Tribal CRM, Archaeologists, and Action Anthropology

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Abstract:

One of the exciting developments in North American anthropology and cultural resource management (CRM) during the past two decades has been the return of Native Americans to the process of protecting important places. Many anthropologists, primarily those trained in archaeology, are working with Tribes to help them establish tribal protection programs that reflect tribal values and needs. Many of these anthropologists and their approach to helping tribes achieve a goal of self-determination are reminiscent of Sol Tax's "Action Anthropology." Drawing on Tax's ideas, the anthropologists working for tribes are encouraged to communicate to the anthropological discipline their successes and challenges in working with tribes. In this way, anthropology can continue to grow and become more useful to Native Americans and others.

One of the exciting developments in North American anthropology and cultural resource management (CRM) during the past two decades has been the return of Native Americans to the process of protecting important places. Managing burial grounds, resources, and other lands was always part of Indian culture; at least until EuroAmerican colonialism disrupted their ability to do so. Today, Native Americans are working with federal and state agencies, local governments, universities, and CRM contractors to identify, evaluate and manage the nation's cultural resources. This work is traditional and innovative; tribally self-determined and collaborative.

Growing use of the term Tribal CRM reflects not only a growing Native American presence within the field, but also fundamental differences between tribal approaches to CRM and the more conventional anthropological approach. Burney, Longenecker and VanPelt, and Warburton's papers (this issue) document some of the crucial developments in tribal CRM from Native American and anthropological perspectives. In particular, they focus on the roles that anthropologists are now playing in assisting tribes develop their own CRM programs, and on ways in which the performance of anthropologists can improve in the future. The articles both describe and exemplify anthropologists who are working with or for tribes to support tribal goals and values, first and foremost.

The Past and Present Involvement of Native Americans in CRM

Native Americans have been managing their cultural resources since time immemorial. Yet, since the field of historic preservation began to emerge early in the 20th century, the increasing formalization and professionalization of the field has systematically excluded Native Americans from its ranks. Simultaneously, threats to Native sites have intensified, and the imperative for tribes to protect these cultural resources has grown more pressing. The current movement of tribal engagement in CRM should thus been seen in relation to long native traditions and worldviews, more contemporary movements for sovereignty and self-determination, and the immediacy of distructive specific threats.

CRM is populated by historians and architectural scholars, but dominance of archaeologists in the field has made anthropology its closest disciplinary home. Of course, Native Americans have played various roles in archaeological work for decades (Ferguson 1996). However, typically relegated to the roles of informants or objects of study, they were not able to collaborate or assume management roles in CRM until the 1980s. Native people had by then won legislation such as the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978) which could be used to force some accountability of archaeological practice to tribes. Still, in a new century, the degree and nature of involvement today depends on

the particular area of the country and the attitudes of the parties involved.

Barriers to Native involvement have been twofold. The first is the above-mentioned professionalization of CRM into the academy, government, and other institutions that have either legally or de facto excluded Native participation. The second barrier is constituted by conflicting values and worldviews, including the scientific notion that academic "experts" are better qualified to manage cultural resources than Indian people themselves. Today, both barriers persist in more or less overt ways. Tribal CRM is an attempt to overcome them because it recognizes that Native involvement is not only a question of access. It also calls for fundamental shifts in the in theory and practice of historic preservation, and a commitment to the prioritizing of Native goals and perspectives, one that archaeologists and anthropologists must be willing to undertake. When they are supportive and willing to work in truly collaborative or tribally controlled programs, anthropologists bring knowledge and skills that tribes can use to their advantage.

Thus far, anthropologists have reacted in both supportive and oppositional ways to native demands for reform. The results of these conflicts and collaborations have been some notable developments in CRM. For example, in response to tribal initiatives, and sometimes to intense pressure, local and federal governments have altered regulations such as the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In other cases they have created new legislation, such as the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. In addition to these legal reforms, Native American protests and social movements have made society in general more inclusive of the public and special interest groups in decision-making processes, opening many doors for tribal input.

Within these broader social changes each tribe has taken its own approach to CRM involvement and followed its own path. These variations are due to differences in culture, regional history, funding, location, and other factors. However, when a tribe pursues participation in and substantive control over CRM work, the stages of involvement are often similar. During the initial stage, tribal involvement tends to be passive, limited to non-binding discussion (termed consultation) among tribes, agencies, and CRM professionals. In the next stage, consultation evolves into more substantive opportunities for tribes to comment on project plans and reports. The third stage, training and collaboration offer opportunities for tribes to join in actual fieldwork, as both observers and participants. In the fourth stage, the relationship evolves into more cooperative roles, with Native Americans having a much more active role in planning, performing, and evaluating the work to be done.

It is during the fourth stage that many tribes begin to establish and manage cultural resource protection programs of their own, which are increasingly staffed by Indian CRM professionals. In some cases, tribes have taken on State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) responsibilities by establishing their own Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO) through certification by the Department of Interior, National Park Service. Today it is increasingly common for Tribes to serve as managers of resources on their own lands, as key participants in the management of relevant resources off reservation lands, and as providers of CRM services on and off the reservation.

Implications of Tribal CRM for Anthropology

American anthropology, the discipline with the longest history of working with Native American groups in North America, has been effected by the Native American presence in CRM activities in two important ways. First, those CRM anthropologists (almost exclusively archaeologists) working for state and federal agencies, CRM contractor firms, and private industry found themselves forced to interact with indigenous communities, many for the first time in their lives. Academic training in the United States has generally not prepared archaeologists for these types of intercultural interactions, nor to understand the claims of Native people to their own cultural resources. Instead, most archaeological practice has been conceptualized as either "salvage" work or the study of extinct peoples, so archaeologists presumed they were working in a cultural vacuum. When Native Americans began to overcome their exclusion from the field this paradigm became unacceptable.

If the new presence of Native Americans in CRM makes one kind of anthropology untenable, it is also having a second effect of creating new opportunities for anthropologists to work for and with tribes. In the initial stage of tribal involvement in CRM described above, tribes seek expertise from those anthropologists with experience in CRM and hire them as consultants. As tribal workloads increase and outside expertise remains

necessary, many non-Indian anthropologists become tribal employees. Still, most archaeologists who were hired by tribes, as well as the few cultural anthropologists also working in CRM, were not trained to work with indigenous people. As a result, on-the-job training became the norm. In the face of a new opportunity to make important contributions to tribal CRM, anthropologists must be more thoroughly and appropriately trained to work in tribally controlled contexts. This is new territory, both for tribes and for anthropologists.

A Precedent for Tribal CRM in Action Anthropology

Anthropology may be on new ground, but it can draw on two traditions. The first is clearly the worldviews and practices of the Native American cultures with which anthropologists are working. The second comes from anthropology itself. In fact, many of the anthropologists helping to develop tribal CRM programs are working in the tradition of Sol Taxls action anthropology. Tax promoted the concept of action anthropology in the 1940s and 1950s, calling on anthropologists to enable disaffected and distressed groups to take charge of their own destinies in their own ways (Lurie 1973). Tax and his students and colleagues developed the action concept by working with a variety of cultural groups, but mostly with Native Americans, and most notably with the Fox Tribe (Gearing 1960; see Foley 1999 for some contemporary thoughts on the Fox Project in particular and action anthropology in general). In this regard, Tax was building a tradition of helping Native American communities that was in its anthropological infancy. As Nancy Lurie explains, "the field of applied anthropology got its start in the United Stated during the Collier administration. Although Collier was the first Indian Commissioner to go out and meet with Indian people in the field to hear their grievances and wishes, he and his staff designed the program to respond to them, and anthropologists were hired to help tribes make use of its benefits (Lurie 1999, 110)."

These "New Deal anthropologists" were funded by, and responsible to, the federal government, not the tribes. Outcomes of the Indian Reorganization Act certainly reflect this fact, but these anthropologists were among the many scholars and intellectuals that Collier, and Roosevelt more generally, brought out of the academy and into the more "applied" settings of the New Deal. Collier's concept to orient anthropology toward the goals of what he thought were progressive reforms to strengthen self-determining communities was precedent-setting.

Tax's development of action anthropology was an important step forward in working with tribes that suggested new conceptual frameworks for the field of applied anthropology itself. According to Tax, the action anthropologist is a facilitator to a cultural group, perhaps helping the group identify the problems from their own perspective, and to develop solutions that make sense to them. The anthropologist might provide technical expertise, or share ideas for solutions, or help find financial resources for the group. The role is that of a consultant, rather than the more typical role of the anthropologist as principal investigator. Significantly, the goals of action anthropology are defined and measured by the cultural group rather than the extraction of research for the discipline.

Tax was also clear about the important benefits action anthropology would have to scholarship more generally. One implication of action anthropology is that it entails changes in traditional relationships between anthropologists and their "subjects" and this transformation leads to the final component of Tax's concept. He emphasized the need for a flow of knowledge from the community or work site into the academy, so that anthropologists would bring back knowledge gained from their field experiences to advance the theoretical state of anthropology.

The role Tax defined in action anthropology is exactly that which many anthropologists are playing in the tribal CRM arena. These anthropologists are not just conducting studies or extracting scholarly data; they are helping tribes develop programs that exist for the tribe, that will be staffed by tribal members, and that will be run according to tribal needs, values, and principles. The notion that they are working for the advancement of the tribe first and foremost is articulated by this new generation of action anthropologists in the common statement that "we are working ourselves out of a job."

Yet anthropologists will not become irrelevant to tribes if anthropology truly accounts for the significance of tribal involvement in the theory and practice of the discipline. This is why anthropologists involved in tribal CRM must remain engaged with the academy and bring their experiences back through its scholarly associations. Tribal CRM will be a truly collaborative form of applied anthropology if tribes, once considered to be passive objects of anthropological inquiry, can be active participants in theoretical and methodological

development. Future action anthropologists would, in turn, be greatly aided by the improved training and resources that the academy could provide.

At this early stage of Tribal CRM, this knowledge transfer does not appear to be occurring to the degree that Tax would have expected. One reason is the tendency among tribes not to want their anthropologists to talk much about what they do for the tribe, and the tribe's preferences about knowledge sharing should be respected. However, a more pervasive reason lies in the general lack of time and resources participants in tribal CRM have to think about what they are doing in a broader sense, much less present a paper at a conference or publish it.

Another reason appears to be that CRM professionals do not tend to see themselves as "applied anthropologists." Thus, only a small percentage of the tribal CRM anthropologists are members of the applied organizations such as the Society for Applied Anthropology, the National Organization for the Practice of Anthropology, or the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. We must garner interest and resources to improve upon this lack of involvement.

Where there has been knowledge transfer, it tends to circulate within the CRM field. The results have been successful changes in the fields of CRM and archaeology (Swindler et al.1997), and future impacts are likely to be even more significant. It appears, for example, that the Native American emphasis on active "protection" of sites, in contrast to the more passive "management" style of traditional CRM, is going to move the field from its current academic-based research orientation to a stewardship orientation (Stapp 1998).

Currently, we estimate that there are hundreds of anthropologists working for dozens of tribal programs, many others who are generally supportive of tribal CRM in the United States, and many more in Canada (Nicholas and Andrews 1997). Ten years ago there were only a few dozen. This trend would seem to support Nancy Lurie's 1973 thesis statement that "...it may be that what we designate as action anthropology is really what anthropology as a whole is becoming." (Lurie 1973). In this light, the lack of connection between a group of anthropologists doing action anthropology in the 1990s and the school that promoted and developed action anthropology decades earlier presents itself as a bit of a conundrum. Nancy Lurie again provides an answer when she characterizes action anthropology as follows: "its very unobtrusiveness is a measure of its effectiveness"(Lurie 1973, 4). In other words, while the hallmark for applied anthropologists in the academic tradition are publications and presentations at professional conferences, the hallmark for the action anthropologist is a successful tribal program.

Activities required to make a program successful tend to take place at local levels, within the tribal sphere. The focus, out of primary necessity, is to use one's anthropological skills to help the people, not use the knowledge gained from helping the people to help anthropology. Certainly all would agree that helping anthropology develop its method and theory is also important if anthropology is to become more relevant, but during this early stage of tribal CRM development, the former has had to take precedence over the latter. In time that should change, and will change anthropology for the better.

Future Imperatives for Anthropology and Tribal CRM

Several recommendations have emerged from this discussion:

- First and foremost is that anthropology in its training of archaeologists needs to start teaching students to collaborate with living peoples. Even in areas of the continent where native people may not be active, archaeology is being forced to work with the public and a myriad of special interest groups who attach importance to particular cultural places.
- Second, archaeologists and CRM professionals, and especially those working with indigenous peoples, must become more active in the professional applied organizations such as the Society for Applied Anthropology, the National Organization for the Practice of Anthropology, and the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. For those situated outside of the academy, these societies are the only avenues for interaction with non-archaeologist anthropologists. Such interactions are important for staying abreast of developments in the field, and for developing relationships with professionals working in similar areas (methodologically, theoretically, or geographically).
- Third, anthropologists working to help Native Americans develop their own programs need, when at all possible, to communicate their experiences to the profession. Communicating

these experiences will help provide better tools and knowledge to the next generation of anthropologists who will be working with Native Americans and other indigenous groups. It will also facilitate the currently under-developed transfer of knowledge from the field into anthropology.

A discussion of action anthropology cannot close without a discussion of the ethical implications of a situation in which anthropologists are working with tribes to develop tribal CRM programs. The action anthropology concept has certainly generated controversy in this area in the past (see comments following Schlesier 1974), and is likely to do so again. Some anthropologists believe that anthropologists who help tribes are using their anthropology in the service of political goals, rather than conducting anthropological research per se. This argument relies on a notion that anthropology must acquire "true" and unbiased data, and that the quality of knowledge and research will be compromised by political affiliations. Clearly there are often, if not always, ethical dilemmas that action anthropologists face in the course of working for people, and for that matter, dilemmas that all anthropologists face. If anthropologists are working with tribes, these questions must be contextualized by discussions of the material and spiritual bases of all scholarly knowledge, the interests that it serves, and conflicts of worldviews. We must also attend to the implications for our discipline of finally taking seriously and giving equal authority to the sovereignty and values of the Indian people who have for so long constituted the discipline's livelihood.

There are ethical questions beyond debates about whether action anthropology constitutes legitimate anthropological practice and whether it will contribute to the theoretical and empirical development of the discipline. An anthropologist will always alter a situation merely by entering it. The ethics of anthropologists influencing the programmatic development of tribes is incredibly fraught: some believe that helping a tribe is unethical, while for others, not helping a tribe is unethical. There is no formula for ethical behavior in any given setting. Each anthropologist needs to answer the questions for themselves.

General ethics statements from the American Anthropological Association and various other anthropological groups are widely available, and they are a first step toward improving ethical awareness and decision making. Sol Tax has ruminated profoundly on ethical issues, and I have found his Integrated Goals and Means to be particularly helpful in making these decisions for myself (Hinshaw 1979, i):

- To serve one's fellows, contribute as you can knowledge of the choices available to them; to learn about one's fellows, observe the choices they make.
- Have the respect not to decide for others what is in their best interests; assume you will never understand them that well.
- But do have the courage to protect wherever possible the freedom of others to make those decisions for themselves; and even to make mistakes.
- For oneself, avoid premature choices and action; assume there always is more knowledge to be brought to bear on any matter than is currently available.

It is clear that anthropologists and indigenous people will continue to work together to develop programs in resource management and many other areas, such as health care and education. If anthropology is to meet the needs and expectations of indigenous groups, we must continually and cooperatively evaluate our successes and failures.

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