

## Catch-and-Release Archaeology: A Path Towards Solving the Curation Crisis

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Morag Kersel (2015) describes archaeology as “the production of knowledge and an accumulation of things.” The accumulation of artifacts has led to a curation crisis wherein resource management and funding is limited or entirely unavailable. Removing artifacts from archaeological sites also poses the challenge of removing them from cultural context. New methods of archaeology should be utilized to minimize the impacts on resources. In this paper, I want to talk about the use of catch-and-release practices at the Apex, Arizona Archaeology Project field school a

potential solution to the curation crisis while also recognizing community concerns like how future researchers will know what has already been studied.

This summer, I was fortunate enough to participate in the Apex, Arizona Archaeology Project which is a collaborative program between Northern Arizona University and the Kaibab National Forest. I mostly want to discuss the methodology we utilized, but first I'll give you some insight into Apex. Apex is a 20<sup>th</sup> century historic logging town just south of Tusayan, Arizona near the Grand Canyon

had different cleaning strategies. We can document that context in paperwork and photographs, but it is incredibly impactful to see those artifacts in their original environment. Additionally, we completed a 1 meter by 1 meter excavation of a possible privy. Artifacts discovered during the excavation were catalogued by the level in which they were discovered, photographs and measurements were taken, and then they were placed aside until the end of the excavation. At that point, all of the artifacts we gathered were placed in the bottom of our excavation site on top of a piece of burlap with a 2024 quarter and buried with the dirt removed during the excavation. The placement of the quarter alerts future archaeologists to this excavation and the piece of burlap signifies that our dig ended at that point. Again, we have minimized the physical collection and established a way to notify future researchers of a previous excavation at that site.

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