

LEARN FROM HOME

Archaeology



This week, let's do a little digging into the topic of archaeology! Let's begin by going over a few key terms. Archaeology is a tricky word! Try saying it like this: *ar-kee-aw-low-gy*.

Archaeology is the study of human-made artifacts from the past. Archaeology tells us a lot of information about people who lived in the past by examining what they left behind!



An **Archaeological Site** is a place that has a large amount of evidence that people from the past lived or worked at a specific location. The evidence would be shown through the artifacts that archaeologists find! In Canada, archaeological sites are large and wide-ranging in nature, showing communities that moved through or lived on the land that is now Canada.

Archaeologists are the scientists who study archaeology! Much like a detective would study fingerprints to find a culprit, an archaeologist uses clues on artifacts to learn about past societies and how they lived. They study history through the method of excavation on the archaeological site by creating a grid system and uncovering artifacts. Not only do archaeologists spend a lot of time digging in the dirt, but they spend time in labs working on cleaning the artifacts found at a site and also researching all they can about topics that relate to their site so they can better understand the history of that place!



Artifacts are human-made objects or something that has been changed throughout history for use by humans. When you visit a museum, the artifacts are all of the old objects you see on display!

Examples of archaeology are places with rock art and carvings, campsites from many years ago, homesteads, fur-trading, military and industrial sites and shipwrecks too! Much of Canada's history is revealed through these resources that in many cases are the only sources of trustworthy information that Canadians have for historical sites and our cultural history.



Checkpoint Question

Can you think of any examples of archaeology that you have seen?
Where have you seen it?

What sort of tools do archaeologists use to do their work?



When archaeologists begin digging at a site they will use a wide range of tools to remove the layers of dirt to reveal artifacts. The tools used most often are the large shovel to remove the top layer of dirt and then after that the archaeologist will use the trowel (the triangle shaped hand shovel) to take off thin layers of dirt so the artifacts won't be damaged by the large shovel hitting them. Archaeologists will also use brushes to dust off artifacts when they are found, sometimes they will even use toothbrushes.

The smaller pointed tools are used to remove clumps of dirt from the artifacts and to help remove them from the ground. With all of the digging that the archaeologists do they end up with large piles of dirt, there is always a possibility that artifacts could be in the dirt that was missed by an archeologist and so they will put the dirt into buckets and then they will pour the dirt into large sifters, that look like really big sand sifters. By doing this they can easily find small artifacts that would have been much harder to find while digging in the square plot.



What if I find an artifact while I am exploring?

Artifacts are everywhere and can be very exciting when you come across one! If you find an artifact it is best to simply leave the item where you found it. **If you want to be helpful** you can record any and all information that you know about for the item. This includes a description of the artifact, where you found it, and photos if possible or even a sketch. From there it is best to find a licensed archaeologist to take over as they are experienced in the process of taking care of artifacts and how to properly document the found artifact to preserve its cultural history. If you are in a national or provincial park that has park staff or rangers it would also be good to alert them to the artifact as they too can help preserve it by preventing potentially damaging situations!



Did you know that you can visit the site of an ancestral Wendat village right here in Stouffville?

The Jean-Baptiste Lainé Site

The Jean-Baptiste Laine Site, formerly known as the Mantle site, is a large 16th century ancestral Wendat community. It was discovered in a farm field on the south-end of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. It was excavated by a team of ten archaeologists between the years of 2003 and 2005 and was found to cover an area of almost ten acres of land. When the village was first built there would have been 52 longhouses and around 1800 people living at the site. When the archaeologists excavated the site they discovered that there had been 98 longhouses in total for the entire time the Wendat lived at the village. The team of archaeologists during the span of their excavation were able to uncover over 150,00 artifacts!



See for yourself!



Take a walk to the site itself and read the historic plaques that were commissioned by the Ontario Heritage Trust! **The trail can be accessed by Jonas Millway, Lost Pond Crescent, James Ratcliff Avenue, or by walking in from Wendat Village Public School.** If you're lucky, you may even spot a beaver at the pond!

In July of 2019, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum opened a new temporary exhibit called *Archaeology Alive! The Jean-Baptiste Lainé Site in Whitchurch-Stouffville*, where you can see 100 of the artifacts from this archaeological site on loan from the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec, as well as a selection of artifacts on loan from the Huron-Wendat Museum in Wendake and from a local collection!

(Important: museum temporarily closed)





Put your skills to the test!

Let's practice being archaeologists together.

Your home is an archaeological site, and you're just the right person to explore it! Let's begin by finding something around the house to be your artifact.

Once you've found the perfect object, you'll need to get the details! Remember, we don't want to remove the object from where it is, so let's bring our tools to the object. Go ahead and collect **a pencil and a ruler or tape measure.**

My artifact's name:

This is what my artifact looks like!

How big is my artifact? I can measure it with my ruler. _____

What does my artifact say about me or my family? _____

What is my artifact made of? _____

This report was made by this archaeologist: _____