



PROTECTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Archaeological sites are the physical remains of past human activity. There are over 50,000 known archaeological sites in British Columbia representing thousands of years of human history. The **Heritage Conservation Act (HCA)** recognizes the historical, cultural, scientific, spiritual, and educational value of archaeological sites to First Nations, local communities, and the 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 disclaimer¹ below.

Your property or project area falls into the selected category:

Direct overlap with protected archaeological site: _____

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 alteration permit usually requires archaeological expertise. 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 until permit requirements have been established; this may result in significant development delays.
- 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 with archaeological sites or areas of high archaeological potential

Provincial records do not indicate known archaeological sites or areas of high 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 halted and the Archaeology Branch contacted for direction (250-953-3334).

¹ **Provincial Disclaimer:** The Archaeology Branch of the Province of BC is responsible for the administration of the *Heritage Conservation Act*. It is not administered by municipal or regional governments. In completing this form, municipal and regional government staff rely on information provided by the Province of BC. 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 BC that are unknown and not recorded in these records. 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 the majority of situations where small-scale development plans are in conflict 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.

What do I do if my property or project area contains a protected archaeological site?

You must obtain a site 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. **Note that the application process for all Archaeology Branch permits takes 8-12 weeks from the date the application is submitted.** Contact an eligible consulting archaeologist for time and cost estimates.

After discussing your project, a desktop review, and/or a preliminary reconnaissance, the archaeologist may conclude 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. In other cases the Archaeology Branch may conclude that an alteration permit cannot be issued based on the information available.

What is an archaeological impact assessment?

An archaeological impact assessment (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.

Contact an eligible consulting archaeologist

An eligible consulting archaeologist is able to hold a Provincial heritage permit that authorizes archaeological studies. Ask an archaeologist if he or she can hold a permit. Contact the Archaeology Branch (250-953-3334) to verify an archaeologist's eligibility. Find an archaeologist through the BC Association of Professional Archaeologists (www.bcapa.ca) or through business directories.

Contact the BC Archaeology Branch

BC Archaeology Branch
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Phone: 250-953-3334

Web: www.for.gov.bc.ca/archaeology/property_owners_and_developers

Data Request Form (to inquire about archaeological sites within your property or project area): www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca