

## Ancient spearheads raise new questions about North America's first inhabitants

[A]rchaeologists have uncovered evidence of a human settlement stretching back as far as 15,500 years: hammer stones and broken knives, fragments of fractured tools. And now, scientists say, the Buttermilk Creek complex has offered up the oldest known spearheads in North America.

The new “projectile points,” [reported \[October 24\] in the journal Science Advances](#), come in two unusual shapes — a fact that [geologist Mike Waters](#), who oversaw the excavation, found both “bizarre” and “really exciting.” The find adds to the evidence that the first people arrived in the Americas earlier than researchers thought, even as it raises new questions about who those people were and how they made their epic migration into the continent.

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[T]he archaeologists uncovered two perfectly preserved artifacts: One triangular point, which resembles a predator's sharp tooth, and one lobe-shaped projectile with a tapered, or “stemmed,” bottom. With these whole points as models, Waters's team was able to make sense of the 10 additional fragments they collected. They seemed subtly but significantly different from Clovis and other toolmaking traditions — neither a clear ancestor to the later technology, nor an obvious competitor.

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Were the Clovis people descendants of these early inhabitants who came up with a new toolmaking technique? Or did they migrate separately into the continent before scattering their tools across the Americas?

“We're just beginning to answer that,” Waters said.

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