

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump UNESCO World Heritage Site Archaeological Field School

The Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump archaeological field school is a seven-week, 9 credit program (three third-year courses: ARKY 3000, ARKY 3300, and ARKY 3400), that runs from **May 6 – June 23, 2024**.



Research Objectives of the Project

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is an elaborate hunting complex spread across the landscape where, for at least the past 6,500 years, hunters used the natural topography to drive herds of bison off cliff edges and then process the animals in the vicinity. The site is remarkable not just for its striking topography but for its long-term use as an important and ingenious component of subsistence and cultural practice in the northwestern Great Plains. It is one of the most important locations of Indigenous heritage.

Our work at the site aims to clarify chronological and contextual issues related to the earliest occupation phases, evaluate the relationships between different activity areas, and identify earlier uses than those currently well-documented. Through this work, students will learn about the site and develop key skills necessary in North American archaeology.

2024 Archaeological Field School at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump

This field school has three main components:

1. A two-week online course to prepare students for the project;
2. Four weeks of excavation at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump; and
3. One week of laboratory work at the U of L Westcastle field station.

Students will be introduced to the archaeology and history of the northern Great Plains, theoretical methods for approaching North American archaeology, Indigenous archaeologies, and Indigenous consultation. They will gain experience in excavation and survey methods, and field documentation through experiential learning activities. Students will also be introduced to the practical and intellectual challenges presented by field research.



Students will receive further training in laboratory analysis and will have the opportunity to catalogue the cultural remains they found.

The broader context of the archaeological finds and the site will be explained through discussions, lectures, and workshops.



A Typical Day on the Dig

7:30	Rise and shine	17:15	Pack up equipment
7:45	Breakfast	17:30	Return to basecamp
8:30	Travel to the site	18:00	Workshops and
8:45	Work begins		Camp chores
12:30	Lunch time!	19:30	Dinner time!
13:00	Back to work	22:00	Lights out

We will follow a similar schedule for the laboratory work at the Westcastle field station.



Field School Learning Outcomes

By the end of the field school, you will have a solid understanding of archaeological field methods, know the value of detailed excavation records, and have experience in laboratory analysis. You will also learn how your efforts and discoveries contribute to the academic goals of the research project.

You will be immersed in the local environment and culture of southern Alberta, learn about the people that live there, and make many new friends!

Interested in Participating?

An archaeological field school requires real, hard work in a camp environment. The weather may be hot or cold, rainy or sunny. You will get dirty and be very tired by the end of the day. We hope that the thrill of discovering artifacts that were buried for thousands of years outweigh the stiff muscles and long days. There is no better way to learn how to do field research than actually doing it!

To submit your application or if you have questions about the 2024 field school at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump please contact Dr. Shawn Bubel, at the University of Lethbridge. Email: bubest@uleth.ca