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A New Archaeological History of the Sheyenne Bend

Denizens of eastern North Dakota know that there is more to the history of this region than meets the eye. Mike Michlovic and George Holley pulled together over 30 years of archaeological field experience in southeastern North Dakota to write an accessible new history of the pre-European cultures on the Sheyenne Bend region.

Both Michael Michlovic and George Holley are Emeritus Professor s of Anthropology at Minnesota State University Moorhead, where Michlovic served as chair of the Department of Anthropology and Earth Science and president of the Council for Minnesota Archaeology. Holley excavated across the United States in the Southeast, Midwest, Plains, and Southwest, and in Mesoamerica where prehistoric ceramics became his specialty.

Mike Michlovic remarks that the new book, *The Archaeological Culture of the Sheyenne Bend*, "is an effort to make our work more accessible to a larger audience, and to put all of the sites we worked into a single story."

Beginning over 10,000 years ago, Michlovic and Holley welcome us into the world of the communities that lived around what is now the Sheyenne River in Walsh County, North Dakota. Retreating glaciers, the disappearance of Lake Agassiz, and the changing course of the Sheyenne River provide a vivid backdrop to the thousands of years of activity in this region that predate the arrival of Europeans.

For Michlovic and Holley, the story of these societies remains important to this day: "We were both educated as anthropologists, and as such were taught that there are no people in the world who are unimportant, and who, through understanding, don’t have something to teach the rest of us. We feel it is the same with the study of the past. There is something to learn from everyone’s past, not just the from the history of presently dominant societies."

Michlovic and Holley explain how the sites only gave up their history of the area when combined on a regional scale: "The Shea and Sprunk sites demonstrated the features of a previously unknown cultural entity in the Sheyenne region, the Rustad site by far the oldest site, and one well represented by the cultural deposits, and the Biesterfeldt site, now a National Historic Landmark reflecting the early history of the Cheyenne people."

Taken together these sites remind us "every people and every place have a past worth knowing, and it is vital that we learn this past before it is lost."

William Caraher, director of the Digital Press at the University of North Dakota and himself a field archaeologist, said, "Working on this book was particularly rewarding because it combined the press's interest in archaeology and North Dakota into a book that is both accessible and one of the very few book length studies of North Dakota archaeology published this century."

Like all books from The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota, it is available as a free download for the press's website or as a low cost paperback: https://thedigitalpress.org/sheyenne-bend/

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Photographs

Michlovic.jpg. Author Mike Michlovic in a trench. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Holley.jpg. Author George Holley studying finds in the field. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Field testing a site in the Sheyenne River floodplain.jpg. A view of a test trench on the Sheyenne River Flood plain. Photograph courtesy of the author.

Author Bios:

**Michael Michlovic** is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, Minnesota State University Moorhead, where he taught from 1975-2015, and served as chair of the Department of Anthropology and Earth Science. He studied anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh and received a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. Michlovic conducted fieldwork in the Eastern and Midwestern US, as well as the Northeastern Great Plains. His research interests include the archaeology of the Northeastern Plains, popular uses of the past, and the Archaic period. He is a former editor of the *Minnesota Archaeologist* and past president of the Council for Minnesota Archaeology.

**George R. Holley** is currently Emeritus Professor, Minnesota State University Moorhead. He earned his PhD in Anthropology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Holley has been practicing archaeology since 1973 across the United States in the Southeast, Midwest, Plains, and Southwest, and in Mesoamerica. Prehistoric ceramics are his specialty and he has created ceramic sequences for Tchefuncte ceramics in Louisiana, the Cahokia site and Middle Silver Creek in Illinois, the Sheyenne Bend region in North Dakota, and for the Classic Maya city of Piedras Negras, Guatemala. He is presently working on a Handbook for Minnesota Precontact Ceramics.