

# Native American Heritage Commission

## Archaeological Terms Glossary

A (#A) | B (#B) | C (#C) | D (#D) | E (#E) | F (#F) | G | H (#H) | I (#I) | J  
 | K | L (#L) | M (#M) | N | O | P (#P) | Q | R | S (#S) | T (#T) | U (#U) | V  
 | W | X | Y | Z

### A

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#### **Accession, Accession number**

The number assigned to artifacts or data for permanent storage and curation in a collections facility.

#### **Alluvium**

Sediment (gravel, sand, silt, etc.) deposited by a stream

#### **Anticipated Effects**

Effects that would be created by development of a proposed project to culturally sensitive areas.

#### **Archaeological Site**

The location of past focused human activities, defined in close proximity of continuous distribution of artifacts.

#### **Archaeologically**

An area where the occurrence of archaeological material is predicted, often on the sensitive basis of settlement/subsistence pattern and environmental data

#### **Area of Direct Impact – AKA:ADI**

The area that would be impacted by the proposed development.

#### **Area of Potential Effects**

The geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may cause changes in APE the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist.

#### **Artifact**

An object (tool or ornament) showing human workmanship or modification.

**Assemblage**

The complete inventory of artifacts from a single, defined archaeological unit (such as a stratum or component)

**Associated Funerary**

Those objects which, as a part of the death rite or ceremony of a culture, are objects reasonably believed to have been placed with the individual human remains at the time of death or later

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**B**

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**Backdirt**

The soils excavated from test pits, typically used to refill them once excavations are terminated.

**Bedrock Milling Station**

An outcrop of bedrock containing one or more mortar cups, milling slicks (bedrock metates"), or other features related to food grinding or crushing.

**Bedrock Mortar – AKA:BRM**

A mortar cup in a bedrock outcrop

**Biface**

A tool that has been worked on both sides

**Burial**

Human remains disposed of by interment burials may be simple (containing the remains of one person) or complex (containing the remains of two or more individual).

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**C**

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**Carbon-14 Dating**

A method for determining the age of organic material.

**Chert**

Crypto-Crystalline Silicate. A flint like rock; commonly selected as a raw material for flaked-stone tools.

**Chipping, Knapping**

Making stone tools by controlled flaking, either by percussion as in using hammerstone, or by exerting pressure on the stone edge with a pointed antler tool.

**Complete Survey**

To define the extent of a site both surface and subsurface.

**Components – AKA:Constituents**

The elements of a site, all spatially related features of a site.

**Consulting Process**

The process where the lead agency provides information regarding development to the various agencies for consultation.

**Core**

A cobble or small rock from which flakes or blades are removed; the core may be used as a tool as well as a source of flakes.

**Cremation**

Disposal of the dead by burning; a feature consisting of ash and small pieces of burned human bones and teeth.

**Cultural Resources**

Relates only to remains and sites associated with human activity or activities or elements or areas of natural landscape which traditional cultural significance.

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**D**

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**Data Recovery**

The act of excavating with the intent of answering specific research questions.

**Datum – AKA:Hub**

A stationary control point from which all other features or artifacts are mapped from.

**Debitage – AKA:flaked stone**

Lithic refuse or debris produced during flaked-stone tool manufacture.

**Depression**

A large or small circular or rectangular area where cultural activity took place. (i.e. depressed area of a roundhouse or longhouse)

**Direct Impacts**

Impacts that would directly effect a site. (i.e. a site would have a direct impact if a development proceeds adjacent to a site)

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## E

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### **Ethnography**

The study of a culture to obtain information on past and present life ways.

### **Excavation**

A systematic process of digging archaeological sites, removing the soil and observing the provenience and context of the finds (both cultural and noncultural) contained within, and recording them in a three-dimensional way.

### **Extended Phase I Survey**

A Phase I survey which the archaeologist excavates a few shovel test pits to determine whether a subsurface deposit is present; however, may be done during the Phase I Survey

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## F

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### **Feature**

A large, complex artifact or part of a site such as a hearth, cairn, housepit, rock alignment or activity area

### **Fire-Cracked Rocks**

Burned rocks, typically fractured during intense heating in a firehearth or remnants of rocks associated with cooking. Fairly common to prehistoric archaeological sites.

### **Firehearth**

Typically a prehistoric feature containing ash, charcoal, burned rocks and/or other evidence of a fire kindled by people.

### **Flake**

A thin, flattened piece or chip of stone intentionally removed from the core rock by chipping with either a stone or bone hammer.

### **Flaked Stone**

see [Debitage \(#Debitage\)](#)

### **Flexed burial**

A human interment in the fetal position, that is, with the legs and arms bent and drawn towards the ribs.

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## H

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### **House**

Compacted earth, post molds, hearths, and/or other associated features representing the floor of a structure.

### **Housepit**

A depression of any shape representing the former location of a partly subsurface (semisubterranean) structure.

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## I

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### **In situ**

In place; applied to archaeological remains found in their original, undisturbed location or position.

### **Indirect Impacts**

Impacts that would not directly effect a site. (i.e. a site would have indirect impacts if a subdivision development would create by the influx of people in the area)

### **Integrity**

Classification of a site regarding the degree of disturbance.

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## L

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### **Lithic**

Of or pertaining to a stone (obsidian, chert, basalt, etc.), as in lithic artifacts.

### **Lithic Scatter**

see [Debitage \(#Debitage\)](#)

### **Loctus, Loci (plural)**

A concentration of site elements.

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## M

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**Mano**

a loaf-shaped handstone used for grinding seeds, pigments, and so forth, metate or millingstone.

**Metate**

A portable stone slab upon which seeds and other grains are milled with a mano (worked with a push-pull motion).

**Midden**

Soil that is dark and has a greasy feel. A deposit marking a former habitation site and containing such materials as discarded artifacts, bone and shell, food refuse, charcoal, ash, rock, human remains structural remnants, and other cultural leavings.

**Millingstone**

A roughly shaped stone slab upon seed and other plants products are ground with the aid of a mano. The milling basin of the slab may be ovoid to round, depending on the rotary motion of the handstone.

**Mitigation**

Actions taken to preserve or reduce impact to a site.

**Mitigation Process**

The consulting and review process of direct and indirect impacts to sites to obtain specific results.

**Mortar**

A stone or wooden bowl-like artifact in which seeds, berries, meat, and other products are ground or pulverized with a pestle. Mortars occur in bedrock outcrops and as portable items.

**Multi-Component Site**

A site with one or more feature.

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## P

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**Pestle**

An elongate, often cylindrical stone used to pulverize food products and other cultural products in a mortar.

**Phase I**

Generally consists of a records search, a pedestrian field survey, and a written report.

**Phase 11**

The purpose of this phase is to determine whether a cultural resource is significant" as outlined in Appendix J of CEQA. Usually will include test excavation pits. The goal of this is to determination of the site boundaries; an assessment of the site's integrity; evaluation of the site's importance or significance through a study of it's features and artifacts.

#### **Phase 11I**

Total data recovery.

#### **Principal Investigator, AKA:PI**

The designated archaeologist who oversees and is responsible for all aspects of archaeological investigation.

#### **Project Proponent**

The property owner/developer who is sponsoring the project.

#### **Projectile point**

A sharp tip (usually stone) affixed to the business end of a spear, lance, dart, or arrow.

#### **Provenience**

The origin or source of an object.

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## **S**

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#### **Sacred Objects**

Ceremonial objects which are used by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions.

#### **Site**

The location of past cultural activity; a defined space with more or less continuous archaeological evidence.

#### **Spatial**

Artifacts and features in close proximity that infer a relationship in time.

#### **Standard Test Unit**

A defined unit of measure for the purpose of recovering archaeological material.

#### **Sterile Soil**

The layer of soil that contains no presence of cultural material.

#### **Stratum**

A layer of material deposited by cultural or geological processes.

### **Surface Survey**

A reconnaissance or on-foot examination of an area to determine its archaeological potential, and usually, to formally locate and record archaeological sites.

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## T

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### **Temporal**

Groups of items (artifacts, features) that can be traced to a given point in time.

### **Trait**

Any definable element or feature of culture suitable for comparative purposes.

### **Transect**

A survey is often conducted by people walking a study area which has been mentally divided into subareas, in order to systematically locate artifacts exposed on the ground; a series of transects, or passes, are walked by one or more persons in a parallel fashion to inventory an area.

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## U

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### **Uniface**

A tool that has been worked only on one side.

### **Unit**

A defined area of excavation.

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California Native American Heritage Commission

1550 Harbor Blvd, Suite 100 • West Sacramento, CA 95691 • (916) 373-3710  • Fax:

(916) 373-5471  • [nahc@nahc.ca.gov](mailto:nahc@nahc.ca.gov)

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