Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage

Theory • Practice • Policy • Ethics

Who We Are

The [Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project](#) is a seven-year collaboration involving more than 50 international scholars, and 25 partners. The project was developed by George Nicholas (Simon Fraser University), Julie Hollowell (Indiana University) and Kelly Bannister (University of Victoria). Led by Project Director George Nicholas and a Steering Committee of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers experienced in collaborative research, IPinCH brings together anthropologists, archaeologists, lawyers, experts in intellectual property and ethics, and stakeholder groups.

Why this Study?

As Indigenous communities and others work to protect their cultural heritage, issues are emerging over how culture, rights, and knowledge are interpreted. IPinCH is an investigation into these issues. Rather than attempt to generalize varied Indigenous perspectives on cultural heritage and knowledge, analyses will identify common issues and themes. Studies will point towards broad implications and important lessons on fair and appropriate use of knowledge.

Previous studies have addressed issues involving repatriation of cultural objects. However, more needs to be done to better understand how traditional and cultural knowledge is valued, transmitted, regulated, and protected by various societies, and how its use – and misuse – by others impacts cultural heritage. How archaeologists and others respond to these issues has the potential to positively impact, rather than constrain, future research.

What We Are Doing

The project is contributing knowledge, documenting issues, and exploring good practices through three complementary strategies. **Working Groups** discuss research questions, integrate knowledge and findings, and study and publish on theoretical implications. An online **knowledge database** collates relevant publications and documents, and makes them available to researchers, Indigenous communities, and other stakeholders. Up to twenty collaborative community-based initiatives funded as **Case Study research** are exploring specific issues in cultural heritage, contributing valuable lessons and examples for other researchers and communities.

How We Are Funded

IPinCH is funded in large part by a $2.5 million award from the Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI) program of Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Other funding comes from research grants and in-kind contributions from partner organizations, including Simon Fraser University. Close to one-quarter of the IPinCH budget goes towards training students, through research assistantships and fellowships.