ESSAY

PURSUING A GOOD: RESPONSIBILITIES AND BOUNDARY SPANNING IN ARCTIC ARCHAEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

There are a fortunate group of archaeologists leading archaeological research in the Alaskan Arctic and Subarctic, yet few Alaska Native archaeologists leading this work (Alaska Native Knowledge Network 2025). As defined by Margaret Anamaq (Inupiaq) and affirmed by Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq (Inupiaq) boundary spanners are those with a combination of identities such as Indigenous, community member, researcher, archaeologist, and academic that may often sit in opposition to each other (Uluak Itchuaqiyaq 2022). This paper examines more than a decade of boundary spanning, reflecting on the ongoing development of community partnership and a "good" archaeology, including locating balances between the often oppositional needs of community relations, disciplinary tenets, institutional partners, undergraduate field school students, and logistical challenges of remote field archaeology in partnership with the community of Tuyuryaq/Togiak, Alaska. The emphasis of this paper is to demonstrate an approach that centers community while spanning competing interests.

INTRODUCTION

The "pursuit of a good" has long held a space within philosophical debate as well as in the ethics and practice of archaeology. Within archaeology, lively discussion about "good" and largely a desire to "do good" can be observed in a range of publications, intellectual debates, and the professionalization of ethics (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2008; Hamilakis 2007; Soderland and Lilley 2015; Watkins 2005; Zimmerman et al. 2003). The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) declares itself a leader in the definition and practice of ethics.

> Through its Committee on Ethics, annual Ethics Bowl, and Principles of Archaeological Ethics, SAA is a leader in defining and practicing ethical conduct (SAA 2025).

While concerns about ethics within the discipline often come about as a response to the colonial foundations of the discipline, the debate has become trapped within a western epistemology and a false dichotomy of good vs. bad. This has at times become personalized, casting doubt or blame on individuals or as a reductive argument suggesting *care equates to good (*Barnett 2022; Lyons and Supernant 2020). This evades more substantial considerations such as challenging archaeologists to incorporate critical assessment and analysis, avoiding universalization of ethics, and engaging in an ongoing reflexive interrogation of not only the discipline at large, but of self. To "care" indicates a particular emotional investment, a feeling, though it adheres to no particular ethic. Care can pertain to anything from polarizing politics or intellectual debates to the inactionable. Caring as an inactionable stance that can allow for abhorrent acts to occur without interference. Likewise, a person can care deeply about something that

may cause pain to others. For example, Boas cared deeply about his work, his personal achievements, and the development of anthropology (Müller-Wille 1998) though it is indisputable that his work and the development of anthropology has caused extreme and ongoing harm to Indigenous peoples (Deloria 1997). To rely on care to ensure an ethic of good can allow abhorrent acts to become justifiable, a collateral damage in lieu of the things that are cared for.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED RESEARCH

Over the past two decades, the role of community has become an imperative in archaeological research, particularly in North America, emphasizing a growing interest in examining ethical issues situated in the orthodoxy of archaeology and the false positioning of objectivity that has furthered narratives of a disappeared peoples (Deloria 1997; Nicholas and Hollowell 2007). Requests from funding agencies (e.g., NSF navigating the new Arctic) reflect this shift, asking researchers to engage with communities, though expectations lack clarity. Agency requests encourage community consideration beyond consultation, inviting virtue-signaling language such as community-engaged, co-production of knowledge, and community partnership without establishing modes of accountability or requiring a shift in research design beyond wording in many cases. This is further complicated by capitalistic pressures seeking to limit research costs while requesting an expansion of participants/participation to include community. What happens when the researcher is also a community member? While whiteness is rarely perceived as a conflict of interest (Walter and Anderson 2014), the identity of the researcher has sparked controversy when it comes to Indigeneity, specifically challenges of essentialism, and a disavowal of Indigenous research as a *rigorous* alternative to orthodox research models (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010; McGhee 2010).

There is a growing need for nuanced conversations about collaboration and community engagement. This has become urgent as the number of non-Indigenous scholars who express desire to *do* Indigenous archaeology, better expressed as Indigenous-centered archaeology (Sanger and Barnett 2021), increases. Indigenous/Indigenous-centered or community archaeology and the accompanying language suggests a particular ethic or virtue, one that signals a relationship of varying degrees with community, inadvertently making the roles of community and researcher mutually exclusive. As more Indigenous peoples holding advanced degrees in archaeology move into researcher roles in the discipline, they/we are uniquely situated as boundary spanners who, along with community intellectuals and partners, bring with them epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies that depart from Western orthodox approaches, offering new perspectives within the discipline. This highlights emergent needs and new opportunities to hold conversations exploring potentials and bringing a "good" into focus, specifically in field research.

There is no prescriptive set of instructions for "a good" in any archaeology, including collaborative Alaskan archaeology, though it is clear through our professional societies and discussions about ethics that there is a desire to do good work. Without relying on a template for good, Alaskan collaborative archaeology provides an opportunity to implement adaptations that allow communities to chart their own pathways. Alaska is vast. Each village and community will have different desires and needs, and each researcher will be required to make decisions about their own priorities and how best to satisfy their desire for *a good*. Indigenous archaeologists span a unique positionality and are well suited to guide some of these possibilities.

BOUNDARY SPANNERS

> …individuals who occupy both academic spaces and marginalized community spaces and who are called on to act as mediators between the two (Uluak Itchuaqiyaq 2022:2).

Being an Indigenous archaeologist within a largely non-Indigenous discipline that has grown out of colonialism can incite discomfort, especially when butting up against the power held by the orthodoxy (Milandri 2025; Wilcox 2010). Founded in colonialism and the exploitation of Indigenous or subaltern peoples, contemporary anthropology, and its subdisciplines, continues to struggle to make a clear break from its colonial origins (Deloria 1988; Wilcox 2010). Boundary spanning highlights how competing interests result in a different set of requests (or spanning of responsibilities) that an orthodox scholar would be likely to encounter, including requests from colleagues, students, or others seeking "introductions" to knowledge keepers, potentially seeking to exploit the relationship(s) of the spanner (Tuck 2009; Uluak Itchuaqiyaq 2022). Boundary spanning challenges institutions, and their representatives, to imagine the different responsibilities the spanner may be navigating at any

particular time (Hatch et al. 2023; Uluak Itchuaqiyaq 2022), highlighting the multitude of interests that the spanner is required to navigate. Boundary spanning can result in a prohibitive amount of pressure, including unusual or unspoken expectations and burdens. The impacts of this in archaeology can be ascertained from the low numbers of Indigenous peoples with advanced degrees in the discipline. In the U.S. and Canada there are fewer than 50 Indigenous PhDs in archaeology, with only three being Alaska Native archaeologists (Alaska Native Network 2025), while the discipline retains a strong focus and power over interpretation and understanding of our pasts (Deloria 1988; Wilcox 2010).

BOUNDARY SPANNING IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SCHOOLS

Field schools have served as an important rite of passage for undergraduate and graduate students in archaeology. They provide hands-on experience for learning field methods including community engagement, field journaling, survey, mapping, excavation, screening, field curation, field ethics, and opportunities for mentoring (Silliman 2008). They also provide an important opportunity for students to determine if field archaeology is a pathway they want to pursue while providing credentials that give participants advantages when applying for positions in cultural heritage management (Douglass et al. 2024; Emerson 2021). For students pursuing an emphasis in lab-based archaeology/archaeometry, field schools can be an important opportunity and reminder for lab technicians to engage with context, place, and community.

While the conditions of a field school will not be replicated in all fieldwork, the field school is an excellent case study to explore how to incorporate the concept of boundary spanning in combination with Indigenous/Indigenous-centered as it addresses a wide range of potential responsibilities that researchers must navigate, helping to locate a good in Alaskan archaeology. The following example is led by an Indigenous archaeologist but is applicable to any archaeologist independent of their identity, providing a clear opportunity to engage in Indigenous-centered approaches without the inadvertent appropriation of Indigenous identity (Sanger and Barnett 2021). This approach relies on Lambert's (2014) Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP), a conceptual model that aids in visualizing an approach that centers community values and desires while still meeting the other obligations researchers must attend to.

For researchers, field schools can assist with supporting research programs, training and mentoring students, and meeting community responsibilities. Orthodoxically, field schools have been an opportunity for researchers to employ student labor for the intensive work of excavation and analysis. Field schools require a significant amount of planning and investment and take on a certain amount of risk. Field schools/fieldwork have often become a source of hazing or tales of spectacular displays of inappropriate behaviors including substance abuse, sexual exploits, and/or discord (Voss 2021a, 2021b). The borrowed saying "what happens in the field stays in the field" is commonly heard, equating poor or risky behavior that can occur in the field to risky behaviors associated with visiting Las Vegas. Recognizing and planning for the real risks associated with abuses of power is especially impactful for early career scholars and students hoping to secure a future within the field of archaeology (e.g., Clancy et al. 2014; NSF 2022).

A recent inquiry into field school considerations and priorities for potential participants highlighted the most pressing criteria students pay attention to when considering an archaeological field school (Douglass et al. 2024). The criteria students gave the greatest attention to when considering a field school are:

- Safety
- Cost
- Inclusivity
- Availability of information
- Schedule
- Flexible accommodations
- Other

These highlight some of the important factors extending beyond research that researchers need to consider in the planning process.

My field experiences in graduate school provided an important perspective for leading my own field schools in later years. In 2015, during my post-doc, I arranged the first field season in Togiak, Alaska, a Yup'ik village in southwest Alaska's Bristol Bay region. The invitation to conduct field research came from the tribe after two years of collaboration, during which we located belongings from a 1960 excavation. The first year began with a small research group of seven, including a graduate research assistant and two undergraduate interns both hired through our Alaska Native regional corporation's educational foundations, Cook Inlet Regional Corporation (CIRI) Foundation and Bristol Bay Native Foundation (BBF). This work remains committed to supporting the tribes' questions and desire

to fulfill their sovereign rights to develop and share a comprehensive knowledge of their old village.

In 2017, during my first year as a faculty member, I organized and carried out the first full "field school," taking 12 undergraduate students to Togiak after receiving an invitation to teach an experiential learning week class (E-week) at the school on place-based archaeology followed by continued research at the Old Togiak village (GDN-00203) across the bay from the current village. The format developed in that first year has continued into the most recent field season in 2025, with adaptations and adjustments each year. It is our collaborative research in Togiak and a continual reanalysis of the field school/research that has culminated in the boundary spanning approach I rely on.

The encroachment of capitalism in academic institutions and its relationship to archaeology (Hamilakis 2007) creates some of the most influential factors while planning a field school. For example, pressure to increase enrollment to the largest number of students meets the departmental demands for more "butts in seats" or increasing student enrollment per faculty member. The emphasis on increased enrollments highlights tensions between making a field school course cost-effective for departments via increased student numbers, tuition, and extra course fees collected from students, subsequently increasing the amount of labor, risk, and responsibility placed on the researcher. This emphasizes a reliance on students to reduce monetary pressure on institutions, departments, or grants already contributing to field research that ignore the competing interests of safety and learning.

This approach carries downfalls and risks such as placing a counterintuitive financial barrier on students seeking important training for their chosen profession. Additionally, the pressure to increase student enrollment (1) decreases the student:instructor ratio; (2) can increase the need for graduate student teaching assistants, some of whom may have no previous teaching, excavation, or field experience; and (3) increases the range of roles within the field school adding complicated power dynamics, which increases opportunities for abuses of power (Clancy et. al. 2014; NSF 2022). More importantly, the pressure to maximize the number of participants increases the footprint of the field school, increasing the number of resources required and the amount of waste created, along with the demands of time invested in logistics, management, teaching, conflict resolution, and safety that take the focus away from community relationships, responsibilities, and partnerships.

A MODEL OF PRAXIS

To address these challenges, I rely on Lambert's (2014) Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) (Fig. 1) as a foundation for demonstrating researcher responsibilities and considerations for Indigenous or Indigenous-centered research. Alone, the IRP allows us to visualize a path toward community-engaged research, a nonhierarchical order of considerations: a web of interlocking needs that cannot be arranged in a linear series of methodological steps. One of the strengths is the interconnectedness of each methodological consideration, which does not exist or function independently of each other.

I use IRP in combination with a modified concept of boundary spanning (Fig. 2) to demonstrate the role of the boundary spanner (center) and the multiple interests and obligations pulling at the spanner when carrying out collaborative research. The spanner/researcher must attend to the requirements and needs of communities, funding agencies, safety and logistics, local students, undergraduate students, graduate students, staff/interns/colleagues, institutions, and the land; all interests that, at certain points, sit in opposition to each other. Therefore, boundary spanning becomes a necessity. The act of boundary spanning is not new. When it comes to Indigenous scholars and scholarship, academics at all stages are familiar with the concept often coined in dualistic concept of *walking in two worlds,* or more recently the Mi'kmaq concept of *two-eyed seeing* (Atalay 2022). The recognition of boundary spanning draws attention to the multitude of variables being spanned, upending the notion of navigating between two things. It is with this in mind that each of the following headings can be located within the IRP conceptual model (Fig. 2), modified for the purpose of guiding us through the complicated web of responsibilities and considerations of field schools.

I organized this discussion within Lambert's (2014) Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) Conceptual Model, combined with concepts of boundary spanning, using headings and subheadings that can be located within the IRP supporting conceptualization and integration of categories while avoiding perceptions of priority hierarchies.

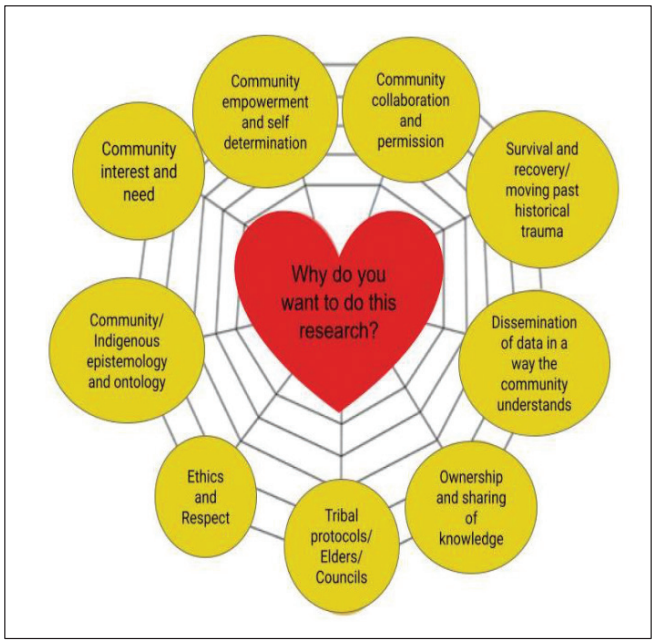

Figure 1. Indigenous research paradigm: a conceptual model (Lambert 2014).

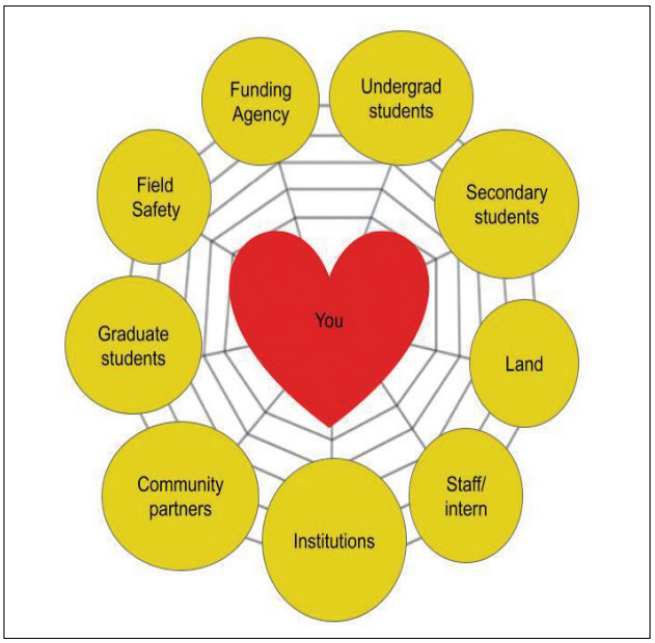

Figure 2. Boundary spanning (Hatch et al. 2023; Uluak Itchuaqiyaq 2022) and modified IRP (Lambert 2014). A frame of reference for navigating collaborative archaeology partnerships.

FUNDING AGENCIES

Agencies and foundations providing funding influence research, providing clear priorities and agendas based on changing national interests. These are powerful forces that impact research trajectories and career potential, creating a sense of security or precarity depending on the shifting values and desires (Tuck 2009). Another key function funding agencies serve is meeting needs of professional development, including career advancement, tenure, and promotion. A National Science Foundation or National Endowment for the Humanities award is highly competitive and prestigious and can provide an important advantage when competing in the job market or for tenure and promotion.

Funding agencies establish and control timelines for research and reporting. Timelines can limit or expand opportunities to build relationships prior to designing or implementing research plans, which creates a chicken-and-egg scenario when it comes to Indigenous/Indigenous-centered collaborative or community-engaged research. Agencies possess the ability to transform concepts of collaborative research. For example, if agencies specifically provide funding that supports the building of relationships prior to research design, this enables communities and researchers to build trust and to participate in defining research parameters, desires, questions and outcomes together. This is a vital aspect, defining and developing measures of accountability for research and data sovereignty, collaboration, and co-production of knowledge that center community interests and objectives as an organizing structure.

The priorities of funding agencies at any given time require researchers to adhere to predetermined objectives and standards. NSF's call for "Navigating the New Arctic," encouraged a flurry of research proposals to meet the goals of an undefined community-engaged research. Though well intended, there were consequential burdens placed on communities in the form of requests for letters of support from researchers they didn't know. This example highlights the importance of relationality, building trust and respect prior to developing or seeking to implement a research plan.

Community-engaged, Indigenous/Indigenous-centered work is not easy. It requires additional time, planning, and investment. Newly added challenges include changes implemented in 2018 and early 2025. U.S. funding agencies were ordered to limit or halt research on climate change and put an end to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), (Garisto 2025; Harris 2019; S3 2019). This most recent move to end DEI initiatives is in direct opposition to the existing standards and goals of NSF, which are to increase

the reach and impact of science learning and engagement. This highlights some of the precarity that comes from shifting policies, which creates challenges for researchers who are trying to secure funding support for collaborative fieldwork in a world where words such as collaborative, community, or Indigenous may trigger a process that undermines the success of a funding proposal.

FIELD CAMP SETUP, SAFETY, AND COMMUNITY

I often emphasize the remoteness and challenges of isolating conditions at our field camp in Alaska, though for participants any field location, including urban settings, may feel remote or isolated based on the distance from the support systems participants would commonly rely on. Field settings in Alaska will vary greatly. With a land area of 571,242 square miles and a water area of 94,483 square miles, Alaska has the highest Indigenous population of any state in the U.S. at 20.29% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). Due to its expanse and the diverse landscape including mountain passes, tundra, and various shorelines, much of the state is only accessible by boat, small planes, or helicopters, providing another layer to the designation of remote or isolated. Coming from outside, one may be compelled to consider these locations as the "middle of nowhere." Centering community reminds everyone that although unfamiliar or remote, these locations are also the "center of everywhere" (Dylan Thombs, pers. comm. 25 May 2017).

Working in Alaska poses unique logistical challenges for building infrastructure and addressing safety. It requires a strong knowledge of the region, including familiarity with local businesses and knowledge of current issues and events. In Southwest Alaska there are a limited number of barges each year that can transport supplies. Not only is it costly, but the travel and transport are weather contingent. A lack of knowledge and familiarity can have dangerous consequences for participants and place unnecessary pressure on community relationships and resources to offset these mistakes.

In 2019, I purchased a 20-foot shipping container packed with vital field gear and infrastructure to support our field research. The barge was scheduled to arrive May 7, a convenient three days after our arrival in field camp with a group of students and researchers. Due to weather, the barge did not arrive until three days before our departure. It was also inadvertently unloaded on the wrong side of the bay, on the Togiak side. By the time we realized the error the barge was gone, along with any chance of receiving our gear that field season. This could have been catastrophic for safety, well-being, and research if it weren't for the existing knowledge of place and good relationships that provided temporary, reciprocal support.

The remoteness of Alaska Arctic and Subarctic research also means that institutions cannot always provide logistical support during either the planning process or during the field season. This places administrative pressure on the principal investigator, such as booking flights and charters for large field crews and shipping gear and food supplies via air cargo or other modes of transport. This also includes securing propane and gasoline and arranging transport. In 2023, the fuel barge was scheduled to arrive at the end of April but did not arrive to replenish fuel supplies when our group departed in June. The village of Twin Hills, located across the bay from Togiak, ran out of fuel, putting extra pressure on Togiak fuel supplies. The resources in villages, such as fuel, propane, groceries, etc. are impacted significantly by our presence and it requires careful consideration, planning, and respect to minimize the toll our group can potentially have on village resources.

Setting up the field-camp infrastructure is a time-consuming endeavor. It takes three to four days and includes setting up tents, kitchen, temporary composting bathrooms, and a Weatherport in the domestic area of camp. Camp breakdown takes another two days, meaning if you want to complete two weeks of even orthodox fieldwork you will need to be there for at least three weeks. Prioritizing community and Indigenous research is slow work that requires thinking beyond logistics and making time to ensure that community-engaged work is factored in and there is enough time to proceed without placing demands on community partners and collaborators to respond to your timeline and agenda. This also needs to fit within institutional perimeters as a course that is restricted by the number of credits, length of term, and capacity for participants to be away.

Detailed safety plans, including evacuation plans and a list of potential pilots you can depend on for emergency support, ensure the potential for success. This includes consideration for community partners and/or community members, including youth. Weather plays a large role and can shut down field work for days while also making it impossible to replenish supplies. Advance planning and careful monitoring of supplies is crucial. Safety has become a reciprocal aspect of the field camp.

The community checks in on our well-being during challenging weather, and likewise we check in and are prepared to provide shelter and warmth to community members who are facing the same conditions and may not be able to make it home. Having more than one person on the leadership team hold backcountry and CPR certification is important, along with a robust first aid kit that includes items such as stitches/staples, tourniquets, wound irrigation, burn care, hydration, medications, and sanitation. In preplanning stages, I have implemented the development of individualized care plans for participants. This includes both leadership and students disclosing preexisting physical and mental health conditions, stress responses, or other conditions along with development of emergency care plans with their existing health providers. Having access to 24-hour mental health support, especially under harsh or remote conditions, is an important safety consideration. Even participants without preexisting mental health concerns can find themselves needing support. The location of our research is in a rural region with limited or already stressed health care resources intended for community members. Healthcare needs of any kind require thorough planning and can have significant consequences if overlooked.

Safety plans also include animal awareness and training. Our arrival in early May or June runs the risk of cooler temperatures and occasional storms, but allows us to arrive and depart before the fishery is open to minimize the chance of bear encounters and mosquitos. Safety in field camp includes bear spray and air horn training, bear drills, and clear safety protocols for encounters with foxes, moose, or other animals. We also include earthquake and tsunami drills and evacuation protocols. Establishing a sense of trust and transparency with field participants prior to our arrival helps us move through safety training pragmatically and honestly, helping alleviate anxiety.

During my experiences as a graduate field teaching and research assistant, I learned the importance of maintaining clear expectations and communication. Shared camp chores/tasks pair students in teams and assigned daily responsibilities among the group include daily water hauling, camp cleaning, meal preparation, dishes, and toilet emptying/cleaning along with camp showers and scheduled phone use. These chores are carefully scheduled and posted in a common area along with detailed definitions and expectations of each task. These are reviewed during predeparture meetings on campus, and reviewed at each transition in the field, and posted in easy-to-access areas in field camp. A clean field camp not only deters wildlife from visiting; it also conveys our respect for land and place to community partners.

Food is of vital importance for connectivity, sustenance, and health. I have learned to make food a priority and reduce efforts to lower costs by skimping on ingredients and variety. Not only does it provide important comfort for participants who are away from their regular support systems, but it also allows us to prioritize community partnerships and relationships by always being able to accommodate shared meals, snacks, or coffee/tea with community and guests. It takes significant planning and hiring a camp manager with expertise in food safety, preparation, and management in off-grid conditions with no refrigeration, running water, electricity, or heat. Cooking is a shared task in our camp, overseen by the camp manager. This emphasizes the importance of community and responsibility for each other and provides the added bonus of students learning to cook for groups of people. Community partners often share in recipe exchange and ingredient sharing. We eat each meal together, everyone sharing the same meal prepared to meet accommodations for food allergies and sensitivities. Predeparture meetings include regular reminders that everyone will be making compromises on preferred ingredients, but food remains an important aspect of keeping everyone healthy, happy, and connected. Each student has a chance to provide these benefits to their field school cohort with the expectation that local community partners and friends can drop in for a meal, a cup of coffee or tea, or stay longer if wanted or needed.

Living and working together in close quarters inevitably creates social stress. Clear boundaries and expectations are part of a good safety plan as well as good social/community planning. Incorporating critical thinking, active listening, and community-based priorities that emphasize the "we" rather than "I," along with built-in opportunity for conflict resolution, facilitate satisfaction, and a shared sense of safety and belonging. We also plan activities and events that break up the monotony of fieldwork and ensure participants have time alone. Each year I incorporate a "found things" hat contest, daily stretching exercises, and a paint night on the beach. These activities are intended to build in alone/quiet time during hat preparation on evenings preceding the unveiling of the hats at a beach cook-out, while paint nights provide creative outlets and keepsakes for participants in lieu of collecting keepsakes from the land.

SECONDARY STUDENTS

Community is at the center of our collaborative research. In the past, much of my community work has relied on the physical structure of the school as a place of connection, though conflicting needs of school districts and communities may differ. Additionally, giving a drop-in presentation at the school can be perceived as an easy way to check the community box. Ironically, this was the case in Togiak at the original 1960 excavation when the archaeologist stopped into the school on the last day of their time in Alaska to give a presentation to the students (Barnett 2025). In 1960, the school was a place for the archaeologist to build relations with the schoolteachers who had come to teach from outside Alaska; still common practice. Anymore, the school is a place of relationship to community, independent of those who may be in rotating leadership roles at the school.

E-week at the school has become a central component of our collaboration and after nearly a decade, I have worked with students and their younger cousins and siblings and watched students graduate and have children of their own. Foundational readings, learning, and preparation for our work begins in predeparture meetings on campus; this ensures that once the field school officially departs, we are centered in the village with the community rather than field participants being engaged in their own orientation.

E-week courses center on the archaeology at the old village, emphasizing connection and meaning, continuity, and sovereignty. A strength of archaeology is that it can transcend disciplines and interests. In May 2025, E-week was a weeklong hands-on course co-taught with Elders Evelyn Eva Yanez and Ferdinand Sharp, building a *qasgiq*, an old style sod house, using Yup'ik math, engineering, and language. The course included 50 Togiak high school students, seven undergraduate students, and two graduate students. Over the course of the week, multiple community members, Elders, teachers, and staff were engaged in the project, including local clinic practitioners in health and wellness.

Returning to the school each year to teach place-based courses supports community goals. E-weeks are the most rewarding and challenging components. Teaching and learning includes course development, internships, and a commitment to return, an act that demonstrates the importance of our relationships. It also has affirmed to Togiak youth that they matter. This work is not about the past; it is about the future. This is vital messaging in a village school where most, if not all, middle and high school teachers come from outside, teaching a year or less before departing, sending a message that there is something wrong with the people and/or place. With teacher turnover in rural Alaska villages between 30 and 300%, care and trust between community, students, and educators struggle to flourish (Drew 2022). For many years, the most pressing question from local students at our departure was: "[when] will you be back?"—a seeking of reassurance that they matter. One measure of the success of our collaboration is that this is no longer the case. Rather, they know we will return and want to know when and who will be coming, emphasizing the complex responsibilities that must be negotiated and considered in advance.

After departing the school and village we cross the bay to our field camp, living in tents for the coming weeks. I offer paid and unpaid internships for Togiak youth participants, support drop-in visits, and have transportation available for anyone who wants to join us but may not have immediate access to transportation. We have a well-known drop-in policy for meals, visits, and monitoring, with guardian permission and/or school permission for minors. I have equipment specifically aimed at supporting community partnerships, including tents, sleeping bags, and accommodations for various lengths of visits and collaboration. Important considerations are given to these visits, including student or minor status, additional safety plans, and consent and/or invitations for chaperones or family members. Boundaries and preplanning considerations provide a safe structure that ensures opportunities for collaboration and learning/co-learning for an entire community. This is a move away from relying on community members as volunteers or uncompensated labor and opens our field camp up as an extension of community space, whether used or not. Our field camp is in and on village lands. It is a place reserved for community in all aspects of camp life, a place to share a meal, a walk, a sit, or collaborate in field methods and research supporting hands on learning, engagement, and community building while affirming their value and a reminder that it is the field school participants who are the guests.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Working in community requires knowledge, understanding, and commitment to community values and desires represented by Respect, Reciprocity, Rights of Refusal,

and Relationality (the Rs). These Rs, encompassed by Indigenous research methodologies (Schneider and Hayes 2020), have become popularized and injected into orthodox research designs, and consequently reduced to value signaling language without a demonstrated change in methodological approaches. The desire to co-opt these methods is complicated by the time required to develop relationships that support them. Currently, funding agencies are economically strained, and funds are more likely to be allocated towards research than relationship making. Indigenous/Indigenous-centered research methodologies and boundary spanning is slow work, requiring time to develop the trust needed to support the Rs. Boundary spanners may be perceived as having an advantage in this area because they often have a pre-existing relationship with community partners. Despite this, it remains slow.

In Alaska there are numerous partners to consider, extending beyond considerations of local village members to address various interests stemming from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). Under ANCSA, lands were allocated and divided with consideration to surface and subsurface rights among various Native regional and village corporations, associations, foundations, etc. (Tuck 2014). The distinction between surface and subsurface highlights some of the challenges of archaeology in Alaska which breaches these divides.

In addition to corporations, foundations, and associations, there are tribal/traditional councils, Elders, local school boards, regional school districts, and the larger local community. Overlooking or excluding any of these communities can result in a regretful oversight and emphasizes the complicated question of who counts as community. Understanding and recognizing the formal role of each distinct entity is necessary while also recognizing and centering tribal sovereignty. Each of the groups will have a vested interest and potentially engage with or impact the collaboration. It is important to consider each group or entity, but it is the tribe that holds the ultimate authority. In villages, it is common that many individuals serve in various roles, spanning boundaries within the village and making none of these entities or groups mutually exclusive. This is an important reminder that if you overlook any particular group/entity they will likely know about it before you realize your oversight, keeping you attentive to the importance of inclusive communication and consideration. There will be varying responses to the presence of researchers. Even with good relations, it is unlikely that everyone will be happy about your presence. Archaeology has a sordid colonial foundation that has resulted in the taking, collecting, and severing of objects from their communities (Thomas 2000).

The voices of opposition and challenge are as important as the voices of support and provide an opportunity to listen, understand, and realign your approaches with community values. One important example of this was when a then-current tribal council president did not want to support archaeology in the old village. There were valid reasons for this as archaeologists and outsiders have invested in taking rather than giving. I also felt honored by their decision to share their discomfort. It recognized the relationship and respect we have for each other, given that sharing a voice of dissent creates more vulnerability than that of agreement or support. We can't separate archaeology from its past, but we can examine opportunities to prioritize communication and transparency and always honor ongoing rights of refusal if communities decide they no longer want research conducted there. The council president's resistance to having archaeological work conducted at the old village was resolved through listening and learning more about the work I was doing and the way I was approaching that work. Once assured this was not an orthodox approach to archaeological research, they were assured yet remained skeptical. More recently, they have become an advocate and an engaged partner in our research—working together at the school, sharing ideas, and spending time with us in our field camp. I seek out their input and advice with confidence, knowing they will share their thoughts independent of whether they think they may align with mine or not.

Traditional Council has a long-term comprehensive plan that I rely on to ensure our work supports community needs and desires. This also provides a resource created by the community that I can be responsible to as a first step, rather than exhausting the community with unnecessary inquiries and requests.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Running field research as an undergraduate field school adds an enormous amount of work. Experiential learning from travel, discussion, and intellectual and personal growth is a unique hands-on learning for undergraduates, very different from the classroom they are accustomed to, and one that can highlight the discomforts of learning. Investing in a thorough application process for students can help facilitate success for everyone. The application

and review process for undergraduate participants includes multiple information sessions, individual applications, interviews, and reference checks. Once selected for participation, there are four months of on-campus coursework and predeparture meetings that include meeting with former undergraduate participants, safety meetings and protocol review with on-campus partners, review of required gear, and a detailed packing list. This helps build realistic expectations and assists in preparation for being in a unique field camp in an unfamiliar place; one that prioritizes community while still caring for participants. The application and on-campus predeparture coursework takes place over a six-month period, emphasizing the amount of planning and labor required.

Participating students begin their off-campus learning in Anchorage where we spend two to three days acclimating to Alaska, the long hours of daylight, and phasing students into being in a new environment. While in Anchorage we visit local museums and the Alaska Native Heritage Center, including the reconstructed old-style houses on the outdoor trail. Participants practice critical thinking and communication, examine roles of representation and grand narratives about Alaska Native peoples and communities, and interrogate the role of archaeology in narrative making. Participants learn how to speak *to* and *with*, rather than *about* or *for* Indigenous peoples. There is also built in time for students to visit gift shops and bookstores and to view the city before transitioning to being off the road system.

Travel to Togiak requires a combination of jet and regional bush aircraft. During E-weeks, undergraduate participants phase into a single-room, shared living space without cell phone coverage while still enjoying the comforts of heat, shelter, bathrooms, showers, and kitchens with electricity. Space is limited but it is a priority to establish a distinction between sleeping spaces for undergraduates, graduate students, staff, and researchers to ensure recognition of boundaries and differentials in power, limiting opportunity for abuses. In addition, living in the school requires clear guidelines that recognize the school needs, including teachers and students and the reality that we are sharing space with minors. Togiak students look forward to our return for E-week and are excited to reconnect with returning students and meet new participants. The relationships between undergraduate participants and students have destigmatized fears or insecurities for local students about post-secondary education and training opportunities. E-weeks are a good example of relationality. They emphasize the sharing and exchange of different knowledges from the work we have done at the old village, linking information across generations. The time at the school provides an important platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and research accountability.

The relationships between undergraduates and Togiak students are an important point of discussion. Undergraduate participants often express concern about what it means for them to be there as temporary guests and are interested in developing clear expectations for what is a reasonable and appropriate relationship for them to build with local youth. Togiak youth recognize the undergraduate participants as peers, fellow youth, and they are always excited for our arrival. I usually start getting messages from Togiak students in early spring inquiring about who will be coming, when we will arrive, and what E-week classes will be offered so they can sign up. The relationships between Togiak and undergraduate students are often ongoing thanks to social media and technology that transcends time and space, including Instagram and Snapchat. These relationships have made internships for Togiak students appealing and exciting to continue the friendships they have built and to continue to participate in the archaeological collaboration that is centered in their culture, history, and home. There are opportunities for paid internships conducting lab work together with a focus on analysis and interpretations.

The end of E-week marks the transition to field camp across the bay. Once at camp, we all participate in the set up and maintenance tasks for the coming two to three days. Before excavation begins, participants are trained in excavation techniques, field journaling and paperwork, setting up practice grids, mapping, and survey. Relying on Yup'ik math to set up grids reminds participants that Indigenous peoples have always been scientists, creatives, engineers, artists, etc. It is not the colonial imposition of the West that developed these areas. Practicing excavation on the beach prior to excavating within the designated area alleviates anxiety students may have about making mistakes and developing techniques. I try to emphasize this as a learning opportunity in which people take priority over excavation, allowing us to take time so participants can feel confident in their learning and receive the oversight and training to ensure clear understanding of method and protocol. The methods and protocols are relatable and community partners of all ages—from 5 to 75—come together to teach and learn together. This approach seeks to ensure that the community is always recognized as the

knowledge holders and the connections between people and place are always emphasized.

The months of on-campus predeparture coursework helps undergraduates prepare for a successful experience as we focus on identifying and communicating personal boundaries, working towards creating a trusting community, clarity of pedagogy and Indigenous research paradigms, and taking time to know each other as well as ourselves. I communicate a set of non-negotiables that reflect community values, including a strict drug and alcohol policy and rules about land-use with restrictions placed on exploration. I have learned to include opportunities for reconciliation and resolution, including clarity around the circumstances that will result in expulsion from the course. This, in addition to taking time to meet one-on-one with each participant to establish personalized care plans and facilitate one-to-one check-ins after campus departure, supports positive outcomes of field research, participant learning, and community collaboration and relationships.

Importantly, I have learned to communicate the following:

- Students are temporary guests; the community is the center.
- I will not make rules or consequences I may be unwilling to enforce.
- Participants need to understand discomfort does not automatically equate to harm.
- Not every participant is guaranteed the same experience.
- Don't just talk about it, post all information and resources in easy view for students and community.

Because we live together 24/7 there is the challenge of maintaining boundaries to ensure leadership meets their responsibilities to participants and do not become overly casual, parental, or a mental health provider.

I recently introduced Starlink to our infrastructure for the purpose of technology and emergency support. It is a great option but requires a generator, necessitating that limitations are placed on its use. I keep three cell phones in camp for emergencies, supporting scheduled or emergency communication with family/friends and access to mental health and campus resources, including an ombudsman. I discourage students from getting their own SIM cards, and being "unplugged" has become something students look forward to. This has also highlighted the need for discussion and planning for the final transition of the field school, *re-entry*. What will returning to home, campus, social media, and family and friends look like? How can they prepare to respond to questions that inherently focus on the materiality of archaeology (e.g., artifacts/belongings) when Indigenous/Indigenous-centered collaborative research prioritized the community? This is something that participants have expressed appreciation and gratitude for, as re-entry is a transition that is easily overlooked.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Graduate assistants are supported by clear, previously agreed-upon job descriptions that are co-written for clarity of expectations. An important addition to the job description is clarification that the position is one of responsibility, not authority. This is an opportunity for graduate students to pursue their own research and professional development while learning to work collaboratively as part of a diverse team. We prioritize communication and conflict resolution. Graduate students in the field can be perceived as inexpensive labor, leading to tension and resentment. I have prioritized providing fair pay, timely reimbursement (something the bureaucracies work against), and transparency. Living and working together 24/7 for five-plus weeks requires mutual respect. Feeling respected translates to good field partnership and practices, replicating the model of the Rs to extend beyond community to all partnerships.

STAFF AND INTERNS

Like with graduate student research assistants, clear roles and expectations, including agreed upon job descriptions and fair and timely compensation, is a priority. It is unrealistic for staff to be off-grid for up to six weeks and wait an additional four to eight to be paid. Staff bring important training and expertise and play an integral role in helping with place-based camp protocols, including respect, communication, and other tools of support. In 2019, I began implementing the permanent role of camp manager. Adding this position requires additional upfront efforts on the part of the principal investigator, including funding, planning, and logistical considerations. The camp manager attends all predeparture meetings with the graduate and undergraduate students and has allowed for a more sustainable distribution of field responsibilities and support.

The camp manager is also designated as a role of responsibility, rather than authority. They are responsible for co-supervising camp schedules, overseeing the kitchen,

food safety, and equipment. This position plays an important part in our leadership team, providing daily logistical support with technology such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR), drones, or other specialized equipment to graduate students in addition to overseeing camp maintenance and food inventory and reordering. This role also provides an alternative avenue of communication and support for community partners and students and adds an additional layer of safety in camp.

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

There are various institutions to consider, including permitting agencies such as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), though for the purpose of the example of field schools I will limit this discussion to academic institutions. Institutional pressures create some of the most influential factors while planning a field school. Institutional expectations are often incongruent with teaching a field course. There are departmental pressures to increase course enrollment to the largest number of students possible based on institutional economic issues and the cost of supporting field studies. In theory, Indigenous/Indigenous-centered community engaged research is valued but the reality is that there may be challenges to prioritizing community needs and partnership when it is perceived as being in opposition to department and institutional interests.

Institutions are risk averse, employing legal teams charged with protecting institutional assets and potential perceptions that a fully realized risk assessment is a liability. This may create pressure for the researcher to minimize risk rather than expand considerations, leaving everyone vulnerable to harm. For example, acknowledging abuses of power, including rape or sexual assault, or even tsunami, earthquakes, hypothermia, and drowning can dissuade institutional support, especially when the risk is extended to consider community members.

Navigating institutional pressures can be assisted by clear communication and advance planning. Identifying a *comprehensive* list of potential risks allows opportunities to establish protocols, trainings, and discussions that offset the risks identified and makes time to begin developing shared, realistic expectations in advance. Our collaboration and relationships are year-round and include bringing community partners together to share in analysis, conference participation, and academic and professional development which is not always easily accommodated by institutional bureaucracies, especially when including minors, but it is an important aspect of maintaining accountability. Striking a balance between institutional expectations and limitations and community commitment and responsibility can be challenging, but is possible.

LAND

Respect for land and place is paramount to Indigenous/Indigenous-centered community archaeology and reflects an acknowledgement and respect for Indigenous sovereignty. Both Indigeneity and archaeology are vested in land, highlighting a natural tension between the two, leaving several issues to attend to. With field schools, this begins with screening student and leadership team applications to avoid academic tourism. This can be identified by requesting a short answer from applicants explaining why they are interested in participating in this field school. Red flags may include references to exploring or experiencing a new place without an acknowledgement of the people who live there and/or the learning objectives included in course information. During on-campus predeparture coursework, we require students to watch the satirical documentary *Qallanut! Why White People are Funny* (Sandiford 2006), providing an interrogation of western orthodox research in the Canadian Arctic with the aid of humor to help the viewer take in the difficult topic and impact of scientific colonialism, including the treatment of land as an exploitable object or something to be conquered.

The film and subsequent conversations help avoid participants arriving with a sense of entitlement to explore what they may perceive as an empty landscape. Challenging these concepts as well as establishing guidelines and expectations about the treatment of land aids in creating new understandings of relationships and responsibility. The lands we engage with may be contested or hold complicated histories of allocation or misallocation (e.g., ANCSA land divisions). The field school's relationship with the land is connected to a deep respect for community and a responsibility to the land to ensure the health, sustainability, and acknowledgement of the continuing relationship between the village and the surrounding lands and waters.

Not only does field work require respect, care, and limitations placed on access or exploration/discovery of place. It also requires considerations of historical traumas and the way that our research can trigger these. In 2017, during a gathering at the school, an Elder shared

his experience during ANCSA and the land division process. He described looking across the bay to the old village (where we currently excavate) watching as helicopters landed and people got out driving stakes into the ground laying the groundwork for divisions of lands and allocations. This account is a reminder to use caution as we set out grids (close to ground, pulling as we go) as well as leaving the excavation backfilled and closed when we depart, leaving the land intact and whole. Treating the land as you would any living relative ensures it remains respected in a way that honors community and land as a place of relationships.

CONCLUSION

There remain important questions to consider when planning a field school, such as:

Compensation and recognition: This approach creates a significant increase in time and labor.

Funding support and buy-in: Will research proposal evaluators be trained in community collaboration? Safe and inclusive best field practices? Indigenous/Indigenous-centered research methods? Will there be budgetary allowances for additional support such as remote mental health access, travel SOS insurance, and expansive (diverse) leadership and infrastructure team?

Departmental support: Will there be support to build a leadership team with specialized knowledge and experience? How can we minimize pressure to take more participants? What role do course evaluations play in tenure and promotion? Will this teaching be valued as equivalent to on-campus courses?

Institutional support: How do we plan accordingly to acknowledge existing and potential risks that can be perceived as too great of a liability? How can we minimize pressure to avoid or conceal liability?

Self-protection: After planning carefully for well-being, safety, and respect for communities and participants, how do researchers assure that they build in protection and boundaries for themselves? Field schools create vulnerabilities and risks for researchers, especially early career scholars.

While there is no prescriptive set of instructions for a "good" collaborative Alaskan archaeology, the combination of the IRP and boundary spanning (Hatch et al. 2023; Lambert 2014; Uluak Itchuaqiyaq 2022) creates opportunities for researchers and communities to come together and imagine possibilities. Grounded in Indigenous methodology, these become helpful tools for researchers interested in developing a place-based Indigenous/Indigenous-centered collaborative archaeology that meets the requirements of a wide range of representations, including community, institutions, funding agencies, land, and students, among others. The implementation of this conceptual model defies initiatives to professionalize or universalize an ethic of good, offering an adaptable approach to guide and design research collaboration for place-specific research. Furthermore, this model provides clarity regarding the *when*, *why,* and *how* of community field research with opportunities to locate and build upon a *good.*

Eventually, research collaborations will come to an end. These tools help ensure that, although research concludes, the relationships and respect will continue, emphasizing the potential for archaeology to solidify its place as a transformed, nonextractive discipline that prioritizes Indigenous presents and futures, rather than retaining a limited focus on the past.

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