

Archaeology in B.C.

Archaeological sites are physical evidence of how and where people lived in the past. There are over 62,000 known sites in B.C., 90% of which are of First Nations origin. First Nations have governed and stewarded their cultural heritage and archaeological resources since time immemorial and have an ongoing connection to these sites. Many archaeological sites in B.C. are culturally sensitive, contain ancestral remains, and have important sacred and spiritual value to First Nations in B.C.

Examples of archaeological sites include:

- Remains of ancient villages and cemeteries
- Hunting and food processing sites
- Stone tool manufacturing areas
- Culturally modified trees
- Ancient rock art
- Shell midden

Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes that Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites and artifacts.

The Province has a legal duty to consult with First Nations on Heritage Conversation Act (HCA) permit applications that have the potential to impact their rights and title interests. All comments or concerns received during this process, including appropriate accommodations, are considered in a decision on whether or not to issue a permit, and if so, under what terms and conditions.

Protection of Archaeological Sites

Protecting heritage in B.C. is a shared responsibility.

Archaeological sites on both public and private land are protected under the HCA. This includes recorded sites and sites that have not yet been recorded. HCA protections apply even if a site has been disturbed in the past. Construction, renovations, and landscaping can damage and destroy an archaeological site. Property owners and developers have a legal responsibility to ensure archaeological sites are not disturbed without appropriate permits in place. If you are considering a construction or development project, you may need an HCA permit. Follow these steps:

STEPS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS AND DEVELOPERS:

1	Get Archaeological Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Find out if your property contains a protected archaeological site by:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Talking to your local government OR2. Submitting an Archaeological Information Request [It's free!]: www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca/ OR3. Contracting a private consulting archaeologist✓ If there is presence or possibility of an archaeological site, you will receive a report and information on next steps
2	Plan Before You Dig	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Consider low-impact building techniques✓ Contact the Housing Navigator Service to determine what authorizations, including local government permits, are needed for your project: permitconnectbc.gov.bc.ca/#one-place✓ Learn about HCA permitting requirements✓ Hire an archaeologist to help you apply for a permit www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/permits
3	Get a Heritage Inspection Permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ If an archaeological site may be at risk, you may need an HCA Heritage Inspection Permit✓ A Heritage Inspection Permit allows an archaeologist to conduct an archaeological assessment. This involves subsurface testing to identify if a site is present and how you can protect it during your development✓ The Province will consult with affected First Nations during the permit application process
4	Get an Alteration Permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ If a site is present, you must have an HCA Alteration Permit to impact or disturb the site✓ An Alteration Permit allows for activities such as capping a site, impacting a site, and relocating archaeological material, such as stone tools and bone fragments, in a way that ensures their care. Ground disturbing activities may require the oversight of an archaeologist during excavation or other ground disturbing activities✓ The Province will consult with affected First Nations during the permit application process

Hiring an Archaeologist

A qualified archaeologist will need to apply for, or act as a co-applicant on, any archaeological permits required for your development.

To find an archaeologist:

- Do an internet search for “archaeologists near me”
- Check local business directories
- The [British Columbia Association of Professional Archaeologists](#) keeps a list of its current members
- Get one or more quotes, and find out when an archaeologist is available to do the work
- Confirm that an archaeologist is “qualified and able” to hold permits in your area. You may email: Archaeology@gov.bc.ca to inquire about the status of an archaeologist

Visit: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/private-commercial-or-development-property

Costs to Homeowners

- Property owners and developers are responsible for the costs of archaeological work. These costs can be minimized by taking early action and employing a low-impact approach to development
- The costs of archaeological work may vary on the scope of the work required, the location of the project, and the charge-out rates of the archaeologist.
- HCA permits and information requests issued by the Province are free

Choose low-impact building techniques

Archaeological sites are an irreplaceable part of history and critically important to First Nations communities.

By choosing low-impact construction methods you can help reduce:

- Impacts to an archaeological site
- The costs of archaeological work

Low impact building techniques include:

- Changing location of the building site or footprint to reduce or avoid impacts to an archaeological site
- Adjusting the construction techniques to reduce the degree of site impact, for example, an above ground basement or building on pads and or pilings instead of an in-ground foundation
- Use existing utilities access
- Develop within imported fill to avoid disturbing natural sediment, or soil, that may contain archaeological material.

Working with Local Governments

- Local government requirements may be different throughout B.C.
- Property development requires other permits and authorizations from municipalities, regional districts, or the Province. Local government development permits are not a substitute for archaeological permits.
- Some local governments ask property owners to obtain an Archaeological Data Report prior to issuing their own development permits.

🌐 **Visit:** www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology/private-commercial-or-development-property

CONTACT THE HOUSING NAVIGATOR SERVICE

The [Housing Navigator Service](#) has dedicated staff to help you determine what applications are needed for your project and navigate the provincial process.

🌐 **Visit:** permitconnectbc.gov.bc.ca/#one-place

✉ **Email:** Housing.Authorizations@gov.bc.ca

📞 **Call:** 1-844-687-4644



For More Information

🌐 **Visit:** [Archaeology in B.C.](http://Archaeology.in.B.C.)
www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology

✉ **Email:** Archaeology@gov.bc.ca



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