

# CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN BUSH ALASKA: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

This paper gives a personal perspective on cultural resource management (CRM), as viewed from rural Alaska. It reviews the sociocultural and economic realities of bush Alaska, which may be unfamiliar even to archaeologists based on the Alaska road system. It then describes how CRM archaeologists, and often other archaeologists, appear to many Bush residents and attempts to explain why these perceptions may arise. It lists some particular challenges that can develop due to these perceptions. Further, it describes the benefits of working in bush Alaska. It also offers some suggestions that may be helpful to those who are new to working in the Bush, to help them avoid some common problems, an outcome that will benefit both the communities and the cultural resources.

**KEYWORDS:** CRM, bush Alaska, public archaeology

## BACKGROUND

This paper presents my personal perspective on cultural resource management (CRM) in Alaska, as seen from rural Alaska, well off the road system, and from outside federal or state agencies. While I am not alone in working for an Alaska Native organization, or in working off the road system, the number of nonagency archaeologists living in rural Alaska is quite small. Opinions expressed in this paper are my own and in no way reflect the positions of my employers, past, present, or future.

My initial exposure to CRM came in 1982, while I was attending graduate school. I worked for several firms in the Philadelphia area and eventually owned an incorporated consulting firm, which did its first work in Alaska in 1986 at Pingusugruk, at Point Franklin. My firm was very active in eastern Pennsylvania and also did

work in Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and West Virginia. Projects ranged from work at the Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia to flood-control projects in Dolgeville, New York, and Chester County, Pennsylvania, through landfill expansions and innumerable sewer systems to ground-truthing geophysical data in support of reconstruction of the house at the Thomas Stone National Historical Site in Maryland. Clients ranged from federal and state agencies to public utilities to small municipalities to developers to a few well-to-do individuals who were interested in the history and prehistory of their property. All this gave me broad exposure to a variety of regulatory and client approaches, as well as experience with various ways to handle common cultural resources problems.

In 1994, my firm got a contract that involved field work in a large number of bush communities in Alaska. It gave me the opportunity to talk with people in quite a few villages throughout Alaska while doing background research and making arrangements for field teams, and there also was field work in a number of the communities. The same year, Glenn Sheehan, Greg Reinhardt, and I got National Science Foundation funding for excavations at Pingusugruk, fulfilling a promise we had made to people in Wainwright after the 1986 contract to find money to come back and do more work. We were still Pennsylvania-based, and traveled to Alaska for the field seasons.

#### WORKING FOR AN ANCSA NATIVE CORPORATION

In 1996, I moved to Barrow, Alaska. I started working for Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation (UIC) in early 1997. UIC is the village corporation of the Native Iñupiat people of Barrow. UIC Science Division was part of the Real Estate Department and recently has been spun off as an independent subsidiary, UIC Science, LLC. UIC was created under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and is one of the most successful of the village corporations. In fact, it is more profitable than a number of the regional corporations. This economic success is what gave UIC the flexibility to hire and equip someone to do CRM, even though it incurred costs that were not necessarily going to be recouped quickly. Unfortunately, not all ANCSA corporations are in a financial position to take such a step.

The community of Barrow has a long history of cooperating with scientists. From the days of the first International Polar Year in 1881–83 up through the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory days, the people of Barrow worked with scientists, including archaeologists and anthropologists, and found at least some of what they did interesting and of value. This history, combined with the presence in UIC management of many people with a great interest in the cultural resources of the North Slope, is in large part why UIC *chose* to hire someone to handle CRM issues. Most ANCSA corporations do not have a CRM professional on staff.

#### WORK IN THE BARROW AREA

As senior scientist/cultural resource management specialist for UIC Science, I am the only practicing archaeologist in the community of Barrow and indeed at times in the entire North Slope Borough. As a result, most cultural re-

source issues that arise eventually come to my attention, not infrequently at night or on holiday weekends. For most people in Barrow, cultural resources are equated with archaeological sites and graves, although there is a growing interest in older buildings and Naval Arctic Research Laboratory sites. There is as yet little popular understanding of the category of traditional cultural properties/places (TCPs), although it is quite clear that a number of them exist in the area.

As an ANCSA corporation, UIC has title to a surface estate of approximately 91,000 hectares in the general area of Barrow. While this may seem insignificant to many cultural resource managers at federal agencies, who have rather more acreage to worry about, it is centered on Barrow, an expanding community that has a significant erosion problem and a long history of occupation. There are a number of known sites on UIC lands, including Nuvuk, Piġniq (better known to most archaeologists as Birnirk, a national historical landmark and type site of the Birnirk culture), Utqiagvik, Nunavak, Kugusugaruk, Walakpa, and the Coffin site. Undoubtedly there are even more as yet undiscovered sites. Erosion, land use patterns past and present, and subsistence digging (Staley 1993) all take their toll.

Protecting cultural resources on UIC lands is one of my major job responsibilities. We try to keep track of these resources and their condition. Obviously, it is not possible to visit all sites nearly as often as desirable, and indeed there are certain sites that could use round-the-clock babysitters, at least on summer weekends. However, local residents, whether UIC shareholders or not, are very helpful in quickly reporting changes to sites and exposures of artifacts or graves. I respond to these reports with a site visit and salvage data if possible, often with the help of volunteers or local students. I then attempt to find longer-term solutions for the problems and funding to implement them.

UIC tries to anticipate effects from sanctioned activities on our lands and avoid them. In some cases, like the Barrow Arctic Research Center site, federal funds are involved and therefore consideration of cultural resources is mandated. Title 19 of the North Slope Borough Municipal Code has very strong language protecting cultural resources, although the current permitting process unfortunately allows many cases to fall through the cracks. The current North Slope Borough administration is examining the process in order to eliminate this problem. Even in cases with no regulatory requirement for cultural resource

studies, UIC tries to avoid impacts to cultural resources, at least in principle.

Certainly, as is the case with any private landowner, conflicts can arise between preservation of cultural resources, be they archaeological sites or TCPs, and the economic goals of the corporation. In my experience, these instances have been very rare, and it has been possible to find a way forward that meets both goals.<sup>1</sup> This lack of conflict may be due to the fact that people who are planning UIC projects in the Barrow area include local residents who are generally aware of where cultural resources are located, and therefore such areas don't even enter into consideration. I usually get a call fairly early in the process as well. My impression is that such conflicts may be more likely to arise in cases where the management is not locally resident, either regional corporations where shareholders could be from another village and thus lack specific local knowledge, or where the corporation is being run from a city on the road system, perhaps by shareholders who may have spent considerable time away from their village.

Some land in the area belongs to the City of Barrow, and there are private townsite lots, Native allotments, and shareholder homesite lots. UIC is perhaps the only ANCSA corporation that has essentially completed transfer of shareholder lots,<sup>2</sup> so there are many private lot owners. The State of Alaska owns the airport and a nearby gravel pit. Nearby federal land includes a few tracts in or close to Barrow, as well as the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, which surrounds Barrow. The City of Barrow owns much of the Utqiagvik site, including Ukkuqsi where the frozen family (Lobdell and Dekin 1984) and the little frozen girl (Zimmermann et al. 2001) were found, and portions of the Birnirk, Thule, and pre-and-post-contact components on both sides of Kugok ravine. Other parts of the site are on private or State of Alaska land.

Although these areas are not officially part of UIC's land, since they don't belong to UIC, in practice I am still the person who gets called to deal with archaeological problems. Sometimes the caller doesn't know who owns

the land and assumes that it is UIC land; in other cases they know quite well but cannot think of whom else to call. The Utqiagvik site in particular is a source of a number of calls. It is located in town, it is eroding, it suffers from some subsistence digging in the hard-to-monitor areas, and it has a history of yielding frozen human remains. It also seems to contain a truly prodigious number of worn-out mukluks. When these are first exposed, they tend to be filled with ice, and when an observer grabs one, they feel hard, leading people to conclude that there is a foot inside and an attached body still buried in the bluff. At this point, they become concerned and report it to some authority, and I get urgent calls and e-mails.

## WE ALL WEAR MANY HATS

In most bush communities, the majority of people fulfill a wide variety of roles. In larger urban communities, a lot of these roles would belong to separate people who would be able to devote full time to each job. Since bush communities are smaller (often much smaller), the only way to get these roles covered is for one person to fill several of them. The same individual may be an elected government official, a Native corporation board member or executive, a tribal government official, a member of a committee or commission to regulate a subsistence resource, and an elder in the church, not to mention having family obligations. This means that the person filling a particular niche may not be immediately available, often because they are filling another role of equal or greater importance.

As an anthropologist living in bush Alaska, I also wear many hats. I am a local resident, a neighbor (in Barrow) or fellow bush resident (elsewhere), an archaeologist, a cultural resources educator (both formally and informally), the person to call when bones are found or missing, someone who discourages the artifact trade (and associated looting), an ethnographer, and the person to whom weird objects are brought for identification.

As a knowledgeable local citizen with an interest in the culture and the past of my community, I attempt to

1 The biggest challenge in this regard is the former Naval Arctic Research Laboratory, which was turned over by the Navy in 1982 with no Section 106 process whatsoever. Since the Navy was essentially demolishing by neglect before the turnover, the structures are in need of considerable investment to preserve them. In some cases, they are so deteriorated that health and safety issues demand demolition. The only economically viable plan is through use of historic preservation tax credits, which require that the structures be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The lack of any prior Section 106 documentation means that UIC will have to pay for all the work necessary to nominate the laboratory if they are to be able to take advantage of the tax credits and preserve the structures. Although many UIC shareholders worked at the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory and it is generally perceived to be culturally important, it is not as important locally as other sites.

2 Under ANCSA, there is a provision for all shareholders to receive title to primary home sites and subsistence camps, which is to come from the land transferred to the corporations.

make sure that cultural resources are taken into account before ground-disturbing activities, at least to the extent required by law. This places me in a situation that might be perceived as a bit of a conflict of interest. I may wind up urging that cultural resources studies be done (wearing either my local citizen or unofficial cultural resources consultant to the North Slope Borough Planning Department hat) and then wind up bidding on (and carrying out, if all goes well) the investigations (wearing my UIC Science cultural resources hat). In fact, in most bush communities such situations arise frequently, due to the multiple roles people must play.

### HOW DO ARCHAEOLOGISTS APPEAR TO NONPROFESSIONALS?

For most bush residents, and in fact for many agencies and businesses on the road system as well, archaeologists are perceived as odd and intrusive people. There are a number of reasons why this is so, some of them historical and therefore beyond our control. Other reasons are easier to address.

#### WE COME AS STRANGERS

Most archaeologists come to villages as strangers. Particularly in smaller villages, strangers are not that common, except for the revolving door of government contractors and agents who often fail to interact with many residents. Diligent efforts to make contacts with village residents before arriving can help to alleviate the issue. The real cure is repeated contact with a community, rather than the situation that led Barrow Elder Warren Matumeak (in his younger days as a North Slope Borough official) to greet a visitor who announced he was from the EPA with "I know you. You're a different one every time!"

#### HIT-AND-RUN SCIENCE

In some cases the archaeologists seem to arrive, do a project and depart with little or no contact with the community, either to explain their mission or to consult people who hold local knowledge. I am aware of surveys purportedly carried out in Barrow for which I can later find no evidence that the archaeologists so much as spoke to anyone who would be a reasonable local resource person (planning

and permitting personnel; Inupiat History, Language, and Culture Commission staff or members; Inupiat Heritage Center staff; or local archaeologists). As an example, one such project has led representatives from three local entities to call me with questions and concerns, even though the project does not involve me or UIC in any way. After a number of calls and e-mails to Fairbanks and Anchorage I was able to learn that no report<sup>3</sup> has been produced by the agency archaeologists two years later, although the construction phase of the project is underway. The noncommunication often extends to project results.

This lack of reporting to the community is a common problem in Alaska. While reports may be generated and filed with agencies, and copies may even be sent to local entities, most local residents do not see them and frequently are not aware they exist. Even given access, a standard CRM report is not an effective way of communicating with nonprofessionals, especially those whose first language may not be English and whose opportunities for school attendance may have been severely limited. Public presentations are a far better method for communicating results to a community, and they allow community members to ask questions. Where archaeologists do this, it has been very beneficial. Agencies seem to be becoming more receptive to such reporting, probably because "public outreach" is legally required in many cases, but for smaller projects it still is very difficult to get funding to support the necessary travel back to the communities since it is usually quite expensive, and you cannot report results until analysis and report writing is done.

Proper scoping of projects would eliminate many of these problems, as well as others. I attend many scoping meetings in my home community. Unfortunately, rarely do agencies send anyone who knows anything about laws concerning cultural resources or what might be entailed in a proper survey. There is generally no one who knows what questions they should be asking community members in connection with cultural resources. No one tells community members that cultural resources are entitled to be considered. If there are community members who have questions about cultural resources, there is no one available to answer them, and seldom does the agency follow up later. The legally required "consultations" frequently take place via form letters sent to an organization in general, with no subsequent attempt to make sure that the letter actually reached anyone who was empowered to

3 To anyone, including the agencies employing the archaeologists and doing the construction.

deal with it. There is obviously a need for radical improvement in this area on the part of agencies.

A common concern in bush Alaska is that archaeologists are chiefly interested, in the words of one anonymous reviewer, in “grabbing artifacts and taking them away” from the village. In fact, this is seldom an issue with most CRM projects, most of which are directed towards site inventory and result in little or no artifact collection. However, most village residents are familiar with academic or museum-based projects, where this has happened. Reporting to the community could help to alleviate this concern. In cases where large numbers of artifacts are collected, typically in mitigation excavations, the best course is to do as much work as possible in the community. Where all work cannot be done in the community,<sup>4</sup> visual documentation of artifacts before they leave the community for analysis can be very helpful and reassuring. Many people assume that an artifact is an intact tool, and therefore imagine if they are told that 1,000 artifacts are being taken that they are all complete harpoon heads, figurines, and so forth, rather than the more likely scenario of hundreds of pieces of debitage and baleen fragments, a few dozen artifact fragments, and a few complete pieces. In many cases, simply being able to see what is under discussion can change great concern to complete approval.

#### WHY DO YOU NEED TO DO THAT?

People in villages generally don't know the requirements for cultural resources surveys. In many cases, even if they have had fairly recent state-funded or federally funded projects, little or no work has been carried out because agencies and their contractors often honor the relevant laws and regulations more in the breach than the observance. Thus, what people may perceive is strangers coming to town and taking away artifacts for no good reason. The artifacts are part of peoples' cultural heritage. In some communities where subsistence digging occurs, they are also seen as an economic resource.

Access to wage labor is critical for survival even in a primarily subsistence economy, and paying jobs are very

limited in villages. Archaeology, particularly shovel testing or monitoring, looks pretty simple. Residents may not understand why one of them isn't qualified to do the job you are doing. Residents also might want to know why local people are not being hired to work “under instruction.”

In fact, projects can and should be designed to maximize work with community members. It is quite possible to train interested local residents to be effective field assistants on survey or monitoring projects and even to be competent excavators, given a reasonable amount of time and proper supervision. It behooves us to remember that many significant sites in Alaska and elsewhere in the Arctic were excavated with local residents as field assistants and often primary excavators. By using local residents as field assistants, one has the opportunity to educate community members about the importance of context, which has the potential to discourage subsistence digging. It also has the potential to expose young people to the possibility of CRM as a career, which is certainly the first step to developing more Alaska Native CRM professionals. Explaining that certain credentials are legally required to be in charge of a CRM project can serve both as an incentive for interested individuals to pursue an education and to explain why you are qualified to be the archaeologist in charge and they are not.

#### UNPLEASANT SURPRISES

Due to their unfamiliarity with cultural resources protection laws, people are often taken by surprise by CRM projects. Where a village is not known to have extensive cultural resources, project planning almost always assumes they will not be found. If they then are encountered, project schedules can be disrupted.<sup>5</sup> This is a serious problem in villages that may be waiting for infrastructure that Alaskans on the road system have taken for granted for decades. It also may mean that paying construction jobs will not be available when residents had counted on them. Given that most villages have very few paying jobs, high unemployment, and costs far higher than on the road system, this is an unwelcome situation. It may be exacer-

4 Per diem and labor costs may be truly astronomical, and it may be decided that it is better for all concerned to use some of that money elsewhere on the project.

5 There are very few cases that I am aware of where cultural resources have led to project delays and huge expenses that could not have been avoided by proper project planning (proper scoping, through background research including literature and local interviews, adequate cultural resource surveys early in the design process rather than after the final design was locked in, and simply allowing adequate time to deal with resources if any were found and could not be avoided). Most of the “unavoidable” problems have occurred in urban or industrial areas where the site was covered with existing construction and could not be surveyed or in areas with very deep stratigraphy like river bottoms. It is past time to expect project management professionals to do their jobs and actually plan ahead.



bated in cases where residents have been told (falsely) that the costs of archaeology will reduce funds available for the proposed project, perhaps leaving some residents without the infrastructure benefits they had come to expect from the project. Again, a large part of the solution to this problem is proper scoping.

#### **WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THAT?**

Local evaluations of the significance of resources may differ from those of federal or state agencies. Agencies may dispute the importance of a resource that is very significant to the community, while showing interest in resources to which community members are indifferent. In either case, residents do not perceive that their history or culture are being protected. Cultural resource protection laws do not privilege "academic" or research interests above local interests in determining significance.

When sites that residents don't think are important are determined to be significant, this can lead to interference with community development goals and real economic hardship. This is a real issue. Certainly, better communication of project findings to communities may change a community's evaluation of the importance of a resource and thus its interest in preserving it. However, there are cases where the goals of preservation and development are incompatible, and mitigation may be the only way forward. If what is being preserved is primarily of interest to the broader society, it would seem to be a matter of social justice that the broader society should bear the burdens of that preservation, rather than imposing it on the few residents of an economically challenged bush community.

### **CHALLENGES**

#### **SINS OF THE FATHERS**

Unfortunately, one of the issues with which we all have to contend is a fairly deep-seated mistrust of members of our discipline. While it would be grossly unfair to attribute all of this to Hrdlička, he is held in low esteem by Alaska Natives, even in areas such as the North Slope, where his activities were limited. The term "anthros" and the stereotypes that sometimes accompany it are derogatory and occasionally painful.

There are notable cases where Western scientists, archaeologists or not, have proposed and occasionally done harmful things to Native populations in Alaska and

elsewhere. The Project Chariot episode (O'Neill 1994) featured experimental radioactive contamination of the tundra. The caribou on which Point Hope residents subsist live off that tundra vegetation. The lack of concern with possible contamination of those caribou and the plans to use nuclear explosions to dig a deep-water port at Cape Thompson, despite the total lack of need for any such port, obviously did not promote trust of non-Native scientists. Neither did the iodine 131 experiments carried out in Wainwright by the Army Aeromedical Laboratory. While it is true that standards of informed consent as well as radiation safety were different at the time, Wainwright residents were told they were being given vitamins.

Obviously, such a history can lead to a situation in which strange scientists arriving at a village may not be greeted with open arms or trust. Politeness, patience, straightforwardness, and attention to follow up on any promises made will pay dividends not only today, but for you or any of your colleagues who eventually return to the village. Bad attitudes are based on bad experiences; positive attitudes can grow from positive experiences.

#### **ALL PARTS OF THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATE**

One reality in many bush communities can take people from larger communities by surprise: generally, in small communities everybody knows everybody else's business. Many bush residents operate with an implicit assumption that a similar situation exists within the federal or state government, or at least within an agency. Thus, people will communicate their issues and concerns with the government to any representative of that government, whether or not that person's job description pertains to anything remotely resembling the topic of concern. Archaeologists working for an agency on contract may well be considered equivalent to agency employees, and therefore communication with them may be considered by village residents to be communication with the government. Obviously, careful explanation of the actual situation, repeated as necessary, can go a long way towards avoiding such confusion. However, it may not solve the problem. Some years ago, I spent almost a third of my time in the field on a project on the Kenai Peninsula listening to the laments of various homeowners about the design and function of various sewage facilities.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, the best one can do is to politely take down the complaints and attempt to pass them along.

A corollary to the belief that all government people talk to each other is that you may arrive in a village to find people rather upset that something has not been done about an urgent issue that they communicated to the previous set of governmental people who passed through town. The fact that it may have been members of an Air Force Restoration Advisory Board who were told about possible toxic waste at a World War II military installation rather than someone from the Army Corps of Engineers, or wildlife biologists who were told about an eroding archaeological site, is irrelevant. Again, one can only make a plea that government personnel either make note of issues and pass them on to the appropriate agency or attempt to point people in the right direction.

### SUBSISTENCE DIGGING

Subsistence digging (Hollowell 2006; Staley 1993) is a problem for cultural resource managers everywhere.<sup>7</sup> It can be more of a problem in bush communities because often it is one of the few ways of earning any cash. As professionals we are aware of the problems it causes for preserving and interpreting the past, but these issues are not readily apparent to most local residents.

If local residents have experience with archaeology, it generally consists of seeing artifacts dug up and taken away. For elders, the excavations they may have observed were certainly not conducted to today's standards. In fact, some of these excavations were apparently carried out with little more care than would be taken by the average subsistence digger, judging by the frequent accounts of excavating an entire frozen sod house in one day. Most non-archaeologists don't know what happens to artifacts after they are dug out of the ground and generally imagine they just go on display at the museum right away. Thus, many subsistence diggers see little difference between what they are doing and what archaeologists do, except that if they do it the money stays in the community and their kids get fed. As noted above, they may not really understand why they are not as qualified to do an archaeologist's job as you are.

Public education is obviously not the sole solution here. I would suggest that doing as much archaeological work (including lab work and conservation) in the community as is feasible, using local students or local hires to the maximum extent possible and making sure other community members are able to come watch, combined with talks in the schools and reports to the community, is helpful. It also may help to educate ANCSA corporation officials about the potential issues—including increased site destruction, potential increases in coastal erosion, and increased damage to private property—that may arise in connection with buying and selling artifacts as opposed to modern crafts and artwork. Both of these approaches are far easier when one has a long collaborative history with the community in question.

I would also suggest avoiding the use of the clearly pejorative terms “looters” and “looting” in instances where “subsistence digging” might be more appropriate. Much of this activity is taking place on private property. As such, it is entirely legal. Many of the participants are doing this because it is the only means available to them to earn the cash necessary to support their families. Most archaeologists are probably not in a position to create long-term stable employment in a community, which would almost certainly reduce subsistence digging. However, we can help to influence people's attitudes and understanding of the practice in such a way that it becomes a least-preferred alternative when other opportunities do become available in the community. It seems unlikely that one will make much progress in that direction by denigrating people who are attempting to feed their families.<sup>8</sup>

### MISUNDERSTANDING OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Another issue that gives rise to a great deal of frustration in many villages is misinformation about various laws and regulations. This can lead to misplaced expectations and then to disappointment.

Many misunderstandings revolve around the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Most village residents have heard of it, but there are at least two main areas of misunderstanding.

6 My personal favorite was the family who had been given a new outhouse, approximately twice as far from their home as the old one. The new one had been constructed in Washington state and brought up to Alaska. It was a fine structure indeed but the location was really inconvenient in winter, and so it had been converted into an equally fine smokehouse. I can attest to the fact that it worked well for smoking salmon. The family liked the smokehouse well enough, but we all felt, as taxpayers, that there might have been a better use for the money.

7 The issue of subsistence digging as opposed to looting is far too complex to go into here. There is a considerable literature on the subject, (e.g., Brodie et al. 2006; Carman 2005; Matsuda 1998; Skeates 2000; Staley 1993), with which anyone working in rural Alaska should be familiar.

8 If this concept seems obscure, I would recommend a quick perusal of Carnegie (1998).

The first is how the process of repatriation actually works. Initial expectations often are that the request will be made to a museum, then people will travel to the museum, and their ancestors will return home to them almost immediately. The time it takes to arrange for NAGPRA grants to cover travel and for publication of repatriation plans and so forth can come as a shock. The second major area of misunderstanding concerns “objects of cultural patrimony.” To many people, this means any artifact connected with their culture, and they expect to be able to make claims for ethnographic and archaeological collections and have them returned to their villages in their entirety.

Another set of misunderstandings concerns tribal historic preservation officers (THPOs). Many tribal governments have heard of them but few actually know what the regulations are concerning the establishment of a THPO office.<sup>9</sup> One particularly pernicious result came from a government agency (nameless for what should be obvious reasons) that was involved in construction projects in villages. Some agency personnel would encourage tribal governments to set up THPOs, even providing sample resolutions, and assert control over their cultural resources. They would then enter into an agreement with the “THPO” concerning inadvertent discoveries of human remains and other archaeological resources. These generally specified that construction personnel would notify the “THPO,” and that the “THPO” had 24 hours to take action, after which time construction could proceed. While this no doubt worked like a charm in avoiding construction delays, it has obvious deficiencies in the realm of cultural resource management. This all was done in a roundabout fashion and was totally illegal. Attempts to force agency personnel to take responsibility for imposing proper procedures usually were fruitless.

### SO WHY KEEP DOING IT?

Some of the foregoing may not sound too encouraging. Libraries in the Bush generally don’t have extensive archaeological holdings. Consulting the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey files or reports on file at the Office of History and Archaeology involves a multiday trip costing at least \$1,000.

Nonetheless, being an archaeologist based in a bush hub has definite advantages. The main one is, after you’ve been there for a while, you get to know people and people get to know you. They have a chance to observe you, see how you act, and decide whether or not you are trustworthy. You have a chance to convince even those people who generally distrust archaeologists that you, as an individual, can be trusted. This often means that people are willing to share more detailed information with you over time. Entire research topics that people would not be willing to work on or even discuss with an outsider can open up for collaborative work as people come to know you. It can become possible to find common ground on cultural resources even with people who have worldviews that may be somewhat at odds with those underlying Western science.

Where I work, I am fortunate that there are still some elders who remember seeing people using types of tools or other items that are now excavated as artifacts. For example, when trying to identify fragments of sewn hide, experienced skin sewers can identify the whole from a rather small fragment, based on the type of stitch used and the cut of some individual piece. Many more people spent at least part of their youth camping at what are now archaeological sites around the North Slope. When attempting to interpret sites from a hunting culture it is absolutely invaluable to be able to consult with people who’ve spent their entire lives hunting those same species of animals on the same landscape.

Another real benefit is that you have the chance to interact with children many times as they grow up, in the classroom and also in the summer when you are excavating near town. It gives you the chance to channel their natural curiosity about cultural resources, leading to concern for their preservation, rather than coming across as a preachy outsider who is easily ignored. For several years, I have been carrying out a major excavation of an eroding Thule cemetery with a crew composed in large part of local high-school students. I don’t believe any of them had seriously considered archaeology (or any science) as a possible career option, but several of them have gained the skills to be competent archaeological technicians, both in the lab and the field. Two of them have worked for me on local CRM projects. Several of them are considering continuing on to higher education, and even if they don’t choose to major

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<sup>9</sup> Due to the lack of Indian country in Alaska (other than on Annette Island), it would appear that even if a federally recognized tribe were to follow the process and obtain National Park Service approval of a THPO, they would be merely symbolic, since THPOs only have jurisdiction on tribal land, which has generally been considered to exclude lands owned by a tribe but not considered Indian country.



in anthropology, they have the skill set to work in on-campus archaeology labs or local CRM firms, instead of at a fast-food outlet. Even those who show no interest in post-secondary education understand that archaeology entails more than just picking up old artifacts. They clearly have a much greater understanding and appreciation of their ancestors' lives and the challenges they faced, as well as the resourceful ways they met those challenges. Some students are returning for their fourth season, and a number of the other students were originally encouraged to apply to the project by friends who are already participating.

You also have the chance to interact with a variety of community members. Even if the interactions do not involve archaeology directly, they shape people's views of archaeology and archaeologists. There are also many opportunities for some informal science education about archaeology, how archaeologists learn what they learn, the importance of context, and the problems created by uncontrolled artifact excavation. Where I live, there are alternatives to subsistence digging for people needing to support themselves and their families, and over time, one can gently nudge people away from the practice.

As relationships develop, you have the opportunity to learn what sorts of cultural resources and historic questions are most important to the community and to collaboratively develop programs that address those concerns and questions. In doing so, community members can become more engaged in archaeology and often develop interest in a much broader array of topics than they initially had. Research questions that may have been uninteresting, or even felt to be somewhat unpleasant, may over time become things community members want to know.

## CONCLUSIONS

Clearly, I feel that being an archaeologist based in the Bush has major advantages when it comes to both cultural resource management and research in general. It is equally clear, however, that it is not practical for most archaeologists to operate from the Bush. For the foreseeable future, the majority of archaeologists working in the Bush will be from road-system communities or even Outside. I have made a number of suggestions throughout this paper of ways that such archaeologists can increase their chances for interactions with bush communities that are positive

for community members, cultural resources, and archaeologists alike.

The following list is offered as helpful suggestions for those of us who are not fortunate enough to be able to work from the Bush.

1. Remember that people in bush communities may occupy several roles.
2. Proper scoping, including cultural resources, is absolutely crucial.
3. Make contact with the community before arriving, consult extensively, explain what you're doing when you get there (including why the work is legally required), and return to give public presentations of the results after the project is finished. Do not rely on letters, written reports, or e-mail for any of the above.
4. Do as much work as possible in the community, including lab work. Involve young people.
5. Explain who you work for (agency or contractor) and that you are there about the cultural resources connected with a specific project. If community members raise concerns about other government-related issues, make notes and attempt to pass them on to the appropriate parties. Give the community members contact information for the appropriate parties. If you work for an agency, try to get your noncultural resources colleagues to do the same.
6. If subsistence digging appears to be an issue, gentle education about the problems it can create for understanding archaeological sites may be appropriate. Using pejorative terms, whether in community meetings or in interviews with the media in communities on the road system, is not productive.
7. If the opportunity arises, straightforward explanations of laws pertaining to cultural resources that community members may have heard about, such as NAGPRA and THPOs, can be helpful in avoiding unpleasant surprises and disappointments to the community.
8. Your actions, and those of your colleagues and crew members, affect not only people's opinions of you and your project but their attitudes toward all future archaeologists and anthropologists who may work in that community or any other community in the region. Please try to act in a collegial manner.

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