words, I recognized that the demonstration of cultural continuity and past land-use had implications for on-going land-claim negotiations. Through community visits and slide presentations, I endeavored to convey something of my research results to the Innu. While my images of familiar landscapes and stone projectile points were reviewed with little comment, the slides I had made of the Smithsonian's collection of nineteenth and early twentieth-century photographs of Innu people fascinated the modern

residents as they had no idea that such archival materials existed. Slide shows in Utshimassit, a small Innu village on the central coast of Labrador, would last long into the night. Having surrendered control over the projector to one of the village elders, animated conversation—in Inueimun—greeted each image. The projector's light shining through a nearly opaque cloud of cigarette smoke, was like a time machine carrying everyone present back to the past.

Such experiences convinced me that while native Labradorians might appreciate knowledge of the far-past it was the near-past, which included the landscape of myth and memory, that appealed most to them. Archaeologists in Labrador, as throughout much of the North, had designed research programs, for the most part, without input or participation of host community members. It is not surprising that this resulted in the alienation of Native communities and the hardening of their attitudes toward archaeology. At the least archaeologists were guilty of benign neglect, at the worst their actions amounted to a blatant continuation of postcolonial scientific attitudes that divorced research from any form of community (social) interaction and obligation. In effect, the past in Labrador had become dichotomized. Scientific practitioners had their materialist view of the past based on radiocarbon dates, artifacts, and old sites while local community members held title to a past that was based on oral traditions, place names, myths, genealogy and stories.

With the completion of my dissertation (Loring 1992), I was eager to initiate new research conducted in a cooperative mode with the Native communities of Labrador. As envisioned, it would be research that sought not so much a concordance of the past as a means of empowering people with the relevance and authority that is conveyed by control over the past.

COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY WITH THE INNU IN LABRADOR: PATHWAYS

The Pathways Project emerged as a cooperative initiative of the Innu Nation, the Innu Resource Centre and the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center. It sought to address the interests and needs of the Innu community and their notions of the past while exploring their ancient tenure of the land. It also sought to empower Innu youth with another perception of their history and heritage. In light of the usurpation of Innu control of their land by a government that first flooded their rivers then used the land as a military training ground, and finally implemented massive mineral development projects, this project seemed particularly poignant.

An essential feature of the Pathways Project was the integration of my training in archaeology and familiarity with Innu prehistory with the knowledge, wisdom and skills of participating elders. During the fall of 1993, Innu students from the community of Sheshatshit, a Native community on Lake Melville, participated in two weeks of classroom training and community interviewing followed by a month in the country to learn the methods and techniques of archaeological practice. The field site was located at Amitshuakant. This was the beginning point of an Innu portage route that led from Seal Lake to the now flooded Lake Michikamau; from there it ran north to Ungava, west to Hudson's Bay, and then south to the Quebec North Shore. Although unmarked in any printed atlas, Amit-

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shuakant was a major crossroads for the Innu in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the point from which families departed to the furthest corners of Nitassinan (the Quebec-Labrador peninsula).

The Innu participants, selected by community leaders for their interest in heritage issues, included students, hunters and homemakers (fig. 13-2). The excavation of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century tent-rings at the beginning of the portage trail revealed an array of artifacts including hunting and fishing paraphernalia, tobacco related products, knives, cookware, medicinal containers, molasses jugs, combs, beads and coins. But our time in the country was much more than an exercise in how archaeologists practice their profession. It was an opportunity to incorporate Innu values and perspectives into a construction of history and a chance to expose Innu youth to life in the bush.

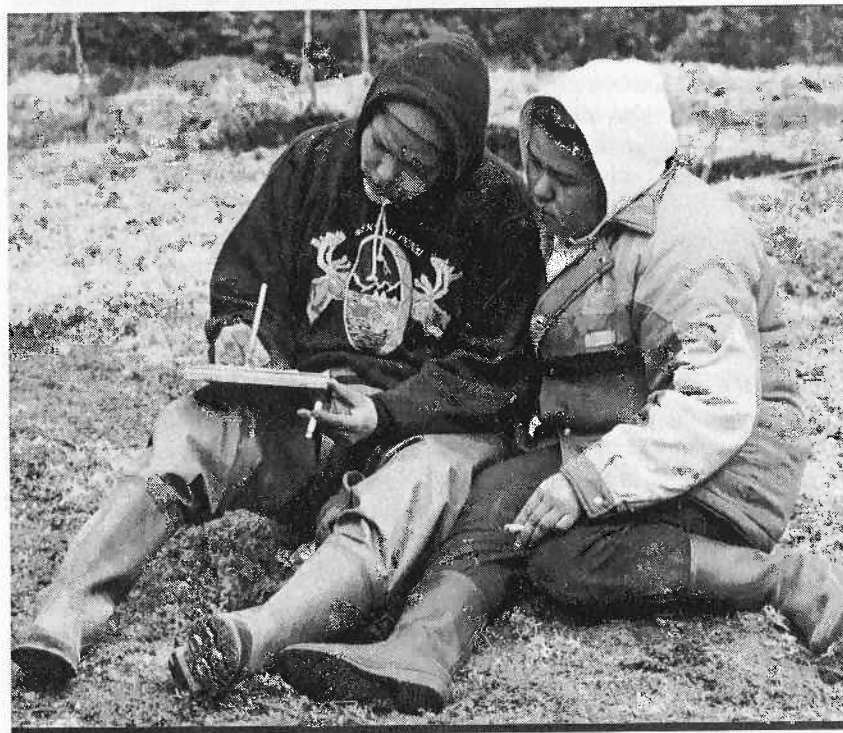


Figure 13-2. Kathleen Penashue and Edwina Jack working on field notes for their excavation unit at Amitshuakant (FICf-1) on the Naskapi river, Labrador.
Photograph courtesy of Stephen Loring.

We were accompanied into the country and into our inspections of the past by an elder couple, Louie and Mary-Adell Penashue and their infant grandson. After a day of excavating, students had the opportunity to accompany the Penashues and attend to nets and snares, hunt moose and bear, and prepare food. Later, as the autumn nights lengthened, everyone gathered in tents to listen to stories about the old days, about times of starvation and extraordinary journeys by snowshoe and canoe. At the conclusion of the field-season, we returned to She-shatshit where the students prepared the results of the project for presentation to the community.

Pathways is an example of the growing commitment and concern shown by archaeologists in addressing the needs and interests of Northern community members. In the Canadian Arctic there has been a marked increase in Inuit participation and interest in archaeology that has led a number of archaeologists to instigate fieldwork specifically aimed at addressing local interests in archaeology and providing training and fieldwork experience for young people (Bielawski 1984, Rowley 1991, Stenton and Rigby 1995). With the increased opportunities for research and fieldwork, and through the implementation of training programs designed for Northern Native students (Bertulli 1985), it is clear that the future of archaeology in the Eastern Arctic will include ever more Northerners.

A cooperative archaeology in the North combining the training of archaeologists, historians, and museum specialists with the insight and knowledge of community elders holds the promise of creating a radically different and exciting new form of archaeology with potentially revolutionary impacts on the practice and perception of the past. For one thing, Native archaeologists would bring language skills and an awareness of community values to the practice of archaeology. A Native archaeology would have considerably freer access to community elders with their erudition and wisdom, and traditional ecological or indigenous knowledge (Berkes 1993; Brooke n.d.; Cruikshank 1981, 1984; Freeman and Carbyn 1988, Saunders 1992, Stevenson 1996). Such intimate knowledge of the distribution and availability of resources, as well as of Arctic ecology, together with a historical perception of the relationships between human beings and their environments, will go far to humanize the wilderness of Northern prehistory.

Initiatives like the Pathways Project promise an exciting future for archaeology by (1) liberating it from the exclusive confines of the academy, (2) producing a product that has meaning to both anthropologists and to the communities from which collections and information is derived, and (3) celebrating a multi-vocal past that addresses social and political agendas, and embraces both humanist and scientific perspectives.

OUTREACH AND COOPERATION: NUNIVAK ISLAND, ALASKA

A second example of the practice of community anthropology at the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center is an undertaking centered on the village of Mekoryuk on Alaska's Nunivak Island in the Bering Sea. Surrounded by shallow seas, Nunivak escaped much of the social disruption that came in the wake of whaling, gold prospecting, and other industries, as well as Euro-american missionary and governmental interventions experienced by Native Alaskans in the nineteenth-cen-

ture. Nunivak has long been of interest to anthropologists since it was believed that the Chu'pik inhabitants of the island were relatively untouched by Western concepts and economy. This belief prevailed well into the beginning of this century.

In 1874 Alaska's premier naturalist, William H. Dall, made a brief visit to Nunivak and acquired a number of objects for the Smithsonian. A few years later the Smithsonian's peripatetic Edward Nelson whose Yupik name, "the man who bought good-for-nothing things" was indicative of his inexhaustible collecting enthusiasm, purchased a number of objects from Nunivak that were carried to the mainland near Cape Vancouver.

During the summer of 1927, the Smithsonian's Ales Hrdlicka sent two young anthropologists, Henry B. Collins and T. Dale Stewart, to Nunivak. Hrdlicka had been foiled in his attempts to find Pleistocene-age sites in the interior of Alaska and hoped they would have better luck on the shores of the Bering Sea. While the chimera of "Early Man" eluded them, Stewart and Collins had a fairly productive summer conducting archaeological, ethnographic, and anthropometric research at villages along the north and east coast of the island. In the course of their stay they acquired a large number of objects for the National Museum.

The Stewart-Collins' collection from Nunivak includes approximately 700 specimens, everything from masks and painted wooden bowls to doll's clothing, harpoons, ancient ceramic vessels, and lamps. Women's artifacts included many pieces of jewelry, labrets and earrings, as well as ulu knives and sewing tools. Men's artifacts included a wide assortment of tools used in hunting and fishing. These materials were derived from several distinct contexts, including collections made in house ruins in recently abandoned villages, purchases from Nunivak craftspeople, and excavations in ancient middens. In competition with Edward Curtis (the famous photographer of Native Americans), a University of Alaska field party led by Otto Giest, and sailors from the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Algonquian*, scavenged artifacts and offerings from old burial scaffolds. Some of these items also ended up in the Smithsonian's Nunivak collection.

While objects from Nunivak have appeared in different exhibitions over the years, the collection had never been studied systematically. Since a large portion of the collection is expected to be repatriated, I was prompted to make inquiries to the community about their interest in participating in a cooperative project that would result in a complete description and analysis of the Smithsonian's Nunivak collections. A preliminary visit to discuss this proposal was made to Mekoryuk in September 1995. I was accompanied to Nunivak by Bureau of Indian Affairs; anthropologist Ken Pratt, who, along with Robert Drouza, had been working with Mekoryuk community leaders and elders to create an extraordinarily detailed gazetteer of Nunivak Island. Although a stranger to Nunivak, I brought an unusual gift: a set of nearly 70 photographs that Henry Collins had taken during his 1927 visit. Ken's introductions and the photographs provided a wonderful entrée into the Mekoryuk community.

Visits to homes throughout the village quickly transformed and personalized Collins' limited notations ("Eskimo woman and daughter," "Eskimo man in kayak") into specific individuals. The photographs evoked spirited discussions of

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Nunivak genealogy, subsistence strategies, personal histories, and changes in local settlements. Copies of the prints were distributed and plans were made to incorporate them into the school curriculum.

With support from the National Museum of Natural History's Repatriation Office and a Smithsonian collections enhancement grant, I invited a party of three elders (Walter Amos, and George and Elsie Williams) and two community scholars (Howard Amos and Ike Kiokun) from Nunivak to come to the Smithsonian in February 1996. The purpose of the visit was to examine the artifacts collected on Nunivak over the years and decide upon a course of action for the objects that fell within the scope of the repatriation mandate. We hoped to use the visit to begin a research initiative that would lead to the publication of a book featuring the Collins' photographs, the narratives the photographs evoked, and an analysis and discussion of material culture and art from the island (fig. 13-3).

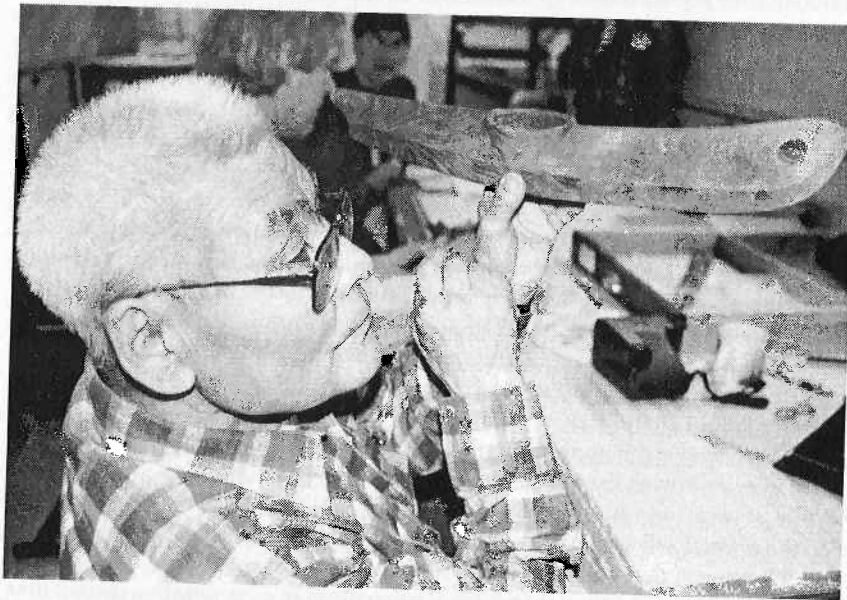


Figure 13-3. George Williams from Mekoryuk, Alaska, explaining details of Nunivak kayak construction. Photograph courtesy of Stephen Loring.

Between the notes made by Collins and others, and the knowledge of the Mekoryuk elders, a detailed history and analysis of the Nunivak collections was produced. The elders were able to provide Chu'pik names for artifacts, many of which had not been manufactured in their lifetime. One ivory wrench-like artifact that Edward Nelson had collected over a century before and which had been cataloged as an "unknown ancient ivory object", was revealed to be a *qaluarun*, a seal-intestine stretcher (figures 13-4a and 13-4b). Together we spent an intense week analyzing and discussing all the objects in the collections: masks, bowls, hunting equipment, and clothing. The elders felt an incredible responsibility to

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provide an accurate and detailed explanation of each object as they recognized that they were now the bearers of their community's culture history. The younger men, who had been selected by community leaders to make the trip to Washington partially because of their work in preparing a Chu'pik dictionary, were continually surprised at the words that emerged from the elders' discussions. Often these words had dropped out of the vocabulary of modern village life. After one discussion that lasted more than 40 minutes, Walter Amos apologized to me in English for not being able to find their word for a small ivory toggle: "we know what it is, and we remember hearing our fathers talk about it, but we just can't remember the word. I am sorry." My assurances that the knowledge, insight, and explanations that they provided had more than compensated for the few things they were unable to interpret did not seem to assuage the stark recognition that some part of Nunivak heritage was irretrievably lost.

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Figures 13-4a and 13-4b. *Qaluarun* (SI Cat. No. 43753), also known as "unknown ancient ivory object" in the catalogue records. Photograph courtesy of Stephen Loring.

Henry Collins' field notes proved a wonderful foil to the knowledge of the elders since they were based on information derived from informants whose knowledge and memory extended well back into the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the old objects removed from burial scaffolds had fallen out of common usage long before George, Elsie and Walter were born. Yet, with the hints and descriptions provided by Collins, these elders were able to greatly expand our understanding of the function and significance of many of the objects in the collections.

Midway through the visit, after we had finished reviewing the Smithsonian's entire holdings from Nunivak, George turned to me and inquired, "where is the ivory pole?"

"What ivory pole?", I asked.

George related a description of an astonishing funereal monument erected beside a burial scaffold that had consisted of a wooden pole to which a dozen or so walrus ivory tusks had been attached perpendicularly, like a ladder. The tusks, unworked at the bottom, became increasingly more elaborately decorated the higher up the pole they were placed. The theft of the ivory monument was first noticed sometime after the summer of 1927, the year in which the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Alaska, and Coast Guard personnel had overrun Nunivak Island buying curiosities, handicrafts, and clothing, and rooting around the old abandoned villages and cemeteries. We never located any references to what must have been an extremely prominent feature in either Collins' or Stewart's journals or field notes; nor did George's description match any objects in the Smithsonian collection.

The story of the ivory pole, however, brought home another realization about how much of the island's patrimony and heritage had been lost. I don't believe I ever detected any resentment or hostility from the people in Mekoryuk, or from the delegation visiting Washington, about this state of affairs. This was, in part, a reflection of their extraordinary generosity and kindness. But it also involved a shared realization about the transient nature of material objects and the extraordinary circumstances that only sometimes favor preservation.

The Nunivak delegation that visited Washington in the spring of 1996 bore a heavy responsibility. They realized that the combination of a Smithsonian collecting expedition in 1927 and the passage of NAGPRA in 1990 offered them a unique opportunity to recover materials salvaged from the mists of time and memory. Excitement at the possibility of returning Nunivak heritage to the island so that young people could learn something of their history and take pride in the accomplishments of the ancestors was tempered by the realization of the responsibilities that ownership entailed.

The contingencies of a subsistence lifestyle with seasonal movements between camps and villages was never conducive to the preservation of material culture. By their very nature, tools, clothing, and ceremonial paraphernalia were meant to be used and through use wear out and eventually be discarded. It is not surprising, then, that the community has no store of antiquities, although a few old things have survived to be passed down from generation to generation. Still, it isn't likely that there is another cultural windfall comparable to the Stewart-Collins' collection lurking in a museum vault somewhere. This collection likely represents a significant portion of the historical materials available to the community. These thoughts and observations were very much on the minds of the Nunivak delegation. They were eager to assess the significance of the collection and discuss its potential to address community concerns.

In anticipation of the return of the Stewart-Collins' collection, the community of Mekoryuk has sanctioned a complete analysis and formal publication of the collection as a collaborative venture between Smithsonian researchers and com-

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munity elders. While some portion of the collection will certainly return to Mekoryuk, the fate of a portion of it—including archaeological specimens, broken objects, and objects too fragile to be displayed, remains unresolved. Certainly the community will gain title to the material but whether they elect to leave the objects at the Smithsonian, bring them to Mekoryuk, or place them in an Alaskan repository remains a matter for future deliberation.

I would add as a postscript that the human remains taken from Nunivak in 1927 were returned to the community and reburied with due ceremony outside of the village of Mekoryuk in October 1996 (Mudar et al. 1996; Phillips 1996).

A MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS

My experience with the Innu, and museum consultation and research conducted with the elders from Nunivak, epitomize the intensely social component of the production of knowledge that makes Northern research so fascinating. Through community archaeology, the reticence of stone tools and ethnographic objects is replaced by a richly textured layering of history, stories and knowledge. The passage of NAGPRA and the establishment of a new National Museum of the American Indian have been instrumental in expanding the awareness of museum collections in Native American communities throughout North America. As more and more Native American researchers, scholars and educators gain access to museum collections, the sense of shared responsibility toward the care and maintenance of collections is intensified. Collections form a unique and tangible link to the past, a past that has begun to be liberated from the exclusive purview of academic researchers and museum curators. However, the time machine of the museum is extraordinarily expensive to operate. Museum collections have for the most part insured that some objects were rescued from the inroads of time, but at the price of being imprisoned behind cabinets, computer-generated catalogs, and the bureaucracy of conservators and curators whose allegiance has traditionally been to the objects themselves rather than the descendants of the people who produced them.

One exciting development in the museum world is the emergence of the world wide web as a facility for disseminating information about collections. The museum world has aggressively embraced web technology as a means to greatly expand its audience and increase access to museum holdings. While digitized images will never replace hands-on observations, they still provide users with detailed inventories that can expedite and help structure research. Given the rapid development and global adoption of web technology, it seems apparent that the future of education will come to reside more and more in web-like outlets. Eventually, the major collections in museums will be digitized and accessible via computer communications. Inevitably museums will have to come to grips with changing perspectives on their proprietary rights and control over objects and information.

The National Museum of Natural History holds its collections in trust for the citizens of the United States (and in a broader, more practical sense, for all people). As such it has an institutional philosophy that encourages access to and use of its collections. With its main constituency far removed in northern climes, the Arctic Studies Center envisions its homepage as a vehicle to help disseminate

information about the Smithsonian collections to schools and communities across the Arctic.² One example of such outreach initiatives has been the development of a detailed inventory and visual catalogue of the Lucien Turner collection from northern Quebec and Labrador. Making this collection internet accessible was done at the request of the Innu Nation and the Labrador Inuit Association who saw the educational and heritage potential of the material if it could be made available to students in Labrador.

As for the future of anthropology in the circumpolar North, it will have to take into account the fact that Native groups are increasingly empowered with the means to control research conducted on their land. Many Northern peoples are interested in their past, yet their concerns are for the present as well, for alleviating the tragically high rates of unemployment, alcoholism, and suicide that plague some Native communities. The archaeology of the academy needs to be replaced by an archaeology of the community. Museum studies must address the needs and concerns of the Native communities whose material pasts they have so long held in trust. Similarly, as indigenous peoples continue to confront the political and economic issues facing them, there is a concurrent revitalization of culturally distinct arts, rituals, and ceremonies. These developments, not just in the North but world-wide, pose a great challenge to museums in the next century: to evolve beyond their perceived role as giant repositories of scientific specimens derived from colonial excesses, anthropological avarice, and acquisitiveness, into institutions that increase awareness of diversity through celebration, repatriation, and revitalization.

NOTES

1. A portion this paper formerly appeared in the American Anthropological Association's *Anthropology Newsletter* in October 1996.
2. The homepage address for the Arctic Studies center is:
<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/arctic>

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