When I look back on my life up until this point, I notice that I seem to have been a student forever and that the chapters of my life are all marked by a particular teacher who made all the difference to me at that stage in my life. From my high school Latin teacher who encouraged my love of the ancient world, to my archaeology professors now, who have all helped me realize my passion for archaeology and what I need to be doing “when I grow up,” each one of them and the knowledge they offered up so freely have made an impact on me and helped shape who I am today.

That’s why, when I came to work for Project Archaeology, I was a little nervous to learn of a certain task that they needed help with: teaching fourth graders from a local elementary school in Bozeman about archaeology at an actual tipi ring site in southwestern Montana. Of course, I was excited to spend the day outside, checking out a neat site, but a larger part of me was nervous. Luckily, I was not thrown to the lions without some help (Project Archaeology does have the best resources available for this), but I still wasn’t sure what I was going to be able to accomplish. What could I, just a student myself, say or do that would make a difference?

Regardless of my nerves or reservations in my ability, October 10th came all too soon. I led one of four lessons at the site, teaching for 45 minutes to a group of fifteen 4th graders at a time about stone tool artifacts. I had access to some previously collected tools; crude scrapers and bifacial cutting implements, as well as a core and hammer stone. I used the artifacts along with a worksheet created by Project Archaeology that guided the students to discover for themselves what kind of artifact they were looking at and how it might have been used by the people who called that site home hundreds of years ago.

Although I knew the students were having fun (they were outside with a hands-on learning experience, instead of being in the classroom learning about the past at a distance), at the end of the day, I left wondering how much I was really able to teach them. Did I help them feel a tangible connection to the past, sitting in the same place and holding the same tools that someone else did hundreds of years ago? Or was it just more exciting to be outside? Did they realize how special that experience was, one worth protecting in the future? In short, I left doubting my teaching skills and my ability to implement the message of Project Archaeology—my message, something I passionately believe in.

A week later, I got my answer.

That morning I got to work to find a pile of notes on my desk—thank you notes from every single one of the kids who came out that day. Each and everyone of them said something positive about their experience that day. A few were detailed and personal, making it clear to me that they did get my message and made it their own. Project Archaeology has turned a professional student into a teacher, giving me the opportunity to share my passion with the next generation and the tools to do it successfully.

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Re-Coordinating the Coordinator’s Conference

By Courtney Agenten

Despite a storm that cancelled our conference in 2012 and a government shutdown that threatened to derail our plans for 2013, seventeen coordinators, plus one “Flat Jeanne” persevered to support Project Archaeology at the Coordinators Conference October 14-18, 2013 in Shepherdstown, WV. With no end to the government shutdown in sight, “Plan B” was enacted to address the National Conservation Training Center closure, cancelled guest speakers, inaccessible Smithsonian Museum tours, and five furloughed government employees.

The Project Archaeology network of coordinators sprang into action by being flexible, helpful, supportive, encouraging and creative. Everyone rallied around a new set of goals, leaders emerged to help teach sessions, and we all enjoyed new field trip opportunities.

Joelle Clark (Arizona) delivered guidance and offered a fun idea to hold an open conference session where coordinators could offer topics they would like to discuss. We discussed future visioning for Project Archaeology, regional/national/international collaboration and engaging professional archaeologists and informal audiences.

Also Joelle got us in the PA spirit with a time traveling orientation activity and modeled how to conduct a book discussion as we examined Collaborating at the Trowel’s Edge: Teaching and Learning in Indigenous Archaeology by Stephen W. Stillman.

Who knew such exciting archaeology programs existed just outside Washington D.C. that could also roll out the red carpet for our group on short notice. We had a wonderful time learning about the public archaeology initiative at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum. Ruth Reeder coordinated our visit to the museum organizing two speakers and guiding us through a hands-on archaeology activity geared toward students.

Next we visited Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington. Luke Pecoraro met us at the entrance and took us behind the scenes to the archaeology lab and once we finished our tour of the mansion he gave us a private tour of the onsite archaeological excavation. Our visit was followed by a decadent, historical dining experience at the Mount Vernon Inn complete with costumed wait staff, crab cakes, and wine!

We learned the Get Serve Keep marketing strategy from our marketing coach, Joel Fortner, which will help us reach more teachers with our message of protecting archaeology sites. We have strategies to find, identify, educate, and motivate new teachers while ensuring an incredible experience for teachers who come to a workshop. We hope to foster lifetime relationships with teachers so that they become ambassadors and recommend our materials to others.

As a result of this year’s Coordinators Conference, I am convinced that Project Archaeology is comprised of an incredible group of archaeology educators who have a strong vision for this organization.
Hello Everyone,

The FY2012 annual Reports are coming in apace. Still looking forward to hearing from some of our states—I know you have been busy offering Project Archeology events—we’re anxious to hear about them. December is a good time to start scheduling your professional development events for Spring and Summer 2014, if you haven’t already done so. We can help you add your events to the Web site if you need some assistance. Teachers will start looking for good opportunities soon, so let’s get our events out there!

We have scheduled the 5th Annual Project Archaeology Leadership Academy for June 23-27, 2014. Please help us find “all-star teachers” to attend the academy; when they get home, they can help you with professional development in your state or region.

The annual Project Archaeology Meeting will be held in conjunction with the Society for American Archaeology conference in Austin, Texas. We will meet from 8:30 to 5:00pm at the conference hotel on April 23, 2014. I will send more details as soon as I have them. The agenda has not been completely developed yet, but we continue our conversation about the Common Core State Standards and their impact on archaeology education. We are working hard on a new marketing strategy and will update everyone. Finally, we will examine some interesting new ways to sponsor state and regional programs.

Courtney Agenten, our special projects coordinator, is working on revisions for Project Archaeology: Investigating Food and Culture; thank you for your comments and suggestions. Cali Letts, long-time curriculum writer for Project Archaeology, is working on the next draft of Project Archaeology: Investigating Art and Archaeology. Meghan Dudley, our new student research assistant, corrected and updated all of the investigations on the Web site. She is a dynamo and we are really glad to have her on board. See Meghan’s article on page one.

Have a safe and joyous holiday season.

Jeanne Moe
Jeanne M Moe
BLM Project Archaeology Lead

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Joelle Clark (Arizona) with “Flat Jeanne” at George Washington’s Mount Vernon.
Investigating Garnet: A Historic Mining Town

By Crystal Alegria (Montana)

A few years ago we started our Project Archaeology Place-Based series with Project Archaeology: Investigating Fort Meade. We continued with Changing Land: Changing Life: Archaeology in the Apsáalooke Homeland and we are now excited to announce another place-based curriculum in the works, Project Archaeology Investigating Garnet: A Historic Mining Town.

This curriculum will focus on the “ghost town” of Garnet, MT located an hour from Missoula in the northwest corner of the state. The town of Garnet is a prime example of the many boom and bust mining communities that popped up in Montana during the late 1800s and then went bust in the early 1900s. Many of these towns have left no trace behind, but Garnet survives in a remarkable state of completeness thanks to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Today Garnet boasts two dozen standing buildings and a visitor center that is open from Memorial Day through September. The BLM stabilizes and preserves the remaining buildings and staffs the visitors center throughout the summer. The community has an active Garnet Preservation Association that works in partnership with the BLM. Garnet welcomes 22,000 visitors a year including many school groups from local towns. The ghost town provides a great opportunity to experience history on the ground in the place where it happened.

Investigating Garnet focuses on the history and archaeology of this important place, using the context of Montana’s mining legacy to bring this significant history to students. Much like the previous Project Archaeology Place-Based guides, Investigating Garnet includes in-classroom and on-site lessons that use primary documents such as census records, historic photographs and oral history to tell the story of Garnet. The Final Performance of Understanding reinforces the importance of preserving historic places that hold our history and tell us the stories of our past.

The unit will be complete by the end of 2015, so look for it on the Project Archaeology website!

www.projectarcheology.org
Project Archaeology is an educational program dedicated to teaching scientific and historical inquiry, cultural understanding, and the importance of protecting our nation’s rich cultural resources. We are a national network of archaeologists, educators, and concerned citizens working to make archaeology education accessible to students and teachers nationwide through high-quality educational materials and professional development. Project Archaeology is a joint program of Montana State University and the Bureau of Land Management.

Welcome Meghan Forney!

Please join us in welcoming our newest Project Archaeology team member, Meghan Forney. Meghan is a post-baccalaureate student at Montana State University, getting a second bachelor's degree in anthropology, focusing on archaeology. She hopes to pursue a career as an archaeologist, conducting research on lithic technology in the Great Plains and northern Rocky Mountains. When she’s not busy studying, she enjoys reading and relaxing with her husband.