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CURRICULUM AND LESSON PLANS

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LESSON 10: PROTECTING AND PRESERVING CULTURAL RESOURCES

SUBJECTS

Social Studies, History, Archaeology

DURATION

30 to 45 minutes

CLASS SIZE

10 to 30 students

OVERVIEW

This lesson addresses the topic of protecting and preserving cultural resources. Teachers and students can examine the specific ways the West Point Site has been protected and the collection has been preserved.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine issues concerning protecting archaeological sites and preserving cultural resources.

MATERIALS

Books, *The Young Oxford Book of Archaeology* and *Archaeology Resource Guide*.

VOCABULARY

Cultural resources – evidence of human activity such as archaeological sites, ethnographic sites, and historic buildings.

Preservation – the act of protecting things from harm or deterioration.

BACKGROUND

Archaeological sites and cultural resources are non-renewable. Once these sites and resources are destroyed they can never be replaced. For many people, including archaeologists, it is important to protect archaeological sites and cultural resources. Many people view archaeological sites and cultural resources as important reminders of our history and heritage. If these sites are protected and preserved, then people will be able to visit the sites in the future, and continue to learn more about the sites as technology improves.

However, the protection of archaeological sites and cultural resources is not respected by everyone. Many of the archaeological sites and cultural resources in our state and throughout the country are threatened by people who loot artifacts and disturb archaeological sites. If a person takes away an artifact from a site, vandalizes a site, or digs holes in a site then that person is harming the site in

several ways. First, looting artifacts and disturbing archaeological sites destroys the cultural landscape and robs the citizens of this country of our shared history.. Second, looting artifacts and disturbing archaeological sites disrespects the cultural heritage of Native Americans. Often, these sites and resources are the village sites, sacred places, and burial grounds of Native people's ancestors. Third, vandals destroy evidence of the human past that archaeologists could study,.

There are many federal and state laws that protect archaeological sites and cultural resources. These laws protect archaeological sites and cultural resources on both public and private land. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) was passed in 1979. This legislation makes it illegal to collect, deface, injure, or excavate sites and artifacts older than 100 years old on public land. Public land is defined as land administered by any state, federal, or tribal agency. Many states have additional laws to protect archaeological sites and cultural resources. For example, the state of Washington has adopted many laws related to the protection and preservation of archaeological sites and cultural resources including laws that protect Indian Graves. (See the *Archaeology Resource Guide* or contact the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to learn more about these laws).

The West Point Site and the artifacts recovered from the site have been protected and preserved in unique ways. A large portion of the West Point Site remains unexcavated within the boundaries of the wastewater treatment facility and under existing buildings. Areas in the site with cultural deposits were covered with a protective cloth and preserved in place. The West Point Site is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and therefore will be protected in the future. The artifacts recovered from the West Point Site are presently being preserved according to an agreement reached between the Burke Museum, King County, the Muckleshoot Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, and Tulalip Tribes. The collection is currently housed at the Burke Museum and a committee, comprised of the agencies listed above, oversees the storage and curation of the collection. The artifacts are available for research with approval of this committee.

PROCEDURE

1. Explain to students that archaeological sites and cultural resources are non-renewable and irreplaceable. Ask the students to think of other non-renewable resources or irreplaceable cultural resources. (Students might think of resources such as old-growth forests, a great masterpiece of art such the Mona Lisa, a national landmark such as the Washington Monument, or a cultural icon such as the Space Needle).

2. Inform the students about the problem of looting artifacts and disturbing archaeological sites. Use the *Archaeology Resource Guide* to facilitate this lesson.
3. Explain that looting artifacts includes taking any artifact away from an archaeological site including projectile points, flakes, stone tools, and pottery sherds.
4. Explain that disturbing an archaeological site includes altering a site in any way such as moving material found on the surface, vandalizing permanent fixtures in the site, or digging below the surface of the site.
5. Ask students why it would be harmful to loot artifacts or disturb an archaeological site. (Students should think of answers such as looting artifacts and disturbing sites destroys scientific data that archaeologists could study, disrespects the cultural heritage of Native Americans, and compromises the cultural history and cultural landscape of the country).
6. Present the students with a hypothetical situation about an archaeological site. For instance, the school wants to build an addition to the current building that extends out into the playing fields. While preparing the area for construction several artifacts are found. Ask the students what they think the school should do next? Should construction continue or be suspended? Who should be notified? Who should be involved in making these decisions?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Research other archaeological sites in your state or region. Learn about how the sites have been protected.
2. Visit a museum that has archaeological collections. Learn about how the museum preserves archaeological collections.

REFERENCES

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