March 2021 Newsletter Vol. 11, Issue 1

# Indigenous heritage

Passed to Present

The Alliance For Heritage Conservation

THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

## Please Welcome Alliance's Newest Board Members!

**Diane Slocum**, our new Inherit Program Director, is an Anthropology Ph.D. student at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her primary research interest is community-engaged archaeology in Yucatán, Mexico. In the Spring of 2018, she completed an M.A. in the Anthropology program at Northern Arizona University where she gained experience working as an archaeologist in Belize, Central America. Prior to beginning the M.A. program, her archaeological knowledge focused on the American Southwest where she worked in cultural resources management. Her extensive fieldwork informs her belief in the importance of opening lines of communication between archaeologists and local communities. Practicing archaeology in the U.S. instilled in her an ethical concern about how archaeologists interact with local and Indigenous communities that extends beyond the confines of legal mandates.

**Nancy Strickland Fields'** 18-year museum career has been focused in museum education and administration. She has worked at the Museum of Contemporary Native Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico; The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.; and The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum in Oklahoma City. Her current role is Director and Curator of The Museum of the Southeast American Indian at UNC in Pembroke, North Carolina. She is the first Lumbee graduate of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Museum Studies. Nancy earned a master's degree in History from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and is currently a doctoral student in the Public History program at North Carolina State University.

**Khristin Montes** (also "Landry-Montes") is a broadly trained art historian with an extensive background in anthropology, archaeology, and museums studies. Her specific areas of research interest include ancestral Maya art and architecture as well as the use of sacred landscapes in the region of Yucatán, Mexico. Dr. Montes is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Art and Art History at Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa. Khristin has served as an affiliated researcher with InHerit and was the Project Facilitator for InHerit's "Cultural Heritage, Ecology, and Conservation of Yucatec Cenotes Project" in Yucatán, Mexico. Much of Khristin's work as an art historian and researcher with InHerit is inspired by contemporary Native communities, her Maya colleagues and friends, as well as her own family who originally came to the U.S. as farm laborers and migrant workers from Zacatecas, Mex-

ico. Khristin holds dual M.A.s in art history and anthropology from Northern Illinois University along with a concentration in Latin American Studies and certification in Museum Studies from that institution. She received her Ph.D. in art history in 2018 from the Department of Art History at the University of Illinois Chicago.

## Departing Board Members Stay Engaged with Heritage Issues

**Dylan Clark** is now Assistant State Archaeologist for the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology's Western Office in Asheville, North Carolina. He continues working with Indigenous peoples, collaborating with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Cherokee Nation, United Keetowah Band, and Catawba Indian Nation on projects in western NC. He also continues to assist with public and community archaeology in the Asheville area and, of course, frequently consults with InHerit in his role as Adjunct Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Chapel Hill.

**Sarah Rowe** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). She continues to engage in research related to critical cultural heritage issues and collaborative community research and is currently developing a program in Heritage Studies at UTRGV.

Thank you, Dylan and Sarah, for the brilliant ideas and energy that you brought to InHerit programs. We wish you the very best.

# InHerit and Museum of the Southeast American Indian Collaboration Kicks Off Curriculum Development

**By Nancy Fields & Alisha Locklear Monroe**

*March 2020 visit to Research Labs of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to inspire ideas for incorporating object-based learning.*

InHerit and the Museum of the Southeast American Indian (MSAI) at the University of North Carolina (UNC)-Pembroke continue their efforts to develop educational resources for K-12 teachers that contribute to reshaping dominant cultural narratives and amplifying Native voices in North Carolina history. We have brought together a cohort of educators who will develop a curriculum comprised of dynamic lesson plans that employ museum education and classroom teaching. Our project aims to tell a rich narrative of Native people in North Carolina from 1491-1830. To tell this history, we will use maps, archaeology, archives, text, and tribal oral history to create a dynamic K-12 curriculum.

Our current focus is on researching content for the curriculum. To kick off this portion of the project, collaborators from the MSAI visited the Research Labs of Archaeology at UNC-Chapel Hill to identify artifacts that may be used to meet object-based learning objectives. Future plans for providing teachers access to content material include field trips to Charleston, South Carolina; Town Creek Indian Mound, North

Carolina State Historic Site; and the Research Labs of Archaeology at UNC. These visits, along with books, articles, and talks provided by subject experts will inform the cohort of educators as they synthesize content for the curriculum. The cohort will host a Teacher Institute in the summer of 2022 where they, along with the rest of the team, will present on curriculum, museum education initiatives, and other content that could be implemented in the classroom. The final goal is to have the North Carolina School System adapt the curriculum as an off-the-shelf product.

## The Yucatec Cenotes Project—it's a wrap (nearly)!

### By Patricia A. McAnany & Khristin Montes

Although the pilot phase of the Cultural Heritage, Ecology, and Conservation of Yucatec Cenotes Project wrapped up in the winter of 2019 (see InHerit Newsletter Vol. 10, Issue 1), we are now finalizing and printing the Cenotes teacher workbooks and analyzing surveys completed by middle school participants in the eight towns and middle schools with which InHerit and UNO collaborated. As a bit of background regarding the surveys: in 2018, questionnaires were distributed to middle school students to assess what they knew about cenotes before the project began. After our pilot project in Yucatan culminated, we asked the same students to complete a post-survey. Questions on the later survey included the following:

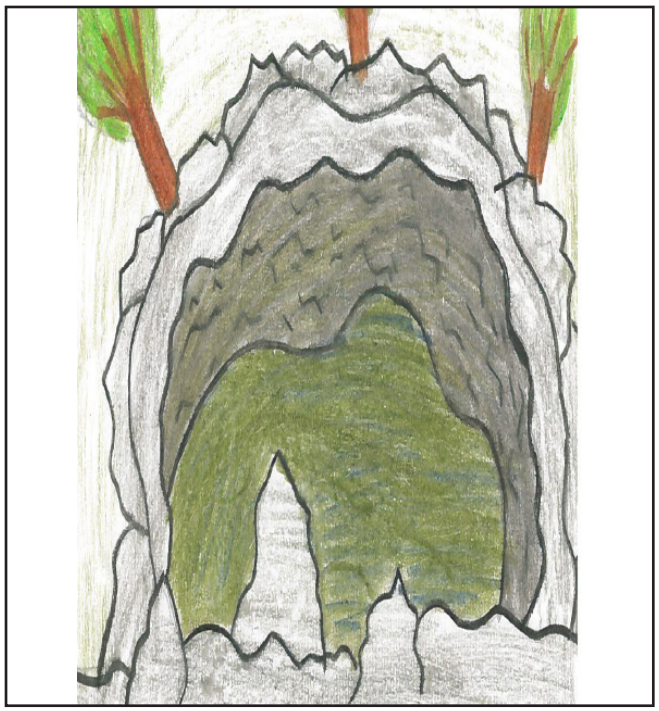
*Have you visited the cenotes in your community?*

*Do you think the cenotes in your community are clean or contaminated?*

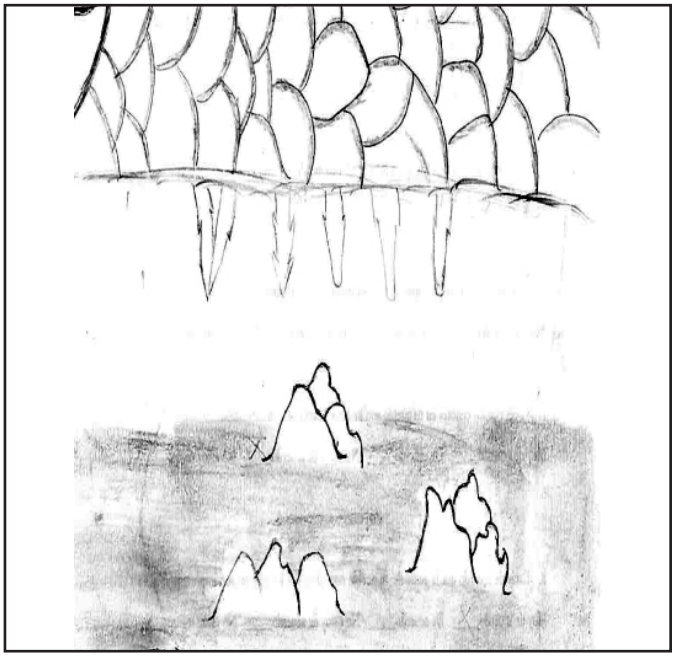
*Do you know if cenotes were significant to the ancient Maya who lived here before Spaniards arrived?*

What are some of the stories told in your com*munity about cenotes?*

On the survey distributed before the pilot project began in the classroom, we asked students to describe or draw what cenotes meant to them. Turns out, we have some amazing artists! We share a few of the student representations of cenotes here.



*Cenote in the town of Kaua, Yucatan, Mexico. Middle school student drawing, preliminary survey, summer 2018.*



*Cenote in the town of Cuncunul, Yucatan, Mexico. Middle school student drawing, preliminary survey, summer 2018.*

*Cenote in the town of Tahcabo, Yucatan, Mexico. Middle school student drawing, preliminary survey, summer 2018.*

When the pilot project was completed in Yucatan, the surveys (before and after) still needed to be analyzed. Dr. Montes, Assistant Professor of Art History at Cornell College and Affiliated Researcher with InHerit is guiding the analysis of the questionnaires. Four undergraduate students at Cornell College are helping to code, translate, and digitize survey answers and illustrations. Art History and Anthropology double major Maryellen Hinken and Art History major Ariana Ramirez have functioned as student leaders for the project and are working alongside Archaeology student Fredy Portillo (originally from the Maya town of Copan in Honduras), and Art History and Computer Science double major Armani Rogers. Ms. Hinken was especially influential in helping to design the Google Form and datasheets that the team is using for data entry. The overall process has included coding all surveys with an ID number that designates the survey's town, defining themes related to answers in both the preliminary and post surveys, entering these data into a Google Form linked to a searchable Excel Spreadsheet, uploading scans of student drawings, and searching for data trends.

Dr. Montes is already seeing some very valuable stories emerge from the data. She states, *"It's clear that the Cenotes project is having an impact. Middle school students from every town knew more about the cultural significance and scientific background of cenotes after our project finished than they had before. This is already evident from the findings. What's more, students are now clearly more engaged with how they are coming to know this information and what they can do to protect their cenotes and cultural heritage in the future. As an art historian, I was of course so pleased to see how much the students appreciated learning about cenotes in the codices, precious books of prophecy and religion written and illustrated by their ancestors in the centuries before the Spanish arrival. As someone with an anthropology and archaeology background, it was wonderful to capture some of the oral stories the students told us about in the surveys and it's been incredibly exciting to chart trends between towns (oftentimes seeing links to the ancestral Maya past). It's also been enjoyable for me as an educator to read about the activities the students enjoyed the most. At the top of the list was water quality testing, submerging our underwater drone, and making their version of a codex. Every student surveyed had brilliant ideas for how to protect this heritage going forward, and that was really one of our main goals as a team."*

Montes and her team are set to finish inputting and interpreting data this month, after which point more information will be shared. For now, we leave you with the following sentiment expressed in 2018 by a middle-school participant from Xocen, Yucatán: *"For me, the cenotes are a fundamental part of life here and an important aspect of being human...being alive."*

Look for more on survey results and how teachers integrate the workbooks into their teaching curriculum in future newsletters!

## Interested in Supporting InHerit's Projects and Mission?

Please consider making a personal donation to support our current projects, such as our collaboration with the Museum of the Southeast American Indian. Remember that even a small contribution of $10-$20 will help make our projects sustainable and boost the quality of the activities and outcomes that grow out of our partnerships with Indigenous communities. A full 100% of your donations will go toward supporting our mission to work together to unearth hidden histories, document and share untold stories, and conserve the material remains of the past to empower people to reshape cultural narratives and affect positive social change. Donating is easy! Simply click on one of our donation buttons at http://in-herit.org or our InHerit Facebook page. Or, send us an email at inherit.p2p.email@gmail.com and let us know what programs you would like to support. Your generous donations to our 501(c)(3) partner, the Alliance for Heritage Conservation, are tax-deductible. You can also support InHerit by doing your Amazon shopping through AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to your selected charity. All you have to do is follow this link (or insert https://smile.amazon.com into your browser) and select Alliance for Heritage Conservation as the non-profit you are supporting. Then, shop till you drop! Thank you for your unwaivering support!

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**InHerit: Indigenous Heritage Passed to Present** is a UNC-Chapel Hill program administered by the Research Labs of Archaeology and the Department of Anthropology. The Alliance for Heritage Conservation is a registered 501(c)3.

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