Today on Across the Fence a program that helps preserve and protect Vermont’s cultural heritage. We will go on site with the University of Vermont’s Consulting Archaeology Program where professionals and students are carefully sifting through clues. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I’m Judy Simpson. For more than 30 years UVM consulting archaeology program has unearthed clues that help explain our state’s history and heritage. At the same time the program gives students hands on experience as well as opportunities to work alongside professionals. To learn more we join Across the Fence’s Rebecca Gollin.

Researchers from the University of Vermont are digging up the past in South Burlington.

John Crock: UVM Consulting Archaeology Program “…here’s a native American settlement, based on a little bit of previous surveying work, dates to about 1300, or about roughly 700 years ago.”

John Crock is the director of UVM’s consulting archeology program, which is a research unit within the school’s anthropology department. Consulting archeologists work at different sites around Vermont, often in advance of construction projects.

Crock / - “the project here that we are working on for the Air National Guard is related to a road project of a realignment of the road here, a National Guard road, as part of upgrades for the guard part of the airport we are doing some archaeology in advance of that to salvage a native American site that was identified a few years ago.”

The crew includes archeology professionals as well as students, many of whom get their start in archeology by working in the field during summer breaks.

Kathryn Bennett: UVM Consulting Archaeology Program: “I did a field school with John Crock last summer and he asked a bunch of us to stay on and work for the rest of the summer so that’s when I knew I was going to be back here this summer, I asked him if I could join the crew again, and he said yes, thankfully, and so I’m back and I’m loving it.”

Bennet is an archeology major at Hamilton College in upstate New York.

Bennett / - “ I knew about archeology, but I didn't know about digging, or even anything about the process, so I learned a lot from John and he was great at helping us out and just learning how to dig, how to dig square holes is hard, learning how to screen, learning what to look for in the screens.”

With its many features, this site is an ideal place to both work and learn.
Robinson: UVM Consulting Archaeology program “this is certainly one of the more impressive sites I've worked on, just for the density of what we call features, which are fire hearths, or storage pits, or refuse pits, the # of artifacts they're turning up, and its setting...”

Jess Robinson is a research supervisor with the consulting archeology program, which is known as CAP. Like many here, his introduction to archeology was as an undergraduate at UVM.

Jess Robinson / - “during my work at UVM I've pretty much worked on every period, all the way up through pre-history... it's a good place to be able to range widely if you're interested to study northern hunter gathers.... For a lot of reasons Vermont is just a great place to study and work as an archaeologist”

Nats

Crock / - “in addition to the ongoing inclusion of students, we also have our staff, fulltime staff is made up of mainly UVM graduates who graduated a few years ago, maybe took a field school, a class that we offer in the department of anthropology, got trained, and then got hired by CAP. Some of them have gone away to work, as far away as Hawaii and Alaska and South Carolina, but then have migrated back to work with us again. So it's a wide network of UVM archaeologists out there in the world and proudly, many of them are trained here in Vermont.”

Warren Rich is another UVM graduate who has returned to work in Vermont.

Warren rich: UVM consulting archaeology program / - “I've worked in South Carolina, and the Caribbean... I did my field school in Anguilla with John when I was a freshman at UVM, that's kind of how I had my first taste of archeology, and that was a really cool site, right on a beach bay, you know, sandy soil, lots of great pottery and other artifacts, and it was a cool introduction to archeology in general, and I came right out of that and started working in VT, with CAP, and did that for the next 4 or 5 summers through my breaks, and my college career.

The CAP researchers work in this field for a number of weeks, expanding the area of their efforts, and observing what they can about the site and its features. For more information, they’ll head to the lab, where bags of dirt and material removed from the site will be meticulously examined.

Nats, lab, food, bone, etc. -

Crock / - “We have the advantage in Vermont of having a winter lab season, because the ground is frozen and you can't do archaeology... So in the winter our field crew becomes our lab staff, and we do all the processing and analysis on campus”

As work continues in the field, preserving as much information as possible before construction starts is key. The road being built has been designed to have as little impact as possible on the area that’s being studied, but such measures are not always possible.

Crock/ - “…these archaeological sites are not renewable, even when they are excavated they are destroyed (0:09:13.6) even if it's done archaeologically, and we take really great notes, we've still destroyed the site in the process and never can go back to it.”

Digging into the past to preserve the information there for the future... in South Burlington, I'm Rebecca Gollin with Across the Fence.

Thanks Rebecca. Joining me now is the Director of UVM's Consulting Archaeology Program, John Crock. John is also an associate professor in the department of anthropology. Welcome. You've been
the director of the consulting archeology program or CAP for 11 years but your work has taken you
around the world tell us about your background.

John.: I'm originally from Maine and came to UVM as an undergraduate and did some archaeology
after that in Vermont and in Maine. Then I had a hankering for something more tropical and ended
up doing my graduate work in the Caribbean where I still work actively in the northern lesser
Antilles small islands particularly Anguilla where I've done a couple of UVM Field schools and some
of the people that work with me still at CAP were first trained at one of those Caribbean field schools
and now here in Vermont.

Judy.: How long has CAP existed?

John.: CAP has been around since 1978. We first started back when federal regulations were put in
place to do archaeology in advance of federally funded projects. CAP evolved to serve state agencies
federal agencies and also later private development community for this regulatory process as part of
the environmental review process.

Judy.: How many people work there?

John.: We have eight fulltime staff we have a couple work study students we have some independent
study students and a lot of volunteers at any given time. In the field season we build out a little bit
depending upon how many projects we have and hire a number of part time temporary employees
students over the summer. Field season months.

Judy.: Where does the funding come from?

John.: The funding usually comes from either federal agencies or here in Vermont we also do a lot of
work under Act 250 private developers getting permits require you to do archaeology as part of the
environmental review process. A lot of people don't know that private developers contributed a lot to
our understanding of Vermont’s archaeological heritage as just part of the permit process. It's one of
the benefits I think to the permit process here in Vermont and also nationally a lot of the archeology
done today is done under the offices of these federal laws and regulations.

Judy.: So for big developments going in part of what they have to do is have someone from your
department do some fieldwork as far as look at the ground to see if maybe there might be a site.

John.: That's right we use a predictive model of where we know sites are most likely to be and then
projects in those areas are studied for their potential to contain sites. Some of the work we do early
on as a survey stage we may not find anything and then the project moves forward. If we find an
archaeological site we investigate to see how significant it is and if it's significant we might do
additional larger scale archeology to salvage some of it before development occurs or the development
is reengineered to avoid some of it to preserve it.

Judy.: Which is what happened on the road for the guard project?

John.: That's right it worked very hard with engineers to avoid some of the sites to bury some of it so
that the site would be preserved as outside of the developed area for future archeology. A lot of what
we do is they have is in the salvage stage and we believe we're going to get better at archeology so
there's no need to dig up all the sites today we need to preserve them for the future. As I said in the
video these sites are not renewable so once they're gone they're gone forever.

Judy.: So it's kind of ironic that what you do is sift through and find the sights. You want to
obviously find out what's in them but also part of what you're doing is to preserve and not touch them
so that when the technology advances so that maybe you'll have to dig up a site to find out what's there.

John.: That's right we're hopeful that technology will get that advanced that we won't have to dig but we're still having to do that sort of manual labor part of archeology but there's so much to work with we have so much information already from excavated sites and sites that are in danger that there's no need to dig up sites that are preserved or in their protected context.

Judy.: How does CAP fit into the anthropology department?

John.: We're part of the anthropology department. It provides students with hands on experience which they might not get in the classroom setting it allows students to get a feel for archeology to get a feel for a lot of it is the lab work side of it which is detailed. You get to handle some artifacts that maybe thousands of years old but it's pretty tedious. It tedious work as is the field work. There is some manual labor involved. It exposes soon so that side of archeology and some are taken by it and some decide that maybe it's not what they want to do.

Judy.: It's a lot of work.

John.: It's a lot of work and really helps apply some of the things we keeps them in the classroom in terms of research methods theories about archeology how we reconstruct what happened in the past how human beings adapted to the environmental change particularly here in Vermont. It gives a real firsthand experience aspect to the anthropology curriculum.

Judy.: That's something that they can take not only in Vermont but worldwide?

John.: That's right you can use some of the same methodology is that we teach students here in Vermont and apply them anywhere in the world archaeologically. What we find is we have a difficult time in Vermont because our soils are very acidic so not very much preserves. So we have to get as much information as possible from a very small amount of material remains. Stone and pottery burned bone and burned plant remains so you really get trained in the very detailed way here in Vermont so that when you go out I think students have a very strong foundation in terms of methods and techniques.

Judy.: So what happens to all the artifacts when you're finished with a project?

John.: We're working through them cataloging them the and ultimately they'll be curated. Some of them temporarily at UVM but the state right now is working on a plan for a heritage center in Barre teamed up with a history center. Right now there's a facility in South Burlington where the artifacts are stored in but Vermont really needs a state museum. A lots of states have a museum where some of these aesthetically pleasing artifacts or range of things can be displayed for people to see and we do not have that here but I hope that we do sometime in the future.

Judy.: We saw on the video the work being done on the National Guard project what was the result of that project?

John.: We're still working through it as I a mentioned and the winter work is ahead of us. We're going to be processing a lot of the soil that we got from fire pits from storage pits getting small bits of plants and food bone remains. But we've started to connect up some of the map work than we did at the site. Showing that we probably have portions of structures shelters that contained both fire pits and storage pits in one particular area. We also can map out the distribution of artifacts to show where people are living and where they were disposing of trash essentially. That's all part of process reconstructing what went on at the site about 700 years ago. That takes a long long time for every day in the field I think there about four days in the lab.
Judy.: What do we know about these people that were living there? Where they living on the site fulltime?

John.: It looks like a Native American group at least for one season potentially more or there probably in the late fall based on the hunting in women so we found. Also there is storage. They were growing corn probably nearby. From earlier studies we found corn in some of the storage pits so that's really exciting. It was up off the Winooski River late fall to winter occupation where people had stored enough plant foods to get them through the winter and we're also hunting as well in that area.

Judy.: All this you learned just run looking at different parts of the site?

John.: Yes is all based on a sample. We are doing sampling just like any kind of scientific enterprise. That we don't have to dig up the whole site to learn more about it. Just our pits excavated on a grid pattern give us enough information so we can reconstruct both the age of the site and the activities that it for there.

Judy.: Is this similar to other sites that you've seen around Vermont as far as similar habits or what you think people were eating or doing?

John.: It is similar that is interesting because it's more recent. We are lacking in Vermont at least in terms of archeology a lot of the recent sites. Sites from the contact. Right when Europeans came in about 400 years ago. This is exciting because as relatively recent for us because the Americans have been in Vermont for 13,000 years. This is a relatively recent site at only 700 years old. It tells us a little bit more about this end of the history of human history in Vermont and we really don't have any written records from any of the native American periods so this is been really exciting to do this project.

Judy.: It's fascinating. If you'd like to learn more about the UVM Consulting Archaeology Program you can visit the web site. The site has information about the various projects that the program is involved with. There's also an extensive listing of archeology sites and museums around New England. You can visit the web site that's listed on your screen or you can search the University of Vermont website for the Consulting Archeology Program.

Thanks so much for joining us.

John.: Thanks for having me on.

Judy.: That's our program for today; I'm Judy Simpson we will see you again next time on Across the Fence.

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