

CREATING TRAILS THROUGH TRADITIONS: AN UPDATE ON THE KASHAYA POMO INTERPRETIVE TRAIL, FORT ROSS STATE HISTORIC PARK

DARREN MODZELEWSKI AND SARA GONZALEZ

In 2003 the Kashaya Pomo Interpretive Trail Project, a collaborative venture between UC Berkeley Researchers, the Kashaya Pomo Tribe, and California State Parks, began planning for the creation of an interpretive trail at Fort Ross State Historic Park in Jenner. This paper will provide an overview of the trail's development thus far. We will examine the operation of an ethnographic and archaeological field school, describe the construction of a companion website, and provide potential solutions for issues surrounding on-site interpretation, working with multiple stakeholders, and making undergraduate students vital components of a research program.

Two years ago, in a session entitled "Beyond the Site Report: Creating Public Interpretive Programs," Kent Lightfoot, Otis Parrish, Roberta Jewett, Dan Murley, Tsim Schneider, and the authors presented the Society with the challenges of creating a public interpretive trail within Fort Ross State Historic Park. Kent, Otis, and Roberta highlighted two of our key concerns. First, how do we present to the public interpretations of Kashaya culture, history, and interactions with a variety of colonists? Second, how do we reap the benefits of on-site interpretation while minimizing damage to archaeological resources that would be exposed by an interpretive trail? Sara discussed the potential of paralleling the physical trail with a virtual one, in the form of a website, Tsim and Darren focused on potential methods for presenting interpretive content, and Dan discussed the then-current focus of the Fort's interpretive program. All of us shared a common desire, to take visitors beyond the stockade walls and ask them to listen to the muted voices of Fort Ross's native inhabitants.

The park contains Kashaya Pomo ancestral sites dating back 6,000–8,000 years (Lightfoot et al. 1991). This provides a wonderful opportunity to present Kashaya history and culture. To do this, we proposed that the trail be segmented into two loops: an East and a West loop. The East Loop will wind around the stockade, highlighting the colony's ethnic neighborhoods and associated archaeological sites, and the West Loop will take visitors onto the coastal terrace and focus on the Kashaya Pomo's complex history and culture within the region. In this paper we will update you on the current status of the Kashaya Pomo Interpretive Trail. We will highlight two field methods used to explore the West Loop of the trail, some key components of camp life, elements of consultation, and the potentials for virtual interpretation, and will conclude by underscoring some ongoing concerns and future trajectories.

To begin the process of building an interpretive trail, Kent originally planned the Kashaya Pomo Interpretive Trail Field School for the summer of 2003. Due to some health issues among the senior staff, it was postponed. Because of this, we enrolled them in a rigorous fitness program comprised of functional exercises, and thankfully by

2004 everyone was fit as a fiddle and ready for action. We served, along with Tsim and Lee, as Graduate Student Instructors for the field school.

As many of you are aware, for more than 15 years the Fort Ross Archaeological Project (FRAP), jointly run by UC Berkeley, CA State Parks and the Kashaya Pomo Tribe, has investigated the impacts of mercantile colonial encounters on Fort Ross's Native inhabitants (Lightfoot et al. 1991; 1997). Fueling the research agenda is the reciprocal collaborative relationship with the Kashaya Pomo Tribe; the interpretive trail project continued in this vein. The trail's primary goal was and is to present Kashaya perspectives on heritage; therefore, consultations with the community were vital for developing themes and interpretive content. In addition, consultations aided us in identifying appropriate archaeological sites for public interpretation and in creating an atmosphere of mutual respect wherein all project participants could freely communicate with one another.

Creating an archaeological interpretive trail that uses on-site interpretation is tricky business (Heath 1997; Jameson and Hunt 1999; Kwas 2000; McManamon 1994; Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996; Molyneux 1994; Potter 1997). It threatens archaeological resources, but at the same time it creates new opportunities for the public to engage with the archaeological record. This meant re-locating known sites, as well as identifying new ones that were within the trail's visitor impact zone. We conducted an intensive surface pedestrian survey covering 25 meters on either side of the proposed trail route. We felt that this swath was adequate to identify potentially endangered sites. The sites we located consisted of dispersed lithic scatters, shell middens, and petroglyphs.

Once we completed the survey, we returned to the sites, mapped them, and collected surface artifacts. For previously recorded sites with California trinomial numbers we filed an Archaeological Site Condition Assessment Record (ASCAR) with the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Monitoring in this manner provides us with a baseline of information from which to assess the impact on archaeological sites from the trail, as well as from ranching within the park.

The vegetation is extremely dense on the coastal terrace, making it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to define site boundaries and do surface collection. Because of this, and in consultation with State Parks and the Kashaya Pomo, we decided to use surface test units. These were 1-x-1-m units selected randomly within larger 5-x-5-m sample units. Within each test unit crews literally peeled back the sod and collected artifacts to a maximum depth of 7–10 cm, depending on the thickness of the root mat. Artifacts collected in this manner will later be returned to their original unit provenience once they have been analyzed.

Dubbed the ‘catch-and-release strategy’ (Schneider 2005), this method poses many benefits to the Kashaya, the project, and State Parks. For the Kashaya, excavating and disturbing ancestral sites creates a variety of ethical and spiritual challenges. In previous work with the Tribe, surface collection units proved highly successful from their point of view. The earth sustained minimal scarring in this process, and the artifacts are being respected by being returned to their intended places. From an archaeological perspective, we are able to get what we feel is a representative sample, allowing us to better define site boundaries. While surface test units do disturb a site, they do not affect the integrity of it. The top 10–15 cm at sites along the coastal terrace are continually disturbed by a host of rodents, cattle, and root systems. Taking artifacts from the first 7–10 cm and ‘releasing’ them back into their original unit provenience thus poses little threat to site context. In terms of State Parks, their collections facilities are overloaded and the cost of curation is prohibitive. The ‘catch-and-release’ strategy is a way for us to avoid overburdening their collections system, while gaining enough information about site contents to effectively manage cultural resources. The artifacts are still being analyzed, and we will closely study the effect of this new technique, both for preserving site context and for studying the effects of tourism from on-site interpretation.

The second component to the field school was ethnographic. Undergraduates not only participated in field work, but were closely involved in interviewing elders, developing interpretive content, and leading public tours of the trail. One of our initial concerns with running the field school in this manner was how undergraduates and elders would react within this unique setting. Rarely are undergraduates so involved in a collaborative project of this nature (Watkins 2000). Seasoned researchers who have developed a long-standing and familiar relationship with tribal members typically conduct consultations. Because of our unique circumstances, we had to create an environment where students and elders felt comfortable with each other.

Never have kitchens played such an integral role in a field school! Violet Chappell and Vivian Wilder, our principal consultants, served as our camp cooks. While the role of the camp cook is often underappreciated, for Kashaya women cooking for large groups of people is an honor. Giving Violet and Vivian this role recognized their status and knowledge. To help the students get to know Violet and Vivian, each crew rotated through the kitchen and helped them cook. The sharing of work and food created an atmosphere of respect and friendship among the collaborators. This helped break down potential communication boundaries between Violet and Vivian and project

participants during subsequent consultations. In addition, many tribal members dined nightly with the camp. For many of the undergrads, this was the first time that they had met Indian people. This environment provided students with an opportunity learn about what tribal members thought about archaeology, the trail, Fort Ross, and what it means to be a tribal member today.

Camp life was remarkably different from most field schools in two other ways: First, students were asked to abstain from alcohol when elders were in camp and on the days of their consults, and second, *khela* rules were followed by women and their partners. For the Kashaya things of the earth and things of the spirit should not mix. Women on their menstrual periods are considered of the earth and therefore restricted from anything of the spirit including handling food, visiting sacred places, and participating in ceremonies. In camp this translated to *khela* women (i.e., menstruating women) not serving or preparing food, working on archaeological sites (themselves considered sacred) or participating in consultations (also considered a sacred act). Abstaining from alcohol provided a similar function and together with *khela* rules fulfilled our obligations to the Kashaya and ensured the safety of elders involved in the project. Though this created some tensions, the end result was a positive experience for those involved, and the undergraduates overwhelmingly appreciated the opportunity to learn from elders.

After the field school our focus was to organize all of the data we collected so that they were accessible for interpretation and easily transferred to the Tribe for their use. Sara and Darren have been working on this task as well as developing a website. Sara proposed that the website supplement the interpretive trail. While this remains the ultimate goal, an additional purpose of the website is to use it as a vehicle to test the interpretive content and trail structure before actual construction begins. Currently, the website is under review by the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Kashaya Pomo Tribe, and it is hoped that the first edition will be launched in the Fall of 2006. This first edition is designed to be accessible to a broader audience and as such has limited interactive content (i.e. video, complex animations, plug-ins such as Flash or Java). Later, an enhanced version of the website will give visitors greater access to primary source materials including audio and video recordings of consultations, movies on Kashaya oral histories, and interactive images of historic documents. Although there is nothing like 20-knot winds blowing sand in your face, the website is an alternative pathway for experiencing Fort Ross’s and the Kashaya’s heritage.

Virtual interpretation poses new opportunities to educate the public about archaeology (Addison 2000; Pletinckx et al. 2000; Refsland et al. 2000; Stone and Ojika 2000). Working with the Kashaya raised a new set of concerns that the archaeological project had not previously considered and became one of the driving forces for the website. All Kashaya sites are considered sacred, and the Tribe wishes to protect them. Their destruction in any form impacts the Tribe today, not just in destroying its heritage, but in its spiritual well being. Archaeologists may quickly dismiss these kinds of spiritual concerns, but they form the heart of the Kashaya’s and ultimately our concerns. This collaborative

project has functioned because Kashaya beliefs and needs are placed at the center of its goals and practices. To disregard or dismiss their importance to the Tribe is in opposition to the spirit of the project. For this reason sites that have been deemed sacred will not be interpreted or revealed.

Collaboration brought to the fore the need to portray Kashaya culture as part of a contemporary tradition. The theme of Living Heritage, Living Land has been selected to convey this message. We have been careful to depict the coastal terrace as a peopled landscape, a place of gathering, learning and living. We don't focus solely upon hunting and gathering in the past and present, because these activities are only part of who the Kashaya are. Trail stops combine archaeological information with oral histories and traditions to explain the broader context in which the Kashaya's use of the terrace occurred. Throughout the trail we link tradition to the present by discussing dislocation from ancestral territory, restrictions on visiting sacred sites and collecting traditional foods, as well as the Tribe as a contemporary political entity.

We've made considerable progress over the past two years, but we're still working out some of the logistics of implementing the trail. We are considering the pros and cons of the catch-and-release strategy, implementing a post and pamphlet architecture as opposed to interpretative sign boards, and evaluating the impact of the trail upon archaeological resources. We caution that close consideration is needed before programs like this are implemented elsewhere. It is clear that the success of these kinds of programs is driven by details. At Fort Ross, there is a long history of public interpretation, and implementing a project such as this makes sense. This is not the case everywhere. But we maintain that the larger lessons are applicable in other contexts. Presenting sites to the public demands close collaboration with multiple stakeholders, the flexibility to 'go with the flow', a willingness to relinquish some control of the project, and a keen awareness of the political implications of archaeological actions. We are confident that the 2007 field school, which will focus on the exterior of the North Wall of the Fort and on developing the East Loop of the Kashaya Pomo Interpretive Trail, will be similarly successful. The success of the Interpretive Trail continues to be built upon our ability to listen and learn from long-standing traditions as well as to develop new ones.

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