

BACK TO THE PAST CULTURAL CLUES — BURIED TREASURE?

Preparation

Check with school officials to find out if your class will be allowed to bury a time capsule on school grounds. If so, determine where the site will be, how deep the item can be buried, who will dig the hole, and any other preparations needed. An alternative would be to keep a time capsule in the school office or in a classroom.

Objectives

Students will

- Describe how evidence from the Hohokam helps us understand how they lived
- Create a list of items from our present culture that will allow future students to learn something about how we live today
- Explain the importance of preserving cultural sites and artifacts

Activity Procedure

1. Begin this activity by asking the students, “How do we know the Hohokam lived in Sabino Canyon so long ago?” Use this question to lead into a discussion of “cultural clues” from the past, such as trash middens, pottery sherds, bedrock mortars, shelter ruins, etc. Explain how these “clues” or “evidence” help us to understand how the Hohokam lived and that archaeologists are scientists who study such evidence to learn about people who lived long ago.
2. Next ask the students what clues or evidence would be left behind if our culture vanished. Have the students brainstorm a list of things most indicative/representative of our culture. If they were to bury a few specific items in a “time capsule,” what would they include to tell future civilizations something about the way we live today?
3. Have students volunteer to bring to school selected items from the list. Consider what kind of container to bury them in. Is it large enough, and will it last in the ground for many years? Remind the students that the items they bring will be buried and not returned to them. A picture may be drawn or cut from a magazine to represent an object if it is too large or too valuable to put in the time capsule.

4. To emphasize the importance of preserving cultural sites, ask the students to consider how they would feel if someone dug up their time capsule and stole the contents. Does this happen today? What can we do to prevent it?
5. Bury the time capsule at the designated site. Dedicate the the buried treasure for a particular class a few years into the future, perhaps ten. As a class, write a letter of dedication explaining the reason for creating your time capsule and include a detailed map illustrating where it can be found, as well as the date it was buried. Ask the school office to keep the letter on file for the future class.