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Engaging Pacific Islander Veterans and Military Families in Difficult Heritage Discussions

Jennifer F. McKinnon¹ · Anne S. Ticknor² · Anna Froula³

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Abstract

A discussion program that engages Pacific Island veterans and military families in examining the experience of war through humanities sources including conflict heritage was recently undertaken in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The program proposes to assist the community with gaining a meaningful and relevant understanding of war as a shared human experience by exploring their local conflict heritage and assisting in integrating Pacific Islander veterans into a sociocultural position of authority in the history of war in their islands. The program is informed by theoretical and practice-based approaches in Indigenous and community archaeology, is interdisciplinary in design, and provides some consideration for future prospects in engagement with descendant and veteran communities.

Keywords Pacific · Veterans · WWII · Indigenous · Descendant

Introduction

This paper presents a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) discussion program that engages Pacific Island veterans and military families in examining the experience of war through humanities sources including conflict heritage. The authors suggest that in viewing the heritage of past conflicts alongside contemporary veteran experiences as it relates to the shared human experience of war, we might come to understand and interpret conflict heritage as a shared, collective heritage. As such, the program proposes to assist the community with gaining a meaningful and relevant understanding of war as a shared human experience, exploring their local conflict heritage, and assisting in integrating Pacific Islander veterans into a sociocultural position of authority on the history of war in their islands. The program is informed by theoretical and practice-based approaches in Indigenous and community archaeology, is interdisciplinary in design, and

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provides some consideration for future prospects in engagement with Indigenous and veteran communities.

Indigenous and Community-Based Maritime Archaeology

Roberts et al. (2013) published a paper outlining a dearth of Indigenous research and engagement in maritime archaeology and a call for discussion on the matter. In the article, Indigenous archaeology, “archaeology with, for, and by Indigenous peoples” (Nicholas and Andrews 1997: 3), and “Indigenist” research principles (Rigney 2006:42) were combined with maritime archaeology to explore the history of an Indigenous-built and operated vessel, *Narrunga*. Since that time, other archaeologists have called for and addressed Indigenous worldviews, perspectives, and inclusivity in maritime archaeology of descendant heritage (Fowler et al. 2014, 2015, 2016; Fowler and Rigney 2017; McKinnon 2013; McKinnon et al. 2014; Roberts et al. 2014) and colonial heritage (McKinnon 2013, 2017; McKinnon and Carrell 2015). While much of this research has occurred in the post-colonial context of the Australasian and Pacific region, community-based maritime archaeological approaches have benefited from a wider footprint.

Maritime archaeology has, in many ways, engaged communities and the public since its inception. Underwater heritage trails, parks, and preserves are ways in which the interests and involvement of the public have been incorporated into research and interpretation of maritime heritage (McKinnon 2007; McKinnon and Carrell 2015; Philippou and Staniforth 2003; Scott-Ireton 2003). Divers and avocational groups have provided incredibly useful skills, labor, and knowledge of local resources in maritime archaeology and we are still finding new ways to gather large site data sets via the public through crowdsourcing (McCarthy and Benjamin 2018). More recently, community archaeology, based on a set of core ideals and principles with an explicit methodology founded on the idea “that at every step in a project at least partial control remains with the community” (Atalay 2012; Marshall 2002:212; Moser et al. 2002) has been applied to maritime archaeological projects, specifically in the Mariana Islands of the western Pacific (McKinnon et al. 2014; McKinnon and Carrell 2015). Efforts to highlight descendant communities and their own maritime heritage and to also involve them in conversations about conflict heritage of colonial aggressors, requires an Indigenous and community archaeology approach to be meaningful, relevant, and ethical rather than “single stakeholder,” “top-down,” and “marginalizing multivocal” (Hart 2011).

Difficult and Shared Heritage

The archaeology of modern conflict comes with its own set of challenges including incompatible and contested memories, statements from living survivors and witnesses, unresolved grief, dark tourism, human remains, cultural stress, and ethical and political concerns. But as Moshenska (2008:1) has rightly stated, “the controversy inherent in modern conflict archaeology is its greatest strength, because it forces us to take a position of critical self-awareness both as individual practitioners and as a discipline”. This is even more true when working with descendant groups or working with the public on conflict sites. These challenges and critiques force us as practitioners to continually address the ethics and meaning of our research to improve upon our practices.

As this paper presents, the design of modern conflict heritage programs specific to a descendant veteran and military family, with their own intensely personalized experience

with past and contemporary conflicts, creates a unique juxtaposition between understanding past and present struggles. Such a program creates even more ethical minefields, allowing us to further explore the notions of opening old wounds or offering solace; the outcomes need not stand in such opposition to each other (i.e. hurt/heal), but can be fluid, dynamic, and even coexist.

Further, this program provides a platform for exploring notions of conflict heritage as “shared heritage” through common experiences of conflict and war. As Ya’ari (2010:9) states in relation to the Promoting dialogue and cultural Understanding of our Shared Heritage (PUSH) project, “The concept of ‘what is shared’ is at the heart of the conflict/consensus debate, which questions the act of sharing, whether it be of a value or of an attributed value, as embodied in place, and recognizes that within a conflict of interests there can be a consensus allowing the act of sharing to take place.” Like the PUSH project, this project builds on UNESCO’s recommendations to promote dialogue that fosters mutual respect for heritage (Natsheh et al. 2007). Utilizing conflict heritage and the commonality of the experience of war, this program seeks to build a greater understanding, respect, and appreciation for other experiences and is a powerful argument and tool for conflict heritage management and protection, particularly in a post-colonial, descendant context.

Conflict Heritage Discussions through an Interdisciplinary Lens

The program outlined below is designed to be specifically interdisciplinary, drawing upon expertise in archaeology and heritage, education, literacy studies, film studies, humanities, and veteran studies. Designing the discussion program from an interdisciplinary approach bolstered the content and activities by layering the expertise and knowledge from multiple social science fields (Sherif 2017) to more deeply explore the experience of war and conflict as a shared human condition. The Project Directors of *War in the Pacific: Difficult Heritage* include East Carolina University (ECU) faculty Associate Professor Jennifer McKinnon from the History Department’s Maritime Studies Program, Associate Professor Anne Ticknor from the College of Education, and Associate Professor Anna Froula from the English Department’s Film Studies Program. McKinnon’s long-term relationship with the community of Saipan and her research interests in community archaeology and public engagement, conflict heritage, and WWII history provide the foundation for the program and content. Ticknor’s expertise and experience in literacy studies and education enhances the discussion program design in text/genre selections, program activity design, and discussion leader training. Additionally, Ticknor’s research interests focus on identity and learning communities as evidenced in literacy activities such as discussions, written documents, and informal talk. Froula’s body of research on veterans, wars, and their representation in popular culture enriches the preparatory and discussion programs’ approach to reading films and World War II memoirs. Moreover, her work with student veterans at ECU helps bridge the gap between civilians and veterans.

The community Discussion Leaders include Jim Pruitt, an archaeologist at the Saipan Historic Preservation Office (HPO); Eulalia “Lolly” Arriola, a humanities program officer with the Northern Mariana Islands Humanities Council (NMHC); Fred Camacho, a history enthusiast, cave explorer, and archaeological technician; Genevieve Cabrera, a cultural historian; Tina Sablan, a veterans’ advocate with journalism, planning, and political experience; and Leila Staffler, a high school principal (Fig. 1). The merits of an interdisciplinary approach are too numerous to discuss here, but in the context of the discussion program below, the approach proves repeatedly to be beneficial in methodological considerations,



Fig. 1 Cultural historian and Discussion Leader Genevieve Cabrera stands in front of her family photo at National Park Service American Memorial Park, Saipan

expanding ideas, scrutinizing ethics, broadening content, and deepening meaning for both participants¹ and researchers. Each team member approaches the subject and design from a different perspective, creating a program that is additive and interactive, adjusting as it progresses.

War in the Pacific: A Difficult Heritage

Overview

War in the Pacific: Difficult Heritage, a NEH grant-funded program of ECU in partnership with the NMHC, the HPO, and the Veterans Affairs Office (VA), engages a less-represented and poorly supported veteran community² of Pacific Island veterans and military families in exploring, understanding, and personalizing their experiences with war and

¹ Participants included the participants of the discussion program as well as the trained Discussion Leaders who eventually lead the discussion programs.

² According to the U.S. Census, 27,469 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander military veterans live in the U.S. with 685 in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The Marianas is the only U.S. jurisdiction without a VA medical facility, mental and physical health resources, or full-time medical staff. Many veterans must travel off-island, sometimes out of pocket, to get the care they need, and only recently has a licensed clinical social worker been recruited to be based in the Marianas.

conflict heritage in the Mariana Islands. The Mariana Islands, a Micronesian island chain in the western Pacific, and its Indigenous peoples have been the location and subjects of numerous episodes of colonial aggressions and resistance from the Spanish in the seventeenth century to the present. Invasions, battles, and colonial aggressions have been waged with and on top of the first Indigenous peoples, the Chamorro and the Carolinians. As such, the land and seascape represent, in both tangible and intangible ways, the cultural heritage of those conflicts. Today, Indigenous island residents navigate throughout their days on the island reminded of the battles and wars that have both defined and challenged who they are and where they are going.

War in the Pacific trains Saipan community members with experience in humanities, history, and veteran affairs as local Discussion Leaders to conduct humanities discussion groups with veterans about their islands' conflict heritage. As such, the program endeavors to support NEH's *Standing Together* initiative for "helping Americans to understand the experiences of service members and in assisting veterans as they return to civilian life" by assisting the community in gaining a meaningful and relevant understanding of war as a shared human experience, exploring their local conflict heritage as a shared cultural heritage, and assisting in integrating Pacific Islander veterans into sociocultural positions of authority on the history of war in their islands.

Local discussion leaders were identified based on a set of criteria that included their education and personal history, an aptitude for public speaking, and any military service. Most of them volunteered and were researchers or community members McKinnon previously worked with, while others were identified by the Humanities Council, and one became a leader after having participated in the first of two discussion programs. Each Discussion Leader is paid an honorarium for the time they spend training and leading discussions creating economic benefits for local participants. These opportunities come together to provide for a transfer of knowledge between generations and aligns with an Indigenous and community archaeological approach.

Discussion leader training occurred on island over a period of 1 week during which ECU Project Directors worked with local leaders to refine their discussion-leading skills. Faculty-modeled, source-based discussion techniques, including open-ended questions of inquiry, listening without critique to encourage openness and trust, and restating participant questions or comments, were practiced. Difficult discussion scenarios were identified and practiced to allow leaders to embrace and negotiate such subjects when they arise. Strengths and areas of interest amongst the Discussion Leaders were identified and matched with program content and their feedback was incorporated into the development of programming. This input by Discussion Leaders was critical to improving content, design, and delivery of the program. Planning and logistics were also covered in preparation for Discussion Leaders to run the program on their own.

Once trained, Discussion Leaders assisted Project Directors side-by-side in leading the veteran discussion programs with local residents. These programs included five themes focusing on one topic each night 6:00 pm–8:30 pm Monday through Friday, with Saturday and Sunday dedicated to heritage site visits. Terrestrial sites for visits were chosen and led largely by Discussion Leaders; accessibility, safety, and permissions were all considered in site choice. Underwater sites visited were from the existing WWII Maritime Heritage Trail³ and ranged from sites in just a few feet of water to ones as deep as 30ft. Snorkel gear

³ <http://www.pacificmaritimeheritagetrail.com/>.



Fig. 2 Group photo after first discussion program heritage site visit

and safety equipment were provided to participants. The entire program was free of charge to participants.

At the conclusion of the week, a ceremony was held on the final afternoon during which participants were awarded a certificate and a specially created challenge coin for their advanced knowledge in war and conflict heritage. Challenge coins hold special significance for veterans and military families identifying achievement, successes, or special effort in service and were chosen for that reason (Fig. 2).

Content Design

The discussion program focuses on two wars, the Spanish-Chamorro Wars of the seventeenth century and the WWII Battle of Saipan, as bookends to the history of resistance and aggressions in the islands. The Spanish colonization of the Marianas during this period represents the discovery of the islands and the “fatal impact” of Europe on a Pacific island culture. It began with cultural suppression, depopulation, consolidation of island peoples, and religious fanaticism and conversion through missionization. These events that spanned over a century, although tragically catastrophic for the Chamorro, were met with resistance and agency in what has become known as the Spanish-Chamorro Wars. Little is understood about these wars, both historically and archaeologically and in some ways they are overlooked because the related heritage is limited, and the history has been written primarily from the Spanish perspective (Hezel 2015). However, the wars are beneficial for exploring and understanding how Indigenous warriors and peoples both resisted colonial powers

and acted as their own agents in negotiating allegiances for their benefit. Examination also serves to explore themes around modern resistance to colonialism and military buildup, which is a current affairs topic in the western Pacific.

The WWII Battle of Saipan was an intense aerial, amphibious, and terrestrial battle fought during June and July of 1944. It involved the warring Japanese and U.S. forces, as well as Chamorro, Carolinian, and Japanese and Okinawan civilians, and conscripted Korean soldiers. The use of WWII Battle of Saipan is valuable to participants for exploring civilians' experiences during war. It is also useful for identifying what struggles and opportunities the post-war period brought to the island that will continue on into the future for their children and grandchildren, who continue to serve in the military, now for the United States. It also affords an opportunity to contemplate the most obvious and tangible conflict heritage that covers the island in the form of bombed bunkers, decaying war machines, and memorials to those who lost their lives. As a more recent war of living memory, it provides a stronger connection to both the past and present for veterans who have served in contemporary wars. Together these wars were chosen for these conflict heritage discussions because they represent the complexities of all participants of war, both combatant and non-combatant alike, in a colonial and post-colonial context and what that might mean to the community of Saipan.

The discussion program incorporates a range of rich humanities sources, including archaeology, film, history, memoirs, children's historical fiction, poetry, painting, and graphic novels. A focus on multiple voices is critical to understanding the meanings of war from different perspectives and, as such, the sources are chosen explicitly to be illustrative of many voices. Discussion materials are available to the participants prior to the beginning of the program via a hardcopy reader and digitally on the program website.⁴ Additionally, as the programs run, content created by participants (i.e., photographs, drawings, etc.) is uploaded to a private page so that it can be accessed in the future.

Within the parameters of two wars, the program focuses on five intersecting themes chosen for their association with Saipan's colonial history, its difficult heritage, and veteran experience. These include: Veteran/Warrior and Indigenous Identity; The Enemy; The Civilian; Memorialization; and Conflict Heritage.

The Veteran/Warrior and Indigenous Identity theme seeks to explore the unique intersections of being an Indigenous Pacific Islander and a veteran/warrior. Indigenous peoples have served in the U.S. armed forces in every major conflict since the Revolutionary War and this discussion focuses on defining who that veteran/warrior is through the history of the Marianas. Participants begin by reading George Ella Lyon's poem "Where I'm From" (1993), Ticknor's own version of the poem, and then writing their version of the poem. They then read portions of Scott Russell's (1998) book on ancient Chamorro culture and history. Chapters such as "Weapons and Warfare" are particularly poignant in understanding ancient war and conflict. A second Chamorro-authored and illustrated graphic novel, *I Manmañaina-ta*, tells the story of prominent warriors who fought in the Spanish-Chamorro Wars (Benavente and Unpingco 2007). Through a graphic history, discussion participants can come to understand the characteristics of these warriors and the role they played in the resistance movements of the Spanish colonial period. Heritage site visits to the largest Spanish-Chamorro War battle site and cemetery on Saipan help participants to experience

⁴ <https://cnmiheritage.wordpress.com/>.

and visualize firsthand the tangible location of an important battle and personalize their understanding of a poorly understood conflict.

The Enemy theme focuses on the complex and diverse relationship between the soldiers and their enemies. The session explores how the enemy is classified in one's mind as "the other," and how that allows for combat between two sides to exist. This is particularly important when it comes to understanding how race was deployed to create the Japanese enemy during WWII and how alien the Spanish might have seemed for seventeenth century Chamorro. Participants read a speech by Hurao, a celebrated Chamorro chief who inspired an army of 2000 to fight the Spanish (Guampedia.com). Today his speeches are often quoted as examples of resistance and calls for action against modern colonial aggressions. Participants read excerpts from soldiers' memoirs of Pacific battles including *With the Old Breed* (Sledge 1981) and *Helmet for My Pillow* (Leckie 1957). The movie *Hell in the Pacific* (1968), which focuses on the dynamic between two enemies, Japanese and American, is screened. A heritage site visit to The Last Command Site allow participants to reflect upon the enemy through the Japanese perspective. Although misidentified, this tourist site is interpreted as the last stronghold held by the Japanese forces prior to the last counter attack known as *Gyokusai*.

The Civilian theme seeks to understand and explore the complexity of civilians' wartime experiences through multiple perspectives and differences in identities including age, gender, and ethnicity. The civilian theme presents both first-person and fictional accounts of WWII survival on Saipan. The first text, "We Drank Our Tears," presents oral stories told by Indigenous elders to school-aged children who recorded and illustrated the stories (Tuten-Puckett 2004). In many cases, the elder and child are related, with the child similarly aged as the elder at the time of their experience. The stories provide historical context for those living on Saipan during WWII while the drawings serve as a link to contemporary understandings of war and survival. The second text, *Warriors in the Crossfire*, is a young adult historical fiction novel about a young Chamorro, Joseph, and his half-Japanese cousin, Kento, during the final months of WWII on Saipan (Flood 2013). The third source is the poem *We Shall Bring Forth New Life* by Sadako Kurihara (1946). Kurihara survived the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and became one of Japan's most famous poets. This piece is particularly poignant as it illustrates the experience of civilians hiding in caves on Saipan. Participants then visit WWII shelter caves which serves to enrich their understanding of these experiences during the Battle of Saipan. Experiencing the cramped quarters, seeing the artifacts that still remain on the cave floor, and hearing the first-hand accounts are palpable reminders of this. Many caves also contain ancient rock art that pre-dates the Spanish colonial period. Viewing and discussing Indigenous history as told through pictorial representation created by Chamorro ancestors serves to draw a line from the prehistoric past through to the present and solidifies participants' understanding of how their ancestors have used these caves for protection during times of war.

The Memorialization theme examines how war is remembered and how it has been memorialized in the Mariana Islands. This theme seeks to explore how we remember, record, and sometimes discard the past. Participants read cultural historian Genevieve Cabrera's (2015) history chapter "Battle for Saipan." As this is one of the first historical contexts of the battle written by a Pacific Islander and a woman, discussants examine the difference between colonizers' accounts of the battle and what happens when history is not "written by the victors." Participants watch the Japanese film *Oba: The Last Samurai* (2011), which provides a counterview to the numerous U.S. productions on the conflict of WWII in the Pacific. They also consider Theo Hios, a combat artist, and his painting *Ambush at Saipan* (1945) which depicts the *Gyokusai* event at the end of the battle on

Saipan. Heritage site visits to underwater archaeological sites that include memorials for both Japanese and Korean peoples allow participants to view the wide range of memorialization and how the past can be politicized. Participants visit Banzai Cliff, the site of many Japanese civilian suicides to understand how this site has become a pilgrimage for many, and the National Veterans' Cemetery.

The final theme of Conflict Heritage focuses on the tangible remains of past conflicts and exploring how they inform our comprehension of war. Ancient warrior artifacts are included in the discussion session so participants are able to examine them. It is particularly powerful for the Indigenous veterans to hold the weapons of their ancestors and reflect upon their meaning and the how the warrior's weapons have developed over time to present day. Participants also watch four public service announcements about protecting WWII caves and the 18-min interpretive film *Battle of Saipan: WWII Maritime Heritage Trail*, and read the trail guides, posters, and website for the heritage trail. This serves as background information for sites they visit during the field sessions.

Discussion Program Participation

The preparatory training and two discussion programs took place in July and October of 2017. Advertisements and promotion of the program were through TV and radio programs, newspaper interviews, paid newspaper ads, fliers, emails, and word of mouth. Each discussion session was expected to draw 10–15 participants; however, over 90 people participated and one participant even became a discussion leader. The program is currently being assessed through survey data collected prior to and after the programs, which will be used to improve future offerings. The program content will be turned over to NMHC so, should they choose to continue the programming in some capacity, they will have access to all materials. Ongoing research is being undertaken on the concepts of identity and shared heritage through the program and survey data. Further, forthcoming publications are anticipated. With the program having been offered twice it seems prudent to reflect briefly on some of the derivative thought-provoking discussions. Below are three different perspectives in the researchers' content areas along with examples of stimulating discussion.

Literacy Studies: Text Sets and Reader Response

As discussed earlier, multi-genre texts were selected to provide a wide range of perspectives and voices concerning past conflicts in the Mariana Islands and surrounding areas. From the perspective of literacy studies, texts grouped around a similar topic or theme are commonly referred to as a text set (Short et al. 1996) and the use of text sets in this program was deliberately designed to offer participants multiple perspectives on each of the five themes. Participants would read texts within the thematic text set then respond to the readings through a series of activities to promote dialogue and discussion. Reader response, a theory conceptualized by Rosenblatt (1968), focuses on the reader's response to ideas presented in the form of text. This encourages dialogue and discussion as well as a deeper examination of his or her own experiences. The idea of reader response was critical in this discussion program in order to explore the unique experiences of each participant and build a collective understanding and concept of conflict heritage as a shared heritage.

An example of how the discussion program utilized text sets and reader response to interpret past conflicts alongside contemporary experiences is found in the theme of

Veteran/Warrior and Indigenous Identity. As outlined earlier, this theme sought to explore the unique intersections of being an Indigenous Pacific Islander and a warrior/veteran. Participants began this exploration by first considering their own identities by reading George Ella Lyon's "Where I'm from" poem and reading Ticknor's own version of the same poem. These poems were selected to begin the text set to provide participants an opportunity to discuss and reflect on their concepts of identity and place by bringing their experiences and understandings to the texts. Participants continued their response to the poems by writing their own versions of a "Where I'm from" poem. To continue the text set reader response cycle to connect identity with warrior/veteran, participants shared their individually written poems within small groups and discussed with each other the larger theme of identity. Many Indigenous participants shared in their poems and subsequent discussions that the concepts of identity and place were intertwined with their collective history of conflict and colonization. One Indigenous veteran participant stated he did not even know where he was born; he was unsure of the geographic location of his ancestors. His statement echoes the shared history of conflicts in the Marianas, colonization of Indigenous people, and the continued negotiation of identity.

Participants continued the text set reader response cycle for the theme by reading selections from *I Manmañaina-ta*. This text is written in both Chamorro and English and includes graphic illustrations of prominent historical Chamorro warriors. After reading and discussing the text in relation to the theme, participants responded to the text by drawing an image of a warrior. These drawings were then shared within small groups and discussed. Many participants took up the concept of warrior and identity to illustrate women in their families, such as mothers and grandmothers, who survived and thrived after the Battle for Saipan during WWII. One participant, a mother of a veteran, explained that she drew her grandmother standing underneath a coconut tree. Her drawing represented the concept of warrior because her grandmother was a source of strength and inspiration for her throughout her lifetime. She explained that the drawing represented how her grandmother taught her to use natural resources, such as coconuts, as she did when she survived the Battle of Saipan. She continued her story by stating "she was with me" during difficult times in her life including the aftermath of typhoon Soudelor in 2015.

Film

John Boorman's working title for *Hell in the Pacific* (1968) was "War is the Enemy," and discussion of the film centered on how blurred the boundary can be between enemy and friend when deprivation threatens survival. Contextual excerpts from *With the Old Breed* and *Helmet for My Pillow* related how hatred had influenced the behavior of U.S. troops, with some even desecrating the bodies of fallen Japanese troops. *Hell in the Pacific* follows two combat survivors—one from the Japanese Imperial Army and one from the United States abandoned together on an island with limited resources. They first antagonize each other but soon realize each must collaborate with the other to survive the elements. Thus, they build a raft together in an uneasy peace and sail it to another island to find the remnants of an American base, only to die together during a bombing campaign. The film has particular resonance for the Battle of Saipan because its American star, Lee Marvin, fought and was severely injured in the battle. Participants viewed scenes in which the two protagonists encounter each other, feverishly imagine how the other would kill him, taking turns holding each other captive, and even getting drunk on sake. Conversation about the film turned toward the universal emotions of war: fear, rage, boredom, camaraderie, etc. One

veteran of U.S. contemporary warfare shared that he had struggled with these emotions and was grateful to veterans from the Vietnam War for giving us the language of trauma. While not directly concerned with the film, it is nonetheless a demonstration of how moments of peace and healing, however ephemeral, can be possible through discussion texts about war.

Oba: The Last Samurai similarly generated discussion about cinema as a process of memorialization. The film is a Japanese production based on a book by American author, Don Jones. The production context is useful for thinking about textual layers and strategies of memorialization. Jones served with the U.S. Marines on Saipan, where he heard of the legend of Oba, a captain for the Imperial Japanese Army who led his men and a group of civilians in resisting surrender after the Battle of Saipan until December 1, 1945. In 1965, Jones traveled to Japan to hear his story, which he then published in 1965. The distance from the war to Hideyuki Hirayama's 2010 production of the film allowed for decades of reflection on U.S.-Japan relations. The most meaningful scenes for the community were those of the civilians living in the caves on Saipan's Mount Tapochau, as they possessed memories that were handed down by their elders. As Sturken (1997:11) reminds us, "cinematic representations of the past have the capacity to entangle with personal and cultural memory." In this case, the reenactment of their elders' experience were mingled with the oral stories passed down within families.

Heritage

Heritage is woven throughout the program as an underlying humanities content that spans the history of conflict in the Mariana Islands. It was important to situate the beginning of the program with the earliest written recording of conflict and violence, the Spanish-Chamorro Wars. This served to draw the participants back in time to consider how their ancestors were warriors and how they might consider their warrior identity, but also to recognize that war is a shared experience across the generations. Artifacts including sling stones, adzes, and axes were archaeologically recorded during the conflict heritage session and used as discussion pieces to explore the early weapons of war. Veterans reflected upon how their connection to modern weapons is different, yet similar to those a warrior might have had in the past with their weapons. One veteran remarked how powerful it felt to hold a sling stone and wonder what its history was, who it might have injured, and why and how it was left behind.

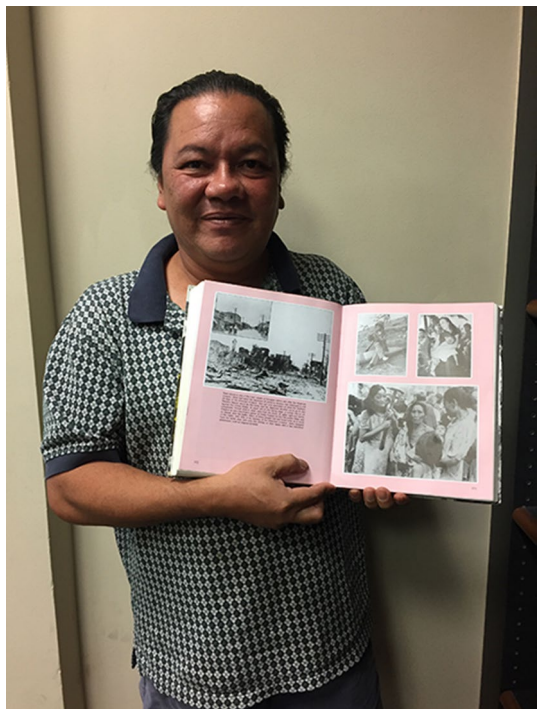
Visiting heritage sites including WWII caves on land and WWII wrecks underwater was an eye-opening experience for many. While all of the participants pass by the sites daily, few knew the extent to which the sites existed around them. For many, the trips to both the caves and underwater sites were a first-time experience despite growing up and living on the island (Fig. 3). They had heard their elders discussing the caves but never had they entered one. They knew there were sites underwater but did not realize the extent of their preservation and number. The strongest reactions and connections most had with conflict heritage was with the civilian caves, likely due to their own families' experiences during the war.

Objects or artifacts were important to the participants, particularly family heirlooms saved from pre and post-war periods. One participant shared that his family still holds the saint statue that was carried from the home to where they hid during the invasion and was protected through their internment in the camps post-battle (Fig. 4). Another held on to her family's work release identification tags that were issued to Chamorro and Carolinian men and women who were allowed to leave the internment camps to work jobs on the island.

Fig. 3 Veterans' advocate and Discussion Leader Tina Sablan visits a WWII Japanese landing craft for the first time



Fig. 4 Participant holds the history book that contains a photo of his family with the saint figure they kept with them through the battle and internment camp. Ronnie's family still holds the saint today



Precious objects carried with them strong memories of a past that is not so distant for the community.

Conclusions

Archaeology can serve many purposes beyond the practical aspects of discipline design. It is fair to say that archaeology can benefit communities in many ways, particularly within descendant communities when practiced as applied, activist, community-based, or Indigenous archaeology (Atalay et al. 2014). Schaepe et al. (2017) recently outlined the therapeutic role archaeology can play in improving individual and communal health and well-being in descendant Indigenous Coast Salish peoples on the NW coast of North America. Cultural stress, an effect of colonialism, manifests in a loss of cultural identity, the connection to one's past, and has led to increases in suicide, substance abuse, depression, and other devastating health outcomes. For Schaepe et al. (2017: 517), archaeology, as a material-based discipline, provides an avenue for “reconnecting and reestablishing personal placement within a meaningful ‘home,’ building communal strength and human capital by literally piecing things back together—linking dislocated peoples with the tangible and intangible reckoning of their world and worldview”. However, they offer a word of caution in that, thus far, archaeology as therapy has been practiced with little thought for development of design and practice. And certainly, the challenge of using conflict or colonial archaeology for these purposes is even more difficult for descendant communities and archaeologists.

While *War in the Pacific: Difficult Heritage* was not designed as a therapeutic or restorative program, the benefits of descendant Indigenous veterans and families discussing war was certainly tangible. In several instances there were moments of tears for those lost most recently in contemporary wars, words of thanks from recent veterans to older generations of veterans, and the sharing of untold stories between veterans who had been friends for years but could not find the right moment or words to share until prompted by the discussion. The recognition that war is universal and stretched from their past to their present was a concept that most participants came to embrace and along with that came a stronger appreciation for the heritage that represents those wars in which their ancestors, their families, and even themselves have been participants.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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