

Archaeology in the Schools:

Introduction

Credit

The Archaeology in the Schools Program originated as a docent led introduction to archaeology at the Royal British Columbia Museum. The museum has given the program material to the Archaeology Branch with the understanding that this material will be used by the archaeological consulting community to aid in teaching archaeology in elementary schools.

The Archaeology Branch would like to thank the museum staff for their contribution.

The Archaeology Branch has revised some of the teaching materials for local use by the archaeological community.

General Goals and Objectives

This program introduces children to archaeology by focusing on the types of information archaeologists try to extract from an archaeological site. Parallels are drawn between an archaeologist's understanding of an ancient culture and the students' "expertise" in their own culture. Once the value of an archaeological site as a window into ancient times is established, the fragile nature and need for conservation of these sites is introduced.

Included is a Visiting Archaeologist's Manual to help plan a school visit. There is also a School Teacher's Guide which suggests various activities and readings that school teachers can do following the classroom presentation.

Priorities

- Help students see the connection between the past and the present (the past creates the present—often the present can only be understood by understanding the precedents).
- Engage people in looking at artifacts. Use the artifacts to trigger questions and inquiry of the procedures, attitudes, and events of the past.

- Promote the development of historic empathy—the ability to imagine how others in other times experienced their world.
- Development of a sense of the complexity of history—different groups (e.g., gender, age, etc.) experience events differently.
- Understanding the necessity to preserve these sites.

Messages

- Understanding the past—understanding history and culture is relevant to present day life.
- There is a “cultural” dimension to most things.
- Anthropological disciplines have played a significant role in the constructions of our understandings of B.C. history. A history rather than *the* history should be presented.
- Objects “contain” information and are valuable storehouses of history and culture.
- Complex relationships exist between cultures and environments.
- Various contexts produce varied meanings of objects.
- The historic information of a place or era is not just found in books.
- An object’s meaning is constituted through its context.
- The interpretation of history has its limitations—it is “informed” analysis and interpretation.
- Archaeological sites are the only source for many kinds of information about the past.
- Digging in archaeological sites is not allowed.
- Archaeological sites must be preserved to maintain this link with the past.