

ANNUAL REPORT: PROVIDENCE ISLAND, COLOMBIA 2019 FIELD SCHOOL

Director: Dr. Tracie Mayfield, Ph.D.



Students and Faculty Excavating on Old Providence Island (2019)

The 2019 historical-archaeological field season was the first of its kind on Providence Island and we were able to gather valuable information from a variety of sources; including material and spatial data from excavations and survey (dating from the 1600s to the present), ethnographic data from oral histories and interviews, and ethnoarchaeological data centered on how current transportation, food production, governance, built-environment, and technology are used today and how those same activities were carried out in the past (both deep and recent), allowing us to make connections between Providence Island's history and its present; and between the Island and the international/global community over time, since the Colony's establishment in 1629.

Students played a critical role in all aspects of data collection: processing, and identification; photography; mapping and drawing; and making preliminary interpretations from the data we gathered. During weekday mornings until around lunchtime, we worked on recovering artifacts from excavation sites (*5 in total over 4 weeks!*) and conducting ethnographic interviews. In the afternoons, we worked on cleaning and processing artifacts in a lab we set up at Enilda Posada, where the team was staying during the field season. On the weekends, students had time off (1/2 days on Saturday and all day Sunday) to explore the Island and take part in activities like hiking, snorkeling, SCUBA, bike riding, canoeing, horseback riding, and going to public events like concerts and festivals.

During the first week of the field school, the director presented on various subjects relating to the theoretical foundations, field and laboratory methods, and types of data used in historical archaeology in the evenings at Enilda Posada. And, because community voice is an important aspect of the Project's overall mission, we invited Native Providencians to speak to us in the evenings, as well. Native presentations included topics such as, the history of Providence Island; farming and food sustainability; and art and culture (talks from bush medicine specialists and local artists).

Students also participated in group field trips to different sites on Providence Island, such as: the Virginia Archbold museum, the annual Reizal festival (where Native goods are sold and historical presentations are given), and a boat tour of Old Providence and Santa Catalina islands.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the 2019 field season was working directly with middle and high school students on the Island. We spent two days at a local school, excavating on the property with students. Our field school students were tasked with teaching the young people how to excavate properly, but also explaining the aims and goals and types of data used in historical-archaeological research. The endeavor was so successful that we have been asked to return next year and expand the scope and scale of teaching, to include washing, processing, photographing, and identifying artifacts.

The field school attendees also produced original research designs (topic of their choosing) to present to the other students and faculty towards the end of the field season. Instead of a final research paper, students were challenged to come up with a research topic or question and then present 'how' they were going to do the research. For example, what is their research question/problem orientation (e.g. what do you want they know?) ...where would their data come from? ...what issues might come up during research? ...where would they present their research, once completed? The students came up with creative and exciting topics and few of those projects will continue over the next few years, including a second season on Providence Island for some participants in 2020 and 2021 in order to do further research.

Along with student research dissemination, the director and other faculty will be writing blogs and articles on a variety of platforms (*NOTE: 'like' our Facebook page –The Providence Island Archaeological Project– to receive notifications*) and presenting research collected during the 2019 field season at the Society for American Archaeology annual conference in 2020.