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MAS Digs

The Newsletter of the Montana Archaeological Society

Layers of Time: Explore, Educate & Engage

(Summer, 2025)



2025 Meeting in Livingston, MT

The Montana Archaeological Society held a spirited conference in April at the Depot Center in Livingston, Montana. The meeting concluded with a Keynote address by University of Arizona anthropologist Dr. Maria Nieves Zedeño. She presented her research on *Billy Big Spring and the Blackfoot Early Origins Program*.

Her work with the Blackfoot Confederacy in collaboration with genomic researchers shows that "the genomics of sampled individuals from the Blackfoot Confederacy

belong to a previously undescribed ancient lineage that diverged from other genomic lineages in the Americas in Late Pleistocene times." During her talk, Dr. Zedeño described her work along with co-author Francois Lanoë in northern Montana at the Billy Big Spring site and her work understanding the deep-time persistence, 18,000 years, of the Blackfeet people in Montana and Canada. Watch the keynote below.



READ OR DOWNLOAD THE TRANSCRIPT: <https://mtarchaeologicalsociety.org/>

What's Happening

- **Courtney Little Axe**, University of Montana NAGRPA Coordinator presentation

WHAT: History and Heritage Public Lecture Series

WHERE: The Confluence Center, Missoula, MT

WHEN: July 30, 2025, 6pm

- **Visit the Reed and Bowles Trading Post!**

WHAT: Archaeologists will be working on site through the end of June. Want to visit the site and check out excavations? Text Steve Aaberg (406-696-2198) or Clark Whitehead (406-696-4090)

- **MAS 2026 Conference**

WHAT: Annual Meeting of the Montana Archaeological Society
(The meeting announcement and call for papers coming soon!)

WHERE: Holiday Inn Downtown, Missoula, MT

WHEN: April 10-12, 2026

(Get it on your calendar!)

Welcome New MAS President Jeannie Larmon



Dr. Jeannie Larmon was elected as the new president of the Montana Archaeological Society at the 2025 annual meeting in Livingston.

Jeannie holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, an M.A. in Anthropology from Washington State University, and a B.S. in Anthropology from Bates College. She grew up in New Hampshire, where she spent her free time running and skiing.

Jeannie conducted her doctoral research in Belize, investigating the ways in which water helped shape the Terminal Classic Maya (c. 800–950 CE) landscape at the site of Cara Blanca. With laboratory experience in palynology, isotope analysis, and micromorphological analysis, Jeannie enjoys integrating specialized methods with varying theoretical frameworks.

During graduate school, Jeannie worked for various cultural resources firms in Utah and Illinois. In 2018, while finishing her dissertation, she moved to Missoula, Montana and began working for Historical Research Associates, Inc. Since 2022, she has led HRA's CRM operations for the Missoula office. In addition to her professional responsibilities, Jeannie is affiliate faculty with the University of Montana Department of Anthropology and serves on the Heritage Missoula Committee.

In her free time, Jeannie plays in a band, runs the trails, and floats the rivers. She has come to love everything that Montana offers and looks forward to advancing the MAS mission by engaging with the public and fellow MAS members to promote and discuss archaeology throughout Montana.

Consider This

Dear Members,

The MAS Board is happy to bring you the MAS newsletter for your enjoyment!

Members are welcome to submit a brief opinion piece to be highlighted in the newsletter—think hot topics in the news, calls to action, exciting announcements...

As such, I will use this first opinion piece to urge you to take part in securing the future of historic preservation across Montana (and the country). The voice of a few can be loud, but the voice of many is much louder. Contact your representatives!

Currently, the U.S. Congress is withholding Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 funding for the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), and FY 2026 funding is at risk of being cut entirely. This threatens the work of State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs and THPOs) and undermines efforts to protect Montana's cultural heritage. **The HPF promotes community revitalization, creates jobs, enhances tourism, and grows community tax bases for Montana.**

In 2024, the HPF supported 60% of Montana SHPO operations—over \$1 million—10% of which was distributed to local preservation efforts and an additional 10% to Montana's 15 Certified Local Government (CLG) programs. These grants fund projects that revitalize downtowns, encourage tourism, support tax credit programs, and preserve historic structures like Billings' southside railroad district and Whitehall's Borden's Hotel.

Nationally, 12% of the HPF supports THPOs. In 2023, Montana THPOs received roughly \$700,00 of HPF funds for essential staff and preservation initiatives. Yet, as the number of THPOs grows, individual funding amounts shrink—leaving many THPOs under-resourced. THPO offices, aided by the HPF, support Tribal sovereignty and self-governance by facilitating essential Tribal historic preservation work.

We've faced threats to the HPF before, and strong bipartisan support from Congress has been crucial. **Your voice can make a difference.**

Check these out to learn more:

[Preservation Under Threat](#)

[SHPO Threat One Pager](#)

As always, feel free to reach out to me with your thoughts or questions!

Jeannie Larmon
MAS President

Good Archaeology Reads

Archaeology of Ritual, Religion and Magic, C. Riley Augé, 2022, Berghahn Books, New York.

War Stories: Reading Plains Indian Biographic Rock Art, James D. Keyser and David A. Kaiser, 2023, Berghahn Books, New York.

Land of Beginnings: The Archaeology of Montana's First Peoples, Douglas H. MacDonald, 2024, Montana Historical Society Press, Helena.

Jobs in Archaeology

[Visit Current employment opportunities on the MAS website!](#)

Montana Archaeological Society

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