

Introduction and Background

This exploratory project examines Native American perspectives on archeology and its practices such as survey, excavation and limited collection methods on Indigenous lands. Through informal conversations with family and freinds, it explores how cultural values and lived experiences shape views on archeology and excavation compared to non-invasive approaches. It focuses on hearing from everyday Indigenous community members whose voices might be overlooked in academic research.

The project grew from my summer field experience with the GRSLE program, which practices "catch-and-release" archaeology, a limited collection method, that studies sites through surface level documentation rather than disturbance. Inspired by that approach, I began informal conversations with 10 Indigenous family members and friends to learn how people outside traditional archaeology view these practices.

These open discussions revealed how native americans view archaeology and helped shape the survey questions featured in this poster. These insights form the foundation for future research aimed to developing ethical, community-guided methods and building stronger collaboration and trust between archaeologists and Indigenous communities.

The Importance Why This Topic Matters.

Community Understanding

Native communities should know how archaeology can protect their history and offer cultural and educational benefits.

Collaboration

Archaeology must follow Indigenous guidance, respecting cultural values and traditions in every stage of research.

Knowledge Return

Research results maps, reports, and digital archives should always be shared back with the community to support cultural preservation and local use.

Rebuilding Trust

Past practices have damaged relationships between archaeologists and Indigenous communities. Rebuilding trust means leading with respect, openness, and shared understanding.

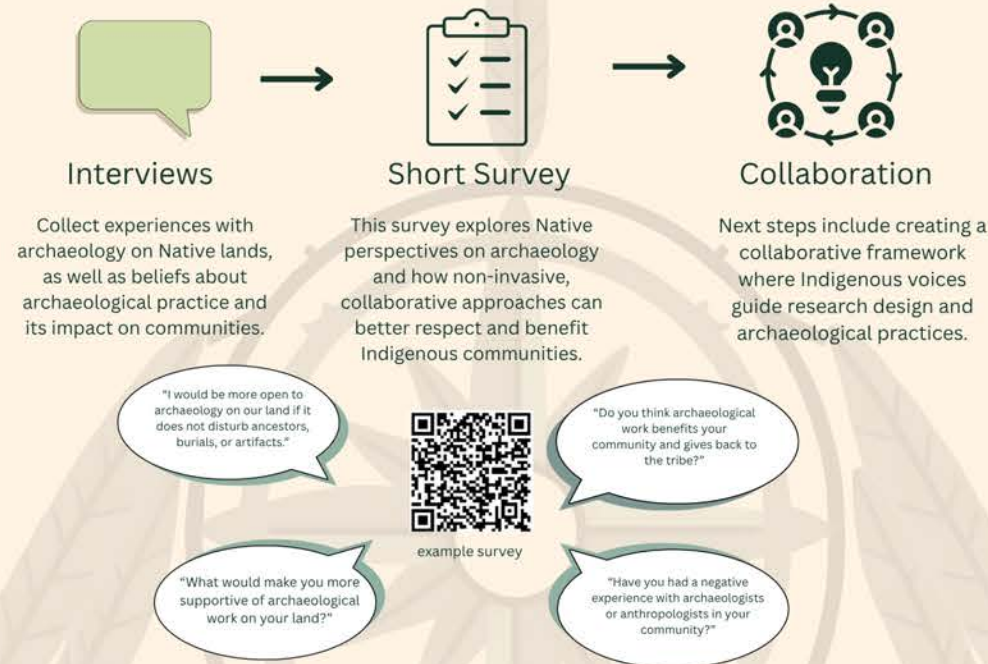
Future Opportunities

Surface archaeology and non-invasive methods open the door to learning more about Native history without disturbing sacred ground. These approaches create space for ethical research, collaboration, and deeper understanding of the past.



Download my poster here!

Framework for Community-Centered Research



Early Exploratory Findings: Shared Ideas Across Conversations

Broad ideas that emerged from open conversations with family and friends about archaeology .

Younger Generation

- Only Indigenous people should study Indigenous lands.
- All data, photos, and findings should remain with the tribe.
- Younger participants emphasized Indigenous leadership and control.
- They demand that archaeologists listen and follow community guidance.

Across generations

- Voiced anger and frustration toward archaeologists who disrespected tribal history and sacred lands.
- Believed catch-and-release archaeology is the most respectful way to study native American lands.

Older Generation

- Archaeological digging disturbs the dead and sacred ground.
- Believe the past should be left in the past, focus on the living and future.
- Oral storytelling is the true way to preserve history.

Understanding Non-Invasive Archaeology through the GRSLE Method

Catch-and-release archaeology is a non-invasive approach that records and studies archaeological sites without disturbing them. The method focuses on observation, coding and mapping. The method attempts to keep the landscape intact while gaining useful data for further reasech.



GRSLE Field Team (2025) implementing the GRSLE surface archaeology method



Transect the land – walk systematic lines to observe and locate visible artifacts.



Flag artifacts – mark their positions using flags.



Map and code – record artifact data through GIS mapping and field coding.



Remove flags – leave the site and artifacts exactly as found.



This process allows archaeologists to document data, and respect Indigenous values.

Next Steps

This project will expand from informal conversations to formal, IRB-approved research in spring 2026. I plan to conduct structured interviews and surveys with Indigenous participants, community members, educators, artists, and college students from several tribal nations, including the Navajo and Cherokee Nations.

After collecting these perspectives, I will share this information with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) to develop outreach programs that help Indigenous communities recognize the value of archaeology and encourage collaboration between local people and archaeologists. The ultimate goal is to rebuild trust and create lasting, community-driven research grounded in respect and shared knowledge.