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Re-Connecting with a Historical Site

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Article abstract

The 'Parsons site,' a large Huron-Wendat village site near York University's Keele campus located by archaeologists in the early 1950s, has been subject to a variety of investigations and development proposals which have mobilized certain narratives about the site and its inhabitants. This article provides an analysis of how these narratives represent the site, its inhabitants, and contemporary Huron-Wendat. It problematizes narratives that describe the site as an archaeological resource and situate Huron-Wendat presence in the past. Although these narratives have shifted to acknowledge ongoing Huron-Wendat presence, more collaboration with contemporary Huron-Wendat communities regarding this and other sites is needed.

Re-Connecting with a Historical Site

On Narrative and the Huron-Wendat Ancestral Village at York University, Toronto, Canada*

by L. Anders Sandberg, Jon Johnson,
Rene Gualtieri, and Louis Lesage

The Huron-Wendat[1] and their ancestors have lived on the rich lands of the St. Lawrence Valley through north of Lake Ontario for about a thousand years or more.[2] Toronto was considered Huron-Wendat territory when the first European explorers started visiting and traveling through the area and the Huron-Wendat continued to grow crops, hunt, fish, and trade there until the early 1600s. In the Toronto area, archaeological investigations have

*We acknowledge the constructive comments on the paper by Ron Williamson of Archaeological Services Inc.

[1] The 'Huron' designation is a French exonym that once and still has, for some, a derogatory connotation of 'savage' or 'uncivilized'. Some scholars, like Magee Labelle, do not use the term. See Katherine Magee Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed: A History of the Seventeenth Century Wendat People* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014). Some within the Huron-Wendat community itself, however, use the term in combination with Wendat, and we therefore employ that term in this article. Likewise, because the Huron-Wendat are culturally and linguistically similar to the Haudenosaunee, both have been historically labeled by scholars as 'Iroquoian', but the use of this term has too often obscured the fact that the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and other Iroquoian-speaking peoples are distinct political, cultural, and economic entities. For these reasons, we refrain from using 'Iroquoian' (except when quoted in the original source). There are several theories about the etymology of the name 'Wendat'. Huron-Wendat historian Georges E. Sioui suggests that the name may derive from the root 'wen(d)' and the suffix '-io. The root wen(d) connotes "voice, spoken word, or language; and the idea of seniority, nobility, uniqueness and authority," which relates to "the essential quality of a chief [which] lies in his mastery of the art of oratory and therefore in his power to speak for those he is called on to represent." The suffix '-io' expresses grandeur, beauty and magnificence. Georges Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 9.

[2] Gary Warrick and Louis Lesage, "The Huron-Wendat and the St. Lawrence Iroquoians: New Findings of a Close Relationship," *Ontario Archaeology*, 96 (2014), 134-44.

Abstract

The 'Parsons site,' a large Huron-Wendat village site near York University's Keele campus located by archaeologists in the early 1950s, has been subject to a variety of investigations and development proposals which have mobilized certain narratives about the site and its inhabitants. This article provides an analysis of how these narratives represent the site, its inhabitants, and contemporary Huron-Wendat. It problematizes narratives that describe the site as an archaeological resource and situate Huron-Wendat presence in the past. Although these narratives have shifted to acknowledge ongoing Huron-Wendat presence, more collaboration with contemporary Huron-Wendat communities regarding this and other sites is needed.

Résumé: *Le "Site Parsons", un grand village ancestral huron-wendat près du campus Keele de l'Université York, retrouvé par les archéologues au début des années 1950, a fait l'objet d'une série d'enquêtes et de propositions de développement, qui ont mené à certains récits concernant ce lieu et ses habitants. Dans cet article, nous allons fournir une analyse de la façon dont ces récits représentent le site, ses habitants, et les Hurons-Wendats contemporains. Nous allons problématiser la description du site en tant que ressource archéologique qui situe les Huron-Wendats dans le passé. Bien que dernièrement ces récits commencent à reconnaître la présence continue des Hurons-Wendats, une collaboration accrue avec leurs communautés contemporaines concernant ce site et d'autres est nécessaire.*

uncovered dozens of Wendat sites located along the tributaries of the Credit, Humber, Don, Rouge-Duffins drainages, demonstrating continuous Wendat inhabitation of the area until the end of the 16th century.[3]

The Wendat living in the Toronto region moved northward by the early seventeenth century to join other Wendat nations living in Huronia or Wendake, the area between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay in response to social, political, economic, and ecological upheavals related to sustained European presence.[4] In response to ongoing conflicts with the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat strategically moved from Wendake during the mid- seventeenth century and maintained or strengthened ties to French and other First Nation communities in Quebec and Northwestern Ontario,[5] with the latter group eventually moving further south and west to lands in Michigan, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Significant numbers of Wendat people also chose to integrate into Haudenosaunee com-

[3] Ron Williamson, "The Archaeological History of the Wendat to A.D. 1651: An Overview," *Ontario Archaeology*, 94 (2014), 3-64.

[4] Georges Sioui, *Huron-Wendat: The Heritage of the Circle* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 84, 87.

[5] Magee Labelle, *Dispersed but Not Destroyed.*

[6] *Ibid.*

munities.[6] Today, the Wendat live in four different communities that go under different names: the Huron-Wendat Nation of Wendake in Quebec; the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation in Michigan; the Wyandotte Nation of Kansas; and the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. Collectively, the Wendat number approximately 10,000.[7] Of these four groups, the Huron-Wendat of Quebec are leading the efforts to connect and protect their ancestral remains and sites in the Toronto region and Ontario.

One of these sites, a large Huron-Wendat village inhabited around the late-fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century,[8] is situated on the east bank of the Black Creek, north of Finch Avenue, between Jane and Keele Streets, adjacent to York University. The site is thought to have been inhabited during a time when the Huron-Wendat confederacy was forming and when ancestral Wendat villages were being relocated progressively northward from Lake Ontario towards Wendake. The village site has, since the 1950s, been subject to a variety of archaeological investigations and development proposals, each of which has mobilized particular narratives about the site and its Wendat inhabitants. Environmental historian William Cronon reminds us that narratives leave impressions and that "where one chooses to begin and end a story profoundly alters its shape and meaning..."[9] Stories of the past typically include certain events and people, exclude others and thereby define the meaning of landscape in specific ways. Cronon's insights are relevant in interpreting how various archaeological narratives have represented the ancestral Huron-Wendat village.

This article provides an account of the various narratives or stories told about this village site from the 1950s to the present, focusing on archaeologists and their changing relationships, interactions and views of the site and its Indigenous inhabitants. The scope is not to provide a detailed history of the site, a highly in-depth analysis of the archaeological findings, or an in-depth history of the Huron-Wendat peoples. Instead, it explores historical-archaeological narratives of the site that reproduce notions of Huron-Wendat peoples as historical subjects-objects that are no longer present in the area. The focus of these narratives is on accumulating, storing and interpreting material artifacts and human remains found at sites. It then locates a narrative that acknowledges the historical and ongoing presence of Huron-Wendat peoples in the Toronto area, and asserts the importance of Indigenous peoples' involvement in interpreting their own histories, but that still remains more con-

[7] Gary Warrick, "Collaboration avec les Hurons-Wendat pour la protection du patriomoine archéologique en Ontario," *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, XLVIII (2018), 46.

[8] The exact dates are 1470 to 1540, as determined by 200 radiocarbon dates from north shore sites and Bayesian modeling of sequences. Personal communication, Ron Williamson, 22 March 2019.

[9] William Cronon, "A place for stories: Nature, history, and narrative," *The Journal of American History*, 78:4 (1992), 1364.

[10] Neal Ferris, "Between Colonial and Indigenous Archaeologies: Legal and Extra-Legal Ownership

sultative than collaborative.[10] It discusses how Huron-Wendat perspectives may inform narratives of the village that reposition "archaeological" perspectives within Wendat cosmologies, highlighting the way the ancestors, descendants, and the land itself are tied together in meaningful historical and contemporary reciprocal relations. It concludes by proposing that the ancestral village at York University be part of a relationship-building effort between the Huron-Wendat and the ongoing efforts to Indigenize the university. This paper is written from the perspective of a student and two faculty members at York University and the University of Toronto who are not Huron-Wendat, as well the research director of the Huron-Wendat in Wendake who are collectively interested in representations of the Indigenous presence in Toronto and are currently working on new ways, led by the Huron-Wendat, to engage with and present the village.

Historical-Archaeological Narratives of the Huron-Wendat Ancestral Site at York University

The first telling aspect of the archaeological narrative is that it foregrounds the settler society in its treatment of excavation sites. The ancestral Huron-Wendat village was named the Parsons Site by archaeologists and is still known by this name in public discourse. The land was owned by Mr. Jacob Stong and Mrs. M. Stong (Lot 21) and by John Boynton (Lot 22) in 1878. By the 1950s, lot number 21 was owned by Mrs. Elsie Parsons (1899-?), married to Egerton Parsons (d. 1950) in 1915 who sold the property to the City of North York and Ontario Hydro in 1958. Mrs. Parsons' maiden name was Snider, the name of a prominent land-owning and farm family in the region. In the Tremaine's 1860 Map of the County of York, the Sniders are shown to have held extensive areas of land both north and south of the ancestral Huron-Wendat village. It is likely they acquired the lands from the Stongs and Boyntons. In *Might's Toronto City Directory* of 1969, there is an E.A. Parsons listed as the owner of unit 408, 2755 Weston Road. An Elsie Parsons on Weston Road is referenced in later documents as owner of the land of the ancestral Huron-Wendat village site. We believe that Elsie inherited the land from her parents, who in turn had bought it from the Stongs and Boyntons.

The Parsons themselves were major land owners and farmers in the area.

of the Archaeological Past in North America," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology*, 27:2 (2003), 154-90; Neal Ferris and John Welsh, "Beyond Archaeological Agendas: In the Service of A Sustainable Archaeology," in Sonya Atalay, Lee Rains Clauss, Randall McGuire, and John Welch (eds.) *Transforming Archaeology: Activist Practices and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2016), 215-38; Kris Nahrgang, "An Aboriginal Perspective," in Marit Munson and Susan Jamieson [eds.] *Before Ontario: The Archaeology of a Province* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 203-211; Alicia Hawkins and Louis Lesage, "Huron-Wendat Archaeological Heritage: Challenging the Professionals, 2016," http://documents.grenadine.co/CRC%20Patrimoine%20Urbain/ACHS%202016%20-<%20What%20does%20heritage%20change/HawkinsandLesageCHS2016_Hawkins_and_Lesage_CHS_2016.pdf> (accessed 2018).

They possessed a prominent farm called Fairbank near Dufferin Street and Eglinton Avenue. But they also held land two concessions over from the Sniders, very close to the lot that was to become their property and the "Parsons Site," the site of the ancestral Huron-Wendat village. The naming of the site as "Parsons" after a prominent Euro-Canadian landowning family, a common naming practice throughout the region, constitutes one level of erasure of the area's Indigenous presence. On the York University Campus, it is illustrated further by the profusion of European settler names in the naming of campus features. These include Stong College, Stong Student Residence, Stong House, and Stong Pond; Hoover House, Hoover Road, and Hoover Creek; a set of student house units within Stong Residence (Hoover, Kaiser, Fisher and Boynton); Pioneer Village Subway Station; Kaiser Subway Gate; and Boynton Woodlot.

The historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and archaeologists is often described as acrimonious. But this has not always been the case. Archaeologists approached Haudenosaunee leaders when the Taber Hill ossuary in Scarborough was impacted by development in the 1950s, and the Haudenosaunee were involved in the subsequent treatment of that site.[11] And, by the mid to late 1970s, the Huron-Wendat were involved in excavations at the Draper and Spang sites in the airport lands and many archaeologists had been seeking consent from Indigenous nations to work in their territories and in structuring collaborative crews. Twelve students from Wendake, for example, participated in test excavations at the Spang Site in 1978 and 1979.[12] And in René Sioui-Labelle's film Kanata: Legacy of the Children of Aataentsic, there is a scene of a Huron-Wendat person working at an archaeological site.[13]

At the Huron-Wendat village at York University, however, the archaeological work was driven by cultural resource management objectives well into the 1980s, and did not involve the Huron-Wendat. The rescue of artifacts and human remains were not for the Huron-Wendat, but for the Canadian settler population. Efforts focused in particular on engaging not only professional archaeologists but also university and high school students in an outdoor education

[11] The site, however, is a Huron-Wendat site, something that is recognized by archaeologists though the plaque at the site still refers to the site as Iroquois (Haudenosaunee). See Victoria Freeman, "Remembering Wendat History in Toronto," in Louis-Jacques Dorais and Jonathan Lainey (eds.) *Eonywa' ndiyonhratekwihChia'Ekwaa'tatehkwih: Wendat et Wyandot d'hier et d'aujourd'hui/Wendat Then and Now, Proceedings of the first Wendat and Wyandot Studies Conference June 2012* (Wendake, Quebec: Editions Hannenorak, 2013), 126-47.

[12] Williamson, "The Archaeological History of the Wendat to A.D. 1651: An Overview," 20; Warrick, "Collaboration avec les Hurons-Wendat pour la protection du patriomoine archéologique en Ontario," 47.

[13] René Sioui-Labelle, director. *Kanata: Legacy of the Children of Aataentsic*, National Film Board of Canada, 1999.

venture that involved students trying their hands at excavating and learning from the site.

Archaeologists began excavating the ancestral Huron-Wendat village at York University in 1952, when J. Norman Emerson conducted a series of field schools at the site with students and scholars from the University of Toronto. His excavations generated a plethora of artefacts that are now housed at the Archaeological Archives of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. In one of his reports, The Importance of the Parsons Site, Emerson revealed his own views of the site. He began the report by proposing that the word 'importance' can have many meanings; "such values will vary from the most personal and selfish reasons to the most altruistic and socially conscious ones."[14] He then concluded that "the Parsons Village has little to offer in terms of the human values on antiquity, size, treasure, accepted history, peculiar insights or uniqueness" but that the site has "an almost unique applied value in the areas of education, conservation, recreation and tourism."[15]

Emerson's response suggested that the site was not important in and of itself or as part of a Huron-Wendat history with its own unique characteristics. Instead he believed that the site had "tremendous potential for development as an Indian counterpart of the reconstructed Black Creek Pioneer Village," a provincial theme park in the neighbourhood that displays and performs a reconstruction of a typical Southern Ontarian farm settler village from the 1860s. Emerson also felt that the site could serve admirably as the scene of the summer archaeological training school for university students and for the development of the high school participation program.[16] Emerson referred to a successful precedent here, citing his own department's seventeen-year stint of annual fall student excavations where large groups (up to 600) of untrained, inexperienced young people were provided with digging experience.[17] This statement clearly outlines Emerson's intentions for the usage of the site as a potential space for place-based learning about the history of the site, though with no presence or involvement of the Huron-Wendat themselves.[18]

Emerson also felt that his project

[14] J. Norman Emerson, "The Importance of the Parsons Village. A Brief Submitted to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development National and Historic Branch," February 1968, 2. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[15] *Ibid.*, 5.

[16] J. Norman Emerson, "Proposal for an Archaeological Conservation Program. Submitted to The Metropolitan and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority," Toronto, May 1964, 4. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[17] *Ibid.*, 3.

[18] This is more of an indictment of archaeology as whole than of Emerson alone. The Huron-Wendat played an insignificant role on the archaeological scene in Ontario until the late 1970s, then they were absent until the mid-1990s, only to reappear as regular participants around 2004. Another complication in the exclusion of the Huron-Wendat was that the Haudenosaunee, as late as the 1990s, were arguing

could provide for not only an "archaeological revolution" but also a "minor 'social revolution'" that would foster good character and build understandings of students for the total environment. He wrote about his student excavations:

> Nowhere in the world has such a concept of mass participation been developed; this is the revolutionary aspect of the program. There is no doubt that each individual taking part will have a very real feeling of making his or her own small contribution to a grand scale development. Such experience can awaken in young people a sense of history in this program of learning by doing. The Indian will be seen in a new and more realistic light, free from bias and distortion. Healthy, outdoor, manual work never did anyone any harm. The digger is led to pursue many fields of knowledge as he attempts to understand the materials he digs up out of the ground. He is led to ponder man's relationship to nature and his total environment.[19]

When sharing the potential structure of the high school excavation program, Emerson suggested that films should be shown in addition to the hands-on experience. He specifically identified National Film Board productions, such as The People of the Longhouse (1951), Village in the Dust (1962), and The Loon's Necklace (1948) as supplements to the digging activity in order to introduce students to "the broader picture of the Canadian Indian."[20] At the "Parsons Site," none of these discussions allowed participation from the Huron-Wendat to tell their own stories and give their own interpretations of artifacts unearthed at the site, reinforcing the perception that the Huron-Wendat were a people of the past, dispersed and disappeared, rather than still living.

Emerson worked diligently in lobbying politicians and civil servants to make his plans for the site a reality. In 1966, for example, he sought support for a Centennial Salvage and Conservation Project to conduct an excavation in light of the pending construction of a high-rise apartment building at the northern part of the site.[21] Two years later, Emerson

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that they represented these sites because they were Ontario Iroquois, a term that has confused everyone including native leaders for generations and has led to a still on-going contested heritage. Williamson also feels that for Emerson to have approached the Huron-Wendat would have been extraordinary, and that Emerson was progressive at the time by using economic arguments to try to convince colleagues of the importance of the Parsons Site when most administrators had excessively colonial attitudes toward the site. Emerson also attempted to reach out to Indigenous peoples through intuitive archaeology, though we have found no evidence of such efforts for the Huron-Wendat ancestral site at York University in Emerson's correspondence held at the Archaeological Archives at the University of Toronto. We are indebted to Ron Williamson for these insights. See also Ron Williamson, and Robert MacDonald, "Echoes of the Iroquois Wars: Contested Heritage and Identity in the Ancestral Homeland of the Huron-Wendat," in Peter Biehl, Douglas Comer, Christopher Prescott and Hilary Soderland [eds.] *Identity and Heritage: Contemporary Challenges in a Globalized World* (New York: Springer, 2015), 97-106.

[19] Emerson, "Proposal for an Archaeological Conservation Program," 5.

[20] *Ibid.*, 8-9.

[21] Report. Interview with Dr. Emerson, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, held in Mr. Boyes' office on Monday, 28 March 1966 at 10.00 am. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

and his Board of Education supporters applied to the federal minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to have the site designated as of national historic significance.[22] Emerson also had some support from the Historic Site Division of the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. Russell Cooper, an Administrator of the Division, wrote enthusiastically about the site as unique in its ideal location to attract millions of visitors.[23] The village, he wrote further, has "the potential of portraying the true image of the pre-white Indian."[24] He also felt that "[t]here are several thousand Indians from all over Canada living in the Toronto area and it is anticipated there would be no problem in securing a competent Indian staff to act as interpreters and guides for the village."[25] These "Indians" would act out a prehistoric spectacle based on a "true historic reconstruction without any embellishments or attempts at glamourizing the life of the Indian. Here is a chance to dispel the misconception of the red savage and portray him in the true light of a human being and craftsman artisan who carried on an agricultural existence long before the coming of the white man to Canada."[26] In 1972, Emerson led another excavation at the site but, ultimately, his efforts were unsuccessful. The archival record suggests several explanations. One was the sheer cost of the project. In contrast to Russell Cooper's views above, some staff at the Conservation Authority feared that the site might become a competitor to the Black Creek Pioneer Village, which apparently had its own problems garnering visitors to its location.

In the late 1980s, faculty members at York University revived Emerson's idea. The project, a joint undertaking with the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, was headed by Professor Bill Mahaney under the title "Geology, Prehistory, and Reconstruction of the Parson's (sic) Archaeological Site" and supported as a potential winner in the University's Fund Raising Campaign for research projects.[27] The objectives were no less ambitious than Emerson's plans. The results, the applicants wrote, "will include a reconstructed 'living village' that will accurately portray the lifestyle of the inhabitants, and will demonstrate the techniques and meth-

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[22] W.A. Dempsey to Fred Young, 19 April 1968, Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[23] Russell K. Cooper, R.K., "Background Material on Indian Village Site (Parsons' Village) Black Creek." Historic Site Division. Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. December 18, 1967, 1, 8. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Conrad Heidenreich, William Mahaney, and Arthur Roberts, "Geology, Prehistory, and Recontraction of the Parson's Archaeological Site, Toronto, Ontario. Department of Geography, York University, Downsview, Ontario," n.d.. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

ods of archaeology, prehistoric investigation and site reconstruction."[28] The total budget was $1,680,000.[29] The proponents also announced optimistically that the "project will be profit making and will be designed to inform the public about the prehistory of Canada and the lifestyle of the prehistoric occupants of the country." Among the efforts was the hiring of a professional archaeologist, Mima Kapches, who obtained a grant from the Ontario Heritage Foundation to catalogue and analyze the collections and field notes of Professor Emerson (who had died by this point). Once again, there was no indication in the proposal that the involvement of the Huron-Wendat was any more than "pre-historic" or that they would take an active part in the project, though the proposal made references to "native groups" being "involved in the general archaeological and interpretative program, such as helping with the excavation and performing a range of traditional tasks within the context of the time period (circa 1550 A.D.)."[30] The vision for the site's development was entirely a settler one, with Indigenous peoples expected to play roles within a plan that was predetermined by settler scholars.

But just like Emerson's initiatives, the York University proposal failed. Professor Conrad Heidenreich, a colleague of Mahaney and himself a prominent scholar of the Huron-Wendat, who opposed the project (though his name was initially on it), provided a good explanation why the project was bound to fail. Some of the key reasons he identified were the lack of a competent archaeologist at the university, the licensing of the site to an avocational archaeologist, John Morrison, by the Ministry of Culture and Recreation (see below), and, once again, the lack of interest by the Metro Region Conservation Authority that was running Black Creek Pioneer Village, a project strained for funds and fearing competition from an "Indian Village." The only way Heidenreich could see himself supporting the project was by the University hiring an archaeologist who would protect and then excavate the whole site.[31]

One of Emerson's disciples, avocational archaeologist John Morrison, provides a telling illustration of the archaeologist's concern for the exotic detail and its educational value for Canadian students. According to newspaper accounts, Morrison was trained but unable to find work as a commercial artist; he thus worked various factory jobs while pursuing his hobby as an avocational archaeologist until, in 1967, he was employed by six different boards of education across Metro Toronto to speak about and display his collection.[32] Morrison was compulsive in

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*, 14.

[30] *Ibid.*, 4.

[31] Conrad Heidenreich to Prof. G.G. Bell, Vice President, Finance and Development, 8 April, 1980. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[32] Morrison did in fact earn little money from displaying the Huron-Wendat artefacts apart from

his collecting, keeping a huge collection in the basement of his house and a small building in his garden on 8 Cobalt Avenue in Toronto. In a report of the site, he wrote: "From 1956 to 1971, I had uncovered 230,382 archaeological artifacts, as well as 18,513 bones of animals and fish, 1,117 bones of human skeleton remains, all of which are catalogued and re-stored."[33] [See Figure 1].

Initially, he took some students to the site, an initiative that was of some concern. In 1970, for example, at a meeting at Topcliff Public School, Emerson and various school officials met to discuss the site. They called for a more controlled access. Morrison had apparently brought two schools to the site with no permission.[34] The minutes of the meeting also noted that "more schools are coming to the site and some crowding is occurring."[35] They also observed that "teachers and students dig indiscriminately, collect 'souvenirs', fails (sic) to map locations and nature of finds. This is highly undesirable and needs to be stopped before the site is totally destroyed."[36] Morrison, during this time, dug with the permission of Mrs. Parsons who owned the land.

Such events did not escape other people.[37] In 1971, a graduate student at York University, Victor Konrad, supported by a $4,000 Opportunities-for-Youth-grant, wrote a report with the telling title The Archaeological Resources of Metropolitan Toronto: Inventory and Prospects.[38] It was a statement on the urgency of protecting these "resources." When sending a copy to Emerson, Konrad pointed out that he was especially concerned about the "Parsons Site," stating that "[t]he looting of the site has increased in volume. As a result I have recommended its immediate posting and fencing. I have also made a plea for interest on the part of York University in the site."[39] In the York Gazette, a campus publication, there is a photo of Konrad confronting a looter at the site.[40]

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small but infrequent stipends. Sandberg is working on a more complete picture of John Morrison.

[33] John Morrison, "Parsons Site (AkGv-8) John Morrison Report c. 1979," 2. Copy provided courtesy of Ron Williamson of Archaeological Services Inc.. When Morrison died in 2001, his collection was unfortunately lost. His relatives put half of it on the curb for garbage pick up. The other half was acquired by a real estate agent and its current location is unknown. Sandberg has acquired some important items from Morrison's relatives which he has passed on to the Huron-Wendat.

[34] "Minutes of Parson Site Meeting," Topcliffe Public School, October 15, 1970. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] For a history and treatment of Indigenous artifacts in pre-confederate and early Ontario, see Michelle Hamilton, *Collections and Objections: Aboriginal Material Cuture in Southern Ontario* (Montréal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2010).

[38] Victor Konrad, *Archaeological Resources of Metropolitan Toronto Planning Area: Inventory and Prospect* (Toronto: York University, Department of Geography, 1973).

[39] Victor A. Konrad to J.N. Emerson, 3 November 1971. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[40] Victor A. Konrad, "Site Faces Destruction," *York Gazette*, (n.d.). Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

One example, likely one of many, reveals the nature of the haphazard excavations that took place at the site. In 1999, a retired school teacher donated two boxes of artefacts from the site, dug up by two classes of about 25-30 students from 1969-1971, to the University of Toronto archaeological collection. According to the notes at the archives, he recalled another history teacher, at a different school, conducting similar digs. However, he could not remember where he dug or the name of his colleague, nor did he take field notes or screen the soil.[41]

When the Ontario Government enacted the Ontario Heritage Act in 1974, it also introduced a stricter licensing system for avocational archaeologists.[42] Under the new system, Morrison was denied a license on the basis of failing to provide sufficient analysis and reports of his excavations. By 1979, Morrison had corrected the situation and had his license renewed by the Minister of Culture and Recreation, only to have it canceled again in 1983.[43] In the first year of his renewed license, 1979, Morrison retrieved 3,698 archaeological artefacts, 112 bones of animals and fish, and 26 human bones.[44]

In time, Morrison used his collection to put together a travelling show that visited the various school boards in the Toronto Region. In 1977, he had conducted over 400 school visits and spoken to around 50,000 pupils.[45] In 1989, the Toronto Star journalist Rita Daly (1989) reported that Morrison had set up twelve display cases containing 400 items at Metro schools for over twenty years.[46] In some ways, Morrison succeeded where Emerson had failed, not by "developing" the village and bringing people there on a formal basis, but by excavating the site, building up a spectacular collection, and then bringing the collection to the people.

While the York University initiative to develop the Huron-Wendat Village failed, it nevertheless left some traces and precedents. Mima Kapches' report of the site provided an up-to-date and state-of-the art interpretation of Emerson's and Morrison's past data as well as her own analysis of the site, including commissioned reports from other scholars.[47] Her intervention corresponded with the growing status of archaeology as a profession and its ability to exert control over archaeological sites in Ontario and North America more generally. She was

[41] "Donation of Parsons Site Material," 1999. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

[42] "Rescue," *Arch Notes*, September 1976, pp. 10-11. https://www.ontarioarchaeology.org/Resources/ArchNotes/an76-7.pdf (accessed 2020).

[43] Various files, John Morrison, RG 47-100, Archaeology licensing files. Ontario Archives.

[44] Morrison, "Parsons Site," 2.

[45] "Piecing Together Ontario History: His Indian Story has 290,000 Parts," *Toronto Star*, 24 January 1977, p. D1.

[46] "Every artifact tells a story," *Toronto Star*, 1 February, 1989, p. 2.

[47] Mima Kapches, "Parsons Project. Royal Ontario Museum," 1982. Toronto. Archaeological Archives, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto.

critical of Morrison's excavations, writing at one point: "Mr. Morrison's work has been very extensive. He has unsystematically worked over the site for thirty years. He has excavated in a destructive manner, keeping little in the way of usable field notes or plans. Mr. Morrison's contribution to the Parsons site is his immense artifact collection."[48]

The treatment of the Huron-Wendat Village has since been examined through a professional lens in one archaeological dig and several publications. The excavation, the last to date, occurred in 1989-90 when ASI conducted a partial examination of the site.[49] [See Figure 2]. The ASI excavation was followed by a scholarly piece edited by David Robertson and Ronald Williamson in 1998, "The Archaeology of the Parsons Site: Summary and Conclusions," published in Ontario Archaeology.[50] The dig cleared a trench which revealed the traces of ten longhouses, a series of underground sweat lodges, a surrounding palisade and four middens or refuse areas. The authors also alleged that the village was at least twice the size of earlier documented village sites in the Humber River Valley. It was once thought the layout was haphazard but this is deceptive since it is likely that the site was occupied at different times and each time had its own organization and logic. This finding, along with tall log palisades interpreted as a defense against potential hostile groups, suggests that this may have been the site of a critical period in ancestral Huron-Wendat history, when small groups merged to form the large villages that visiting Jesuits made famous 200 years later and when individual Wendat nations began to form the Wendat Confederacy[51].

Robertson and Williamson go on to speculate about a number of questions surrounding Huron-Wendat society, including trade relations, the presence and roles of palisades, marriage patterns, the use and abundance of Onondaga chert, the significance of the presence of specific ceramic vessel patterns, and the relationships with other local and distant communities. At one point they hypothesize that "since Parsons is almost twice

[48] *Ibid.*, 23. This may be an arguable point. Morrison kept a detailed record of his collection in a series of notebooks and labeled each item. He also indicated where each item was retrieved. It is true, though, that he was artefact-focused and was less concerned and capable of interpreting his findings. Personal communications on several occasions with Garry Morrison, John's brother, in 2019 and 2020.

[49] Lana Crucefix, L. *The Parsons Site: A Summary by Lanna Crucefix*. Archaeological Services, n.d..

[50] David A. Robertson and Ron Williamson, "The archaeology of the Parsons site: Summary and conclusions," *Ontario Archaeology*, 65:66 (1998), 146-50; Dennis Smith, "Toronto Feature: Huron-Wendat Village,"in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada, 4 February, 2013. <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/toronto-feature-huron-wendat-village> (accessed 2019).

[51] In the late thirteenth century, the Wendat ancestors had started to migrate northward from the north shore of Lake Ontario, likely forming the Bear and Cord nations, which then became the Wendat Confederacy by the mid-fifteenth century. The Rock joined around 1580, from the Trent Valley, and the Deer around 1610 (from the Humber-Rouge-Duffins-Holland). The confederacy was situated in the historic Wendat homeland of Wendake, between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay, by the seventeenth century.

Figure 1. Bone arrowheads retrieved by John Morrison at the ancestral Huron-Wendat Village at York University. Courtesy of the Huron-Wendat Nation; photo by John Howarth.

Figure 2: Archaeological excavation of the ancestral Huron-Wendat village site by Archaeological Services Inc. in the early 1990s. Photo courtesy of Ron Williamson of ASI.

the size of the earlier villages, it is possible that the nearby Riseborough site on the Don River was one of the contributing villages. Parsons may, therefore, represent the amalgamation of people from two or more of these earlier communities and relate to the initial formation of a tribal system."[52] The article is probing, reflexive and raises many questions. It ends by proposing that explanations for the formation of the Huron-Wendat Confederacy "will only emerge with the efforts of another fifty years of archaeological work," a promising prospect indeed for the field of archaeology.[53]

Williamson (2014) has since written a comprehensive review of archaeological work on the Huron-Wendat prior to 1650 A.D., commissioned by the Huron-Wendat themselves.[54] Though written from a Western archaeological perspective, the Huron-Wendat interest in commissioning the piece points to the possibility of new, more collaborative relationships among archaeologists and Indigenous nations that is more attuned to and respectful of Indigenous peoples' priorities and perspectives.

But the Huron-Wendat's interests in archaeology are part of a deeper effort and commitment to reconnect with their ancestors and ancestral territories in southern Ontario, or, as some prefer to call it, Wendake South. Since their departure from the region in the seventeenth century, the Huron-Wendat have been unable to control access to their ancestral sites. Up to the late 1990s, the former Ontario Cemeteries Act allowed the nearest First Nations group to approve the retrieval of human remains rather than the groups that were culturally connected to the dead. At the same time, the Huron-Wendat were preoccupied with the struggles for lands and rights in their ancestral homelands of Nionwentsïo in the lower St. Lawrence area. Language and jurisdictional boundaries also made it difficult to maintain and protect their ancestral villages and ancestors in Wendake South. But since the late 1990s, Huron-Wendat political and legal activism have laid some of the ground work for the articulation of different possibilities with regards to memorializing and remembering ancestral sites.

This renewed engagement with Wendake South may have had its roots in 1974 when Michel Gros-Louis visited the former capital of the Wendat Confederacy, Ossossane, and learnt that 500 of his ancestors, who had been buried in an ossuary there in 1636, had been dug up by archaeologists and were warehoused at the Royal Ontario Museum.[55] Gros-Louis' revelation prompted action on the

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[52] Robertson and Williamson, "The archaeology of the Parsons site: Summary and conclusions."

[53] *Ibid.*, 150.

[54] Ron Williamson, "The Archaeological History of the Wendat to A.D. 1651: An Overview."

[55] Roberta Avery, Huron Wendat reunite after 350 years: Reunion brings tears of joy, sense of belonging, 20 September 1999, p. C6; Mima Kapches, Ossossane Ossuary: The circle closes, *Archaeology of Eastern America*, 38 (2010), 1-13; Emma Anderson, *The Death and Aftermath of the North American Martyrs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 231-42.

part of the Huron-Wendat to begin negotiations with the museum to repatriate their ancestors for reburial. The effort rallied all Wendat nations who gathered for a reburial in Ossossane in 1999. During this gathering, the Wendat nations also rebirthed their Confederacy.[56] A similar burial took place in 2013 after ancestral remains were rematriated from the University of Toronto and entombed in an ossuary in Kleinburg.[57] When Chief Gaetan Sioui went to see his ancestors at the University, he is reported to have said: "we almost cried to see our ancestors lying in dusty boxes for so long."[58]

The Huron-Wendat have also engaged legal channels to assert jurisdiction over ancestral remains on several occasions with significant results. In 2002, the Huron-Wendat took part in a legal challenge alleging that the Ontario Realty Corporation breached provincial environmental rule by not doing a full heritage and environmental assessment before a land swap. The land traded contained an ancestral Huron-Wendat village that was slated to become a Catholic cemetery.[59] In 2004, a Justice of the Peace in York Region ruled that the Huron-Wendat should have been consulted.[60] The Huron-Wendat's lawyer at the time, David Donnelly, writes that the decision meant that the "Huron-Wendat and their heritage were finally recognized in Ontario."[61]

In 2004 the Huron-Wendat initially joined Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee groups to challenge another Ontario Realty Corporation land swap, this time pertaining to the so called Seaton Lands. A newspaper article reported this as the first official gathering of the three groups since the Treaty of Montreal in 1701. It was also a time where the groups met to embrace the sacred aspects of heritage preservation. As Darlene Johnson of Chippewas of Nawash pointed out, the Indigenous groups' understanding contrasted with that of the province where "the understanding of sacred is not within the legislative vocabulary."[62]

However, tensions erupted among the Indigenous groups. One member of Six Nations involved in the consultations questioned the presence of the Huron-Wendat in Ontario, expressing anger at them for aligning themselves with the Jesuits and abandoning their homeland in favour of Christianity. He also felt that if governments need to unearth any grave or village sites for developments, he would say a prayer to the ancestors and move the material as he had done in the

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[56] *Ibid.*

[57] Susan Pfeiffer and Louis Lesage, The Repatriation of Wendat Ancestors, 2013, *Canadian Journal of Archaeology*, 38, 1 (2014), 5-12;

[58] "U of T basements hold thousands of remains," Toronto Star, 3 September 2010, p. GT5.

[59] "Cemetery Plan for Catholics Appalls Natives," *Globe and Mail*, 16 August 2002, p. A16.

[60] "Huron oppose digs on ancestral land," *Toronto Star*, 5 October 2006, p. R5.

[61] Donnelly Law, "Funeral Praise: Heather Bastien," 4 February 2017. <https://www.donnellylaw.ca/notablematters/1834>.

[62] "Spirits and the material world: Natives feel that in saving sacred sites from development they are protecting aboriginal heritage," *Globe and Mail*, 13 February 2006, p A9.

past. Mr. Luc Lainé, former head of land claims of the Huron-Wendat, countered that they did not abandon their lands in Ontario but were driven out of their homes by war, religion, and European diseases. He also felt that "it's a little bit cynical that they (Six Nations) would do a special ceremony to our forefathers. We can apologize ourselves to our forefathers..."[63] Such tensions pitted the Williams Lake Treaty First Nations against the Huron-Wendat. In the end, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ontario Realty Corporation and the Huron Wendat, as the major descendant of the archaeological remnants on the Seaton lands, negotiated a settlement. This settlement was challenged by the Williams Lake treaty holders, but the court found in favour of the Ontario Realty Corporation and the Huron-Wendat.[64]

Then, in 2010, the Huron-Wendat took the lead in calling for a moratorium of all archaeological excavation in Ontario in response to the failure to consult them on a proposed development that would threaten the site of one of their ancestral villages, Skandatut, in the northwestern part of the Toronto region. The protest reinforced the regulations on development applications that require those First Nations that were directly affected be consulted.[65] Skandatut is now protected though recent development has somewhat compromised that situation.[66]

The Huron-Wendat Nation is now routinely involved in consultations and the building of partnerships with developers and governments, taking part in more than 300 various consultations per year pertaining to Wendake South. In these consultations the Huron-Wendat Nation does not systematically oppose development but insists on exercising their sacred duty to protect their cultural and archaeological heritage.[67] Such principles and practices now form the foundation for different ways of conceiving of and interacting with ancestral sites, including the ancestral site at York University.

Moving Towards a Respectful Narrative of the Huron-Wendat Ancestral Village at Black Creek:

The Induction of the Huron-Huron-Wendat Trail, the Parsons Site Plaque, and Beyond

The Huron-Wendat as an afterthought: In 1999, Huron-Wendat scholar Georges E. Sioui wrote that most of the research and perspectives surrounding the Huron-Wendat is based almost entirely on writ-

[63] "Native groups come to rebury their dead," *Globe and Mail*, 11 October 2004, p. A8.

[64] Hiawatha et al. v. Ministry of the Environment et al. (3 December 2007), 285/06 (Ontario Superior Court of Justice Divisional Court).

[65] "New Rules Will Help Preserve Archaeological Sites," *Globe and Mail*, 19 November 2010, p. G2

[66] Warrick, "Collaboration avec les Hurons-Wendat pour la protection du patriomoine archéologique en Ontario," 51-2.

[67] Wendake South (Ontario). <https://wendake.ca/cnhw/bureau-du-nionwentsio/wendake-sud-ontario/> (accessed 2002).

ten accounts derived from archaeological research.[68] Such an approach to preserving and retelling Indigenous culture and knowledges, he suggested, often conflicted with the oral story-telling nature of the Huron-Wendat and other First Nations. He wrote, for example, that the greatest non-Indigenous specialists of our history "have said that we are only the descendants of the Iroquois... that we have ceased to exist theoretically in 1784, or 1789... that we are now inadequate, somehow... that Indian culture now lies under a glass dome."[69] Sioui described two obstacles that interfere with ethical and compassionate relations between archaeologists and Indigenous peoples: the first is a cultural obstacle, the lack of sufficient awareness of "the other," which prevents non-Indigenous researchers from automatically seeking or understanding Indigenous peoples' perspectives on Indigenous histories and cultures. For example, Williamson has described the essential elements of Wendat culture as a primary reliance on horticulture for subsistence; habitation in often-fortified bark-covered longhouses shared usually by matrilineally-related extended families; clan membership extending beyond each village to other communities, thereby extending villages within tribes and confederacies; a set of shared governance structures and religious beliefs and practices; and participation in ritualized warfare, trophy taking, and prisoner sacrifice.[70]

While this description may be technically correct based on current archaeological knowledge, the Huron-Wendat would undoubtedly emphasize other aspects of their culture and knowledge, including continuity with contemporary Huron-Wendat knowledge, communities, and cultural practices, and would not describe themselves, their more-than-human relations, or their ancestors in such a clinical, materialist manner. The second obstacle is a professional deficit, "the apparent inability of most archaeologists to imagine an order of basic objectives other than those of processual archaeology - that is, the production of generalizations about human behaviour and cultural change."[71]

In this situation, Sioui felt, it was only natural that Indigenous peoples still felt violence of the cultural shock between the "two worlds," as well as the psychological and spiritual trauma resulting from the colonial experience.[72] Sioui proposed that one important step for archaeologists to improve their relationship with Indigenous peoples was to become educated about, or at least aware of, the colonial past of Canada and acknowledge that the "historical trajectory [of Indigenous peoples] was abruptly

[68] Sioui, *Huron-Wendat,* 45.

[69] Georges Sioui, *For an American Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1992), 32; see also Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, 46.

[70] Williamson, "The Archaeological History of the Wendat to A.D. 1651 2014," 3.

[71] Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, 49.

[72] *Ibid*., 51.

and radically curtailed by the coming of Europeans to the Americas."

Since Sioui's writings, many Indigenous archaeologists have emerged who practice Indigenous archaeology. They are not only inspired by material culture and remains, but also complement or triangulate such data with archival documents and oral histories.[73] The field is also informed by Indigenous priorities when it comes to what sites and periods to explore. There is also a recognition on the part of non-Indigenous archaeologists that Indigenous views and perspective need to be considered.[74] It may also involve less invasive forms of excavation, including the decision to leave certain sites untouched.[75] Kris Nahrgang advocates for the right of First Nations peoples to be consulted about sites of importance before developers tamper with the land. This should mean, he states, that Indigenous peoples should already be involved in the archaeological process from the very start, "not just added as an afterthought."[76]

Applying these understandings to the case of the Huron-Wendat ancestral village site at York University, we have not found any archival evidence that the Huron-Wendat were ever consulted on their ancestral village before 2013. In that year, however, nearly sixty years after the initial investigations at the site, the City of Toronto, Heritage Toronto and ASI came together to celebrate the rich history of this area by naming the newly developed Finch Hydro Corridor bike and walking path the "The Huron-Wendat Trail."[77] The long history of the Huron-Wendat ancestral village was finally honoured at North York's Driftwood Park, about 500 years after its utilization. The Huron-Wendat Trail is an outgrowth of the Shared Path, Toronto's first historical park, along the Humber River. It was a collaborative effort between Heritage Toronto, The City of Toronto, The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, The Canadian Heritage Rivers System

[73] Eldon Yellowhorn, "Awakening Internalist Archaeology in the Aboriginal World" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2002); Eldon Yellowhorn, "Just Methods, No Madness: Historical Archaeology on the Piikani First Nation, in Cristóbal Gnecco and Dorothy Lippert [eds.], *Ethics and Archaeological Praxis. Ethical Archaeologies: The Politics of Social Justice*, vol 1 (New York, NY: Springer, 2015), 245-56. See also the work of Rudy Reimer, including his TV series on wild archaeology. <https://www.aptn.ca/wildarchaeology/>(accessed 2020).

[74] Ron Williamson, "Archaeological Heritage Management: The Last and Next Half Century," *Canadian Journal of Archaeology*, 42 (2018), 13-19.

[75] Bonnie Glencross, Gary Warrick, Edward Eastaugh, and Alicia Hawkins, "Minimally Invasive Research Strategies in Huron-Wendat Archaeology: Working toward a Sustainable Archaeology," *Advances in Archaeological Practice*, 5:2 (2017), 147-58.

[76] Nahrgang, "An Aboriginal Perspective," 208. For a wider context and other conflicts over Indigenous burial and heritage sites, see *Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry*. The Honourable Sidney B. Linden, Commisioner, Volume 2, Chapter Six, "Aboriginal Burial and Heritage Sites (Toronto: Office of the Attorney General), 129-51.

[77] Claire Van Nierop, "Revisiting the Parsons Site. Archaeological Services, 2013. <http://www.iasi.to/web.nsf/page/Revisiting%20the%20Parsons%20Sit> (accessed 2019).

and La Société d'Histoire de Toronto. The trail also contains a series of plaques documenting the presence of various Indigenous groups that have occupied the Humber drainage system. There were four plaques written with the collaboration of the Huron-Wendat, named "How the Earth Was Formed," "Toronto's Huron-Wendat Heritage," "Transforming Village Life," and the "Parsons Site." [See Figure 3.] The first, the Huron-Wendat creation story, was written by the Huron-Wendat, while the others were written by non-Huron-Wendat consulting bodies.[78] The process is well expressed by Ron Williamson of ASI:

> ..., they [Toronto Parks] asked a woman named Susan Hughes in Heritage Preservation Services whether or not this site up at York University could be interpreted and we had been involved with the City of Toronto since 2005 helping them manage archaeological resources—we did an archaeological management plan and we have been kind of a retainer, in that sense, helping the city figure out what to do ... but also helping them sort out engagement protocols with Indigenous Nations as it related to development and archaeology. ...I think that was 2011—we sat down with Parks and I had been working closely with the Huron-Wendat ... since 2004 and so managed to get the Huron-Wendat to come to a meeting in Toronto where Parks, the Huron-Wendat and myself and the city—the Heritage Department—sat down and said well, we'd like to extend this trail but we'd like to do it—it's going to go by the Parsons Site. So we explained what the Parsons Site was and then began to talk about what kind of messaging we wanted to put on. Now we helped with the plaque content obviously but we weren't the final decision makers on the wording—the final decision makers were both the heritage department and the Huron-Wendat.[79]

The event in the Jane Street-Finch Avenue neighborhood park included "a plaque presentation and a ceremony to open the Huron-Wendat Trail. The Heritage Toronto plaques commemorate the history of the Huron-Wendat people in Toronto and Ontario."[80] Following the plaque unveiling, archaeologist Ron Williamson led an interpretive bike tour along the Huron-Wendat Trail. The trail runs under a power line corridor from Keele to Jane Streets and traverses the ancestral Huron-Wendat village. Grand Chief Konrad Sioui thanked the city for declaring June 15 Huron-Wendat Day, stating "We must never forget that our ancestors have walked, lived and died in the Greater Toronto Area and in the Great Lakes area. The Huron-Wendat Trail is a positive reminder of our past, present and future presence in our unceded natural lands."[81] [See Figure 4.]

During the 2015 Ontario Archaeological Society annual symposium held in Midland, Ontario, most of the papers presented answered questions posed

[78] Ron Williamson, personal communication, 29 March, 2018.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Lisa Queen, *Driftwood Park ceremony honours Huron-Wendat First Nation. Toronto: North York Mirror*, 2013. <https://www.insidetoronto.com/news-story/3842969-driftwood-park-ceremony-honours-huron-Huron-Wendat-first-nation/> (accessed 2019).

[81] *Ibid.*

Figure 3. Plaque erected in 2013 by Heritage Toronto to recognize the ancestral Huron-Wendat village, known as the Parsons Site, south of York University. The plaque is located at the southeast corner of Murray Ross Parkway and Sentinel Road. Photo by L. Anders Sandberg.

Figure 4. Huron-Wendat delegation attending the opening of the Huron-Wendat Trail in 2013. Photo courtesy Ron Williamson, ASI.

by the Huron-Wendat that related not only to archaeology but also linguistics and oral and written history. And the answers were different from the conventional ones. While archaeologists have consistently held that the "Iroquoian" peoples of the St. Lawrence valley were culturally and politically distinct from the Huron-Wendat, the evidence presented at the conference suggested the opposite, namely that the St. Lawrence "Iroquoian" are ancestral Huron-Wendat and that the St. Lawrence River valley is Huron-Wendat territory.[82]

Efforts such as the Midland OAS conference and the work by the City of Toronto, Toronto Heritage, and ASI on the Huron-Wendat trail move in the direction of a new archaeology that is more mindful and respectful of Indigenous peoples. The induction of the trail and plaques was conducted with the Huron-Wendat in mind. The dominant institutions approached the Huron-Wendat who were part of the final decision makers. But there is still room for improvement. For instance, the "naming of the trail and the plaques was a long-overdue acknowledgement of the Huron-Wendat at the site, it took over sixty years for the acknowledgement to take place.[83] The Huron-Wendat did not lead these plans and the process was still more consultative than collaborative.[84] The site also still bears the name Parsons, a colonial name, even after its formal and public acknowledgement as an Indigenous site, and the re-naming of other sites of equal importance.

The Huron-Wendat as a forethought:

When we contemplate the ancestral Huron-Wendat village site at York University solely from an archaeological perspective, there are many absences. There is no mention at the site itself of the current presence of the Huron-Wendat in Toronto, or North America for that matter, and the types of knowledges and practices that continue to affirm and strengthen Huron-Wendat communities today and into the future. Nor has there been much activity at the ancestral village and trail since the 2013 acknowledgement. This begs several questions: How would the site be understood from within Huron-Wendat worldviews and perspectives? Given the structural inequities created by ongoing settler-colonial perspectives and institutions, how can institutions such as York University, the City of Toronto, archaeological organizations, individual archaeologists, and others best mobilize their resources to support contemporary Huron-Wendat in developing closer and sustainable relationality with the site? How can people assist Huron-Wendat and their supporters in these endeavours in the future?

The Huron-Wendat Nation considers Wendake South to be a territory occupied by more than 100,000 of their ancestors and home to more than 800 and growing recognized Huron-Wendat

[82] Warrick and Lesage, "The Huron-Wendat and the St. Lawrence Iroquoians."
[83] Sandberg, "Subverting the Enterprise University," 5.
[84] Hawkins and Lesage, "Huron-Wendat Archaeological Heritage."

archaeological sites. The Nation considers this the largest archaeological heritage linked to any First Nation in Canada. "The protection and preservation of these sacred sites are therefore at the heart of the priorities of the Huron-Wendat Nation."[85]

Huron-Wendat philosophy and teachings envision the village as a site of ongoing spiritual ancestral Huron-Wendat presence and more recent archaeological research is coming into closer alignment with this understanding as well. Birch and Williamson discuss a pattern of northward displacement that is evident in the relocation of Huron-Wendat villages from 1000-1600 CE.[86] This progressively northward movement created an expanding ancestral landscape of ancestral Huron-Wendat villages and hunting grounds extending northward from the north shore of Lake Ontario. Though former village sites were no longer inhabited by contemporaneous Huron-Wendat, the Huron-Wendat continued to maintain reciprocal relationships with the ancestors that had been interred via the Yandatsa ('the kettle' in Wendat language, described by Jesuits as the Feast of the Dead or Feast of Souls) and otherwise at their former village sites. The Wendat continued to visit their ancestral sites and likely held feasts and other ceremonies there on a periodic basis.[87] One account from Jesuit Relations describes that the spiritual presence of ancestors who had died when very old or very young , and who were thus too weak to make the journey to the village of souls, would remain in the vicinity of their ancestral villages:

> Some assert that at times they hear the noise of the doors of their Cabins, and the voices of the children chasing the birds in the fields. They sow corn in its season, and use the fields the living have abandoned; if any Village takes fire, which often happens in this country, they take care to gather from the middle of this fire the roasted corn, and lay it by as part of their provisions.[88]

Ancestral Wendat villages are not merely archaeological sites containing lifeless material objects and human remains; they are living sacred sites inhabited by

[85] Wendake South (Ontario).

[86] Jennifer Birch and Ron Williamson, Navigating ancestral landscapes in the Northern Iroquoian world, *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 39 (2015), 139-50.

[87] Such sites may be an integral part of an emergent but as yet not well understood precolonial pattern of urban development, evident in South and North America, that Forbes labeled "heart circles." The heart circle pattern involved a system of villages separated from each other by relatively naturalized hunting grounds, but connected to each other by trails and a common or shared ceremonial ground which was not a place of regular inhabitation, but which was a gathering place for the residents of the villages that were part of the heart circle. The ceremonial centres were integral to the maintenance of the heart circle. The ancestral landscape of former Huron-Wendat villages may have served as a ceremonial centre for Huron-Wendat villages connected via such a heart circle model. See Jon Johnson, "Pathways to the Eighth Fire: Mapping Indigenous Knowledge in Toronto (Ph.D. diss., York University, 2015). See also Eric Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead: Indian-European Encounters in Early North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

[88] In Sioui, *Huron-Wendat*, 145.

the ancestors of the Wendat and are sites for the activation of relationality with ancestral Wendat among contemporary Wendat.

The work of Wyandot artists Richard Zane Smith and Catherine Tammaro with pottery fragments at the Royal Ontario Museum illustrates one example of how contemporary Wendat activate spiritual relationships with ancestral Wendat through material culture from former village sites. A ROM spokesperson describes the meeting as an important project because it could "reinforce those cultural connections that they and other Wyandot members share with their Ancestors."[89] In this interaction, Smith and Tammaro challenge archaeologists' conventional way of associating particular pottery designs with specific Huron-Wendat groups.[90] They write that studying "shapes and forms lends itself to knowledge about our Ancestors from a cultural, spiritual, and experiential standpoint; it is deeply satisfying as it fills in gaps in awareness."[91] Smith and Tammaro speak movingly about their spiritual, emotional, and embodied connections to the pottery, Tammaro suggesting at one point, when reflecting on the stunning similarity between her own pottery and that of her ancestors, that some Ancestral memories may be contained in her DNA. Their concluding remarks suggest similarly that the ancestral pottery can speak to their descendants.

> Richard:... The handling of these pieces puts me at ease. It's like being in the presence of a group of Elder women sitting together, laughing and gossiping.... so many of these vessels were made by average villagers who simply made ALL their own things, they had their own village and nation ways and girls learned by watching those family members who sat before them, month after month. The techniques, the shapes, the design work, all created within a safe village site. There is a noticeable feel of being casual with the materials, a sense of calm... nothing extreme... just the daily life of basic living; of collecting water, of cooking of sitting and eating with family and other villagers. These are what these sherds tell me as I hold them in my hands. [See Figure 5].
>
> Catherine:... I am left with the overwhelming certainty that somehow and in some way, the vessels are a reflection of the natural environment, viewed through an Ancestral paradigm. Vessels hold sacred water, sustenance, nourishment; they support survival and as other art forms, including effigy pipes, garments, the construction and placement of longhouses. All of these things seem to reflect a specific world-view, so perhaps pots and vessels do too. Perhaps the vessel is the cosmic vault itself; the spherical shape a reference to the heavens, the designs, reflections of patterns found in nature, or references to the structure of a longhouse-like container.

[89] Craig Cipolla, Remembering Ancient Pottery Traditions. Royal Ontario Museum Blog, 2016. <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/remembering-ancient-pottery-traditions> (accessed 2019).

[90] Craig Cipolla, "Archaeological Approaches to Ceramics," Royal Ontario Museum Blog, 2017. <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/archaeological-approaches-to-ceramics> (accessed 2019).

[91] Richard Smith, and Catherine Tammaro, "Wyandot Approaches to Archaeological Ceramics," Royal Ontario Museum Blog, 2017. <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/wyandot-approaches-to-archaeological-ceramics> (accessed 2019).

Figure 5. Richard Zane Smith and Catherine Tammaro examining Huron-Wendat pot sherds at the Royal Ontario Museum. Photo courtesy of Craig Cipolla.

Another example of how contemporary Huron-Wendat relate to ancestral objects from archaeological sites come from an article entitled "Looking at Archaeology from All Angles" published in a 2015 edition of *Heritage Matters*. In the article, Michel Savard, curator of the Museum of the Huron-Wendat Nation in Wendake, Quebec, reflects on a clay pipe that was unearthed at a Huron-Wendat site within the territory of Wendake South, in Ontario. His comments reflect an embodied engagement with this item as not only evidence of past lifeways, but as an ongoing relationship with ancestors:

> As a Wendat, the temptation to drop a burning ember into the bowl of this pipe would have been overwhelming. It is true that if this pipe had come to me, regardless of the context, I would certainly have dropped this ember in. It is lucky for the archaeologists that this will never happen. Too much data would go up in smoke....
>
> It would be extraordinary to discover a pipe that still contained the tobacco that one of my ancestors had placed in it more than 400 years ago! One thing is certain. This would have been, for me as a Wendat, a great moment of spirituality unlike any I could have imagined—a direct connection with my roots, my spirit and (who knows) perhaps with the spirit of this Wendat ancestor from whom I might have learned to get more connected to the genuine things in life, like portaging my canoe!... From an archaeological point of view, this discovery could bring answers to our questions about our Wendat ancestors' way of life. Otherwise, what would be the use of unearthing, or rather removing, these artifacts from the belly of Mother Earth! Sometimes the act of voluntarily burying an object is in itself a spiritual reflection that must not be desecrated, even if this results in a loss of knowledge for science, no matter what the discipline.[92]

These eloquent statements point to the non-representational and affectual aspects of Huron-Wendat history and material culture. They speak to ancestral, spiritual, relational, and the tactile realms that can take archaeological scholarship in directions that are more consistent with and respectful of Indigenous cosmologies. They underscore how contem-

[92] Martha Latta, Richard Zane Smith, and Michel Savard, "Looking at Archaeology from All Angles," *Heritage Matters*, 13:2 (2015), 6-7.

porary Wendat continue to activate or re-activate spiritual relationships with ancestral Wendat village sites that should be acknowledged and foregrounded in any future plans for or treatment of Wendat and ancestral Wendat archaeological sites.

Archaeologists and many other Western scholars may see the importance of the ancestral Huron-Wendat site at York University in terms of 'knowledge of the past' and consider excavation to be tantamount to rescuing these places. But this overlooks the practice of sustainable archaeology, an archaeology that corresponds with Indigenous peoples' inclinations to disturb Indigenous sites as little as possible. It also neglects oral histories and the way these sites tie ancestors, descendants, and the land itself together in meaningful reciprocal relations in the present. Once such considerations are taken into account, different insights may be gained.

The village site at York University provides such an opportunity. Adjacent residential building projects that were allowed to proceed without proper archaeological evaluations in 1977 and the early 1980s resulted in the destruction of parts of the village. Other settler activities, such as the planting of crops, the appropriation and theft of artifacts by amateur archaeologists and looters, the installation of the hydro-corridor that runs above it, and pipelines that are dug through it have also disturbed the village site.[93] Yet, much of the village remains intact and is, paradoxically, now protected by the presence of these very structures. There thus continue to be possibilities for the development and maintenance of ongoing relationships with the village as a living ancestral site that go beyond excavation and village reconstruction schemes in the vein of Black Creek Pioneer Village or the Huron-Wendat village at Crawford Lake.

Conclusion

The Huron-Wendat ancestral village south of the York University campus provides an insightful illustration on the past interpretation of Indigenous ancestral sites as well as a potential future of the role of archaeology, history, and Indigenous scholarship in the decolonizing, reshaping, re-telling and re-inhabiting of such sites. In this article, we document a narrative based on professional archaeology that first shaped and to some extent still continue to shape the site. It is based on professional expertise as it relates to archaeology and the professional accreditations, techniques and means of interpretation that go along with that discipline. It is based on the retrieval of so called artefacts, human and non-human, the interpretation of such artefacts, and the drawing of conclusions about the broader Huron-Wendat society from such interpretations. When first practiced at the

[93] Crucefix, *The Parsons Site;* L. Anders Sandberg, "Subverting the Enterprise University: The Case of the Alternative Campus Tour at York University, Toronto, Canada," *International Journal of Widening Participation*, 2:2 (2015), 4.

Huron-Wendat ancestral site at York University, the archaeological narrative was based on such premises, and there were no consultations with contemporary Huron-Wendat people. The people at the site, the Huron-Wendat, were seen as past rather than present people. The proposed plans for the site were similarly constructed without the presence of the contemporary Huron-Wendat. Instead they focused on engaging students to perform digs at the site as an outdoor exercise and to learn more about Canada's Indigenous peoples, and to reconstruct the village as an ancestral site, with local Indigenous peoples being engaged as guides, dressed up in historical clothes and performing traditional activities.

It took sixty years for the Huron-Wendat ancestral village at Black Creek to be acknowledged formally and publicly as Huron-Wendat, recognized with a series of plaques and the naming of a trail. Yet, though the Huron-Wendat were present and consulted in this endeavour, the archeological narrative remains dominant. The archeological record still speaks for the site, and archaeologists are now retained and work for the Huron-Wendat on ancestral sites. This article proposes that there is still work to be done and new narratives that can guide interpretations and interactions with the site. The village, for example, still carries a colonial name and the Indigenous presence that lived and created the site remains largely untold. But more importantly, it is argued, there is an absence of an Indigenous scholarship about the site that recognizes its sacredness and living nature, its connection to kinship and ancestors, and that engages with the site on a continuous basis.

With respectful and compassionate work towards solidarity with the Huron-Wendat, the Huron-Wendat ancestral village at York could empower and give voice to the Huron-Wendat, past, present, future, and allow them the possibility and option of reconnecting with the village in some way. It would also allow any visitor, student, faculty or staff at York to become more respectful and mindful of the true history of the land they stand, walk, work or study on, and, if called upon, given the option to assist the Huron-Wendat in building a closer relationship to the site.