Gaining the Attention of Youth in Heritage Research and Preservation - Integrating Anthropology, Education, and Technology

Margaret M. Allsopp

Abstract

This poster explores the possibilities that new technologies have for engaging youth in heritage research and preservation. Examples from several heritage preservation projects serve as a context. A central theme is an interdisciplinary approach that includes community stakeholders, anthropologists, educators, technology specialists, and the National Park Service. Technologies such as podcasts, iTunes, and other digital media were used to engage youth elders and other community members to create, share, and disseminate historical information about their communities. The potential benefits of this highly participatory process will be discussed.

Objectives

• Partner with the Sulphur Springs Museum and Heritage Center in Tampa, Florida and the National Park Service in Nicodemus, Kansas.
• Work with descendant families and other stakeholder groups
• Engage youth and elders in collaborative discussion
• Train, mentor, and incorporate student researchers and participants
• Engage community participation in cultural heritage preservation efforts for public presentation, interpretation and access
• Explore the use of multimedia tools and technology as a means of documenting history and/or preserving heritage
• Share artifacts that have historical meaning and value about the community for participants
• Acquire relevant artifact/materials for inclusion in museum

Methodology

• Sulphur Springs, Tampa FL -- Graduate student mentor for Heritage Research USF Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Summer 2010
• Nicodemus, Kansas - Research conducted as part of a National Park Service grant under the direction of Dr. Antoinette Jackson to support the community of Nicodemus in collecting and preserving its history and heritage (Summer 2011)
• Participant Observation
• Oral History interviews
• Photo elicitation

Results

• Historical “Silences” (Trouillot 1995)
• Database of oral history interviews (audio, video and transcribed notes)
• Photo archive
• Podcasts
• Reports documenting findings
• Public presentation of findings to output to community and professional organizations
• “Podcasting and iTunes U provides multiple pathways to create, disseminate and access grassroots content”

Conclusions

• Podcasts on iPod, MPR players, cell phones foster great possibilities for flexible learning for youth and adults
• Podcasting and iTunes U provides multiple pathways to create, disseminate and access grassroots content
• Adding their own memories and thoughts to photos and video exhibited online prompted community members to use new technologies

Portable, affordable technologies are tools to bridge gaps between youth and history, providing avenues for youth to assess the past, self-reflect and create “new stories” and raise the volume on the narratives of people who have been silenced due to issues of representation, access, identity, race, gender, and socio-economic disparities.

Acknowledgements

• Heritage Research USF Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Summer 2010, Sulphur Springs, Tampa FL
• Sulphur Springs Museum and Heritage Center
• Norma and Joseph Robinson
• Local community residents, Sulphur Springs, Tampa FL
• Descendant families and local community residents and businesses Nicodemus, KS (Summer 2011)
• NPS Nicodemus Historic Site (J6068090024-H50000085095)
• University of South Florida (Department of Anthropology Heritage Research Lab; College of Education; Office of Undergraduate Research; Office of Sponsored Research)
• Antoinette Jackson, Ph.D., Director, USF Heritage Research Lab

Figures

1. Nicodemus descendant Joette Niews at family Homestead.
2. Nicodemus descendants Florence Howard and Bertha Moore Carter at remains of family Homestead.
3. Margaret Allsopp assisting Nicodemus descendants create a podcast.
4. Nicodemus descendants, youth and community members participate in podcasting workshop at local library.
5. Sulphur Springs elders Willie Streeter and Earl Olyphi sharing memories of community at the Sulphur Springs Museum and Heritage Center. Photo courtesy: Mr. Willie Streeter.
6. Dillard Elementary School, Spring Hill, FL. Photo courtesy: Mr. Willie Streeter.
7. Spring Hill home torn down by interstate and urban renewal. Photo courtesy: Mr. Willie Streeter.
8. Mr. Streeter shares personal artifacts with teen from Sulphur Springs.
9. Female youth explains why she chose to participate in sharing sessions with elders.
10. Youth participants.
11. Youth participants wrote emotions, thoughts, themes about dialogue with elders.