

ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY TERMS

Anthropology 325
Kenai Peninsula College
Alan Boraas, Instructor

Anthropology	the study of culture. Anthropologists ask the question "why are cultures the way they are."
Native heritage	a statement about a people's traditions. Tribal historians and others ask the question, "what is our story and what are our values."
Etic	a point-of-view from the standpoint of an outsider. Most anthropology writing is an etic perspective
Emic	a point-of-view from the standpoint of an insider. Native heritage commentary by an elder is an emic perspective.
Archaeology	Using artifacts and other information to infer what a past culture was like. Archaeology is not simply the collection of "neat stuff" it is an attempt to describe people through material remains.
Prehistory	the record of peoples in an area before there was a written record. Includes archaeology, linguistic, oral tradition and other types of information
History	the period of time after a written record
Ethnohistory	using explorer accounts, missionary accounts, archaeological information, oral tradition, mythology, and elder interview's to reconstruct and understand a culture's history
Ethnography	the description of a culture using observation and interviews. Anthropologists usually describe a culture according to five systems: technology, subsistence, social organization, political organization and religion
ethnographic present	the time just before European contact. Also called the cultural present or baseline culture
Site	any location where prehistoric early historic remains are found
Artifact	any natural material intentionally modified for a particular purpose. An artifact may be a stone arrowpoint, an item of clothing or a modern computer.
feature	non-artifact information at a site such as fire-hearths, rock walls, post-molds etc.
material culture or technology	the total array of artifacts and the knowledge of how to make and use them possessed by a culture.
site grid	intersecting lines superimposed on a prehistoric site usually with stakes and string used to locate artifacts or features. Usually the metric system is used.
excavation layer/level	Under normal circumstances the youngest artifacts occur at the top of a site and the oldest artifacts occur at the bottom. Artifacts in the same excavation layer (natural soil unit) or arbitrary excavation level (usually 10 centimeters deep) are thought to be of the same age.
Provenance	Knowledge of the exact location of an artifact. An artifact "lacking

	provenance" means you don't know where it came from and therefore is of almost no use in archaeology.
<i>in situ</i>	Latin for "in place" means the artifact was found in the place the prehistoric people left, lost or discarded it
Stratification	refers to two concepts: the stratification of artifacts or the stratification of soil units. If artifacts are stratified it means there is an older set of artifacts below younger artifacts above. If the soil is stratified there are natural soil layers which mark geologic events. Volcanic ash layers are common strata in the Cook Inlet area.
undisturbed site	an archaeological site that is mostly intact since it was abandoned.
disturbed site	an archeological site that has been disturbed by natural erosion, intentional vandalism or by unintentional destruction such as highway or airport construction.
pot hunting	the intentional act of looting a prehistoric or historic site for its artifacts or other remains for one's personal collection or for sale.
surface find	an artifact found on the surface often "turned up" by either natural erosion or construction. Surface finds are of limited use because they lack provenance.
Component	artifacts features and other information at a site that can be assigned to a particular culture or time period of a culture
multi-component site	a site occupied by two or more cultures usually one after the other
site survey (reconnaissance)	the location of prehistoric or historic sites in a particular area. Site surveyors use ethnohistoric ethnographic geologic biologic and "good guessing" to locate sites. Even so most sites are found accidentally.
site report	a written report of the results of site excavation. Most modern site excavations seek to answer a particular question.
Interpretation	using data from site reports to make conclusions about a prehistoric people. Two archaeologists may interpret the same data differently or an archaeologist may interpret earlier conclusions based on new data.
Inference	the logical process of making generalizations about a prehistoric culture based on facts or data. Archaeologists infer from technology what the other systems of culture were like: subsistence, social organization, political structure, and religion
Chronology	establishing a record of events at a place
radiocarbon dating (C14 dating)	measurement of the amount of radioactive carbon in a substance to estimate its age.
faunal analysis	analysis the animal (fauna) bones at a site to determine diet.
floral analysis	analysis of the plant remains at a site to determine diet
Flotation	pollen etc by immersing a soil sample in water and skimming off the floating organic material.
culture	a group with a distinctive adaptation and set of customs and beliefs
Tradition	a prehistoric culture that exists over long duration

phase	a distinctive time period of regional group within a tradition
cultural resource management (CRM)	specialists who enforce laws pertaining to prehistoric and historic sites and otherwise manage historic and prehistoric resources
Alaska State Antiquities Act	This act states it is illegal to disturb or destroy prehistoric or historic sites on state-owned land. Also makes it illegal to traffic in artifacts.
Federal Antiquities Act 1906	This act states it is illegal to intentionally disturb or destroy prehistoric sites on land owned by or controlled by the federal government
Historic Sites Act 1935	This act gave the National Park Service responsibility for identifying and protecting important historic and prehistoric sites.
National Historic Preservation Act 1966 (amended 1976-1980)	This act established a National Register of Historic Places and provides grants to state preservation programs.
National Environmental Policy Act, 1969	This act requires federal agencies to consider environmental, historic and cultural values whenever federally owned land is modified or federal funds are used on private land.
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act: An act by congress to allow Native American groups to claim human remains and sacred artifacts from museums and other repositories.