

VOA Special English Science Report

EARLY AMERICAN SETTLEMENT

This is Bill White with the VOA Special English Science report.

Research scientists are studying new evidence from the remains of a camp in the eastern American state of Virginia. Tests suggest that humans occupied the camp at least 15,000 years ago. The area could contain the earliest known evidence of humans in North America.

The findings support the theory that North America was occupied thousands of years earlier than most experts had thought.

The evidence was presented at the yearly meeting of the Society for American Archaeology. Delegates to the conference met earlier this month in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Joseph McAvoy is leading the research project at an area called Cactus Hill. It is about 70 kilometers south of the Virginia state capital, Richmond. His team used radioactive carbon dating tests to find the age of materials recovered from the camp's remains.

Mr. McAvoy says the tests show human occupation at Cactus Hill took place at two different times. He says the tests show one group lived there for a period from about 11,000 years ago. The tests show another group of hunters and gatherers lived there much earlier. The older, lower level of occupation took place at least 15,000 years ago. However, the researchers say it may be as much as 17,000 years old.

The researchers say the earliest people who lived at Cactus Hill had stone tools, but their tools were not sharp. The people who built fires there 11,000 years ago used sharp stone tools and weapons. They are similar in appearance to objects developed by what are known as the Clovis people.

Similar objects were first discovered more than 60 years ago near the American town of Clovis, New Mexico. Tests showed these objects to be from a period 10,000 to 11,500 years ago.

Mr. McAvoy says finding evidence of human occupation in America at least 15,000 years ago means people arrived at different times. Other researchers expressed interest in the new Cactus Hill findings. However, they say the study does not settle the important debate about the earliest settlement in the Americas. And, they say more investigations are needed.

This VOA Special English Science Report was written by George Grow. This is Bill White.

Source: Voice of America, 4/27/2000

Re-posted by eigozai
No. 0149pdf (372 words)