

HOW (AND WHY) WE DO ARCHAEOLOGY

An Introduction to the Indigenous Archaeological Record

ARCHAEOLOGY LESSON PLAN SERIES

FIRST PEOPLES OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES OF CANADA

MI'KMAQ, WOLASTOQIYIK, AND PESKOTOMUHKADI

Lesson 1

What Is Archaeology?

DISCUSSION IDEAS AND EXERCISES

How (and Why) We Do Archaeology: An Introduction to the Indigenous Archaeological Record

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Lesson Plan 1

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Statement of recognition: This lesson plan has been developed using educational facilities and resources within the traditional lands of the Wolastoqiyik and many other First Nations of Canada. The material in these lesson plans deals with the culture and history of the Wolastoqiyik, the Mi'kmaq, and the Peskotomuhkadi, as well as the First Nations in the Northeast of North America and across all of the Americas. Much of the knowledge base shared in this lesson plan is the direct result of the sharing of knowledge by the First Peoples of the Americas. The authors gratefully acknowledge that the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Peskotomuhkadi and all First Peoples made this lesson plan possible and that the rich cultural history of these peoples created the sites that we study.

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**Note Concerning Ethical Treatment of the
Archaeological Record**

This lesson plan is not intended to replace archaeological education or give students or teachers the skills to conduct archaeology. The authors and NCCIE in no way endorse seeking out Indigenous artifacts, withholding archaeological information from regulatory bodies, looking for archaeological sites, or digging with the intention to find artifacts or sites. Conducting archaeology, including excavation, testing, surveying, and monitoring, is only to be undertaken by an archaeologist or under the direction of an archaeologist who meets the criteria to be permitted by the provincial regulatory body of the province in question. The authors and NCCIE strongly condemn any activity that endangers the archaeological record, treats artifacts in a disrespectful way (such as selling or destroying artifacts), or impedes the ability of regulatory bodies to protect cultural resources.

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HOW (AND WHY) WE DO ARCHAEOLOGY

An Introduction to the Indigenous Archaeological Record

Lesson

1

What Is Archaeology?

DISCUSSION IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

Discussion 1: What Is Archaeology

Archaeology is the science of the human past. To learn about the human past, we have to learn about the processes that form the archaeological record, like the deposition of sediment. We also have to learn about the kinds of things people made and did in the past, and why.

Finally, we need to know how to find traces of human behaviours in the past (i.e., archaeological sites) and know how to get information from those sites by carefully excavating them and analyzing the artifacts.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Why would we want to do archaeology?
2. What can we learn by understanding people's behaviours in the past?
3. Have you had experiences of finding something and trying to figure out what it was doing there and what it was? How did you try to find out more? Is it still a mystery, or did you learn its story?

LIST OF TERMS

archaeological record
context
events
feature
oral history
projectile points

artifacts
cultural evolution
evidence
hearth
perishable
stratigraphy
written history

ceramics
debitage
faunal remains
lithics
post mould
stratum

Discussion 2: Learning to Ask Questions

Archaeology is about asking questions and trying to find the answers through a lot of different sources. These sources include looking in books, going to museums and looking at artifact collections, asking local people about their knowledge, and asking other archaeologists what they know about a subject. Because of this, archaeologists need to know about a lot of different things. It helps to know some history, to be familiar with the archaeological record of the area, and to know about how a lot of different things were made and for what purpose. You have to have a certain amount of curiosity about the past to learn about this many different things.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Would you say you are a fairly curious person? If so, are you curious about everything, or only a few things? What sorts of questions do you have about the past?
2. If you have a question about the past, how do you think you would go about answering it?
3. Do you think we should always be trying to find more things to study, or should we be fairly happy with how much knowledge we have now?

LIST OF TERMS

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| archaeological record | artifacts | ceramics |
| context | cultural evolution | events |
| evidence | faunal remains | feature |
| flake scatter | hearth | lithics |
| oral history | perishable | pictographs |
| sherds | species | written history |
| | zooarchaeology | |

Discussion 3: Technology, Art, and Artifacts

The material culture of a people says a lot about them. Unfortunately, some people have misunderstood ancient technology and called it “primitive” and “simple.” Usually, these people have not tried the technology in question for themselves so they don’t know that flaked-stone tools are sharper than metal tools, for instance, or that tempered pottery makes a more delicious stew with less effort than a metal pot does. In modern society, a lot of the technology we use is mass-produced, which is the main reason we choose things like metal and plastic over toolstone and ceramic, because plastic and metal can be reproduced in much larger quantities. If we made most of our own tools, we would probably choose technologies that do not require as much effort as a factory or a metal-working foundry (think of all the people, fuel, and space you need to make these work!). Mass production is required for modern technologies and ways of life, but it makes very little sense for people living off of the land. If you think about technology in this way, you start to see how ancient technologies are not “primitive” but instead are best suited to

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the needs of the people who were using them, and how modern technologies may have some problems that ancient technologies did not.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. What might have been the advantages to using lithic tools? What about the other artifact classes?
2. Because people take pride in the tools they make, often those tools can seem very much like pieces of art when people put extra effort into making them beautiful. Cooking pots are a good example of this. What do you think the difference is between a piece of art and a tool?
3. When does an object become an artifact in your opinion?

LIST OF TERMS

abrader	awls	biface
ceramics	classes	copper nuggets
debitage	faunal remains	fibre arts
flaked-stone tools	flakes	flintknapping
formal	groundstone tools	hammerstone
lithics	native copper	pictographs
plaited	projectile points	scraper
scute	sherds	textiles
toolstone	utilitarian	utilized flakes

Activity 1

Individual Project: Life History of Objects

WHO I AM

Approximate time: 1 week

GOALS

In this exercise, you will pick five objects to describe and then talk about what the objects say about you from an archaeologist's perspective.

MATERIALS / RESOURCES (STUDENTS)

For this exercise, you will need something to write on (paper, computer, or another way to write your ideas). OPTIONAL: you can take pictures and pass them in with your report if you like.

INSTRUCTIONS

Pick five of your most precious objects. First, list some information about each one, as follows:

Name: What is it (description): When you acquired it: How you got it or who gave it to you: Where you keep it: Why it is precious:

Go into as much detail as you want about these objects.

Now, try to imagine what an archaeologist might think about you if they were looking at these five objects and knew they were your most precious possessions. Would an archaeologist be able to guess your age or your nationality? Would the function of these objects be obvious or hard to understand? Would their significance be hard or easy to see? Would they say a lot about you as a person? What would they say about you as a member of an extended family or a person living where you do? What would they say about the world you live in?

REQUIREMENTS

Write a 1-page archaeological report as though you were an archaeologist trying to interpret a site that contained these five objects. You might want to consider what an archaeologist would notice, like whether they are brand-new or heavily used, and what materials they are made out of. You can assume that the archaeologist has a pretty good understanding of your society from written records and images. Attach your object information to this report.

Activity 2

Field Trip: Visit to a Government Archaeology Office or History Museum

RESOURCES AROUND YOU

Approximate time: 1/2 day

GOALS

In this exercise, the class will visit an archaeology branch office, museum, or university to get an idea of how artifacts are handled after they have been excavated or found.

**MATERIALS /
RESOURCES
(TEACHERS)**

First, identify which resources are nearest and which would be best suited to your class visit. Each province has an archaeology branch or unit in the capital city. Here is the contact information for each:

NB:	NS:	PEI:
Executive Director of Archaeology and Heritage Branch (Brent Suttie)	Nova Scotia Curator (Dr. Katie Cottreau-Robins)	Director of Aboriginal Affairs and Archaeology (Dr. Helen Kristmanson)
Andal Building P. O. Box 6000 Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1 Canada (506) 457-4880 thctpcinfo@gnb.ca	1747 Summer Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada B3H 3A6 Phone: (902) 424-7353 catherine.cottreau-robins@novascotia.ca	Aubin Arsenault Building 3 Brighton Road Charlottetown, PE C1A 8T6 2nd Floor 902-368-5378 hekristmanson@gov.pe.ca

You can also go to a closer museum or historic institution if resources do not allow a trip to the capital. The institute you choose should have a strong focus on Indigenous history and/or archaeology.

REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of the trip (which you should communicate to the authority you are contacting) is to learn about the following:

1. How archaeology is conducted in that province;
2. What kinds of artifacts the facility houses;
3. How the facility acquires the artifacts, specifically, whether they house them after they have been excavated by other archaeologists or whether they conduct archaeological work themselves;

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4. How they work with Indigenous people to make sure the artifacts help the people learn about their culture and history.

You can mention that European artifacts are also of interest (if this is the case) but that the class focuses mainly on Indigenous history and archaeology so the goal of the visit is to learn more about Indigenous subject matter. You can also ask if there are an Indigenous Knowledge Keepers who could talk to the students about archaeology.

EVALUATION

Students should come prepared to ask questions of the person facilitating the visit. Their questions should be written down, and the response to their questions should be written down as well. This can be handed in to be marked, or you can mark on participation during the visit.

Activity 3

Class Presentation: (Re-)Creating the Past

BUILD YOUR SKILLS

Approximate time: 2 Weeks

GOALS

In this exercise, you will find out about the traditional skills and knowledge held by your family members and you will choose something from what you learn that you want to try doing. You will make a piece of art or technology or do a demonstration with a link to the past to show to the class.

Many people we live with and see often have a lot of skills and knowledge we don't know about. These skills and knowledge are often handed down from long ago. But people may not think their family members are interested and so sometimes the skills and knowledge do not get passed on. In this exercise, you will try to access some of this knowledge in your family and carry it on through trying it out and showing it to your class.

MATERIALS / RESOURCES (STUDENTS)

You will need materials related to the skill you want to demonstrate. You may have to ask you family to help you gather these things. You could also see if your teacher might help you assemble what you will need. Talk to your family or teacher about your project to see if they can help.

INSTRUCTIONS

First, start talking to your family members about the things they know how to do. Also, bring up some of the things you have learned about in this class. See if anyone knows anything about how to make pottery, or weave baskets, or start fires without matches, or tan hides using the brains of the animal. See if anyone has ever tried flintknapping or porcupine quillwork. When you get interested in something, see if they might be willing to teach you how to do it. Or, if you already know how to do it, see if they will do it with you and try to learn from them to add to the skills you already have.

When you have settled on what you want to make or demonstrate, try it out for yourself. If you are making something, get it to as finished a state as you can. Feel free to make more than one. While you are doing this, try to remember the parts of making that you think others will need to know if they are going to learn how to do it. If you are demonstrating something, like how to start a fire, make sure you have done it enough times that you can confidently do it in a demonstration. Try it in a few different situations, like in the woods and at home, and using different kinds of materials. Make sure to remember the challenges you encountered and what works best to be successful.

REQUIREMENTS

For your class presentation, include the following:

1. What your skill is;

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2. Some background about your skill and how it was used in the past;
3. Who (if anyone) taught it to you, and how you learned from someone else;
4. How you do it (give a little lesson);
5. Why it is important to you to be able to do this skill.

Use anything you want to help you demonstrate your skill. This can include a PowerPoint presentation, a live demonstration of how it is done, a picture, a handout, or anything else you can think of. You may even choose to ask the person who taught you or another knowledgeable person to come in with you to help demonstrate.

**NOTE TO
TEACHERS
ABOUT
RESOURCES**

Teachers may need to help students find the materials required for the demonstration they wish to give. It is recommended that, in this case, students speak with their teachers about what is possible. Because teachers cannot supply all their students with expensive materials, The teacher may need to look for organizations and individuals they can connect students with to get their materials needs met.

Teachers must also decide which formats they can accommodate for the class presentations. PowerPoint may be one good option as long as the teacher has the resources to allow students to present in this way.

Activity 4

Personal Project: Searching for Traces

LAND LEARNING

Approximate time: 1 Week

GOALS

In this exercise, you will practice looking for objects on the ground left by humans. The goal of this exercise is to get better at seeing traces of the past.

MATERIALS / RESOURCES (STUDENTS)

No materials are required. You will need to take some time to get out and walk around. Make sure you wear appropriate footwear if you are walking anywhere wet, and make sure you dress for the weather if you are going out in extremes such as summer sun or winter cold.

INSTRUCTIONS

Because provincial regulations prohibit looking for artifacts without an archaeological permit, you can practice by looking for other kinds of objects. Try looking for coins, jewelry, and other objects dropped by humans. Sometimes these are shiny and sometimes they are covered by dirt. Only practice will help you spot these objects even when they are dirty.

Make sure you pick these objects up and study them a bit before you throw them away, if you don't want to pocket them. It helps build your knowledge of what objects look like when they have been discarded. Remember to be a good citizen and report lost objects that someone might be really missing, like a ring or a watch.

REQUIREMENTS

You are not required to submit anything for this activity, but your teacher may ask you to share with the class some of the things you found that were especially interesting.

NOTE TO TEACHERS ABOUT EVALUATION

This assignment may not work with a lesson plan that requires evaluation. If evaluation is required, it is recommended to have a discussion about what students have found. Marks may be awarded as for any other discussion, based on participation, respect for others, and demonstration of comprehension.