Western Michigan University anthropology students and citizens of the Pokagon Band have begun to identify areas of shared interest that can be pursued in building a relationship to create more inclusive histories in the St. Joseph River valley.

SHARED INTERESTS BETWEEN THE POKAGON BAND AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS

By doing collaborative research, anthropologists create bonds with communities like the Pokagon Band. Collaborative research is mutually beneficial for communities when common interests are identified. Engaging in collaborative projects demonstrates how the discipline of anthropology has become more inclusive and accountable to community groups. Since anthropologists are interested in culture, past and present, they can assist groups like the Pokagon Band in recovering their history and keeping their traditions alive. Together they can work to disseminate knowledge about Native culture to the public.

WORKING TOGETHER

The Pokagon Band is represented on the Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Advisory Committee and participates in Project activities. Efforts can be made to strengthen the partnership by exploring new areas of shared interest. Both the Pokagon Band and archaeologists are interested in recovering the hidden histories of the Native peoples in southwest Michigan. Collaborating with the Pokagon Band can provide an understanding of their values and their perspectives on the interactions that took place during the fur trade era in the St. Joseph River valley. Both communities are interested in Fort St. Joseph because the site was a multi-ethnic settlement inhabited by both French and Native Americans. Collaboration between anthropologists and Native Americans promotes positive understandings of this chapter of American history.

KEEPING TRADITIONS ALIVE AN MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

Citizens of the Pokagon Band are interested in preserving and communicating Potawatomi language, culture, and history. It is important to them to revive and maintain traditional values. Native peoples possess knowledge that would have been traded at Fort St. Joseph. Future efforts might include a lecture series co-hosted by the citizens of the Band and members of the Project. Potential collaborations between the two communities include the Next Exit Generation application, which would be a novel way of sharing history and material culture uncovered at Fort St. Joseph with a wide digital audience. Another partnership could be a lecture series co-hosted by the citizens of the Band and members of the Project. Lectures could feature presentations of interest to both groups such as the ways in which head knowledge is created about Native and colonial history, traditional practices and histories, traditional medicine, and spirituality. Moving forward in collaboration with the citizens of the Pokagon Band can foster connections that will allow for greater knowledge and discovery in the future.

A HISTORY OF COLLABORATION IN THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER VALLEY

The Pokagon Band and archaeologists are interested in recovering the hidden histories of the Native peoples in southwest Michigan. Collaborating with the Pokagon Band can provide an understanding of their values and their perspectives on the interactions that took place during the fur trade era in the St. Joseph River valley. Both communities are interested in Fort St. Joseph because the site was a multi-ethnic settlement inhabited by both French and Native Americans. Collaboration between anthropologists and Native Americans promotes positive understandings of this chapter of American history.

Awigamog, the chief of the Potawatomis of the St. Joseph River valley, resisted removal. The 1833 Treaty of Chicago called for the removal of Natives from the Great Lakes area. A group led by Leopold Pokagon, the chief of the Potawatomis of the St. Joseph River valley, resisted removal. The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi is represented on the Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Advisory Committee and participates in Project activities. Efforts can be made to strengthen the partnership by exploring new areas of shared interest. Both the Pokagon Band and archaeologists are interested in recovering the hidden histories of the Native peoples in southwest Michigan. Collaborating with the Pokagon Band can provide an understanding of their values and their perspectives on the interactions that took place during the fur trade era in the St. Joseph River valley. Both communities are interested in Fort St. Joseph because the site was a multi-ethnic settlement inhabited by both French and Native Americans. Collaboration between anthropologists and Native Americans promotes positive understandings of this chapter of American history.

Diagrams and photos courtesy of the Pokagon Band’s Public Archives.