

Southeast Region
Cultural Resources Division
Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology
Program Management

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Connecting Parks, People and Associated Communities

**Recognizing people and communities as key cultural
resources in all park initiatives.**

Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography Program

WHAT WE DO:

The ethnography program conducts several kinds of research to comply with the National Park Service policies and federal mandates. The goal is to inform park planning, management, preservation, and interpretation initiatives.

- Research and documentation in the parks by providing baseline research and identifying *Traditionally Associated Peoples* (TAPS) and resources that have cultural significance to the park. To tell the whole story through studies like:
 - Ethnographic Overview and Assessments
 - Traditional Use Studies
 - Ethnohistorical Studies
 - Rapid Ethnographic Overview & Assessments
 - Cultural Affiliation Studies
 - NAGPRA Consultations

Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography Program

WHAT WE DO:

- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Program (NAGPRA) consultations and consultation planning*
- American Indian Liaison: Assist parks in maintaining effective government-to-government relationships with federally recognized Indian tribes according to federal Indian laws and policies (tribal sovereignty) and NPS policy.
- Technical Assistance with relationship management, communication and engagement with other Associated Communities

Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography Program

WHAT WE DO:

The goal of the ethnography program is to inform park planning, management, preservation, and interpretation initiatives.

We are interested in working both within the Cultural Resources Division (CRD) in the Southeast Region and beyond to collaborate and consult with other programs and communities with cultural anthropology and ethnographic program/product needs.

Key Partnerships/Target Programs and Initiatives:

- NAGPRA –Consultation Coordination with American Indian Tribes, SE Region
- Interpretation and Education—Youth and Heritage Technologies/Youth training initiatives and Comprehensive Interpretive Planning/GMP-Virgin Islands and Congaree NP
- Natural Resources Division -- Climate Change as it impacts Gullah Geechee communities and the Gullah Geechee National Heritage Area Corridor
- Partnerships Division -- Call to Action, History Lesson initiative
- Inventory & Monitoring Program—Timucuan Preserve/Kingsley Plantation; SFCN

Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography

What is Culture? What is Anthropology? What is ethnography?

- Culture refers to the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior
- Anthropology is the study of human diversity. Emphasis is placed on cross-cultural perspectives and taking a holistic approach to understanding the human conditions spanning time and place.
- Ethnography is the work of describing a culture

Ethnography as a way of Seeing

- **“The important question is not whether ethnography is feasible in a particular instance but whether and how cultural interpretation might enhance understanding of the topic or problem under investigation”**—*Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*
by: Harry F. Wolcott (2008:73)

Ethnography as a way of Seeing

- **“To me ethnography entails *both* the way we study culture and the interpretive framework that ethnographers impose on what they study. I do not set out to “observe” culture, but I do take responsibility for making culture explicit in whatever I observe, because that is how ethnographers make sense of what they see”** —*Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* by: Harry F. Wolcott (2008:81)

Transmitting culture

- Culture is Learned
- Culture is Shared
- Culture is Symbolic
- Culture is Integrated (consists of systems of: knowing; administering; organizing; governing; allocating/protecting resources; and distributing wealth)
- Culture is all encompassing

-see: *Mirror for Humanity: A Concise Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (by: C. Kottak)

Ethnographic Research Methods/Ethics

– Ethnography as a Way of Looking

- All the ways of one may direct attention while in the field (fieldwork/working in community and away from the office)
- Multiple techniques/”multi-instrument” approach
- Participant Observation-interviewing-archival research
- Experiencing-Enquiring-Examining
- Examining data about the everyday acts and actions of people; uncovering intimate knowledge about people in material records (diaries, photographs, letters, oral histories, artifacts, museum collections, buildings) and cultural/natural landscapes

—**see:** *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* by: Harry F. Wolcott (2008)

Ethnographic Research Methods/Ethics

Applying Ethnography

When, where, and by whom should ethnography be used:

- Appropriate for some but not all settings
- Can be conducted in almost any setting
- Calls for extended commitment; involvement on-site and in community; flexibility; respect for time/needs of participants

Ethnography Used to:

- Bring clarity to a problem/define a problem (such as early stages of research; when something new has been introduced; when there are contested resources/multiple interests)
- Address/inform complex problems
- Better understand an existing problem/program/institution/situation

Ethnographic Research Methods/Ethics

- Learn culture by observing people and making inferences
 - From what people say (how they talk-- words usage and meanings)
 - From the way they act (rituals, traditions, daily activities)
 - From material culture and artifacts that people use
 - From the way people engage with the natural resources or have engaged with the land, natural resources, and changing environmental conditions historically/traditionally

Ethnographic Research Methods/Ethics

- Ethnography is the act of describing culture.
 - Goal: understand another way of life from that group's point of view
 - Goal: assume an attitude of ignorance...you are there to learn
 - Goal: to understand how someone else or some other group constructs their world
 - Language is a primary key (need to know what words/actions/gestures/silence means in another setting actions)

See: The Ethnographic Interview, by: Spradley (1979)

Why ethnography

■ Anthropology/ethnography:

- Describe similarities and differences between cultural groups (i.e., a comparative approach/cross-cultural analysis).
- Recognize that we are all culture bound...we have a specific way of seeing the world which we take for granted.
 - We are infused with knowledge through educational systems; family structures; peer group interactions; ...
 - Even scientists, historians; doctors or other so called objective professionals or professional approaches are steeped in cultural assumptions and perspectives.

■ Ethnography offers a way of incorporating and describing other cultural systems or ways of seeing in relation to our own.