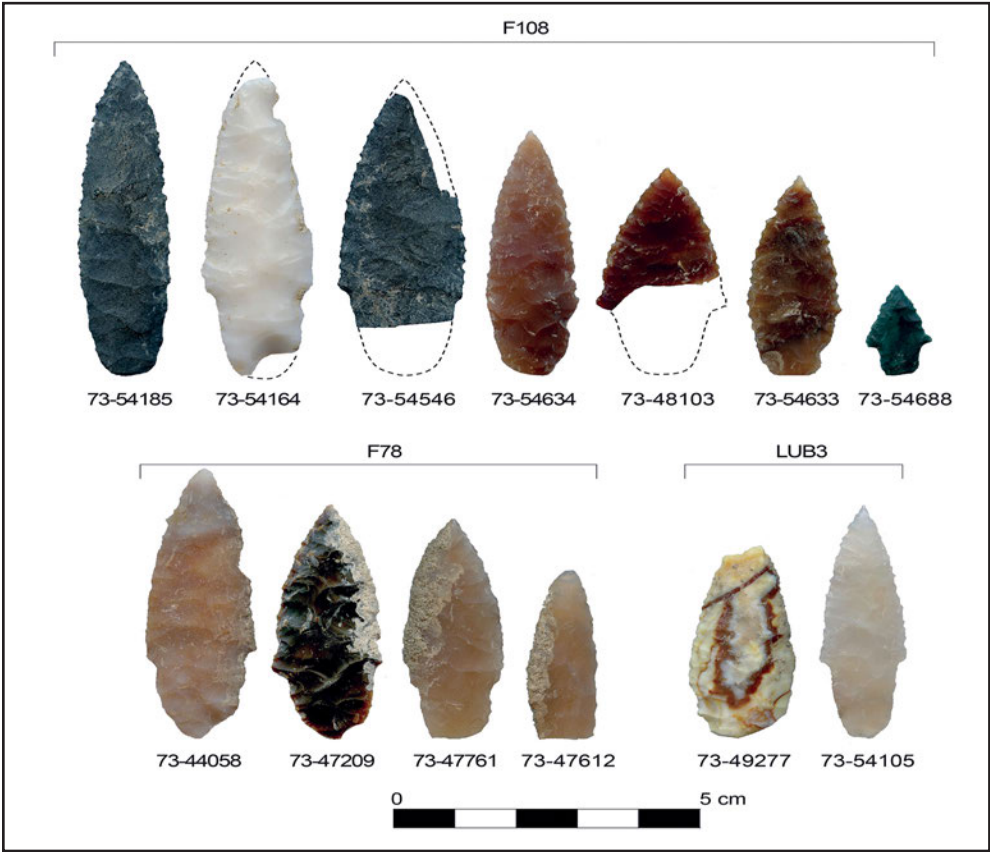


Stone tools trace Paleolithic Pacific migration



By Misty Edgecomb/OSU
CORVALLIS, Ore – A new analysis of stone tools offers strong evidence for the theory that ancient people from the Pacific Rim traveled a coastal route from East Asia during the last ice age to become North America’s First Peoples, according to a paper published this week in the journal Science Advances.

“This study puts the First Americans back into the global story of the Paleolithic – not as outliers – but as participants in a shared technological legacy,” said Loren Davis, professor of anthropology at Oregon State University and one of the study’s lead authors.

“This marks a paradigm shift. For the first time, we can say the First Americans belonged to a broader Paleolithic world—one that connects North America to Northeast Asia,” he said.

For decades, experts have debated whether people migrated across the Siberian land bridge known as Beringia around 13,000 years ago as the last ice age waned or if they followed a Pacific coastal route at a much earlier time, possibly around 20,000 years ago.

The archaeological evidence presented in this study supports the earlier coastal scenario, indicating that early seafarers gradually moved

into the Americas from the northwestern Pacific Rim during the last glacial period, from regions that now include Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan’s islands.

Recent genetics research also supports the narrative that Indigenous Peoples in areas that became the United States and Canada are linked to East Asian and Northern Eurasian ancestry.

Davis and his collaborators analyzed stone tool technologies from North American sites dating between about 20,000 and 13,500 years ago, linked to a period they call the American Upper Paleolithic. They showed that the earliest of this style of projectile points first appear around 20,000 years ago in Hokkaido.

Called bifaces, the projectile tips are flaked on both sides to create a durable, razor-sharp penetrating hunting weapon, which represents a major leap in hunting technology. The study demonstrates that this advanced weapon system was carried into the Americas, where these tools display strong continuity with each other and with artifacts from many Late Upper Paleolithic sites across East Asia.

The discovery of this archaeological connection rewrites the opening chapter of human history in the Americas,” Davis said. “It shows that

the First Americans were not cultural isolates, but participants in the same Paleolithic traditions that connected people across Eurasia and Asia.”

The earlier stone tools that Davis and his team studied are smaller and lighter than later Paleoindian technologies and were made using distinctly different methods. This dual system of core-and-blade production combined with bifacial point manufacture forms the technological foundation from which later Paleoindian and subsequent American traditions evolved.

This system serves as the technological fingerprint linking the American Upper Paleolithic to its roots in Northeast Asia. Prior papers have suggested this pattern, but this deep dive provides the strongest evidence that’s been assembled to date, Davis said.

Researchers have long known of American Upper Paleolithic sites, but if people had traveled at higher latitudes across Beringia, these earliest sites should be in Alaska and Yukon in Canada. Instead, the five primary sites that Davis and his team studied were in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas and Idaho.

And while tools found at similarly aged sites in Oregon, Wisconsin and Florida follow the pattern, they

contain too few artifacts to include in the recent analysis, Davis said. Additional archaeological evidence that could support this model is likely submerged along the eastern Pacific Rim due to rising sea levels at the end of the last ice age, he added.

Many prior papers about human settlement sites from this period focused on evidence from a single location. This study is the first to connect multiple research sites globally, presenting a coherent model for the initial human occupants of the Americas.

“We can now explain not only that the First Americans came from Northeast Asia, but also how they traveled, what they carried, and what ideas they brought with them,” Davis said. “It’s a powerful reminder that migration, innovation, and cultural sharing have always been part of what it means to be human.”

Co-authors of the study include David B. Madsen of University of Nevada, Reno; Thomas J. Williams of the Spokane Tribe of Indians Preservation Program; Masami Izuhō of Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo, Japan and Fumie Iizuka of University of Wisconsin, Madison and Tohoku University, Sendai, Miyagi, Japan.



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Nesika Illahee Pow-Wow

Attention Siletz Tribal Artists, the Pow-Wow Committee is once again having a logo contest for the upcoming Pow-Wow in August 2026. All Siletz Tribal artists are encouraged to submit a Pow-Wow themed logo. The winning logo artist will receive a cash prize of \$400 and a professional banner with your logo.

Additionally the winning artist will have their logo highlighted on Nesika Illahee Pow-Wow flyers and merchandise.

Please submit your artwork to the cultural education director’s office at the Tribal Community Center or mail it to Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Attn: Pow-Wow Logo Contest, P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380-0549. All entries must be received no later than Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.

Royalty Crown Proposals

The Pow-Wow Committee is now accepting proposals for 2026-2027 royalty crowns. Proposals are being accepted for Miss Siletz, Junior Miss Siletz and Little Miss Siletz. Proposals for a crown are required to include art design, size of the crown and a bid for the crown or crowns of your interest.

Proposals can be submitted for individual crowns, two crowns or you can submit a bid for all three crowns. Crown proposals must be turned in to the committee no later than Feb. 26, 2026 by 4:30 p.m.

Proposals can be sent to Siletz Pow-Wow Committee, P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380-0549.

If you have any questions on either of these two items, contact A.J. Warren at 800-922-1399, ext. 1244; 541-444-8244; or ajw@ctsi.nsn.us.