



# MVAC

CONNECTING THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE



*Reconstructed fourteenth-century pottery vessel from a La Crosse area Native American village site.*

**MISSISSIPPI VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGY CENTER**

2025 | UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE



*In the spring of 2025 Kathy Stevenson replaced Tim McAndrews as MVAC's Director. Tim continues to serve as Chair of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology.*



*Dr. Constance Arzigian, retired MVAC Senior Research Associate and Teaching Professor Emeritus, was awarded the Midwest Archaeological Conference (MAC) Distinguished Career Award at their annual meeting in Iowa City on October 31, 2025.*

## 2025 Update

We've had a busy 2025! MVAC staff have walked and shovel tested their way across countless acres, braving ticks and brambles and inclement weather along the way, and donned hard hats at construction sites. In the office, we've dealt with hundreds of public inquiries, analyzed and reported on projects, cared for irreplaceable collections, and provided important information to agencies, businesses, and the public. We've also helped undergraduate students gain real-world experience to build their career skills.

## The Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center

Founded in 1982, MVAC is a research and educational organization based at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UWL). Our mission of regional research, preservation, and education focuses on understanding and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Upper Mississippi Valley. We offer:

- Resources and professional expertise for research, preservation, and planning
- Public engagement and hands-on learning for all ages
- Career-building experience for undergraduates
- Curation of regional artifacts and documents

## How We're Supported

MVAC is a self-sustaining unit of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

We're funded by:

- Contracts and grants
- Public donations
- Endowment income
- United Fund for the Arts and Humanities (UFAH)





*Volunteer Peter Sternberg discusses pottery and shell from a La Crosse area site with MVAC Collections Manager Mike Bednarchuk.*



*Former MVAC Research Intern Cindy Kocik records site information during a survey. Besides her field and lab work, Cindy made multiple videos and podcasts for MVAC. She now works for the Wisconsin Historical Society.*

## **Archaeological Research and Cultural Resource Management (CRM)**

MVAC's CRM specialists help agencies, developers, and others fulfill their historic preservation responsibilities through all stages of a project, from initial planning to successful completion. Our services include:

- Evaluation of project needs and requirements
- Records reviews and surveys to find out whether cultural sites are present
- Special considerations and monitoring for sensitive locations
- Evaluation of site condition and significance
- Excavation to recover information
- Artifact processing and analysis
- GIS mapping
- Project reporting

## **Repository and Library**

Our region's cultural heritage spans thousands of years. We're helping to preserve this rich, meaningful history for future generations. MVAC's archaeological repository is the largest in western Wisconsin, featuring:

- Documented collections from hundreds of sites
- An extensive library of reports and files
- Curation services for federal agencies and the State of Wisconsin
- Information for planning and research
- Respectful treatment of information and artifacts related to Indigenous sites



Volunteers with MVAC's 2025 Public Field Survey clean and examine their finds after returning to the lab.



Visitors to MVAC's 2025 Annual Artifact Show view ancient mammoth and mastodon teeth in protective cases, and the partial skull of an extinct form of bison.

## Public Education & Outreach

MVAC's trusted public archaeology program encourages understanding and respect for the region's long cultural heritage. Our outreach activities include:

- An on-campus exhibit area
- Outreach events:
  - Annual Artifact Show
  - Public presentations
  - Public field surveys
- Resources and information for avocational archaeologists and the general public
- Support for K-12 education:
  - Working with teachers
  - Classroom visits (in-person or virtual) and resources

## We bring archaeology to you!

MVAC's digital resources make it easy to get the latest information:

- Free monthly **e-News** emails with updates, information, events, book reviews, and more
- **Archaeology News** newsletters with updates, project information, and more
- **Website** with news, upcoming events, and interesting content
- **Videos on YouTube** with a variety of topics
- **Facebook** posts with upcoming events, weekly informational posts, and regional information
- **Tumblr** blog with weekly informational posts and monthly archaeology fiction reviews

Questions about archaeology? Contact us at [mvac@uwlax.edu](mailto:mvac@uwlax.edu) or 608.785.6473.



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UWL archaeology student Blake Hansfeld shovel tests along a city boulevard to see whether artifacts are present.



Where are our graduates today? Clockwise from top left: Meg Rivers, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian; Ken Ritchie, Moesgaard Museum, Aarhus, (Højbjerg) Denmark; Elizabeth Leith, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Matt Hill, Iowa State University. Click photo to view/listen to these and other alumni talk about their UWL experiences on MVAC's Archaeology Alumni Podcast series.

## Support for Undergraduate Education

UWL's highly regarded Archaeology program prepares students for careers in archaeology and other fields. MVAC enriches that experience by providing:

- Collections and resources that enhance undergraduate learning
- Internships and other opportunities for research, learning skills, and creating knowledge
- Hands-on field and lab experience as volunteers or paid crew

MVAC experience helps students and graduates shape and refine their career plans, get jobs, and apply for graduate school successfully. Many have become professional archaeologists, while others have carried their experience into other careers.

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### MVAC Staff

**Katherine Stevenson**  
Director

**Erik Anderson**  
Research Archaeologist

**Michael Bednarchuk**  
Laboratory Manager

**Jean Dowiasch**  
Education Coordinator  
Senior Research Archaeologist

**Wendy Holtz-Leith**  
Senior Research Archaeologist

**Timothy McAndrews**  
Chair and Professor, UWL Department of  
Archaeology & Anthropology

**Bonnie Jancik**  
Director of Public Outreach  
Development Budget Manager

**Vicki Twinde-Javner**  
Senior Research Archaeologist  
Contracts Budget Manager

**Dylan Chapes**  
Archaeologist

**Lindsay Lentz**  
Archaeologist

### Research Associates

David Anderson  
Constance Arzigian  
Suzanne Harris

Amy Nicodemus  
James Theler  
Heather Walder





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*Participants in the 2025 Volunteer Field Survey look for traces of archaeological sites on the surface of a plowed field. Photo credit Gigi Atkins.*