Archaeological Information Access Policy

V.2 – Revised July 7, 2023

Contents

Access to Provincial Archaeological Information

The Archaeology Branch (branch) is the central repository for archaeological information held by the Province of British Columbia. Archaeological information, such as the location and description of archaeological sites, reports on archaeological field work, and maps showing where sites are likely to occur, is available. However, to protect the integrity of archaeological sites, distribution of this information is restricted to cases where sharing this knowledge will facilitate site protection and conservation. The powers to restrict the distribution of archaeological information are found in Part 1, Section 3(3) of the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

This access policy presents the categories of available information, limitations on distribution, and methods of accessing this information. Appendix A further describes each information category with the associated distribution limitations and access methods.

Archaeological information distributed by the branch should not be forwarded to a third party unless a distribution policy has been developed with the branch.

Categories of Available Archaeological Information

There are four categories of archaeological information available:

1. Archaeological Site Records consisting of the site form and maps for each protected archaeological site in the Provincial Archaeological Site Inventory Database.

2. Archaeological Permit Reports detailing the results of archaeological impact assessments (AIA), inventories, impact mitigation and research field work authorised under an HCA permit.

3. Archaeological Non-Permit Reports and Books retained by the branch to support archaeological overview assessments (AOA), preliminary field reconnaissance (PFR) and other archaeological work not requiring an HCA permit.

4. Archaeological Spatial Data Layers developed by the branch to assist in archaeological resource management.

Limitations on Information Distribution

The branch oversees the distribution of archaeological information where disclosure would contribute to the conservation of archaeological sites protected by the *Heritage Conservation Act (HCA)*. Conversely, the branch will refuse to distribute archaeological information where disclosure may result in damage to, or interfere with, the conservation of protected archaeological sites.

User Groups of Archaeological Information

Several user groups require access to archaeological information:

1. **Accredited Archaeological Researchers** – Archaeologists on staff at educational institutes and graduate students requiring archaeological information for research. **Graduate students** must furnish a letter of support from a member of their thesis committee stating that the information is required for their research and may only retain access during the period of their study. Access should be set to expire upon graduation.

2. **First Nations Governments** – Staff supporting land and resource management, treaty, and land claims.

3. **Industry** – Companies active in land-altering development and resource extraction activities.

4. **Land Title Conveyance Professionals** – working on behalf of a registered land title owner or potential purchaser.

5. **Local, Provincial and Federal Government Branches** – Staff supporting land and resource management planning and authorisations, treaty negotiations and First Nations agreements.

6. **Private Property Owners** – Registered owners of commercial, agricultural, or residential property.

7. **Professional Archaeological Consulting Community** – Archaeologists who have held a heritage inspection or investigation permit in the past two years or have Professional or Associate level membership in the BC Association of Professional Archaeologists. Other professional consulting archaeologists may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Archaeological information is not placed in the public domain and site-specific information is not distributed to the public as this information may be misused to damage archaeological sites. Further, archaeological information will not be released for merchantable products or for avocational research.

Methods of Accessing Archaeological Information

There are three methods of accessing the archaeological information held by the branch:

1. [Information Requests](#)
2. [Self-Service Access](#)
3. [Direct Access](#) (Provincial Government Branches Only)

1. Information Requests

User Group Eligibility & Requirements

Information requests are submitted by a wide range of clients including researchers, indigenous governments, industry, local/prov/fed governments, land title conveyance professionals, property owners and archaeologists. Requestees must confirm they are eligible to receive the information, and then fill out an Information request form either online or in the office.

Archaeological **site records**, archaeological **permit reports** and **Provincial AOA assessment data** may be accessed by contacting the Archaeology Branch in the following ways:

- Completing the Information request form on the branch website at https://www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca/
- Submit an Information request form request by fax (250-953-3340)
- Mail a form or request to:

    Archaeology Branch
    PO Box 9816
    Stn Prov Govt Victoria, BC
    V8W 9W3

2. Self-Service Access to Archaeological Information

Self-service online access is available to the **Remote Access to Archaeological Data (RAAD)** portal and the **Provincial Archaeological Report Library (PARL)**.

User Eligibility & Requirements

Access to RAAD and PARL is limited to qualified users of archaeological inventory information requiring repeated access. Identified groups include:
- Accredited Archaeological Researchers
- First Nations Governments
- Local Governments (RAAD only)
- Provincial and Federal Government Branches
- Professional Archaeological Consulting Community

Self service users must sign an information sharing agreement detailing the terms and conditions of website usage, information access and distribution. Applicants external to the Provincial government must have a Business BCeID.

RAAD Contents

The **RAAD** portal contains archaeological site records, provincial AOA data and archaeological site locations.

PARL Contents

The PARL portal enables users to search, view, and download reports and includes a print-on-demand service. Archaeological permit reports and selected non-permit reports can be accessed through PARL.

3. Direct Access to Archaeological Information

BC Geographic Warehouse (BCGW)

Archaeological site locations are held in secure layers within the **BC Geographic Warehouse (BCGW)**. Direct access to this layer is governed by an information access agreement.

User Eligibility & Requirements

Direct access is only considered for provincial government employees.

Note that Direct access will only be considered for provincial government groups that:
1. support land and resource management planning and authorisations, treaty negotiations, First Nations agreements and consultation.
2. track users and use of archaeological information.

Appendix A

Archaeological Information Categories

There are four defined categories of information distributed by the Archaeology Branch:

1. Archaeological Site Records
2. Archaeological Permit Reports
3. Archaeological Non-Permit Reports and Book Collection
4. Archaeological Spatial Data Layers

Each category is described below with the associated distribution limitations and access methods.

1. Archaeological Site Records

Protected archaeological sites reported to the province are entered into the Archaeological Site Inventory Database. There is one record for each known site. The text records consist of the site location, environment and site description, archaeological activities within the site, site condition and general remarks. Site records also include location maps showing the general site location and detailed maps showing the site extent and archaeological features exposed on the surface.

Accuracy and detail vary in the pre-1980s site records, but sites are recorded with greater detail and accuracy after this period. Site location and extent information is enhanced in the new millennia with the introduction of GPS recording.

Three levels of archaeological site records are available:

i. **Land management level records** – are tailored to assist land management decisions by containing information on the site location, extent, mapping accuracy, condition, and titles of associated archaeological resource management studies. The following tables and fields are contained in a land management level record:

Borden Number	Legal Description	Site Visits
Registration Status	Site Typology	Site Condition
Map Reference	Site Dimensions	References
Site Location	Site Disturbance	

ii. **Resource management level records** - contain virtually all information found in a provincial archaeological site form. These records are generated to assist in the background research necessary for many archaeological resource management and research studies. Resource management level records contain:

Borden Number	Site Feature List	Tenure
Registration Status	Archaeological Culture	Cultural Material

Site Name	Site Visit Information	Protection Authority
Map Reference	Site Visit Team	Remarks
Site Location	Site Dimensions	
Legal Description	Site Condition	
Site Typology	Environmental Context	
Site Feature	References	

iii. **Archaeology Site Government Users View attribute table records** – contains site record information to assist in the identification, spatial sorting, and filtering of archaeological sites:

BordenLow	ObjectID
BordenNum	RegStatus
BordenSeq	Class
BordenUp	Descriptor
FormRec	Subtype
HertgSite	Type
BordenLow	Shape

Archaeological Site Record Distribution and Access Methods

Archaeological site records are available:

- by making an Information request
- through our self service RAAD application

Only site records relevant to the archaeological resource management obligations of the client will be distributed. Site record distribution is subject to the terms and conditions found on the Information request form, information sharing agreement, and RAAD access pages.

The method of accessing archaeological site records and the amount of information available is dependent on which client group is requesting the information. The following table details the level of information and methods of access for each client group:

CLIENT GROUP	ACCESS METHOD		
	Information Request	Self Service (RAAD)*	Direct Access
Accredited Archaeological Researchers	Resource Management Level Reports	Resource Management Level Reports**	N/A
First Nations Governments	Resource Management Level Reports	Resource Management Level Reports	N/A
Gov't – Local Branches	Land Management Level Reports	Resource Management Level Reports	N/A
Gov't – Provincial Branches	Resource Management Level Reports	Resource Management Level Reports	Archaeological Sites- Government Users View
Gov't – Federal Branches	Land Management Level Reports	Resource Management Level Reports	N/A
Industry	Land Management Level Reports	N/A	N/A

CLIENT GROUP	ACCESS METHOD		
	Information Request	Self Service (RAAD)*	Direct Access
Land Title Conveyance Professionals	Land Management Level Reports	N/A	N/A
Private Property Owners	Resource Management Level Reports	N/A	N/A
Professional Consulting Archaeologists	Resource Management Level Reports	Resource Management Level Reports	N/A

* Only Resource Management Level Reports are available through RAAD.
** The branch will determine if Accredited Archaeological Researchers are provided full or time-limited access to RAAD.

2. Archaeological Permit Reports

Field work authorised under a *Heritage Conservation Act* permit is detailed in a written report submitted to the Archaeology Branch.

The most common type of permit reports are archaeological impact assessment (AIA) reports. AIAs are conducted when proposed activities may impact protected archaeological sites. The AIA identifies protected sites, assesses their significance, examines the impact of proposed development or activities and contains recommendations on how to avoid or mitigate the impacts to the archaeological site.   This work is summarised in the AIA permit report.

Other types of permit reports held by the branch include inventory reports focused on surveys to identify archaeological sites in a large region, mitigation reports containing the results of detailed excavation to gather scientific data before a portion of a site is destroyed, and research reports concerning the academic investigation of archaeological sites. In addition, the branch holds alteration permit reports, which are usually very short reports on the alteration of sites through development after an impact assessment and required impact mitigation have been completed.

Archaeological Permit Report Distribution and Access Methods
Archaeological permit reports can be requested by submitting an information request or through the self service Provincial Archaeological Report Library (PARL). PARL enables users to search, view, download and order archaeological permit reports. The following table shows the methods of access to archaeological permit reports for each client group:

CLIENT GROUP	ACCESS METHOD	
	Information Request	Self Service Access (PARL)
Accredited Archaeological Researchers	✓	✓*
First Nations Governments	✓	✓
Gov't – Local Branches	✓	X
Gov't – Provincial Branches	✓	✓
Gov't – Federal Branches	✓	✓
Industry	X**	X
Land Title Conveyance Professionals	X**	X

CLIENT GROUP	ACCESS METHOD	
	Information Request	Self Service Access (PARL)
Private Property Owners	✓***	X
Professional Consulting Archaeologists	X	✓

* The branch will determine if Accredited Archaeological Researchers are provided full or time-limited access to PARL.
** Industry and Land Title Conveyance Professionals are not eligible to receive archaeological permit reports. These client groups should contact a qualified consulting archaeologist or the branch for site-specific advice.
*** Private property owners are only eligible to receive reports with respect to their property.

3. Archaeological Non-Permit Reports and Books

Archaeological Non-Permit Reports and the BC Archaeology Book Collection

The branch has a number of planning studies such as archaeological overview assessments (AOA) conducted outside of the permitting process. AOAs vary greatly in scope, from a portion of a city lot to a complete forest district or regional district. This variation in size and complexity is reflected in the length of reports.

The branch also has a collection of 1300 books on BC archaeology and ethnography.

Archaeological Non-Permit Report Access Methods

AOA studies used to compile the AOA layer within RAAD are linked to the corresponding AOA report through the Archaeology Branch webpage. Selected non-permit reports are available through the PARL. All other non-permit reports are held digitally and are available by email request to authorized individuals.

4. Archaeological Spatial Data Layers

The branch has developed four spatial data layers to assist in archaeological resource management activities:

1. **Archaeological Site Layer** containing both protected and unprotected archaeological sites found in the Archaeological Site Inventory Database.
2. **Archaeological Overview Assessment Layer** consisting of selected large area archaeological overview assessment studies modified to adhere to provincial archaeological overview assessment standards.
3. **Archaeological Resource Management Layer** comprising all known protected archaeological sites buffered by an additional 50 meters.
4. **Archaeological Sites Government Users View** containing both protected and unprotected archaeological sites found in the Archaeological Site Inventory Database and attribute data to allow searches and filters based on site type and Borden Block. This layer is intended to be used in Geographic Information Systems within the Provincial Government. There are restrictions on use and distribution of resulting products.

Archaeological Spatial Data Layers Distribution and Access Methods

Spatial data layers are distributed as ESRI shapefiles. The method of accessing spatial data layers and the spatial data layers available is dependent on which client group is requesting the information. The following table details the type of data layer and methods of access for each client group.

CLIENT GROUP	ACCESS METHOD			
	Archaeological Site Layer	Archaeological Overview Assessment Layer	Archaeological Resource Management Layer	Archaeological Sites Government Users View
Accredited Archaeological Researchers	RAAD, Information request	RAAD, Information request	RAAD	N/A
First Nations Governments	RAAD, Information request	RAAD, Information request	RAAD	N/A
Industry	Information request	Information request	N/A	N/A
Land Title Conveyance Professionals	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Local and Federal Government Branches	RAAD, Information request	RAAD, Information request	RAAD	N/A
Private Property Owners	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Professional Consulting Archaeologists	RAAD, Information request	RAAD, Information request	RAAD	N/A
Provincial Government Branches	RAAD and Information request	Information Request and BCGW	RAAD	BCGW