

# Historic Places in British Columbia: Guidelines for Natural Resource Project Proponents

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## **BC Heritage Branch:**

Heritage Branch works with other provincial government branches, ministries and agencies, to incorporate best practices in heritage stewardship into resource management, and to integrate the use of BC Register of Historic Place data into Crown resource management.

## **BC Register of Historic Places:**

This is the portion of the provincial heritage register (established under *Heritage Conservation Act*) that lists historic places. Archaeological sites are recorded separately by the provincial Archaeology Branch. Historic places are heritage sites that are formally recognized for their historical, aesthetic, social/cultural, scientific and/or spiritual values.

The BC Register of Historic Places lists post-1846 provincial heritage sites and provincial heritage objects protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act*, as well as historic places that have been formally recognized by local governments under the heritage conservation provisions of the *Local Government Act* or *Vancouver Charter*.

## **Information on BC Register sites:**

Information on the BC Register of Historic Places is available from the Registrar, Heritage Branch, at 250-386-1435. Most registered historic places are also shown on the RAAD application, access available via the BC Archaeology Branch, 250-953-3338. Note that new listings are constantly being added to the BC Register.

Proponents should note that the BC Register is a starting point only; there may be historic places on the ground that local residents value but that have not been formally recognized or communicated to Heritage Branch. Project proponents should contact local and regional governments and First Nation communities for additional information about valued historic places in the area of interest. There are also other sources of information on historic places protected under other provincial legislation. Proponents should contact Front Counter BC (FCBC) to ensure that all historic places are identified.

## **Role of Heritage Branch in Crown land use applications:**

For each area proposed for resource development, the Heritage Branch uses the BC Register to identify:

- a) formally-recognized post-1846 historic places; and
- b) known, but as yet not formally recognized post-1846 historic places.

Heritage Branch staff then work with other agencies, branches of government and project proponents to find ways of mitigating impacts on these and other heritage resources that may exist in an area of interest.

## **Heritage Branch can provide:**

- Advice on the legislative and policy tools, (e.g. *Local Government Act*, *Heritage Conservation Act* and *Land Act*) that exist to help conserve and protect heritage resources.

- Advice on the national standards and guidelines for heritage conservation and how those can be applied to specific historic places:  
<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx>
- Some input to project working groups from a policy perspective.
- Comments on terms of reference and proposed mitigation strategies for historic resources affected by a project.

#### **Provincial designation and recognition:**

- The Province rarely uses the provincial designation authority available under the *Heritage Conservation Act*. *Land Act* tools such as map reserves and notations of interest are usually implemented before the HCA designation option (full legal protection and related requirements) is considered.
- Note that the Province may also reserve places with heritage value through other legislative tools such as the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and the *Parks Act* for recreational purposes. Proponents should contact FCBC to identify any such places in the area of interest.
- Heritage Branch is investigating options for formally recognizing non-designated, yet provincially significant, historic places.

#### **Best practices for identifying valued components of an area of interest:**

- Consult Heritage Branch and FCBC to identify known historic places.
- For a complete picture of the historic places valued by a community it is important for a proponent, as part of their community engagement process, to ask which historic places have been identified by the community through inventory, community heritage register, Official Community Plan or other mechanisms. The proponent should try to identify geographical communities that may attribute value to an area, as well as communities of interest that may value a resource, but that may not live within the region.
- In the absence of detailed information about the significance of any affected historic resources, proponents should presume in favour of high regional significance. Any mitigation measures should reflect that presumed significance. Regional districts, municipalities and First Nation communities should be asked for input and, where possible, their recommendations should be accommodated by the proponent.
- Proponents should also be aware of the federal legislation pertaining to historic places, including the *Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act*, *The Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act*, Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO) policies; and the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act*. Proponents should identify federally-recognized sites located within or near the project area and understand their commemorative integrity or heritage value to determine the potential impact of the proposed project.

#### **Best practices for mitigating impacts on valued components:**

- Build understanding of heritage values and plan to conserve them. By understanding heritage values, proponents can make informed mitigation proposals. An understanding of values allows for creative mitigation of impacts, including adaptation of an historic place. Often an understanding of heritage values can ensure that mitigation measures benefit both the project and the historic place.
- Practice avoidance where feasible (e.g. change the route, siting, etc. of proposed development to avoid historic features).
- The context of the historic place is also important. For example, views to and from a historic place may be character-defining elements. Be sensitive to the surroundings of

historic places by looking beyond the footprint of the proposed works and providing adequate buffer zones to protect both the historic place and its setting.

- Record the place (e.g. using photogrammetry, site mapping and documentation).
- Interpret the place (e.g. provide signage about site history and significance).
- Make information about the historic place publicly accessible. See examples of places listed on Canadian Register of Historic Places. Heritage Branch can provide advice on preparing Statements of Significance.
- Discuss options with interest groups (e.g. regional district, municipalities, First Nations, heritage organizations, etc.)
- Be open to 'rescue' ideas.

**Resources:**

- Parks Canada. *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx>.
- Canadian Register of Historic Places at [www.historicplaces.ca](http://www.historicplaces.ca)

**For further information:**

Contact Heritage Branch

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