

In Search of Different Pasts

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ABSTRACT: Archaeological interest in theories of relationality, non-anthropocentrism, and ontology are currently on the rise. Relational approaches consider complicated “entanglements” of—and dependencies between—people and things. Non-anthropocentrism calls human-centric and human-separate views of the world into question. Finally, ontological critiques ask about the mind-independent nature of the world, the arbitrariness of the western gaze, and the possibility for worlds and pasts that are radically different from our own.

In this talk, I bring these various threads of archaeological theory into critical dialogue with my experiences conducting collaborative archaeology in Northeastern and Midwestern North America over the last decade or so. This work provides crucial testing grounds for these new arguments. It serves to further parse theories of relationality, non-anthropocentrism, and ontology as they relate to 1) working *with* communities, 2) recognizing difference without appropriating or essentializing it, and 3) acknowledging the colonial and Euro-centric roots of our discipline.

Dr. Craig Cipolla is the Curator of North American Archaeology at the Royal Ontario Museum and Associate Professor in the Dept of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on archaeological theory, material culture, the archaeology of colonialism, indigenous collaborative archaeology, and fieldwork.