

# BURKE ARCHAEOLOGY NEWSLETTER

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Spring 2004

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## Sea Monsters and Mountain Sheep: Preserving Images of Columbia River Rock Art

In 1956, Mark Hedden and Sari Dienes were racing to capture the images carved into the rock along the Columbia River. Many of these recorded significant histories and stories of local Native American communities. With the construction of the Dalles Dam, the landscape in this area was about to be forever



*Rubbings like this one of a rock art depiction of a deer or elk are the last record of submerged art on the Columbia.*

changed. Before the waters rose, Hedden and Dienes, archaeologist and artist respectively, documented the art by creating rubbings on sheets of webbril, burlap, and rice paper. They recorded over 400 petroglyph images, many of which are now underwater and inaccessible. We are working to preserve these images and make them more accessible to tribes,

researchers, and the public. We are currently seeking funding to make a portion of the collection available to the public through our website.

## Mapping Technology Aids Repatriation Efforts

Burke Museum archaeologists are using new computer software in an effort to help tribes claim and repatriate human remains and grave goods. Since 1990, the

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) has made it possible for federally-recognized tribes to claim and repatriate human remains and grave goods held in museums. However, the claim process has turned out to be much more time consuming and complex than first thought. Tribes must organize huge volumes of information to document their claims. In an effort to help tribes speed up the claim process, we are using the newest geographic

information systems (GIS) technology to plot museum collections onto electronic maps. Tribal representatives can then determine whether collections were located within their territory. Unlike typical maps, each point on a GIS map can be linked to a database, allowing us to display museum records and historical information about tribal lands all together. We are currently entering museum data and historical maps into the system, and next will meet with each tribe in

Washington, Oregon, and Alaska to customize the system according to their requirements. This project was funded by a grant from the National Park Service NAGPRA Program.

## Burke Works to Protect Archaeological Collections Statewide

In the past, archaeologists gave little consideration to what happened to artifacts and records once an excavation was finished. Unfortunately, this practice still continues: even new collections are often placed in facilities with little regard to long-term considerations, and there is no central list of all collections in the state. Burke Museum archaeology staff recently joined representatives from tribal, federal, state, county, and city governments and private contract archaeology firms in a series of meetings to discuss these problems. The third meeting of this group, to be hosted by the Yakama Nation in Toppenish on May 10, 2004, will focus on developing voluntary, statewide curation guidelines and creating a staff position at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to track old and new archaeological collections in the state. More information is available at [www.staff.washington.edu/sdenton/index.htm](http://www.staff.washington.edu/sdenton/index.htm).

## Students Learn More Than Textbook Lessons

The Burke Museum, Seattle Public Utilities Cedar River Watershed, and Chief Kanim Middle School have kicked-off a cultural heritage education program with consultation from the Snoqualmie and Muckleshoot Indian Tribes. With classroom exercises, research, and hands-on visits to the watershed, 180 seventh grade students have been learning about the rich cultural heritage of the Cedar River Watershed, which is the backyard to nearby Chief Kanim students

and their families. The watershed provides over 70% of the drinking water to the Seattle area, spans over 90,000 acres and contains archaeological sites with evidence of 9,400 years of human use. By experiencing archaeology and cultural heritage through this unique program, students are gaining a sense of stewardship for these irreplaceable resources.

## Archaeology in the World's Newest Nation

Curator Peter Lape is currently investigating changing settlement patterns and landscape use over the past millennium in East Timor. This former Portuguese and Indonesian colony is the world's newest nation, having achieved independence in 1999. Its rugged



*Peter Lape (far left) and Laura Phillips (far right) with research team members and local hosts in Tutuala, East Timor.*

mountainous landscape is dotted with large stone-walled settlements. Although uninhabited now, these places still play an important role in local sacred practices. Little archaeology has been done in this war-torn country, and none conducted on these sites until now. Lape is working with an international team of archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and paleobotanists from the US, Australia, Taiwan, and Portugal. In 2000, this group found the earliest evidence of modern humans in Island Southeast Asia, dating to 38,000 years ago. In 2003, Laura Phillips,

Burke Archaeology Collections Manager, joined the team to help with site survey. The team also visited the East Timor National Museum in 2003 in an effort to provide technical assistance to aid rebuilding efforts. Most of the museum's valuable collections were looted during the violent Indonesian withdrawal in 1999. Dr. Lape and several UW students will return for a third field season in June.

## Ancient Textiles and Baskets from I-5 to the Aleutians

Delicate objects like textiles or basketry rarely survive burial in the ground like stone tools or ceramics. With the right conditions, though, archaeologists do find these objects, which can give us a glimpse into a whole new world of material culture. In the past year, Burke archaeology staff and students have worked with two collections of delicate organic objects. From Washington's Skagit River delta, we have 600-year old basketry that was unearthed during the construction of Interstate 5. From the Aleutian Islands,

we have ancient textiles that were collected in the 1930s. These objects require continued work to prevent further decay. This includes treating the materials with preservatives in some cases, and storing them in ways that protects them from damage while also allowing researchers to view them. Last spring, some of the Skagit wet site materials were on display for an international conference on wet site archaeology held at the Squaxin Island Tribal Museum.

In consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), we discovered that the Aleutian Islands textiles were removed from federal land. Under a new curation agreement, the Burke Museum will continue to care for the textiles, and thanks to funding from USFWS, the collection is now completely rehoused and photographed. Aleutian native communities were particularly interested in the textiles, as weaving methods and materials evident in the archaeological textiles are no longer used by weavers and basket makers. Using information gleaned from this unique collection, native weavers may reintroduce past weaving techniques and materials into contemporary methods.



*For a last chance (for a while) to see the mummy, and other exciting stuff, don't miss the Burke's Behind-the-Scenes Night on April 21.*

## Egyptian Mummy and Coffin to Visit Foreign Lands!

Thanks to generous donations to conserve and re-house the Burke's Egyptian mummy and coffin, both will soon travel across the waters to Victoria, B.C. Beginning July 10, 2004, the Royal British Columbia Museum will host the

international exhibition, "Eternal Egypt – Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum." The Burke's mummy and coffin will be exhibited in their recently completed environmentally-controlled case. We are pleased to be able to share this significant collection with the international community, and invite everyone to visit the Burke's mummy and coffin alongside ancient artifacts from the British Museum. The exhibition will run through October 31, 2004.

# Thanks to Our Generous Supporters in 2003-2004!

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