

# 'We then carefully shoveled off a layer of sod'

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for the Tundra Times

Students assisted in an archeological dig led by Dr. Laughlin, who has a license so we could dig at Chaluka. He also needed permission to dig from the federal government because of the fact that it is a National Historical Site.

To get the exact location of where to dig we used survey marks and compass bearings. We dug 165 feet from the survey marks.

After Anangula, which is a small island off Umnak Island, Chaluka has more artifacts per square meter than anywhere in North America. In earlier times Anangula was connected to Umnak and was at the end of the land bridge.

To excavate you must follow a grid, like a map, of the area that you are going to dig. Our grid was 1 meter by 1 meter. Then we marked off the area with stakes and tied it off with some string.

The excavation site was 2 meters wide and 8 meters long, but because of lack of time we only dug in a 1 meter by 2 meter section.

We then carefully shoveled off a layer of sod and set it off to one side. We looked under and on the sod for artifacts.

Then we did shoveling, troweling and screening. Dirt is placed on a framed screen and shaken to get rid of the dirt and leaving only the bigger items to look at, for artifacts. Later on we also did some augering for lower levels to get soil samples.

During the whole process of excavation we took recordings of where we found the item, photographed it where it was found, and measured how far down it was. We took soil samples around the item we found.

During the week of the excavation we dug down 140 cm. and observed about five or six layers of soil, called stratum.

The third process was selecting the artifacts. We looked to see if the items showed signs of being worked on or possibly used or made by man.

Bones were selected if they indicated use by people, whether for tools or for weapons. They were also used to help tell about what kind of year that they had. If there was a good fishing year there was a lot of fish bones or seal bones.

Stones were selected that showed signs of being used for weapons, tools, cooking, like an arrowhead, a hammerstone or cooking stone. The kinds of stones we looked at were chert, obsidian, andesite and sedimentary.

The ones mostly used were chert and obsidian. Chert is smooth and can be found in green, red or gray colors. Obsidian is fine-grained and shiny. It is made by volcanoes and is great for tools, weapons and decorations.

Soil samples were taken to analyze soil contents. The objects were recorded; what it was, the exact location and how far down it was found. It was then brushed and photographed before it was removed, at exactly where it was found, then removed to be bagged. The bag was marked with the exact location of the contained items.

After the artifacts were selected they needed to be cleaned and classified. To clean the items you take them from their bag, being careful not to get them mixed up with other bags, and wash them in water with a brush. Dry them as soon as possible, so you don't soak the artifacts, carefully with a paper towel.

To classify the artifacts you need to identify the exact location, take measurements and weight, also conjecture what the item may have been used for. You also need to describe and draw a picture of the item, as well as give the date it was found. To prevent confusion, write the location on the item with pen or pencil.

To record the exact location you

write:

1. name of where dig was (NK-)
2. who had kept the artifacts (NK)
3. a "/" and (/)
4. the quadrant where it was found. (A-2-N)

Example: Nikolski-Nikolski/Section A-Row 2-North Quadrant: NK-NK/A-2-N.

The final stage is the restoration of the site. You fill in the hole with the dirt dug up and the remaining things that you didn't take for artifacts.

When we were done we filled up our hole with big rocks we had dug up, items of no interest to us, two dimes and soil. We then put the sod carefully into place, exactly where we got it from. The borrowed tools and equipment were returned to their proper places and artifacts taken home to study and show to our schools.

The results of the excavation: we have many bones of sea mammals, birds, and other animals. We also have stone artifacts used for cooking, weapons, tools, and some plain ordinary rocks.

The major artifacts of interest were a 1936 penny, a complete spearhead, a lamp, a bone harpoon head with three barbs and a large whale vertebra. Nikolski School has the whale vertebra and is storing it in their Culture Room.