

Beyond Compliance

Planning Heritage Preservation for Native American Ancestral Sites

In the American Southwest, indigenous Pueblo cultures are a vital part of the region's contemporary mosaic of ethnic diversity. This is especially evident through their long-standing relationship to the land and landscape, as reflected in the continuity of place for most Pueblo communities and the countless number of sacred/ancestral sites that figure prominently in contemporary beliefs and ritual.

Many such sites have recently gained federal recognition and legal protection through Native American participation in the federal government's Section 106 consultation process; yet programmatic stabilization, protection, and interpretation of these sites have proven difficult. Based on the recognition that such places remain critical to the continuing identity of indigenous peoples and that these sites are central to the cultural lives of many, their physical preservation and respectful management have become a relevant, timely, and sometimes controversial issue.

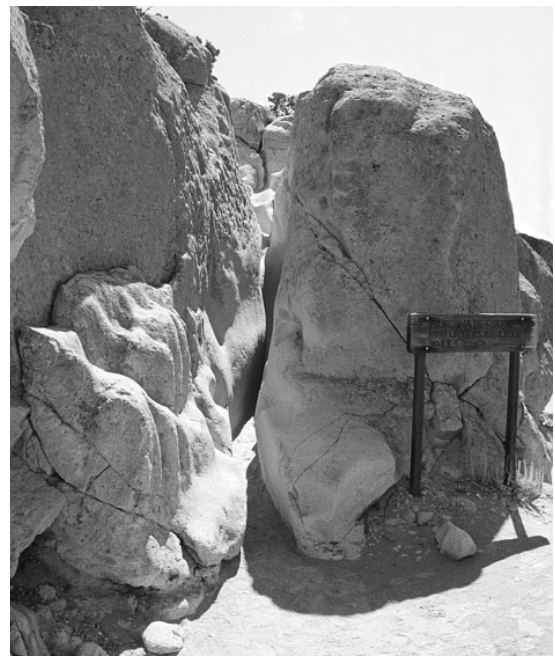
Since its emergence in the 1970s, historic preservation has developed into a professional field that many now consider to be among the most significant and influential socio-cultural movements to affect public life and the quality of our historical environment. To date, most preservation activity has focused on programs of survey, inventory, conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of specific sites associated with selected histories. Such approaches have tended to ignore the continuing significance that buildings and landscapes hold for traditional communities in defining and preserving everyday life and beliefs in all their diverse forms and expressions.

Conservation as a concept and process has as its fundamental objective the protection of cultural property from loss and depletion. Implicit in this is the notion of maintaining living contact with the past through the identification, transmission, and protection of that which is considered

culturally valuable. In traditional societies, this concept of valued cultural inheritance is most visibly regulated by tradition. Yet, as central as tradition is to the concepts of cultural identity, it is also as dynamic as culture change itself. Only by recognizing the changing nature of tradition within the context of cultural identity can a community effectively and responsibly manage its present and future through personal and collective interpretations of the past. Historic preservation is not an impractical attempt by nostalgic minds to see history preserved as an entity apart, but rather as continuous change, and conservation as a logical step in evaluating changes to the whole environment.

Applied conservation in contemporary form can have applicability to indigenous societies when linked to tradition. This approach intends to provide culturally responsive alternatives to imported solutions that do not relate to existing contexts; it seeks to counter the often destructive

Trail backfill at Tsankawi Mesa before preservation treatment. Photo by the author.



application of “modern” technologies, which can be physically damaging and disrupt the lifeways of traditional communities. Instead, the application of culturally appropriate conservation can encourage long-range revitalization by promoting and investing in sustainable solutions that reinforce and promote the related social practices and beliefs associated with traditional living.

From this approach, the concept of **heritage management** emerges as a broadly based method for the planning, direction, and care of all heritage—both natural and human-made—with an ideological objective of maintaining and establishing cultural continuity and identity. Moreover, the concept serves an educational function, through the preservation and promotion of culture history and sustainability. The wisdom of such an approach has only occasionally been demonstrated through unique international development programs centered on the conservation of cultural property in relation to the socio-economic realities and modern requirements of traditional communities. Application to the indigenous native cultures of North America—and in particular to the ancient Pueblo communities of the American Southwest—is appropriate, and long overdue.

Native American Pueblo communities and their ancestral sites, together with the land, define a traditional cultural landscape, which for these communities is physically and ideologically inseparable. While past approaches by outsiders

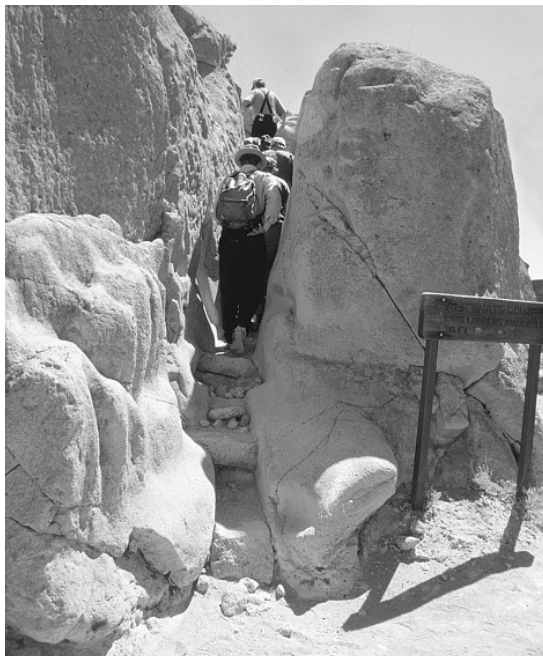
have viewed this cultural landscape as separate entities in time and space, many native communities instead have a characteristic sense of continuity between past and present, between veneration and use of the land, and a sense of identity and place in time as reflected by and through these sites, their built remains, and beliefs and practices. Lack of available economic resources, forgotten traditional knowledge, tourist-based development, and the infiltration of inappropriate government programs from the outside have placed severe pressures on the historic resources, and on traditional living and the continued transmission of traditional knowledge, especially to the community’s younger generations.

Project Focus

In 1997, following the completion of a renewed Resource Management Plan, Bandelier National Monument invited the University of Pennsylvania to help plan a project to specifically address the problems of trail and site preservation at Tsankawi Mesa. That request quickly evolved into a context-based problem addressing Tsankawi, and more recently Frijoles Canyon, as a cultural landscape. In 1998, an interactive training program launched a season of field work that has continued each summer into the present. In this way, the central issues of use, interpretation, and technical conservation could be explored together from the beginning in developing integrated approaches to the preservation and maintenance of this archeological and ancestral site. Heritage preservation, as both a means and an end, was developed as a dynamic program by which the affiliated Pueblo communities could explore, reinforce, interpret, and share their historical and traditional past and present among themselves and with outsiders. Conservation as a proven methodological approach could facilitate a sustainable, long-term relationship between a community and its natural and cultural resources, as well as the lifeways associated with them.

In recent years, the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate Program in Historic Preservation has included a curriculum that concentrates on developing an integrated management approach to the conservation of archeological sites as traditional places of cultural significance that acknowledges and responds to past identities and present-day needs and expectations. Likewise, in recent years, the National Park Service has begun to expand upon the essential mission to preserve, study, interpret, and present

Trail backfill at Tsankawi Mesa after preservation treatment. Photo by the author.



sites of natural and cultural significance to further work with traditional communities to understand, experience, and perpetuate our shared cultural heritage. In the Tsankawi Project and the Frijoles Canyon Cavate Project, both institutions have come together, and included the Pueblos of Cochiti and San Ildefonso, in exploring culturally and environmentally appropriate methods to better understand and manage ancestral Puebloan sites that lie within the jurisdiction of Bandelier National Monument.

Program Description

Education and Training. The collaboration has led to an integrated program of field training, stretching the current academic conservation curriculum into actual problems and field activities, with the added benefit of creating career opportunities for Native Americans in conservation and cultural resource management. University students join side by side with native students to participate in the field training exercises (in 1998 and again in 2000). The collaboration has also stimulated the reappraisal of National Park Service management strategies related to native ancestral sites. Such a project addresses the very issues of cultural diversity by bringing different partners together to explore each other and themselves through their notions of tradition and the commonality and specificity of cultural heritage.

The objective of the collaborative program, now in its third year, has been twofold. First, it has sought to raise the awareness of the interdisciplinary and highly specialized nature of working in designated heritage areas among professional conservators, planners, architects, landscape architects, anthropologists, and museum professionals and their students. Each needs to understand the limitations and complementariness of

their respective inputs, as well as how best to integrate these with the contributions of the other professions involved. Second, the community as cultural affiliate has been directly involved during all phases of research, analysis, and implementation. All have cooperated closely, during both the analytical and the planning stages, to develop solutions that respond fully to the inherent complexity of outside visitor and tribal use and beliefs. Ultimately, the aim has been to promote and reinforce an awareness and knowledge about tradition and cultural diversity among resource management professionals and community members through a practical program of heritage management for traditional native ancestral sites.

At a practical level, the program has addressed topical, theoretical problems through advanced site-applied fieldwork. In so doing, the program has offered real assistance through training to Native American Pueblo communities and the National Park Service in their effort to identify and develop the strategies, practical actions, and technical and culturally-determined standards needed at this crucial moment. Environmental damage, deteriorating archeological remains, and uncoordinated and rapid development in and around the region all pose major threats to the cultural resources and ecological stability of these sites. These problems have been addressed through a professionally-based, community-assisted survey of cultural resources and needs as directed by the partners. In addition, a practical field-training program was developed and implemented to provide opportunities for National Park Service professionals and Native American interns. This partnership has served as a model cooperative program, and helped to stimulate dialogue between associated tribes and the park—dialogue that continues to be very alive and active today.

The Collaborative Program—Approach and Components. The problems encountered in historical/traditional settlements and ancestral/archeological sites are multi-disciplinary. Accordingly, the emphasis of a collaborative program is on developing integrated solutions with input from diverse professionals as well as stakeholders. The current program at Bandelier National Monument has been supervised by a multi-disciplinary team whose various expertise and individual contributions have been brought together and synthesized into concepts, strategies,

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Bandelier student employee Waiyai Martin (Cochiti Pueblo) moving slash to mesa top at Tsankawi during the 1999 summer season. Photo by Jake Barrow.



Tribal Voices

The objectives for the 1998 workshop, *Beyond Compliance: Heritage Preservation for Native American Ancestral Sites*, were stated: "... to examine the objectives, programs, and systems related to the native ancestral site preservation and management through active tribal participation during project planning and implementation. The National Park Service manages the ancestral site of Tsankawi within Bandelier National Monument. A dialogue and collaboration will be sought, using the training process, to increase and enhance communication and activities between the stakeholders. In this case, San Ildefonso Pueblo will represent the interests of Puebloan peoples as directly related to Tsankawi. The training also will provide an introduction to resource protection and management programs, and field skills necessary for the conservation of the cultural and natural heritage at Tsankawi."

Joint recognition of active site degradation and inappropriate activities shown by some visitors to Tsankawi led the park to actively support this project. Beyond conserving the place, hearing native voices express heartfelt opinions about Tsankawi was a specific agenda in the curriculum. During the training, these three questions, which generated direct and powerful responses, were asked of the group:

What does Tsankawi mean to you?
What are the issues?
What changes, if any should be made?

"Tsankawi is still our home"

"Tsankawi should be left as it is"

"Artifacts should not be removed from the site"

"Respect the place"

"Contamination of the land from Los Alamos nuclear research has hurt the site"

"Visitation should be more controlled; trails should be established to restrict access"

"The NPS should hire someone from the Pueblo to patrol the area"

"Return Tsankawi back to San Ildefonso Pueblo"

"Trails are in need of repair, but would rather that they be left alone"

"Parking area is too small but visitation should not be encouraged"

"Cavate preservation should be done to prevent vandalism (graffiti)"

"Back-filling of deep trails is acceptable"

"Remove the word 'Anasazi'—a Navajo word that implies a people who are unknown and gone"

"Use Tewa words in the trail guide"

"Do not refer to Tsankawi as a ruin—call it a village"

"The site is open to the public but they are not instructed how to behave."

"The word 'ruin' on the sign allows people to think of the place as abandoned and not cared for."

"The current policy of discovery allows visitors to roam the site and disrespect special places at Tsankawi that have sacred meaning to Tewa people (i.e. Kivas and shrines).

"Identify Tsankawi with a sign stating, 'Our towns are full of people you can't see. This is our ancestral home where our people lived and are buried. Treat carefully'"

"The boundary should be posted to clearly mark NPS from tribal land"

"USGS has 'sacred area' designated on topo map—why can't NPS do the same?"

Respondants included: San Ildefonso elders Adeladio Martinez and Martin Aguilar; native students Naomi Naranjo, Patrick Cruz, Lawrence Atencio, Bill Bebout, Paul Quintana, and Adrian Roybal.

and practical proposals—all under the supervision of the partners.

The major focus of the program has addressed the theoretical and ethical issues and technical problems of trail and ruins (cavate) stabilization, graffiti mitigation, environmental restoration, site interpretation, and the collection and care of artifacts. Participants have explored the natural and cultural context of Tsankawi and Frijoles Canyon, including its landscape and environmental changes, archeological and preservation history, and artifact collections. They have also performed condition surveys of the resources to understand and develop intervention priorities, and have addressed the technical solutions to stone and plaster deterioration, visitor access, and graffiti.

In summary. The activities of the last several years have re-invigorated the intra-cultural dialogue concerning the conservation of Native American archeological and ancestral sites by accentuating the living cultural landscapes and by encouraging multi-disciplinary involvement. This dialogue has fostered increased cultural sensitivity between native and non-native participants, and facilitated community/stakeholder participation with outside professional partners and the public. In addition, it has helped to provide another vehicle for National Park Service and other heritage professionals and cultural affiliates to collaborate in an applied field context and, most important, to learn and experience other cultural viewpoints in the presentation and management of heritage through the concepts and practices of conservation.

The synthesis of outside professional approaches and methodologies in heritage management with direct participation from community members acknowledges the various strengths and contributions of the project partners upon which to build more reasonable solutions to the problem of environmental and cultural damage from unsustainable, inappropriate use and management. By conjoining current issues concerning indigenous heritage, tradition, and appropriate technology with academic training needs and formats through the vehicle of field-applied research and practical work, this program has effected the greatest impact on the maximum number of people trained at the appropriate level of involvement. Native American students from the affiliate Pueblos, as well as graduate students from preservation programs, were directly trained

through this initiative, as were a large number of professional staff from the National Park Service. As a direct result, several Pueblo students have chosen career paths in architectural studies, anthropology, and conservation. Additionally, the existing consultation process between the National Park Service and the affiliated Pueblo communities has been greatly strengthened during collaborative efforts through public meetings, social events, field work, and group exercises such as mapmaking, language discussions, and the identification of shared and unique values and recommendations for the sites.

Frank Matero is Chair of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Acknowledgements

The 1998 training program was funded in part by the National Park Service Cultural Resources Training Initiative. The two-week training session held at the onset of the project was an interactive colloquium designed to initiate cross-cultural dialogue. This event served as gestation for the multi-year program and tribal consultation process that has been engendered. Participation included the following: Martin Aguilar and Adeladio Martinez, elders of San Ildefonso Pueblo; Bandelier staff participants, including Roy Weaver, Superintendent, Charisse Sydoriak, Chief of Resource Management, Gary Roybal, museum technician (San Ildefonso), Elizabeth Mozzillo and Mike Elliot, staff archeologists, Brian Jacobs, natural resources specialist, and Sally King, Interpretation. Intermountain Support Office-Santa Fe staff included Virginia Salazar (Santa Clara Pueblo); Jim Trott; Jake Barrow; Jill Cowley; and Bob Powers. University of Pennsylvania staff included Frank Matero; Bob Preucel; and graduate student Shaun Provencher. Shaun Provencher wrote his thesis on this topic; he went on to become employed by the Intermountain Support Office-Santa Fe, and now works as a landscape architect in the Pacific Great Basin Support Office of the National Park Service. The New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office was represented by Alysia Abbott, archeologist. Native American student participants included Naomi Naranjo, Adrian Roybal, and Bill Bebout (San Ildefonso); Patrick Cruz and Lawrence Atencio (San Juan); and Paul Quintana (Cochiti). Private consultants included archeologists Kurt Anschuetz and Wolkie Toll; and conservator Betina Raphael.