

LANCELOT, SONATA AND LUST: ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION AND THE PUBLIC

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"Folsom, Folsom Man
I wanna be
A Folsom Man.
Folsom, Folsom Man
I'm gonna be a Folsom Man."

(To be sung to the
tune of "Macho Man")

The relevance of my writing the above will become apparent below. In the meantime, I would like to begin my paper in earnest by calling attention to a statement by Dr. C. T. Shay, a highly respected Manitoba archaeologist of long standing. Dr. Shay (1997:1), in a recent speech on what it means to be a "scholar," noted that:

"It means thinking, questioning, seeking, probing, challenging, delving, searching, testing. It means not accepting the orthodox view, the conventional view, the party line. Because if I have learned anything, it is that we need to constantly challenge."

Although I am no longer an academic, I do nonetheless like to think of myself as a scholar of sorts -- a "learned person" in the dictionary definition of the term. And because I have an abiding interest in applying the benefits of archaeology in the public arena, I frequently find myself questioning, challenging, and testing the very essence of how certain aspects of archaeology are conducted in this province.

Half the time I am very pleased indeed with how things are proceeding. The best instances that come to mind are the very fine work being done by Brandon University's Dr. Bev Nicholson and his colleagues and students in researching the late precontact history of southwestern Manitoba, and the ongoing experimentation into traditional lithic and ceramic technology by several Manitoba archaeologists (e.g., Flynn and Tisdale 1997:4-5).

There are other aspects of Manitoba archaeology that are, in my opinion (given my personal biases and values based on 34 years in the discipline), due for an overhaul. One of these -- our mode of communicating our results to the public -- forms the subject of this paper.

"Archaeology," and "archaeology"

To begin, I would like to acknowledge the existence of two closely related phenomena: archaeology (small "a") and Archaeology (capital "A").

Small "a" archaeology is defined as "the study of past human life as revealed by relics left by ancient peoples" (G. & C. Merriam Inc. 1974:51). In other words, archaeology is a scientific discipline. Capital "A" Archaeology is a dialect of the English language used by avocational and professional practitioners who seriously indulge in the discipline of archaeology.

Archaeologists -- people who speak Archaeology -- are, in a sense, bilingual. They can speak both plain English and Archaeology. English-speakers who are not archaeologists understand plain English, but they can have considerable difficulty understanding Archaeology.

That is because Archaeology is a mixture of (a) plain English and (b) specialized jargon. To the non-archaeologist listening to a conversation in Archaeology, certain words -- the common English ones -- are familiar and can be readily understood. The specialised words -- the jargon -- cannot be readily understood, and communication may very well fail to take place as a consequence.

Archaeology is somewhat comparable to another (albeit fictitious) English "dialect" named after an imaginary creature known as the Jaberwock. Consider the following pair of lines from Lewis Carroll's poem entitled, appropriately enough, "Jaberwocky":

T'was brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.

To an English-speaker, certain words in that quote ("T'was", "and", "the") will sound familiar; they are recognizable. Others, however, ("brillig," "slithy," "wabe") are not. In fact, they are nonsense words, and while the listener/reader might get the gist of the statement, (s)he is not at all sure just what is being said, due to the presence of the unfamiliar words -- that is, the jargon.

In a way, Archaeology is like that. But unlike Jaberwocky, all words used by archaeologists in speaking Archaeology are *bona fide* English terms. The difference is, certain of the English words (the jargon) used by archaeologists when speaking Archaeology are either not used in everyday speech, or else they are assigned significance or meanings that are unfamiliar to English-speaking non-archaeologists.

It can be seen from the foregoing that there are two kinds of people: archaeologists and non-archaeologists. As I have already indicated, the archaeologists can speak and understand both plain English and Archaeology, but the non-archaeologists can reasonably be expected to speak and understand only plain English (for convenience, I will hereinafter refer to these English-speaking non-archaeologists as "laypersons").

Given the above, it makes little sense for an archaeologist to speak to a layperson in Archaeology. Fortunately, all languages and dialects (including Archaeology) can, theoretically, be translated into other languages or dialects. Hence, Archaeology can be translated into the English vernacular. And before archaeologists presume to speak to laypersons, they should translate the Archaeology into plain English first.

Unfortunately, they very often do not. Rather, they speak to the laypersons in Archaeology, a form of speech the latter will almost surely have difficulty understanding. Why do archaeologists engage in this seemingly illogical form of behaviour?

Archaeology: A Personal Experience

Perhaps I can shed some light on this question by referring to my own experience as a professional archaeologist. In order to become a professional archaeologist, I had to go through several years of training in archaeology at two universities. In the course of my training, I learned to speak Archaeology; indeed, whenever I spoke about archaeology I spoke only in Archaeology.

One thing I definitely did not learn to do in university was to translate Archaeology into plain English. There were no translation courses, nor creative-writing courses, that would help me master the art of writing about archaeology in plain English, nor was there any encouragement or incentive for me to learn on my own to speak in plain English while talking about archaeology during my university career.

This did not pose a problem as long as I was talking to other archaeologists. And in the university, other archaeologists were pretty well the only people I spoke to about archaeology. There arose a difficulty, however, when I ventured outside of the university to talk to laypersons about archaeology.

Archaeology, Plain English, and Me

One day I ventured outside of the university and never went back. Rather, I became a provincial civil servant -- a "public archaeologist" -- and in the process I entered a world full of laypersons, e.g., my boss (the Director), his boss (the Assistant Deputy Minister), his boss (the Deputy Minister), and his boss (the Minister) of the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, and numerous co-workers, not to mention the general public for whose benefit I had been hired. None of these many people either spoke or understood Archaeology. For many years, I tried to learn on my own how to translate Archaeology into plain English in order to do my job.

After I completed my career as a civil servant, I became a heritage consultant with an ambition to apply archaeological information for the benefit of the masses (numerous laypersons). This made it all the more important for me to speak and write about archaeology -- not in Archaeology, but

in plain English.

What, really, is the nature of archaeological jargon that renders Archaeology a dialect of English rather than simply part and parcel of plain English? In point of fact, there are two kinds of Archaeology -- sub-dialects, so to speak. I will call them "Basic" and "Taxonomic", and they are quite different variations on the theme.

Basic Archaeology

Basic Archaeology simply comprises an array of both simple and complex terms, of which the following is an excellent example. This quote is an abstract (summary) of a paper given some time ago at a Canadian Archaeological Association convention.

"The systemic viewpoint presupposes isomorphic structure in all domains. Explicit delineation of any system in a symbolic calculus enables recognition and utilization of these isomorphisms. Application of a formalized model to an archaeological situation, with the explicit hypothesis of isomorphism, will allow deduction of hitherto unknown elements within that situation. Subsequent testing for the deduced elements either confirms or denies the hypothesis. This methodology can greatly reduce, if not eliminate, the present reliance upon analogy in archaeological analyses" (Kroker 1976:31).

I would suggest that this paragraph would not be understood by the average layperson; indeed, its meaning may be grasped by only a select cadre of professional archaeologists specialising in the particular topic being presented. It qualifies as a good example of what I refer to here as Basic Archaeology.¹

Taxonomic Archaeology

Taxonomic Archaeology is generally not quite as complex as the mode of expression exemplified in foregoing quote (although acute communication problems can be expected to arise when both Basic and Taxonomic Archaeology are combined in the same piece of writing or oral presentation and conveyed to a layperson). Fundamental to Taxonomic Archaeology is the application and use of proper nouns as "name tags" for different classes of archaeological materials. To explain the system that is presently in use, let us briefly review what scientific classification is all about, and how its use can help or hinder communication.

Archaeology is a science and, like all other sciences, it has its own special system of nomenclature, or taxonomy. This system was developed to facilitate communication between

¹ I hasten to point out that Mr. Sid Kroker, the author of the above quote, was the Director of the tremendously popular The Forks Public Archaeology Program. This and his many well-received presentations to lay readers/listeners/viewers bespeak of a skill to which all archaeologists should aspire -- the ability to tailor one's delivery, as appropriate, to the audience of the moment.

archaeologists, and to assist them in organizing their findings in a controlled fashion for research and curatorial purposes.

To illustrate, let us take an example from the natural sciences. In this area, there are two kinds of words -- the specialized, and the common. The specialized word for "whitetail deer", for instance, is *Odocoileus virginianus*. At a convention of wildlife biologists, use of this Latin variant would pose no communication problems because everyone there is familiar with the term and knows precisely what it means. However, if one of these experts were to give a talk to an audience of laypersons, (s)he would be well advised to use the available common term (whitetail deer) rather than the specialized one.

Archaeologists also have a vocabulary of specialized terms, only they are usually drawn from some language other than Latin (the terms used in Manitoba usually happen to be of Western European derivation). The application of these specialized terms goes something like this: from time to time a site is discovered containing material remains of a culture or civilization hitherto unknown to archaeologists; for them, it is a genuinely new discovery. This "type site" is given the name of a nearby town or other geographical feature, or perhaps the name of the landowner on whose property it was found. The new findings are published under this name, which becomes widely recognized as more and more archaeologists make use of it.

"Folsom"

Very often, this same name is also applied to the entire archaeological assemblage, or "complex", found at the type site and eventually elsewhere. Thus, one will find in the archaeological literature reference to both the "Folsom Site" and the "Folsom Complex".

What makes a newly-found complex different from other, previously-found complexes is the presence of one or more distinctive or "diagnostic" kinds of artifact -- "cultural signatures", so to speak. In Manitoba, projectile points (arrow points, spear points) and/or pottery wares comprise the cultural indicators. A diagnostic artifact category is usually given the same name as that applied to the original find-site and the overall archaeological complex, e.g., "Folsom projectile point type".

As I indicated above, surnames or proper nouns like "Folsom" used in this fashion are nothing more than handy identifiers that allow archaeologists to scientifically organize and categorize their findings, and to communicate with one another about them. Obviously, an English name like "Folsom" in no way figured in the vocabulary of the Precontact Aboriginal people who were responsible for the cultural complex that came to be discovered, defined and so named thousands of years later by 20th Century archaeologists.

Now because human beings made and used Folsom points and were the originators of the Folsom Complex, a logical extension of the use of the term is to match it with other words that

acknowledge that fact. Hence, we find in the literature expressions such as "Folsom Man", "Folsom people" and "Folsom hunter". Because these designators are genuine aspects of Archaeology, archaeologists use them all the time and understand perfectly well what they mean.

But what would they mean to a layperson who has not had the benefit of training in archaeology, does not speak Archaeology, and is hearing them being used by an archaeologist for the first time? Let us consider each of the above three expressions in terms of what they might mean, at first blush, to a layperson.

What, for instance, is a "Folsom Man"? The most familiar comparable image in everyday experience to this wording would be, I suppose, a "Marlborough Man". Since a Marlborough Man smokes cigarettes known as Marlboroughs, can it not be expected that, to someone who has never been tutored in the origins and nature of archaeological taxonomy, a Folsom Man is someone who smokes "Folsoms"? (at this point, please refer back to my archaeologization of "Macho Man" at the beginning of this paper).

Next question: who were the "Folsom people"? A response from a layperson might be, "Well, Joe and Mary Folsom and the kids, I guess. Or maybe the whole Folsom clan." I would not expect a layperson, without the benefit of appropriate instruction, to conceive of "Folsom people" as Aboriginals who lived on Turtle Island (the Aboriginal name for North America) 10,500 years ago.

Likewise, just as a lion hunter hunts lions, or a deer hunter hunts deer, would not a "Folsom hunter" be someone who hunts, or hunts for, Folsoms? The following is a quote written by a knowledgeable 20th Century artifact collector who would very likely be considered by a layperson to be a "Folsom hunter". We join him in the process of an artifact search (hunt?):

"I had not been getting much else than end-scrapers and the occasional Plains Side Notch, when I saw a bone-white shape almost four inches in length. To my utter amazement it was a fluted point, complete except for one "ear." Ordinarily I let out a war whoop when I make a good find and a fellow collector is present. This time I just stopped and looked at it for a good minute, then still speechless, walked, not ran, to my partner. I said to him very quietly, 'I can die happy now,' and I showed him the Folsom" (Hlady 1967:5).

Considering the very high value this gentleman placed on "Folsoms," can there be any doubt that in his heart of hearts he was, or at least aspired to be, a "Folsom hunter"?²

² Notwithstanding the rather amusing tone of Mr. Hlady's anecdote, and the use I make of it here, I would like to point out that he acted very responsibly in consequence of his discovery. He ensured that it was properly documented, photographed and drawn by staff of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. A plaster cast was also made of it. He quite correctly noted in his article that "these precautions are necessary for every major discovery, since lack of specific information as to location of the artifact (or loss of the artifact) can deprive the science of archaeology of

In reality -- that is, in the mind of an archaeologist -- "Folsom Man/People/Hunter" is the general or generic Archaeological terminology for a branch of humanity whose members long ago lived on the high plains and Southwest of North America and are identified in the archaeological record by the distinctive Folsom point type.

Likewise, "Folsom people" refers to the population so represented. A "Folsom hunter" was an individual within that population who obtained food by hunting wild animals of types now extinct.

We archaeologists use names like "Folsom" because we have no way of knowing what language the ancient people spoke and therefore what they called themselves, so we select identifiers of our own as a convenient means of referring to the ancient people in question.

As I indicated above, as long as those using this vocabulary are all archaeologists, it poses no problems. However, unlike wildlife biologists with their *Odocoileus virginianus*/whitetail deer matching pairs, archaeologists have not developed direct non-specialised counterparts for their specialized terms. As a result, this jargon usually forms part of the archaeologist's effort to convey his/her findings and conclusions about them to the general public. If the archaeologist's presentation does not include an explanation of why such terminology is used and where it came from, questions and confusion may well arise in the listening/reading layperson's mind.

Some More Cases In Point

This is borne out by the public's occasional confusion between proper nouns that form part of Archaeology and similar terms that are more generally familiar to non-archaeologists. For example, there is a culture complex known as "Sonota." This word is very similar to "sonata," a musical term meaning "an instrumental composition with three or four movements differing in rhythm and mood but related in key" (G. & C. Merriam Inc. 1974:656). I recall seeing in an undergraduate student's term paper reference to "Sonata points."

Another example of this kind of confusion involves the word "lanceolate." This term looks very much like "lancelot," as in Sir Lancelot, knight of the Round Table. I recently read a short paper by an avocational archaeologist that made reference several times to "lancelot points."

On one episode of the evening news I witnessed a non-archaeological lay-person newscaster announcing the use of the Internet in the public school system. He mentioned that the students were learning all about the "Polio- (my spelling, but his pronunciation) Indians." Clearly, what the gentleman meant was "Palaeo-Indians," a term with which he was obviously (but understandably) unfamiliar.

As a person of my own generation, said newscaster no doubt was familiar with the term "polio," an oft-used contraction of "poliomyelitis," a crippling disease that appeared in near-epidemic proportions in Canada in the early 1950s. The blank look on the broadcaster's face when he said "Polio-Indians" spoke volumes about what the "word" meant to him (i.e., nothing) -- never mind to his legion of layperson viewers.

Sometimes, laypersons who presume to use Archaeological terms jump to conclusions as to their implications and acceptable use. For example, there existed in Manitoba and elsewhere a late Precontact culture referred to by archaeologists as "Blackduck." I have personally heard museum docents -- non-archaeologists, to be sure -- refer to the "Blackduck tribe" and the "Blackducks," just as one might refer to *bona fide* Aboriginal peoples as Crees, Dakotas and Ojibways.

In reality, of course, there is no reason to believe that there ever was a "tribe" of people who called themselves, or were referred to by their contemporaries as, "the Blackducks"; "Blackduck" is simply a recent geographical place name in Minnesota adopted by archaeologists for their own particular purposes. Some other local name could just as easily have been chosen. From a traditional Native standpoint it has no historical reality, nor does it constitute an integral or inherent part of the artifacts themselves. Its adoption and use by archaeologists is artificial and arbitrary.

And in print, "Blackduck" runs into problems again at the hands of the non-specialist communicators such as journalists. Consider this quote from a local Winnipeg newspaper: "Spearheads dating back to 6,000 BC and black duck pottery from 780 AD were found here" (Bigourdan 1994:1). In this quote, the use of "black duck" (two words, no capitalization of "Black") can only lead me to conclude that the communicative value to non-archaeologists reading the article was absolutely zero.

Freudian slips also figure in the deployment of Archaeological terminology by the uninitiated. There is a late Plano complex known as "Lusk," expressions of which have shown up in Manitoba. It was only a matter of time before "Lusk" was mis-spelled "Lust" in an archaeological report. "Lust" is defined in the dictionary as "sexual desire often to an intense or unrestrained degree" (G. & C. Merriam Inc. 1974:417). The implications are that the typist was more familiar with "lust" (it may in fact have been a lifestyle thing and therefore a Freudian slip) than "Lusk," and the archaeologist who drafted the piece did not proof-read it carefully before it went to press.

Of course, in two of the above cases -- Sonata and Lust -- we may simply be witnessing examples of typos and nothing more. But this form of error provides the opportunity to examine the jargon issue from a slightly different angle. In 1985 I published an article in the public-oriented book "Natural Heritage of Manitoba, Legacy of the Ice Age". Back in those days, I was only just starting my struggle with this matter of Archaeology in the public arena, and I was still freely using it in my for-the-public writing. When the book finally appeared in print, I was vexed and annoyed to see that the word "Clovis" was mis-spelled "Clivic" at one place in the text.

Now in the dictionary of North American archaeology, "Clovis" refers to a very early hunting and gathering culture whose economy was based to a large degree on the pursuit of now-extinct big game animals. It got its Archaeological name from the town of Clovis, New Mexico situated near the type-site.

And make no mistake about it, the name "Clovis" is indeed a very historic one. However, in its original historical context, it had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with North American Ice Age big game hunters. Rather, the original Clovis was the king of the Franks who ruled between 481 and 511 CE and who is regarded as the traditional founder of the French kingdom. Obviously, he had nothing to do with the people responsible for the ancient cultural deposit discovered in a New Mexico gravel pit.

That being the obvious case, what difference does it make how the name is spelled when used in reference to the 11,500-year-old lifeway? Since the name was in no way inherently connected with the culture *per se*, does it really matter how it's spelled? The typographical error didn't compromise or influence my ability to tell the story I wrote about the ancient culture; the use of "Clovis," even in its correct form, was quite unnecessary to begin with. Why not call the ancient culture "Charlemagne"; he was an early French king too (Answer: there's no town near the New Mexico gravel pit called "Charlemagne").

In short, for all the sense it makes to name a North American Ice Age culture after a Christian-era European king, any spelling will do. Clovis, Clovic, Clovix -- who cares? It all goes to show just how irrelevant the jargon really is in the hypothetical reconstruction of early North American culture history for public consumption. In the end, the typo wasn't worth the calories I burned up fussing over it.

An explanation of Archaeological taxonomy along the lines that I have provided above would probably clarify for the average layperson the whys and wherefores of terms such as "Folsom" and "Blackduck." Such an explanation would hopefully put the record straight; and among non-Aboriginals, at least, no further questions would likely materialise. Non-Aboriginals may still consider it odd that an Anglo-Saxon family name like "Folsom" would be applied to a 10,500-year-old way of life whose followers, as North American Aboriginals, were obviously not Anglo-Saxons. But never mind.

Not Necessarily Academic

On the other hand, a good many Native people may very well mind, and the use of a name like "Folsom" to label an ancient Aboriginal culture and population might strike them as something more than simply "odd." There are some Canadian archaeologists who are trying very hard to convince Native people of the value of archaeology and what it can do for them. In some instances these efforts are bearing fruit; but there are many heritage-conscious Natives who are

highly vocal in their rejection of archaeological interpretation of the Aboriginal past (cf Tobias 1987:55; Verrall and McDowell 1990:32; Demas 1993:3; McCoy 1998:115) no matter what kind of language is used.

In all honesty, I personally do not recall ever having heard an Aboriginal person object to the use of a European family name to denote a Precontact Aboriginal culture. This is probably because most Native people have more important, bread-and-butter issues to contend with that don't happen to include Archaeolinguistics.

Rather, I take my cues from similar circumstances outside of archaeology. For example, in recent years many Native communities have changed their names from those originally given to them by the federal government, to alternatives drawn from their own languages combined with English words that more fittingly express the peoples' self-identity. Thus, the "Fort Alexander Indian Band" is now the "Sagkeeng First Nation."

A similar state affairs came about a few years ago with regard to the re-naming of Aberdeen School in Winnipeg's North End. Originally, this school was attended overwhelmingly, if not entirely, by students of non-Native descent. At that time, a good Scottish name like "Aberdeen" was considered appropriate.

However, with changes in the demographics of the neighbourhood in which it is located, and in response to the special needs and circumstances of Native students, the institution has become an all-Native school and its name has been changed to "Niji Mahkwa" (My Friend the Bear).

If European and Euro-Canadian identifiers like "Fort Alexander Indian Band" and "Aberdeen School" are no longer deemed acceptable to the people primarily concerned, might we not logically anticipate a similar response to terms like "Folsom," "Laurel," and "Selkirk" in reference to all-Aboriginal cultures of long ago?

I do believe that if archaeologists ever hope to impress sceptical Natives with the products of their research, they (the archaeologists) are going to have to critically review the ways in which they go about their business. We must bear in mind that the discipline of archaeology is foreign to traditional Aboriginal culture, and this is manifested loud and clear in the terminological conventions I have discussed above. The standard ways of doing archaeology involve a very thick veneer of Eurocentrism; and if they ever took it upon themselves to closely examine what we are up to, we should not be surprised if Aboriginal people were to question the practice of Euro-Canadian archaeologists giving European family names to entirely Indigenous, Precontact cultures.

Like it or not, this practice is yet another example of a sector of the dominant, mainstream society imposing foreign standards and concepts on things that are purely Aboriginal. In its own small way, it symbolizes the pervasive take-over of the Western Hemisphere by foreigners, and

reaffirms the status of the Indigenous populations as colonized peoples. Considering that the above-described system of Taxonomic Archaeology is applied on a continental scale, along with the fact that the bulk of literature on Aboriginal history is written by non-Aboriginals, we would seem to have an instance of heritage appropriation on a grand scale. I believe that as archaeologists, we should acknowledge that fact and perhaps do something about it when we undertake to communicate our information to the general public, Native or otherwise.

Growing Sensitivity -- To A Point

In recent years, some archaeologists (myself among them) have come to understand the insensitivity of using certain words in referring to Aboriginal heritage. Terms like "primitive," "prehistoric," "Indian" and "New World" have come to be recognized as biased, demeaning, historically inaccurate or otherwise inappropriate, and efforts are made to avoid the use of them in popular writing and public-speaking. At the same time, there seems to be no hesitation whatever to continue using -- in the public arena -- European family names like "McKean", "Duncan," "Hanna" and "Selkirk" to label wholly Precontact Aboriginal cultural phenomena in which European involvement had no presence whatsoever.

As dyed-in-the-wool archaeologists, we are fully indoctrinated into this practice right from Day One. It should come as no surprise, then, that by shunning such conventions, we might feel that we are not doing "real" archaeology. Certainly, some archaeologists seem very uncomfortable with the idea of excluding such terminology from their popular media. Between 1996 and 1998, three major public awareness projects, aimed directly at non-specialist audiences, were produced in Manitoba. During that same time period, papers were published by two of the province's senior archaeologists decrying the use of jargon in public-education products (Syms 1997:64-65; Pettipas 1997:62-63). That notwithstanding, all three of these recent productions make use of Archaeological jargon to a greater or lesser degree. Either the issue is not being taken very seriously in this province, or we are finding old habits very hard to break.

Parenthetically, I must in all honesty admit that the latter statement applies to me personally: notwithstanding my conviction that taxonomic jargon should not be used in public-oriented interpretation, I still find myself falling short at times in living up to my principles. The difficulties in teaching an old dog new tricks -- even when he wants to learn them -- goes hand in hand with another old adage: Rome wasn't built in a day. I am finding some real discrepancies between my sermons (like the one you are presently reading) on the one hand and my practice on the other, and the goal of consistency is going to require some determined and conscious effort on my part.

An "Ethnographic" Analogy

But to return to the sermon: over the years, I have become increasingly aware of the technical/popular dichotomy being discussed here. What I think we are doing is mixing apples

and oranges where such need not and, in my opinion, should not, be the case.

I liken the use of Archaeological jargon to what happens when I take my car to the service station for maintenance or repair. When my car is in the shop, a wide range of tools and instruments are used to diagnose the problem/condition of the car, and to service or repair it. When the job is done, what happens? I drive away, of course; but in the process I do not take all those specialised shop tools with me. Rather, their usefulness is ended for my immediate purposes, and so they are left behind at the service station.

I think the same thing should, and for the most part does, happen when we do archaeology. The garden trowels, recording forms, line levels, cataloguing systems, analysis sheets, weigh scales, microscopes, statistical calculations, scholarly journals and, last but not least, specialised terms, are all the tools of the trade that help us to reach our objective -- reconstructing the past. Those of us in the non-academic sector, that is, we who seek to present that reconstruction to the general public, should leave those tools behind once they have served their purpose, just as we leave the service station and its array of instruments behind when we drive away in our repaired or serviced vehicle. And if we are not used to telling our story to the layperson without the use of those tools, we should undertake to devise ways and means of replacing them with something that is more "user-friendly" to the non-archaeologist.

In a recent publication, Dr. E. Leigh Syms of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature made a very interesting statement. He wrote:

"A ceramic sherd must be viewed as a series of skilled activities of craftsmanship including skill and pride in production, decorative beauty, and function rather than merely a 'type' with an arbitrary irrelevant name (e.g., Selkirk, Laurel)" (Syms 1997:64; emphasis mine).

My particular interest here is the use of the words "arbitrary" and "irrelevant". The choice of "Laurel" as a name for an ancient Aboriginal culture is indeed arbitrary. The archaeologist who first selected it for that purpose could just as easily have picked the name of some other nearby town, village, or geographical feature to name the culture in question.

Beyond that, any decision to use it in communicating to laypersons is also arbitrary because it shouldn't be necessary to do so -- since it wasn't part of the ancient culture to begin with, we should be able to tell our story without it.

However, I would disagree with Dr. Syms in his seemingly broadcloth view that "Laurel" is "irrelevant." It may or may not be, depending on the immediate circumstances. For two professional archaeologists in their lab or on a dig discussing between the two of them the earliest known ceramic-bearing culture in Manitoba, "Laurel" is a very relevant (and useful, and convenient) term/tool with which to facilitate communication between these two specialists. But I would agree that it is irrelevant in the effort to paint a picture of the real world as it may have

existed on Turtle Island 1500 years ago.

Admittedly, a Double Standard

What I am advocating, I must admit, is a double standard. The continued generation and use of Archaeological jargon is inevitable. As scientists, we are still going to have to classify our findings according to a taxonomic system, and I frankly do not know what to suggest as an alternative to the one already in place. Indeed, trying to replace it at this stage of the game, considering how entrenched it now is, would be highly problematic. Besides, if it is a perfectly good system solely for the purposes of the specialist user, what would be the point of trying to come up with an alternative?

It can be expected, then, that terms like "Folsom" and "Clovis" will continue to be part of the professional Archaeological lexicon for a long time to come. But do we have to use this jargon when we "go public"? Is there not some way of telling our story to the layperson without having to resort to our own brand of Jaberwocky?

Inasmuch as these jargonistic terms do not form an integral or inherent part of the archaeological findings themselves, nor of the historical events of which the ancient objects were once a part, the answer to this question should be "no"; we should be able to tell our story without them, particularly when our audience is made up of people who are probably unfamiliar with them and hence are not anticipating their presence in the first place. We should be able to deliver our message to the layperson in plain English, not in Archaeology. Let's have no more "lancelot" points, "Clovic" sites, "Folsom hunters", "Lust" complexes, "Sonata" phases, "Polio-Indians", perplexed TV reporters delivering non-news, or baffled newspaper journalists encouraging us to learn all about the elusive "Black duck" tribe.

Alternatives

In a book entitled "Other Peoples' Heritage: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Museum Interpretation" (Pettipas 1994), I included a précis of Aboriginal history relating to Manitoba. A much expanded version appeared in the more recent "Aboriginal Migrations: A History of Movements in Southern Manitoba" (Pettipas 1996). One of my objectives in writing these pieces was to show that the story could be told without the wholesale use of Archaeological jargon that derives overwhelmingly from European surnames.

In 1991, Henry Epp, a Saskatchewan archaeologist, came out with a work which he entitled "Long Ago Today". I regard this publication to be a very significant one, because it exemplifies very well what I am trying to say in this paper. The first half of Epp's book is all about the discipline of archaeology; the second half offers a reconstruction of the past -- a culture history. The first part presents, among other things, the specialised terminology and explains what the jargon is all about. The second part -- my focus of attention here -- presents an extensive historical narrative,

extending back 11,500 years, without using any of the jargon. It can indeed be done.

A comparable book, "The Foot of the River," was written by Manitoban George Lalor, a non-archaeologist. In this case, only a cultural-historical reconstruction is put forward. Both Epp and Lalor took pains to present their historical reconstructions in straight-forward, plain, every-day English. It is worth noting, I believe, that the Lalor book received Honourable Mention in the most popular book category of the Manitoba Historical Society's Margaret McWilliams Medal Competition for 1988.

The Epp and Lalor works can best be classified as creative and imaginative historical narrative, inasmuch as they reconstruct living scenes, action sets and episodes complete with named characters ("Running Caribou," "Grizzly Claw"). But however one might choose to regard them, the stories are based on actual archaeological and ethnohistorical findings and, in my opinion, are far better suited to a lay readership than other, jargon-ridden efforts that have been promulgated as "popular" literature (e.g., Pettipas [Editor] 1983).

This sentiment would no doubt be endorsed by Aboriginal educators who have published reviews of literature on Native heritage. It has been noted that even though it constitutes a piece of dramatised history, Lalor's book presents readers "with living, breathing people, with whom they can identify and share a distant yesterday" (Verrall and McDowell 1990:80).

Conclusions and Recommendations

I hope that, from the examples I have presented above, it is clear that problems in communication can (and do) arise when a conscious effort is not made to translate Archaeology into plain English for the benefit of the general public. In response to this situation, I have called attention to what I consider to be a viable solution, and it is by no means unprecedented.

Indeed, some very useful models already exist in the form of the books cited above in the section headed "Alternatives." My recommendation is that archaeologists should seriously examine these books, take their contents to heart, and attempt in future to follow the example they provide.

In closing, I would like to once again call upon the wisdom of the above-quoted Dr. Shay. In concluding his speech, Dr. Shay urged his audience to "Be All That You Can Be." May I respectfully suggest that by continually reviewing and fine-tuning our ways and means of communicating to the public (perhaps, but not necessarily, along the lines recommended here) and taking the appropriate action in consequence, we will progress in some measure as a community toward that worthy goal of "being all that we can be" -- good archaeologists and good communicators.

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