

SSHRC Explore Final Report

Lamoureux-St-Hilaire - #103281

Slow Archaeology and Community Engagement in Dolores, Guatemala

1.1 Project Summary

This first anthropological phase of a slow archaeology program aims at crafting a collaborative research project with the heritage community of Dolores, Guatemala. This ethnographic study of Dolores archaeological professionals seeks to: (1) Document the community's rich history of involvement with the field of archaeology; (2) Critically examine its relationship with academic archaeology; and (3) Explore its interest in developing a local archaeological project.

1.2 Project Outcomes and Impacts

During the 2023 summer season of the Dolores Slow Archaeology Program, my colleague Ruben Morales Forte and I interviewed 20 archaeological professionals from Dolores, Peten, Guatemala. We had originally hoped to conduct 10 interviews, and this number is reflective of the amazing welcome we received from our research community and how enthusiastic they were about the project. The interviews were organized around the three planned investigation themes of (1) Personal history with archaeology, (2) Relations with academic archaeology, and (3) The archaeological heritage of Dolores. Most interviews were done in the town archaeology museum, with a few conducted at our hotel and two at local archaeological sites (Ixtonton and Ixkun). 19 of the 20 interviews were filmed, while one was audio-recorded. We have great video footage with excellent audio footage. All 20 interviews went very well, and we've already accumulated valuable data. We now have a much better understanding of the scope of experience of the grassroots archaeologists of Dolores. It appears that every single interviewee loves to work on archaeological projects and highly values his relation with academic archaeologists. In particular, the pivotal influence of the deceased archaeologist Juan Pedro Laporte on the research community is now better understood and contextualized. Finally, we now have a better idea of what archaeological project the research community would like to see developed in the area. The community is eager to see us back, and we already have several contacts who want to be interviewed in the future. We are excited to return to Dolores for at least one more ethnographic season to help us develop our community-based participatory archaeological research program. We are currently finishing a first publication on this work and will be preparing a formal report over the course of the academic year to be presented in Dolores. This community presentation will feature some of the video footage.

2.1 Use of Awards Funds

As planned and reported in Chrome River, the funds were used to pay for transport (air and land), lodging (in transit and Dolores), food (as per diem and a few business meals), equipment (minimal), and for disbursing as token monetary amounts to our interviewees.

2.2 Additional Outcomes/Research Issues

N/A

2.3 Dissemination of Project

We will be communicating our results at two major conferences this academic year: the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology and the American Anthropological Association. I will also give one or two talks here at MRU. We have one publication in its final stages of preparation for the Canadian Journal of Archaeology entitled "Slowing Down the Archaeological Process in Dolores, Petén, Guatemala." We will be studying and summarizing the results of our study over the academic year. This includes working on the audio-visual materials we collected. These data and media will be used to prepare a community-oriented presentation for the people of Dolores, to be presented next summer.

2.4 Future Research Plans

This was the first ethnographic season of the Phase 1 of the Dolores Slow Archaeology Program. There will be at least one more, if not two more, ethnographic seasons. These constitute the initial community engagement and consultation phase of the program. Next, we will design a program of archaeological investigation in collaboration with the research community. We hope to be able to launch this collaborative archaeological project by 2026.