

CANADA > COLOMBIA #WORLDINTERVIEW #16

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# CANADA > COLOMBIA

## INTERVIEWEE: JIMENA

### LOBO GUERRERO

### ARENAS



**Has the designation of UNESCO World Heritage sites affected the recent development of Colombian archaeology?**

This designation has served to make archaeological sites visible, to give them an official status and in the majority of cases, it has had a positive impact on them. In Colombia, two archaeological sites have been declared UNESCO World Heritage sites: San Agustín and Tierradentro. They also hold the category of archaeological parks and are under the protection and administration of the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, ICANH. Thanks to Unesco's designation they have received more attention from the state, which has meant a greater number of public funds for protection, outreach and research programs. In addition, there are specific archaeological management plans for each of these sites, that is, norms and regulations of what can be done and in what way.

On the other hand, many archaeological sites lie under urban centers that have also been declared Unesco World Heritage sites. Unfortunately, they have not received the attention and treatment they deserve. The historic center of Cartagena de Indias, for example, is itself an archaeological site. In this city, projects on conservation and restoration of building heritage have largely ignored the importance of the archaeological work.

### **Does the public have a different appreciation of the importance of pre-Colombian and colonial era archaeological sites?**

To some extent archaeology in Colombia is synonymous with pre-Columbian while colonial archaeological sites are not clearly recognized. Archaeology in Colombia has traditionally concentrated its efforts on pre-Columbian sites, therefore, the importance given to historical archaeological sites is little when compared to pre-Columbian. On the other hand, legislation is stronger when it comes to pre-Columbian findings. Colonial era archaeological sites are under recognized, even if they fall within UNESCO World Heritage sites.

### **How do archaeologists work with indigenous and minority groups/communities when examining sensitive sites/material culture?**

Human groups (whether indigenous or minority groups/communities) that inhabit archaeological sites or their areas of influence often tend to participate in archaeological projects as volunteers. In many cases, locals assist and engage in the excavation phase. According to legislation, archaeologists have to include as part of their research project a heritage management plan. Such plan must include an outreach program involving the participation of the local community. Archaeologists must raise awareness and provide information to the local community about the archaeological site, its importance, and how to protect it. Sometimes archaeologists offer training sessions to locals on issues related to protection of archaeological sites.

### **How does Colombia build capacity for minority groups to get involved in archaeology and museums?**

Little efforts are being made on this regard. As mentioned in the previous response, archaeologists usually get locals to participate in archaeological projects. But, there is a lack of institutional programs to build capacity for minority groups to get involved in archaeology and museums. However, there are initiatives such as the Ministry of Culture, which, through the Directorate of Heritage, created the Cultural Heritage Watchers Program as a voluntary participation strategy seeking to integrate the communities interested in Cultural Heritage. Cultural Heritage Watchers are sometimes involved in archaeological projects and look after archaeological sites.

In addition, there are isolated cases of minority groups doing archaeology. I refer to the case of the Guambiano indigenous group, south of Colombia. A couple of decades ago, this group decided to do archaeology and use the results as useful tools for recognition and vindication of their identity and the territory they inhabit. Efforts are isolated but they do exist. I think there is a clear consciousness in archaeologists to make communities aware of the importance of archaeological sites but at the same time, there is a scarce or null governmental purpose of redirecting efforts towards this end.

### **About Jimena:**

I am a Historical Archaeologist. My research interests focus on the study of material culture from late pre-Columbian and early colonial periods, particularly in Colombia (South America). I draw on theories from material culture studies and the archaeology of colonialism to explore, analyze and interpret the interaction amongst indigenous people, Africans and Europeans and the multiple cultural responses to contact encounters expressed through material culture. I have a particular interest in metals. I have experience working in Museums and enjoy exploring the different ways people can engage in the interpretation and preservation of cultural heritage. Currently, I'm working on an archaeological project, which aims at examining an exceptional collection of artifactual and biological data recently recovered in the Jesuit church of San Ignacio, a jewel of Spanish colonial art set in the historical district of Bogotá, Colombia. I received my PhD in Archaeology and Anthropology from University of Bristol (UK). I hold a MA in History from University of Los Andes (Colombia) and a BA in Anthropology and a BA in History from the same university.

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### **Questions from William Moss in Canada.**

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