

## FORUM: From Priority to Practice

*Summarized by Peter Carruthers  
Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation  
Toronto, Ontario, CANADA*

The 1996 Forum was held on Sunday morning from 9:00 to 12:00 in the Donald Gordon Centre. Attended by ca. 60 persons, it was moderated by Peter Carruthers of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation (MCzCR). A panel consisting of Robert Park, Waterloo University; Art Howey, avocational archaeologist; Ron Williamson, Archaeological Services Inc.; and Neal Ferris, MCzCR, created a framework for discussion by raising key issues which reflected current views about where the discipline stood and suggestions about where it might be going. Some of those issues and key points from the discussion are reflected below.

### Robert Park (*University of Waterloo*)

- defined the basic roles of a university anthropology department as being research, dissemination of information, teaching in general, and the training of future anthropologists/archaeologists
- the major changes in the university environment have included fewer funds for all purposes inside the institution and increased competition for dollars outside
- In spite of the fact that statistics from B.C. showed how Arts students were significantly more employable after graduation than science or engineering students, universities tended to try to de-emphasize Arts programming
- the imposition of a business model onto institutions of learning has led to fewer teachers, amalgamated departments, increased teaching load and less time for research
- anthropology although popular among students, and useful in a complex world was not thought by the university administration to be of paramount relevance
- there is anxiety around the influence that business funding may have on types of research done, research outcomes and teaching directions
- there is uncertainty about future availability of jobs for professionals now and for up-coming students

- and therefore there is uncertainty about what level of training would be appropriate
- and of course, who is going to be training who in the future for what kinds of jobs; who will be doing the research and where and how will it be done?

Art Howey (*Avocational Archaeologist*)

- noted that although significant effort from the heritage community has gone into consultation and program development, a lack of follow-through has led to certain important opportunities being lost or deferred
- he included among these efforts, various symposia, meetings and working groups whose reports haven't been acted on; the deconstruction of the ACOP program in south-western Ontario; the imperfect to non-existent distribution and use of educational materials which have been produced by the OAS, and of course, activities around the Heritage Act
- he stressed that although several of these opportunities could still be acted on and that public education was of paramount importance, if the people volunteering their time continued to feel that their efforts were not going to show results they would increasingly take a less community-minded approach
- he stressed the need for an enhancement of professionalism in archaeology so as to increase credibility outside the discipline
- he advanced the probability that roles and jobs carried out by the avocational community could include activities such as education, speaking, fundraising, stewardship, and advocacy

Ron Williamson (*Consulting Archaeologist*)

- described the origin of CRM in North America. beginning in the U.S. and becoming a force in Canada in the 70's and 80's
- talked of the powerful forces at work in the discipline which lead to tensions between consultants and academics pointing out that the apparent disparity between data collected and data described was a cause for some of these tensions
- a shared objective however, was the need for site protection and although consultants are often accused of site consumption, they contribute significantly to site stewardship

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- during this period CRM has become dominant form of archaeology in Ontario, some sites have been saved, huge amounts of data have been collected and publication was occurring
- publications tended to differ in that academics focused on the theoretical in juried journals and the CRM researchers concentrated on site description and culture history in other magazines, journals and newsletters
- patterns of land development suggest that CRM will continue to dominate in near future
- the point was also made that both academic and CRM researchers were subjected to a range of pressures which made it difficult to pursue an ideal form of research
- suggested that one of the shared goals should be to work towards a systemic breakdown of the barriers preventing achievement of research goals
- pointed out that the SAA sessions in the spring were geared to such an objective
- stated that an important part of building linkages entailed coming to a common understanding about what research was all about; that high standards were important, and that we should work co-operatively to this end

Neal Ferris (Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation)

- addressed the issue of opposing tensions by describing the way in which government mediated between the conservation ethic on one hand and land development/resource extraction/ economic development pressures on the other . The end result is intended to be a balanced approach. This is done through a politically driven regulatory process
- cultural and natural threats to heritage sites include erosion, development, urban growth, looting and are contained by a fairly effective set of legislation such as the Heritage Act, the Planning Act, the EA Act among others, development of each of which has led to various guidelines
- guidelines represent one form of educational programing for the doers of archaeology and for those who pay for it
- Consultants have done hundreds of projects on lots of property and register the majority of archaeological sites (4-700/yr)
- the smaller numbers found by avocationals and academic researchers represent the results of the natural inclination or ambient opportunity to do archaeology which in one form or another

has been relatively constant or has fluctuated slightly due to the availability of funds or opportunity

- the difference in the number of sites found by each group represents the number that would commonly have been lost in the absence of the regulatory system
- maintaining a strong regulatory framework, and monitoring threats from natural and cultural forces, are important functions which can be enhanced by a shared community responsibility for education about the conservation of sites
- the big challenge may have more to do with mitigating damage from self-inflicted impacts caused by prima-donna individualistic approaches, factionalism, mutual criticism, and erosion of credibility in the eyes of decision makers and the development community
- questions that arise include: are we all on the same side working towards common goals?; are we accountable for effects or are we willing to let decisions be made by others?; where does our self-interest stop and our responsibility towards sites and colleagues begin?
- strategic options to pursue include a) the status quo; b) pursuit of narrow self-interest; c) strengthening legislation; and d) pursuing self-regulation or leaving it to others

### **Discussion**

The following bullets are many of the comments made by participants. The complete proceedings are available on tape and make possible the linking of comments with names. The order of some of the views expressed below have been rearranged where clarification would result.. Summary comments are added at the end and reader's comments will be welcomed.

- The organizers of the Forum, in response to a question about their original intent, stated that they were aware of large consensus about key issues but that individuals were thinking in isolation. There was a need therefore to bring an awareness of broader problems to a larger table to clarify understanding, to discuss strategies used in different regions, to see how friends and colleagues were coping elsewhere and to brainstorm about how we should deal constructively with changing universes, policies and the availability of resources.
- How can we make archaeology more relevant to the broader public? Ontario history and social science teachers know little about the subject. Perhaps next year, we should do a workshop at the symposium about making the exciting aspects of the subject more accessible. It is up to the community as a whole to promote this. There are indications of certain community apathy e.g. lack of reaction at suspension of OHF funding of archaeological research grants.

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- the government needs to be pressured into implementing educational curricula and/or courses; the OAS needs to identify conferences where heritage themes can be inserted to broaden awareness; the community needs to be much more activist; why is there no formal program in the province for historical archaeology?
- Lets arrive at a mutually agreed upon definition of the term “research” since different interpretations lead to disagreements about who actually does it.
- Should be more emphasis on analysing existing collections rather than digging unthreatened sites in southern Ontario. However, there is a great need in the north to do basic research so a different approach is needed there which is not linked so strongly to the regulatory process and to development.
- Archaeology is one field among many which deals with the past; history, myth, tradition, story telling, society, reenactment, religion and what might in general, be called stories about people. While our methods may be unique, the end product is not. In fact there are many who deliver the product much more effectively than we do although the quality may vary. It is tempting to think that linkages are both possible and necessary since public interest is very much divided.
- We should do some analysis to find out where to place our effort before we get too focussed on one or another type of initiative since you may end up emphasizing something that has little public appeal, or creating a reaction counter to what you intended. Wider experience of groups involved in heritage, conservation, and ecology might show that those associations and interest areas are as ripe for a broader form of integration as we are; that there are in fact whole communities out there that are hungry for the information and we are not giving it to them.
- Each of us have been told many times that the things that we talk about should be, but aren't taught in the schools.
- Why pay for the harvesting of the resource rather than promotion of the information and the ideas. We should bring the wider communication of information and ideas to the front and centre of any data production project
- Among the many cultures in the province are several vital native cultures and there is a need for cross cultural awareness on both sides. Ipperwash was an archaeological issue. In such a burial situation archaeologists should have had a real role to play. Its important to see that archaeologists and native people both have a significant role to play in archaeology. This is not recognized by policy makers.

- It might be worth while to figure out what small number (20%) of key initiatives we can put 80% of the effort into (the 80/20 approach). Sometimes we spend a lot of time doing relatively unimportant stuff when we should, with a little thought be putting our energy behind things which are fundamental enough that if done, many of the other things take care of themselves. The challenge would be to pick one of those things (for example in the aboriginal sphere of interest) and define a do-able action.
- There are serious federal cut backs and yet collections still need management and requests are constantly being made to give things back or to make contributions to the community. Land claims for example require museums to assemble large quantities of cultural information. If archaeologists can't provide the information, then we and the process are in big trouble. Basically, we should focus our energies on getting information out, about native communities, and to native communities..
- The Public is not being educated in archaeology. Neither teachers nor native bands have good data. Each band has a person responsible for education and they need good data to chose from. How about the cable history channel. Might visuals be used to get message across? It is necessary of course to translate archaeology into english. Within the aboriginal communities there are key places where those resources could best be used.
- It might even be a good idea to translate some materials into native languages as well as plain english for maximum utility
- We have neither a product availability problem or an availability-of- consumers problem.. We have a marketing problem. We don't have the capacity to link the available resources with the consumers who are hungry for product. We should be putting our resources into marketing. There will be very little support for the legislative framework unless you sell the idea that heritage is good. And it requires professional assistance which in turn is going to cost money. But you want to do it right. We have to put effort, money, resources etc. into forging the link.
- To speak of the *native voice* is ludicrous since the communities are very diverse. We should consult widely before we develop a strategy. It is important to realize that there is divergence in views about interpretations of information about the past. e.g. Palaeol-Indian - Bering Strait etc -
- One could characterize the point as being one of cross-cultural awareness. For example, many archaeologists are unaware of basic data such as treaties or other written materials which form the basis for how aboriginal communities look at things. The archaeologist is often completely taken up with material culture. We could bring a lot more substance to what we talk about if we were to consult more with aboriginal peoples. It would enrich and enliven the results of our work .

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- Is there concensus that this would be something that the OAS should play a role in focussing resources on?
- There is a host of issues. Aboriginal matters could consume people's attention for ever and that is only one of many. We have to focus on the issues which are internal to discipline. The field has a different face than it had 20 yrs ago and in 20 yrs will be different again. What are the internal issues that we don't deal with because of the fact that most of us are in constant reaction mode?
- Perhaps the OAS could support the writing of a discussion paper to provide the basis for clarifying issues and developing a series of strategies. Even if we as individuals might not all be equally interested or capable of getting involved, at least everyone would be aware of the issues.
- Should OAS strike a committee to promote on- going issues of aboriginal consultation, marketing, education, and other matters raised here today? Organization which binds us together is underutilized for committee purposes.
- The committee should not be Toronto-centred and should reflect diversity of the community.
- If we are to have a committee, and it is very important to do so, we need a change in thinking, courage, and funds. The OAS needs active fund raising . An aboriginal contact committee requires communication in english and people must be able to liisten to the native voice since we are not on same plane or plain. A professionalism committee could be very important for self regulation, changes in regulation, evaluation criteria and other issues.
- Effective committee work could be enhanced by teleconferencing perhaps aided with government resources or facilities. Others might contribute services or facilities as well. Private sector funding might be possible.
- Would the members of the panel for the forum be willing to serve as a comittee to produce a discussion paper to define the issues and get in-put from the broader comunity? Perhaps we could use such a paper to poll the membership. It would be necessary to take the results to the Board for some direction. Membership cannot act without the strong support of the Board and the reverse is also true. After all the society needs more direct involvement from the membership. The OAS already has a committee structure. An 80/20 strategy could be developed with the right preparation.
- It is time to get back to the basics about why we do archaeology anyway. We collect stuff, we analyse it , we translate it into english, we talk about it among ourselves. A lot of people don't get it because they need sound bytes. We have to get the message out to the whole

world in as wide a way possible. Our job is to communicate. We should get back to basics and revisit the OAS constitutional mandate. If we get back to our central purpose, all else will follow.

- A useful model for approaching archaeology in the future may drawn from the use in the natural sciences of the concept of sustainability. What sustainable archaeology might mean requires some research but the idea provides a context for thinking about not always assuming that sites will be consumed.
- The word conservation, as in *the conservation and protection of sites* needs to be front and centre if we are interested in the non-consumption of sites.
- Another aspect of conservation has to do with the *conservation of materials from sites* on federal and provincial properties. Ontario is lacking in policies and facilities The subject bears consideration, even though cost could be great.
- The best way of protecting archaeological data may be to leave it undisturbed in the ground.
- There are practical and political realities which often intrude. Just as it is important to break down barriers within our own community; it is important to be aware of other barriers as well. For example the archaeological master plan of Kingston has never been passed by council and implemented. You would think that in Kingston of all places, this would have passed. All sorts of conflicting priorities at the municipal level plus increasing burdens from provincial and federal levels conspire to create a very complex stew. A bizarre example is the attempt by the St Lawrence Parks commission to off-load Fort Henry onto the city. In any case this sort of thing creates strange barriers and unusual alliances.
- Master plans are difficult to implement at the best of times. The message is being delivered but not perhaps in the right way. We have failed to create a climate where conservation is taken for granted. Municipalities have to develop a set of priorities based on what *must* be done and regardless of the effectiveness of the delivery of the message, sometimes food and roofs and schools win. If Kingston can't do it who can?
- We are a small component of a larger context. We don't drive the provincial planning process but we need to both make effective links and work on our own internal cohesiveness. If for example, we could believe that every one in our community were doing good things, then this would lower the factionalism level, which is higher in this field and in this province than in other parts of the country. In-fighting causes expenditures of huge amounts of wasted energy and fruitless effort and, perhaps as importantly creates an image (a true but unhelpful image?) which erodes credibility in the eyes of decision makers.

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- The OAS has brought us together at this symposium and has a role to play in bringing the community together in several ways. We need to focus on the integration process and finding and perfecting ways of using the OAS as a way of helping the archaeological community express itself.
- One of the ways that we could enhance the feeling of interconnectedness in the OAS would be to document the history of our discipline in Ontario. The timing might be right and as a society project it could have an integrating effect through reassuring people that we've been up and down before. Sharing stories about people and sites is a way of confidence building enhancing a longer term awareness. Members of the board shared their plans for just such a publication.
- The point was made about how important it is to have a broad feeling of support when members go out to organise special events or fund raising for the OAS. Ontario is a big province and the membership is quite diverse sometimes with little common ground. One of the big challenges is communication within the society. Another, of course, is sustaining a wide base of active members.
- The diversity of membership of this society and the diversity of the province at large suggests a solution to what can be seen as a huge challenge. If there is to be an emphasis on marketing and fund raising, a first step is reach out to stakeholders beyond our own group at every opportunity. This continuing effort will create a starting point for the communication strategy which will follow.

### Summary

Following are groupings of certain of the main themes which reoccurred. Each is worthy of expansion and more detailed treatment. The content can, of course be arranged in many ways and clearly we have barely scratched the surface.

Back to Basics

Role of the OAS

Communication and Education

Communication and Marketing

Strategic Planning in General

Aboriginal Communications Strategy

OAS Committee Development

Archaeological Master Plans