

**RED, WHITE, AND BRUISE:  
LESSONS FROM DECADES OF COMMUNICATION,  
CONSULTATION, AND COLLABORATION**

REBA FULLER AND YVONNE JANSEN  
TUOLUMNE BAND OF ME-WUK INDIANS

SHELLY DAVIS-KING  
DAVIS-KING & ASSOCIATES

*The plenary theme of the 2015 SCA meetings, developed by Program Chair Kaely Colligan, was "Beyond Boundaries." That theme promoted discussion on the confluence of geographical, cultural, and/or political boundaries. This article was introductory to the plenary session, beginning with two Me-Wuk women providing a skit to offer a dialog between a Native American (acted by an archaeologist) and an archaeologist (acted by a Native American). The attempt was to demonstrate different perspectives of the same issues, with a goal of communication, consultation, and collaboration. Like other papers in the plenary, this one asked the audience to consider the effects of Native Americans not being active participants in the preparation of research designs, reports, and investigations.*

Players:

- Agency Ann, Agency Archaeologist, wearing her Navajo turquoise.
- Chief of Sacred Hill Tribe, in regalia.

Scene 1: In Agency Ann's office, she repeatedly looks at her watch, wondering where the Chief is. As he arrives, the dialog begins:

Agency Ann    Hi, I'm Agency Ann from My Way or the No Way Agency.

Chief            I'm Chief of the Sacred Hill Tribe, the descendants of the original people here.

Agency Ann    Thank you for coming. This meeting is to discuss the Sanitary Project on Sacred Hill. I thought you people might be interested. Here are the reports I sent you two weeks ago. Have you read them?

Chief            [SHOCKED look]. We've been here for thousands of years and you sent us these reports just two weeks ago!! This is only a start of our discussions. I'm here to listen for my people.

Agency Ann    There isn't really anything in these reports that you should be worried about. Just some technical reports on geomorphology, water quality, endangered species, and cultural chronology, and things like that. Nothing of interest. I'll take care of it for you.

Chief            Endangered Species? It's our culture that's an endangered species. Sounds like everything in your reports has to do with Mother Earth and The Creator—it's our responsibility to be stewards of the land. Of course we're interested!

Agency Ann    Oh. Hmmm. I really like your jewelry

Chief            And I see you think you can wear Indian jewelry, too.

Agency Ann    Yes, it was handed down to me from my grandfather. I thought this would show you how much I wanted to share with you. I'm part Indian too, so I understand your position.

Chief            [aside] Which part?

Agency Ann    [pointing to a map] So, this project we are discussing, can you tell me if it's in your territory and if it has any significance?

Chief Exactly where is it? Sacred Hill. Heeellllloo.

Agency Ann Well, since you haven't read the reports, why don't we make a field visit? Come along, I'll show you.

Scene 2: In the field with map:

Agency Ann Here we are at the project! Do you see anything?

Chief Is that bone?

Agency Ann [foot stomping on indicated bones]. No, I don't see anything. Probably chicken bones. Besides it's white.

Chief [as an aside, while patting mouth] Oh, and I suppose our bones are red or brown? And all Indians go "whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop."

Agency Ann Oh no, no, no. That's not what I meant. Let's look at the map. Here's the project and the sites we discovered.

Chief All those little circles are what? Who determined that?

Agency Ann Well, we archaeologists did the survey a year ago and the professionals marked the boundaries.

Chief Wow, a year ago? This is the first I've heard of a survey. Why didn't you ask us to help? Like on this one site here. Where it's shown on one side of the creek? You think my people didn't cross the creek?

Agency Ann That's not in the APE. We're only dealing with these boundaries.

Chief What does an APE have to do with where the site is?

Agency Ann I'm sorry, I have a Master's degree. It means the Project's Area of Potential Effect. We use lots of acronyms.

Chief Oh, bureaucrat-ese. I see. We don't need to read your report to know about this place. In our culture there are no boundaries. Those little circles on your map are all interconnected. Where are the gathering areas? Where are the hunting areas? Don't you see that this is one big cultural landscape?

Agency Ann What's a cultural landscape? Oh, by the way, all the sites will be impacted, so we'll be doing some mitigation here, and you'll get a chance then.

[Looking at her watch again] I'm sorry, I have another meeting. I would love to get with you again though, to get your concerns, because we start this project in 30 days.

Chief You mean you want me to drive two hours on my own dime, and take time off work, so you can hear my concerns in the next 30 days? We need to talk about it NOW.

Agency Ann [walks away] I think we're finished here. I can say I consulted with you. I'll be in touch.

Chief What does "mitigation" mean? How will this affect our culture? Your circles—you don't really know what they mean. Is your intent the destruction of our people? I think this Sanitary Project is really Dig Em Up Project.

[Both actors walk off stage]

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CONSULTATION, AND COLLABORATION**  
(Shelly Davis-King)

That little skit was put together from recent statements and actions made by archaeologists to Reba Fuller and is just a small glimpse into what can happen when archaeologist and Indian meet, even today.

When our young discipline began, Columbia University professor Franz Boas created American anthropology as a discipline of four fields: cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, linguistics, and archaeology. Each was an aspect of understanding human beings, through field observation, the study of physical features, language, and lastly, through a cultural historical investigation of the past, or archaeology. The principal students of Boas—Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Edward Sapir, and Alfred Kroeber—went out into the academic world, retaining the original four-field approach. Consequently, that first generation of academic anthropologists knew Native Americans as people, not merely as objects of study.

Boas (1911) firmly argued that there was no such thing as a higher form of culture—that is, that there were no stages of human social development. Thus, one group of people was not superior to another, and this founding principle set anthropologists apart from the other social scientists and, indeed, the prevailing belief of that generation. Boas rejected the common museum presentation of ethnographic artifacts as somehow related to developmental status, and preferred instead an organizational system whereby items on display were based on function, affinity, and geography of the cultural groups in question. This was a radical idea in the late 1890s.

In addition, Boas founded the idea of cultural relativism, which holds that cultures cannot be objectively ranked as higher or lower, or better or more correct, but rather that all humans see the world through the lens of their own culture and judge it according to their own culturally acquired norms. Thus one group may find caterpillars disgusting to eat, while another finds them to be a fried delicacy worthy of a party. Neither better nor worse, just different. It is the understanding of those differences that Boas felt was the object of anthropology: to understand the way in which cultural upbringing conditioned people to understand and interact with their world.

Boas's students carried his four-field approach to their respective institutions, so that in 1901, when Alfred Louis Kroeber became the first professor of the newly formed Department of Anthropology at the University of California Berkeley, he insisted that his students and colleagues adhere to the four subdisciplines. Although Kroeber is known primarily as a cultural anthropologist, he did significant work in archaeology and anthropological linguistics, and made important contributions connecting archaeology and modern culture. His excavations in New Mexico, Mexico, and Peru kept his mind open to and aware of the historical backgrounds of the people he worked with in California.

Kroeber and his colleagues collected cultural details about California tribes that appeared in the *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*. Note that Kroeber included both archaeology and ethnology in the series title, believing them to be central and comparable concepts that went beyond disciplinary boundaries. Interviews with native Californians continued, especially up to and just after World War II, retaining the Kroeberian perspective that both ethnography and archaeology are continuities in Native American history. According to Julian Steward (1961), Kroeber “liked especially to deal with civilizations in which archeology and ethnology were not distinguished.”

But then something happened after World War II, and it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when, how, or why. In 1966, an archaeological task force with representatives of different groups was formed to consider how to improve the archaeological discipline in California. Clem Meighan at UCLA represented the UC system, since Bob Heizer at Cal refused to get involved. Adán Treganza represented the California State Colleges, while avocationalists were represented by George Kritzman of the Archaeological Society of Southern California and Tom King of the Northwestern California Archaeological Society. Fritz Riddell represented the State of California, Paul Schumacher the federal archaeologists, and Charles Rozaire represented museums. Significantly, there was no representative from the Native American community. The task force met several times to discuss an improved disciplinary future, and it was decided that the simplest approach to the problem of getting some organization into the state's archaeological community was to form a society. And so, in 1966, the Society for California Archaeology was created.

The SCA was very small in those early years. An investigation of the SCA meeting program for 1969 indicates there were 41 papers given. The majority involved some sort of Indian archaeology, especially issues surrounding the High Dos Rios Dam project, which by the damming the Eel River would inundate Round Valley. Rob Edwards (1969) noted that this inundation would “destroy 750 known ... archaeological sites, relocate several hundred native Americans and ... wipe out what remains of Yuki culture.” Anthropologists, largely archaeologists, felt there was a political and social responsibility to oppose the dam and minimize cultural genocide. Edwards called for “salvage anthropology” rather than “salvage archaeology.”

Bob Schenk (1969) discussed the destruction of Yuki physical and cultural areas, calling for a museum to be operated by the dispossessed Yuki population to help them adjust to the new way of life and help preserve their cultural unity. Gene Anderson (1969), the distinguished ethnobiologist, expressed that ethical considerations for the Yuki displacement needed to be considered, and called for Indians and anthropologists to work together. Leslie Wildesen (1969), having regarded Native Americans as excellent field informants, argued economic and political gains could be made if archaeologists and natives worked together to improve information, with “peaceful and friendly cooperation.” Beyond these four papers however, there was no real consideration of living California Native communities nor interaction with the same reported in the other 37 papers. With few notable exceptions, collaboration ceased and boundaries were drawn.

The 1970 SCA meetings at Asilomar saw Native Americans invited to participate in the annual meetings for the first time. The Indians who showed up, according to one informant, were largely the contingent from the Alcatraz occupation force (or according to another informant, they were from the University of California, Davis Indian Studies Department). They drummed, chanted, and danced throughout the night in the living room of one of the main dorms. The police visited the building several times during the night to demand quiet but were altogether ignored. The Indians prayed to Creator to stop the graverobbers, but the “graverobbers” never attempted a meaningful dialog with the Indians.

By this time, I was finishing my degree in anthropology at UC Santa Barbara, where the majority of my professors were uninterested in training their archaeology students in how to interact with native communities. One professor, Bill Allen, stood out, however, suggesting that there was no way a bunch of white-boy college kids could ever understand what it felt like to grow up on a rez. Even more, he suggested that we, as a profession, had long ago lost the ability to think of Indian groups as human beings, and he set about to teach us an example (as told below, with some memory license).

We packed up our VW van and another vehicle with sifting screens, shovels, buckets, and the other tools used by the archaeologist and headed down the 101 some 100 mi. to Los Angeles. There we set up our excavation grids and began digging up a cemetery. Soon the police arrived, arrested our professor, stopping the excavation, and we archaeology students knew that we had achieved our goal. In laying down excavation units at Forest Lawn, the white establishment could not tolerate the excavation of *their* ancestors. The double-standard was evident, and those of us who participated learned a lesson we would never forget. But we were a rare group of archaeologists.

Beginning in the 1970s, American Indians protested widely against archaeology, or the “Vulture Culture,” as they called it. Joe Watkins (1994) analyzed 144 articles in major Indian newspapers and periodicals published between 1969 and 1979 that revealed distrust, revolving primarily around the perceived threat to Indian ancestors and their remains. It was the excavation of burial grounds most specifically that caused the complete breakdown of communication between the two groups.

In contrast to the early four-field anthropologists, many later archaeologists received scant training in the other subfields. Exposure to ethnography and linguistics was often limited to some required undergraduate course. Native Americans, as real live people, faded from their experience. Many archaeologists purposefully and actively distanced themselves from Native Americans, but in so doing, they distanced themselves from the descendants of those whom most archaeology studies. As the discipline evolved with better technical skills, archaeologists became worse anthropologists.

Also, around 1980, in Redding, Native Americans confronted the SCA Board, but to little effect. Bitter debates preceded the enactment of NAGPRA, lapses in proper consultation still continue, and there remains an unwillingness to believe the Native informant when they describe something that cannot be measured or seen. Boundaries between archaeologists and the Native people whose remains they are investigating have become more extreme in some cases. I ask that you focus on collaboration between Native Americans and archaeologists, with the purpose of facilitating important conversations from your respective viewpoints and looking “beyond boundaries.”

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