REVIEWS

The Indigenous Paleolithic of the Western Hemisphere. PAULETTE F. C. STEEVES. 2021. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. xxvii + 294 pp. $65.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-4962-0217-8.

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This publication will certainly draw controversy, but it also contains the potential to create closer connections and deeper conversations with Indigenous communities, in part through its demand that we decolonize research into the earliest peoples in the Western Hemisphere. The most controversial aspect of Paulette Steeves's book is her claim that people have been in the Western Hemisphere prior to the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM, >23,000 cal BP), and perhaps as far back as 100,000 years or more. Many archaeologists, particularly those studying the earliest human inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, will focus on Chapters 5 and 6, in which Steeves summarizes findings from more than two dozen sites that report early occupations. Additional data and references detailing Pleistocene-era sites from both Western and Eastern Hemispheres fill the appendix. Many of these sites will be familiar to archaeologists; they include several that have some level of acceptance within archaeological circles, including Monte Verde, Chile; Meadowcroft Rockshelter, Pennsylvania; and Cactus Hill, Virginia; as well as more controversial sites such as the Cerutti Mastodon and Calico sites in southern California. In Chapter 7, Steeves draws on paleogenetic and linguistic research as well as oral histories to further argue for a deep Indigenous presence in the Western Hemisphere. With this wide array of information sources, and with a narrative written in an engaging and often very personal register, this book will find a broad audience outside of academia and will likely convince many that people were living in the Western Hemisphere prior to the LGM.

Archaeologists, particularly those engaged in Pleistocene-era research, are far less likely to be convinced by the author's short site summaries, and the cursory discussion of genetic and linguistic studies will not sway many already familiar with the literature. Steeves wrote her book before the publication of the White Sands footprints in New Mexico (Matthew R. Bennett et al., "Evidence of Humans in North America during the Last Glacial Maximum," *Science* 373:1528–1531, 2021), perhaps the strongest evidence yet of people living in the Western Hemisphere prior to 20,000 years ago, although even this evidence has been contested (David B. Madsen et al., "Comment," *Science* 375:eabm4678, 2022), which Steeves would likely see as further strengthening one of her core claims: the peopling of the Western Hemisphere is an academic war zone where claims pushing back the timing of entrance require nearly impossible levels of proof, and careers can be upended for supporting the "wrong" theories. For Steeves, this reluctance to accept early dates reflects a continuation of colonial priorities that required a shallow Indigenous presence in the Western Hemisphere to justify genocide, land acquisition, and the subjugation of Native peoples. Archaeologists engaged in Pleistocene-era research are sure to bristle at this accusation and will instead say that their work follows Carl Sagan's directive that "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." I doubt that many archaeologists, geneticists, or linguists will find the evidence provided in this book to be extraordinary, so their opinions about the peopling of the Western Hemisphere will likely remain the same as they were before reading it.

Because it lacks novel or detailed datasets and is written for a broader public, many might be inclined to disregard this book—which would be a shame, given that it has so much more to offer, and it should be widely read. Writing from an Indigenous viewpoint, Steeves begins and ends the book discussing the harm archaeological research can inflict on Indigenous peoples and how we must refashion our discipline to be more receptive, considerate, and welcoming to these communities. A range of Indigenous

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and non-Indigenous researchers have made similar critiques to decolonize our discipline. What makes this book unique is that it focuses on how "Paleoindian" studies, especially Clovis-based research, has impacted modern Indigenous communities. This intervention into the study of late Pleistocene and even early Holocene research is critical as Steeves correctly identifies a flawed assumption held by many archaeologists as well as the broader public: Indigenous peoples feel less and less connected to their pasts based on the flow of time. Steeves drives this point home most clearly in her discussion of the Ancient One (also known as Kennewick Man), in which members of the archaeological community—and their lawyers—argued (with some success) that the age of the remains effectively discounted the concerns of modern Native American communities. In part based on the outrage caused by the Ancient One case, archaeologists working with ancestral remains have increasingly come to appreciate the need to engage with descendant communities, even when they are many thousands of years old. Steeves takes the discussion one step further: it is not just the remains that Indigenous peoples claim their rights over—it is the ability to create their own narratives and interpretations describing their arrival and initial occupation of the Western Hemisphere and that they can utilize archaeological data in this task. This move to claim archaeological data as a tool to formulate an Indigenous-centered narrative is important on many levels, not the least of which is that it offers an opportunity to decolonize our discipline.

In Chapters 1 and 2, Steeves revisits the problematic history of archaeology as an outgrowth of colonialism—a well-trodden topic to be sure—but she provides a particularly elegant description of how archaeology has caused social, cultural, and psychological harm to Indigenous peoples by "cleaving links" (p. 48) between modern communities and their ancestral relations and lands. Limiting the human history of the Western Hemisphere to 12,000 years or less is certainly one way in which Steeves sees archaeology as undercutting Indigenous peoples' claims to their pasts, but so is the tendency many archaeologists have of dehumanizing past peoples—particularly those living many thousands of years ago. As an example of this dehumanization, Steeves points to the use of "Clovis people" or "Clovis culture" to describe a pan-continental distribution of communities that she argues were far more diverse than suggested by this singular nomenclature. The dehumanization of Indigenous pasts, along with an underappreciation for their temporal depth, helps inform what Steeves describes as "agnotology"—a "pedagogy of intentional ignorance" (p. 51)—in which the general public actively works to not understand or appreciate the lives, cultures, and histories of Indigenous peoples. According to Steeves, such ignorance helps "perpetuate discrimination, racism, and the reproduction of colonialism" (p. 51) and negatively impacts the social, political, and economic lives of modern Indigenous peoples, who suffer extremely high rates of suicide and murder, more often live in underserved communities, and have less opportunity for socioeconomic advancement. It is rare that archaeologists consider the impacts of their work on the lives of descendant groups, especially when studying truly ancient peoples, but Steeves makes a compelling case that our research does not occur in a bubble—it has real-world consequences that can harm, or heal, modern communities. Steeves's book comes at a critical point for archaeology, given that our discipline (like so many others) struggles to remain relevant, strives to face its colonial past, and responds to an era of racial reckoning. Steeves and others (e.g., Bonnie L. Pitblado, "On Rehumanizing Pleistocene People of the Western Hemisphere," *American Antiquity* 87:217–235, 2022) demonstrate that these struggles and responses must not be limited only to researchers working in the more recent past (although historic archaeologists are way ahead in this work) but instead must begin at the roots of archaeology in the Western Hemisphere.

The potential for healing is a theme that runs through *The Indigenous Paleolithic of the Western Hemisphere* and becomes central in its final chapter. Using the evocative terms such as "pyroepistemology" and "pyroregeneration" (p. 184), Steeves calls for a fiery purge of outdated archaeological narratives—many inseparable from their colonial roots—thereby allowing the growth of new ideas based on modern evidence and novel interpretive lenses, including Indigenous ways of knowing the world. Steeves details how archaeology—much as a landscape heals and grows back stronger after a fire—can become more relevant, responsive, and respectful to Indigenous peoples by understanding the human costs incurred when archaeological narratives separate descendant groups from their pasts, no matter how ancient. Although parts of the book are polemic, Steeves concludes by stating that her goals are to "open a discourse" about the assumptions informing the archaeological study of the peopling of the Western Hemisphere and for archaeologists to "reflexively consider the impacts of their work on Indigenous populations" (p. 184). These goals ought to be widely shared among archaeologists, and they are good reasons to read and respond to this book.

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