

# Why is the Past Important?

( [http://www.cce.org/resources/learning\\_centre/classroom\\_activities/past\\_importance.asp](http://www.cce.org/resources/learning_centre/classroom_activities/past_importance.asp) )

## Connections to the curriculum:

Science, social studies

## Time:

15 to 40 minutes

## Materials:

- Students bring to class an object, photograph, or drawing of an object that represents their past

## Overview

We realize that this doesn't have much to do with public lands on the surface, but we need to remember that Canada's public lands contain a wealth of archaeological sites and these sites need to be considered in the public lands use debate. Mining, golf courses, logging, and other forms of development often take place in areas where ancient people lived and development as a way of damaging sites beyond repair. This may be a stereotype, but once you dig a hole into a midden, the midden can be gone forever. If we educate children about the importance of the past, they will become better stewards of the future, both of land and resources.

## Objectives

As an introduction to the study of our archaeological heritage, students will use a personally owned object to:

- Share the importance of their past.
- Connect this importance with reasons why the human past is important.

## Geographic Skills

- Knowledge
- Evaluation

## Strategies

- Brainstorming
- Discussion
- Application

## Vocabulary

- Archaeological site: a place where human activity occurred and material remains were left.
- Archaeology: a method for studying past human cultures and analyzing material evidence.
- Artifact: any object made or used by humans.

## Background

Sites and artifacts can be messengers from the past. If we know how to read their messages, material remains can tell us about the people who made and used them and then left them behind. Although the owners of the artifacts and the inhabitants of the sites may have lived

hundreds or even thousands of years ago, they undoubtedly had many of the same needs and concerns, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows that we have today.

The messengers from the past belong to everyone. Everyone has a right to know how the world came to be and to know his or her place in the world and material remains can answer those questions.

The link to the past is provided through scientific analysis as well as through traditional values placed on archaeological sites and artifacts. For example, L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland provides a tangible link to the colonial history of Canada and is valued for that reason. By examining its historic buildings and objects, the site provides scientific information about the lives of the historic inhabitants. Similarly, some prehistoric sites throughout Canada may represent the heritage of First Nations and are valued accordingly. These sites are also capable of providing scientific information about the prehistory of the region.

### **Setting the Stage**

This lesson will help the students to begin to discover why we study the past. Assign the students to bring an object from home that tells about their own or their family's past. If the object cannot be brought to class, a drawing or description will suffice.

### **Procedure**

1. Share background information and vocabulary
2. Working in groups of 3 to 4, students tell each other what the object conveys about their past.
3. In a class discussion, ask the following questions:
  - o Is it important for you to know about your past? Why or Why not?
  - o Is it important to know about the human past? Why or Why not?
4. What can we learn from the past? The students brainstorm ideas. Some examples: how humans lived in the past and why cultures change over time.

### **Closure**

If your past is important to you, what statement can you make about the importance of the past in general?

**Source:** *Intrigue of the Past*: (1996) Shelly Smith, Jeanne Moe, Kelly Letts, Danielle Patterson