

American Indian Archaeological Sites of North Carolina

By Savannah Blystone from Gates County High School
for the 2021-2022 World View Global Fellows Program

Overview of Lesson: In this lesson, students will gain a better understanding of ancient American Indians in North Carolina, especially the influences that geography and environment had and continue to have on settlements and lifestyles. Students will learn about the past through archaeology by focusing on one of the American Indian archeological sites. Teachers can either assign students a particular site or students can choose which site or time period they want to investigate on their own.

About the Project: American Indians lived in the area we now call North Carolina for at least 15,000 years. Archaeologists study the remnants of their communities to learn who these people were and how they lived and prospered for thousands of years. The lesson presented below was developed as part of the 2021-2022 UNC World View Fellows Program, [Exploring Indigenous Cultures: Ancient North Carolinians, Past and Present](#). It is one in a series of lessons that the Fellows created for K-12 schools and community colleges to help students learn about the ancient peoples that lived here and those who represent today's vibrant American Indian populations. Lessons connect past to present day by exploring multiple resources within the [Ancient North Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of North Carolina Archaeology website](#) to examine how communities changed over time and what influenced these changes. Understanding past Indigenous lifeways—their complexity, resiliency, and vitality—allows for a greater appreciation of the contributions American Indians made to the past and continue to make to the present and future of North Carolina.

Suggested Grade Level: 8th grade

Subject: Social Studies

Corresponding National or [State of North Carolina Standards:](#)

8.B.1.2 Explain how cultural values, practices, and the interactions of various Indigenous, religious, and racial groups have influenced the development of North Carolina and the nation.

8.G.1.2 Explain how location, resources, and human geography have influenced the development of North Carolina and the nation.

8.G.1.3 Explain how location and human geography have presented opportunities and challenges for the movement of people, goods, and ideas in North Carolina and the nation.

8.H.2.2 Explain the influences of individuals and groups during times of innovation and change in North Carolina and the nation.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with past American Indian lifeways by exploring the archaeology of North Carolina using the Ancient North Carolinians website (<https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/>).
- Students will be able to discuss important archaeological sites to gain a better understanding of Indigenous groups in the state prior to or immediately following European settlement in the region.
- Students will be able to evaluate how natural resources, geography, and the environment influenced Indigenous settlements.

Essential Questions:

1. What kinds of natural resources are needed to build a thriving community?
2. How can artifacts show us what daily life was like for North Carolina's first inhabitants?
3. Why do some areas have more archeological sites than others?
4. How can archaeology help to fill in gaps in our knowledge about Native people in the state?
5. What can these sites tell us about the movement of Native populations and immigrant populations across the state?

Background information for the educator:

The Ancient North Carolinians website (<https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/>) is an effort by UNC to bring archaeology and Indigenous resource to the public. The part of the site you will have students researching includes a list of every county in the state (Exhibits / Archaeology In Your County: <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/exhibits/archaeology-in-your-county/>). There is a map at the top of the page that shows which counties have archeological sites (colored blue); some counties have archeological sites, others do not. If a student clicks on a county without a site, the page indicates that information directs them to go back to the previous page and look for a neighboring county that does have a site. To view a list of sites accessible to the public, go to the Explore / Archaeological Sites page (<https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/explore/archaeological-sites/>), which provides location and a corresponding link to external webpage for the site.

Part I: Specific Student Activities

1. Have students go to the Exhibits / Archaeology In Your County page, <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/exhibits/archaeology-in-your-county/> and explore archaeology sites and any artifacts listed in their county. If there are no sites in the county in which the student resides, have them look at sites in surrounding counties or the region in which they live (Indian Heritage / By Region). This is where most of the work will be completed. You can direct students to look at the archaeological sites page where they may be able to find external websites to specific sites in the state- this is optional.

2. After the students have spent time exploring the site engage them in the following discussion questions. *NOTE: If you would prefer, you could have the students answer the discussion questions in a **worksheet format** first (see below) and then engage in verbally discussing the questions.*

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think some counties have archaeological sites while others do not? Does this mean that Native peoples did not live in these areas? What evidence do we have to prove or disprove this assumption?
- What do you think happened to these settlements? What evidence is there to support or disprove what you think happened?
- What can the artifact tell you about the way of life of Indigenous people?
- What other sorts of artifacts or information do you wish you had about this settlement/archaeological site? How could you possibly go about finding this information?
- How did the artifacts and information about the archaeological sites change or support your previously held beliefs about Native populations in the state?

Part II: Specific Student Activities:

1. Students will be tasked with looking at various archaeological artifacts found throughout the state and creating an exhibit (traditionally on paper or digitally with an online exhibit, using a program such as PowerPoint or Google Slides) of Indigenous life in North Carolina. Students will then present their findings to the class. The goal is for students to look at a wide variety of artifacts and sites across the state to get and deliver a clear picture of the life of Indigenous people in the state. Students will use the following page on the Ancient Carolinians website (<https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/indian-heritage/indian-heritage-overview/>)
2. Pass out the Artifact Analysis Worksheet (see below) that will help students in their selection and study of artifacts. Students will use the worksheet to gather information for each artifact in their exhibit.
3. Students choose a selection of at least 10 artifacts (you can adjust this number based if needed) that they feel represent the daily life of Indigenous peoples in North Carolina.
 - a. Students should keep the following questions in mind when selecting artifacts: How did this artifact impact the daily life of a Native person? How did this artifact enhance the life of the person? What purpose or purposes could the artifact be used for?
 - b. In their exhibits, students need to identify the artifact, the location it was found, as well as other pertinent identifying information. Students will need to explain why they chose this artifact to exhibit, paying close attention to explaining what the artifact teaches us about Indigenous life.

Sites used:

- <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/>
- <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/explore/archaeological-sites/>
- <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/exhibits/archaeology-in-your-county/>
- <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/indian-heritage/indian-heritage-overview/>
- <https://kwlibguides.lonestar.edu/PrimarySources-History/nativeamericans>

Extension Activity/Primary Source Analysis:

- Students can send their exhibit to the class or have a gallery walk for students to see others' work.
- Have students select one specific artifact to research further. Students can write a narrative about the artifact's life.
- Have students look for primary sources, either images or writings, to add to their exhibits. The purpose of these enhancements is to bring deeper meaning to the artifacts presented and provide the students with a deeper understanding of Indigenous life. For example, students may find a picture or rendering of the artifact as it looked when being used by Indigenous populations.
- Have students create a wish list of other artifacts they would like to find and would have wanted to be presented in their exhibits.

Explore Further:

Look at John White's or John Smith's writings and drawings about early Native life in North Carolina (<https://kwlibguides.lonestar.edu/PrimarySources-History/nativeamericans>).

Materials:

- Computer or tablet with internet access
- If having students create a digital exhibit, they will need some software or app such as Google Slides or Canva
- Pencils/pens
- Paper
- Access to primary sources (if using extension activity- can be digitally or as handouts)
- Poster (if creating physical exhibits)
- [Discussion Questions Worksheet](#) (if using)
- [Artifact Analysis Worksheet](#)

Discussion Questions

Directions: Go to the following website (<https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/exhibits/archaeology-in-your-county/>) and explore the archaeology sites of Indigenous people across North Carolina. Start in the county you currently reside. From there, look at surrounding counties. After exploring, answer the following discussion questions. Be prepared to share the answers with the class in a discussion format.

1. Why do you think some counties have archaeological sites while others don't? Does this mean that Native peoples did not live in these areas? What evidence do we have to prove or disprove this assumption?
2. What do you think happened to these settlements? What evidence is there to support or disprove what you think happened?
3. What can the artifact tell you about the way of life of Indigenous people?
4. What other sorts of artifacts or information do you wish you had about this settlement/archeological site? How could you possibly go about finding this information?
5. How did the artifacts and information about the archeological sites change or support your previously held beliefs about Native populations in the state?

ARTIFACT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Directions: Use this worksheet to fill out the needed information for each artifact in your exhibit. You will then return to this worksheet and use the information to compile the information cards for your exhibit.

1. Name and a brief description of the artifact:
2. County or region where it was found:
3. Archaeology site name where it was found:
4. Description of the archaeology site and/or region (landscape, natural resources, time period, etc.).
5. What was this artifact used for? What purpose did it serve?
6. How did this artifact enhance the life of Indigenous people?

7. Would you consider this artifact to be a necessary part of daily life or was it something that was more for comfort? Why do you think this? What evidence helped you form your opinion?

8. What can this artifact tell you about daily life in ancient North Carolina?

9. Why do you think this artifact has survived all of these years? What evidence helped you form your opinion?

10. Why did you choose this artifact to be in your exhibit?