

# DelDOT ARCHAEOLOGY



## The Puncheon Run Site

### ARCHAEOLOGY AT PUNCHEON RUN

What was life like in Delaware 2,000 years ago? Since there are no written records from so long ago, the only way to find out is through archaeology. The Puncheon Run Site in Dover is a place where prehistoric Indians camped while they hunted, fished, and gathered plants on the St. Jones River and in the surrounding woods and marshes. From the point where you are standing, the site extends east to the St. Jones River and continues westward for about a half mile. The site follows the north bank of a small stream called Puncheon Run, which is in the wooded area to your right. Archaeologists working here in 1997 found evidence that people camped in this area over a period of at least 3,000 years.



The Puncheon Run Connector, a new road that will carry traffic from State Route 1 to US 13, will cross the site. To prevent the loss of the only record we have of life in this area before Europeans came—that is, the archaeological sites—the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) and Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. (Berger), are conducting archaeological excavations at the Puncheon Run Site.



The excavations began in May 1998 and will run through the summer.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The site will be open for tours on Tuesdays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and by appointment. People who want to dig on the site can drop by on Thursdays, or make special arrangements for a different day and time. Hundreds of students have already worked on the site, learning about the past and about the science of archaeology. For more information, please call Kevin Cunningham of DelDOT at (302) 739-3826 or John Bedell of Berger at (202) 331-7775.



### ARTIFACTS

The people of Puncheon Run used stone tools, like the spearpoints and knives shown here, and clay pots. By studying these objects we hope to learn what kinds of work people did on the site, when they lived here, and how they were related to other peoples in the surrounding region, who may have made their tools and pots differently. People also made tools out of wood, bone, and reeds, but tools of these materials have all rotted away.



### STORAGE PITS

In the field between Puncheon Run and the place where you are standing, archaeologists have found several deep pits like the one pictured here. We think the people who lived at Puncheon Run dug them to store food for the winter months, or used them for temporary



storage during food gathering or processing. We do not know yet what the stored foods were, but we hope to find out by excavating more of these pits. We will also be carrying out a variety of scientific tests on the soil from the pits, including radiocarbon dating, immunologic tests for animal proteins, studies of plant phytoliths (microscopic silica structures made by plants), and analysis of the soil chemistry. We hope to find similar pits in other parts of the site as well.

### FLINT KNAPPING



On the left, students watch as Keith Googins, a member of the Puncheon Run Crew, shows the techniques by which prehistoric

peoples made stone tools; on the right, Keith cleans up a pile of waste stone left by a prehistoric tool maker.



### PREHISTORIC HEARTH

In some parts of the site, prehistoric hearths or fire places are still intact. The stones lie just as they were when people left these camps and moved on, as much as 5,000 years ago.

