# "The Algonquin Provincial Park Oral History Transcription Pilot Project "

HANNAH MCELGUNN, R. ALEXANDER HUNTER, AND EMILY WELSH

# The Algonquin Provincial Park Oral History Transcription Pilot Project

HANNAH McELGUNN, R. ALEXANDER HUNTER,
AND EMILY WELSH

**ABSTRACT**    This communication details an emerging partnership between the collections coordinator of the Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections (APPAC), and anthropologists at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. This partnership offers students at Queen's practical experience in working with oral histories, including transcription and basic discourse analysis, by engaging directly with recordings accessioned at the APPAC. In this article, we reflect on the collaborative process that gave rise to this project, outline what worked well, suggest ways to improve upon our pilot efforts, and provide a working model for other interdisciplinary partnerships focused on archival collections. We also suggest ways that archival collections can be used in interdisciplinary pedagogy and reflect on how these kinds of collaborations can be fruitful for academic researchers, archival users, students, and museum visitors.

**RÉSUMÉ**    Cette communication offre des détails sur un partenariat en développement entre la personne responsable des collections au Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections (APPAC) et des anthropologues de l'Université Queen's à Kingston, Ontario, et de l'Université Brown à Providence, Rhode Island. Ce partenariat offre à la population étudiante de Queen's une expérience pratique de travail avec des récits oraux, incluant la transcription et l'analyse de discours de base, tout en interagissant directement avec des enregistrements sonores se trouvant à l'APPAC. Dans cet article, nous réfléchissons au processus collaboratif qui a donné naissance au projet, décrivons ce qui a bien fonctionné, suggérons des moyens pour améliorer nos efforts préliminaires et proposons un modèle de travail pour d'autres partenariats interdisciplinaires axés sur les collections d'archives. Nous suggérons également des façons d'utiliser des collections d'archives dans des cadres pédagogiques interdisciplinaires et menons une réflexion sur les façons dont ce type de collaborations peut être bénéfique pour les chercheur.e.s universitaires, les usagers.ères des archives, les étudiant.e.s ainsi que les personnes visitant des musées.

## Introduction: Partnership Development and the Algonquin Provincial Park Oral History Collection

Algonquin Provincial Park is widely considered the jewel of Ontario's provincial parks system. The park, in South-Central Ontario, includes over 7,500 square kilometres (km) of lakes, rivers, and forest on the edge of the Canadian Shield. Although the park comprises vast areas without permanent habitation, the region it encompasses has a deep social history of Anishinaabe Algonquin stewardship; Euro-Canadian colonization; extraction of timber resources, which began in the 17th century and continues today; and recreational use as a wilderness park.[1] Documentation of this history is, in part, accessioned within the Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections (APPAC), including in a series of oral histories recorded beginning in the 1970s. These oral histories include information on the formation and management of the park, life in the park in the early 20th century, tourism histories of Ontario, ecology and wildlife management, and the history of timbering in the park. Given that they are comprised of interviews with individuals who lived and worked in the park through the first half of the 20th century, they are a unique historical, anthropological, and linguistic resource.

Despite the clear value of the APPAC oral histories, they are underused by researchers. In part, this is due to access challenges and use restrictions: many of the interviews lack release permissions, a significant portion have not been digitized, and many are not transcribed. This article discusses an initiative to expand the accessibility of these oral histories and make use of them as pedagogical resources in the university setting through a service-learning class, in which students developed transcription protocols and transcribed a subset of interviews. The problems this project set out to address are not unique to the APPAC. We outline this preliminary initiative here in hopes that it may be modified for use in other educational and archival settings.

We are the collections coordinator of the APPAC (Welsh); a linguistic anthropologist and faculty member at Ontario's Queen's University (McElgunn); and an anthropological archaeologist and postdoctoral researcher at Brown University (Hunter). In this article, we detail the collaborative process that gave to rise

1    See Roderick MacKay, *Algonquin Park: A Place Like No Other–A History of Algonquin Provincial Park* (Whitney, ON: The Friends of Algonquin Park, 2018); Audrey Saunders, *Algonquin Story*, 5th ed. (Whitney, ON: The Friends of Algonquin Park, 2021), originally published 1964.

to the oral history transcription in-class initiative, reflect on what worked well in our process and what requires improvement, and provide a replicable model for others in similar positions. Based on our reflection and comments by student participants, we have found that collaborations like ours can be fruitful for all involved parties. For archives, especially in circumstances where funding is difficult, collaborations of this kind can help increase the accessibility of collections and provide a workflow for tasks that would otherwise be extremely difficult given constraints of time, staffing, and funding. For students and instructors, such collaborations offer hands-on pedagogical experience that is both culturally specific and broadly applicable. For researchers, they make available for use important historical, linguistic, and anthropological data that would otherwise be difficult to access.

The APPAC is owned by the Government of Ontario and managed co-operatively with the Friends of Algonquin Park, a not-for-profit organization that funds the position of collections coordinator. Like many other Canadian heritage institutions, the APPAC contends with challenges that include a lack of financial resources and of qualified personnel devoted to the processing, improvement, and accessibility of the collections.[2] Because of this, Welsh is enthusiastic about developing partnerships that advance the work of the APPAC and benefit the interests of collaborators and supporting contributors interested in working with the APPAC's three permanent collections – archival, artifact, and specimen – in addition to its library and educational materials. The APPAC's oral history collection forms part of the APPAC archival collection. Most of the oral history collection began in the mid-1970s, when Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources personnel and researchers recognized the need to record the recollections of "old-timers" who had grown up, lived, and worked in Algonquin Provincial Park in the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries. These project team members recognized that written records went only so far in preserving and explaining the history of Algonquin Provincial Park, its people, its towns, and its industries.[3] The interviews also allowed the researchers to ask targeted questions about lesser-

2    Canadian Museums Association, *A Study of the Economics of Museum Collections* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Museums Association, 2013), https://www.museums.ca/uploaded/web/docs/CMACollectionsMNGT2013 REPORTENG.pdf.

3    Roderick MacKay, "Recollections as Resource: The Use of Oral History Interviews in Personalizing Local History," in *Partnering for New Business Opportunities*, Conference proceedings, Cultural Heritage Tourism in Ontario Conference, October 18–21, 1999 (Pembroke, ON: Friends of Bonnechere Parks and Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, 2000), 148–55.

known techniques, sites, and people to support and expand the historical record and park interpretation. These interviews continue to the present day, as notable park staff, researchers, and personalities are interviewed to ensure their stories are preserved for the benefit of contemporary and future generations.

The APPAC oral history collection consists of over 175 recordings of various physical media types, most of which have been digitized. New donations and backlog donations are processed and added to the collection each year. Although the collection is large, a significant portion of it is very difficult for researchers to access. Only about one-third of the oral history collection's interviews have associated physical records (i.e., consent forms, interview notes, or transcripts). Furthermore, the transcription process begun in the 1970s was incomplete, and many ostensibly completed transcripts contain errors or paraphrasing that compromise their utility. As such, many transcripts do not accurately reflect the content of the interviews and therefore are not made accessible to researchers. Recent work had been undertaken to verify or edit some of the transcripts against audio files and to make any necessary changes by adding handwritten corrections to copies of the original transcripts. But because of the number of errors and edits required, even many nominally corrected transcripts remained unsuitable for research purposes. In addition, until recently, the oral history collection lacked a policy or procedures for handling research requests and providing access via the public-facing side of the APPAC's Past-Perfect database. The APPAC's collection policy[4] was protective of the voices of interview participants but needed a procedure for determining how and when audio, transcripts, and other information could be shared with researchers and descendants. Consent and donation forms also needed to be updated to meet contemporary views on privacy and ethical rights surrounding oral histories. In her role as collections coordinator, Welsh created a procedural document[5] and updated consent forms in 2022–2023; however, working to transcribe materials remained an unresolved challenge for the archive. In what follows, we detail the ways in which our collaboration helped to address these challenges and offer a blueprint for further work in the same vein.

4   Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections, "Algonquin Provincial Park Archives & Collections (APPAC) Management Policies" (unpublished manuscript, on file at Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections, revised 2022).

5   Emily Welsh, "APPAC Procedures: Oral History Collection" (unpublished manuscript, on file at Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections, 2023).

## Creating Transcriptions of Oral History Recordings

Our project originated in 2023, when Hunter introduced McElgunn and Welsh as potential collaborators. During their initial meeting, Welsh and McElgunn discussed the challenges with the APPAC's oral history collection and its current lack of accessibility to researchers. McElgunn explained that she was looking for opportunities to provide her students with experience in working with oral histories, and Welsh detailed the APPAC's need for assistance in transcribing oral history interviews so the information could be appropriately shared with researchers online. It quickly became clear that a collaboration had the potential to help realize mutual longstanding interests and goals – especially Welsh's commitment to modernizing the APPAC collection, McElgunn's interest in oral history and commitment to pedagogical innovation, and Hunter's research on the social history of Algonquin Park.

As the transcription project was a pilot without significant external funding, McElgunn adapted a portion of a small, fourth-year undergraduate capstone course, LLCU 403: Stories that Matter, to include service-learning with the oral history collection housed at the APPAC. In keeping with the tenets of collaborative learning, a pedagogical approach that involves working together to produce products, complete tasks,[6] and engage in active learning,[7] the exercise was designed to enable students to gain practical experience in working with archival collections while also producing three sets of documents that could be used by the APPAC: (1) transcriptions of 14 interviews, totalling approximately eight hours of audio, each with a cover sheet featuring metadata (interview date, location, length, participants), a summary, keywords, and a harmful language warning, along with a note about Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)* regulations; (2) a style guide detailing the class workflow and transcription process, intended to guide staff of the APPAC and those undertaking future transcriptions; and (3) an abbreviated "how to read the transcriptions" instruction sheet, intended for anyone wishing to access the transcriptions.

---

6   Marjan Laal and Seyed Mohammad Ghodsi, "Benefits of Collaborative Learning," *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, no. 31 (2012): 486–90.

7   John C. Bean and Dan Melzer, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2021).

Below, we describe preparations for the in-class component, our process of implementing the pilot transcription project, and key takeaways and future directions for the work. By outlining all these steps in detail, we aim to illuminate the time commitment demanded by such a project and provide a model for archivists embarking on similar collaborative projects.

### Preparations for the In-Class Component

The first step in our collaboration was receiving approval from both the APPAC Collections Committee and Queen's University. Welsh presented a proposal to the APPAC's Collections Committee, and after receiving the committee's support, Welsh and McElgunn developed a volunteer agreement form to communicate to student researchers their relationship with the APPAC, the need for confidentiality, their potential exposure to derogatory or triggering content in the audio, and the need to respect audio files and the information therein. McElgunn, in turn, consulted with the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board and her department chair to ensure that there were no university policies that would be contravened by this volunteer opportunity. Following those consultations, McElgunn incorporated suggestions into her course design, which included allowing students to opt in to participation and providing alternative assignments and coursework for any student who opted out. Finally, given the need to restrict unwanted access or further dissemination, Welsh and McElgunn discussed strategies for safely exchanging and storing the audio files.

Prior to the beginning of the term in which LLCU 403: Stories that Matter would be taught (January–April 2024), Hunter and McElgunn selected a subset of the recordings in the oral history collection to prioritize for transcription. Selections were based partly on Hunter's ongoing archaeological work in the park so that his research could serve as proof of concept for the utility of the new transcriptions. For the purposes of this pilot project, selections were limited to recordings that had completed consent forms. Interviews without formal consent forms will be transcribed at later stages under more restrictive protocols, and access may be restricted. Welsh provided audio recordings to McElgunn using the data-transfer mechanism of Queen's University's secure cloud storage. Finally, Welsh and McElgunn held a planning meeting to finalize volunteer agreements for participating students and discuss parameters for establishing research protocols.

**Implementation**

Students were introduced to the pilot project in the first week of class, but they did not begin transcribing for several weeks. The intervening time was important to allow several components to fall into place. Firstly, students were given the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to participate in the group project or would prefer to be given an alternative assignment. All students opted in and signed volunteer agreements provided by Welsh. Secondly, the gap between the introduction and beginning of the assignment provided time for Welsh to give a guest lecture to the class introducing the oral history collection and the APPAC. To complement this lecture, students did background readings on oral history, learned about different kinds of transcription styles and conventions, and were introduced to related ethics and privacy issues. To foreground the collaborative nature of the exercise, students each elected to join one of several working groups assigned to focus on the following dimensions of the project: transcription conventions, metadata and workflow, offensive language guidelines, and privacy and consent issues. Students selected the groups they wished to join based on their responses to the framing readings assigned in class, and each group contributed a section to the style guide provided to APPAC at the end of the semester. Finally, before students began transcribing, they reviewed available metadata for the audio recordings (provided by Welsh) and selected their first and second choices to transcribe. Each student was ultimately responsible for transcribing 30–35 minutes of audio.

As a linguistic anthropologist, McElgunn is most familiar with and taught students an approach to transcription that emphasizes the politics of representation.[8] Because no graphic rendering can capture the fullness of auditory information, every transcript is necessarily a selective representation that reflects what the transcriber deems important to include and therefore incorporates some degree of the transcriber's own bias. Scholars of language and communication have developed a wide range of symbols to represent different kinds of expressive phenomena in transcriptions, including noting inhales and exhales and measuring the length of silences to fractions of a second. Because the

---

8    Elinor Ochs, "Transcription as Theory," in *Developmental Pragmatics*, ed. Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schiefflin (New York: Academic Press, 1979); Alessandro Duranti, "Transcription: From Writing to Digitized Images," in *Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Mary Bucholtz, "The Politics of Transcription," *Journal of Pragmatics* 32, no. 10 (2000), 1439–65; Alexandra Jaffe, "Introduction: Non-Standard Orthography and Non-Standard Speech," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4, no. 4 (2000): 497–513.

audience for these transcripts will include researchers from a range of academic disciplines, including history, anthropology, and ecology, as well as the general public (i.e., family members of interviewees), such details were likely to detract from the accessibility of transcriptions. The task that students faced, then, was to strike a balance between accuracy – capturing the uniqueness of how individual speakers might express themselves orally – and accessibility – making this legible to a broad audience. To determine appropriate transcription conventions, students were introduced to a wide range of symbols through John Du Bois et al.'s "Outline of Discourse Transcription."[9] They then worked together to select the symbols and types of speech features they thought would be most useful. These selections became preliminary transcription conventions for the project and were codified into a transcription protocol developed by the transcription conventions working group.

The class devoted an entire week of class time (two 80-minute meetings) to learning how to use and troubleshoot two kinds of transcription software: NVivo and Express Scribe. Learning to troubleshoot technical issues – of which there were many – proved to be a critical step that enabled students to continue their transcription independently. The key functionalities needed in the transcription software include the ability to speed up or slow down the audio and to pause, play, and rewind – ideally with a keystroke rather than the use of the mouse. Another crucial element is the ability to automatically create a timestamp at the beginning of each person's turn at talk. This results in "time-aligned" transcripts that enable the recording and the transcript to be used together. For instance, if a researcher is looking for one particular topic, they can search the transcript using keywords, locate the precise moment at which the topic is being discussed, and navigate to that portion of the audio recording. This eliminates time spent scrolling through the recording.

Once preliminary conventions were in place and students had some familiarity with the software, they were each assigned an interview to transcribe based on their first or second preferences from the list of available recordings. Time was allotted in class to work on transcripts, but the expectation was that the majority of work would take place outside class time. Initially, students produced draft

---

9    John W. Du Bois, Stephan Schuetze-Coburn, Susanna Cumming, and Danae Paolino, "Outline of Discourse Transcription," in *Talking Data: Transcription and Coding in Discourse Research*, ed. Jane Anne Edwards and Martin D. Lampert (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1993).

transcripts of 20 minutes of their audio recordings. Observations made in the process of creating these draft transcripts allowed students to refine and finalize the transcription conventions. After reviewing draft transcripts in class, the students identified the following speech features as priorities for representation: pauses, overlapping speech, speaker emphasis, and inaudible stretches of audio. They also used (what we hope are) intuitive symbols to represent such features – for instance, ". . ." for pauses and italics for emphasis. (Final conventions and formatting protocols are detailed in the appendix to this article.) Students then implemented revised conventions as they finished their transcripts of 30–35 minutes of audio.

In addition to producing a transcript, each student was also responsible for submitting a coversheet, designed by the workflow and metadata group, with the following fields: names of participants, name of transcriber, location and date of interview, length of interview, keywords, and summary. Each coversheet also included two standard content warnings – one about harmful language and another about concerns defined by FIPPA – which were contributed by the working groups on offensive language and privacy and consent. Students submitted these materials to McElgunn, and they became part of their final assessment for the course.

At the end of the course, further steps were necessary to finalize the transcripts prior to transferring them to APPAC. McElgunn hired two research assistants from the class, who spent approximately four additional weeks working part time to edit the transcripts to ensure they were consistent with the conventions. During this time, all questions about technical terminology or spelling of names of people or places were provided to Welsh, who provided feedback to ensure that the accuracy and completeness of the transcripts could be improved before accessioning. The completed transcripts and documents were then transferred to the APPAC for processing and review by Welsh. Welsh asked the students to identify instances of derogatory and triggering language, as well as instances of private information as defined by FIPPA, as part of their transcription process. Building on student work and recommendations, Welsh edited the transcripts, created any necessary redactions, or added dates for when material would become accessible, and built upon the content warnings the students had added to the transcripts and their style guide. The completed transcripts were then uploaded and shared online alongside a copy of the conventions key in the APPAC's database. Access to the audio files will continue to be available

during in-person research visits according to the APPAC's established policies and procedures.

**Reflection: Issues and Improvements for the Transcription Process**

As with any pilot, this project provided an opportunity to identify what worked well, in terms of pedagogy and workflow, and which elements should be improved in future iterations. In an end-of-class survey, filled out by a self-selecting group of students from the course, respondents identified two positive aspects of the project: Firstly, students saw the collaborative aspect of the project as a highlight. They valued working with their peers as a whole class or in small groups – for instance, being able to deliberate over transcript conventions and come to consensus as a group. Secondly, students appreciated the opportunity to take on roles of decision makers: it was up to the students themselves to decide upon final transcription conventions, formatting, and information included in the coversheets. Students reported that the practical component of creating the transcriptions (i.e., rather than talking about what makes a good transcription) was among the most challenging but rewarding aspects of the process. This feedback suggests that in-class time for group deliberation, for troubleshooting, and for seeking feedback on practical tasks was pedagogically beneficial, and it confirms the importance of an active, collaborative learning approach that fore-grounds student autonomy and peer-to-peer instruction. These aspects will be further emphasized in future iterations of the exercise by devoting time in class to peer-review and group-editing exercises.

Issues that arose in class largely involved technical troubleshooting. The first software the class attempted to use was NVivo, in part because it was provided free of charge to all students by Queen's University. However, we found that the version of NVivo that was current at the time of the course had major issues of incompatibility with certain Macs, which led the software to crash unexpectedly and prevented audio files (.wav and .mp3) from loading for some students.[10] Further, there were notably different functionalities for students using the same version of NVivo on Mac and Windows operating systems, leading to confusion. While about a quarter of the students continued with NVivo, Express Scribe was introduced as another possible option for students to use, given that it had the

---

[10]  A representative from NVivo communicated to McElgunn that these issues had been resolved through a software "hotfix," released April 30, 2024.

core functionalities listed above. Because our original software choice did not function as expected, having a second class devoted to learning the software and troubleshooting proved invaluable. Despite this on-the-fly solution, students identified software issues as a frustrating aspect of the project, suggesting that building in even more time for students to learn and get comfortable with the software would have been useful.

Another consideration that arose during the pilot was the amount of time required for students to transcribe 30 minutes of audio. This varied markedly: some students reported taking about five hours to complete their transcripts, whereas others took up to 20 hours. Some of this variance was due to issues with software, but another contributing factor was students' linguistic backgrounds. Students for whom English was a second (or third) language found the transcription process much more onerous. These difficulties were exacerbated by the unique dialect used in many of the recordings and the common use of locally specific place names and technical terms. This created a potential problem of inequity among students and suggests that a different workload arrangement that allows students to draw on their individualized skills in further iterations of this project might be more beneficial.

Among possible workflow improvements, a key modification would be to incorporate peer review and local knowledge *throughout* the process rather than one round of complete review at the end. Given that transcription is such a detail-oriented process, the practice of having a different set of eyes reviewing transcripts helps to ensure consistency and to catch errors or typos, much like the copy-editing process that is standard for other kinds of academic outputs.

When asked to review place names or other proper names that the students were unsure about for the APPAC, Welsh noticed some issues with mishearings and inconsistent transcriptions. For instance, names that were locally familiar in the Algonquin region (i.e., Nipissing River) were often mistranscribed. Welsh was able to understand the terminology and place names used by the interviewees based on her local knowledge and her background of working with the APPAC. These transcription issues brought to the fore the importance of local knowledge when working with collaborators from varying backgrounds. Although it would be time consuming, it became apparent that Welsh would need to listen to each audio recording while editing the transcript to pick up on any inaccuracies.

Adding check-in times or question-and-answer sessions during the course would have allowed Welsh to better assist the students with these uncommon or unknown terms. The added time would have created a better experience for the student volunteers, who reported that learning more about the park community and the context for the interviews would also have rendered their participation more fulfilling. Incorporating the Archives staff at various points in the project would have also lessened the task on peer editors at later stages and on Archives staff once the initial transcriptions were complete.

Nevertheless, any institution considering a collaboration must be aware of the significant time commitment that will be required of them. In this type of collaboration, to ensure the oral history interviews are transcribed as accurately as possible, respecting the voices of the participants, and to support the experience of the volunteers, archives staff should set aside time both during the project and for processing afterwards. The time commitment can be daunting; Welsh reflected that, without the help of a volunteer task force, the APPAC would not have been able to even consider tackling the task of increasing accessibility to the oral history collection. When considering the time interviewees took to share their stories, as well as the historically important content contained within them, Welsh became certain of the need for her own time commitment and of the irrefutable value of the outcomes. Although less than 10 percent of the oral history collection was transcribed during this project, the pilot program created outputs that allow for continued progress toward increased accessibility. The existence of a style guide means that transcriptions in a consistent and usable format can continue to be made, whether by future students of this same course or by other types of volunteers. Already, the presence of a style guide with workflow details has provided Welsh with the tools to speak with family researchers who might be interested in transcribing their ancestors' interviews to support the APPAC.

## Discussion: Future Pedagogical and Research Uses of Transcripts

Although provisional and experimental, this collaboration has already proven fruitful. In addition to the pedagogical benefits to Queen's University students, as

noted in their comments following the course, the transcription program has also benefited both the APPAC and researchers studying the history of the Algonquin Provincial Park region. The APPAC is looking forward to using the style guide created by the students to continue work with the collection. Welsh hopes that future researchers and volunteers will continue the transcription process and that, eventually, the complete collection will be transcribed and the information it contains will be readily accessible to researchers, including remotely. This is especially important in the context of the APPAC because the archive is in an isolated location, approximately 250 km north of Toronto, Ontario, and about 260 km west of Ottawa, Ontario, the closest urban centres. This remote location makes access difficult for Canadian and international researchers alike. Once each interview has been transcribed, organized, and ethically considered, the historical information it contains can then be shared with researchers online. The accessible material can also more easily be used by staff for exhibitions and public programming.

The historical information contained in these first-person recollections is invaluable in supporting, completing, and challenging the written records relating to the logging industry, railroads, recreational practices, social-environmental interactions, and other human activities represented in the history of Ontario's oldest provincial park. Many publications about the park's history have drawn upon the documents held within the APPAC.[11] With APPAC permission, researchers have also drawn on information from the oral history collection. However, given the aforementioned challenges created by the current state of the collection, access remains restricted and limited. By consistently and accurately transcribing the oral history collection using the style guide and recommendations developed during this pilot project, the APPAC will be better able to support researchers and authors while respecting the rights of the interviewees. In time, the APPAC will restore complete and ethical accessibility to this collection, which was previously improperly documented and difficult to access.

The iteration of LLCU 403: Stories that Matter discussed here ultimately transcribed only a small portion of the extant APPAC oral history recordings. McElgunn anticipates continuing this work in future iterations of the course. It should be noted that some of the most valuable elements of the project from

---

11   MacKay, Algonquin Park; Roderick MacKay, *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere: A History of Exploration, Logging, and Settlement, 1800 to 1920*, 2nd ed. (Pembroke, ON: The Friends of Algonquin Park, 2016).

a pedagogical perspective – namely, the collaborative development of transcription protocols – will need to be modified for future classes given that those protocols have now been established. Hunter is also drawing on the transcripts to develop exercises for the classes he teaches in environmental studies and archaeology. One such exercise prompts students to use excerpts from the transcripts to interpret an assemblage of artifacts recovered from an early 20th-century logging camp. Another, for an environmental storytelling class, asks students to extrapolate from the transcripts to write microhistories of everyday life in timber camps. Both exercises introduce students to techniques and challenges of archival research. Given the degree to which this pilot project emphasized the value of collaborative, active learning for students approaching archival materials for the first time, those principles are being incorporated into all exercises developed based on the transcripts.

The transcripts produced through collaboration between the APPAC and Queen's University have already been useful for researchers, and they promise to have future uses as pedagogical tools. Hunter is drawing on information from transcripts to understand archaeological remains of logging camps in Algonquin Provincial Park. For instance, several interviews discuss labour conditions within work camps run by the lumber company of J.R. Booth, one of Canada's most powerful timber barons, in the early part of the 20th century. These interviews highlight labour conditions, the proper use of logging tools, and the reasons for shifts in targeted tree species.

The audio recordings and transcripts also have the potential to be used by linguists for research focused on language shift. For instance, the recordings are a rich source of information on Canadian English dialects from the early to mid-20th century and, as such, offer a way to study sound changes in Canadian English.[12] Further, given that many of the interlocutors are from the Ottawa Valley region, this set of recordings as a whole could contribute to a better understanding of the Ottawa Valley dialect, which was not well documented when speakers of the dialect were more numerous, prior to the 1970s.[13] Transcripts are relevant to both kinds of studies because they can provide examples of certain

12   Charles Boberg, "Variation and Change in the Phonetics of Canadian English," in *The English Language in Canada: Status, History and Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

13   Ian Pringle and Enoch Padolsky, "The Linguistic Survey of the Ottawa Valley," *American Speech* 58, no. 4 (1983): 325–44.

words where sound changes are expected and showcase lexical (word-based) and grammatical variation. More broadly, the recordings could be used for courses focusing on Canadian English and historical linguistics, as well as phonetics and phonology (the study of sound), in addition to more discourse analysis–oriented classes like the one taught by McElgunn.


## Conclusion

The collaboration documented here has established a protocol that enables the use of the archival resources of the APPAC in educational settings; developed a series of conventions that facilitate the continued elaboration of the APPAC oral history collection; made previously inaccessible materials in that collection available to researchers and teachers; enabled the development of pedagogical materials drawing on the archive; and built collaborative relationships between the APPAC, Ontario universities, and international researchers. We anticipate that these relationships will continue and that the oral history collections of the APPAC will be made more accessible and robust as a result. We understand this pilot project as the first step in a collaborative process that we envision continuing through future iterations of courses taught by both McElgunn and Hunter. To conclude, we wish to emphasize a few key findings from our experience: Firstly, direct engagement with archival materials in their original form is valuable for students from a pedagogical perspective. It not only exposes students to the content of those archives but also affords opportunities for methodological training and teaches students about the biases, translations, and researcher decision-making inherent to the process of converting archival materials into historical narrative. Secondly, such collaborations can also be valuable for archives, providing opportunities to develop and curate collections where obstacles like funding restrictions and the need to prioritize urgent work might otherwise make those longer-term projects less viable. In this sense, collaborations like this one offer a bridge between archives users and archives, which will be of significant interest to teachers, researchers, and archivists.

**BIOGRAPHY**    Emily Welsh is the Collections Coordinator for the Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections (APPAC) and is employed by the Friends of Algonquin Park (FOAP), a Canadian registered charity for people passionate about Algonquin Park. She is a graduate of Queen's University, with a Bachelor of Sciences degree specializing in life sciences and classical studies. Emily explored her passions for collections management and exhibition design through completion of the Master of Museum Studies program at the University of Toronto. As an emerging museum professional, she developed her collections management skills through work at the Ontario Science Centre, Royal Ontario Museum, and Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute (KCVI) and values the collaborations and experiences shared by working with others in the heritage sector.

**BIOGRAPHY**    Hannah McElgunn is a linguistic anthropologist interested in issues of information sovereignty. Since 2014, she has been visiting Hopi, an Indigenous homeland in northeastern Arizona. Working in reciprocity with friends and colleagues, she studies the appropriation of Hopi language, knowledge, and other intangible materials and the various ways they might be reclaimed in the present. In addition to this longer-term work, she has done research with French-speaking communities in Eastern Canada and more recently began a partnership with the Algonquin Provincial Park Archives and Collections in Ontario. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Queen's University.

**BIOGRAPHY**    R. Alexander (Sandy) Hunter is an anthropologist and historical archaeologist. While conducting the work described in this article, he was a Voss Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute at Brown University for Environment and Society; he is currently a lecturer in anthropology and archaeology at Stanford University. Hunter researches the political ecology of colonialism, focusing on the long-term legacies of colonial land management. His work in Algonquin Park examines how the labour of lumbering remade the space of the park in the 19th and 20th centuries and queries the connections between timber extraction and contemporary understandings of Algonquin Park as a place for wilderness recreation. He also has research projects in the Peruvian Andes.

## Appendix

**Format of transcription:**

- Timestamp ⇨ Speaker ⇨ Transcript in columns from left to right (and indicated at the top).
- Formatted in a table, with grid lines and in portrait structure.
- Use full name for first turn of talk, initials thereafter
  - First turn – Interviewer, following lines – I
  - Write the full name of Interviewee, then initials thereafter
- Third-party speaker: Name if named, description if not (only put initials if they are frequently interjecting)
- New line and time stamp: Each time there's a switch in speakers (backchanneling excepted) or at transcriber's discretion when there's a new topic. Make more than one paragraph if someone goes on for more than a page.

| CONVENTION | DESCRIPTION + EXAMPLE |
|---|---|
| \<lower case\> | Use for transcriber's notes on sound or utterance coming from speaker/voice quality (e.g., clearing throat, laughter, cough, etc.) E.g., \<clears throat\>, \<laughing\>, \<coughing\> |
| ((lower case)) | Use for transcriber's notes that provide contextual information, such as any significant background noise or speaker actions that the transcriber feels should be noted. E.g., It was maybe . . . ((children playing in background)) twenty years ago. E.g., You know, maybe around here ((gestures towards map)). |
| ((SP?)) | Use when unsure of the spelling of people's names, places, or any other word. E.g., We were up at Lake Ryan ((SP?)) |

| ((inaudible)) | Use if a word or longer phrase is unintelligible and cannot be made out.<br>E.g., And that's what ((inaudible)), I think. |
|---|---|
| xx  xx | Use for uncertainty in hearing – write a best estimation of what speaker was saying.<br>E.g., I went xx down to the lake xx |
| [ ] | Use for backchanneling (utterances from the listeners that indicate active listening like "mm," "mhm," "uh huh") and speaker overlap. Align square brackets in cases of overlap. Include backchanneling minimally at transcriber's discretion.<br>E.g., I got hired there [I: mhm] when I was 17.<br>E.g., Interviewer: When you were working by [the lake]<br>Interviewee:                                          [Yeah, by the lake] |
| – | Use in instances of latching (where a speaker begins talking directly after another with no discernible pause) as well as a speaker's false start, correction, or interruption of themself.<br>E.g., Interviewee: And what he said was–<br>Interviewer: –Right<br>E.g., And, well– it– it was so scary in the moment. |
| . . . | Use for long pauses, where the speaker is hesitating or thinking before speaking.<br>E.g., I was with . . . two other guys. |
| . | Use a period intuitively at the ends of sentences for finality and if a question is posed with flat intonation.<br>E.g., That's where we went.<br>E.g., But you weren't there, were you. |
| , | Use at transcriber's discretion for short pauses and to capture the tone of the speaker.<br>E.g., They were up early, with their stuff ready and that, but I didn't want to go. |
| ? | Use for questions asked by speakers. For the sake of legibility, the question mark does not indicate a speaker's rising intonation.<br>E.g., Can you believe we did that? |

| | |
|---|---|
| ! | Use at transcriber's own discretion for exclamations made by speakers that are more energetic or forceful than a simple statement.<br>E.g., Well that's what she told me! |
| " " | Use when someone is directly quoting someone else.<br>E.g., And then she said, "you can't go that way!" |
| *Italics* | Use for speaker emphasis.<br>E.g., I would *never* do that. |
| Repeated letters | Use for drawn out sounds and words.<br>E.g., It was sooooo cold outside. |
| Numerals | Use when referencing age, years, time or money.<br>E.g., I started working there in 1932.<br>E.g., In '32 I would have been 20.<br>E.g., We started work at 5 o'clock in the morning.<br>E.g., Back then lunch would have cost you less than $5. |
| Non-standard spelling | Use apostrophes to indicate clipping (when final consonants are dropped at the end of a word).<br>E.g., We were gone fishin'.<br><br>Standard spelling is retained even when words are pronounced non-standardly for the sake of legibility.<br>E.g., Sometimes we would wrestle (rather than "wrassle"). |