

# Community-based and collaborative archaeology in South Greenland: Preliminary report from the first year of the Alluitsoq Project

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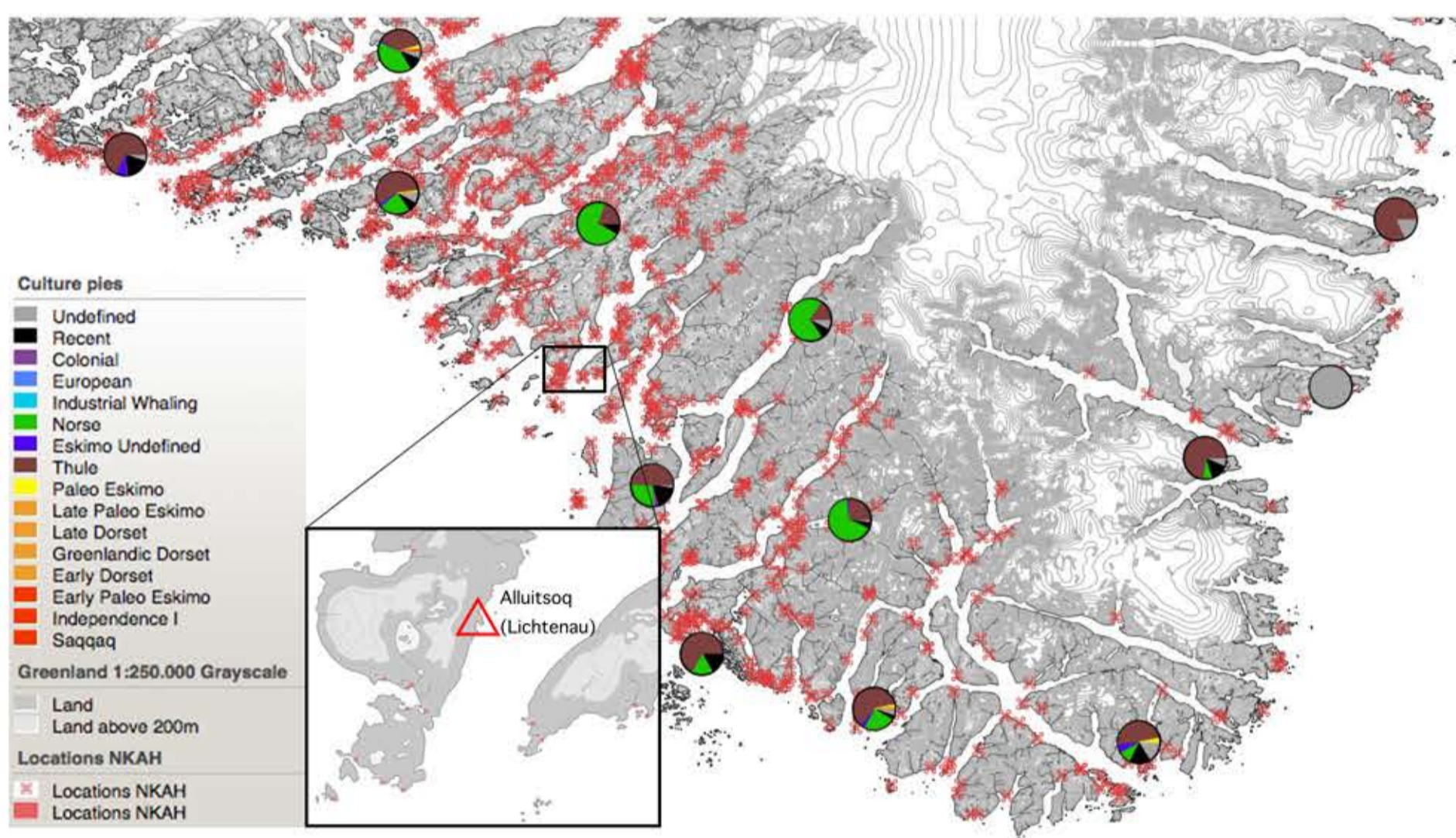
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## Introduction

- Launched in 2019, the Alluitsoq Project aims to:
  - Investigate changing lives and colonial interactions in Greenland
  - Create an archaeology by, for, and with the community,<sup>1</sup> which is called for regionally<sup>2</sup> and locally,<sup>3</sup> through collaboration and community-engagement
  - Contribute to a multi-sited study of life at missions in Greenland and Canada
  - Contribute to long-term environmental adaptation studies in the North Atlantic
  - Rescue cultural heritage threatened by global climate change<sup>4</sup>



Lichtenau was the first Moravian mission in southern Greenland (est. 1774) and was once the largest settlement in the country. It remains an important place for descendants.

## Research Designs

- The Alluitsoq Project supports one MA and three PhD students who are investigating:
  - The role of foodway persistence and foodway change in ethnic and political identity formation<sup>5</sup> in colonial South Greenland (Turley, PhD candidate)
  - How adoption of new technologies entangles people, things, and global economies and politics to afford new actions<sup>6</sup> in a dynamic culture (Bendtsen, MA candidate)
  - Noorliit (Neu Herrnhut, Nuuk), Alluitsoq, and Canadian missions to compare mixed Inuit cultural traditions at mission contact zones<sup>7</sup> (Møller, PhD candidate)
  - People's changing relationships with the environment seen in shifting subsistence patterns while interacting with imperial networks (Coleman, PhD student)

## Methods

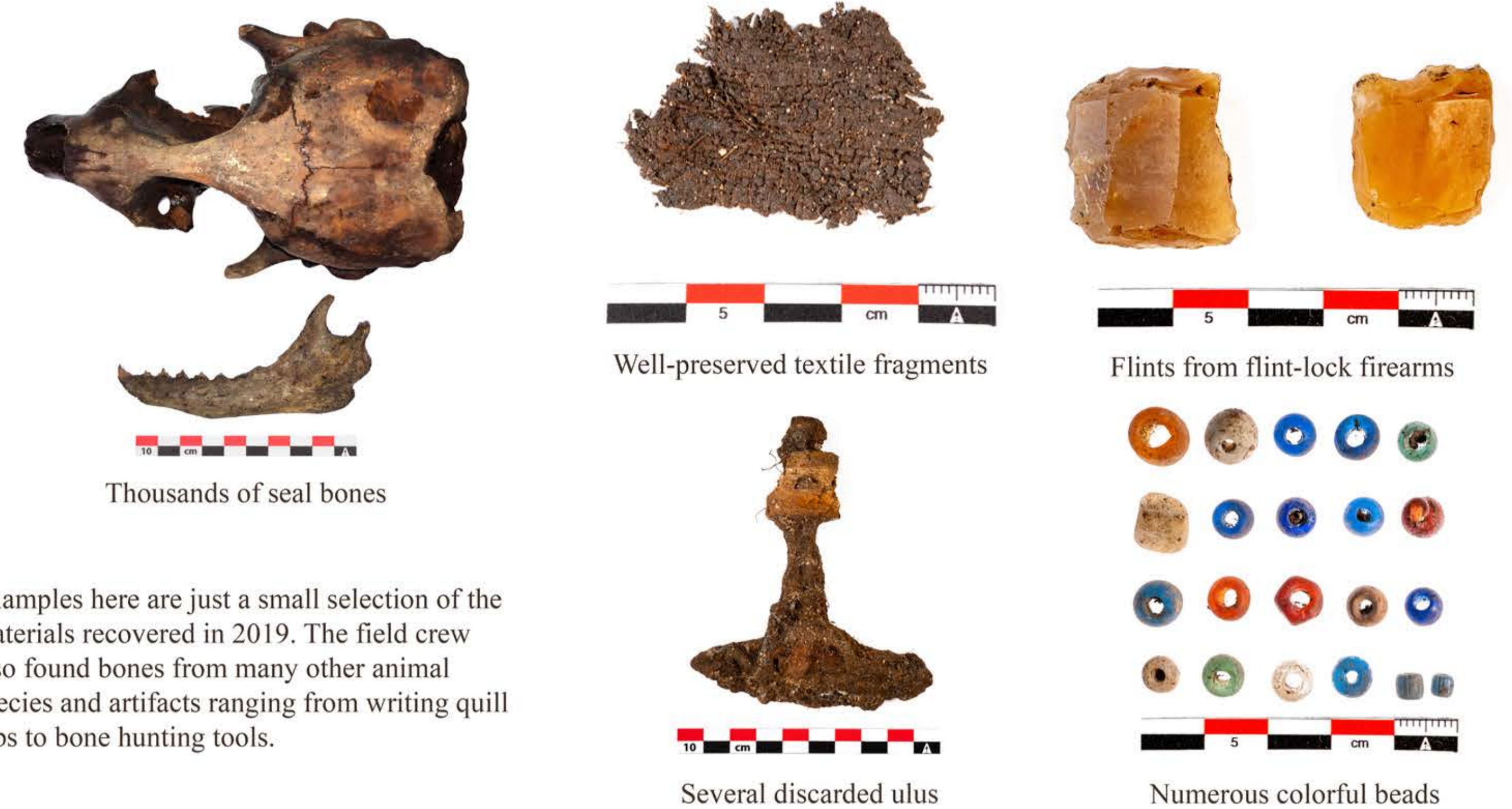
- Excavation recovers material remains analyzed through:
  - Zooarchaeology (analysis of animal bones)
  - Organic residues (analysis of fats preserved on artifacts)
  - Artifact analysis (changing material culture)
- Ethnographic and oral history interviews contribute to relevant interpretation through:
  - Questions and topics collaboratively created by Bendtsen and Turley
  - Coding with grounded theory<sup>8</sup> to identify community-wide cultural concepts
  - Knowledge co-production<sup>9</sup>

## Excavation Results

- Excavation in 2019 targeted three eroding middens (trash deposits) associated with late-18<sup>th</sup> to early-20<sup>th</sup> century turf house ruins.
- Recovered 250kg of animal bones, thousands of artifacts, dozens of organic residue samples.
- Preliminary results of analyses expected in 2020.



More of the archaeological record erodes into the fjord each year. Excavation of these three middens is an effort to save as much history as possible before it disappears.



Examples here are just a small selection of the materials recovered in 2019. The field crew also found bones from many other animal species and artifacts ranging from writing quill nibs to bone hunting tools.

## Ethnographic and Oral History Results

- Bendtsen and Turley conducted 30 hours of interviews with community elders demonstrating:
  - Strategic adaptability through persistent cultural traditions with simultaneous appropriations, alignments, or rejections of a range of new items and ideas
  - Identities are a continual negotiation of the traditional and the contemporary
  - Strong evidence of cultural creativity and resilience, *not* cultural loss
- Examples of material use in creative cultural adaptations include:
  - Imported flour used for *Kalaallit kaagiat* (Greenlandic cake) is *not* evidence of acculturation, but of flour's appropriation for a new, uniquely Greenlandic food
  - New fishing technologies are consistent with the persistent cultural importance of having good tools, while affording adaptive fishing techniques in a changing world



Strategic decisions are made with items (left), then used as mediating material culture (center) to define identities (right)

## Conclusions

- Continued excavation will grow this dataset to answer innovative anthropological questions.
- The Alluitsoq Project is achieving broad impacts through:
  - Successful collaborations between Greenlandic and American junior scholars to form a new model for archaeological research in Greenland
  - Creation of spaces for community feedback to ensure relevant, ethical research
  - Productive interventions in local, regional, and global conversations on Indigeneity as more nations look to renewed and expanded exploitation of the Arctic
  - Contributions to millennial-scale studies on climate change adaptations
  - Excavations which rescue valuable cultural heritage threatened by climate change

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