

**WHAT WE LEARN FROM NEVIS POTTERS: KEEPING VISIBILITY
OF AFRO-CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY AND CULTURE ALIVE
AGAINST EVOLVING NEOLIBERALISM**

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By

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The Undersigned Graduate Committee Approves the Project Report Titled
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CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY AND CULTURE ALIVE AGAINST EVOLVING
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ABSTRACT

Newcastle Pottery is a cooperative recognized as an important focal point of traditional heritage of Nevis – St. Kitts. Along with potters in this organization, we co-created a documentary, *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters*, to raise awareness of conflicts involved in maintaining future pottery production in Nevis and possible solutions. I conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews with different Nevis residents, local artists, and government officials to collect accounts demonstrating various ways the pottery is valued and can be maintained. I paired vital insights from interviews with different visuals of Nevisian Pottery and its potters. This platform will engage stakeholders to contemplate values of hospitality, history conservation, and heritage management to develop potential solutions using tourism to support the pottery's longevity. In this report, I overview my project and the creation of its deliverable. I present the literature research and anthropology methodology that informed my collaborative work with Newcastle Pottery. I analyze the interview findings featured in the documentary to my research question and discuss next steps for the project.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this graduate project to Jennifer Anderson, Ph.D. Dr. Anderson, I never wanted the semester to end when I was lucky to be in one (or a few) of your classes. Your captivating stories and the moving devotion to learning you shared each day made up so much of the foundation of my dearest times as a university student. You had lit a match the day you passed along Alfred Gell's "The Art of Play", and later "The Road Through Miyama" by Leila Philip for me to read. That fire has since led my path here, with tales of cooking clay that warmed me along the way. Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCING THE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT WITH NEWCASTLE
POTTERY

Introducing the Project

Research Question and Project Deliverable

In this project, I focus on Afro-Caribbean ware traditions and how tourism sustains the craft. This project addresses the research question: *How is maintenance of traditional Afro-Caribbean ware applicable to supporting modern initiatives and needs of global societies in the Caribbean?* I partnered with Newcastle Pottery, and its potters Almena Cornelius and Mareelyn Evelyn to spotlight their perspectives as practitioners of traditional Afro-Caribbean ware (which I also refer to as Nevis Pottery in this report) to co-create a project design that will influence perseverance efforts and research inquiry linked to their craft.

Our three-year collaboration produced the ethnographic movie *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters*, which captures the different ways stakeholders value Nevis pottery. It reveals that such pottery is vulnerable. The potters and their allies paint a future in which they can maintain pottery traditions for future generations. We intend the movie to ignite government intervention and community action for the continuation of Nevis pottery following Almena and Mareelyn's nearing retirement. A broader context of Caribbean anthropology, grassroots tourism, and historical processes of intertwined neoliberal and colonial influences that impact representations of people and place in the Caribbean informs this project. I incorporated methodologies that center rapport building and community

involvement in project planning. I drew on conceptual models in applied anthropology to guide this project, including using a “partnership approach” and incorporating “appreciative inquiry.” Publicizing how residents and practitioners connect to Nevis pottery humanizes Afro-Caribbean ware as a living heritage and distinguishes its representation away from limiting portrayals as an artifact of an ancient past. Despite Afro-Caribbean ware being an emerging focus in archeological research, these discoveries rarely support modern operations of production or engagement with resident communities who use the pottery. One goal of this report is to identify the need to bridge efforts and knowledge between historical research and front-line operations of the craft, which I anticipate will aid craft preservation.

Overview of the Project Report

I organized this project report into three chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the project’s community partner, objectives, and an overview of the project’s historical background and the literature research that has informed this project. Following, I present the project’s methods and a description of the deliverable and the informants featured in it. The second chapter is a standalone article manuscript for submission to *Practicing Anthropology*. I briefly summarize the overview of my project and assess the interview findings to my research question, along with the anthropological themes that guided this project. I end the article with a brief analysis and make additional suggestions to researchers, particularly those interested in Afro-Caribbean ware, to support leading work that is more aligned with benefitting the local people of the regions they study. In chapter three, I reflect on the project outcomes, limitations, next steps, and further takeaways.

Meeting the Project Partner Newcastle Pottery

Traditional Nevis pottery uses locally sourced clay manipulated with coil-building methods, stone-burnished surfaces colored with a red/orange iron oxide (molding, burnishing, and coloring techniques are shown below in Figure 1.2), and fired over an open flame of palm trees, coconut husks, cow dung, and other materials (a wood-firing is shown below in Figure 1.1). The pottery's appearance and production retain close resemblances to ancestral Central and West African traditions brought over to Nevis and used by the African people forced into bondage to provide labor for the sugar cane industry of Colonial England (Fay 2017, 136). In the past, pottery was the primary industry on Nevis and remnants of Nevisian centuries-old pottery found elsewhere across the Lesser Antilles confirm a long-standing history of inter-island interactions and Nevis being involved in the industry as an exporter of its local production (Heath 1999; Nicholson et al. 1999).



Figure 1.1: Newcastle Pottery Wood-Firing, 1994 (courtesy of Patricia J. Fay)



Figure 1.2: Coil-Building, Burnishing, Iron Oxide Coloring (courtesy of Patricia J. Fay)

Four generations of knowledge enable the current production of Nevis pottery in Newcastle village, Nevis through the work of Almena Cornelius (Miss George) and her cousin Mareelyn Evelyn. The two descend from the longest renowned family line of potters between Nevis and St. Kitts. Historically, women of African descent who learned the trade from older generations of females within their family produced Afro-Caribbean ware in Nevis (Fay 2017, 135). Almena and Mareelyn learned the craft by observing their grandmother Marrienne (Mary) Jeffers, their aunt Helena (Lena) Jones, and other potters of Newcastle village mold and fire the pottery. As children, adults tasked them with digging for the clay, sorting rocks and roots from the clay, and kneading it. They completed other tasks associated with preparing the wood-fires, such as collecting materials and setting up the fire pits. The tasks were very labor intensive, and time-consuming. Throughout Almena and Mareelyn's childhood, there was no electricity or cars on Nevis, which, made this work much harder than in the present day. Almena had taken up what she refers to as "the challenge," to continue the craft after it became stagnant following the retirement of her family members. Mareelyn joined Almena later on after finishing her career with the Nevis government.

Almena and Mareelyn manage and operate pottery production and sales from the pottery studio named Newcastle Pottery in Newcastle village (the studio is pictured below in Figure 1.3). The studio is a frequent field trip destination among primary schools and a resource of historical education for locals and visitors. They founded Newcastle Pottery in 1981 through international grants funded by USAID and Canada's CIDA to open a studio space to carry on the production from the elder potters of Newcastle and bring economic revenue from tourism (Fay 2017, 141). Newcastle Pottery derives most of its sales revenue

from tourists. It maintains a small local market, mostly among local businesses that commission the studio to create lamp holders and other decorations. The studio is the only local supplier of traditional clay pots between St. Kitts and Nevis for the community of Rastafarians that use them for *ital*¹.



Figure 1.3: Newcastle Pottery Studio (courtesy of the author)

In Nevis, historically, people have produced local pottery in Newcastle village, along the Northern shore of Nevis because of its location and natural resources. Newcastle’s landscape is abundant in clay deposits and permitted easy access for potters to sell their work by crossing the water to St. Kitts, which held a popular street market. The shore along

¹ “Rastafarian followers of Jah (i.e. God) adopt a particular way of eating, called *ital*, based on fresh, organic and preferably homegrown produce. Processed and tinned food, as well as any other products they believe to be ‘contaminated’ by preservatives or other additives, are off limits” (Danko 2021).

Newcastle is one of only three safe entries to Nevis because of harsh conditions of winds and waves. The Nevis government arranged the demolition of most of its central town buildings (referred to as the main road of Newcastle junction) to make way for the current Vance W. Amory International Airport. That airport was constructed in the 1950s and expanded in the 1990s with further destruction of historic structures, including a seventeenth century fort. As children, Almena and Mareelyn dug for clay near the shore of Camps, just as their older relatives had for as far as they can remember. This practice stopped once the site was sold to the Medical University of the Americas, built-in 1998. The potters now source their clay from the top of Herbert's Beach (pictured below in Figure 1.4), which is near Newcastle Pottery. This use may present future problems as the beach belongs to the historic Nisbet Hotel, which closed during the pandemic and is currently for sale to new investors.



Figure 1.4: Clay Site at Herbert's Beach (courtesy of Patricia J. Fay)

Project Objectives

Spotlighting the Potter's Perspective in Preservation Efforts

The potters of Newcastle Pottery informed my project objective to highlight issues and potential solutions linked to supporting the recruitment and retention of new practitioners of Nevis pottery. Mareelyn and Almena disclose that although previous outside efforts have been with good intentions, they have had little input in defining what support the pottery needs. The potters feel outside parties of help and influence are out of touch with the realities at hand for the craft's present and future. For example, the government previously became involved in supporting Newcastle Pottery through funding summer class programs at the studio, gifting a large electric kiln, and other heritage-related projects that have resulted in documenting and promoting Newcastle Pottery's work.

The gifting of the kiln was well-intentioned but uninformed as it undermines the potter's primary mission to promote the practice of traditional wood-firings, and has placed an additional burden on the potters. They must sell or donate the machine since the studio does not possess the electrical infrastructure to power it. Selling and transporting the large kiln is a strenuous task. Finding buyers and paying for the high costs of overseas shipping and transportation is challenging. Having an awareness of the production methods and labor that traditional Nevis pottery demands is crucial to understanding how this limits the practitioner's ability to contribute to the tradition's maintenance and deters new potters from committing to the craft. Operating sales, pottery production, and maintaining the studio space is a full-time job. The potters have few opportunities to seek out other forms of support for their craft.

Introducing Historical Background and Anthropology Literature Review

In the following section, I summarize the history of enslavement in Nevis-St. Kitts and the process of colonial rule being reproduced through historians upholding portrayals of this past that exclude the lives of the free and enslaved Afro-Caribbean laborers. I introduce the history of Afro-Caribbean ware as a legacy that disrupts portrayals of history that center colonial perspectives on enslavement in the West Indies. I next unpack the anthropological research on Caribbean tourism, the value of local participation in its development, and processes linked to the industry that impact representation of people and places in the Caribbean.

The colonial past of the West Indies shaped the current conditions that threaten the maintenance of Afro-Caribbean ware. Afro-Caribbean ware is an agent of change to disrupt the past. Resisting the ongoing colonial influence by asserting the visibility of Afro-Caribbean heritage is an effort to protect meaningful traditions. Traditional Afro-Caribbean pottery keeps the local community alive. It is a driving force in shaping regional representation and development.

Historical Background

A History Yet Untold: The Past Lives of the Enslaved Afro-Caribbean Laborers

Nevis is part of the two-island country, the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, in the Leeward Islands of the Eastern Caribbean. The island was previously a colony of the United Kingdom until 1983 and was once the epicenter of sugarcane production of the English colonial empire. Nevis's population of 12,000 residents is primarily of African descent. The English forcibly brought their ancestors from West and Central Africa during the Atlantic

slave trade to provide labor for the sugar cane industry. As explained by Ahlman, McKeown, and Schroedl (2009, 22), “The communities of free and enslaved laborers existed within a dominant English colonial military culture that sought to prevent and erase their cultural expression and individuality.” Previous historical interpretations of the West Indies posited structures of absolute control over the agency and culture of the African and Creole laborers in colonial society. This depiction was never the complete reality (Ferguson 1992; Hauser 2008; Olwig 1985).

Consequentially, many interpretations of the West Indies have relied primarily on historical documents written by the plantocracy (the ruling class of planters) that center the experiences and biases of the European side of plantation life (Ferguson 1992, xlv). Through these documents, planters perpetuate a colonial gaze—a symbolic hierarchy and erasure of the past through literary devices that describe African and Afro-Caribbean laborers as monocultural blank slates in the backgrounds of daily life, baring no cultural heritage or origin (Ferguson 1992; Hauser 2008). They negated such people’s involvement in building and maintaining the very plantations they were forced to operate (Ferguson 1992; Jackson 2020). Archeologist Leland Ferguson relays that West Africans who were forced into labor through the Atlantic Slave Trade were taken from a region the size of the United States. That region encompassed thousands of communities and cultures, from different lifestyles ranging from nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, farm regions, and pastoral tribes²” (Ferguson 1992, 24). The creolization of these different cultivation skills, craftsmanship, and cultures produced the self-sufficiency and capabilities that planters depended on and profited from

² nomadic groups that travel with a herd of domestic animals that they rely on for food

(Ferguson 1992, 24; Olwig 1985, 13). Laborers were, for the majority, entirely expected to provide for themselves. This entailed planters to encourage laborers to maintain their own provision grounds and with that, came different systems of economic and symbolic exchanges for survival (Hauser 2008; Olwig 1985).

Afro-Caribbean ware: Agency, Survival, and Culture

Afro-Caribbean ware, low-fired earthenware created by people of African descent throughout the Caribbean, is a significant artifact for inquiry into the past because of its archeological visibility and complex role in shaping the past lives of ancestral Afro-Caribbean communities (Ahlman et al. 2009; Hauser 2008). Beyond the pottery's uses for essential domestic needs such as cooking and storage, the craft presented a path for survival and cultural expression for the free and enslaved laborers within the colonial society. The potters used production in some regions (such as Nevis) as a risk minimization strategy to accumulate extra money and for social bonds to combat shortfalls of the unpredictable conditions of small plot farming (Ahlman, McKeown, and Schroedl 2009, 23).

Pottery production began as a cottage industry; they completed most tasks to create the pottery at home, except for duties associated with collecting the clay and selling the pieces. Producing and selling pottery was an entire household and broader community endeavor. Those who undertook pottery production would disperse and share tasks among their kin and peers to help mitigate the intense labor to balance their work on the plantations simultaneously (Ahlman et al. 2009, 37). Various pottery styles and industries formed across the Caribbean, formed by different regional topographies (e.g., agriculture, local materials, travel mobility), influence from different African traditions, relationships with Indigenous

communities, and colonial contact (Fay 2017). Afro-Caribbean ware often found its way into the planter's homes for its utilitarian value, which signifies the pottery had an influence over the planters and created a dependency on local pottery production of the laborers (Meniketti 2011).

Literature of Caribbean Tourism and Its Implications to People and Place

Caribbean Tourism

Tourism on Nevis, similar to most regions throughout the Caribbean, is the primary industry of employment and source of revenue (Gmelch 2003). All conditions affect the lives of residents. Scholars must frame their traditions and culture in the wider realm of tourism (Gmelch 2003). Dependency on tourism in the Caribbean is unsustainable because of the annual unpredictability of tourist arrivals and their spending (Moore 2015, 517).

Archaeologist Lynn Meisch notes that “all events that affect the movement of travel render tourism regions vulnerable” (2002, 116). In Nevis, hurricanes previously have shut down hotels, creating intermittent unemployment.

Local Control Dictates Tourism's Impacts

Anthropological research shows that host tourism regions experience similar risks and conditions of vulnerability. However, the impact of these risks varies significantly, depending on how local communities involve themselves in defining their participation in these new global markets. Meisch's (2002) research with the Otavalos, an Indigenous population of the Andes, illustrates the impact of local involvement in tourism development. Meisch has studied how the Otavalos have maintained autonomy over their culture and identity while acclimating to the globalization of tourism. Otavalos have incorporated

modern technology into traditional business to market their cultural capital, music, and textiles (Meisch 2002, 10). The Otavalos' success illustrates grassroots tourism, where local interests and values have been the driving factors in shaping their niche of tourism to support the preservation of meaningful traditions and maintain control over its profits.

Outside parties beyond the visiting tourists and local residents, exert control over tourism in Nevis. Entities such as international hotel owners, overseas developers, exporters of commodities, travel agencies, airlines, real estate companies, cruise lines, and global marketing comprise a few examples of outside influence over the region's industry (Chambers 2000; Gmelch 2003). These parties affect the lives of residents through outsourcing services, regional development, global branding, dictating tourists' expectations, and keeping most profits made from visiting tourists (Gmelch 2003, 10).

Manipulating People and Place: Cultural Decay and Loss

Outside parties portray regional history and cultural resources to build a global brand. Such marketing risks perpetuating the myth of cultural decay or loss. Meisch defines cultural decay or loss as the phenomena of a culture ending, or declining through replacement by another culture. It is most commonly associated with conforming to practices and lifestyles that resemble Euro-centered modernity (Meisch 2002). The concept of cultural decay is reliant on untrue beliefs that culture exists in binary oppositions between progressive/backward, modern/primitive, pure/impure, authentic/inauthentic, European/Native, industrialized/less industrialized, and so on (Meisch 2002, 87).

In anthropology's long history with the trope of cultural decay or loss reveals the power of cultural representation, and the harm brought by misrepresentation. For example, in

Berkeley, California, perpetuations of cultural decay or loss eroded native landscapes. Berkeley sits atop *xucyun* (Huichin), the landscape of the Chochenyo speaking Ohlone people. The U.S. Federal government has used field notes from highly revered anthropologist Alfred Kroeber to link the Muwekma Ohlone people to extinction. The notes posited processes of cultural decay through cultural mixing and migration, reinforcing the trope of cultural decay (Cambra et al. 2013). These documents have been used to justify robbing Native land and deny the present efforts of Muwekma Ohlone to obtain federal recognition and sovereignty (Cambra et al. 2013).

Anthropologist Joseph P. Feldman applies his research findings of the portrayals of Tobago's cultural resources in marketing to represent broader trends of Caribbean tourism, which he describes as "enforcing symbolic colonial right of ownership onto regional landscapes, people and culture" (Feldman 2011, 43). Feldman highlights terms such as "unspoilt" and "paradise" that perpetuate place-making myths of island regions and their cultures as finite resources at risk of depletion (Feldman 2011, 43). The concept "unspoilt" directly upholds cultural binary oppositions that allow outsiders to dictate which culture and its people are visible, and which ones are not. To explicate the term "paradise" highlighted by Feldman, I next touch on the romanticization of colonial landscapes.

Manipulating People and Place: Romanization of Colonial Landscapes

The romanticization of colonial landscapes is the pattern of silencing past and present power relations and social processes connected to historical sites of slavery to create a non-confrontational perception of place, which upholds local resources to be enjoyed or consumed by western outsiders (Feldman 2011; Ferguson 1992; Jackson 2020, 79; Moore

2015). Romanticized colonial landscapes targeted to tourists favor commercial sovereignty and gloss over complex narratives and historical contexts of slavery (Feldman 2011; Ferguson 1992; Jackson 2020, 79; Moore 2015). Feldman refers to the place-myth of “paradise” as the image that the British tourism industry created of the Caribbean to brand its colonial empire as a global travel destination to profit from, and formed by the very conditions of neoliberalism that it hides in its portrayal of place (Feldman 2011, 49). Nevis and St. Kitts began investing in tourism after achieving independence in 1983 from Britain. As cited by archeologist Marco Meniketti, “The romanticization of colonial landscapes on Nevis has been purposeful. This originated from the financial interests of previous estate owners who had turned their properties into luxury hotels marketed for the exclusive elite” (2015, 16). This has influenced defining what cultural resources and histories are to be upheld and which ones, as one participant describes, “let go by the wayside.”

Power of Representation

Representation of heritage and cultural resources directly link to the visibility and protection of living people, their pasts, social practices, held values, and rights to the spaces they encompass. Unregulated development projects involving outside interests spawning from Nevis’s increasing dependency on tourism threaten its cultural heritage as it disassembles space from local governance and territoriality (Ahlman and Scudder-Temple 2011, 66; Moore 2015, 522). Portrayals of history and cultural resources that favor economic interests over social development consequently exclude future generations from opportunities to add new discoveries to the past (Jackson 2020; Meniketti 2015). Anthropologists contribute mechanisms to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism development by identifying

prominent (and unlikely) stakeholders involved in its projects and how to facilitate local participation in its planning (Stronza 2001).

Anthropological Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews with Newcastle Pottery

I sought out Almena and Mareelyn first in July 2019, under the recommendation of SJSU Professor Marco Meniketti, during my participation in the San José State Field School of the West Indies. He asked me to create a video documentary with the potters and interview them about their lives and the creation process of their craft. Newcastle Pottery's were the same color and element compositions of the shreds of Afro-Caribbean ware that were excavated from the field school's excavation site of the Bush Hill Estate (Meniketti 2011). I was interested in investigating how the potters described how far back Nevis pottery went in connection to historical plantation sites on Nevis. Almena and Mareelyn had previously met Dr. Meniketti and his field students, who visited their studio over the past sixteen years of field schools on Nevis. Over three weeks, I periodically visited Newcastle Pottery, videotaped the potters working, and conducted semi-structured interviews with them about their lives and craft (a picture of the wood-firing I videotaped of Almena is shown below in Figure 1.5).

During these preliminary interviews, Almena and Mareelyn raised concerns about the current state of the pottery. They worried that no new practitioners would replace them. They brought up pottery's role in the tourism industry and its significance as one of the oldest ancestral traditions of Nevis. Almena and Mareelyn were friendly and more than accommodating with me during the time I visited their studio to document their work. At the

end of my stay in Nevis, they spoke honestly with me. They told me they felt documenting their work would be meaningless if the craft would end after them. Upon reviewing these interviews with Dr. Meniketti, we decided to go forward and approach Almena and Mareelyn with a project proposal that I would continue through graduate school to document the production of their craft and insight on its maintenance. The potters and I collaborated on different ideas to inform how the project's movie deliverable should portray the initiatives to rally support for the continuation of Nevis pottery. I incorporated Almena and Mareelyn's suggestion to shift the focus of the documentary away from their lives and onto the experiences and perceptions of Nevis residents.



Figure 1.5: Almena Facilitating a Wood-Firing (courtesy of author)

I conducted 27 interviews and selected segments from eight of these interviews to pair with interviews of Almena and Mareelyn to create a 35-minute movie documentary. We conducted our interviews outside, at the job sites of interviewees, or other shared public

spaces of Nevis. I edited the audio of the interviews to enhance the natural surrounding sounds nature and other subtle background noises that would convey a deeper authenticity of place that viewers of the documentary could connect with. Interview participants represent different industries related to art, hospitality, and history that are connected to Nevis pottery's maintenance. I next go over the anthropological approaches that informed my collaborative work and interview styles with Newcastle Pottery and the project informants.

Community Involvement in Project Planning : The Partnership Approach

Anthropologist Mary LaLone has created a collaborative model called the partnership approach, that encompasses key values and guidelines to support a grassroots heritage movement. The partnership approach positions rapport building, community involvement, and unity as the core foundation that leads a project (LaLone 2005). The partnership approach emphasizes that a project plan must incorporate the capacity for bonding between all involved partners. Researchers must prioritize learning the cultural values and aspirations held by the community they aim to serve and represent (LaLone 2005). LaLone recommends facilitating fieldwork as informal and semi-structured so it is inviting for participant involvement and control. She emphasizes that community involvement should be allowed at every phase of a project and that participants should feel valued and understand how the project will benefit them (LaLone 2005).

The project plan that resulted from my collaboration with Newcastle Pottery was made possible by establishing parameters of the partnership approach of trust and openness in our dynamic. Almena and Mareelyn took charge as contributors in planning the documentary once they felt connected to the project's benefits and that the objective

represented their ideas. I initially mapped out a different appearance and focus for the documentary to spotlight their lives and knowledge as potters. Almena and Mareelyn felt comfortable enough with me and invested in the project to suggest I should include other participants in the documentary to portray the pottery being connected to a broader community beyond them.

I incorporated the partnership approach in facilitating the interviews by not placing time limits on interviews and allowing interviewees to steer conversations however desired. It was common that interviews went on tangents, and interview questions were dispersed between segments of conversation. The interviews I acquired would not have been possible without establishing comfort and relatability with the interviewees. I remain in contact with the interview participants, providing project updates, and will make it a priority to invite them to participate in the project's future steps. The project's next steps present the opportunity for more community participation and input through a survey accompanying the deliverable and participation in follow-up interviews and conversations about the documentary.

Transformation Through Storytelling: Appreciative Inquiry

The organizational team-building tool, appreciative inquiry, uses storytelling as a component for impactful change and transformation (Messerschmidt 2008). Appreciative inquiry informs the curation of the ethnography featured in the documentary and is used to create cohesion and shared initiatives among the different perspectives explored. Appreciative inquiry focuses on the root causes of success instead of the root causes of failure (Messerschmidt 2008, 454). The documentary presents hypothetical ways different

entities can work together to maintain Nevis pottery instead of drawing attention to how these parties are contributing to the pottery's current endangered state. I have also been mindful to uphold values of appreciative inquiry through organizing the chronology of interviews outlining conflicts, and the images and video clips they are paired with, to not associate a conflict with a direct interest group or stakeholder.

The Project Deliverable and Its Participants

Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters, The Documentary

Using the voices of Nevis residents and its potters, the documentary begins with several slides stating its purpose as an applied anthropology project to ignite collaboration to maintain Nevis pottery. Next, the video introduces Almena and Mareelyn as the last practitioners of the craft, which is the key problem facing the tradition's future. The movie then switches between eight alternating interviewees discussing their ties to the pottery and perceived conflicts and solutions involved in the tradition's maintenance. Following the interviews, the movie returns to the potters, who state their recommendations to assist in the pottery's continuation. The pairing of the community interviews and the potters strengthens and highlights the initiative to maintain Nevis pottery through governmental action to secure potters' pay and merge other local services with the efforts to maintain pottery production and build community efforts.

Professor of Art in Ceramics, Patricia Fay, of Bower School of Music & the Arts at Florida Gulf Coast University, generously donated additional media of the potters featured in the documentary and several archival photographs. Patricia had previously spent time with Newcastle Pottery in 1994 and 2014, along with other pottery studios across the Eastern

Caribbean, studying pottery production and its history. In her book, *Creole Clay: Heritage Ceramics in the Contemporary Caribbean*, Fay presents a chapter providing in-depth information on Almena and Mareelyn's family and the history of Nevis pottery (2017). My documentary is curated with video footage of the potters working, which I filmed in 2019, along with other media I captured in 2019 and 2022. In addition to my media, I invited interview participants and the potters to contribute visuals for the documentary. Some participants contributed photos of using pottery for cooking or other images, ranging from their artwork or places they enjoy spending time in Nevis. In the following section, I will introduce the movie participants and their unique connections to the Nevis pottery tradition featured in the documentary. Below, I briefly describe the eight interviewees and the Nevis potters featured in *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters* as they appear in the documentary.

Documentary Participants

Ganzie

A beach bar owner who serves ital cooking at 'Rock & Roll in' and native of Newcastle village, Ganzie grew up visiting the studio throughout childhood and accredits the clay for "mixing him with nature." Ganzie describes the clay as a value to his cooking, culture, and ability to survive amid catastrophes brought by hurricanes. He describes the pottery being a part of "the nights of moonlight walkin" and expresses how it reminds him of the nostalgia he holds for Nevis before its industrialization. He states that appreciation for local clay connects to the power of "appreciating your own stuff." He suggests that schools should teach about pottery considering its role in self-sufficiency.

Gatorade

Gatorade is a Nevisian Rastafarian with a special place in his heart for the pottery. He describes growing up around his great grandma using a clay pot for all her cooking till age 102. Gatorade praises the pottery for its naturalness and closeness to the earth. He states that the clay pot is older than the tin pan and enhances the natural flavors of whatever you're cooking with, unlike anything else.

Elli

An enthusiastic educator of the Nevis Historical Museum, Eli was born in the Dominican Republic and came to Nevis at an early age. Eli claims that Nevis pottery goes beyond its local roots and has ties to the African Diaspora, reflecting a larger Afro-Caribbean heritage that resonates with him. He emphasizes that the pottery is valuable to preserve because it connects to important legacies. Eli expresses that it shows how African ancestors of the Caribbean survived and created spaces for cultural expression and joy amid bondage.

Carla

A pottery instructor from Dominica, in the southern Caribbean, who operates an instructional ceramics studio based in St. Kitts, Carla has known Almena for years through pottery and discusses the experience of attending the World Ceramics Conference with her in 2002. Carla explains how this experience deepened her connection to her African roots by seeing first-hand how Almena's pots and wood-firings were similar to the African potters despite the centuries that had passed since African pottery was first brought to Nevis.

Sunshine

A public figure and well-renowned business owner of the world-famous ‘Sunshine’s Bar and Grill’ along Pinney’s beach in Nevis, Sunshine acclaims that pottery is an indispensable resource for local and abroad employment and education opportunities that must be maintained “for the benefit of the youth.” He describes how his peers have used the industry to build a good work ethic and explore other career opportunities outside of Nevis.

Deborah

An influential community member within public arts and founder of the Charleston Art Gallery of Nevis, Deborah is a local Cloth Artist who praises the authenticity and dedication to tradition embodied in the craft of Nevis pottery and its potters. She talks about the potters being taught in the traditional way of Nevis pottery through learning from older generations of women in their family and choosing to stick to traditional wood-firings. As a fellow artist, she speaks about the dynamic of craft work competing with hotel work. She states that, consequentially, most artists cannot make a living off of their work.

Ella

A staff member of the Nevis Historical Museum and a digital illustration artist, Ella offers a perspective from a younger generation who she describes, “didn’t see what the older generations had going for them.” Ella speaks about her experience of the pottery being forced on her at too young of an age in school and being reluctant to pursue the pottery further. Ella regrets this decision in light of discovering everyone else had done the same. She recommends that students should be introduced to Nevis pottery when they are older and capable of choosing whether or not they are interested. She states that attempting to take part

in learning the craft while balancing the demands of higher education is not feasible and that the school curriculum should be revised.

Sylvester

Sylvester is a government official of the Nevis Tourism Authority, manager of the historical Hermitage Inn of Nevis, and community advocate for history preservation, local agriculture, cultural resources, and more. Sylvester believes the pottery industry can be expanded to help boost other related industries in Nevis and create distinct Nevisian experiences for tourists. He states that “when traditions die, community fails” and that this represents the initiative of saving the pottery possessing a greater return of love more valuable than economic value. Sylvester relates the potters’ work to how deep histories of traditions and cultures shape the foundation of people. He explains individuals take the pottery for granted. They do not understand what goes into the production. Regarding not taking the time to watch the intricate coils build the structure of a pot, he says “you’re not there to see it done, you think it’s easy.” That sentiment mirrors other traditions and culture not being properly nurtured. That dynamic undermines the foundation and base of all people.

Almena Cornelius and Mareelyn Evelyn

Cousins and practitioners of traditional Nevis pottery who carry four generations of knowledge of the craft from their family, Almena acclaims that her journey with the pottery has been long, interesting but tiresome after 41 years. She says that she is ready to pass the pottery on to someone she says that must be young. Almena reluctantly adds that she does not know to whom the pottery will be passed on to and fears that no one will step up to learn. Following Almena’s interview in the documentary is Mareelyn, she describes her honest

feelings on the situation of the pottery and her visions for its future. Mareelyn states that the pottery is one of the oldest traditions on the island that has come from their ancestors and will die if swift government action ensuring a salary to new potters does not occur. She continues on to describe that the intense labor involved in the traditional firing process deters many from avidly pursuing the pottery and draws on examples from previous classes with the studio. Along with this, Mareelyn shares a story that embodies that timeless inspiration to others of Nevis potters. She describes a story of the hardships her relatives endured taking the pots to market place in St. Kitts to be sold. She concludes that despite these challenges her family preserved and “came out satisfied”; this taught her that if you can find this satisfaction in your work (no matter what it is) that you will always be happy. Below in Figure 1.6 is a picture of Nevis taken from a boat crossing to St. Kitts, this represents a standpoint that was shared by many Nevis potters across centuries who took up “the challenge.”



Figure 1.6: A View of Nevis From the Sea Between St. Kitts (courtesy of Patricia J. Fay)

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced my research question to uncover how traditional Afro-Caribbean ware benefits modern societies, and my community partner Newcastle Pottery, who has influenced the project objective to sustain Nevis pottery (informed by the perspective of Nevis Potters). I provided a literature review of the anthropology and historical research that has guided my work about Afro-Caribbean ware, tourism in the Caribbean, and implications of conflicting interests impacting the representation of people and place. Along with this, I went over the project's methods, a description of the movie deliverable and the informants that are featured. Next, I query the interviews featured in *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters*, with my research question and other anthropological themes of research that guided this project.

CHAPTER TWO

MAINTAINING LIVING HERITAGE AS TOLD BY NEVIS POTTERS

Abstract

Newcastle Pottery is a cooperative recognized as an important focal point of traditional heritage of Nevis – St. Kitts. Along with potters in this organization, we co-created a documentary, *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters*, to raise awareness of conflicts involved in maintaining future pottery production in Nevis and possible solutions. I conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews with different Nevis residents, local artists, and government officials to collect accounts demonstrating various ways the pottery is valued and can be maintained. I paired vital insights from interviews with different visuals of Nevisian Pottery and its potters. This platform will engage stakeholders to contemplate values of hospitality, history conservation, and heritage management to develop potential solutions using tourism to support the pottery's longevity.

Keywords: Nevis, Pottery, Afro-Caribbean ware, Tourism

Introduction

Brief Overview of Project and Anthropological Themes of Interest

Despite the most prevalent cultural influences that have shaped the islands of the Caribbean as African and African-descendant, most historical research of the region concentrated on European colonial studies until the late 20th century. In recent years, Afro-Caribbean ware (low-fired earthenware created by people of African descent throughout the Caribbean) has become a prominent artifact for readdressing the exclusion of Africans and African-descendants in previous interpretations of the past. However, Afro-Caribbean ware is

not an artifact of the past, it is a living tradition, a pulsing social memory and heritage that unites many lives unbound by region or archeological debate. I present this project as a means to urge researchers concerned with historical inquiry of Afro-Caribbean to resituate their work being informed by, and in support of, living heritage maintenance.

In this project, I am concerned with bringing visibility to how tourism could sustain the maintenance of Afro-Caribbean ware (which I refer to as Nevis pottery in this article) and share views informed by the perspectives of its practitioners. I reframe Nevis pottery as an emergent resource to Nevis residents in a tourism-centered economy. Neoliberal forces, which portray and protect cultural resources in the Caribbean, challenge and are challenged by potters as their craft asserts the presence of Afro-Caribbean heritage and community in defiance to historical and modern processes of economic centered exploitation of Caribbean people and places. My work was guided with the research question, “*How is the maintenance of traditional Afro-Caribbean ware applicable to supporting modern initiatives and needs of global societies in the Caribbean?*” to uncover the diverse ways the tradition is repurposed and valued by local residents. I situated the project in several themes of Caribbean anthropology related to the vulnerabilities that host regions face from dependency on tourism. I explored how local involvement in planning can mitigate the negative impacts of industry. I drew on conceptual models in applied anthropology that center rapport building and ongoing community participation to guide in project planning. Together, my community partner organization, Newcastle Pottery, and I co-created our project’s deliverable, the ethnographic movie, *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters*. I used a “partnership approach” incorporating “appreciative inquiry,” concepts I will explain in this

article. The movie rallies support for the continuation of Nevis pottery following the nearing retirement of Almena and Mareelyn. In the following, I unpack Newcastle Pottery as my project's case study and my project methods.

Case Study Context and Methods

Newcastle Pottery: Case Study Context

Historically, women of African descent who learned the trade from older generations of females within their family produced Afro-Caribbean ware in Nevis (Fay 2017, 135). Four generations of Nevis potters carry on today. Almena Cornelius and her cousin Mareelyn Evelyn are descendants of a long line of potters within their family. The two manage and operate pottery production and sales from the studio called Newcastle Pottery located in the historic pottery capital between Nevis and St. Kitts, Newcastle village. The potters create a variety of pieces ranging from smaller decorative items for tourists; such as animals, clay heads and people, Anglican churches, candle holders, and more. The studio also maintains a market for locals of large planters, pineapple lighting holders, and traditional African-origin vessels such as *monkeys* (water jugs), *yabbas* (cooking pots), and the Afro-Caribbean charcoal pot. Potters made traditional Nevis vessels using locally sourced clay manipulated with coil-build methods. Potters colored burnished surfaces with a raw red-orange iron oxide, and fired. They fired wares over an open flame using natural materials such as palm trees, coconut husks, cow dung, wood from old shipping pallets, and other materials. This style traces back to ca. 1682 or earlier on Nevis (Nicholson et al. 1999, 8). The work of Newcastle Pottery is shown below in Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4.



Figure 2.1: Almena Facilitating a Wood-Firing (courtesy of Rosemary Smith)



Figure 2.2: Almena and Mareelyn Working at the Studio Table (courtesy of Patricia J. Fay)



Figure 2.3 (top-left to bottom-right): a. Wood-Fired Yabbas and Pineapple Lighters, b. Charcoal pots, c. A Monkey (water jar), d. A Yabba in a Charcoal Pot, e. Planters and Lids, f. Wood-Firing Yabbas and Charcoal Pots (images b – e courtesy of Patricia J. Fay; images a and f courtesy of Mareelyn Evelyn)



Figure 2.4: Clay Pot Stew (courtesy of Mareelyn Evelyn)

The pottery's appearance and production retain close resemblances to ancestral Central and West African traditions brought over to Nevis and used by the African people who were forced into bondage through the West Atlantic slave trade and bought by colonial England to provide labor for the sugar cane industry (Fay 2017, 136; see also Ferguson 1992). Archeological investigation into the material lives of plantation sites infers possible actions of cultural resistance through distinguishing personal taste preferences based on high volumes of Afro-Caribbean ware in the private quarters of enslaved laborers (Hauser 2008, 29). African laborers invested the little free time they had away from plantation work to customize their pottery and chose to keep to African styles of decoration and vessel form amid being exposed to different types of ceramics (Hauser 2008). Previous interpretations of the past largely based on written documents of the plantocracy, or the ruling class of planters, mostly exclude mention of African and Afro-Caribbean people and their experiences except for documents of past legislation, which we can glean information about dynamics of constraints and economic activities (Hauser 2008; Nicholson et al. 1999). Reinvestigation into “the silent history record” that Afro-Caribbean ware brings to life, is expanding as a new historical context that examines the private lives of the laborers and the ways they presented their identity in their day-to-day lives (Hauser 2008).

The work of Newcastle Pottery keeps the social memory of the tradition alive and ongoing public interest in growing discoveries of the symbolic meaning that the pottery may shine a light on to the complex past lives of enslaved and free African laborers (Hauser 2008; Nicholson et al. 1999; Ferguson 1992). By featuring Newcastle Pottery as a case study and portraying the tradition's value and current endangered state in Nevis's tourism industry, I

have pointed to broader efforts to advocate for protecting emergent Afro-Caribbean cultural resources. Heritage maintenance and preservation efforts romanticized colonial landscapes in the Caribbean through their marketing to consumers. The reality local crafters experience paints a different story.

Methods: Collaboration and Uniting Community with Ethnography

I began visiting Almena and Mareelyn at Newcastle Pottery to conduct semi-structured interviews and videotape their work in July 2019 during my participation in the San José State University (SJSU) Archeological Field School of Nevis, West Indies under the recommendation of the field instructor Dr. Marco Meniketti. I intended to create a brief movie documentary focusing on how traditional Nevis pottery was made and the life stories of its potters. As a fellow ceramic artist, I had a genuine interest in the work of Newcastle Pottery outside of the craft's historical legacy. I spent additional time at the studio working with the potters at the molding table and having off-camera conversations not related to the movie documentary. While recording interviews, I did not place any time restrictions and allowed Almena and Mareelyn to take control over what they wanted to discuss. Over time, Almena and Mareelyn became more comfortable and honest with me about their feelings on Nevis pottery. They told me they felt preservation efforts about Nevis pottery need to be redirected away from them and onto who will be next in line to replace them.

Informed by the concerns of Almena and Mareelyn, I proposed a project that I would pursue in graduate school to create a deliverable incentivized to rally support for Nevis pottery to spotlight the issues facing its continuation (as described by the potters). I drew from Mary LaLone's collaborative model, the partnership approach, which prioritized

rapport building, community involvement, and unity as the core foundation to lead a project (LaLone 2005). I created different scenarios for hypothetical movie documentaries with Almena and Mareelyn for the project's deliverable. Initially, I proposed an in-depth oral history documentary featuring unique stories of Almena and Mareelyn's upbringing in a family of potters. They made suggestions they needed to be removed as the spotlight focus of the documentary and urged me to portray how Nevis pottery is a living heritage in the broader community of Nevis beyond them.

I used anthropological research on local craft makers in the Caribbean to help explain the recruitment problem. Throughout the Caribbean, people connect to tourism, which is the primary revenue generator of the region (Gmelch 2003; Moore 2015). Therefore, I frame the conditions of Nevis pottery and the lives of the individuals invested in that tradition in the wider realm of tourism (Gmelch 2003). I conducted semi-structured interviews with people connected directly with pottery. I also, however, interviewed people who were in complimentary services of crafts and tourism. People discussed Nevis pottery's values. They spoke about ways to improve the pottery industry's connection with other local industries and make tourism more in line with residents' desires. I incorporated these comments into the documentary to explore my research question.

Methods and Deliverable: Appreciative Inquiry, Using Uplifting Stories

The documentary begins and ends with interviews from Almena and Mareelyn. The two briefly introduce themselves as the practitioners of the craft. They relate what they perceive to be the conflicts and solutions facing the craft and share their aspirations for its future. Between segments featuring the potters, eight different interviews alternate. They

discuss the significance, conflicts, and potential solutions for maintaining the tradition. I wanted to design the film to ignite collaboration, generate enthusiasm, and support the pottery industry. I wanted to build empathy with the documentary's target audience. I chose an "appreciative inquiry" approach to curate the varied perspectives. Appreciative inquiry is defined as "team building" and "inviting collaboration" through using ethnography to highlight success stories of "what works" to unify over the root of "success," instead of focusing on "what is failing" (Messerschmidt 2008, 454). I combined interview segments to outline overall conflicts and solutions. I worked to avoid creating a narrative voice that might appear to criticize specific entities and stakeholders. Instead, I sought to educate viewers about the conditions threatening the pottery's continuation. In the following, I discuss interview findings along with quotations featured in the movie and tie them to my anthropological themes of research.

Interview Results Featured in the Documentary

Participant interviews teach us that maintenance of traditional Afro-Caribbean ware applies to supporting modern initiatives and needs of global societies in the Caribbean through its being African heritage, a local resource for employment, a guide to bond with and self-sustain with natural resources of the Earth, marketing, local cuisine, and an untapped asset to retool the tourism industry. Participants offered solutions to support Nevis pottery and its production by reintegrating pottery engagement into education settings and other local industries that relate to tourism. Participants noted that pottery is not a sustainable livelihood based on studio sales alone. They cited the lack of community participation in using the

pottery. They conceptualize Nevis pottery as foundational to their notion of place, representing the community's traditions and cultural continuity.

Nevis Pottery is African Heritage

All interviewees described an ancestral link to their African heritage through Nevis pottery with different experiences of family members, other surrounding community, and education settings. Several interviewees share the excitement they felt visiting the pottery studio as children and describe this as learning about their African ancestor's history and the pottery tradition they brought with them to Nevis. Interviewees made comparisons to witnessing their grandparents cook with clay pots and the act of cooking with a clay pot on fired sticks and stones as "the same way the ancestors did." Several interviewees drew emphasis on the traditional coil method and wood-firing techniques as a broader unity of Afro-Caribbean heritage that transcends Nevisian nationality and region. In the following Carla, a potter in St. Kitts originally from Dominica—relays a story of how Nevis pottery connected her closer to her African roots.

"...Nevis pottery is actually a continuation of African pottery styles that were brought by our ancestors. [...] you would've met Almena in Nevis, we had the opportunity to go to Belgium to attend biennial ceramics exposition back in 2002. When we were there, we were invited, the ACP countries [...] We were really happy to be with all these potters. But there were also African potters and people from India and so on. But the African pots were just ... she was just amazed because she brought her pots and it was very much similar to what they were making in Africa. [...] The fact is we got to see for ourselves, and see how much we are connected to our people still, our ancestors, because it's the same tradition."

Carla's story of Nevis pottery connecting her closer to her African roots represents the tradition as an agent of unity among Afro-Caribbean heritage and shared African

ancestry. Carla felt connected to Nevis pottery, and it represented her heritage despite not identifying as Nevisian. Eli shared similar feelings. He said Nevis pottery represented African history and details how the pottery was a way for enslaved laborers to express themselves, find joy in creating art, and survival. Eli shared that he was born in the Dominican Republic but considers Nevis home and feels connected to Nevis pottery because, as he said, “it transcends,” and “forms a big part of African history, which is what we’re all about.”

Nevis Pottery is Value of Local Resources and Closeness with the Earth

Several interviewees relate Nevis pottery to a nostalgia they have for the times on Nevis before electricity, as Ganzie referred to “the days of moonlight walking” and an increased reliance on exported goods. Interviewees described the values of Nevis pottery associated with the local resource of clay “being natural here, from the earth,” and “enhancing everything you get from the earth” in connection to cooking food and the process of forming a bond with Nevis’s natural environment which Ganzie has described as “mixing me with nature.” In Ganzie’s interview, he made a comparison to the knowledge and ability to use Nevis clay with being able to be self-sufficient off natural resources and speculates that growing dependency on foreign goods and desire for foreign lifestyles can potentially be dangerous amid disastrous events such as hurricanes. Below he stated,

“...They don’t understand the value of our clay. You need to understand the value of your own stuff. Until we get a disaster, or we have to go down to come back up again, then they will understand the meaning of these things. Otherwise, than that, those stores up town have those pots, those shiny-looking pots, those shiny-looking plates...It’s hard to reverse the hand of time. Until we get destroyed by something, they’ll never know how important

the calabash³ is and how important the clay is. We don't want to go to that. I think every household in Nevis should have a piece of clay in it.”

Ganzie's interview about Nevis pottery is revealing of an attitude towards a perceived consequential generational divide between how the pottery and other local resources are valued. In Ella's interview, she expressed the other side of this conversation. She speaks from the standpoint of a younger generation who grew up with less exposure to using the pottery. In her interview, she said,

“...we really do lose interest in what our parents had going for them because it's not fitting the time anymore or they force it on us at a young age and now we just don't want to anymore.”

Ella continues to describe the endeavor to pursue pottery as nearly impossible amid balancing other demands of school. She was too young to understand properly the pottery's significance when she was exposed to the craft in her education. Ella explains that the window to gain an interest in Nevis pottery is small. Even though she was an artist who has always had a love for creative hobbies, she was not inclined to pick up Nevis pottery because of the craft's difficulty. In Ella's words, she said, “I'm not good at it, so I didn't want to take up pottery at all.” Mareelyn and Sylvester further discuss the difficulty of the craft. The challenge is a deterrent, so no new aspiring potters become committed to the craft because they have not had the proper practice and exposure to learn it. They also state that besides the craft being labor intensive, students do not view and treat it as a viable career.

³ Calabash is the term used for artifacts made from the hard shell of a fruit in the gourd family "Lagenaria siceraria." Once the calabash is dried and hollowed out it can be used for serving or storing food.

Many interviewees bring up pottery being shown in school in conversation about brainstorming hypothetical solutions to help the pottery. Such as Sylvester, who proposes that education should take a new approach to pottery that advocates for students to be encouraged to pursue different interests and passions linked to culture preservation as careers. He says,

“...Make it actually a part of maybe our education system because not everybody go to school wants to be a dentist, or a lawyer, or doctor. Somebody might want to be an architect. Somebody might want to be an archeologist, they’re persons with different ideas. There’s some persons that would just simply want to save our traditions and our history in our culture. Those are jobs. And those are the important part of making sure that the base of all countries and the foundation of all countries are sound because I believe that comes from our traditions and our cultures.”

Sylvester’s ideas addressed Ella’s conflict outlined about pottery competing with other school tasks by being integrated as a part of it. Sylvester describes the endeavor to teach the value of the pottery as representing the value of local traditions and culture as crucial resources of foundation to place and community. Similar to this, Sunshine discusses the pottery industry being leveraged in the past to grant travel and study opportunities for Nevis residents. Sunshine explains that some of these individuals eventually pursued different careers, but that the pottery industry was a local resource that allowed them to access opportunities they wouldn’t have been able to otherwise.

Nevis Pottery Can Retool Tourism

Several interviewees brought up Nevis pottery’s significance to the local tourism industry through the craft, representing a unique tradition that is distinctly Nevisian. They create pottery using only Nevis materials and follow a centuries-old practice passed down

through generations of Nevisian women, who learned from their female relatives in their families. Deborah links Nevis pottery to promoting a Nevisian brand and supplying visiting tourists with regional crafts, which simultaneously support all other encompassing local goods, services, and places linked to visitor's experiences. Interviewees describe the hardships they recognize Almena and Mareelyn pursue to keep the studio open. They understood that the potters are not making a profit from their work and keep the pottery maintained more so as an act of love. In Deborah's interview, she speaks candidly about this dynamic and draws on her own experiences as a local artist about the issues facing artists in tourism-centered regions,

“...everywhere that we promote tourism – it's ironic because maybe it's the size of our population but craftwork, crafters compete with hotel work. If you can think about it, hotel work is steady it's sure you're going to get a paycheck every two weeks. When you make a craft, you're not sure if it's going to get sold... So, it places us in a double bind because as governments we put in a lot of advertising efforts into tourism but then when those tourists come, we might even sell something that's been imported as opposed to something locally made or the other side of that is that the people who are providing locally made to you as a tourist can't afford to live doing this.”

Deborah outlines the contradiction of tourism promotions featuring local crafts to support branding the region and satisfying an expectation of visiting tourists being able to purchase handicrafts, despite encompassing industries of tourism competing with craftwork, due to crafters having no guarantee of pay. Mareelyn states that the primary issue facing recruiting new potters is that it is an unstable career and not feasible for a livelihood based on the current state, she makes recommendations that outside help needs to step in to guarantee new potters a salary to commit properly to the craft. Sylvester also speaks on the pottery's value to other

encompassing services to tourism. He offers a solution by proposing to lessen the divide between intersectional industries of services through increased participation in supporting one another. Sylvester brainstormed how the pottery can be better supported by other industries and how this participation would enrich those industries and vice versa. He said,

“...if we stop looking at names, for example like agriculture, agriculture is historical too, because you have to cook in the same pots. So, if we find a way to merge everything that we have, you’ll get more benefit from the pottery and everything else because people just see them as empty vessels. There’s no need for it, but if you actually start to use these things, you’ll see there’s more of a need for it than anything else...And there’s so many more benefits from the pottery... it’s just that we haven’t expanded the pottery itself, it’s a walking gold mine. It’s gold. Clay is gold. So, you are sitting on a gold mine and it’s a place that a lot more can be done.”

Sylvester suggests that sustaining pottery demands new innovation and being understood and fought for as a resource to enrich all other local industries.

Conclusion: Nevis Pottery is Community, Community is Foundation of Place

The Newcastle Pottery project helps unify Nevis communities and enhance the local pottery industry based on input from practitioners and enthusiasts. Anthropologically-informed community participation research facilitates community dialogue and team-building, identified important stakeholders in collaboration efforts, and in this case study results in a film documenting ceramic production processes. Considering the global shifts in tourism that we are seeing in traditional arts (Meisch 2002; Messerschmidt 2008; Pinnock 2014), we learn from the Nevis Potters that maintenance of traditions and cultures is essential to the base and foundation of place through keeping community participation alive.

Consequentially, Nevis's heavy reliance on tourism positions the portrayals of its history and cultural resources to favor economic interests over social development (Meniketti 2015). Landscape interpretation targeted to tourists often glosses over complex narratives and historical contexts of slavery to create non-confrontational portrayals of place to visitors (Jackson 2020, 2). As Nevis continues to expand its window of global access through tourism, mechanisms of community involvement in tourism-related projects must acclimate and optimize to keep up with rapid development influenced by conflicting outside interests (Chambers 2000). Preserving Nevis pottery and its practitioners aligns with the greater mission to keep Nevis in the hands of its local people. It increases their influence in representing their people and place authentically, and serves their community.

As anthropologists, we must be aware of how our work is aligned with the perceptions and aspirations of the resident communities we study. Establishing the trust and openness that led to this project's planning demanded time and humility to unlearn Afro-Caribbean ware as an artifact and as "the challenge" that weaves the foundation of "community" to "place." Researchers who are invested to reclaim the past with Afro-Caribbean ware from a colonial lens must align their work to support heritage maintenance efforts that combat evolving processes of colonial power over landscapes and its portrayals of people and place. This entails creating space for community participation to uncover differences and overlap between local knowledge and affiliated academia, and how research linked to Afro-Caribbean ware should be delivered back to the public to support its on-going maintenance.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT OUTCOMES, LIMITATIONS, NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER TAKEAWAYS

In this chapter, I reflect on the project outcomes creating *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters*. The project produced a film, ethnographic and oral history data from potters, and an article analysis for submission to *Practicing Anthropology*. Yet, the timing of this project was impacted by COVID-19's limitations on travel and remote fieldwork. Such a strategy has its challenges, and I reflect on those in this chapter. I also touch on future steps and further takeaways. In conclusion, this project demonstrates how anthropology can facilitate community inclusion in project planning.

Project Outcomes

Arriving at Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters

I was continuously in contact with Almena and Mareelyn to plan the project. Over time, our collaborative relationship transformed. The documentary started as an endeavor to document the family history of the potters and the production of their craft. The design and aim of the documentary changed after Almena and Mareelyn trusted me more and grew more engaged with the project. In the preliminary phases of our work, I gathered significant amounts of video footage of the potters working over three weeks. I also recorded several semi-formal interviews with them and video footage for the documentary. While I did not include all the interviews with the potters in the documentary, their words were crucial in establishing our project's objectives and building a partnership.

Each time I visited the studio in 2019, I was alone with minimal recording equipment. I recorded for long time intervals, often spanning several hours. Longer interviews allowed Mareelyn and Almena to grow comfortable with me in their presence. The interviews were informal and semi-structured. The informality helped them to respond honestly and take control of the topics. They talked about what they wanted to discuss concerning Nevis pottery. As a result, the potters took greater initiative in giving feedback. They contributed ideas toward the documentary design. This change in the project design was pivotal; where the potters took charge of their roles from participants to active contributors. through the potter's recommendations, the focus of the documentary shifted. The new plan was to spotlight voices of the broader local community connected to Nevis pottery along with practitioners to rally with the possible solutions to maintain the pottery's future.

Fieldwork: Recruiting The Voices of Nevis

I sought ideas from different residents and interest groups across Nevis to include in the documentary. To find interviewees, I focused on public places related to history education, art, hospitality, and clay pot cuisine. By reaching out in person, I included new participants. I conducted all additional interviews of the Nevis community beyond the potters during three weeks in July 2022. Individuals mostly responded positively to being asked for an interview. Even if they didn't want to be interviewed, many people were willing to introduce me to others who could help with the project. Interviews varied in length, from a few minutes to over an hour. I recorded twenty-seven semi-structured in-person interviews. Moreover, I assembled a running list of individuals eager to participate in future interviews

about the pottery. I will talk about the inclusion of interviews not featured in the project documentary in the 'Project Limitations' and 'Next Steps' sections.

Project Limitations

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this project experienced a significant delay in its timeline. Travel to Nevis was not accessible for nearly two years following the start of the lockdown. It was also not appropriate to contact Mareelyn and Almerna frequently about the project while they too were busy coping with the pandemic. We did, however, keep in contact during the lockdown. Although we did not complete a significant amount of work for the documentary, we continued to grow a friendship that benefited this project. The COVID-19 safety protocols impacted my ability to finish my fieldwork for interviews with Nevis residents, limiting my time with them.

This project's principal limiting factor was being long-distance. To gather high-quality interview audio useable for the documentary, I conducted all interviews in-person. This need created a strict deadline for all my interviews to be completed in the three weeks I was on Nevis. Unfortunately, by week three, the momentum of recruiting interviewees through referral sampling took off. I spent the first half of my trip conducting on-the-spot interviews and creating initial contacts. For the rest, I followed up with interviews planned for later and referrals. With more time, I could have included additional interviews to provide a more diverse perspective.

For the sake of creating a concise and impactful movie, I could not include all project interviews in the documentary. I used explicit criteria to include some interviews and to exclude others. Excerpts must be understandable to viewers and directly relate to pottery.

The excerpts must support narrative tone of appreciative inquiry. Interviews need to fit cohesively together. Each comment offered a different perspective not already shared by someone else in the documentary. Nonetheless, the unused portions are valuable. In the next section, I will outline how I can deliver interviews not featured in the documentary back to the public for educational purposes.

Next Steps: Delivering the Documentary

The next step of this project is to deliver the documentary to its intended audience of stakeholders and to the public of Nevis. I will achieve this step through an initial series of in-person outreach events. Outreach activities include, but are not limited to, public viewings of the documentary. The creative team that produced the film will promote it at other events. For example, stakeholders can partner with different events of the popular heritage festival Culturama. The documentary can be referenced during local TV broadcasts. I will deliver DVD copies to public entities connected to education, such as schools, libraries, and museums. I will schedule meetings and follow-up discussions with stakeholders in Nevis, including hotel owners and government officials that I have already reached out to. I plan to return to Nevis for several weeks in 2024, as early as summer, to begin the outreach for the project. I'll create a form for Newcastle Pottery that viewers can fill out online or in-person to share their thoughts on supporting the pottery industry. I will share this ongoing input with Almena, Mareelyn, and other alliances dedicated to making a difference for the pottery. I will publish the documentary online on YouTube through the SJSU Anthropology channel. I can also publish it on digital channels connected to Newcastle Pottery and Nevis heritage.

Beyond Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potters

I will make three movies with important interviews that were not included in the documentary. One contains all media that focuses on the experiences of the potters and the techniques they used to create their work. The second will contain interviews from the community of Nevis. The last segment will include interviews with tourists sharing their travel experiences and thoughts on Caribbean tourism. The two movies focusing on the interview audios would not incorporate complex visuals. They will only use changing slides of descriptions of the interview participants and interview topics. I will give these movies to all applicable entities of Nevis connected to public education and made public on YouTube.

These deliverables may be helpful to students, researchers, and others interested in oral histories of Nevis, Nevis pottery, and tourism in the Caribbean. These videos may impact future development projects in Nevis. Outsiders can gain insight into local perspectives on Nevis's cultural resources. The opportunities to showcase the project to the public are increasing as more contacts offer support for Nevis pottery. During my return trip to Nevis, under the supervision of Almena and Mareelyn, I will follow up with previous contacts I've made to brainstorm innovative ways to spread the documentary and implement the ideas.

Recommendations For Future Research

When working on cultural heritage and tourism projects, researchers and other affiliated outside parties must bond with and learn from project participants and partners. I found it important not to constrain interviewees to strict time limits. It was essential to allow them room for exploratory dialogue to fully contribute to interview questions and to speak

freely about sensitive topics connected to tourism development. The outcome of this approach included collaboration and increased investment in the project.

Reflecting on how my project could have been improved, I would recommend that we take creative approaches to facilitate preliminary fieldwork and exploratory research for long-distance projects. I missed an opportunity to prepare for my in-person fieldwork by neglecting to use virtual communication for preliminary exploratory research. Having conversations or semi-structured interviews virtually (video/phone/email) may have helped me get an earlier start by creating contacts and gaining insight into general attitudes about Nevis pottery and the local tourism industry. Relying only on academic and online resources connected to Nevis pottery and Afro-Caribbean history did not prepare me for how residents may perceive my project and interview questions. Further, I would not have narrowed my window to conduct fieldwork only to the duration I was in Nevis and would have been more proactive in utilizing all my resources.

Findings and Further Takeaways

In the documentary, participants and practitioners share intimate stories of their connections to the pottery, offer insight on solutions based on their insider experiences, and speak candidly on broader trends of community attitudes and actions that are challenging the pottery's continuation. Participants spoke of how the pottery connects them to their Afro-Caribbean heritage, their connection with nature, their love for clay pot cuisine, and collective pride in the industry, representing a tradition distinctly Nevisian. Participants and practitioners expressed insight into a generational disconnect to the craft because there is no active push for community use of the pottery. Being a potter is not sustainable as a livelihood

in its current state; dependent on sales, along with its value and potential not portrayed properly in educational settings. Participants offered solutions to these conflicts by retooling how Nevis pottery can be incorporated into public education and supported by other local industries to tourism.

The practitioners emphasized the need to ensure potters receive a salary for their work, or else future potters will not be able to maintain the craft, which is a full-time job. Gathering these honest perspectives and personal stories was only possible with allocation of time to building trust and giving agency of control to interview participants and the project community partner Newcastle Pottery. The success of creating this ethnographic deliverable reveals more of the value of rapport-building and collaboration in project planning. It affirms the impact of incorporating anthropological approach such as cultivating a partnership. This approach promotes discussion and action for local resources and traditions, specifically in tourism development. Applied anthropologist Mary LaLone created this collaborative model. It describes ethical guidelines for teamwork with through ongoing input and transparent interactions. It builds trust by outlining benefits to all parties. The guidelines urge stakeholders, including researchers, to reaffirm non-hierarchical relationships between partners and participants. The result favors a grassroots heritage tourism movement (LaLone 2005, 11).

The partnership approach also informs our delivery strategy for, *Everything from the Soil: The Craft of Nevis Potter*. I will invite viewers to provide feedback on Nevis pottery through an optional questionnaire. In addition, I urge viewers to participate in greater collective action though highlighting the assets of preserving the tradition and supporting the

future of Nevis pottery. I will ask them to advocate for the suggestions outlined in the documentary. In the video, I encourage a community spirit among all individuals who love the pottery in order to influence future decisions in tourism and government policy.

A broader impact of this project is that it will introduce alternative and creative ways to facilitate community input, encouraging partnerships and appreciative inquiry in heritage and tourism projects. The project's ethnography showed the importance of recognizing cultural resources that shape Nevisian culture today. In Ganzie's interview, he relates knowledge of the pottery to the greater skills of his family and to his ancestor's resilience and dedication to sustain themselves and cultivate the land. He states that foreign dependency, the things coming "on the shiny lookin' planes" are changing how locals value their resources and embrace their Nevisian heritage. Nevis's reliance on tourism could lead to uncontrolled development projects that put the country's cultural heritage at risk. My goal with this project was to raise awareness about how stakeholders handle cultural resources. I hope this will lead to more accountability for developers and increased involvement of locals in decision-making for Nevis.

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Appendix A: Author Biography



Jillian Ferini (jillianferini@gmail.com) is a graduate of the MA Program in Applied Anthropology at San José State University (2024), whose work focused on the facilitation of community inclusion in heritage preservation efforts through ethnographic filmmaking.

Jillian comes from a professional background centered in community engagement and public learning from her previous work in enriching aging communities with ongoing education, outreach communications in affordable housing services, and years of volunteer work with numerous local history projects.