

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

July 2018

With an accessioned collection of over 340,000 artifacts, it is very special when we come across something that we just haven't seen before. At first glance, this tiny bead doesn't look like much, almost as if you could walk down and buy it today at a local craft store. Unfortunately, you'd have a hard time finding this particular bead, as it is made out of prehistoric marine shell. Unlike your modern craft store bead, July's artifact of the month took a significant amount of time to create and required the transportation of raw material (shell) from the coast. It represents a large time investment and artistic skill by a Seminole craftsman.



While the first observation was that the bead was crafted from animal bone, after closer inspection we were able to see the distinct layering of shell. Due to the thickness of the shell, we can tell it is non-terrestrial and the material would have been transported from the coast. The top and bottom sides are flat, while the bead itself is round with softly sloping sides. The bead was found in association with three utilized tiger shark teeth. Interestingly, tiger shark teeth were commonly used to shape and cut material, and could have been used in order to manufacture the bead along with some type of awl or drill to create the hole in the middle. Due to the harsh environment of the Florida Everglades, decorative artifacts such as this bead are not found very often and represent a unique and special aspect of the Seminole story.

