

# Session Presentations

## Session One: The Northern Edges of Greater Chaco

8:45 am – 9:10 am

### Alison Robinson

**Title:**

The Ripple Effect: How Teaching Legacies Shape a Classroom Abstract

**Abstract:** This paper reflects on the legacy of Cathy Cameron and Steve Lekson as educators and archaeologists, and examines how their teaching philosophies laid the groundwork and continued to shape my career in elementary education over the past 15 years. Drawing on my background in archaeology and experiences at the University of Colorado, I illustrate how Cathy and Steve demonstrated a sincere commitment to their students, encouraged intellectual inquiry, and modeled the joy of teaching. Their emphasis on critical thinking, historical nuance, and connecting material culture to lived human experience laid the foundation for my own educational pedagogy. Cathy and Steve's legacy lies in the power of critical inquiry, respect for complexity, and the attention to human stories. These are essential tools for educating the next generation and for navigating the boundaries between past and present. The paper traces my pivot from archaeology to elementary education, where I now teach 5th grade at Lewis-Arriola Elementary School in Cortez, Colorado. Faced with state standards that require students to grapple with Indigenous histories and the imbalance of power, I believe that these complex topics should not be avoided at a young age, but thoughtfully introduced to "plant the seed" for deeper understanding. I contrast the traditional, oversimplified approaches to teaching prehistory with my own classroom practices learned from Cathy and Steve: challenging stereotypes with culturally responsive teaching and reinforcing the continuity of native communities with the inclusion of native voices.

**Biography:**

Alison Robinson is a 5th grade teacher at Lewis-Arriola Elementary School in Cortez, Colorado. She has been in this position for the past 13 years but also has a background in archaeology. She graduated from James Madison University with a bachelor of science in Historical Archaeology in 2006. She interned at Crow Canyon Archaeological Center before completing her Masters in Southwest Archaeology at the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2010 under her advisor, Dr. Cathy Cameron. Her master's thesis and published articles focused on tower architecture in southeast Utah. She worked for Woods Canyon Archaeological Consultants in Cortez until she returned to school to get her teacher's license in elementary education from Western State University in 2013.

9:10 am – 9:35 am

## **Jonathan Till**

### **Title:**

The Bluff Great House, the Legacy of Chaco, and the Deep History of the American Southwest

### **Abstract:**

University of Colorado researchers Catherine Cameron and Stephen Lekson studied great house landscapes in southeastern Utah under the aegis of the Bluff Great House Project, probing and extending the idea of the Chaco Phenomenon in the larger Mesa Verde region, especially in southeastern Utah. Six field school sessions at the Bluff Great House provided insightful architectural data, invaluable information about material culture, and brilliant collaborative insights from descendant community knowledge-holders for the deep history of the Bluff Valley and its Ancestral community centers. This presentation uses the Bluff Great House Project collections housed at the Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum to underscore the contributions of Cameron and Lekson to Ancestral histories in southeastern Utah, the larger Four Corners country, and the expansive American Southwest.

### **Biography:**

Jonathan has worked in field, laboratory, and museum settings throughout his career as an archaeologist in the northern Southwest. Jonathan was employed by the University of Colorado field school as a crew chief before he elected to return to graduate school at CU Boulder. Under the tutelage of Cameron and Lekson and others, Till researched Ancestral roads in southeastern Utah, continuing a focus on the Chaco Phenomenon. Jonathan is the Curator of Collections at Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum in Blanding, Utah.

9:35 am – 10:00 am

## **Winston Hurst**

### **Title:**

Bluff Then, Bluff Now

### **Abstract:**

The Bluff Great House holds an important place in the history of great house investigations in Utah. Steve Lekson brought the Chaco excitement into Utah when he recognized the Bluff big bump as a Chaco Outlier in about 1983. Cathy Cameron's later work at Bluff continues to stand as the most intensive and best reported work at a Utah great house. In this talk, we will look backward and forward from the Lekson and Cameron contributions to a time when the Bluff "Castle" was first recognized as an

ancient community center with roads by a mysterious Muslim traveler in 1897; and forward to the recent unfolding of the northern San Juan Landscape into a vast world of numerous great houses with many miles of roads, many dozens of carved race tracks and hundreds of square miles of monumentally manipulated agricultural berm-swale landscapes. The Puebloan archaeological landscape in the northern San Juan looks very different in 2026 than it did at the turn of the 21st century.

**Biography:**

Winston B. Hurst was born to the smell of sagebrush in southeastern Utah and has been actively engaged in the study of ancient Puebloan Archaeology for more than a half-century. He has studied and written many things and holds a qualifying piece of paper from Eastern New Mexico University.

10:00 am – 10:15 am

**Break**

10:15 am – 10:40 am

**Jason Chuipka**

**Title:**

What Was and What's Next: Large Project Archaeology in the Northern Southwest

**Abstract:**

It may be argued that cultural resource management (CRM) is currently in a liminal state. Liminality is a transitional state between "what was" and "what's next." Liminal states are characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty, the alteration of traditional hierarchies, and the formation of new ways of doing things. The hegemony of the Western scientific paradigm in archaeological practice is being re-evaluated while the traditional knowledge of descendant communities has gained influence in shaping the management of cultural resources. The old patterns that shaped CRM have not yet gone away, but new ones have not yet fully formed. By comparing two large-scale data recovery projects in the Northern San Juan region -- one from the early 2000s and one that is wrapping up — this paper examines how the practice of archaeology has changed in one generation. By examining "what was", we can look ahead to "what's next" for archaeological studies in the region.

**Biography:**

Jason Chuipka is the co-owner and Principal Investigator for Woods Canyon Archaeological Consultants, Inc. in Cortez, Colorado. His archaeological career spans more than 30 years in the northern Southwest. He was a graduate student at the University of Colorado in the early 2000s. Cathy Cameron was his advisor and Steve Lekson was on his M.A. committee. The lessons learned while a graduate student and the scholarship of both Cathy and Steve continue to influence his work today.

10:40 am – 11:05 am

## **Dave Dove**

### **Title:**

The Long Build - Structural Social Status and Their Roofs, Tree-Rings from the Mitchell Springs Group - Multi Great House Community in the Central Montezuma Valley

### **Abstract:**

The Mitchell Springs Group is a large 'watershed' community that was occupied for almost 600 years (AD 650-1240) and contained several great houses, great kivas, and roads. It has been dated by 550 tree-ring dates from 33 structure roofs that present a picture of roof building behaviors. Some were clearly constructed with contemporary wood that was cut within a few years of construction while others incorporated wood that appears to have been stockpiled over a period of more than a decade and included beams that were taken from the roofs of earlier buildings. These 'long-build' structures, appear to have been considered special in some way by their creators. This presentation focuses on those buildings and explores why they may have been viewed as special.

**Biography:** TBA

## **Session Two: The Middle San Juan, Chaco Canyon, and the Southern San Juan Basin**

11:05 am – 11:30 am

## **Steven Rospopo**

### **Title:**

Getting the Point: Advances in Middle San Juan Outlier Archaeology, Steven Rospopo and Linda Wheelbarger, Totah Archeological Project, San Juan College

### **Abstract:**

Nineteen years of research in the Middle San Juan River basin revealed secrets of Chaco Outliers in San Juan County, New Mexico. Intensive surveys and excavations have identified five multicomponent ancestral Puebloan center place occupation clusters south of the San Juan River. Analyses of site architecture and ceramics suggest four cultural tradition influences over 700 years. 37 ceramic types representing four ceramic traditions were identified from Basketmaker to Pueblo III time periods.

Cibola tradition ceramics and architectural suggest an Chaco regional influence from 850 AD to 1050 AD. Evidence suggests that the Point Great House outlier community was an component of the Chaco Phenomenon expansion northward from Chaco Canyon into the Middle San Juan region from AD 1040 to AD 1180. Analyses of the archaeological record at LA8619, suggests continuous occupation from 700 AD to 1300 AD. Continuing research from other cluster sites, will refine our understanding of Chaco Regional Influence.

### **Biographies:**

Steven Rospopo is in the process of becoming a professional archaeologist completing a master's degree in Southwest Studies at New Mexico Highlands University. Steven has worked fourteen years in the Middle San Juan region, has done research in the Jemez, compliance work in the Ojito Wilderness, and currently is conducting research in the Eastern Salinas region of Central New Mexico on paleolithic footprint trackways, and the occupation history of the Northern Salinas/Northern Mogollon jacal/pueblo I cultural phases from 800-1100 AD in the Chupadero and Round Mountain areas of Central New Mexico. Steven is preparing the synthesis report of the Totah Archaeological Project analyses, activities, excavation and survey activities of Middle San Juan archaeological sites (1999-2025), expected to be released in 2027.

Linda Wheelbarger is a professional archaeologist who first came to the Southwest in the summer of 1978 to work in the Dolores Archaeological Program. Through the early 1980's, Wheelbarger worked on survey projects in the Animas-La Plata Reservoir, Rifle-San Juan Powerline, and Vermejo Park for York Canyon Coal Mine while settling permanently in the city of Farmington, NM. She worked at the Salmons Ruins Division of Conservation Archaeology and was the director of San Juan College's Cultural Resources Management Program (SJC-CRMP). She directed the archaeological field school from 2006-2025, taught public archaeology programs and excavated sites in Middle San Juan region since 1999. The field school has been excavated the LA8619 Point Great House Community from 2006-2025.

11:30 am – 1:00 pm

### **Lunch Break**

1:00 pm – 1:25 pm

### **Laurie Webster**

#### **Title:**

Identity, Ceremony, and Connection: Insights from the Chaco, Salmon, and Aztec Perishable Records

**Abstract:**

Sizeable collections of textiles, baskets, painted wood, and other perishable cultural items were preserved within the massive great-house walls of Chaco, Salmon, and Aztec. In this presentation, I explore the stylistic and technological richness of these perishable assemblages and their importance for understanding both shared and distinct ideological and social practices at these great-house communities.

**Biography:**

Dr. Laurie Webster is an anthropologist and independent scholar who specializes in the perishable material culture of the American Southwest. She is a visiting scholar in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Arizona and a Research Associate at the American Museum of Natural History and the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center. She has documented archaeological perishable collections from Chaco, Salmon, and Aztec, and currently leads the collaborative Cedar Mesa Perishables Project to document perishable collections from southeastern Utah. She lives in Mancos, Colorado.

1:25 pm – 1:50 pm

**Paul Reed**

**Title:** Looking Back at Quarter Century: What We Learned from Taking a Fresh Look at Salmon Pueblo and the Middle San Juan

**Abstract:**

Time flies, as we say in the modern world. In the archaeological world, 25 years is barely a blink of the eye. Yet, this much time has passed since Archaeology Southwest partnered with Salmon Ruins Museum to re-examine and complete the seminal research of Cynthia Irwin-Williams and her team at Salmon Pueblo and across the Middle San Juan region. The passage of time allows for reflection and, perhaps, a fresh view of Salmon's role in the ancient Puebloan world. In particular, close engagement with Pueblo descendant communities over the last 10 years has enhanced our understanding of the Chacoan and post-Chacoan periods across the region. In this paper, I'll offer a new perspective on old questions.

**Biography:**

Paul Reed has been a Preservation Archaeologist with Tucson-based Archaeology Southwest since 2001. He lives north of Taos, New Mexico. Reed works extensively with southwestern Pueblos and Tribes to protect landscapes and elevate Indigenous voices. Among Reed's recent writing is an edited book (with Gary M. Brown as co-editor) entitled *Aztec, Salmon, and the Pueblo Heartland of the Middle San Juan*, published in SAR Press' Popular Series in 2018. He also served as editor (and author of several chapters) on *Chaco's Northern Prodigies: Salmon, Aztec, and the Ascendancy of the Middle San Juan Region After AD 1100*, published by the University of Utah Press (2008). Reed was also editor (and author of several chapters) of the three-volume, comprehensive report entitled *Thirty-Five Years of Archaeological Research at Salmon*

*Ruins, New Mexico* published in 2006. His other books – *The Puebloan Society of Chaco Canyon* (2004) and *Foundations of Anasazi Culture* (published in 2000; as editor and author) have explored the origins of Puebloan culture and Chaco Canyon.

Over the last 15 years, Reed has been working to protect the Greater Chaco Landscape from the effects of expanded oil-gas development. Together with Tribal and NGO partners, Archaeology Southwest has focused on strengthening and expanding protections to sites, traditional cultural places, and fragile landscapes across the greater San Juan Basin. In 2022, Reed and filmmaker David Wallace produced a short documentary film: *Protecting Chaco's 10-mile Zone*, which features Pueblo and Navajo cultural leaders. The film was awarded a Rocky Mountain Southwest Chapter regional Emmy in Nov. 2023.

1:50 pm – 2:15 pm

## **Heather Seltzer-Rogers**

### **Title:**

Landscape Patterns and Two Pueblitos (*Bee Holdzil*) in the Dinétah Region of Northwestern New Mexico

### **Abstract:**

In support of improving outdated site records and preservation of cultural resources on state trust land, the New Mexico State Land Office contracted out the documentation of two Diné pueblitos (*bee holdzil*) in the ancestral homelands of Dinétah in northwestern New Mexico. These *bee holdzil*, both of which date to the eighteenth to late nineteenth century, represent a uniquely Diné structure type restricted to this area and are commonly interpreted as defensive positioning during a time of increasing internecine conflict. This presentation discusses the results of this survey conducted by Chronicle Heritage in 2025 and focuses on the two sites in terms of larger questions such as the role and history of *bee holdzil* and landscape patterns within Chaco Canyon and Jasis Canyon.

### **Biography:**

Heather Seltzer-Rogers received her Masters of Anthropology in 2017 from the University of Colorado, Boulder where Cathy Cameron served as her advisor. After graduation, Heather worked for Aspen CRM Solutions in Santa Fe for three years before beginning her career at Chronicle Heritage as a Project Manager and she has been the New Mexico Office Principal for over a year. Heather has extensive survey experience throughout New Mexico and on Fort Huachuca in southeastern Arizona, has recorded sites in Zion and Death Valley National Parks, and excavated at a historic-era site in central Texas.

2:15 pm – 2:40 pm

## **Rob Weiner**

**Title:**

New Research on the Chaco South Road

**Abstract:**

I will present recent fieldwork on the Chaco South Road, discussing newly found architectural sites along the road, small features including carved steps, and the road's relationship with sacred geography. Numerous aspects of the South Road's archaeology suggest it may predate the 11th century height of monumentality at Chaco Canyon, raising questions about the connections between roads and the rise of Chaco as a religiopolitical center. I will also compare the archaeology of the South Road with that of the better-known North Road, discussing how these two regional-scale corridors functioned within the Chaco World.

**Biography:**

Robert Weiner, Ph.D. is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Society of Fellows at Dartmouth College, where he is affiliated with the Department of Religion. His research focuses on Chaco Canyon and its world, with particular attention to Chacoan religion, monumental roads, and Diné oral histories. Weiner earned concurrent BA-MA degrees from Brown University and a PhD from the University of Colorado Boulder. He has published nineteen peer reviewed articles and book chapters, and he has won grants and fellowships from the National Science Foundation, American Philosophical Society, and School for Advanced Research among other funders. Weiner conducts archaeological fieldwork on the Navajo Nation and elsewhere throughout the Four Corner.

2:40 pm – 2:55 pm

## **Break**

2:55 pm – 3:20 pm

## **Jeremy Moss**

**Title:**

A Diachronic Analysis of Obsidian Use at Chaco Canyon

**Abstract:**

The strength of Chaco's regional interactions has been partly defined by the presence of non-local goods including obsidian, which were imported from the surrounding region. Taking a diachronic look at Chaco obsidian use from AD 500 to 1250, we use the largest sample of XRF sourced obsidian available to date and combine this with technological

analyses to identify significant changes in where and how Chacoans obtained and used obsidian. In the AD 700s obsidian from the more distant Jemez Mountains began to supplant the closer Mt. Taylor obsidian. The obsidian is of roughly equal quality, suggesting this shift relates primarily to social factors and not raw material constraints. We find there is more variation over time in obsidian source use and acquisition strategies than previously noted. The patterning appears to be due to social factors related to regional and local cultural diversity, social and organizational heterogeneity, and the development of new exchange networks. This work builds upon and honors Dr. Catherine Cameron's significant contributions to the study of Chaco chipped stone use and economic systems in the region.

**Biography:**

Jeremy M. Moss is currently the Chief of Resource Stewardship and Science, Archaeologist, and Tribal Liaison at Pecos National Historical Park, where he's served for 12 years. He holds a BA in Anthropology from the University of New Mexico and MA from the University of Wyoming and specializes in lithic analysis. Jeremy has worked for the National Park Service for 29 years in field archaeology and education, cultural and natural resource management, historic preservation, and tribal relations. He has worked at several parks including Chaco Culture NHP where he began his NPS career.

## **Session Three: Escapades through Southern New Mexico**

3:20 pm – 3:45 pm

### **Samuel Cason**

**Title:**

Rock-Art Studies in the Sierra de las Uvas, Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument, Doña Ana County, New Mexico. Authors: Samuel Cason, Philip Leckman, Kimberley Babicz, David Unruh, and Emmanuel Macias

**Abstract:**

In 2023, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) contracted Statistical Research, Inc. (SRI) to document 14 sites with rock art imagery in the Sierra de las Uvas within the Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument in southern New Mexico. Fieldwork was conducted in 2024 and 2025. SRI relocated 13 of the sites and documented 63 panels and 288 individual elements. Imagery includes abstract designs (many of which are attributed to the Archaic period), Jornada-style motifs including mythical characters (e.g., goggle-eye figures), and 19 images that are likely associated with Apache cosmological figures—Gaan or Mountain Spirits. A spatial analysis characterizes the sites and project area in relation to their natural settings in a sky-island landscape. It also examines the distribution elements associated with different time periods and cultural affiliations with an emphasis on panel viewsheds and intervisibility. A central component of the project was tribal participation. Members of four descendant

communities visited the sites with SRI and BLM project proponents and shared their perspectives and reflections about the sites, rock images, and the landscape in which they are embedded.

**Biography:** Samuel Cason is a Project Archaeologist for Statistical Research, Inc. He conducts research and practices cultural resource management in the North American west with an emphasis on indigenous lifeways in the Trans-Pecos, Southern Plains, and Jornada Mogollon regions in New Mexico and far-West Texas.

3:45 pm – 4:05 pm

## **Jakob Sedig**

**Title:** Recounting the Last 20 Years of Mimbres Archaeological Research

**Abstract:** I met Cathy Cameron and Steve Lekson nearly 20 years ago, as a young, enthusiastic graduate student with little experience in Southwest archaeology. This paper is a personal reflection and a professional synthesis: it begins by revisiting my journey into Mimbres archaeology with Cathy and Steve as guides, then highlights key developments in Mimbres archaeology during the past decade, particularly in cultural resource management (CRM). I also cogitate on the future of Mimbres research and why I remain optimistic despite new challenges.

**Biography:** Jakob Sedig received his PhD in Anthropology from the University of Colorado. His research focused on the archaeology of the US Southwest, particularly the Mimbres region of southwest New Mexico and the social demographic, and environmental transformations that occurred during the Transitional phase (CE 900-1000). After completing his doctorate, Jakob was awarded a position of Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Ethics and Outreach Officer at the Reich Laboratory of Medical and Population Genetics, Harvard University. During his time in the Reich Laboratory, Jakob worked to more fully integrate ancient DNA with archaeological studies. Jakob's work has also focused on the ethical issues of paleogenomic research, particularly those involving sampling methods and engagement with Indigenous communities. Jakob currently is a Senior Archaeologist with Chronicle Heritage, serving as a Principal Investigator for the Phoenix and Albuquerque offices.

4:05 pm – 4:30 pm

## **Thatcher Seltzer-Rogers**

**Title:**

Leksonian Mimbres and Beyond

**Abstract:**

Archaeological interpretations of southwestern New Mexico typically focus upon the elaborate black-on-white (and occasionally, polychromatic) figurative artistry of the Mimbres culture. Historically, researchers nearly entirely construct their interpretations on what "Mimbres" means on a set of key, variably large sites in the Mimbres valley itself. These include the well-known Galaz, Mattocks, NAN, Old Town, and Swartz sites as well as a few lesser-known others such as Black Mountain, Cameron Creek, Elk Ridge, Gila Encantada, and Harris. Throughout his early career, and well before and partially concurrent to his Chaco-'fame', Steve Lekson, however, in addition to serving in a key oversight role for doctoral student excavations at two important sites (Black Mountain and Woodrow Ruin with Cathy Cameron) provided some of the most important descriptions, interpretations, and excavation data for sites along the Upper Gila, a far poorer understood and intriguingly slightly divergent component of Mimbres. This presentation provides preliminary summaries for several distinct research projects initiated in southwestern New Mexico that have their origins through discussions with Steve and highlights their importance to reframing our understanding of "Mimbres."

**Biography:**

Thatcher Seltzer-Rogers earned his PhD in Anthropology with distinction from the University of New Mexico in 2023 and has extensive archaeological experience in southern Arizona and throughout New Mexico. He is currently a Principal Investigator for Chronicle Heritage, where he oversees project quality and deliverables throughout the Southwest. He is the author of over a dozen peer-reviewed articles and over 40 edited books, book chapters, and scholarly articles as well as hundreds of technical report contributions. He is the current President for the Archaeological Society of New Mexico and also the New Mexico Archeological Council.