



Prehistory and Archeology at Indiana Dunes

The Record of Ancient Humans. The Indiana Dunes form a rich and varied environment, with a wide breadth of thriving life forms. This abundance of different resources likely brought people here throughout prehistory. The archeological record at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (INDU) shows this area has been used by humans for about 10,000 years. Archeological projects at INDU have produced evidence which allows us to address questions such as how people used this landscape through time, and from where these people came.



Above: the Ly-Ko-Ki-Wi Trail winds its way through the woods. Right: The Lake Michigan shoreline.



These projectile points date to the Archaic Period. Their precise locations give archeologists an idea of how people used the landscape between 7000 and 1000 BC.

Late Woodland pottery, dating to about AD 1000.



Preserving the Record. Just as the natural resources within the Lakeshore are valuable, unique, and protected, so are the cultural resources. The National Historic Preservation Act requires that all federal ground scheduled for disturbance be examined for archeological resources first. This is largely due to the fact that these resources are *non-renewable*; once an artifact has been removed from context, most of the information associated with it is gone forever.



MWAC archeologist taking notes during testing prior to construction of the Dunewood Campground.

Archeologists cannot retrieve all of the information that is lost when they excavate, but they can preserve some by keeping careful records. Researchers rely on these notes, photographs, and site maps to learn about the excavated materials and the people who left them behind. This is why archeology is an integral part of management at Indiana Dunes.

Archeological testing in a wooded area. The transit on the right is used to record locations of test units, artifacts and landmarks for generating precise and accurate site maps.



Archeologists use the Munsell Soil Color chart to describe excavated sediments. Using this standard will help future researchers understand site setting.

Archeology is performed at INDU for a variety of management purposes, including assessment of areas slated for disturbance, park-wide inventory of archeological resources, and in-depth testing of significant sites in areas where disturbance cannot be avoided. Thanks to thoughtful management and decades of cooperation between Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and archeologists, the picture of human activity here before European contact and historic records continues to develop.



Recording observations during a park-wide survey.



INDU and MWAC staff check for archeological remains at a site scheduled for rehabilitation.