

Archaeology of Alaska Activity Book

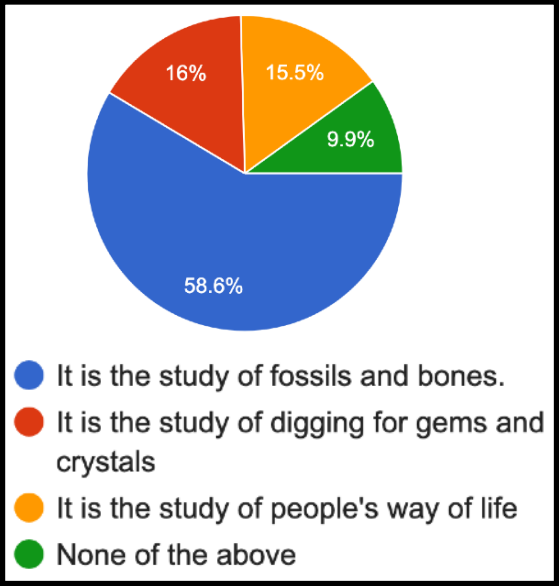


***Created by the
Dirt Busters FLL team 522
print version***

Waqaa! We are the Dirt Busters, a First Lego League robotics team from Bethel, AK. In the 2025 season UnEarthed™, we learned about archaeology and some of the problems that archaeologists might face. They have the fun job of uncovering the past, but sometimes it is hard for them to share what they have found and learned with others.

We surveyed the students, grades 3-8, at our schools about what they thought archaeology was. 213 students took the survey. According to the results, 84% of them do not know what archaeology is.

We created this activity book to educate others about archaeology and to share some interesting archeological sites in Alaska. Come explore the past with us! Travel through Alaska and earn trading cards. Check them off to show you you’ve completed them!



James Perry,



Gretchen Tressler,



Paula Jung,



Amelia Ulak



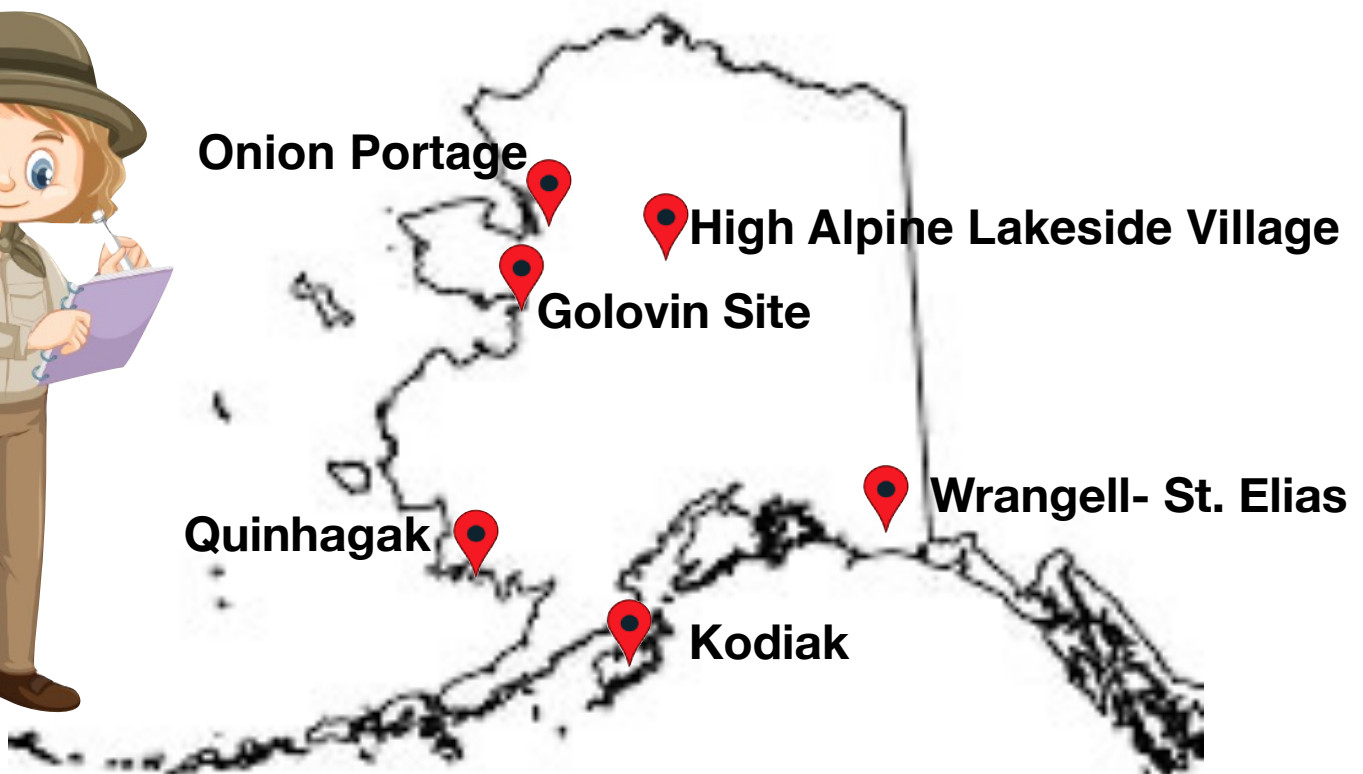
Emmanuel Chiklak



Emery Sands

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What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the study of people from the past and their day-to-day lives: what they ate, where they lived, what clothes they wore, what they made, and what technology they used. Archaeologists study people who lived as recently as 50 years ago, or as distantly as 2,000 years ago or more.

Sometimes people confuse archaeology with **geology**, the study of how the earth changes over time; **paleontology**, the study of ancient plants and animals; or **history**, the study of the past through documents, like newspapers, and personal accounts of what happened, like diaries.



Even though archaeologists, geologists, paleontologists, and historians all study different parts of the past, they sometimes use similar information for their research. For example, archaeologists and historians both use old documents. Or archaeologists, geologists, and paleontologists may all use plant or animal remains that have become rocks, called **fossils**.



While rocks and written documents can help **archaeologists** learn more about humans and their lives, archaeologists have their own unique source of information. They use **artifacts**, items people have made, used, and left behind. Artifacts could be **projectile points**, also known as “arrowheads”, pieces of pottery, called **sherds**, glass bottles, metal nails, musket balls, jewelry, toys, and much more!



Archaeologists find artifacts at **archaeological sites**, which can be in cities, in deserts, underwater, in ancient trash piles, and everywhere people could have been! Examples of archaeological sites could be homesteads, battlefields, hunting camps, or cities both ancient and modern. Archaeologists study artifacts and sites after carefully recording where they were found and removing them from the ground, through **excavation**.



Archaeologists use all the information they gather from sites and artifacts to learn about all the different and interesting ways people have lived around the world and how human **cultures** change throughout time. A culture is a people's belief, activities, and traditions that defines the group and helps them identify who they are and what people, places, and things mean to them.



Archaeologists take everything they learn through excavation at sites, their study of the artifacts, and share the results with other archaeologists and the public. They publish reports or research papers. They create exhibitions at museums or hold special events. That's **interpretation**, or how archaeologists get stories about real people in the past to the public.

Archaeological research and interpretation can be especially meaningful to descendants of the people whom archaeologists have studied. These communities may have traditional knowledge or memories passed down from generation to generation to share with archaeologists.

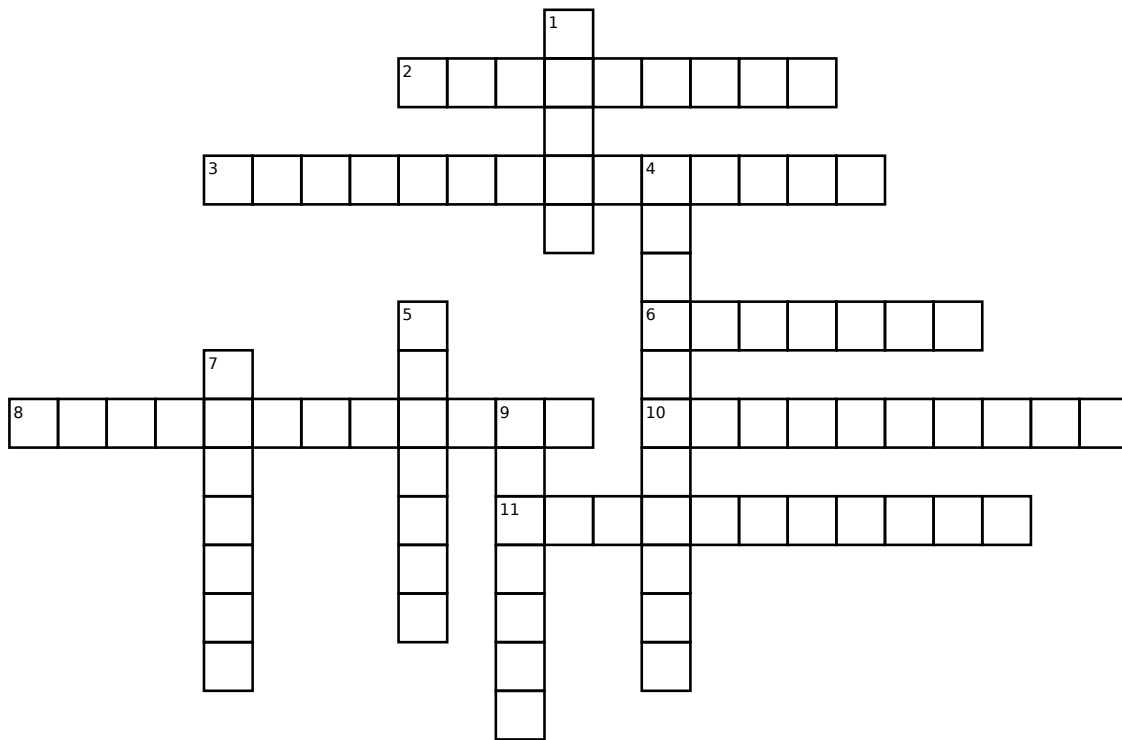
Oral history is one way for archaeologists can record this information. Archaeologists and descendants can learn a lot from each other as both groups try to learn about life in the past!



Why is archaeology so important? Archaeology allows us to learn from people in the past, who faced problems we still grapple with today: making friends with new cultures, adapting to changing environments, and learning new ways of doing things. We can learn from their experiences and grow together into better people!

What is archaeology?

Use the bold faced words found on the previous pages to fill in the crossword puzzle.



Down:

1. places where archaeologists find artifacts
4. the study of people from the past and their day-to-day lives.
5. a people's beliefs, activities, and traditions that define and identify who they are and what things mean to them
7. plant or animal remains that become rocks
9. the study of the earth

Across:

2. items people have made, used, and left behind
3. getting stories about real people in the past to the public
6. the study of the past through documents
8. the student of ancient plants and animals
10. removing artifacts from the ground
11. written traditional knowledge or memories that have been passed down from generation to generation

Quinhagak

“Nunalleq” is a Yup’ik word, meaning “old village”

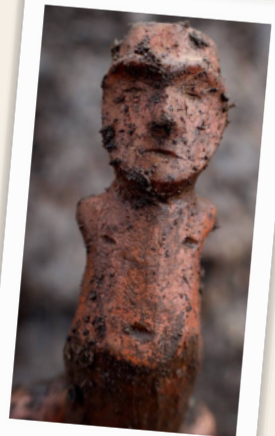
Location: Nunalleq is on the coast of the Bering Strait near the village of Quinhagak, Alaska

Age of Site: 1570 - 1675

Description of site: This site is an old Yup’ik village dating back to pre-contact with the Western world. The purpose of it is to preserve the archaeological and cultural heritage of the Yup’ik village of Nunalleq. It confirms the stories of the bow and arrow wars.

Artifacts found: Over 6,000 artifacts found including numerous complete wooden masks, knives, bowls, spoons, socket piece darts, jewelry, uluat, fishing gear, hunting gear, and many more.

Excavated: This site was first excavated in 2009. It is an active dig site today with many artifacts still being found. There is a museum on-site that houses many of the artifacts



To learn more, go to:

<https://www.nunalleq.org/>

<https://nunalleq.wordpress.com/>



Object Matching

Match each word with its artifact.

seal mask



doll



spinning top



owl fastener



earring



baleen bow



piece of kayak



fishing gear





Onion Portage

“Paatitaaq”



Location: Kobuk River in the Kobuk Valley

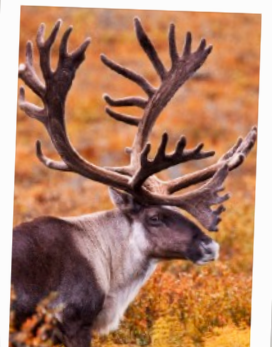
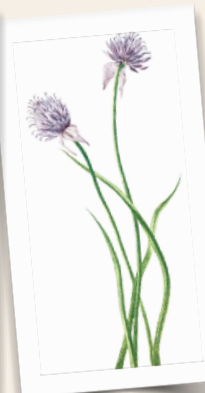
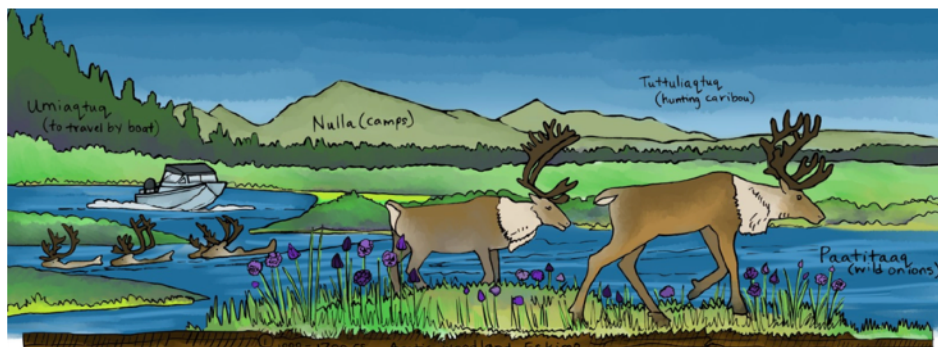
Age of Site: 8,000 years

Description of site: Ancient Inupiaqs used this site to hunt caribou and gather wild onions. In the fall, the caribou herds would migrate. As the caribou crossed the deepest part of the river, the hunters would separate them while they navigated a boat and would spear the animals. The women would gather the wild onions that grew along the banks of the river.

Artifacts found: campsites, spear heads, tools. There are still two old cabins left on the sites.

Excavation: In the 1960s this site was excavated. This area is not open to the general population. It is restricted to only federally qualified subsistence hunters.

Until the 2017 Alaska State Fish and Game would use this same area to capture caribou while they were swimming. They would collar them and take samples to monitor the health of the Arctic herd.

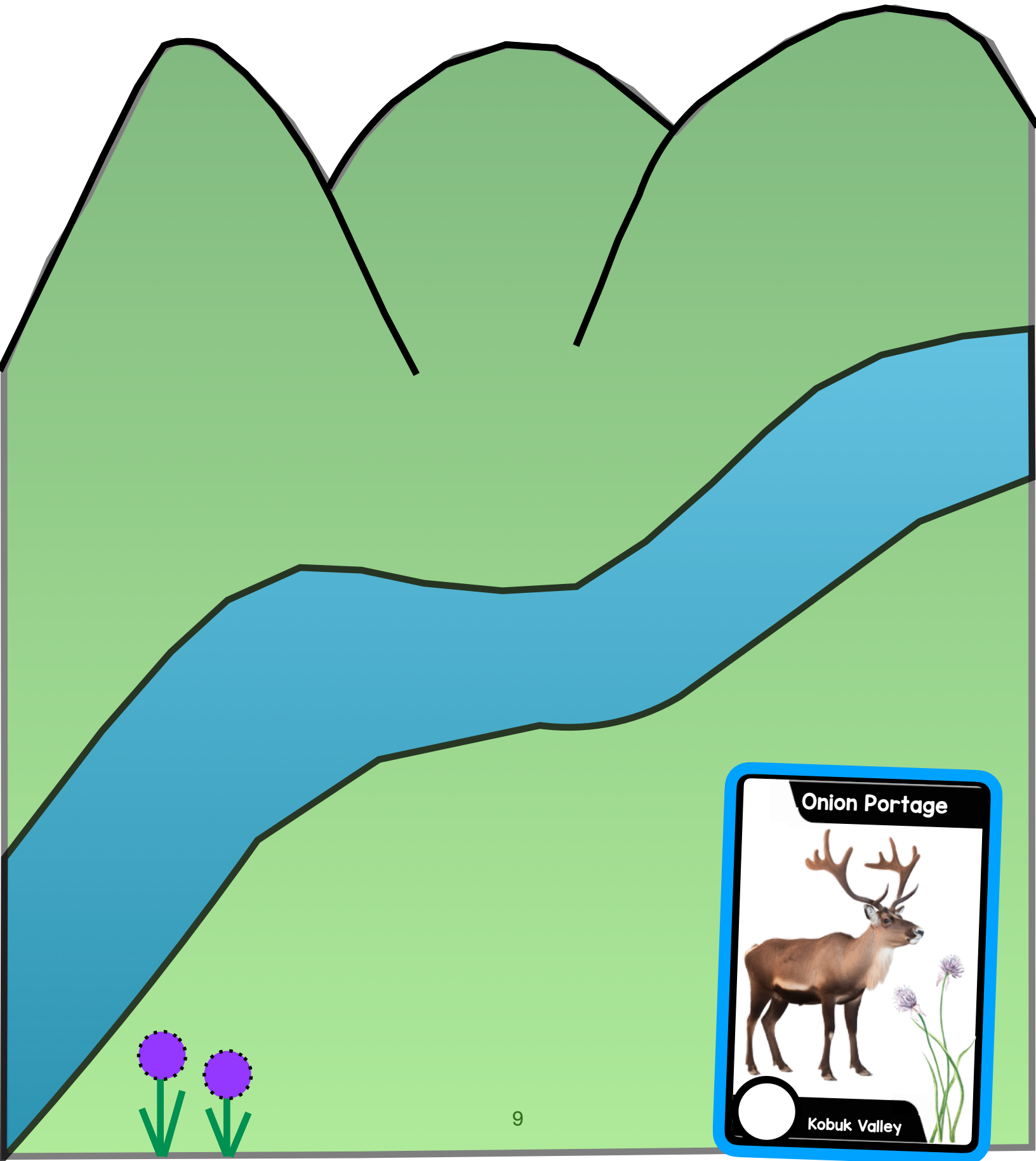


To learn more, go to:

<https://www.nps.gov/places/onion-portage-archeological-district.htm>

Coloring Page

Complete the hunting scene with caribou, boats, hunters, spears and wild onions.



Kodiak's Karluk Site

Location: Near the Karluk river that flows out from the Karluk lake.

Age of Site: about 3000 years old.

Description of site: near a small campsite. Likely from ancient Alutiq ancestors.

Artifacts found: They found a stone blade from roughly 7800 years ago. They also found ancient wooden hunting weapons, including fragments of weapons over 10,000 years old. They found 327 artifacts including a ground slate ulu, a small bone fishhook, an ivory lip plug, and 4 pebbles with unique lines.

Excavated: the site was excavated in 2007



To learn more, go to:

https://alutiiqmuseum.org/museum/archaeology/recent_studies/living-at-karluk-lake/

<https://www.kmxt.org/news/2025-08-08/archaeologists-find-7-800-year-old-artifacts-on-kodiak-island>

Hidden Picture

What is one hunting tool the Alutiiq people used? _____

Hint: there are more than one hidden below.

Color the picture to reveal the picture:

Brown: 10, 12, 19, 23, 28, 34, 45, 56, 67, 73, 78, 82, 89, 91, 100

Yellow: 1, 2, 3, 11, 17, 21, 27, 37, 38, 39, 62, 63, 64, 74, 84

Gray: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Melting Ice Sites

Location: Wrangell- St. Elias National Park

Age of Site: about 9,400- 12,000 years old



Ahnna winter settlement
Illustration by Eric S. Carlson

Description of site: The Wrangell- St. Elias National Park is 13.2 million acres across Alaska and Canada containing many ice fields. As the ice melts, there have been discoveries of at least four ancient people groups. One of the notable features is how well preserved the artifacts are in the ice.

Artifacts found: Artifacts found in the melting ice patches reveal arrowheads and bones that were used as ancient Alaskan hunting tools. Three Alaskan arrowheads and eight Yukon arrowheads were found. Projectile points, knives, and awls were most commonly found at the site. Blades were made of obsidian or copper. The blunt end, or handle, was made of bone, antler, or chip-stone.

Excavated: 2016- present



Left: 650 year old birch bark basket complete with stitching holes found in ice patch.



Right: antler barbed arrows (top) with copper end-blade inserted into the arrowhead (bottom).

To learn more, go to:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/copperendblades.htm>

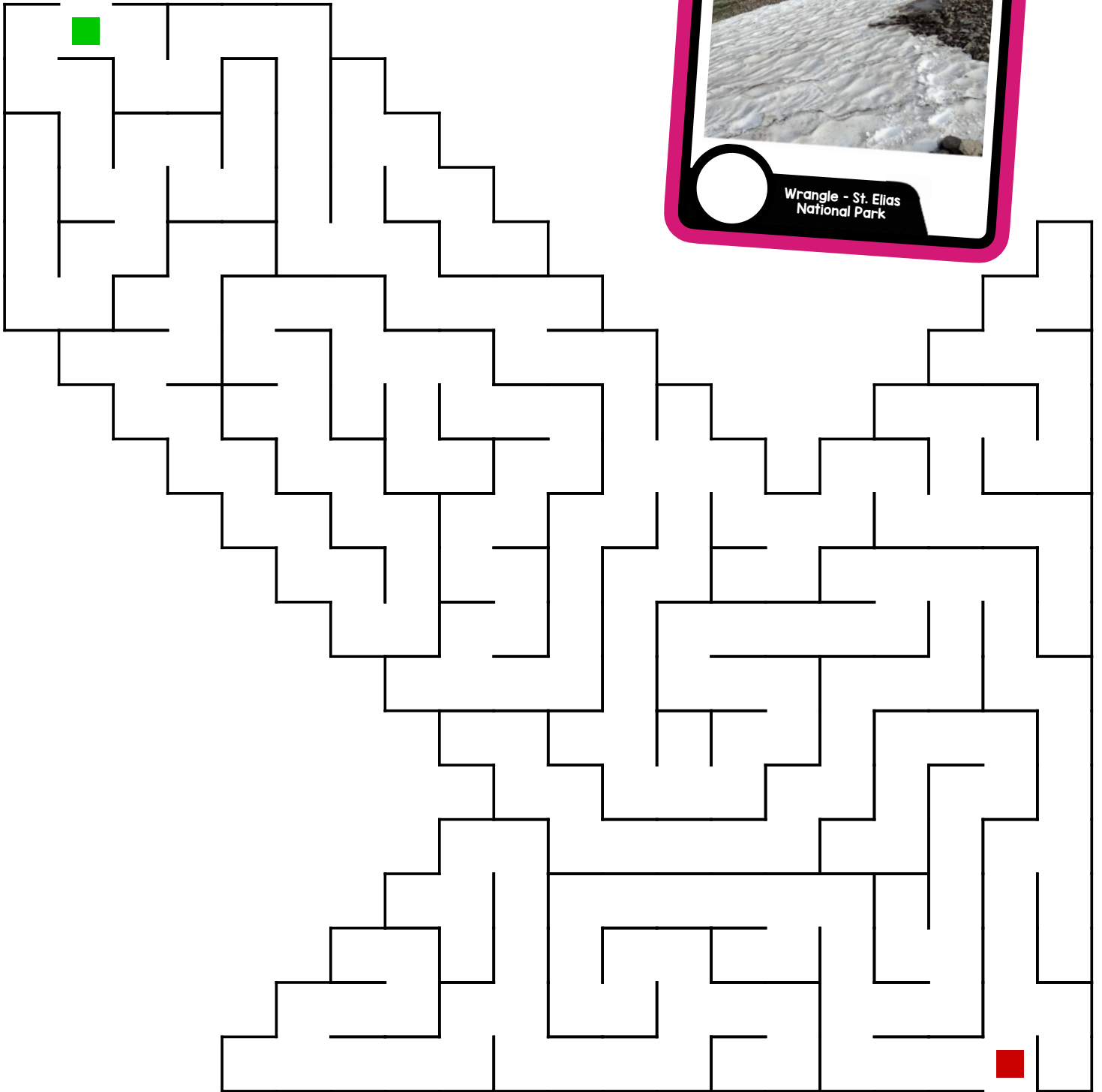
<https://www.nps.gov/wrst/learn/historyculture/archeology.htm>

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/ira-ice-patch-archeology.htm>

<https://www.gi.alaska.edu/alaska-science-forum/tools-ancient-alaskans-emerge-ice>

Maze

Find the path through the arrow head.



Golovin's Qitchauvik Site

Location: Shores of the Golovin lagoon

Age of Site: about 400 years ago, 550 or 750 A.D.

Description of site: The Qitchauvik site was the location of a mens house or qarigi. Qarigi are identified as a communal space where people gathered.

Artifacts found: Wooden boats and sled pieces identified. A small number of bone, and ivory objects were found. Stone tool fragments made of raw materials including chert, basalt, slate, obsidian, and schist.

Excavated: late 1900s to 2000s



To learn more, go to:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/excavating-qarigi-qitchauvik-site.htm>

http://www.qungasvik.org/prev_qasgiq_model/?target= self

Word Find

Find the words related to archaeology in the puzzle.

Archaeology

D E V T M A A D C Q I W I U T B S F Q X
U S G U M C P R Z O C O R Y E C Z N H I
N D T X E X N E C D L M A S K S P E C H
Q H S D U E L Y V H Z H A M D A X E R T
M C Y H P D V E A P A U J J U T O Y R O
Y D V T O G T Q B V V E L N F S A U F O
K K Y E S V E A Q A Y C O K F E E M P L
W I S C T Y E X Z H Q A D L T A E U B S
X U R P D L I L C M C Y W L O J K G M Y
S Q B K U Q A S W A Z K B T T G D Z R Z
E R D B L D Z Z X Y V H U R O D Y E M Y
P R W K O V D W W U E A A S I T E T A L
P R Z W R X Q R Y M W N T R R Z T I P T
E L E F E A T U R E H S I E T N J Q D S
O Z A S A L M I U F E X J A N I T C A J
P C R V E X I F Z X W R M P H C F U Q C
L L R A T R L B J U Z F Z Q R D M A I K
E P O Q E E V R L W O L D K H G L H C J
J S W S X F Y E K M L A Z W Y H Z Z C T
A Y S H J U Z I N D U C V M B I Y A D Q

ARCHAEOLOGY

PRESERVE

PEOPLE

MASKS

EXCAVATE

FEATURE

ARROWS

MUSEUM

ARTIFACT

SHOVEL

TOOLS

SITE



High Alpine Lakeside Village

Location: Noatak National Preserve in the Brooks Range

Age of Site: varies- 14,000 years ago to the 1930s.

Description of site: Three to five village sites located in the High Alpine lakes of the Brooks Range. a dense concentration of house and storage features. There is also evidence of caribou hunting activities.

Artifacts found: dozens of petroglyphs have been found along with contained large, rock-lined communal structures (qargit)

Excavated: The artifacts were discovered and documented in the 1960s.



To learn more, go to:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/noatakvillages.htm>

<https://www.uaf.edu/news/archives/news-archives-2010-2021/noatak-prehistoric-site-contains-new-artifacts-for-alaska.php>

Cryptogram Puzzle

Use the code to what we think about archaeology.

Archaeology

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
↑	▽	↗	△	○	⊗	◎	◀	▩	✱	⌵	◈	💧

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
↘	↙	✕	◐	☺	⌚	●	★	◎	◻	■	⚡	♥

↑ ☺ ↗ ◀ ↑ ○ ↙ ◈ ↙ ◎ ⚡

▩ ⌚ ○ ■ ↗ ▩ ● ▩ ↘ ◎



Created by Dirt Busters using the Cryptogram Puzzle Generator on
Super Teacher Worksheets (www.superteacherworksheets.com)

An Archaeology Mystery - Who Did It?

Paula, Gretchen, and James were walking along the river edge the morning after the great storm. There were still white caps on the river and water was overflowing the riverbanks, but the small path along the river's edge was still there. They were talking about last night's storm, discussing how their houses shook and rocked in the great gusts of wind, and laughing at how James's puppy acted in the storm. Suddenly, Gretchen tripped over an object in the path and part of the river's edge broke away.

The group laughed as mud was dripping from Gretchen's face. Gretchen would often trip and slip on their walks. James and Paula were initially concerned about her fall since it was so close to the river, but Gretchen said with an amused voice, "That was planned, guys." As she tried to get up, she took a closer look at the culprit. It looked unusual, sticking out of the broken bank.

"Hey guys! Check this out!" Gretchen pointed to a smooth wooden handle sticking out of the mud.

"That doesn't look like an ordinary stick," replied James.

Gretchen continued to dig and jiggle the stick. Paula said, "Be careful!"

Suddenly the mud released the object. "It looks like an ulu," James and Paula exclaimed at the same time.

"It's kind of dirty, isn't it?" said Gretchen. "Maybe we should clean it off."

"Oh really, Sherlock," retorted James. But the trio went to the water's edge to gently wash away the caked-on mud.

Paula states, "You know, that doesn't really look like a new ulu. It looks a bit old. The blade looks like it is broken stone!"

"Remember Katie— she talked to our class last week about archaeology. Let's take it to her! Maybe she will know something about it," exclaimed James.

Suddenly there was a shadow over the kids. "Hey, what are you doing at the water's edge? What do you have? Let me have it." The man was in a dark jacket with a floppy hat shielding his eyes so that the kids were unable to see his face clearly. His voice was firm and not friendly. He gave the kids an uneasy feeling. They looked at each other in silent agreement; they were leaving now.

“Aww, it is nothing,” Gretchen exclaimed and pulled the ulu into her jacket sleeve. James reached down to give Gretchen a hand up to standing, while Paula replied, “It is just a piece of driftwood. See you later!” The man continued to scowl at the group as he looked suspiciously at the trio. He seemed upset with the kids' presence.

The group quickly made their way towards Katie's work.

Once they arrived at Katie's work, the kids asked to see her. The front office said, “She is not here right now. She is currently in the field doing some test digs and flying after the storm. What do you guys need?”

“Can you have her call us when she gets back? Tell her that we have a question for her about archaeology,” requested James.

“Would you like someone else to answer your questions?” replied the receptionist.

“No, that is okay. We can wait for her,” replied Paula.

The kids got ready to leave the office, but just then the door opened and in walked Katie carrying all her gear. “Hey guys! What is up? Are you here to see me?”

“Yes! We want to show you something!” exclaimed the kids together.

Katie motioned for the kids to follow her. She asked James to carry her screen and someone else grabbed the shovel. In her office, Gretchen closed the door behind them.

“What's going on?” asked Katie

“Look what we found!” exclaimed James. Gretchen carefully removed the item from her jacket sleeve. She produced a small wooden handle with a slate blade. The handle appeared intact but waterlogged. The slate blade had a sharp edge but had the marking from being created by a rough grinding. The object was still very dirty despite being shoved into Gretchen's fleece jacket.

“Oh! Where did you get that?” asked Katie. The kids quickly explained what had happened. “Do you think that this is old? How old do you think?” questioned Paula.

“We will answer those questions soon, but first we need to drop this off at the lab and then you need to show me where you found this,” instructed Katie.

The group of them followed Katie into the lab where she took pictures and measurements of the find. Then she put it into a special solution to keep the wood from drying out and breaking into pieces. They would place it in the museum in several days. In the meantime, they were going to the area where the ulu was discovered.

The three kids and Katie grabbed her bag, shovel and sieve to return to the site of the find. At the site, the man that they had seen earlier was still poking around, looking through the mud and debris. As they approached, Katie greeted him but when he saw them, he quickly left without a word. Katie asked, "Was he here earlier?"

"Yes, he was here very soon after Gretchen first tripped and found the ulu. He was trying to see it better and seemed a bit on edge," replied Paula.

"Gretchen just slipped the ulu into her coat and we all left. Why?" asked James.

"Oh no reason- just curious. With him digging here, the site has been even more disrupted. But we can still dig a test hole to see what we find," replied Katie. The team worked quickly to make the test hole. No new things were found. Katie told the kids to return to her work in 3 days. They would package the ulu for transport to the museum.

Three days later, the kids returned to Katie's lab. They carefully packaged the ulu and sealed it. Katie handed the package to the intern to take to the museum. But it never arrived.

Katie urgently called the kids to tell them of the missing artifact. The kids quickly made their way to Katie's to brainstorm who would have done it.

"Who would do this?!" exclaimed Gretch with disgust.

"Was it that creepy guy on the river side?" asked Paula.

"Oh yeah, he gave me the creeps. Did you see the way he scowled at us as we left?" answered Gretchen.

"Yeah, he was definitely odd. I am glad we were all together." replied James. "But he did not know where we went. How could he know what we had?"

"Maybe it was the intern?" said Gretchen.

“Listen kids,” Katie replied. “The police are looking into it. It was not the intern. He took the artifact in his van to the museum, but on his way, he stopped at the gas station to fill the van’s tank. While he was paying for the gas, the artifact simply disappeared from the van.”

As kids left Katie’s they discussed the events, “Guys, we just have to find the missing ulu,” declared Paula.

Finish the story. What happened to the missing ulu?

For More Discovery

YK Delta Museums:

1. Bethel <https://www.avcp.org/yupiit-piciryarait-museum/>
2. Quinhagak. <https://www.nunalleq.org/>

1



2



Alaska Museum <https://www.alaskanative.net/>



United States archaeology museums: Find which of the 200 museums are closest to you.

<https://whichmuseum.com/place/united-states-2682/t-archaeology>



World wide: The largest archaeology museum in the world opened November 1, 2025

<https://grandegyptianmuseum.org/>



Video about the Grand Egyptian museum:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eOJphqql2c>



National Park Junior Archeologist Ranger Activity Book :

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/archeology/upload/JrArch-ParentGuide_2025_english_508.pdf

Alaska Region Junior Heritage Ranger Activity Book:

<https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/publiceducation/pdfs/jrheritagebooklet.pdf>



“Rising Whale” site at Cape Espenberg, north of the Seward Peninsula

What to do if you think you found something:



- Take only pictures.



- Only look at artifacts where you find them. Don't touch them!



- Leave them behind for others to see.



- Tell your family and friends about preservation.



- Tell a park ranger or archaeologist if you see someone taking artifacts from a park or public land.



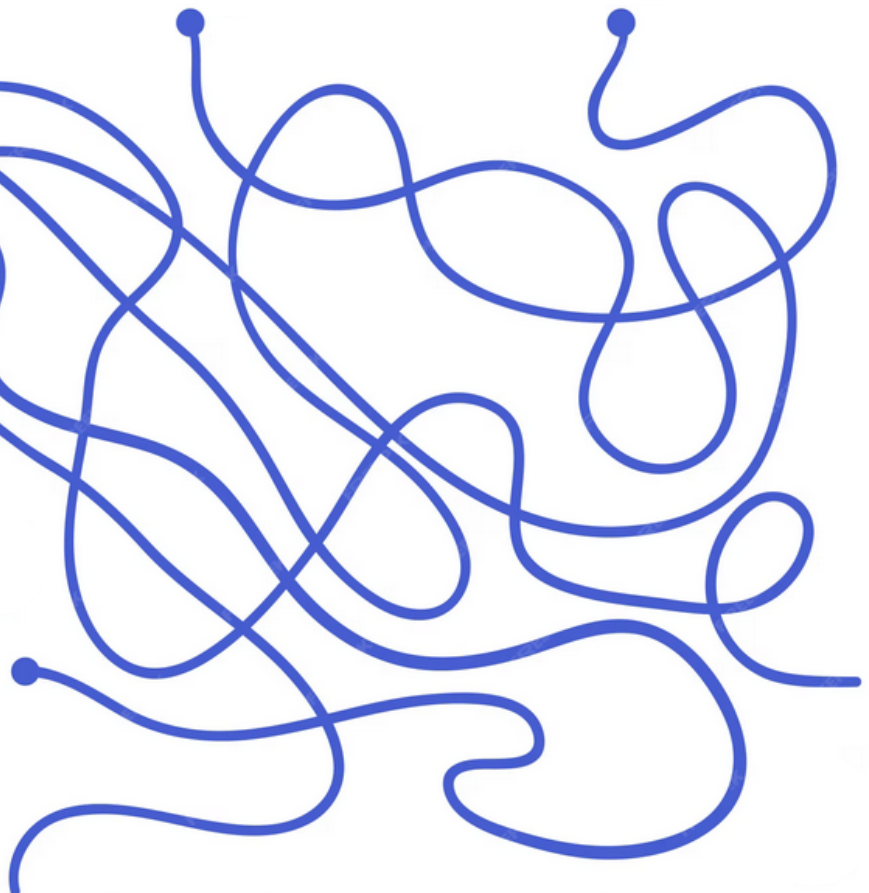
- Can you think of other things you can do to help?

You made it to the end! Do you know what is archaeology?

It is the study of
fossils and bones.

It is the study of
people's way of life.

It is the study of
digging for gems
and crystals.



***We hope you enjoyed this activity
book and learned a lot about
Alaskan archaeology.***

