



## PROTECTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Archaeological sites are the physical remains of past human activity. There are over 61,000 known archaeological sites in British Columbia representing thousands of years of human history. The **Heritage Conservation Act (HCA)** recognizes the historical, cultural, scientific, and educational value of archaeological sites to First Nations, local communities, and the general public. Archaeological sites on both public and private land are protected under the HCA and must not be altered or damaged without a permit issued by the Province of British Columbia's Archaeology Branch.

Receipt of this form indicates that your local government has reviewed the records of the Archaeology Branch to determine whether your proposed activities are likely to impact a protected archaeological site. By identifying overlaps with archaeological sites early in the planning and development process, appropriate and timely steps can be taken that support an efficient development process. You should be aware that there are limitations concerning this review; please read the Provincial disclaimer below.<sup>1</sup>

Your property or project area falls into the selected category:

### **Direct overlap with protected archaeological site(s): \_\_\_\_\_**

Provincial records indicate that an archaeological site protected under the HCA is recorded within your property or project area.

- Your proposed activities may impact the protected archaeological site.
- You must obtain a site alteration permit issued by the Archaeology Branch before impacting the site.
- Completing an application for an alteration permit usually requires archaeological expertise. It is also possible that further archaeological study will be required before the Archaeology Branch will approve an alteration permit. You may consider engaging an eligible consulting archaeologist (see page 2) to confirm the results of this review and assist you in establishing permit requirements with the Archaeology Branch.
- Disturbance of a protected archaeological site without an alteration permit is a contravention of the HCA and may result in substantial fines and development delays.
- The archaeological site impact management and permit process is summarized on page 2. If you have questions about the process, contact the Archaeology Branch.

### **Direct overlap with an area of high archaeological potential**

Provincial records indicate your property or project area has high potential to contain an archaeological site protected under the HCA, either because the area has been previously assessed for potential or there is a known archaeological site within 50 m that may extend beyond its recorded boundaries.

- Your proposed activities may impact an unrecorded archaeological site. Archaeological sites are protected under the HCA, even if they have not yet been identified and recorded.
- Disturbance of a protected archaeological site without a permit is a contravention of the HCA. Accidental discovery of an unknown archaeological site during development requires activities to be halted and the Archaeology Branch contacted for direction; significant development delays may result while permit requirements are established.
- To avoid the possibility of unauthorized archaeological site impacts and development delays, you may wish to engage an eligible consulting archaeologist (see page 2) to determine in advance whether your activities are likely to impact an unrecorded protected archaeological site.
- The archaeological site impact management and permit process that you will need to follow if an archaeological site is encountered before or during development activities is summarized on page 2. If you have questions about the process, contact the Archaeology Branch.

### **No identified overlap or low potential for archaeological sites**

Provincial records do not indicate known archaeological sites or areas of archaeological potential within your property or project area.

- Provincial records may be incomplete with regard to archaeological potential in your area.
- There is always a possibility for unrecorded archaeological sites to exist. Archaeological sites are protected under the HCA, even if they have not yet been identified and recorded.
- If an archaeological site is encountered, development activities must be immediately halted, and the Archaeology Branch contacted for direction at 250-953-3334 or [archaeology@gov.bc.ca](mailto:archaeology@gov.bc.ca).

---

<sup>1</sup> **Provincial Disclaimer:** The Archaeology Branch of the Province of B.C. is responsible for the administration of the *Heritage Conservation Act*. It is not administered by local governments. In completing this form, local government staff rely on information provided by the Archaeology Branch. Any questions regarding this document should be directed to the Archaeology Branch or to an eligible consulting archaeologist. The information in this document is based on a search of provincial records. There are archaeological sites in B.C. that are unknown and not recorded. The Province makes no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of this information. Persons relying upon it do so at their own risk.

## Archaeological Site Impact Management and Permit Process

Archaeological sites are protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act* (HCA) and must not be altered or damaged without a permit issued by the Province of British Columbia's Archaeology Branch. The archaeological site impact management and permit process is summarized below. This summary applies to most situations where small-scale development plans overlap with protected archaeological sites. There are always exceptions that can be explained to you by an archaeologist or the Archaeology Branch as you proceed through the steps. Major development projects may be subject to additional requirements that are beyond the scope of the basic process described below.

### **If your property or project area contains a protected archaeological site:**

You must obtain a s. 12.4 alteration permit issued by the Archaeology Branch before conducting activities that will impact a protected archaeological site. Permit applications are available on the Archaeology Branch website. However, completing a permit application usually requires archaeological expertise. Most applicants will therefore engage a professional archaeologist to review development plans, verify archaeological records, confirm that an alteration permit is required, complete the permit application, and work with the Archaeology Branch on the applicant's behalf to ensure all HCA permit requirements are met.

The archaeologist may conclude, after a desktop review or a preliminary walk-over, that your activities will not impact the archaeological site. The archaeologist should send a letter stating their professional opinion to the Archaeology Branch. You may no longer require an alteration permit to proceed with your activities, provided they don't change.

In other cases, the archaeologist and/or the Archaeology Branch may conclude that an alteration permit cannot be issued because archaeological records contain insufficient information on the nature, extent, integrity, and significance of the archaeological site. It is important that this information be on record before your activities irreparably alter the site. You may therefore be required to furnish additional archaeological site information. It might be possible to obtain the required information via a more in-depth review of the existing archaeological records. Alternatively, you may need to arrange for an archaeological impact assessment (AIA) to collect the necessary data.

### **If an Archaeological Impact Assessment is recommended:**

An AIA is conducted by an archaeologist under an inspection permit. The permit allows the archaeologist to conduct subsurface tests to collect information about the archaeological site. The AIA results in recommendations for managing impacts to the archaeological site. The archaeologist's recommendations and their feasibility should be discussed with you before they are submitted to the Archaeology Branch. Common recommendations include:

- Changing building plans or construction techniques to reduce or avoid archaeological site impacts.
- Proceeding with an alteration permit with or without concurrent archaeological studies, depending on the expected degree of impact to the site.
- No further archaeological study or permits required.

The Archaeology Branch will review the AIA recommendations and determine next steps. **Note that the application process for all Archaeology Branch permits takes a minimum of 8-12 weeks from the date the application is submitted.** Contact an eligible consulting archaeologist for time and cost estimates. The Archaeology Branch does not charge a fee for processing and issuing permits.

### **Contact an eligible consulting archaeologist:**

An eligible consulting archaeologist is in good standing to hold a Heritage Conservation Act permit for archaeological studies in that Culture Area. Ask the archaeologist if they can hold a permit or contact the Archaeology Branch (250-953-3334) to verify an archaeologist's eligibility. Archaeologist may be found through the B.C. Association of Professional Archaeologists ([www.bcapa.ca](http://www.bcapa.ca)) or business directories.

### **Contact the B.C. Archaeology Branch:**

B.C. Archaeology Branch, Ministry of Forests

Email: [archaeology@gov.bc.ca](mailto:archaeology@gov.bc.ca)

Telephone: 250-953-3334

Web: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/private-commercial-or-development-property](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/private-commercial-or-development-property)

**Submit a Data Request Form to inquire about archaeological sites within your property or project area:**

[www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca](http://www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca)