
LESSON 5: DIG DOWN, DIG BACK

Students will participate in an online simulated archaeological dig based on actual public historic archaeological excavations along the Little Bonnechere River, in the Ottawa Valley, Ontario, Canada.



Level: Grade 5

Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts, Mathematics, Computers

Estimated Duration: 2 or 3 40-minute periods

MATERIALS

- access to <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Spirits/English/Dig/index.html> and online Land of the Spirits Glossary <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Spirits/English/Resources/glossary.html>
- class set of *Archaeology 101* worksheets available at <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Spirits/English/Dig/arch101.pdf>
- solutions for *Archaeology 101* worksheets available at <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Spirits/English/Dig/arch101-solved.pdf>
- class set of *Field Notes* worksheets (4/student) available at <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Spirits/English/Dig/fieldnotes.pdf>
- class set of *Artifact Catalogue* worksheet available at <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Spirits/English/Dig/catalogue.pdf>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- access the Internet to participate in a virtual archaeological dig
- plot information on archaeological reports
- link from the found objects to artifact cataloguing data

TEACHER BACKGROUND

IMPORTANT: This interactive activity is designed to teach archaeological principles and methods while providing a simulated excavation experience. It is strongly recommended that teachers preview the website to become familiar with activity, quiz and worksheets, and that the students' computer lab is equipped with the required software.

HOOK

It should be impressed upon the students that anyone can be an archaeologist but one must actually have a licence from their provincial ministry of culture.

Going Under Cover

What do water, trees, ants and humans have in common?

Answer: they all bury things. Ants bury things as they work and tree roots push up the ground. Water shifts and entombs things as it freezes, and humans conceal things on purpose to hide them from view or for safekeeping.

Imagine you drop a set of keys while going for a walk. Unless someone else picks them up they soon get covered with dead leaves or dirt. Burrowing insects and rodents will move the ground and bury them deeper. Then frost and rainwater might cause the surrounding soil to shift. No one would know the keys are underground unless they go digging for some reason.

Archaeologists dig - excavate - for all kinds of things that have been lost or buried. These items are called artifacts. The science of archaeology is important because it teaches us how to properly recover artifacts. And as all archaeologists know, the most ordinary places sometimes reveal the most extraordinary things.

There's a lot going on under cover.

Uncovering the Treasures of the Little Bonnechere River

A shard. A broken saucer. A projectile point.

Today, little remains of the human history along the Bonnechere River. A century ago, the lumber companies left their shanties to rot as they pursued fresh stands of timber. Then with the expansion of Algonquin Park most of the original buildings were reused, removed or burned. Therefore, much of what was known about this time and place came from interviews with former residents, and from old photographs, papers and stories that have been passed down or carefully preserved in archives.

Then we started digging.

Staff from Bonnechere and Algonquin Provincial Parks, with support of the Ontario Archaeological Society Ottawa Chapter, developed a public archaeology program along the Little Bonnechere River. It offers visitors and school groups interested in the science of archaeology and history of the waterway opportunities to dig down and dig back. To date, both professional and amateur archaeologists have made some amazing discoveries, ranging from broken bits of bottles and plates along the foundation of a former stopping place, to tools dating to the late Archaic Age. One projectile point is estimated at 5000 years old!

So, how do we go about digging?

Anyone can become an online archaeologist, but there are a few things you need to know first. Archaeology 101 illustrates the basics of what it takes to dig in.

PROCEDURE

1. In preparation for this virtual excavation, have students complete the *Archaeological 101* worksheets to become familiar with archaeological terms and procedures. Encourage students to access the online Land of the Spirits Glossary as required.
2. Before the class goes online, provide each student with four *Fields Notes* worksheets and one *Artifact Catalogue* worksheet. Instruct the students to complete a *Field Notes* worksheet for each layer of the dig. The *Artifact Catalogue* should be used to itemize the recovered artefacts. Completed worksheets can be used for student assessment. If students choose to excavate additional squares, they will require more work sheets.

EXTENSIONS

Schools located near the Little Bonnechere River, or other archaeological sites that host public digs, should be encouraged to participate in these learning experiences. For more information about public digs hosted by the Friends of Bonnechere Parks, visit: <http://www.bonnecherepark.on.ca/>