



Office of Archaeological Studies

Museum of New Mexico ~ Preserving Our Heritage Since 1909

P.O. Box 2087
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2087

www.nmarchaeology.org

Bataan Memorial Building
407 Galisteo Street, B-100
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Joseph C. Halpin Building
404 Montezuma Street
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

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Jeanne Moe, Chair
SAA Award for Excellence in Public Education
2-128 Wilson Hall
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT 59717

Dear Award Committee:

I would like to nominate the Education Outreach Program of the Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) for consideration for the SAA Award for Excellence in Public Education in the Community category. Because of our institutional identity, history, and mission, our community is the entire state of New Mexico, in all of its multicultural diversity.

OAS is a not-for-profit cultural resource enterprise within the Museum of New Mexico. We have grown out of a contract archaeology program established in 1952 and currently employing thirty-five people of whom four are Native American. All OAS activities are funded by client services, and we receive state budget support only for a portion of the director's salary and benefits. Our principal clients are state agencies such as the New Mexico Department of Transportation, but we also provide services to federal, municipal, and private organizations. The OAS Education Outreach Program is supported by whatever funds we can find and by volunteer efforts. Our most consistent financial support has come from the Friends of Archaeology, an interest group of the Museum of New Mexico Foundation, which donates from \$5,000 to \$15,000 per year. For two years before the recession, the New Mexico State Legislature awarded us \$25,000 per year, but that funding will not be restored. Last year we received a \$4,000 grant from the Bank of America to serve impoverished schools, and we have a multi-year cooperative agreement with the New Mexico State Office of the Bureau of Land Management to conduct education outreach in general and the BLM's *Project Archaeology* in particular. Due to cutbacks in the federal budget, funding of the cooperative agreement was suspended after an initial 2011 allocation of \$15,000, but we hope for the reinstatement of at least some funds in fiscal year 2013.

In 2005, our Education Outreach Program was recognized with an SAA Award for Excellence in Public Education. Why should the OAS be considered for a second award? One reason is our commitment to the longevity and continued growth of the program. We formally adopted education outreach as an office priority in 1991, so we are completing our twentieth year. During the first thirteen years of the program (the point of the 2004 nomination) we reached more than 44,000 New Mexicans. The 2005 recognition boosted our momentum and eventually led to our brief period of state funding. In the seven years since the award we have interacted with an additional audience of more than 56,000 New Mexicans, continuing to find ways to make archaeology relevant to New Mexico's multiple communities. We prioritize interactions with

New Mexico's Native American population and have made great strides in this area (see programs below). We also emphasize a wide range of programs in the rural and underserved portions of New Mexico. Our greatest accomplishment is to have presented at least one program in each of New Mexico's thirty-three counties annually for the last three years. We are the only archaeology organization in New Mexico to have taken on this scale of responsibility, consistently delivering programs outside of our primary city of operation.

The OAS education program has become known statewide for collaborating with private, state, federal, and tribal institutions in support of their own education efforts. Finally, the OAS Education Outreach Program is carried on the shoulders of archaeologists that choose to pursue education responsibilities in addition to the demands of their everyday archaeology jobs. We are committed to sharing the story of New Mexico archaeology with the public, championing and defending the field in a unique environment.

The themes embedded in our presentations are both explicit and implicit:

First, we try to impart knowledge of, and generate an appreciation for, the depth and complexity of New Mexico's rich cultural heritage. We find that there is a remarkable parochialism in public knowledge of history and culture, reinforced by community stereotypes and superficial treatments in formal education. We see our role as gently breaking the bounds of those stereotypes and introducing audiences to the complexity of culture history as a positive value—richness instead of confusion. Archaeology doesn't end, and history doesn't begin, with the Coronado expedition of 1540-1541, and archaeological stories of the past are complements to oral traditions of individual community histories rather than measures of validity.

Second, we try to generate and share a sense of inspiration and curiosity for archaeology's approaches to understanding the past through the study of artifacts and their contexts. This theme is most relevant in our school presentations, where archaeology does not fit exclusively within a single named discipline. Instead, we present archaeology as an example of the integration of many different disciplines—biology, math, geology, history, physics, chemistry, humanities, art. Archaeology represents a real-world integration of applied knowledge in a way that captures children's (and adults') imaginations.

Third, we try to get across the fragility and uniqueness of the cultural record. Whether dug up by a bulldozer, a pothunter, or an archaeologist, archaeological resources can be excavated only once, and information that is not retrieved at that time is lost forever. For this reason archaeological sites are worthy of protection and preservation. We also discuss the real but transitory excitement of discovery, and how the personal collection of an artifact unnecessarily deprives the next person of that experience. If an artifact is left in place, the potential for discovery is inexhaustible, but if it is collected, the experience is selfish and terminal.

Fourth, we believe that a multi-sensory approach has the greatest and most lasting impact on audiences. Images and verbal descriptions of archaeological ideas are necessary but insufficient. Live demonstrations capture the attention of the audience and give people the

ability to touch and handle artifact replicas, ask questions, and actually use or experience an aspect of ancient lifeways. Such an approach fixes memory, not just the replica itself, but also the subject of discussion at the time. A recent addition to our outreach collection has been a back pack and tump band. This one artifact has turned into the most popular “wow” moment for audiences, surpassing even the atlatl and turkey feather blanket in impact.

Most of our educational encounters are short—a day for a site tour, an hour for a school presentation or a public lecture, or just a few minutes for a one-on-one encounter at a festival or event. It is our responsibility to make the most of each encounter, assessing the best way to communicate with the audience or individual. Although we have a set of stock programs (see <http://www.nmarchaeology.org/presentation-catalog.html>), we work with teachers or hosts to structure what they want to support their goals. We evaluate the strengths of individual OAS staff members, pairing their skills with the audience and program needs, and we have trained staff, especially our Native American staff members, who have the ability to make strong connections with Native American audiences. Audience requests have prompted us to develop new programming, and volunteer capabilities and suggestions further expanded our offerings.

Within the past year, we have moved slowly but deliberately into school curricula and teacher training. *Project Archaeology* promises to have a long-term impact, but the school climate in New Mexico (which has an overriding emphasis on teaching to the test) has limited the freedom of teachers to embrace new tools. When BLM funding is restored, we plan to further develop alliances with local school support groups (such as the Taos Archaeological Society and the Hubbard Museum) where local community volunteers are interested in helping teachers integrate and implement *Project Archaeology*, especially in the post-test period late in the school year. Last year we experimented in collaboration with *Citizen Schools*, a national program targeting middle school students with an expanded school day. In partnership with the School for Advanced Research (SAR), OAS staff created an apprenticeship called “Surviving Santa Fe: AD 1000.” The class challenged students to consider what they would need to survive if they were transported back to their school location 1000 years ago.

<http://www.citizenschools.org/newmexico/news/archaeologists-teach-santa-fe-students-survival-skills-for-1000-ad/>

SAR provided a staff member who worked with the class, while OAS provided organization, content, props, instructors, and volunteers.

Our nomination packet includes CDs with electronic copies of files and hard copies of various publications that are not available in electronic form. The CD’s include:

- This cover letter
- A narrative describing the program
- Maps of New Mexico program locations for FY2010 and FY2011
- A table of participants by venue location for 2005-2011
- A tabular listing of individual programs for 2009-2011
- Scans of selected program responses:
 - Laura J. Hobbs, June 6, 2006
 - Glenna Dean, November 16, 2006
 - Mr. Hogue, May 14, 2009
 - Heather Sanchez, February 11, 2010

Valerie Brea, April 30, 2010
Andy Albertson, April 7, 2011
Mary Crowley, August 8, 2011

PDF's of three *New Mexico Archaeology* newsletters

The hard copies in the packet include:

Roads to the Past: Highway Map and Guide to New Mexico Archaeology
El Palacio, Fall 2009, Vol. 114, No. 3 with articles by Stephen Post and Tim Maxwell
Native Basketry in New Mexico: Past, Present, and Future, with a section by Eric Blinman

In the long term, it's not just about archaeology. We believe that the value in archaeology is that knowledge of the past can inform and shape our future, and that education is essential to that goal.

If you or the committee would like any further information, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,



Eric Blinman, PhD.
Division Director



Charles A. Hannaford
Education Outreach Director