

Getting Young People Hooked on the Past: Lessons Learned in Developing Archeological Programs for Middle School Students

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During March-April 1994, the Kellogg Middle School Archaeological Society, an Idaho school district-sponsored club, traveled to the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in Utah to study the archeological remains of the Anasazi culture around Lake Powell. During their stay, the group damaged an archeological site. As a result of National Park Service and professional educator participation in deliberations to resolve the legal case, the parties and consultants agreed to an educational remedy. This article, by the founder of the society, represents part of that legal agreement. Its purpose is to educate teachers on how to develop archeological programs for students that serve to educate them about the past and, at the same time, protect our shared cultural heritage.

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A field trip just isn't a field trip unless you have 40 or 50 kids a thousand miles away from home, doing things they otherwise never would have a chance to do. Teachers and students must know, however, that this notion has inherent boundaries which, when crossed, can result in educational failure. I know. In the spring of 1994, I had the privilege of leading 26 burgeoning young historians-archeologists-explorers on a trip to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in southeastern Utah. It was the premiere journey for our northern Idaho middle school district-sponsored program, the Kellogg Middle School Archaeological Society, and we were excited. Unfortunately, the trip nearly ended in disaster.

What I Did Wrong

The KMS Archaeological Society was formed because so many students had fallen in love with archeology during "Digging the Past," a grant-supported component of our school district's 6th grade social studies curriculum. In "Digging the Past," I taught our sixth graders about archeological field methods and took them to a site near our school planted with simulated ancient Greek cultural remains, so they could practice the excavation, survey, and recording techniques I presented in the classroom. A love of the past, together with a burning motivation to explore the physical remains of the past, always served as a backdrop for these activities.

Following the course, many "Digging the Past" graduates wanted more opportunities to experience archeology, including visits to real archeological sites, not just a seeded, simulated dig. So, thinking that we would have to travel outside our state in order to see archeology, the KMS Archaeological Society began planning an archeology trip to Utah. Actually, had I contacted the Idaho State Historical Society, we would have learned that archeology is all around us here, in Idaho, too.

I thought I thoroughly prepared for our trip to Glen Canyon. By the time our middle-schoolers took on the challenges of spending twelve days away from home, many for the first time, they had learned water safety, boating practices, camping and general survival skills. At the same time, I continued to instruct them on archeological techniques and the history of archeological practice. Our volunteer

chaperons received extensive training, too. Teachers, counselors, and dedicated parents—among who were nurses, emergency medical technicians, and law enforcement personnel—together wanted to give our kids the most amazing scholarly Spring Break they would ever have.

Our enthusiasm for the past notwithstanding, I didn't realize fully how our society values the past for both science and the general public welfare. Of course, I knew intuitively that taking a backhoe, tearing up an ancient site, digging up some pottery, and selling it would be illegal. But, beyond that, I didn't really know what we could or couldn't do at an archeological site. Had I simply called the National Park Service at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area to tell them we planned to visit archeological sites, we would have learned how to behave during our visit there. We also would have learned about the laws that serve to protect and maintain our shared heritage resources for present and future generations. However, I failed to make such a call. Instead, we went to Glen Canyon, and in an area called Forgotten Canyon, I encouraged our students to freely tramp among the remains of buildings situated along a sheltered ledge below an overhang. I also encouraged them to search for artifacts in their effort to determine whether they were at an archeological site. When students found artifacts, they were asked to hold the items in the air while I videotaped them. Following my instructions, the exuberant students, some using collapsible shovels, dug 16 cubic feet of soil covering 38 square feet in eight areas on the site.

This activity took place at a known archeological site called Crumbling Kiva Ruin, a habitation and storage site dating to about 1200-1250 A.D. The student behavior under my direction caused significant damage to Crumbling Kiva Ruin, for which I was responsible. As a consequence, I committed a violation of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). Among other things, ARPA says that no person may knowingly excavate, remove, or damage any archeological resource on public lands or Indian lands without permission, or attempt to do so.

The Outcome of the Case

I cooperated with the Federal authorities from the moment I was made aware that the Archaeological Resources Protection Act had been violated. I provided to the Park Service the videotape that I had made at Crumbling Kiva Ruin. My cooperation was a significant factor in resolving the case. As the organizer of the field trip and supervisor of the student activities at Crumbling Kiva Ruin, I was criminally charged with a misdemeanor violation of ARPA. However, the Assistant United States Attorney believed that the interest of justice would be best served by a pretrial diversion program, meaning that if I fulfilled the terms of my diversion agreement, the United States would dismiss the charge at the end of the 18-month diversion period.

Through consultation with archeologists at the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management as well as education professionals throughout the country, Assistant United States Attorney Wayne Dance crafted a resolution in the case. It allowed us to continue teaching students and insured that we share our lessons learned with other educators, through speaking engagements at education conferences and articles in education journals. In addition, the diversion agreement also required me to provide restitution of \$1,079.80 to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area to cover the cost of restoration and repair to Crumbling Kiva Ruin.

We returned to Glen Canyon in 1995 for remedial training, with a group that was even larger than the one in 1994. By now, the National Park Service investigator assigned to our case had become a valuable resource in helping to reteach our students and recover our program. Also, we volunteered with the National Park Service to form a clean-up detail and thereby added citizenship training to our

curriculum.

As a result of this unfortunate case, we have transformed our club. Cooperation with archeologists, law enforcement professionals, and attorneys has led to the establishment of the Young Explorers' Society of America, a well-grounded program for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. Today, we sponsor trips all over the United States that focus on history, citizenship, and teamwork as well as a strong appreciation for this country's historical and natural resources. We do it, however, with the assistance and cooperation of the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and our state universities. We still preach love for our past, but based on the lessons we learned, now we have an expanded set of objectives for our growing numbers of young members.

The Young Explorers' Society, soon to be a not-for-profit association, is organized to support first-hand exploration of the globe by our nation's youth, as a means to obtain a meaningful understanding of their world. We believe that knowledge makes good citizens, and citizenship and civic responsibility are critical elements to foster in our Young Explorers. Currently, we are working to sponsor chapters throughout the United States and provide better educational adventuring at lower cost to all our student members.

What Educators Need to Know

From the beginning, the greatest flaw in our archeological program was not knowing about public archeology, that is, how the United States, the states, and Indian tribes manage archeological resources on their lands for the public benefit. The Federal archeology program, for example, addresses archeological interpretation, collections care, scientific investigation, protection and preservation, and public outreach and education. It is conducted by Federal agencies under the authorization of laws such as the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Abandoned Shipwreck Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

We have learned that, to develop successful archeological programs, teachers need to seek professional guidance. Fortunately today, thanks to the Internet and electronic mail, governments along with professional associations are providing more communication to teachers and the general public about public archeology than at any time in history.

Before preparing an archeological curriculum, teachers should do two things. First, they should contact the State Historic Preservation Office or the Office of State Archeologist in their state to find out what programs and curricula already exist for students in a particular grade. Every state has a State Historic Preservation Office, with some states having a separate Office of State Archeologist. In Idaho, our State Historical Society (as the State Historic Preservation Office is known) has an archeologist whose responsibilities specifically include education. Often, the SHPO or State Archeologist will be able to provide an existing professionally sound program for the teacher to adopt or modify. Second, educators should look at the array of archeology programs that have been assembled by other professional archeologists via numerous Internet web sites. Regardless of whether the teacher uses any of the archeology curricula available through the SHPO or other professional sources, at minimum, these available programs will provide educators with a solid foundation for the archeology programs they develop for their schools.

After drafting an archeology curriculum with professional guidance, the teacher should request that the State Historic Preservation Office or Office of State Archeologist review their program. Surely,

education professionals want a professional product, and they and their students should know that their archeology curriculum was reviewed by the highest professional authority in their state.

Outside the classroom, every educator and student must know what they can and cannot do when they visit an archeological site (or, for that matter, any public land generally). Teachers need to contact the parks, forest, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas, or reservations they intend to visit to find out the visitor rules. Very likely, an archeologist will be available to provide this information. Besides getting information about how to behave at an archeological site, school groups often also can receive cost-free guided tours, lectures, and other programs from archeologists, historians, and naturalists at the places they visit that, in turn, enrich their field experiences.

Educators should know that a wealth of information about archeology is available through the Internet. [The author provided a 24-page list of archeology web sites that was prepared by Heather Hembry, M.A., during an internship with the Archeology and Ethnography Program of the National Park Service, funded by the National Center for Preservation Education. As the list was too long to include with this article, readers may contact Mr. Richard Waldbauer of the National Park Service (Richard_Waldbauer@NPS.gov) for a copy of the list.—ed.]

Conclusion

Judge Sherry Hutt, one of our country's preeminent authorities on heritage resources law, has written:

Archeological resources are the nonrenewable and irreplaceable material remains of past human existence. Often they are the only evidence of people who lived in the United States. These heritage resources serve the public welfare both intellectually and emotionally. At the same time, they stimulate the desire to recover as much of the past as possible, and as soon as possible. This temptation to exploit archeological sites, however, must be tempered by the realization that all excavation, even if scientifically sound, is also a form of destruction, and that the amount of information obtainable from a site today is only a fraction of what will be possible in the future. Consequently, one of the purposes of the federal government's archeology program is to fight looting and preserve the archeological record in place...(Federal Enforcement Statutes, in S. Hutt, C. Blanco & O. Varmer, *Heritage Resources Law* 181, 1999).

Today, as I look back on the incident at Crumbling Kiva Ruin, I easily can see why it occurred. Although I was informed about the past we were studying, I didn't know how to study and use archeological resources on the ground. I didn't know anything about public archeology, particularly the strategy of protection in place. Also, I didn't have permission, a plan, or a sound methodology for doing what we did. Consequently, without specifically intending the consequences, as an educator I allowed, even encouraged, my students to injure an archeological site in violation of federal law.

Teachers throughout the country should know they can successfully teach exciting programs in archeology and historic preservation in the middle school environment, with both a classroom and a field component. To be successful, however, they need to understand the principles of public archeology and consult with professional archeologists concerning curricula and practices. Communication with public archeologists is not optional; it is a requirement. The alternative is to risk depriving present and future generations of enjoying our shared cultural heritage.

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