

Braiding Strands of Wellness

How Repatriation Contributes to Healing through Embodied Practice and Storywork

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ABSTRACT: Drawing on Anishinabe concepts of holistic health and well-being, this article explores ways that repatriation of ancestral remains and cultural items can contribute to healing and well-being in Indigenous communities. The focus is on “Indigenous storywork” and embodied practices amongst those who are engaged in reclaiming ancestral remains and cultural items, with examples from the author’s experience in repatriation, reburial, and reclaiming cultural heritage. The author describes her work developing a graphic narrative about repatriation as a method of storywork. She describes her use of comics and other storywork practices in teaching, and as a means of bringing Indigenous teaching and learning practices into higher education.

KEY WORDS: storywork, healing, Indigenous communities, repatriation, braided knowledge

Historical unresolved grief. . . is the profound unsettled bereavement resulting from cumulative devastating losses, compounded by the prohibition and interruption of Indigenous burial practices and ceremonies.

Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart¹

And with every repatriation, with every “Recommitment to the Earth” (reburial ceremony), great healing and reconciliation happens—not only within our community, but with all those institutions and people that may have handled our ancestors through study or research. There is joy that they have come home—that their work is complete.

Shannon Martin in *Journeys to Complete the Work*²

¹ Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., “Historical Trauma Among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Concepts, Research, and Clinical Considerations,” *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 43, no. 4 (October 2011): 282–90.

² Sonya Atalay, Jen Shannon, and John Swogger, *Journeys to Complete the Work: Stories about Repatriations and Changing the Way We Bring Ancestors Home*, NAGPRA Comics 1, 2017, <https://blogs.umass.edu/satalay/repatriation-comic/>.

Introduction

For over fifteen years I've been engaged in reclamation work related to cultural heritage. This includes research conducted in partnership with Native nations to write legal repatriation claims for ancestral remains and cultural items under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), two terms of service on the National NAGPRA Review Committee under both the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, and assisting in the preparation and reburial of thousands of ancestral remains. Throughout this research and policy-related work and in roles ranging from scholar and research consultant to aid to spiritual leaders as a member of our traditional Anishinabe medicine society,³ I observed individuals, families, and communities discuss finding healing and a sense of well-being through reclaiming ancestral remains and cultural items. Indigenous people and scholars working with them also discuss healing and improved well-being in relation to practices of reclaiming *intangible* aspects of cultural heritage, including songs,⁴ Indigenous language,⁵ access to sacred sites and places,⁶ traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), ceremonial knowledge, practices, and protocols.⁷

I've witnessed numerous situations and practices in which repatriation and reclaiming of cultural heritage have been associated with healing and well-being, and in this article I discuss ways that such associations of repatriation and reclaiming with health and well-being are congruent with Indigenous cultural practices and beliefs. My approach to this examination is through the lens of "Indigenous storywork," as detailed in the scholarship of Jo-ann Q'um Q'um Xiiem Archibald,⁸ and draws on traditional Anishinabe knowledge practices, including the concept of "braided knowledge."

Through many diverse engagements with the acts and processes of reclaiming tangible and intangible Indigenous cultural heritage, I have found that the stories of increased well-being or of healing that participants shared, during and after repatriations and reclaiming work, stood out and had a powerful impact. Participants regularly recounted experiences in which the process of reclaiming contributed to healing or brought increased well-being to themselves, their families, and/or their communities. Often the sense of healing or improved well-being

3 I am first degree midewiwin, a member of the Three Fires Midewiwin Lodge.

4 Robin Gray, "Ts'msyen Revolution: The Poetics and Politics of Reclaiming" (Phd diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2015).

5 Brian McDermott, *Language Healers: Native Americans Revitalizing Native Languages* (Empathy Works Films, 2014).

6 David M. Schaepe et al., "Archaeology as Therapy: Connecting Belongings, Knowledge, Time, Place, and Well-Being," *Current Anthropology* 58, no. 4 (July 7, 2017): 502–33.

7 Jon D. Daehnke, *Chinook Resilience: Heritage and Cultural Revitalization on the Lower Columbia River* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

8 Jo-ann "Q'um Q'um Xiiem" Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

that is conveyed is palpable when such stories are shared. Being a frequent witness to these stories led me to consider more closely the ways in which repatriation and reclamation work are viewed as contributing to healing and well-being. I wanted to do so viewing health and well-being through an Indigenous cultural lens,⁹ which often considers health in a holistic way, as affecting more than just the physical body of individuals. Since telling, and even *listening* to, such stories were described as healing, I felt it was particularly important to consider the role played by sharing one's experiences through stories as a means through which healing occurs.

A review of the literature on repatriation and reclaiming Indigenous cultural heritage reveals accounts as early as 1995 in which repatriation and reclaiming are connected with healing by Native peoples. Steve Newcomb (Shawnee/Lenape) discussed repatriation and "rematriation" as healing, saying, "Today, repatriation efforts are aimed at assisting our communities to heal from generations of genocide and cultural devastation."¹⁰ More recently, David Schaepe and his colleagues in research partnerships with Stó:lō-Coast Salish peoples in British Columbia asserted the connection of cultural heritage, health, and well-being. In their 2017 article "Archaeology as Therapy: Connecting Belonging, Time, Place, and Well-being," they maintain that "community-based archaeology—meaning community-directed studies of ancestral places practiced by invitation—can improve individual and communal health and well-being."¹¹ They demonstrate how community-based archaeology can help to strengthen interconnections and relationships that are essential for health and well-being. Focusing more specifically on repatriation, Chip Colwell has also contributed important work in this area. As part of a broader survey about NAGPRA, Colwell asked whether "repatriation had led to healing?" and found that 54 percent of respondents believed that it had, with an additional 31 percent being unsure if it had or not.¹²

In considering the connections and recurrent themes relating repatriation and critical heritage work (for example, community-based archaeology) with healing, health, and well-being, I wanted to better understand the aspects or practices of repatriation work that may be contributing to healing, with an eye to understanding the sorts of community-based heritage projects that could best contribute to improved health and well-being in Indigenous communities.

9 Drawing most specifically on Anishinabe traditional knowledge and cultural worldviews and epistemology, but also with broader comparisons to similar Native American traditions, including Cree knowledge systems, and other indigenous traditions that view health holistically.

10 Steven Newcomb, "Perspectives: Healing, Restoration, and Rematriation," *Indigenous Law Institute News & Notes* (Spring/Summer 1995): 3.

11 Schaepe et al., "Archaeology as Therapy."

12 Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, "The Work of Repatriation in Indian Country," *Human Organization* 71, no. 3 (August 27, 2012): 278–91; Chip Colwell, "The Scalp from Sand Creek," *Aeon*, June 8, 2017, <https://aeon.co/essays/does-returning-artefacts-help-to-heal-the-scars-of-conquest>.

Embodied Practices and Holistic Worldview in Repatriation

Drawing on the literature outlined above and my experiences in repatriation and community-based archaeology research, I identified a range of practices that are described by community members who are involved in such work as being healing or connected with increased well-being. These practices tend to fit into three broad categories in which participants:

- 1) were directly involved in doing the work of repatriation, reclaiming, or community-based archaeology/heritage work (writing claims, NAGPRA grants, preparing human remains and cultural items for reburial, reinstating traditional protocols or traditional knowledge practices, identifying and reclaiming songs and language, archaeological fieldwork, community mapping of sacred sites, etc.); or,
- 2) shared their experiences and stories of doing such practices with others in public or community spaces; or,
- 3) heard stories and experiences shared by others who had been directly involved in acts of repatriation, reclaiming, and/or community-based archaeology.

Intellectual work is a necessary and essential aspect of repatriation and reclaiming. Historical, archival, or anthropological research; writing NAGPRA grants; and drafting claims are required for repatriation and reclamation to occur. However, such intellectual work, while regularly mentioned, is rarely the focus in connection to healing and bringing forth well-being. Rather, what is most often emphasized are the *embodied* practices that are involved in reclaiming, along with aspects of emotional and spiritual engagement. For example, the work of physically preparing ancestral remains, seeing and handling sacred objects, engaging in the action of traditional protocols (such as greetings, introductions, gifting, etc.), or listening to and singing traditional songs are often highlighted in the repatriations. Individuals also describe it as healing to share their experiences and stories about such embodied practices. And it is not only direct engagement with embodied practices that are discussed as healing; participants often describe it as healing to listen to others share their experiences of engaging in embodied practices and the emotional and spiritual work of reclaiming, repatriation, or community-based archaeology research.

The importance of connecting intellectual work with spiritual and emotional aspects of reclaiming, and with embodied practices, such as physical engagement with cultural items—walking the land, recording or mapping sacred places, or hearing and telling stories about repatriation and reclaiming—resonates with the way many Indigenous peoples describe their understanding of health and well-being. In contrast to mainstream “Western” cultural understandings, for many Indigenous peoples concepts such as “knowledge” are understood holistically; that

is, the concept is not considered exclusively part of the intellectual realm but also involves physical, emotional, and/or spiritual aspects. Similarly, health and well-being are not simply physical—for many Indigenous peoples these concepts are experienced, understood, or expressed as more than a strictly physical manifestation. Rather, concepts such as knowledge, health, and well-being are understood as being holistic in a way that involves multiple aspects articulated together.

For example, in her research on Cree health, anthropologist Naomi Adelson found the concept of “miyupimaatsiium,” translated as “being alive well,” to be the framing concept of health and well-being among Cree people. She describes this as “an articulation of physical, moral, political, and social forces that coalesce.”¹³ In Anishinabe cultural contexts a similar concept exists. Called “mino bimaadiziwin” in Anishinabemowin language, it is the combination of intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects, all interconnected in balance and expressed and experienced together. In his examination of Anishinabe philosophy, ethics and traditional knowledge, Rheault discusses the importance of “mino bimaadiziwin,” describing and illustrating how the interconnectedness and balance of physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual aspects of life are central for the way many Anishinabe people understand knowledge, health, and indeed the world more broadly.¹⁴

I’ve referred to this holistic approach to understanding the world as “braided knowledge.”¹⁵ I’m currently involved in work that examines this “braided knowledge” concept more closely, as I consider the political economy of knowledge production in Western academic institutions and how researching, teaching, and learning might be improved through incorporating such holistic Anishinabe approaches. I’ve looked at multiple approaches to braiding knowledge, particularly ways that Indigenous knowledge concepts encounter Western ways of knowing, and how Indigenous knowledges are transforming academic institutions, improving the way research is conducted.

Within the context of research, braided knowledge involves multiple forms of braiding: understanding how Western and Indigenous knowledge complement each other, as well as ways that community and university knowledge can be integrated. As we consider health, well-being, and repatriation or other aspects of reclaiming through community-based heritage work, the braiding involves bringing intellectual learning together with embodied practices (hands-on physical learning) and with emotional and spiritual understanding.

Braided knowledge concepts are helping to decolonize research practices, particularly the ways we discover and share new knowledge and the methods we use

¹³ Naomi Adelson, “*Being Alive Well*”: *Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being* (University of Toronto Press, 2000).

¹⁴ D’Arcy Rheault, *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin—The Way of a Good Life: An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy, Ethics and Traditional Knowledge*, 1st edition (Peterborough, ON: Create-Space, 1999).

¹⁵ Sonya Atalay, *Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities* (University of California Press, 2012).

to preserve and reclaim traditional Indigenous knowledge. I argue that bringing Indigenous concepts of knowledge production into research and teaching practices is part of a larger project of decolonization which is beneficial both within and outside the academy, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Similarly, Indigenous concepts of health that view healing and well-being as holistic—incorporating physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects—are also part of a larger project of decolonization.¹⁶ And just as Indigenous concepts can have multiple benefits for Native and non-Native scholars, I've found that the healing and well-being derived from the engaged and embodied practices of repatriation, reclaiming, and community-based archaeology is described as beneficial by both Native and non-Native participants.

Indigenous Storywork's Contribution to Healing and Well-being

From examining the work of others and in my own experiences of engaging in repatriation and reclaiming both tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage, I've found that sharing one's experiences through *stories* play an important role in healing and well-being.¹⁷ This includes both *listening* to and *sharing* with family and community one's struggles, challenges, and victories of repatriation work, reburial ceremonies, and reclaiming efforts.

Jo-Ann Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiim talks about the healing role that sharing one's experiences has in Indigenous communities. In her book *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit*, she describes "storywork" as an Indigenous way of doing research. Archibald reveals the value of "storywork" both as a research method, and also as a means of teaching and learning.¹⁸ Most importantly in relation to this discussion of repatriation and reclaiming cultural heritage, Archibald demonstrates how stories can heal. Archibald details the "significant role that stories can play in teaching, learning, and healing," providing examples of different types of stories and how they bring healing and well-being for individuals and communities. In reflecting on Beth Cuthand's work, Archibald notes that: "This [story] energy is a source of power that feeds and revitalizes mind, heart, body, and spirit in a holistic manner."¹⁹

Archibald's findings about storywork mirrors what I experienced among those who shared stories about repatriation and reclaiming cultural heritage. For example, beyond the healing that individuals experienced by doing the work of

¹⁶ William Hartmann and Joseph Gone, "Incorporating Traditional Healing into an Urban American Indian Health Organization: A Case Study of Community Member Perspectives," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 59, no. 4 (October 2012): 542–54.

¹⁷ See also Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational Network Approach," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5: 605–649 in which she argues for the value of narrative, providing a detailed analysis of the "historically sensitive coupling between social identity and agency."

¹⁸ Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*.

¹⁹ Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*, 85.

repatriation and reburial, sharing stories *about* their experiences engaged in repatriation efforts were also described as healing. It seems that acts of sharing one's experiences, often with the aim of giving guidance for others, contributes to the healing process, bringing a sense of well-being to those who engage in repatriation-related storywork. In addition to the braiding of intellectual work with embodied practice and the spiritual and emotional aspects of reclaiming and repatriation, engaging in the embodied acts of storywork also contribute to healing and well-being—not only for individuals who share/tell stories, but also for those who *hear and listen to* such stories.

Archibald's discussion of storywork resonates deeply with my experience doing repatriation research and engaging in the process of reclaiming ancestral remains, cultural materials, language, traditional knowledge and other tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage. In part, sharing stories about repatriation and about doing the difficult work of reclaiming ancestral remains and cultural items is, in itself, a form of reclaiming. In passing on knowledge and experience through stories, participants are reclaiming traditional methods and practices of sharing community-held knowledge. The stories that are told become the means through which a more contemporary history of struggle and survival is recorded and communicated. Sending such knowledge forward to the next generation rebuilds and strengthens intergenerational pathways of teaching and learning. I would argue that reclaiming such forms of teaching and learning may also contribute to healing and improved well-being. This is because these practices help restore and intertwine connections that were severed, divided, and separated through the harmful discordant processes of colonization that violently transformed collective cultures who held knowledge, health, and well-being as braided, holistic concepts.

Many of the stories that community members share about repatriation and reclaiming braid together time frames, bringing past, present, and future into conversation with each other. In repatriations, reburials, and reclaiming efforts, one will often hear mention of ancestors. Particularly during repatriations and reburials, the presence of ancestors is viscerally felt, as their physical remains are present or nearby. Similarly, with reclaiming of songs, teachings, protocols, and language there is a calling forward and centering of the past. Connections are often made to injustices, both those from the past and present. Stories of pain, loss, and disconnection weave together past and present harms with future looking action. Another common theme is the way repatriation and reclaiming are part of decolonizing and of larger efforts to work for change by battling oppression and specific individual and institutional oppressors (which are usually named). One of the most common themes involves looking injustice in the face and coming out victorious.

Past success in reclaiming ancestors' remains and cultural items are frequently discussed and woven alongside future visions of what is possible. Successes and victories are about lasting change and decolonizing institutions, and also about being able to pass on successful skills and knowledge to the next generation. Thus the work of reclaiming ancestors' bodies, cultural items, connection to ancestral

“sites” and places, and intangible aspects of cultural heritage are braided together. In doing so, participants also simultaneously reclaim the original work we are meant to do for each other as communities. These embodied practices and storywork contribute to a reclaiming of the Indigenous protocols of care that peoples held for their families and their communities.

Reclaiming Storywork and Embodied Practices

The strands of wellness that I’ve described above and the way embodied practices and Indigenous storywork are associated with healing and well-being in repatriation and reclaiming can be better understood when viewed through scholarship in the area of historical trauma and unresolved grief. I’ve found the work of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart to be particularly useful for understanding the connections to healing that I’ve witnessed in my repatriation and reclaiming work.

In her research on intergenerational and collective trauma, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart stresses the importance of providing a context for the trauma. Her work also assesses the extent to which people think about historical trauma events and losses. The trauma contexts and loss events that Brave Heart describes are clearly present in the descriptions that participants in repatriation and reburial efforts express about the presence of human remains and funerary objects held in museums, the desecration of ancestors’ burial places, or the loss of connection or access to sacred places.

Amy Lonetree draws on Brave Heart’s work in her book *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*.²⁰ Lonetree discusses ways that museums can be spaces of healing. She describes how one community’s stories of struggle and resilience in both historic and contemporary times are emphasized in their tribal museum (which includes displays about the community’s repatriation and NAGPRA work), and she argues that these are important steps in the process of decolonization that contribute to healing.²¹

Inspired by this connection of healing with heritage storywork in a tribal museum display, I studied Brave Heart’s work in an effort to understand more about the ways in which repatriation work, as well as other efforts to reclaim aspects of Indigenous cultural heritage, are contributing to healing and improved well-being. Brave Heart and her colleagues explain that historical unresolved grief is “compounded by the prohibition and interruption of Indigenous burial practices and ceremonies.”²² It follows that repatriating human remains and cultural items, which allow for burial practices to be conducted and also contributes to a reclaiming of funerary ceremonies and practices, would result in healing, as is so often

²⁰ Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

²¹ The museum is the Ziiibiwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture & Lifeways, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, detailed in chapter 4 of Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 123–67.

²² See Brave Heart et al., “Historical Trauma Among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas,” 283.

described by those engaged in repatriation work. What I find interesting is that it's not only the repatriation of ancestors, cultural items, and burial practices that are important; the reclaiming of storywork and embodied practices also seem to play a valuable role in healing. I would argue that part of what makes storywork possible as a contributor to healing is that it includes forms of embodied practice, which allow community members to engage body, mind, spirit, and emotion, interconnecting these aspects in a balanced way, helping to bring about "mino bimatiziwin," a sense of health and well-being.

Visual Storytelling: Graphic Narratives as Storywork

Storywork practices are being reclaimed by Indigenous communities, and the practices are expanding beyond an oral tradition of storytelling to also include visual, auditory, and textual forms of passing on knowledge.²³ I've explored connections between repatriation, storywork, and healing through a graphic narrative (comic) project. Partnering with University of Colorado anthropologist and museum curator Jen Shannon and archaeologist and illustrator John Swogger, I co-authored a graphic narrative about repatriation called *Journeys to Complete the Work*.²⁴ It tells the real-life story of research I conducted in partnership with the Ziibiwing Cultural Center of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan for repatriation of ancestors held at the University of Michigan and Harvard University. The comic discusses the complexity of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), showing in an accessible way some of the complexities of the law, when it works and what happens when it doesn't. The comic highlights Native American activism and shows how reclaiming ancestral remains and the work of braiding knowledge is healing, for both Native peoples and for those who work in museums and engage in the NAGPRA process.

The first edition of the graphic narrative was created under a creative commons license and was launched at Indigenous Comic Con at Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico in November 2017.²⁵ Through the *Journeys to Complete the Work* project I've found that storytelling, through images paired with text, is a powerful way to reclaim place-based knowledge, utilizing storywork to share the struggles of reclaiming. Using graphic narratives as a form of storywork can also contribute to Indigenous language reclamation. I'm currently working with community members and elders to produce an Ojibwe language version of this comic as well as a series of additional

²³ See, for example, Jason Garcia's work in the "Tewa Tales of Suspense" series; Dale Deforest's "Hero Twins"; Matt Dembicki, ed., *Trickster: Native American Tales, A Graphic Collection* (Fulcrum Publishing: 2010); and Jason Eaglespeaker, *UNeducation, Vol 1: A Residential School Graphic Novel* (Uncut, 2014).

²⁴ Sonya Atalay, Jen Shannon, and John G. Swogger, *Journeys to Complete the Work: Stories about Repatriations and Changing the Way We Bring Ancestors Home* (Creative Commons), <https://blogs.umass.edu/satalay/repatriation-comic/>.

²⁵ Hard copies are available via Tribal Print Source, Susan Ortuno, (760) 597-2650 x106 sOrtuno@TribalPrintSource.com.

bilingual comics related more broadly to reclaiming both tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

In my teaching, I've found graphic narratives and animation to be valuable tools for educating students about Indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary Native American issues related to critical heritage studies. I've been using these and other arts-based practices in my teaching, training students to engage with these techniques as methods of research. Students describe using these storywork methods as “engaging,” “powerful,” and “life-changing.”²⁶ Their fully cited graphic narrative and animation projects present their research in accessible forms that are easily shared. Students in my classes and those I advised on honors thesis research also used comics, animation, and virtual reality (VR) applications to share the results of their work. One honors thesis student created a “zine,” others developed VR projects using “Walk Into” or “ThingLink.” Though not a course requirement, one student, Sarah Jacqz, created a website to make her project publicly available.²⁷ I view these visual arts-based research methods not only as offering engaged, hands-on teaching opportunities, but also as ways in which aspects of Indigenous storywork can be put into contemporary practice to bring Indigenous methods of teaching and learning into the context of higher education.

Sending Knowledge into the Future

Repatriation work and efforts to reclaim tangible and intangible aspects of Indigenous cultural heritage are described as bringing healing to individuals and to communities. These efforts are part of a larger project of decolonization that involves responding to a sense of responsibility to one's ancestors, present generations, and to those yet to come. Such practices of reclaiming provide opportunities for individuals and communities to braid together intellectual research with hands-on work, involving embodied practices, as well as emotional and spiritual work. Bringing these multiple ways of engaging with the world together, through what I've called “braided knowledge” practices, appear to play a central role in healing. Storywork related to reclaiming is also regularly discussed as bringing about healing—this includes sharing one's own experiences and efforts in reclaiming and repatriation, and also listening to stories shared by others who've done reclaiming and repatriation work.

I argue here that engaging in braided knowledge practices are healing, in part because they provide instances in which participants engage in culturally appropriate forms of storywork—sending knowledge into the future. Those who engage with ancestral remains or reclaim Indigenous language, traditional knowledge, teachings, and cultural items, are then able to effectively share what they have learned, and the process by which they've done so, with the next generation.

²⁶ These quotes are taken from anonymous student course evaluation forms.

²⁷ You can view Jacqz's work at <https://decolonizingyellowstone.weebly.com/>.

Through the very process of this critical heritage work, they are reclaiming practices of intergenerational learning and sharing detailed knowledge through storywork.

In exploring the braided relationship between repatriation and healing, I also found that through processes of reclaiming and contributing to wider decolonization efforts, community members were engaging in the long-term, greatly needed work of transforming institutions. In this work of repatriation and working with communities to reclaim knowledge, language, stories, and ancestors, there is also the act of changing, transforming, and decolonizing spaces and practices. Teaching and learning are also interwoven parts of these processes. Indigenous community members are teaching institutions how to engage with communities in ethical and effective ways, demonstrating best practices and also what *not* to do. At the same time, community members are engaged in their own learning through processes of reclaiming bodies, cultural items, language, and access to sacred places and materials. And, they are working to share what they've learned with other communities.

What I found through examining these stories of reclaiming, repatriation, and healing that was so powerful is that engaging in this work is never simply about one particular project and it's not just about having ancestral remains returned. Reclaiming and repatriation also involve developing new ways of doing research, creating and building a new political economy of knowledge production in the process of each project. Through these processes we can recognize that it isn't just Indigenous people who need to heal, but those who work in museums, those who excavated and studied Native American graves, those who unjustly claimed songs, stories, words, and cultural items as their own. This critical work is part of a much larger and longer-range process of decolonization, one that is ongoing and that we see currently unfolding over multiple generations. What those who engage in the work of reclaiming and repatriation are witnessing is an unfolding of the future in new and exciting ways. It's a future in which Indigenous people engage in the work of reclaiming together with museum professionals and archaeologists, working in partnership to transform institutions—how they work, their goals, and their methods, while at the same time contributing to healing their communities. With all the difficulties involved in this work, it is also incredibly exciting to witness, as we look to a future of improved well-being and continue to explore the supportive role that critical heritage studies scholars and other researchers can play as partners with Indigenous peoples in this critical work.

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examining how the braided and holistic aspects of indigenous knowledge enhance approaches to research and teaching. Using graphic novels, animation, and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies, Dr. Atalay is currently working with Native youth in partnership with Northeast Native communities to explore how reclaiming knowledge of land-based heritage and indigenous language contributes to community health and well-being.