Armed with pencils and disposable cameras, residents of Kodiak Island’s majestic wilderness are recording the condition of ancient settlements and aiding in historic preservation. These volunteer scientists are part of a long-term collaboration between the Alutiiq Museum and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife aimed at saving the archaeology of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. Their efforts are paying off.

Now in its eighth year, the Museum’s Stewardship program locates sites and studies the conditions that threaten their survival. Like mineral resources, archaeological deposits are non-renewal. Each site holds a unique story about the past that once disturbed is lost forever.

Natural forces have long reshaped Kodiak’s sites. Erosion eats away fragile middens, bears dig into house pits searching for tender roots, and rivers cut new courses through old villages. These disturbances are unavoidable, part of the evolution of the landscape that continuously shapes the archaeological record. But in recent decades, avoidable human impacts have increased also. As Kodiak’s population grows and tourism increases, people are reaching the wilderness more, exacerbating natural processes and introducing new disturbances – ATVs and illegal digging.

This is where stewards come in. A corps of people from Kodiak’s rural areas are monitoring site conditions, working like professionals with non-invasive recording techniques. With the stewards’ data land managers identify trouble spots and make plans to alleviate problems before disturbances become acute.

The results are encouraging. Stewards have helped archaeologists document 25% of the known prehistoric site on Kodiak, and their efforts are reducing vandalism. In places where the program has been in effect, this illegal, avoidable disturbance has declined.
**YOU CAN HELP**

(1) Never dig in an archaeological site, collect artifacts, or buy artifacts.

(2) If you find an artifact, leave it in place and notify an archaeologist.

(3) Teach your family and friends to respect sites. Most people do not know that recreational digging is illegal, destructive, and disrespectful.

(4) Report acts of vandalism to the Nation Park Service (1-800-478-2724). Rewards of up to $500 are available for information on site looting.

**RESPECT THE PAST**

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**Know the Facts About Artifacts**

In the United States, archaeological sites and their contents belong to the owner of the land on which they occur. There are more than 10,000 known sites in Alaska. About 70% lie on federal lands, 7% on state lands, and 22% on municipal or private property. Laws protect each.

**Federal Lands** - Under the *Archaeological Resources Protection Act* it is illegal to damage, remove, or sell any archaeological material over 100 years old on federal public lands. Violations are punishable with fines of up to $250,000, five years in jail, and seizure of all tools, equipment, and vehicles used in the offense. Rewards of up to $500 may be awarded for information leading to a conviction under the act.

Learn more at the National Park Service Alaska Archaeology web site: [http://www.nps.gov/akso/CR/ARCommon/free/Archeology/indexArcheology.htm](http://www.nps.gov/akso/CR/ARCommon/free/Archeology/indexArcheology.htm).

**State Lands** - Under the *Alaska Historic Preservation Act* it is illegal to damage, destroy, or remove archaeological materials from state lands. Violations are punishable with both criminal and civil penalties, including fines of up to $100,000. The act applies to all state controlled lands including beaches and submerged lands.

Learn more at the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology web site: [http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/oha/](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/oha/)

**Other Lands** - Archaeological sites on privately owned lands are protected by *Alaska statutes*. Damaging, destroying, or removing archaeological materials from private lands without permission of the landowner is illegal and could be prosecuted as criminal mischief, trespassing, or theft. Additionally, some municipalities and Native Corporations have ordinances that protect sites on their lands.

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**QUYANÁA - THANK YOU to our Stewardship Volunteers**

An incised pebble from Afognak Island – Natives of Kodiak Collection, Alutiiq Museum AM382:14

Volunteers working with Museum archaeologists in Viekoda Bay