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Lessons learned: The Bodo public archaeology program, Alberta

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ABSTRACT

Community-based public archaeology programs tend to be undervalued, but represent essential resources to address societal and economic challenges, such as feelings of alienation and disengagement, regional depopulation, incomplete understandings of historical events, and vandalism of heritage sites. The Bodo public archaeology program is an example of a locally-led initiative that owes its success to several factors: 1. the long-term commitment of the local archaeological society's board and membership, 2. positive relationships with educational, community, and corporate stakeholders, 3. collaborative partnerships, 4. involving student interns and staff members, 5. consistent program delivery methods, and 6. a focus on experiential learning.

The continued viability of the program will depend on its ability to address timely topics, cultivate wider appeal, and further establish stable funding. Suggestions for growth include establishing permanent Indigenous partnerships, developing web-based initiatives to reach out to a remote audience, and engagement with a broader base of stakeholders. The lessons learned at the Bodo public archaeology program have wider implications regarding the benefits that locally-led, experience-based heritage outreach initiatives bring to the communities in which they are situated, and provide suggestions for how to plan for program success when resources are relatively limited.

KEYWORDS

Public archaeology, outreach, education, tourism, community participation, non-profit organization, student internship, experiential learning, Northern Plains

1. Introduction

Sustainable community-based public archaeology programs are largely unrecognized champions of local pride, regional economic development, equity in education, and responsible land and heritage stewardship. The program led from the Bodo Archaeological Centre in Alberta represents one such example. It is a locally-led initiative that engages visitors from around the world and incorporates many elements that make it a useful case

study to illustrate the many benefits that archaeological outreach has to offer.

Experiential learning is one of the foundations of the Bodo public archaeology program. One of the goals of experiential learning is to engage in 'learning through play' and to activate the senses in order to promote a deep connection to the material being taught. Through this

type of learning at archaeological sites, participants learn about heritage, traditional knowledge, and landscapes in their own way. This process tends to motivate people to continue to seek out additional ways to engage and connect with the past (e.g., Griebel 2010; Pawleta 2012; Peterson et al. 2017). Fostering this sense of connection is a key element in promoting cultural partnerships, instilling a sense of local pride, preventing feelings of alienation, and encouraging responsible land stewardship (Smith 2002). Public archaeology programs can also be important tools in reconciliation, as they expand understandings of the deep history of human-land relationships, a history that may not be as familiar as more recent, settler-based accounts (e.g., Warrick 2012; Farazis et al. 2019). Lastly, an engaging public archaeology program is one of the most effective ways of protecting sites from looting, vandalism, and development, particularly when a site is situated in a remote location (Mrđić 2012; Županeč and Bregar 2012; Hogg 2015).

Establishing and maintaining a public archaeology program can be challenging, however, particularly when it is located outside of a major population centre. Funding resources and professional support, for example, may be limited to nonexistent (e.g., Pitman-Gelles 1981:112, in Cerovski and Sinkovec 2012:32; Malainey et al. 2017). Second, there may be a perception that archaeological knowledge is limited to academics or professionals, and is therefore inaccessible to the public, which presents a possible barrier to learning (Griebel 2010; Bakas 2012). Lastly, services may be difficult to obtain outside of larger centres, and people may therefore be less motivated to travel to remote locations, where archaeological sites are often situated (e.g., Mrđić 2012, but see Section 5, below).

Given these challenges, the success of the Bodo public archaeology program has the potential to inform future decision making and planning at Bodo and at other communities considering community-based public archaeology programs. Although Bodo is situated in a relatively remote, sparsely-populated location in Alberta, the program represents a sustainable community-driven initiative that evolved from a one-day annual open house into a full-time summer schedule that now offers a variety of learning opportunities to people of all ages. In this paper, we present a brief summary of the Bodo Archaeological Locality and the history of public outreach at the site, followed by a discussion of challenges and opportunities that have arisen during the development of the public archaeology program. We conclude with a summary of achievements, and provide suggestions for further work to ensure the continued success of this and other public outreach programs.

2. The Bodo Archaeological Locality

The Bodo Archaeological Locality is near the hamlet of Bodo, Alberta, about 400 kilometres southeast of Edmonton and less than 10 kilometres west of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border (Figure 1). The locality is situated in the Bodo Sand Hills, consisting of partially stabilized sand dunes interspersed with numerous sloughs. The current nearest major water source is Eyehill Creek, which flows eastward from Sounding Lake west of Bodo along the northern boundary of the Bodo Sand Hills, into Manitou Lake in Saskatchewan.

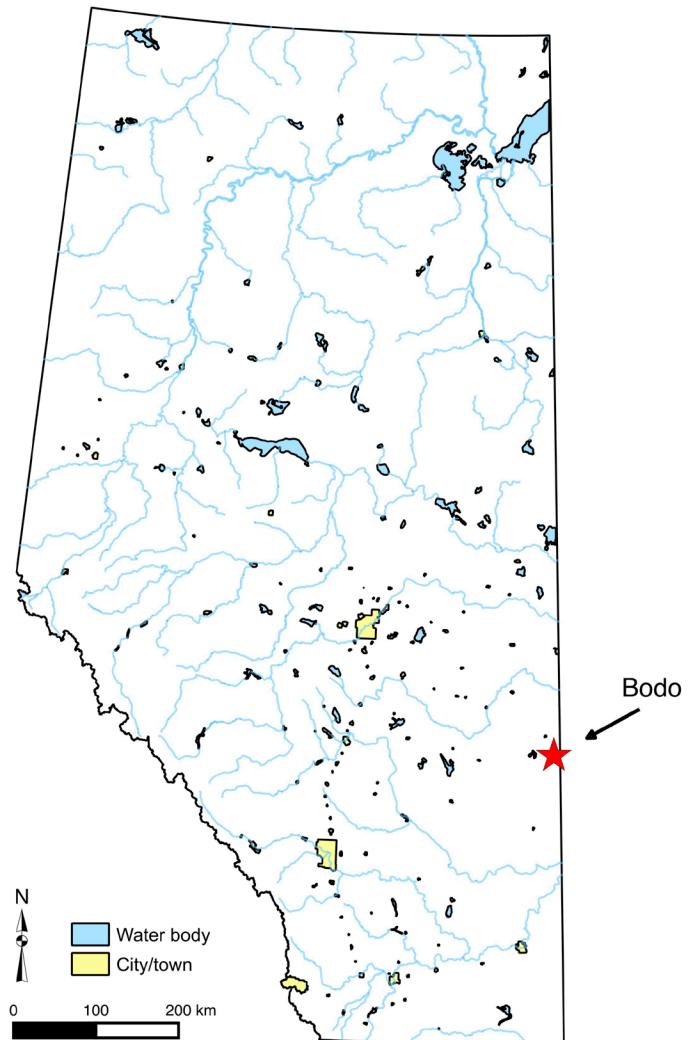


Figure 1. Location of the Bodo Archaeological Locality in Alberta.

The Bodo Bison Skulls Site (FaOm-1) was first recorded in 1995 during pipeline construction (Gibson and McKeand 1996), although local residents had long been aware of the presence of archaeological resources in the region. In 2002, a second site (FaOm-22, the Bodo Overlook Site) was recorded west of FaOm-1, and the two sites are now thought to represent primary locations within the Bodo Archaeological

Locality, estimated to cover an area of more than 10 square kilometres (Gibson and McKeand 1996; Gibson 2005).

The current understanding of the history of human occupation at the Bodo Archaeological Locality is based on more than 20 years of investigations conducted in the area since FaOm-1 was first recorded. Surface finds of diagnostic artifacts provide the oldest physical evidence for human occupation at Bodo, dating to about 4500–3500 years before present. Intact evidence indicates a least three subsequent Precontact Period human occupations, while buried Protohistoric and Historic Period artifacts demonstrate the continued importance of this landscape to people up to the present time (see Gibson 2004a, 2004b; Gilliland 2007; Gibson and Grekul 2010; diagnostic artifact dates from Peck 2011; Munyikwa et al. 2014).

The extent of the locality and the volume of artifact recoveries in a location where no comparable sites had previously been recorded resulted in the interpretation that this area was likely a significant gathering place for ancestral Indigenous groups (e.g., Meyer and Thistle 1995; Meyer et al. 2012). This interpretation is supported by Bradley and Bradley's (1977) observation that the Cree, Sarcee, and Blackfoot all considered the nearby Neutral Hills, Nose Hill, and Sounding Lake to be part of their traditional neutral territory. The region continued to be an important location for Indigenous and settler-descendant communities well into the historic era, as evidenced by the more than 5000 people that attended the signing of the adhesion to Treaty 6 at Sounding Lake (in Cree: *Nipi-Kapitikwek*, about 25 km west of Bodo) in 1879 (King 1979). Occasional Indigenous communal gatherings continued to be held near Sounding Lake into the 1970s (Terrance Gibson, personal communication, July, 2007).

3. Public archaeology at Bodo

In the almost 20 years of its existence, the annual public archaeology program at Bodo has expanded from a single-day event into one that offers multiple programming options over a period of more than three months. The following is a chronological summary of the history of program development, a description of the current program, and a discussion of the importance of post-secondary student involvement and collaboration.

3.1 Open houses

Open houses were a fundamental first step in the development of the public programs at Bodo, and they continue to be among the most well-attended events at the site. The first public open house at the Bodo Archaeological Locality was

held as part of the first University of Alberta archaeological field school in 2002 (Figure 2). It was initiated when field school director Dr. Terrance (Terry) Gibson recognized an opportunity to engage local stakeholders with field school students and foster an appreciation in the public and in students of the value of hands-on education, archaeology, and history. Since then, the open house has been a regular event attended by between 50 and 100 visitors who may travel up to several hundred kilometres to reach the site. The day typically consists of archaeological site tours, learning to use an atlatl, a mock excavation, flintknapping demonstrations, craft-making, video and lecture presentations, and a silent auction. A barbecue lunch or dinner is also provided, and the event is free of charge, although donations are accepted.



Figure 2. Dr. Terry Gibson (in red vest) discusses archaeology with Premier Ralph Klein (centre) during the Bodo public open house held during the 2005 field school.

3.2 The Bodo Archaeological Society

The Bodo Archaeological Society (BAS) was incorporated in 2003 as a non-profit organization with the mandate to: 1. advocate for public education and site conservation through supporting archaeological research, and, 2. to contribute to the development of new tourism opportunities in east-central Alberta. Upon its establishment, the BAS became one of six centres under the umbrella of the Archaeological Society of Alberta (ASA). The BAS has an elected board of directors composed of 11 members that include the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, six Directors and one Provincial Representative. The board meets monthly and is

responsible for the direct management of the affairs of the society, including accounting, fundraising, event planning, and providing support at society events. The Provincial Representative also actively participates in ASA provincial executive meetings on behalf of the BAS. Many of the board members have remained active since the organization's beginning, and executive and community members make a significant commitment to the organization, contributing as many as 1500 volunteer hours annually. The long-term commitment of the BAS board and of the many dedicated community members has been a fundamental factor in the continued success of the public program.

3.3 Development of the public archaeology program

The last University of Alberta field school program at Bodo was held in 2008. The BAS subsequently partnered with the Buffalo Park Foundation (BPF), located in Wainwright (about 120 kilometres northwest of Bodo), in order to continue public engagement and the development of tourism opportunities (see Brower 2008). The BAS-BPF partnership, called Buffalo Adventures, received critical funding from the now-defunct Rural Alberta Development Fund (RADF), which was intended to provide Buffalo Adventures with the capital needed to become self-sustaining over the next three years (i.e., until 2011). This funding was used in part to hire an Executive Director and Marketing Coordinator, and it allowed the BAS to hire a professional archaeologist that was responsible for establishing the foundations of the public archaeology program as it exists today.

In 2009/2010, the BAS was invited to participate in a reworking of Alberta Education's social studies curriculum, subsequently released in 2010. As part of this reworking, The Learning Network, in collaboration with other organizations including the BAS, integrated the Bodo Archaeological Site as a central theme into the Alberta Education Curriculum (Wearing 2011). The resources developed during this curriculum overhaul remain available and in use to this day, and school tours at Bodo are still undertaken in conjunction with the curriculum guides that were developed in 2010.

The history of development of the public archaeology program at Bodo resulted in a focus on the following objectives (from Grekul and Lakevold 2015):

1. To promote public awareness and appreciation for Alberta's rich Indigenous history as well as for the field of archaeology.
2. To educate the public, students, and teachers using archaeology as a means to engage with history, while fostering

a commitment to respect and protect cultural heritage and the natural environment.

3. To provide public archaeology opportunities and educational programs that focus on quality, authenticity, story-telling, and hands-on experiences.

4. To contribute to the understanding of Northern Plains prehistory by undertaking archaeological research at the Bodo Archaeological Locality.

5. To promote economic development in the Provost region and east-central Alberta through heritage tourism and community engagement efforts.

As a result of increased funding and interest in the site's potential for education and economic development, Bodo's public programs developed rapidly, and expanded to include a variety of offerings, discussed in the following section.

3.4 Current state of the Bodo public archaeology program

The Bodo public archaeology program as it is today has developed as the result of the vision, determination, and dedicated efforts of all that have been involved since its early years. The Bodo Archaeological Centre is now open from mid-May to mid-August every year, and since 2010, it welcomes about 500 visitors annually. Programs offered fall into five main categories: school programs and kids' camps, drop-in tours, family programs, adult programs, and special programs.

3.4.1 School programs and kids' camps

Bodo's school programs have become a core field trip for many elementary schools in east-central Alberta, as they provide experiential learning that strongly reinforces the provincial curriculum (see section 3.3 above). A typical school program begins with a short presentation introducing the discipline of archaeology and the history of the Bodo Archaeological Locality. The students then participate in a mock excavation, tour the laboratory, and learn how to identify artifacts (Figure 3). Outdoor activities include dart throwing using an atlatl (a precontact hunting technique), cooking bannock over a fire, and a tour of the archaeological site (Figure 4). The students have free time for lunch, often spending the time in one of the tipis near the Centre. Optional programs include an overnight stay in the tipis and a tour of the surrounding landscape (Figure 5), including a visit to a nearby polished boulder interpreted as a bison rubbing stone.

“The tour was educational for the students. Activities were well organized and varied and flowed well. It kept the students interested and engaged. It is wonderful to have an educational activity such as this only a short drive away!”
-Feedback from teacher on a school tour.

Kids’ camps at Bodo are day-long programs that include many of the same activities as the school programs but involve fewer participants, as there are typically no adult supervisors apart from BAS staff. School programs are booked for May, June, or September, and kids’ camps operate during July and August.

“I like how proper terminology is used. It keeps the program serious and gives the kids respect for the past and interest in what life was like for some people.” -Feedback from parent participant in kids’ camp.

3.4.2 Drop-in tours

From mid-May to August, visitors drop in to visit the Bodo Archaeological Centre, tour the site, learn about the ecology of the area, and participate in experiential learning, such as atlatl throwing. If excavations are ongoing, visitors have the opportunity to observe and talk to the archaeologists and adult program participants (see Section 3.4.4 below), and learn about recent artifact recoveries.



Figure 3. Participating in a mock excavation as part of a kids camp.



Figure 4. School group cooking bannock over the fire.



Figure 5. Kids’ camp participants on a tour of the landscape surrounding the site.

3.4.3 Family programs

Family Lifeways Camps involve hands-on learning opportunities regarding what family life was like on the Northern Plains prior to the arrival of Europeans, and are tailored to the interests and the ages of participants. The camps provide immersive experiential learning through presentations, activities, tours, and workshops. This learning focuses on activities such as pottery production, stone tool making, traditional games, atlatl target practice (Figure 6), storytelling, and overnight camping in a tipi.



Figure 6. Atlatl target practice.



Figure 7. Excavation during the Adult Dig Camp.

3.4.4 Adult programs

The Adult Dig Camp involves hands-on participation in archaeological excavation, and is one of the most in-demand activities offered at Bodo. Participants experience the unique opportunity to learn proper techniques of excavation and artifact recovery (Figure 7), learn about how artifacts relate to technologies of the past, and discuss their experiences with drop-in tour groups. Additional program elements include field trips to learn about the wider cultural landscape, including berry picking and the importance of native plants as traditional medicines. Value-added experiences for adults also include nightly lectures on the science and discipline of archaeology, storytelling, and social time around the campfire. For the majority of participants, this is a rare and unique learning opportunity that tends to result in the development of a deep sense of connection to the past, an increased feeling of responsibility towards the environment, and long-lasting friendships. Many participants return annually as part of their scheduled holiday time.

3.4.5 Special Programs

Special programs are tailor-made at the request of specific groups. For example, in collaboration with the Learning Network and with local Indigenous groups, Bodo helped host Indigenous Culture Awareness Camps for Educators, attended primarily by teachers and librarians. These camps focused on land-based activities at the Bodo site, including identifying traditional medicines and visiting the archaeological site with local Indigenous elders and traditional knowledge teachers. Other special programs at Bodo have involved activities planned for family reunions, daycares, film-makers,

journalists, corporate sponsors, and conferences. Special programs have also addressed curriculum needs for participants of the Duke of Edinburgh program, scouting, or 4-H groups, and integrated traditional Indigenous and archaeological elements with learning through food as part of regional culinary tours.

3.5 Tracking numbers and feedback

Local, regional, and international travellers all arrive at Bodo with different purposes and expectations; therefore, the continued success and wide appeal of the public program depends in part on collecting, evaluating, and responding to visitor statistics and feedback. This information is used to inform future planning, marketing, and management decisions, and to support grant applications (see for examples Tables 1 and 2, and Figures 8 and 9, below).

Table 1. Key data collected on public programs at Bodo.

Data collected
Number of school tours/programs
Number of kids' camps
Number of drop-in visitors/tours
Number of family programs
Number of adult programs
Number of special programs
Number of participants in each program
Estimated total number of hours for each program
Where visitors are from
How visitors learned about Bodo

Table 2. Example of questions asked for visitor feedback.

Feedback requested
What program did you participate in?
What is the age(s) of the participant(s)?
What did the participant(s) enjoy most about their experience at Bodo?
Was there anything the participant(s) did not enjoy?
Based on your experience, would you recommend this program to others?
Do you have any suggestions for future program improvements?
Did the participant(s) learn anything new?
Did the experience meet expectations?
If you had any concerns were they resolved? Explain.

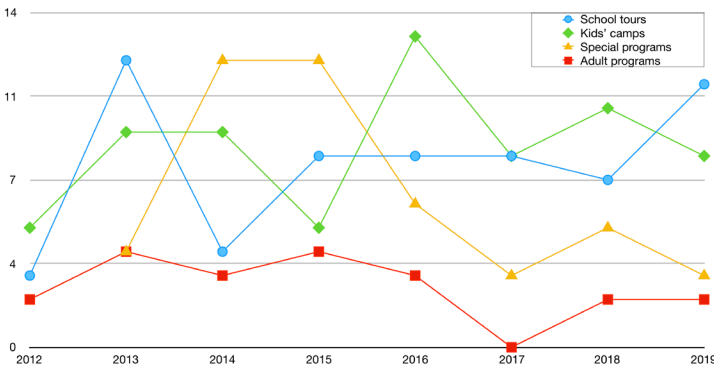


Figure 8. Number of public programs offered at Bodo from 2012 to 2019, by type. Note that 2012 data on special programs is not available.

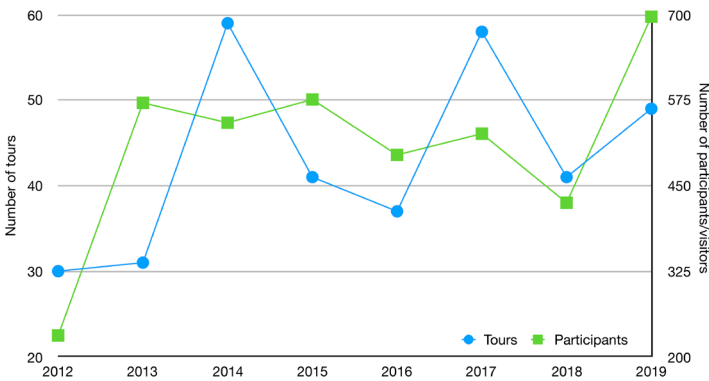


Figure 9. Number of drop-in tours and individual participants/visitors at Bodo from 2012 to 2019.

3.6 Importance of post-secondary education at Bodo

Ever since the first University of Alberta field school was held at Bodo, providing hands-on training for post-secondary students has been a priority. Between 2002 and 2008, the University of Alberta field school at Bodo trained over 100 undergraduates, and provided research, teaching, and

field experience opportunities for about a dozen graduate students.

Once the field school ended in 2008, funding programs such as the Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP), Canada Summer Jobs, and Young Canada Works allowed the BAS to employ between one and two summer students every year. In 2014, the BAS collaborated with MacEwan University in Edmonton to create an internship program focusing on public archaeology and community engagement. Currently, up to three applicants are selected every year, and each student works between six and eight weeks at the Bodo Archaeological Locality and Centre. Student interns are co-supervised by the Bodo Project Director and a professor from MacEwan University’s Anthropology Department, and are required to pay tuition. In return, they earn three credits and are given an honorarium by the BAS to help offset living and transportation costs for the summer.

Student interns are involved in a wide variety of tasks, including:

- Site interpretation and delivery of educational programs (see Figure 10)
- Guiding visitors and students through the interpretive centre and site
- Overseeing day camps and school tours
- Assisting with program development
- All aspects of archaeological fieldwork and lab work, including supervising community participants
- The daily operation of the Bodo Archaeological Centre, including maintenance of the centre, operating the giftshop, booking programs, planning, shopping for, and preparing meals and snacks for participants, and maintaining exhibits (Zutter and Grekul 2020).

“I remember that growing up we hardly talked about Canadian history, especially Aboriginal history. I would love to do more to get that information out there. Hopefully in the future there will be more ways to expose the public to archaeology. That’s the great thing about Bodo—you have the opportunity to get hands-on, interactive information about very real history.” - Robyn Veneau, MacEwan intern (MacEwan University 2015).

Students play a fundamental role in the success of the Bodo public archaeology program. Their dedication, enthusiasm, and hard work translate into enhanced visitor experiences. Happy visitors in turn promote the site, which ultimately contributes to program stability, and increases tourism revenues in the region. The collaboration with MacEwan University also ensures that the program maintains critical links with academic and scientific knowledge resources that add to the existing indispensable Indigenous and local knowledge base at Bodo (e.g., see discussion in Malainey et al. 2017). In turn, student interns receive invaluable hands-on training in archaeology, public education, program management, and problem-solving. These constitute rare opportunities to integrate classroom-based instruction with field practice in preparation for the working world (MacEwan University 2015; Zutter and Grekul 2020).

as these also tend to provide an incentive for creative problem-solving - at Bodo, they were partially responsible for the student intern program (Section 3.5 above), and for discovering opportunities to promote regional tourism (discussed below).

4.1 Funding

After the RADF was discontinued in 2011 (see Section 3.3 above), the BAS pursued alternative funding sources through applying for other types of grants, program revenue generation, fundraising initiatives, and securing corporate and private sponsorship (Table 3), but funding challenges continue. For example, the Bodo program has remained largely funded by local and Provincial government grants, such as from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation (AHRF) via the ASA, and the Alberta Lotteries Fund. However, in 2019, the AHRF, one of the main supporters of heritage programs in Alberta (including the ASA and BAS) was discontinued, as was the STEP program (see Section 3.6 above). While the funding that AHRF provided remains intact and will now be distributed through the Historic Resources Management Branch of Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, the support, guidance, and advocacy the AHRF board provided (i.e., key elements in the success of the Bodo program) are gone. Additionally, funding from corporate donations has decreased significantly since the 2014 economic downturn in Alberta, resulting in a heavier reliance on funds from charitable gaming, which are only available once every two to three years. A major challenge with funding is that it largely depends on the health of global and provincial economies, as well as on maintaining positive personal relationships with corporate sponsors. Maintaining these corporate relationships is often rewarding, but frequent changes in managing personnel or corporate ownership presents an ongoing challenge for the Bodo program.



Figure 10. Student intern teaching identification of bison bones to school tour participants in the Bodo Archaeological Centre.

4. Discussion: Key challenges and opportunities

Two primary challenges that continually need to be addressed at Bodo are: 1) funding, and, 2) staffing and succession - fundamental issues that, if neglected, could result in the rapid decline of the program. However, challenges such

Given these funding gaps, the continued success of the Bodo program is also reliant on donations from individuals and local and regional businesses, and the development of key community partnerships (for example, with the Town of Provost, Provost Museum and Library, and the Bodo Library). The Bodo Archaeological Centre also operates fundraising initiatives, and generates revenue through collecting admission, gift shop and food sales, income from advertising (i.e., on the program van), Edukit rentals, and in-school classroom presentation fees (Figure 11).

Table 3. Key sources of funding and support for the Bodo public archaeology program (average percentage from each revenue source is based on data from 2014 to 2019).

Grants (40%)	Revenue (22%)	Fundraising (20%)	Corporate/private sponsorship (18%)
AHRF	Gift shop and food sales	Cash Calendar Raffle	Petroleum industry
Archaeological Society of Alberta	Admission	BBQ Burgers – Macklin Bunnock Tournament	Local and regional businesses
Alberta Lotteries Fund (casino)	Edukit rentals	BBQ Burgers – Provost Street Fair	Community partnerships
Young Canada Works	In-school classroom presentation fees	Wine Survivor Raffle	Individuals
Canada Summer Jobs	Sale of advertising on tour van		

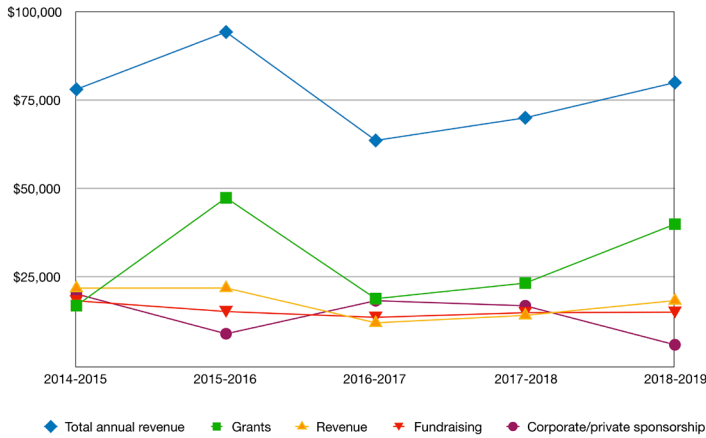


Figure 11. Total revenue and revenue sources from 2014 to 2019

4.2 Staffing and succession

Bodo’s relatively remote location presents several challenges for project staffing and succession. For one, the nearest services are a 30-minute drive from the visitor centre, so a vehicle is required, and finding available and affordable accommodations for the season can be difficult. The types of entertainment and recreational activities offered in the area may also present a challenge to student interns raised in urban settings, and can lead to feelings of isolation or boredom. Not everyone is up for meeting these challenges, and the pool of potential employees is limited to individuals that have access to certain resources and skills (i.e., a car or a driver’s license), and are creative, determined, flexible, and resourceful.

A second challenge is that of retaining essential personnel, as changeovers can result in tangible impacts on the program. For example, personnel changes may create a temporary disconnect with key stakeholders and donors, necessitating renewed relationship building. Specialized programs may also be temporarily disrupted or discontinued during a staff changeover; this occurred during the turnover in the

Project Archaeologist position in 2017, for example. Although these disruptions are largely temporary changes, frequent interruptions in program consistency are a threat to its continued success and must be limited.

Changes in personnel can also result in the loss of institutional memory and knowledge. The valuable practical expertise of student interns and other staff members, earned through operating the program, cannot feasibly be fully passed on to successors. It is therefore critical to systematize knowledge transfer as much as possible, by regularly taking the time to document new learnings and integrate them into existing and future operations. Program documents, procedures, and tools must be curated, preferably by several people within and outside of the organization, to ensure this knowledge does not get lost.

4.3 Tourism

One of the primary mandates of the BAS is to promote regional tourism and economic development. This objective not only generates revenue for the public archaeology program, it also addresses one of east-central Alberta’s biggest challenges: it is a considerable commitment for people to travel to the area. Once in the region, however, visitor feedback demonstrates that this challenge also has its appeals; comments frequently mention the beauty of the landscape, the opportunity to travel through farmland, view rolling hills, creeks, sloughs, and sand dunes, and the backdrop of an expansive blue sky. Furthermore, visitors have commented that the area’s rural setting and small-town hospitality make people feel welcome, valued, and they are therefore likely to return and to recommend the experience to others.

Did you know? Travel Alberta’s YouTube marketing campaign “Alberta Stories” featured Bodo as a travel and tourism destination, releasing a video in spring of 2013 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ritMYfvzrQg>).

The collaborative efforts of the BAS, community partners, Travel Alberta, and the owners of numerous small businesses in the area (breweries, wineries, cheese and honey producers, and bison ranches) have drawn visitors to Bodo and east-central Alberta from all over the world, from as far away as Australia, Japan, and Sweden. The site is also featured in tourism guides and publications including: Canadian Geographic, Travel Alberta YouTube stories, the National Post, the Go East of Edmonton guide, the Chicago Tribune, the Western Producer, Global News Edmonton, and two Alberta archaeology books (Bryan 2015; Huck and Whiteway 2016). In 2019, the Bodo Archaeological Site and Centre was also a finalist for Travel Alberta’s Alberta Pride Alberta Tourism (Alto) award.

5. Conclusions and future work: Lessons learned

The Bodo public archaeology program is a locally-led initiative representing a successful example of experiential learning combined with collaborative partnerships and economic development. The program will continue to focus on delivering quality and consistency, while striving to establish additional stable funding sources and a tenable succession plan. A reflection on the history of the program and the response to challenges that arose during its development reveals key elements that have made the program successful to date:

1. *Organizational commitment.* The consistency of the commitment of the BAS board throughout the life of the organization, and the support of the wider BAS membership have been fundamental driving forces that represent one of the most important reasons for the program’s continued existence and success. The challenge for the future will be to ensure a regular intake of new board members that are willing to take responsibility for moving the public program forward.

“Being a member is very gratifying, helping to discover the history of my local land. This local area is so full and rich with history that I would like to present it to our neighbours worldwide. The history here needs to be shared, and not quietly.” - Iris Larson, long-term BAS board member.

2. *Relationships with key educational, community, and corporate stakeholders.* Key stakeholders include Alberta Education, The Learning Network, MacEwan University, University of Alberta, Archaeological Society of Alberta, Buffalo Park Foundation, Travel Alberta, and Western Heritage. The support of these organizations, in addition to the

numerous other community members, landowners, local businesses, corporations, students, archaeologists, and Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers, has been critical for program success. These relationships have resulted in more meaningful integration of archaeology into school curricula, and promoted knowledgeable and informed public programming. They have also helped to address key issues such as funding and succession, and enhanced community-building and tourism opportunities.

3. *Collaborative partnerships.* Given the site’s relatively remote setting, ensuring widespread appeal to interest groups beyond those strictly interested in archaeology has been a challenge, but has ultimately been successful in attracting visitors from all over the world. Collaborative partnerships in the fields of tourism, culinary arts, agriculture, ranching, and with educators in traditional Indigenous lifeways have resulted in integrated, holistic presentations of archaeological research. This out-of-the-box approach attracts a wider visitor base than would a conventional archaeological dig, and enhances regional tourism and economic development opportunities.

4. *Staff members and student interns.* Selecting student interns from the fields of archaeology, anthropology, and education through a careful application and interview process ensures that Bodo program staff members are passionate, knowledgeable, and committed to a positive visitor experience. This translates into informative and entertaining tours that leave a lasting impression, and ensures that the next generation of archaeologists gain skill and competency in public education and communication.

“I loved learning along with the university students and being in a space with others who so obviously love what they are doing. The actual work was hard at times, but the atmosphere, relationship-building, and learning potential made it thoroughly enjoyable.” - Feedback from Adult Dig Participant.

5. *Program consistency.* The high quality of the programs offered at Bodo year after year has resulted in returning visitors, positive feedback, word-of-mouth advertising, and ultimately program success. Quality and consistency are achieved through staff training and the systematic documentation of each element of the program, which also helps with knowledge transfer and succession. Consistent operating times are also maintained as advertised on the project website, to ensure visitors are not disappointed, particularly as they may have travelled a long distance.

6. *Focus on experiential learning.* The Bodo public program is an example of the range of experiential learning opportunities that can be provided at archaeological sites. In addition to traditional museum- and classroom-based learning about archaeology, participants take part in activities such as pottery-making, atlatl use, cooking bannock around the fire, or interacting with the landscape while learning about traditional medicinal plants and bison behaviour. These activities effectively integrate both tangible and intangible knowledge into the learning experience, and promote deep, meaningful connections to people and landscapes of the past and present (Griebel and Brendan 2010; Tilley 2010; Hogg 2015).

Suggestions for future areas for growth at Bodo include:

1. Establishing permanent, sustained Indigenous partnerships and representation to further address the Calls to Action of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), and to continue to promote a cultivation of empathy, respect, and understanding of the value of cultural diversity, past and present (e.g., see discussion in Davies 2020, Dent 2020, and Rahemtulla 2020) .

2. Developing web-based initiatives that provide learning opportunities for those that cannot visit the site in person. This issue is of particular relevance in times of austerity and as concerns regarding the environment and public health arise. Virtual reality, 3D models, apps, and games are all possibilities for online experiential learning that could be explored (e.g., Bakas 2012; Chowaniec 2012).

3. Increasing engagement with stakeholders to continue to build awareness of the site in its broader regional context, develop a wider range of participatory learning activities, and cultivate additional funding opportunities. Engagement could involve presentations of awards of excellence and/or

appreciation of sponsors, landowners, schools or other organizations (e.g., Bartecki 2012), developing living history lessons, offering additional workshops on traditional skills, hosting archaeological festivals, or reaching out to special interest groups, such as geologists, hunters, birdwatchers, or archers (e.g., Lewandowski and Dmochowski 2012).

The 2020 Bodo program would have been the ninth year that the BAS offers of hands-on public excavation opportunities, and the 18th year that the public is hosted at the site. The current COVID-19 pandemic temporarily disrupted the programs at Bodo due to social distancing and travel restrictions, but plans are underway to renew operations in 2021, although likely with modifications in line with public health guidelines. Once the Bodo program resumes operation, it will continue its mandate to build research-based public archaeology, provide accessible educational resources, and contribute to the development of economic and tourism opportunities in east-central Alberta. Visitors will leave the site with a renewed appreciation of the relevance of Alberta's precontact history and its fundamental role in building vibrant communities.

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Figure 12. Memorial inscription dedicated to Terry Gibson on bench outside the Bodo Archaeological Centre.

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