From Detroit to Copper Harbor and Ironwood to Drummond Island, archaeological sites reveal how people have lived in Michigan for nearly 14,000 years. Archaeology is the scientific study of the human past, using places and objects to understand changing people and environments. It is the study of sand dunes and forests, seas and cities, hardship and resourcefulness, ingenuity and innovation, and above all, communities. Across time and space, archaeology helps us know the past, understand the present, and plan for a sustainable and vibrant future.
Annually, Michigan Archaeology Day draws people of all ages to the Michigan Historical Center to experience special exhibits, demonstrations, hands-on activities, and lectures. Learn how this unique science can make you think about the world—and maybe even yourself—a little differently. For more information about Michigan Archaeology Day, visit michigan.gov/archaeology or michigan.gov/museum.

Archaeology is more than just digging—it is cooperative research, analysis, reporting, curation, stewardship, education, and public outreach. Support Michigan archaeology by respecting sites on public land, being good stewards of sites on your property, volunteering, and learning more.

Once removed from their original locations, artifacts lose their research value unless the removal is properly documented. Contact the State Archaeologist if you think you have discovered an archaeological site. It is illegal to intentionally disturb human remains and associated artifacts on federal or state land. Artifacts are the property of the landowner; you must have permission to remove artifacts from private land. We cannot protect or learn from sites that we do not know exist; it is illegal to disturb them. Leave them in place and report them to the land manager.

Recreational metal detecting on state and federal lands will not be allowed. It is illegal to disturb them. Leave them in place and report them to the land manager.

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