

***Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Native Peoples and Archaeology in the Northeastern United States.* Jordan E. Kerber, ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2006. 384 pp.¹**

Reviewed by Ann McMullen

Those unfamiliar with the Native Northeast's cultural and political landscape may imagine that an anthology on archaeological consultation and collaboration would be a slim volume of interest only to regional specialists: this book proves them wrong. With twenty essays authored by Native and non-Native archaeologists, cultural resource managers, tribal preservation officers, and others, *Cross-Cultural Collaboration* explores the promise, progress, and problems in forging relationships between individuals and entities that have traditionally seen themselves on opposite sides of a very old fence. Given the rise of community consultation and collaboration in museums and other settings, this book is an important resource for anyone embarking on or involved in such work.

The foreword by Joe Watkins and introduction by Jordan Kerber set the stage with discussions of the impact of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) and the 1992 amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), both of which mandate consultation with federally recognized American Indian tribes. Watkins and other authors aptly describe the problems inherent in implementing overarching federal legislation across an uneven cultural and political landscape: NAGPRA and NHPA ignore tribes without federal status, thus leaving most Northeastern Native people without legal standing to challenge archaeologists and museums or demand a place at the collaborative table. Despite this, the essayists take the position that consultation and collaboration—even with tribes currently lacking federal acknowledgment—is more an ethical necessity than a matter of mandated accommodation.

Organized into sections on “Burials and Repatriation,” “Sites and Places,” and “Research and Education,” the essays outline both situations of regulatory compliance with federal and state laws and those where collaboration has been more voluntary. Drawing on case studies from Maine to Maryland, the authors discuss a wide variety of contexts for their work, including cultural resource management projects, burial protections and excavations, tribally sponsored projects, collaborative collections curation, and how to share and protect information.

Overall, the essays are very strong, and it is difficult to identify those that stand out. Despite this, some are particularly noteworthy. Nina Versaggi makes clear that understanding tribal politics and issues of sovereignty is paramount. Speaking about decades of work together in Rhode Island, John Brown and Paul Robinson provide a glimpse into what they term a “negotiated sharing of power” and an ongoing struggle over interpretation. Robert Goodby's essay traces his transformation from an unrepentant scientific researcher to a more humanistic approach through his work with Abenaki people in New Hampshire. With an argument for making archaeology “acceptable and relevant to its multiple constituencies” (p. 112), Richard Hughes and Dixie Henry recount their experiences with Maryland's twelve Indian groups and their competing

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claims of knowledge and control. With his tongue-in-cheek admission that “mistakes were made,” Ira Beckerman discusses a large project in Pennsylvania that ultimately proved to be a crash-course in consulting with as many as fifteen tribes. Marking the transition from earlier modes of consultation, Cara Blume provides a strong case for the importance of working with Native communities rather than single individuals. Michael Petraglia and Kevin Cunningham emphasize how more nuanced interpretations can result from Native involvement and archaeologists’ better understanding of Native worldviews and traditions. Focusing on Oneida archaeological workshops, Kerber illustrates how involvement can be significant in connecting tribal youth to their heritage. Bernard Jerome and David Putnam discuss resolution of disputes between the Mi’kmaq and Maliseet involving oversight of excavations in Maine modeled on traditional intertribal protocols, and David Sanger, Micah Pawling, and Donald Soctomah describe a collaborative project on Passamaquoddy placenames that serves tribal linguistic research.

Despite the inherent subject matter and the academic backgrounds of many of the essayists, only occasionally do specifics about the archaeology creep in; instead, the authors provide frank and often striking reflections on their experiences, including personal accounts of how close exchanges with one another transformed how they work and how they think about it. The essays themselves provide a mix of voices: some are openly collaborative and others offer a point-counterpoint of Native and non-Native perspectives within a single chapter. Many candidly discuss misunderstandings, missteps, and that the resolution of some situations may sometimes be only to “agree to disagree,” thus providing readers with real-life examples of how consultations and collaborations can go wrong and how problems may be avoided or resolved.

This is not to suggest that this book provides a recipe for collaborative work: the essayists are very clear that there is “no cookbook approach” (Versaggi) and “no blueprint” (Jack Rossen). Many stress that consultations and collaborations are ongoing processes embedded in specific cultural, historical, political, and legal contexts that shape interaction and results and that comprehending those contexts is vital to any success. Others emphasize the importance of understanding that different parties may have different goals for participation and that even when agreement or compromise is reached, each may ultimately rationalize its decision based on different criteria or reasoning. Most importantly, many contributors point to their successes in overcoming difficult situations and reaching a point where collaborations on one subject lead to greater trust and ongoing mutual understanding, cooperation, and alliances in other, unrelated arenas, thus providing a basis for future work together.

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