

JANUARY LECTURE

Wednesday, January 18th, 2017

University of Calgary

Tom Oliver Room, ES 162, 7:30pm

Medicine Wheels and Ceremonial Landscapes: Building on Richard G. Forbis's Pioneering Contributions

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Dr. Margaret Kennedy (University of Saskatchewan)**

ABSTRACT - The contributions to the archaeology of the Northwestern Plains by Dick Forbis, Alberta's first archaeologist, were many, particularly in his ten years with the Glenbow Foundation (ca. 1955-1965). Among these were the recording, mapping and excavations of Alberta medicine wheels such as Rumsey, British Block, Grassy Lake and Manyberries. However, Dick, as well as others in more recent years such as Jim Calder who worked at the Majorville Medicine Wheel, focused on the medicine wheels themselves not the archaeological landscapes in which they sit. The study and interpretation of these landscapes and the ceremonial stone feature sites contained therein are, in our opinion, critical to understanding why medicine wheels are where they are.



We illustrate this significance through a review of our past four years of study at the Bull's Forehead and Minor Medicine Wheel Complexes at and above the Forks of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan rivers. These large-scale ceremonial complexes, each extending over 10 km along and 1-5 km behind the valley edges and containing 1000s of ceremonial stone features, are situated and constructed to be where significant focal river valley landscape features are visible.

They were places of pilgrimage, constructed over a period of 1000-2000 years by ancestral Gros Ventre prior to their decimation by European diseases in the 1500s. They continued to be venerated and visited by Blackfoot peoples who shared this landscape and continued to construct their own memorial style medicine wheels along these rivers.

These complexes and archaeological river valley and prairie edge landscapes in which they lie are certainly among the largest and best preserved of their kind in Canada and deserve recognition, designation, interpretation and protection by our provincial and federal governments.



Dr. Brian Reeves (Barney) obtained a BA in Philosophy from the U of Calgary (1963) and took the first courses offered in archaeology from Dick Forbis. He carried on and completed his MA (1967) and PhD (1972) in Archaeology from U of Calgary, carrying out the first large scale excavations at the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in the 60's and directing the first archaeological inventories of Waterton, Banff, and Jasper National Parks between 1967-1972. Barney founded Lifeways of Canada Limited with three partners in 1972, the first Archaeological consulting company in AB. Currently he is working as an independent researcher on fun field archaeological projects, principally the Forks Project.



Dr. Margaret Kennedy is an Associate Professor in the Dept. of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Sask. and has taught there since 1993. Before taking up that position she taught at the University of Lethbridge for six years during and after her completion of her Ph.D at U of C and before that she was employed at Lifeways of Canada after obtaining her MA in 1979 at the U of C. All of her work and research since arriving in Calgary from Ontario in 1976 has taken place in the northwestern plains in both pre-contact and historical archaeology. Most recently, Margaret has been working on the Cabri Lakes and Forks Projects. The interconnected landscape aspects of both of these projects is what really interests her.