

Public Involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project

Michael S. Nassaney*

The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project was initiated in 1998 to locate and investigate an eighteenth-century French mission, garrison, and trading post in Niles, Michigan. Public education and outreach have been essential to the success of the project from the start. Various stakeholders are recognizing the potential benefits and consequences of site investigation, heritage tourism, and a partnership with a large state university. The future of public involvement in the project and the lessons to be learned are dependent upon our ability to identify common ground in which archaeology serves as a metaphor for the discovery and recovery of our collective past.

Introduction

Archaeology is experiencing a fundamental transformation in the way it is being practiced, theorized, and taught (e.g., Little and Shackel, 2007; Nassaney, 2004; Nassaney and Levine, 2009; Smith and Wobst 2005). As a consequence of NAGPRA and a host of high profile projects that have engaged the public (e.g., the African Burial Ground in New York, Ludlow Massacre site in Colorado, New Philadelphia in Illinois, Looking for Angola in Florida), archaeologists are reaching out to potential stakeholders including residents of the neighborhoods in which they work and inviting them to be a part of the discovery and interpretive process. Simultaneously, non-archaeologists have become interested in what we do and they want a say in how we do it. Public archaeology has come of age.

The plethora of recent publications on engaged, community-based, covenantal, and participatory action archaeology clearly demonstrates heightened concern for the social, political, and economic impact of archaeological practice (Lipe, 2000:17; e.g., Derry and Malloy, 2003; Little and Shackel, 2007; Nassaney and Levine, 2009; Shackel and Chambers, 2004; Silliman, 2008). Suffice it to say that archaeology has become much more politically engaged in many parts of the world, as manifest in changing relationships with indigenous peoples, culturally affiliated groups, and descendant communities however defined (Gosden, 2001: 248; Layton, 1989). These relations may take many different forms. For anthropologists whose work involves the study of communities engaged in struggle or people whose histories have been erased, there is a self-acknowledged responsibility to work with stakeholders as partners, collaborators, and even co-activists to confront and redress social injustice (Hyatt and Lyon-Callo, 2003:134). In so doing, archaeology can begin to re-

alize its emancipatory potential by examining the ways in which students, faculty, and their supporting institutions can effect, empower, and learn from community-based organizations and their constituents (Nassaney, 2009; Saitta, 2007).

Traditionally, archaeologists have begun their studies with academic questions that drive the research. However, collaborative archaeology involves stakeholders who have different interests in the work we do and the knowledge we create (see contributions to Nassaney and Levine, 2009). Furthermore, in our efforts to serve various constituents the past may become a commodity subject to commercial forces that influence the questions we ask, how we do the work, the interpretations we espouse, and the branding that is used to market both the archaeological process and its attendant products (Baram and Rowan, 2004). Tensions can ensue when the goals of academic research come into conflict with economic development.

In this paper I examine the opportunities and challenges that we face as we investigate and interpret eighteenth-century colonial relations in the small Midwestern city of Niles, Michigan (Figure 1). The work we do is neighborhood archaeology insofar as the people who live there initially invited us into the community to provide a simple service—to locate the long, lost trading post of Fort St. Joseph. What began with a volunteer effort has expanded into a multifaceted public education and outreach program that has become a central focus of community discussion about the site's potential to stimulate economic development and the need for financial support. The story unfolds by examining the role that Fort St. Joseph has played in defining community identity for nearly a century (Nassaney, 2008).

Prelude to Discovery and Investigation

For many years the city of Niles, Michigan has boasted the moniker "the Four Flags City," in reference to its pre-

* Department of Anthropology, Western Michigan University

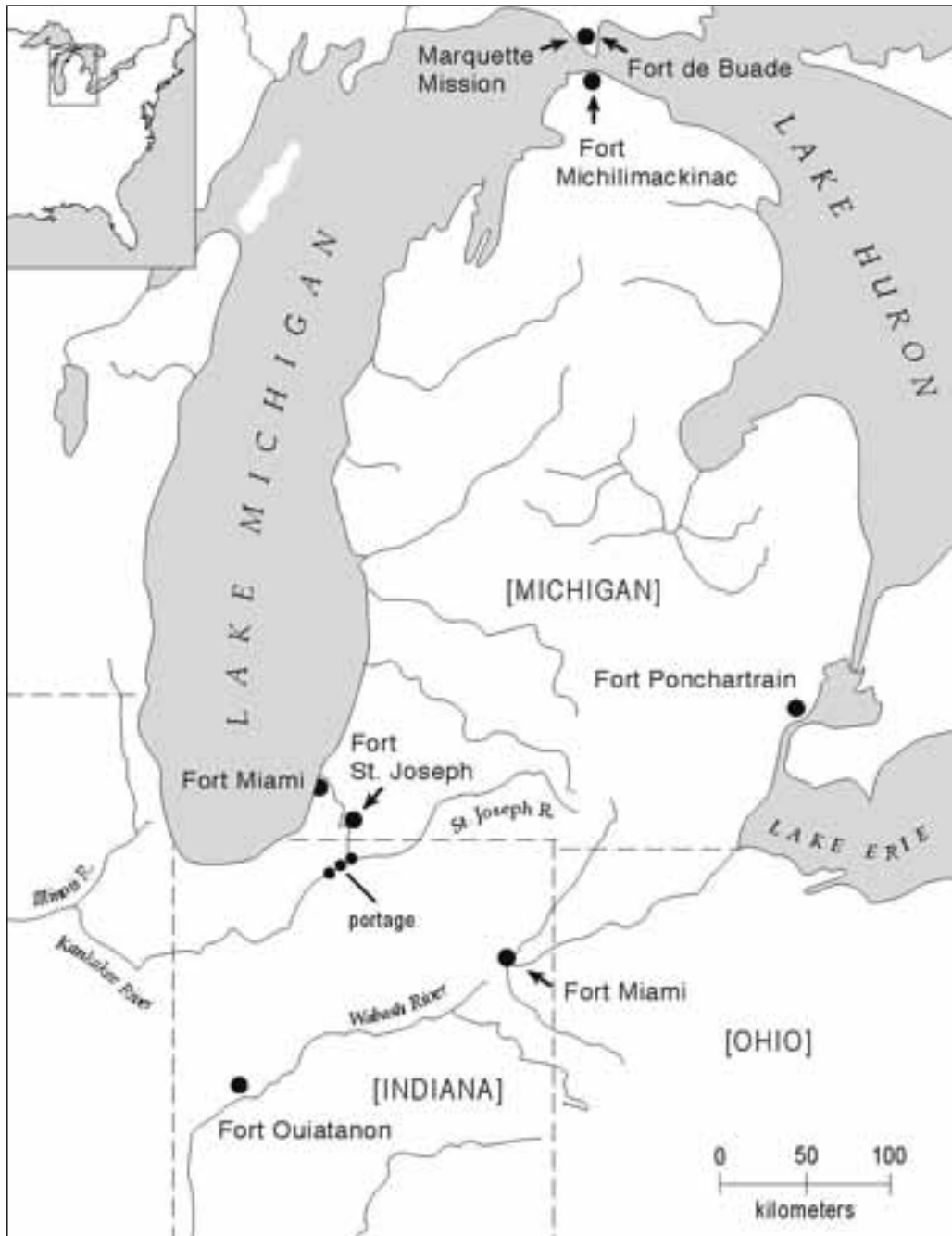


Fig. 1: Map of the western Great Lakes showing the location of Fort St. Joseph and other contemporary sites. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

incorporation history when the area was home to Fort St. Joseph, a mission, garrison, and trading post complex first established by the French in the late seventeenth century. Accordingly, Niles is the only place in Michigan that waved the French, English, Spanish, and American flags. Once home to men, women, and children who identified themselves as voyageurs, soldiers, slaves, Jesuit missionaries, Native Americans, and Métis, Fort St. Joseph played an important commercial role in the fur trade until 1781 when it was abandoned (Nassaney and Cremin, 2002; Nassaney *et al.*, 2003; Peyser, 1978; 1992). As a multi-ethnic community, the site witnessed many different lived experiences. Not surprisingly, the site narrative has changed since the fort was first commemorated in the early twen-

tieth century as evidence of civilization's conquest of the wilderness—a thinly veiled metaphor for manifest destiny (Nassaney, 2008). Even though the exact location of the site was forgotten by most of the community, many continued to identify with this place and embraced it as part of their cultural heritage, even though few of the locals can trace their ancestry to the fort inhabitants.

Our staunchest allies in the archaeological enterprise have been the leaders of Support the Fort, Inc. (STF), a non-profit community group dedicated to educating the world about Fort St. Joseph. STF obtained a grant from the Michigan Humanities Council in 1998 to underwrite a systematic survey by WMU archaeologists (Nassaney, 1999). This grassroots organization has subsequently assisted in



Fig. 2: Students and staff of the 2010 Western Michigan University Archaeological Field School hosted a cookout for members of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Advisory Committee and Support the Fort, Inc. Photo by Jessica Hughes. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

the project by providing regular and continued financial support, volunteering to assist with public outreach activities, and preparing home-cooked meals for the archaeological field school. Various other service groups (e.g., Kiwanis, local Rotary Clubs) have also supported our efforts, as have individuals who see the merit of a University-based research project for capacity building that enhances the overall quality of life. The project also has the potential for increasing economic impact through our reliance on local supplies and services; sales of project-related goods like t-shirts, water bottles, and artifact replicas; and the visitation associated with our public events and an anticipated interpretive center. Members of the community as well as archaeologists welcome these opportunities. Regular interactions with local residents in formal and informal settings provide prospects for the public to share their knowledge, experiences, and enthusiasm for the project with mutual benefits for town and gown partners.

Communication and Collaboration

Of central importance to the success of any public archaeology project is an emphasis on communication and collaboration between the archaeologists and the representatives of the local community at every stage of research from the planning and excavation, through evaluation

and dissemination stages (Cook, 2007; Cook and Barranté, 2008). From the beginning, the project in Niles has closely linked the local public with the University creating a strong partnership. Since the site was located in 1998, efforts have focused on collecting information on the layout, structures, and daily life of the fort for interpretive purposes. WMU archaeologists have worked closely with the city government, Fort St. Joseph Museum, business owners, historical enthusiasts, state granting agencies, and private donors to address the concerns of the multiple invested parties. Indeed, communication and collaboration for the project were initiated before work commenced and remain a key priority. As Linda Derry (1997: 24) has suggested, "if the community does not help define the questions, the answers probably will not interest them." Collaboration does not simply refer to a one-way process of communication where members of the team inform the people of Niles about the venture's progress and objectives. Rather, the goal is to achieve a continuous dialogue that serves the needs of multiple stakeholders.

Towards this end, the Museum director, who served as the City's representative, and I urged the City to appoint an official Archaeology Advisory Committee to formalize the partnership between the City of Niles and WMU. The committee consists of representatives from the City of



Fig. 3: Middle school students in our summer camp program work alongside University students in all site activities, fostering opportunities for constant shared learning. Photo by Tori Hawley. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

Niles, WMU, the Fort St. Joseph Museum, and the local library, as well other preservationists, educators, community leaders, and interested parties (Figure 2). Recognizing the potential of the excavation to have significant implications for future heritage-related developments in the city, the members of the committee recommend the course of action for the investigation and promotion of the site and provide a valuable source of feedback on all aspects of the program. This partnership ensures that community education and involvement remain primary goals of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

Another fundamental aspect of collaboration is discussion about the goals of each field season and dissemination of the results in the form of an annual report, along with exhibits and public presentations summarizing the results of the project. Making all aspects of the archaeological process transparent to local residents is imperative in order to ensure that local stakeholders feel that the archaeologists are not being selective in the information they divulge. Fort St. Joseph has been a long-commemorated site, and its investigation is a source of local heritage and pride, which generates a community sense of stewardship (Nassaney, 2008). Niles citizens are well aware of their history and welcome the opportunity to learn more about the site that defines their identity. To facilitate this

process, the project team has worked to increase the profile of the project and public involvement. These efforts have, in turn, led to changes in our practices.

Public Education, Public Outreach, and Community Service Learning

Early in the project we came to recognize the importance of community engagement through which we began to develop long-term friendships and relationships of trust. All of the partners benefit from these relationships, which are perhaps most clearly visible through the lens of service learning (see Nassaney, 2009). In response to local interest in our annual archaeological field school, we initiated a public education program in 2002 to teach the public the art, craft, and science of archaeology. Each field season we offer weeklong summer camps that provide middle/high school students, educators seeking continuing education credit, and life-long learners the opportunity to engage in active excavations, receive hands-on training in archaeological field techniques, and enhance their knowledge of fort history and culture (Figure 3). More than 100 campers have taken part in the program since its inception. Often campers return in successive years to serve in new roles. These “veteran” campers are made to feel like permanent staff members who experience shifts in research strategy

and field techniques as we refine our questions and methodology.

University students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels enrolled in the field school for college credit experience firsthand the impact archaeology has on the community. Emphasis is also shifted from teaching to learning, and sources of learning that lie beyond the teacher are recognized as community assets, such as local collections and the knowledge of community members and veteran campers. Just as importantly, students are also instructed on how to communicate with the public about our work in informal and formal settings. For example, we recently initiated a summer lecture series that is open to members of the public who enjoy the opportunity to meet with the students and learn about their recent finds and how they are expanding our understanding of the site. Students are also commonly stopped in local establishments and asked about their progress in the work. Thus, students can share their experiences with, as well as learn from, our neighbors as they develop their new skill sets. Much of this exchange culminates in our annual open house, the project's most visible public outreach event.

Public Outreach: The Archaeological Open House

Public outreach at Fort St. Joseph has taken many forms, as the program works to identify an increasing number of avenues to connect with the public. The Director of Development in the College of Arts & Sciences at Western Michigan University and the Finance sub-committee of the Archaeology Advisory Committee are particularly sensitive to the importance of public involvement for the economic health of the project, given the high level of support that comes from local and state sources. By far, the most successful and visible outreach event is the annual open house. Begun in 2001, the open house was expanded in 2006 to attract an increasing number of visitors and provide multiple sensory experiences to the public. The event also underscores the cooperative aspects of the project, as no single organization can host this affair. The people of Niles have been an invaluable partner with WMU in this endeavor, regularly contributing their time, knowledge, and financial support to ensure its success.

The open house is an opportunity for people of varying backgrounds and of all ages to witness ongoing archaeological excavations, interact with student archaeologists, see exhibits of recent artifact finds, learn about archaeology and eighteenth-century colonial life from informational panels, and enjoy period music, food, and demonstrations by professional historical re-enactors, all in their own backyard (Figure 4). The two-day weekend event involves scores of field school students, staff, public humanities scholars, and volunteers. Support the Fort always plays a critical role. Since 2006, nearly 10,000 people have experienced this free public event.

The open house varies annually depending on its particular theme. In 2009 we highlighted the "Jesuits in New France," whereas the 2010 theme was the "Women of New France." The 2008 event was organized into three main



Fig. 4: Everyone is intrigued by the archaeology at our open house event, including this British regiment. Photo by John Lacko. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

components: a living history village, an outdoor museum, and the ongoing archaeological excavations. The living history village included a community of professional re-enactors from throughout the Midwest, representing French, British, and Native American men, women, and children. Food vendors provided period-accurate refreshments to visitors and staff throughout the event. Artisans—including ceramicists, silversmiths, and blacksmiths—demonstrated their crafts and sold their wares at the event. The King's Eighth, named for the British regiment historically stationed at Fort St. Joseph, ran military drills, gun and cannon demonstrations, and mock battles for the public. Voyageurs were on hand to display their furs and other trade goods. The re-enactors insist on the historical accuracy of their clothing, accessories, and domestic items that they employ to show the public what life may have been like at the fort. Educational experiences were provided for children as well. Children's activities included mini-excavations and the popular "bead barter" that encourages children to ask the archaeologists and re-enactors various questions in exchange for beads.

Moving away from the living history village and towards the site itself, guests encountered the outdoor museum. This area included panels of information about the history of the fort, the archaeological survey and excavation



Fig. 5: French market is an opportunity to engage with the public by promoting upcoming activities like the open house and selling project-related merchandise. Photo by Tori Hawley. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

that had been conducted, and the many types of artifacts and features recovered at the site. The panels were accompanied by display cases with recent finds, as well as artifacts from previous field seasons. WMU students were on hand to interpret the items and answer questions. The museum was well received and staffers met many community members who shared memories of the fort site in the more recent past. The outdoor museum became a place for the community to view pieces of the past, and also view the physical “results” of excavation.

From the outdoor museum, the public encountered the ongoing excavations. During the event, student archaeologists and volunteers continued excavating, wet-screening, and record-keeping, albeit at a much reduced pace given the throngs of visitors who bombarded them with a constant barrage of questions about the field of archaeology and the fort itself. Students noted they were hardly able to catch their breath, though they were kept motivated by the rush of adrenaline triggered by literally hundreds of fascinated visitors. The tangibility of the past is so immediate in this setting when the public can observe artifacts as they are being recovered and learn about the way these artifacts are precisely recorded and processed for analysis. Viewing the excavations gives the local community a clear perception of where the fort was and where specific build-

ings may have been on the site. This makes the fort more than just an abstract city moniker linked to the past but a real resource that the public sees firsthand and takes pride in. Engaging with the public and describing the most recent findings at the fort and the history of archaeological excavation there allow student archaeologists to effectively cement their own knowledge through teaching.

The open house event serves as an outdoor classroom, a place for people to learn about and question the past. People who come to the site with some knowledge of the fort find their understandings reinforced or transformed by this experience. WMU faculty, re-enactors, public scholars, city officials, and other stakeholders discuss the significance of the work at both the site and the living history village. The thousands of attendees each year come from the local community, throughout the Midwest, and beyond, confirming that people are interested in learning about the history and archaeology of Fort St. Joseph.

Support for the 2008 and 2010 open house events was provided by grants from the Michigan Humanities Council (MHC), which required a tangible product that is publicly accessible after the event had transpired. In 2008, the informational panels were posted to our web site (<http://www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph/>) and the third in a trilogy of documentary DVDs was produced for distribu-

tion to area schools, teachers, and the public. The videos have focused on the research design, the students' community service learning experiences, and stakeholders' responses to public education and outreach activities. In 2010 we proposed to publish a booklet on the women of New France based on the information from the informational panels and the public lecture series. The booklet, which is written for a general audience, will be distributed free of charge. These examples demonstrate how funding influences the activities we conduct and what we produce for public consumption.

Other Outreach Efforts

While the open house event is by far the largest outreach event conducted each year, it is not the only way the public is engaged as suggested by the longer-term outcomes of the MHC-sponsored programs. In addition, educational events are held regularly to retain public interest in the project and keep the community updated on the latest developments. Displays from the outdoor museum have been modified for the Niles District Library to foster interest in Fort St. Joseph among the wider community and to ensure that residents are kept informed of the excavation's progress, while providing yet another forum for feedback.

During the field season, WMU students live in the city of Niles. By living in the community where the research is conducted, the students see the direct effects of archaeology on the public. Many members of the Niles community are now comfortable expressing their opinions of the program as we pass them in the street or stand next to them in a store downtown. Spontaneous feedback of this kind is essential to the success of this project, as people have begun to recognize that we are interested in the views of *all* segments of the community, not just community leaders or those with a direct connection to Fort St. Joseph. A regular presence in the community also contributes to positive relations that have resulted in financial and volunteer support from the community.

For the past few years, the field school has been invited to participate in the Niles French Market, just one of many volunteer opportunities available to students and staff. The French Market is a weekly event that offers foods and crafts for sale and display (Figure 5). As residents of Niles during the field season, students are welcomed at the event as members of the community. At the market, the volunteers, sometimes dress in period outfits and sometimes as archaeologists, create awareness of the project through sales of project-related paraphernalia and also provide the public with information on upcoming events.

WMU students have been involved in Archaeology Day, held at the Fort St. Joseph Museum and Niles District Library, when local children participate in various activities, including mini-excavations. The museum was open to the public and artifacts from the previous field seasons were on display. Members of the community were invited to engage with the archaeologists and learn more about artifacts they've discovered. They could also ask questions about the fort and its material culture. Our travel-

ing archaeology booth has also been on display at the Niles Apple Fest, Plow Days (Buchanan, MI), WMU Day at the Capitol (Lansing), and Michigan Archaeology Day at the state museum (Lansing). We have also presented to school groups, the Michigan Archaeological Society, local museums and historical societies, Rotary Clubs, and other service organizations. As evidence of its success, the project was the recipient of the 2003 Governor's Award for Historical Preservation, the 2007 Michigan Historical Society's Educational Program Award, and grants from the Michigan Humanities Council in recognition of excellence in public education and outreach.

Challenges of Inclusion

A neighborhood archaeology that aims to be inclusive is likely to encounter resistance. Archaeology comes from a long tradition that maintains separation between scholars and the people with and for whom they work, be they field hands in WPA projects, descendant populations, living history enthusiasts, or local groups (Nassaney, 2009:21). A delicate balance must be reached between one's authority as an archaeologist and the needs, concerns, and expertise of the community (Little, 2007:167). The formal partnership between WMU and the City of Niles and the establishment of an advisory committee necessitates that archaeologists share power over the process with community partners and take seriously the input they provide (Nassaney, 2009:22). Different visions for development challenge us to form a consensus, or a least some agreement, among 15 potentially disparate perspectives on the future of an archaeological site.

For example, archaeologists are accustomed to proceeding with field activities in order to meet their research goals. Yet the public also has needs and questions, and seeks results on a shorter timeline than archaeologists can sometimes produce. Some members of the community are interested in an actual physical reconstruction of the fort in the near future, yet archaeologists recognize that this could take considerable time to collect the information needed for an accurate reconstruction. It is also the responsibility of the archaeologist, as Cleland (1981) points out, to familiarize non-archaeologists with the realities of the archaeological process. For instance, archaeological curation of artifacts and other data require secure facilities in perpetuity—a costly commitment for a small community with an under funded preservation plan.

There may also be some resistance to welcoming the University as a partner by all community members (Barrante and Nassaney, 2007). Because no communities are homogeneous, there are likely to be alternate visions of how to proceed, if at all. Archaeology is a political endeavor that may be contested for varying reasons, not the least of which revolve around the power to control a narrative or the development of a particular place. While the narrative of a multi-ethnic, interdependent community at Fort St. Joseph has emerged organically in the interpretive process, there has been opposition to site investigation by neighbors who look immediately across the river down onto the site.

Citing the potentially damaging environmental impacts of our activities, the dangers of a nearby landfill, and the economic folly of heritage tourism, an angered resident wrote directly to the University President in 2007 asking that all work cease and that I direct myself “to more



Fig. 6: Western Michigan University's Interim Provost and the Mayor of Niles signed a 10-year cooperative agreement in 2008. Photo by Tori Hawley. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.



Fig. 7: Obverse and reverse of the replica of a religious medallion recovered from Fort St. Joseph in 2004. Photo by John Lacko. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.



Fig. 8: The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project logo, designed with the support of Randy Peyser. Courtesy of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

constructive and less intrusive pursuits” (Frieling, 2007). Opposition stems from the desire to thwart the site's development because it was perceived to threaten the local landscape and the fabric of the community should ongoing work lead to a future reconstruction or an interpretive center that will create a different viewscape for neighbors and bring in large numbers of “visitors from out of the area, some with questionable positive values,” “turning the area into an ‘attractive nuisance’” (Frieling, 2007). Fortunately for some, the project has considerable support from the community, the Mayor, and the City Council, thereby ensuring continued development. In 2008 WMU and the City of Niles entered into a 10-year cooperative agreement to maintain efforts to investigate the site for educational and community benefits (Figure 6). In the meantime we are looking for opportunities to bring opponents into the planning process to give them a voice and listen to their concerns. While “each voice should be accepted as authentic and legitimate” (Thomas, 2002:142), not all perspectives are equally credible; some are contradictory and others should be contested.

Neighborhood archaeology also requires a safe and comfortable environment to benefit the community. Accessibility over uneven ground that poses challenges for seniors during site visitation at the open house is a potential liability. Proper permits are needed for food vendors, guns and cannons, and open fire pits on city park grounds.

The marketing of heritage has its own challenges and consequences and not all community groups should be expected to be supportive of involvement in archaeology (Rowan and Baram, 2004). For communities like Niles, where archaeological investigations have the potential to attract tourists, it is important to consider the role of heritage-related merchandising for the project and the local economy. Yet the multiplicity of voices can also hinder these attempts. It recently took a number of years to agree on a course of action to reproduce a religious medallion recovered from the excavations and make these souvenirs available to the public (Figure 7). After considerable discussion, a logo has also been created in response to the community's desire for merchandise affiliated with the project (Figure 8).

The difficulties in producing artifact replicas and designing project logos for branding purposes is evidence of the tensions that can emerge between the academic research goals of the project and the efforts to commodify heritage (Baram and Rowan, 2004). For example, we have come to recognize the importance of authenticity to the historical re-enactors that participate in the annual open house and their desire for replicas of artifacts derived from the archaeological excavations. This is not how I originally thought about artifacts and such a focus shifts attention away from context towards artifact fetishism, a trend that archaeologists typically eschew. Public longing for dig souvenirs such as t-shirts and other paraphernalia drive archaeologists to produce goods that are ancillary to the education and research goals of the project. This is a somewhat unintended consequence of the community archaeology we practice as it diverts attention from some

of the original goals we developed before fully engaging with our community partners and the public. In response to community needs, we disseminate information about our work through venues such as DVDs and popular writing, in addition to scholarly publication. The need to sustain the project economically also dictates to some extent the activities that we conduct. By involving the public through summer camps, the open house, and other outreach activities, we are responding to public needs thereby making our work accessible to an audience of potential donors who want to support an endeavor that reflects their concerns and interests. While we try to maintain a delicate balance between the research and outreach goals of the project, we have an interest in self-preservation. We are not above attempting to persuade local shopkeepers, hotel owners, and members of the chamber of commerce that what's good for Fort St. Joseph is good for Niles. These arguments will be developed more forcibly as we work to establish a permanent presence in the community and develop a heritage tourist destination that exerts its own influence on the region.

I fully expect to see competing visions for the development of the project as we move forward in trying to establish a teaching and learning center in Niles. It will come as no surprise that those individuals and groups who are willing to underwrite this enterprise will want a program that best serves *their* interests. It will be up to the archaeologists and other preservationists to insure that archaeological concerns remain central at Fort St. Joseph and commercialization does not threaten to hijack the project. Of course, what constitutes the centrality of archaeology will surely shift in the context of changing social and political pressures that may compromise the archaeological endeavor in ways that can potentially render it a mere tool of economic interests.

Concluding Thoughts

Despite these hurdles, public involvement in the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project has yielded significant results. In this paper, I have highlighted the need for collaborative practice in archaeology, suggesting that it is no longer acceptable for archaeologists to reap the intellectual benefits of another community's heritage without providing them with the opportunity to benefit equally from the endeavor. The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project has complemented, galvanized, and expanded interest in the past among the local community, which is evident in the increasingly active role played by residents in decisions concerning the direction of this endeavor. The project has engendered a sense of ownership of the past and of pride in the history of this place.

Heritage is undoubtedly marketable and can help economically struggling communities to develop their assets in positive ways that benefit stakeholders beyond history enthusiasts. In a state plagued by one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, the City of Niles was selected by the State of Michigan in 2008 to receive support to work with a consultant to create a cultural economic development plan. The purpose of the plan is to identify

cultural assets in the community and determine how they can be developed to create and sustain economic opportunities. Not surprisingly, Fort St. Joseph emerged as one of the city's most significant cultural assets prompting the task force, city officials, and university faculty and administrators to explore how this archaeological site can further serve as a catalyst for research, learning, and economic opportunities that extend beyond the archaeology. Artists, planners, heritage consultants, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders in Niles's past, present, and future are excited about using heritage as a means of revitalizing a community. This enthusiasm has yet to spread to all segments of the business community, however. Nevertheless, our experiment in collaborative archaeology showcases the role that archaeology and heritage preservation can play in community development and demonstrates that archaeologists make good neighbors.

Over the past ten years we have learned that town-gown collaboration requires more than simply showing respect for the values of another culture or society. The involvement of local communities in archaeological investigations from the outset results in greater visibility and better archaeology. Community members have provided financial and logistical support, as well as intellectual support in some cases. Not only have we gained specific information about the site and the types of artifacts recovered, we have also enjoyed assistance in the form of different perspectives and interpretations of the findings from those who are personally connected to the site.

Doing community archaeology and working in neighborhoods demand making fundamental changes to our disciplinary practice. While there are many strategies that can be adopted to initiate a community archaeology project, I have outlined the practices that have proven to be beneficial to the success of our program. Seldom do we consider how the knowledge and experiences of non-academics and the assets of a community would enhance our research. It is essential that we expand the notion of community or public archaeology to ensure that it is not simply dismissed as an ethical issue to be dealt with, but instead embraced as a method of increasing interest in and support of academic research. We must also be vigilant to avoid the temptations of commercialization that threatens to reap the economic benefits of the site and compromise the core of the archaeological enterprise that aims to reveal what happened in the past and who did it.

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