

# A DAY IN THE LIFE AT BOYD ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SCHOOL

July 28, 2017    Alvina Tam    Day of Archaeology 2017, Education, Environmental Archaeology, Excavation, Experimental Archaeology, Explore Posts, Public Archaeology    Canada, Field School, Ontario

The 40th season of the Boyd Archaeological Field School (BAFS) is almost coming to a close and we wanted to share the experiences of the field school for Day of Archaeology 2017!

BAFS is Canada's only high school credit course where students have the opportunity to participate in real archaeological fieldwork and earn an Interdisciplinary Studies University Preparatory (IDC4U) credit during this two-week long program, offered by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) in cooperation with the York Region District School Board. Since 1975, more than 1,200 Canadian and international students have experienced archaeology through BAFS.



We have found more than one million artifacts, and documented past settlement and activity patterns at several Ontario archaeological sites over the years. This year, students are investigating the Sebastien site in Pickering, Ontario, which was once occupied by the ancestors of the Huron-Wendat First Nations.

During the field school, the students' days alternate between excavating at the site and classroom studies. While on site, students are taught basic excavation techniques and fieldwork methodologies by TRCA

Archaeology staff members, several of whom are alumni of the BAFS program themselves! Over the course of the two weeks, students are then responsible for the excavation of two one-metre by one-metre square units, where they are able to practice and apply their newfound skills under the (very close) supervision of staff and volunteers. In addition to learning about the practical aspects of “How-to-Do” archaeological fieldwork, they are also taught “How-To-Think” like an archaeologist. Students are encouraged to apply their critical thinking abilities to make inferences and exercise their interpretive skills by thinking about how objects may find their way into the ground, consider the people who left them behind, and how their lives were integrated with the artifacts themselves. This allows students to achieve a holistic perspective and interpretation of the site.



When they aren't working on site, students engage in experiential learning projects that appeal to both academic and applied learners. Classroom instruction includes lectures by Indigenous speakers and leading professionals, workshops and seminars, as well as hands-on experience in ancient technologies. The students gain an understanding of the culture and contributions of Canada's First Peoples, including current Indigenous issues and concerns.

One of the most popular components of the program are the two days spent practicing Archaic skills. Students try their hand at creating tools with only resources that were available over 5,000 years ago. For example, students can make a hunting spear, which requires them to flintknape a spearhead, cut down a small ash tree and debark it with only a stone scraper. They must also create twine and collect pine pitch for hafting the spearhead. Other fun projects include:

Basketry with cattails or grass and basswood

Fish traps and weirs

Collecting food and medicine

Fire starting kits

Bolas



Students who loved the course and are interested in pursuing archaeology as a career are invited to come back for a second year at BAFS as volunteers, where they have the opportunity to further their archaeological skills, continue gaining valuable field experience, and advance their cultural material education. In addition to participating in the excavation, volunteers help the staff check students' screens to ensure no artifacts are missed, and assist students in mapping and documenting their units. On classroom days, the volunteers get to work in the lab and process the recovered artifacts. Here, they can then examine artifacts more closely and prepare them for final analysis by the staff.



BAFS has had an invaluable impact on archaeology in Ontario. Over the years, many BAFS alumni have gone on to pursue post-secondary studies, advanced degrees, and careers in archaeology, anthropology, and related fields. In 2005, BAFS was the proud recipient of the Peggi Armstrong Public Archaeology Award from the Ontario Archaeological Society.

Thanks for stopping by! If you, a friend, or know anyone who may be interested in participating in this amazing program, Like the [Boyd Archaeological Field School](#) Facebook page and Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) so you don't miss out on registration for the 2018 session!



Curious to know what A Day in the Life is like for a TRCA Archaeologist? Read all about it [here](#) as we celebrate a Day of Archaeology!