Interweaving Knowledge and Foregrounding Local Interests: Reflections on Building Collaborative Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

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The past three decades have ushered in a paradigm shift in the field of archaeology toward increasingly collaborative, participatory, and multivocal approaches developed through synergistic partnerships with descendant communities that foreground the impacts and relevance of archaeology and cultural heritage preservation in the present, as well as the deep connections between local places and shared identity. Community-engaged archaeology projects are both global and local in the sense that they contribute to broader efforts to decolonize the research process and elevate the voices of underrepresented communities in conservation and public interpretation of cultural resources, while the path collaboration takes varies considerably depending on local context and relationships between stakeholders. For over a decade, InHerit: Indigenous Heritage Passed to Present, a program founded by archaeologist Patricia A. McAnany, has developed and supported several collaborative projects that combine anthropological research, cultural heritage education, and conservation. Through recent InHerit partnerships with communities in Yucatán, Mexico and North Carolina, we see that some of the most profound opportunities (and challenges) grow out of two essential components of community-engaged projects: interweaving different epistemologies and knowledge systems in pursuit of shared objectives and integrating local interests directly into research design and implementation.

Keywords: community archaeology, cultural heritage, public education, traditional knowledge, community-based participatory research (CBPR)

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As several of our colleagues in this issue of *The Mayanist* show, the archaeological past is deeply rooted in communities and landscapes, and the steady transformation in anthropological archaeology toward community collaboration continues to be essential to move the field in a direction that is more ethical, applicable, and sustainable. In 2006, Patricia McAnany and students co-founded the Maya Area Cultural Heritage Initiative (MACHI), which later grew into *InHerit: Indigenous Heritage Passed to Present* and its non-profit partner the Alliance for Heritage Conservation (See https://in-herit.org/en/). Today InHerit is based out of the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Over the past 15 years, InHerit has co-directed or supported 25 projects through partnerships with 57 Indigenous communities in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and the U.S.

The three co-authors have been involved in designing and facilitating InHerit collaborations during the past four years in Mexico and North Carolina. In this article, we discuss fundamental principles that have guided our efforts to develop community-engaged archaeology and cultural heritage education projects, as well as challenges and opportunities that have come to the fore as we operationalize these ideas. We believe that partnering with descendant communities requires at least two essential components: (1) interweaving distinct epistemologies, or knowledge systems, in pursuit of shared objectives and (2) integrating community interests into research design, as well as implementation. Doing collaborative research in archaeology, history, or any social science is no easy task—it is a process of relationship building, negotiation, reflection, and re-positioning of roles that necessitates time and flexibility to develop trust and respond to shifting priorities (McAnany and Rowe 2015:7). As the ethics and practice of archaeology have changed over the past three decades, opening doors to increasing engagement with Indigenous and other concerned communities, community-participatory approaches are, in turn, reshaping the study of the past and the process of knowledge production and exchange.

Prioritizing Community Engagement

Beginning in the late 1980s, postmodern and postcolonial critiques in the social sciences and humanities encouraged archaeologists to reflect on their position within the interpretive process and relationships with descendant communities, as well how the past could be used, for better or worse, in the sociopolitical present (Clark and Anderson 2015:2; Hodder 1999; Shanks and Hodder 1995; Watkins 2009; Zimmerman 2003). This aided multivocality and served as a springboard for further development of critical heritage studies, public archaeology, and museum studies, which exposed the colonialist underpinnings of the field and the great divide between Indigenous people and non-Native scholars who studied their cultures and histories (Fixico 2003; Lowenthal 1985; Merriman 1991; Zimmerman 1997). InHerit's Executive Director, Patricia McAnany, and former Program Director, Sarah Rowe (2015:4) have also traced the collaborative turn in American Archaeology, in part, to the passage of the pivotal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in the U.S. in 1990. After a tremendous, long-running effort by

Indigenous peoples to advocate for the right to control—or at least be consulted about—the disposition and treatment of human remains and associated cultural resources of their ancestors in archaeology and museums, new spaces opened for community engagement and co-management in archaeological research (Derry and Malloy 2003; Pyburn 2003).

By the turn of the 21st century, professional organizations, as well as scientific and cultural institutions like the United Nations (e.g., 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, were redefining their ethical principles and steering the field toward inclusivity and accountability. Within this, of course, there is great variability in how researchers approach engagement with communities most affected by research, from consultation on one end of the spectrum to fully Indigenous archaeology (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008).

McAnany (2016:55; see also McAnany and Rowe 2015) has discussed archaeology's transition from a discipline operating through a "dyadic relationship" between archaeologists and the material culture (things/places) of past cultures to one recognizing the "triadic relationship" among archaeologists, local/descendant communities, and places/things. The latter recognizes the "past cannot be conserved by the expert knowledge of archaeologists alone," but relies on collaboration with multiple "constituencies" who may not be experts, but are intimately connected with the remains of the past and whose actions will ultimately be instrumental in protecting these cultural resources (McAnany and Rowe 2015:5). In Latin America, the relationship between the archaeological past and its various related constituencies is magnified by the importance of cultural tourism as a means of economic development and the evolving role of the Indigenous past in heritage ideologies (Clark and Anderson 2015:3).

It is in the context of this change in anthropology/archaeology that InHerit was created as a program focused on cultivating synergistic partnerships with Indigenous communities that bring Native voices, experiences, and interests to the foreground in knowledge production, as well as conservation and interpretation of sites, material culture, and sacred landscapes. InHerit projects are always linked to cultural heritage, or people's complicated and multi-layered understanding of their connection to places, practices, and things that are grounded in the deep past and passed down from ancestors (Hutson et al. 2014:8; McAnany 2020:321). Attention is trained on how collaboration can make our work not only applicable to positive social change, but also more "effective" in expanding our understanding of the past and mobilizing new knowledge, as well as contributing to processes of decolonization (Stahl 2020:38).

InHerit projects apply techniques from community-based participatory research (CBPR) to go beyond the framework of consultation with Indigenous communities to collaboration, which requires building more robust partnerships for knowledge production and exchange. Participatory research involves a shift in emphasis toward the *process* over the product, or the perceived value of the information generated and disseminated (McAnany 2020:323; Stahl 2020:38). Bringing multiple voices and epistemologies, or ways of knowing, into project design is beneficial because it expands explanatory spaces and the possibilities for accessing and interpreting information when the co-creators engage with different worldviews and positions in relation to cultural resources (Stahl 2020:39). Learning from each other about the different ways the past is experienced and valued is necessary to align the interests each partner brings to its study and interpretation.

Interweaving Knowledge and Interests

One of the scholars whose work resonates strongly with InHerit's mission is Anishinaabe archaeologist Sonya Atalay. While there are a wide variety of useful concepts related to bridging Native and non-Native knowledge systems that have been discussed before, we embrace Atalay's (2012:27) concept of "braided knowledge" (cf. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2010; Silliman 2008; Nicholas and Markey 2015; Zimmerman 1997). Based on traditional teachings, this idea suggests that community-based projects necessitate multiple forms of braiding, or interweaving, of distinct ways of knowing and strands of data from diverse stakeholders, including descendent communities and researchers from academic spaces.

There can be multiple points of convergence, as well as tension, between archaeological epistemologies and Indigenous traditional knowledge systems (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2010:326; Nicholas and Markey 2015:287). This is sometimes framed as "western science" versus either "religion" or "oral tradition"—but these are false dichotomies, in addition to being an inaccurate characterization of the nature of archaeological reasoning (Nicholas 2018). Different epistemologies are not necessarily diametrically opposed. In fact, the perception of opposition tends to be the result of settler colonialism and the unequal power structures and social relations borne out of it, rather than any inherent incommensurability. The braided knowledge concept draws on the potential synergy of Indigenous and western sciences, focusing on how the frameworks each employ and the data they generate enhance each other (Atalay 2020:6). Still, any community's ways of knowing and experiential relationship with the subject of study may be radically different than those of the non-local researchers, and a big challenge lies in finding points of intersection and congruence.

A community-based participatory approach brings Indigenous community members' voices into the process early, at the level of research design, from decisions about what research questions to pursue to the methodological approaches and kinds of evidence used. Community objectives and those of academic partners may or may not be aligned, and non-Native archaeologists and other specialists must be prepared to relinquish authority over what topics are addressed, what data are accessed, and the methods employed to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. As Atalay (2012:184) explains, working together on a plan of action creates opportunities in the form of transcultural spaces for open discussion and critical reflection. This places knowledge systems into "productive dialogue" where they can co-exist (Stahl 2020:38), allowing for a bidirectional rather than unidirectional exchange, where one way of understanding and relating to the past is privileged (McAnany 2016:132). Knowledge that is co-produced is more effectively applied to addressing the social issues most important to communities. Archaeologists who learn the methods and practices of Indigenous science (e.g., traditional ecological knowledge, storywork, etc.) are better prepared for tasks such as sharing information with the public, promoting science literacy, and applying archaeological knowledge to challenges like global climate change (Atalay 2020:8).

Sometimes the priorities of Indigenous communities lie elsewhere, or archaeology may only relate to certain community concerns. In CBPR projects, local communities' objectives carry at least as much weight as that of the researchers, so the research goals or methods of archaeologists and historians may take a backseat in community-driven initiatives. While braiding knowledge always has potential to generate novel hypotheses about how humans lived in the past, of equal

significance are what we learn about the cultural meaning of the past in the present and implications for knowledge sharing and conservation.

Recent InHerit projects, have only been tangentially related to archaeology compared with other community-engaged endeavors that are built around archaeological fieldwork, like the Proyecto Arqueológico Colaborativo del Oriente de Yucatán (PACOY; see Dedrick 2021). For example, the two InHerit projects discussed below are centered on cultural heritage education and involve partnerships with schools and museums (https://in-herit.org/en/newsletters-archive/). Archaeology certainly plays roles in these initiatives, but traditional archaeological practices of survey and excavation do not.

This trend of working with teachers and developing education programs may result from our backgrounds in higher education and believing that experiential education can lead to cultural empowerment for underrepresented groups (Freire 1970). It may also be because teachers in the communities we work with tend to gravitate to projects that connect with young people and help them access transformative experiences and experiential content. Public education is also one of the places where the negative impacts of settler colonialism on Indigenous communities, including heritage distancing, is most evident.

Heritage distancing refers to the systematic separation or alienation of Native peoples from their cultural heritage due to barriers to accessing the tangible remains of the past (i.e., ancient sites, artifacts, sacred landscapes) and the intangible cultural traditions, shared identity, and information about their ancestors obtained through archaeological investigation (McAnany and Parks 2012:80). This can take many forms, depending on the specific historical context. In Mexico, for example, an ideological separation between the archaeological past and Indigenous present caused by centuries of colonialism followed by a reframing of heritage discourse in terms of a unifying national narrative of racial and ethnic identity obscures significant cultural diversity. Many people who speak Indigenous languages do not self-identify as descendants of the people who built the ancient sites spread across their homeland (McAnany 2016:71), and this has ramifications for cultural resource preservation, intellectual property rights, and economic development. In the U.S. and Latin America, traditional knowledge systems and local history are often left out of school curricula, and in some communities, there are growing calls to reconnect with sacred places and traditions as cultural heritage. In education-centered projects, collaborators are focused on mobilizing knowledge and helping people access it to overcome historical erasure and trauma, which is central to the braided knowledge approach in community-based archaeology (Atalay 2020:11), as well as applied anthropology.

Reflections on Recent InHerit Collaborations

Two recent InHerit projects exemplify how we attempt to operationalize the approaches outlined above and the challenges and complexities that shape the process. The *Cultural Heritage, Ecology, and Conservation of Yucatec Cenotes* project is a collaborative environmental conservation and education initiative with nine Yucatec Maya communities in eastern Yucatán, Mexico. Beginning in 2018, the project was funded by the National Geographic Society and co-directed by

Figure 1. Prof. Raúl Jacinto Carvajal Díaz and Dylan Clark visit the community cenote in the town of Tixhualactun, Yucatán at the street level (top) and inside the sinkhole (bottom). Photos by Dylan Clark.

Patricia McAnany (UNC-Chapel Hill) and Maya archaeologist Iván Batún Alpuche (Universidad de Oriente), along with collaborators from the U.S. and Mexico. While there is not space here to fully describe the multiple components of this project, you can read more about it in Landry Montes et al. (2020 and 2021).

The project centers on *cenotes*, the Spanish term derived from *ts'ono'ot* in Yucatec Mayan, which are limestone solution sinkholes ubiquitous in the karst environment of the Yucatán Peninsula (Figure 1). Cenotes provide a source of water, and fertile soils build up in and around them. It is not surprising that cenotes have been integral to the cultural and religious life of Maya communities for millennia, and most towns were built near them (Hernández and Vail 2013). Today, cenotes remain experienced by many as sacred centers of communication between humans and supernatural forces, often through offerings or ceremonies (Figure 2). They are also developed for ecological and cultural tourism, a source of crucial income in the region.

Unfortunately, cenotes and the great aquifer they connect to face significant ecological threats from industrial farming, waste contamination, unsustainable tourism and development, and climate change. While there is considerable appreciation for and local knowledge about cenotes within Maya communities, people's ancestral connection to these critical biocultural resources is also declining as they lose access to many through privatization, while others are neglected and polluted (López Maldonado and Berkes 2017). Even though cenotes do contain impressive archaeological and paleontological sites, our project was not designed around archaeological fieldwork. Rather, our objective was to mobilize the energy and excitement of Yucatec Maya students between the ages of 11 and 14 and their secondary school teachers to learn more about community cenotes and become active advocates for their conservation. Partnering with the communities and secondary schools (equivalents of grades 6-8 in the U.S.), as well as college students at the Universidad de Oriente (UNO) and UNC-Chapel Hill, we designed educator workshops and experiential learning activities that could be integrated into the public school curricula (Batún Alpuche et al. 2021). The workshops and curriculum materials were built around three broad themes, each explored through the lens of cenotes: Oral History and Folklore, Science and Safety, and Archaeology and Cultural Patrimony.

From previous community-based education projects, we learned the importance of bringing teachers into conversation early in the process because they understand best how the tools and resources we bring can be most effectively deployed with students. Workshop themes coalesced through our conversations with the teachers and a sample of Maya students from five participating schools who worked with us at the beginning of the project as part of a CBPR assessment technique called photovoice. In the photovoice process, students filled out questionnaires and took their own photographs of local cenotes, sharing them together in a series of small group discussions (Figure 3). This provided us with an ethnographic window into the ways community members of this age group perceived cenotes and what their major interests and concerns were *before* any curriculum materials or activities were introduced by teachers.

We learned that many students had a strong interest in the oral tradition and storytelling about cenotes in their towns. From our perspective as archaeologists and historians, we originally saw oral history as a secondary, offshoot exercise that could augment the students' main exploration of the Postclassic Maya codices and ancient depictions of cenotes and related symbolism. Through the

Figure 2. View from within the *rejollada* (dry cenote) at the maw of the cave in the community of Tahcabo, Yucatán. Photo by Dylan Clark.

photovoice activity, the Yucatec Maya students shifted the spotlight to stories they learned that explain, for example, how cenotes came to be or what sacred plants grow around them that traditional healers, or *jmeen*, frequently collect and use. This shift in emphasis helped us integrate, or braid in, Indigenous knowledge at the design stage of the project, and we changed our program accordingly by making "Oral History and Folklore" a primary workshop theme. The photovoice activities also served to bridge generations within the communities, as students were motivated to speak with elders about diverse explanations for the natural characteristics of cenotes and how people relate to them today, compared to the past (Figure 4). We started working with local teachers to develop basic training for students in the techniques of recording and curating oral histories. Through this analytical re-centering, we gained further insight into how local people relate to their past and the importance of storytelling in Mesoamerica—what Atalay (2020:11) refers to as "storywork"—in conserving and transmitting cultural traditions. It is not necessarily continuity from the distant past that is valued, as much as connecting with the recent past and elders, and this provides multiple entry points through which we as archaeologists can learn to share knowledge and mobilize an

appreciation for scientific inquiry more effectively.

Among the challenges of community-engaged work is building in sufficient time to adjust based on collaborators' needs. For example, we originally formed an advisory board with teachers and administrators from the schools and the college students from UNO to shape the direction of project activities and content, but we found that formal board meetings at the local university or in the schools were not effective in eliciting participation and the kind of authority-sharing we sought. Instead, informal meetings over coffee and snacks with fewer teachers who, through self-selection, formed a core group created better settings for interweaving the methods we could bring as researchers with the teachers' pedagogy and goals. Our Co-director, Iván Batún Alpuche, and Project Facilitator, Khristin Landry Montes, were also both living near the communities and could meet regularly and manage Whatsapp and Facebook groups with teachers, schools, and students to build relationships and foster essential communication.

Figure 3. Students with Prof. Daniela Garrido Durán from the Héctor Victoria Aguilar Secondary School in Yalcobá Yucatán taking photos at their community cenote for a photovoice session. Photo by Patricia McAnany.

Another obstacle to community-based collaborations and braiding knowledge with Maya communities stems from the entrenched social hierarchy and power asymmetries that are the legacy of colonialism. We see this most clearly when we try to share control over the direction and implementation of project activities. In Yucatán there is still a powerful social class and racial hierarchy with complex historical roots that can undercut our partners' ability to express concerns with the direction of a project, even when critical feedback is regularly sought and incorporated. Our advisory board, for example, was open to all collaborators who we encouraged to participate, but few community members expressed concerns about the educational materials and programming we produced, even with regular communication that their

Figure 4. Cenaida María Ay Pech and Monserrat Karina Tun May conduct a recorded oral history with local *jmeen* (shaman) Don Marcial in their community of Xocen, Yucatán. Photo by Khristin Landry Montes.

voices were essential for shaping the program. Whether among foreign or local researchers, it can be difficult for community members to advise or question the perceived expertise of people that hold advanced degrees or work for an academic institution or government agency. This raises questions about how participating partners can effectively break down asymmetrical positioning built on entrenched historical and social hierarchies when outside researchers unintentionally maintain this through our status as "scientists" or "experts." We must always be attentive to whether our approaches to collaboration do empower people from historically marginalized communities. Later, when the core group of teacher-advisors in the Yucatec Cenotes project did emerge and embrace a power-sharing role, questions also arose about whether and in what ways these individuals could represent the interests and perspectives of the larger community. Ultimately, these issues may not be resolved and require delicate and creative weaving, in, under, and through colonialist power structures to make collaborations not only successful, but sustainable.

While most of InHerit's projects over the past 15 years have taken place in Mesoamerica, two recent initiatives were developed with descendant communities in our home state of North Carolina. One of these, called *Amplifying Native Voices in North Carolina History*, is a project currently underway which grew out of a partnership with the Museum of the Southeast American

Indian (MSAI) at the University of North Carolina-Pembroke (UNCP). The mission of the MSAI is to educate the public about the history, culture, art, and contemporary issues of American Indians of the Southeast with special emphasis on the Native American communities of Robeson County. While there is a deep historical connection between the museum and the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina whose traditional homeland includes Robeson and neighboring counties, the MSAI conducts scholarly research and collects and conserves material culture related to many Native American cultures (Figure 5). Funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and North Carolina Humanities Council, this project also focuses on public education and cultural heritage, where the archaeological past plays a significant role, but is not the central pivot-point for the co-production of knowledge or interpretative content.

What is today North Carolina has a large and diverse American Indian population that includes one federally recognized tribal nation and eight state-recognized tribes. The Lumbee people are a state-recognized tribe with over 55,000 enrolled members. With few exceptions, Native American experiences and histories continue to be largely excluded in education, media, politics, and cultural institutions. In the U.S., the kind of heritage distancing discussed above often takes the form of erasure, where Native American experiences and contributions to local communities are systematically excluded from historical narratives and heritage discourse. For American Indian tribes, a

Figure 5. Exhibit hall in the Museum of the Southeast American Indian at the University of North Carolina-Pembroke, Pembroke, NC. Photo by Dylan Clark.

Figure 6. Collaborators planning the "Amplifying Native Voices" project visit the archaeological collections with Dr. R.P. Stephen Davis at the Research Labs of Archaeology at UNC-Chapel Hill in March 2020. Photo by Nancy Fields.

fundamental aspect of sovereignty is recognition that "we are still here," even when communities have relocated beyond ancestral homelands.

The goal of the InHerit-MSAI project is to provide teachers with access to effective, off-the-shelf experiential learning resources, museum-based programming, and training to help them better incorporate Indigenous cultures, voices, and traditional knowledge into their classes. Like the Yucatec Cenotes project, the methods and topics were selected to address the interests and needs that came to the foreground in a series of listening sessions that MSAI staff conducted with teachers who make up one of the main constituent communities we engage. From these sessions, it was clear that public school teachers have significant interest in incorporating Native American history and cultural heritage into their curriculum, but they lack access to information and resources that have been vetted by specialists, especially Native peoples. It was also noted that one of the significant information gaps for teachers and students is the period from European contact through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. Training opportunities designed to meet these needs include field trips to historical sites and archaeological curation facilities with researchers and curators, as well as a summer teaching institute comprised of a series of educator workshops at the museum in Pembroke, scheduled for 2022 (Figure 6).

As part of capacity-building activities, a cohort of Native and non-Native teachers are working with curators and archaeologists to make curriculum materials applicable to state standards and useful for North Carolina schools. The teachers form an important occupational community, contributing to project design through participation. This form of knowledge co-production is essential for CBPR. Again, the goal is to break down the traditional power structure in which "experts" from academic spaces deliver knowledge into the hands of the "non-expert" community. Instead, working shoulder-to-shoulder, the collaborators open transcultural spaces where continuous dialogue is possible and cultural and interpretive differences can be explored and negotiated (Zimmerman 1997:55). A challenge with early-stage collaboration is that all components of the project are not determined in advance, and flexibility must be built in to shift gears as we work through the process of braiding together the various ideas, needs, and methods—still within the institutional framework of universities and grant funding agencies.

Collaborative cultural heritage projects require continuous reflexivity, and one key issue with the InHerit-MSAI project that continues to be discussed by our partners is the extent to which we will rely on artifacts in the design of educational tools and interpretive content. As archaeologists and museum curators, we find object-based teaching is a useful tool, and educators have expressed interest in working with artifacts. At the same time, our on-going dialogue has highlighted the need for us to re-think the discourse around artifacts to align it better with how Lumbee people relate to their past. Beyond the obvious concern for how objects from funerary or religious contexts are displayed and replicated, archaeology produces narratives about people in the past through material culture that is typed and categorized. From a Lumbee perspective, this produces a kind of rupture, or disconnect, between contemporary people and their past that runs counter to a worldview where the relationship between people and ancestors is continuous, and the artifacts they make and use do not precede or stand in as proxies for people. The material traces of history do not map directly onto traditional knowledge or cultural heritage, which are both situated in the present and equally important components.

Through the collaborative process, teachers and researchers are working out how to position people *first* in the story, as active agents, and from there bring in select artifacts. By interweaving these complex concerns and differing approaches, it may be that archaeology and collections remain significant, but are moved to the background, while other aspects of Indigenous cultures and experiences come to the foreground in creating historical and interpretive narratives that amplify Native voices. The dialogue around these sensitive subjects is not only part of our collaborative planning process but should also be integrated into the curriculum resources we produce to inspire on-going conversations in and beyond classrooms.

Among the benefits we all gain from this project is the disruption of historical erasure and a step toward healing from historical trauma by bringing Indigenous voices and epistemologies into public education and turning the spotlight toward the priorities of underrepresented Native communities. Participating archaeologists and museum professionals are challenged to think beyond objects and relinquish some authority over the interpretation of material culture. This creates opportunities for us to improve research by learning how to apply Indigenous practices, like storywork, and advance cultural resource conservation through collaborative and creative mitigation strategies, which are just as important in archaeological practice as testing hypotheses about past human behavior.

Discussion

We believe the continued growth of community-based participatory research in anthropological archaeology and other social sciences and humanities represents an encouraging change in the study of the past from one that is results-driven to one that focuses on bridging the interests and perspectives of Indigenous communities and other stakeholders with those of the researchers (both Native and non-Native). Shifting the emphasis to the process of collaborative research and how knowledge can be co-produced creates new possibilities for reading the archaeological record and understanding its relevance for people in the present, making our work more effective in the long-term (McAnany 2020:324; Stahl 2020:39). The attention to multivocality and the intentionality of community members and researchers working together to select the strands—data, methods, epistemologies, and interests—that are woven together in Atalay's "braided knowledge" approach resonates strongly with what we hope to accomplish through the *InHerit* program and our recent collaborations in Yucatán and with the MSAI. As we attempt to put into practice these ideas and incorporate community interests and knowledge systems into project design, obstacles do arise, and there are times when we need to shift priorities, detangle the strands, and find new points of intersection to begin braiding again. In some cases, we must be prepared for archaeology to take a backseat in community-driven projects to accomplish broader goals and contribute to positive and meaningful change that benefits our community partners.

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