2017

Partners 06: Partnering with the Pokagan Band of Potawatomi

Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project

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A HISTORY OF COLLABORATION IN THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER VALLEY

The Potawatomi have a long history of collaborating with non-Natives to achieve their goals. Beginning in the 17th century, their ancestors interacted with fur traders and Jesuits at Fort St. Joseph. Collaborating with the Potawatomi can provide an understanding of their values and their perspectives on the interactions that took place during the fur trade era in the St. Joseph River valley. Both communities are interested in Fort St. Joseph because the site was a multi-ethnic settlement inhabited by both French and Native Americans. Collaboration between anthropologists and Native Americans promotes positive understanding of their values and their perspectives. Furthermore, Native Americans often had marginalized in historical documents, so learning about their history through archaeology and in their own words can challenge current understandings of this chapter of American history.

SHARED INTERESTS BETWEEN THE POKAGON BAND AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS

By doing collaborative research, anthropologists create bonds with communities like the Potawatomi. Collaborative research is mutually beneficial for communities when common interests are identified. Engaging in collaborative projects demonstrates how the discipline of anthropology has become more inclusive and accountable to community groups. Since anthropologists are interested in culture, past and present, they can assist groups like the Potawatomi in recovering their history and keeping their traditions alive.

Working together, they can work to disseminate knowledge about Native culture to the public. Engaging in collaborative projects demonstrates how the discipline of anthropology has become more inclusive and accountable to community groups. Since anthropologists are interested in culture, past and present, they can assist groups like the Potawatomi in recovering their history and keeping their traditions alive.

KEEPING TRADITIONS ALIVE AN MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

Citizens of the Potawatomi Band are interested in preserving and communicating Potawatomi language, culture, and history. It is important to them to revive and maintain traditional values. Native peoples possess knowledge passed down from generation to generation that can assist anthropologists in creating new understandings of the past. Potential collaborations between the two communities include the Next Exit History application, which would be a novel way of sharing history and material culture uncovered at Fort St. Joseph with a wide digital audience. Another partnership could be a lecture series co-hosted by the citizens of the Band and members of the Project.

Western Michigan University anthropology students and citizens of the Potawatomi Band have begun to identify areas of shared interest that can be pursued in building a relationship to create more inclusive histories in the St. Joseph River valley.

This exhibit was created and designed by members of the Anthropology in the Community class (ANTH 5030) in Spring 2017. Jourdan Bracko, Chelsea Carpenter, Adina Congelli, Stephanie Faussey-Pineau, Alyssa Geue, Stefan Hubble, Harly McCray, Jeffrey Now, Kortney Potts, Joesh Schmidtke, Kyle Scottie, Ashley Sicotte, Hailey Maurer, and Jeffrey Nau are thanked for their contributions to this exhibit.

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Awigam made by citizens of the Pokagon Band using traditional methods for the Archaeology Open House in 2015. Members of the Advisory Committee were involved in planning for the Open House. That year's theme was "Keeping Traditions Alive and Moving Into the Future." The Band's seal tells the story of a hawk of the sun, which was the gift of fire.