



Addressing Archaeology in an Official Community Plan

Archaeology Branch, Province of B.C.

The BC Archaeology Branch (Archaeology Branch) recommends that Official Community Plans (OCPs) include archaeological site management to help land owners and developers understand their responsibilities surrounding provincially protected archaeological sites. By raising the profile of archaeological site management within OCPs, you can help alert people to archaeological issues at the earliest stages of development planning. Awareness helps to avoid or reduce damage to archaeological sites in the future. Early knowledge of archaeological issues also reduces the potential for increased development costs and delays, and conflict within the community. Finally, local governments may lessen legal risks when considering all available information.

The Archaeology Branch recommends that OCP content relating to archaeology be organized into three subsections: an introductory statement, objectives, and policies. Suggested wording for each of these subsections is included below. These are examples to aid local governments and advise proponents of their statutory requirements under the *Heritage Conservation Act* (HCA). The Archaeology Branch recommends that the local government seeks legal advice to ensure accuracy prior to the formal OCP referral stage.

A note about maps: local governments can obtain spatial data for archaeological sites and archaeological potential by submitting an [archaeological information request](#) to the Archaeology Branch, or by accessing the [Remote Access to Archaeological Data](#) (RAAD) application. However, ***archaeological site locations are not allowed in the public domain and must not be revealed in OCPs.*** To ensure that archaeological sites are discretely captured in OCP maps without revealing their sensitive locations, archaeological sites should be buffered by 50 m and included on maps along with areas of archaeological potential, so that there is no distinction between an archaeological site and an area of archaeological potential.

Please contact the Archaeology Branch at 250-953-3334 for more detailed guidance before including any archaeological data in OCP maps.

Introductory Statements

Many OCPs provide an introduction to a discrete section on heritage or archaeology. Below are some examples of concepts to include in the OCP introductory statement.

Table 1: Introduction

Recommendation	Suggested Wording
<p><i>All OCPs should contain a statement alerting the public to the existence of archaeological sites and the protection afforded under the Heritage Conservation Act.</i></p>	<p>Part of the plan area’s heritage includes archaeological sites—the physical evidence of how and where people lived in the past. For 98% of the time people have lived in this area, no written records were made. Archaeological sites and oral tradition are the only vestiges of this rich history extending back many thousands of years.</p> <p>As of (date this was written),the OCP plan area contains more than XX recorded archaeological sites and has the potential to contain more. The Province protects these sites, whether known or as-yet unrecorded, through the <i>Heritage Conservation Act</i>. This protection applies to both private and Crown land and means that any person wishing to undertake any land-altering activities must have a provincial heritage permit to alter or develop within an archaeological site.</p> <p>Reference: Archeology Permits website, Archaeology Branch, Province of BC</p>
<p><i>If archaeological potential mapping is available,consider including it in the OCP.</i></p>	<p>Archaeological site locations are not identified in this plan due to their sensitive nature.</p> <p>However, archaeological potential mapping is included in Appendix XX. Areas that fall within the red zones have significant potential to contain unknown archaeological sites that are protected under the <i>Heritage Conservation Act</i>. Note that protected archaeological sites may exist outside of the modelled potential areas.</p>

Objectives

We recommend the OCP contains objectives that describe what the local government plans to accomplish by addressing archaeological issues related to development.

Table 2: Objectives

Recommendation	Suggested Wording
<p><i>Consider including these general objectives in the OCP</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise public awareness about the nature and value of archaeological sites and their protection under the provisions of the <i>Heritage Conservation Act</i>. • To ensure that property owners and developers are aware of their responsibilities under the <i>Heritage Conservation Act</i> when conducting land-altering activities. • To follow the intent of the <u>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act</u> (UNDRIP), federal, and provincial commitments, and enhance (local government)'s relationship with Indigenous populations, through sound land-use decisions. • To avoid unauthorized damage to protected archaeological sites in accordance with the <i>Heritage Conservation Act</i>. • To encourage protection of archaeological sites.

Policies

The policies of the OCP will depend on how archaeological issues have been incorporated into the planning and development approval processes. The Archaeology Branch recommends the following basic review process. Note that this process can be modified to suit existing development approval processes:

1. When a local government receives an application that involves land-altering activities, **check for overlaps with archaeological sites and areas of archaeological potential** using the [Remote Access to Archaeological Data](#) (RAAD) application. RAAD is not publicly accessible, but local governments are authorized and strongly encouraged to use it. Some Indigenous communities may also share areas of concern with local governments, to support land-use decisions.
2. If Step 1 identifies an overlap, **notify the applicant** using either the [notification letter](#) developed by the Archaeology Branch, or a type of notification developed by the local government. The Province's notification letter indicates whether the proponent needs to engage a professional consulting archaeologist to determine whether further archaeological studies or permitting are required prior to development. If developing a different notification method, the Archaeology Branch recommends the wording is consistent with archaeological resource management language and process and provincial legislation as per the Province's suggested notification letter.
3. The approval process depends upon the policies, procedures, and bylaws of each local government. Some local governments withhold development approval until the applicant provides assurance that all Provincial permitting requirements have been addressed; other local governments proceed with the development approval process with the expectation that the proponent will contact the Archaeology Branch as directed in the notification letter and will adhere to all Provincial requirements.

By describing the archaeological review process in the OCP, property owners and developers can know what to expect, anticipate timelines for obtaining archaeological information and appropriate authorizations, and can plan for archaeological issues as early as possible when planning the development.

Table 3: Policies

Recommendation	Suggested Wording
<p><i>Include procedures that describe how the local government will identify archaeological issues related to proposed development.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon receipt of a development application, planning staff will review the proposed area for overlaps with known and protected archaeological sites. In addition to known archaeological sites, planning staff will use archaeological potential mapping to identify areas that have the potential for as-yet unrecorded, but protected archaeological sites. Archaeological potential mapping is included in Appendix XX.
<p><i>Include procedures that describe how applicants will be notified of archaeological issues.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development permit applicants will be notified if the subject property overlaps with an area of archaeological concern. The applicant will be directed to engage a professional consulting archaeologist. The archaeologist has the expertise to help determine if further archaeological studies are necessary to manage development-related impacts to an archaeological site. Altering a protected archaeological site will require a Provincial heritage alteration permit prior to any impacts.
<p><i>If a local government requires applicants to address archaeological concerns prior to application submission or approval, include those procedures in the OCP.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to notifying the applicant of provincial requirements, the local government / regional district may also require that an archaeological impact assessment be completed or alteration permit obtained prior to development approval. • Notification of archaeological conflicts will include direction regarding further action that will need to be undertaken by the applicant prior to development approval. • When the applicant is already aware of an archaeological site in the area of proposed development, the application should include written assurance from a professional consulting archaeologist that all archaeological requirements have been addressed.

Additional Links to Resources:

Local Govt information	Local Government section of the Archaeology Branch website
Archaeological Information Request form	https://www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca/
Report a possible Contravention	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/report-a-con
Report Finding an Archaeological Artifact or Human Remains	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/report-a-find
Archaeology Branch	General email: Archaeology@gov.bc.ca or General Tel: 250-953-3334.