

ANNUAL REPORT: Greenland Arctic Vikings 2019 FIELD SCHOOL

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Fig. 1 Students excavating Norse feature at NKAH 2256. Photo: Helena Brandt 2019.

The Greenland National Museum and Archives hosted the Arctic Vikings Field School (AVFS 2019), a four-week training course in Arctic archaeology from 22 June to 23 July 2019 in Igaliku, South Greenland. AVFS 2019 was run as part of an on-going effort by archaeologists from the Greenland National Museum to train students in basic archaeological field methods and the culture history of Greenland.

Students participated in a variety of activities during the four weeks that included archaeological investigations, labs and special guest lectures. Guest lectures included a special afternoon event (27 June) with presentations by visiting scientists from the University of Maine, engaged in a fact-finding mission related to the future of UNESCO in South Greenland. Additionally, students were afforded the opportunity to visit two other Key UNESCO component sites at Sissarluttoq and Qassiarsuk and participate in an overnight excursion to the Norse farmstead at Igaliku Kujalleq.

Students participated in a wide variety of activities during the four-week program in Igaliku. The 12 students were divided into four teams of three for the first two weeks and rotated between excavation of a Norse feature at NKAH 2256 and ground surveying of the surrounding countryside and landscape. Although the locality of Igaliku (Garðar, NKAH 4335) has been long recognized for its historic role in the development of the Norse Eastern Settlement, less attention has been paid to the significant suite of Inuit hunting features and graves that are

found throughout the surrounding area. Through systematic surveys, students were provided with the opportunity to help fill in several knowledge gaps in the local history of Thule Inuit and later Historic Inuit land use throughout the course of the program.

The last two weeks of the field school were a combination of several research activities that included expanded survey, midden testing and excavation of the mediaeval cemetery at Garðar Cathedral. Students were rotated through activities based on daily goals and general interests and efforts were made to ensure that all students were provided with equal time to experience every different type of field research and maximize their time in the trench at Garðar. Additionally, guest instructors K. Smiarowski and R. Harrison hosted a field lab module for two days that focused exclusively on the identification and study of zooarchaeological remains in South Greenland.

Significant research contributions of the 2019 field campaign include:

- Sub-surface testing of several Norse features that included a previously unexamined Norse booth site (NKAH 2256), a previously unrecorded Norse farm dwelling and a Norse midden at Ø48.
- Registration of 100+ new Norse and Inuit landscape features in the surrounding area, including a previously unidentified Norse shieling site.
- Excavation of a portion of the undisturbed medieval cemetery at Garðar cathedral and recovery of skeletal remains from 7+ individual burials (two complete).
- High-resolution photo mosaic and thermal mapping by drone of several key sites in Igaliku and the surrounding countryside.

Because of the high ratio of students to instructors (usually about 2:1), students were afforded the opportunity to work closely with staff—often times one on one—and be guided in many of the basic methods of data collection in the field. Students contributions to data collection included feature registration, collecting GPS/dGPS waypoints, taking photos, feature sketches, plan drawings, trench profiles, artifact recovery and registration, as well as providing much of the heavy labor necessitated for transporting equipment, digging, sifting soil and backfilling trenches. Students also actively interacted with local families from the community and foreign visitors. Lastly, all students were actively engaged in the day-to-day responsibilities of camp life that included helping to prep meals, wash dishes, dig latrines, fetch water, general camp upkeep, etc.

Dissemination of the field school activities is on going and expected to increase dramatically in the coming months:

- A dedicated Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/GreenlandArcticVikings/>) was created by E. Pinta and updated with comments and photos during the course of the program.
- E. Pinta will also present a paper on the field school activities at the Society of American Archaeology's 85th Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas in April 2020.
- One student has also proposed presenting a poster on organic preservation and climate change in South Greenland, also to be delivered at the Annual SAA meeting in Austin next year.
- C. K. Madsen will author a peer-reviewed journal article that will focus on the newly registered archaeological features and maps of Igaliku and their particular significance within the UNESCO designation of [*Kujataa Greenland: Norse and Inuit Farming at the Edge of the Ice Cap.*](#)

