

# Archaeological Sites in the SLRD

Archaeological sites are the physical remains of past human activity. There are more than 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. Any impact to an archaeology site requires a Site Alteration Permit (SAP) which authorizes specific impacts to archaeological sites under [Section 12.4](#) of the HCA. Any land-altering developments located within an archaeological site must have a SAP before proceeding.

**Effective February 2024, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District screen all development permits in order to advise property owners whether or not a SAP is required.**

The process will see all development permit applications screened at the onset. The information is confidential. Applicants will be notified of one of three outcomes:

1. There is direct overlap with a protected archaeological site; or
2. There is direct overlap with an area of high archaeological potential; or
3. There is no identified overlap with archaeological sites or areas of high archaeological potential.

For each outcome, additional direction will be provided.

If you have questions about this process and how it might affect your project, please contact the SLRD's Building Department at:

[bldgofficial@slrd.bc.ca](mailto:bldgofficial@slrd.bc.ca)

## Points to consider before improvements and renovations:

### 1. Why should I be concerned about archaeological sites on my property?

Damaging a site without a heritage permit is unlawful. In many cases archaeological sites are our only link to our past. They provide us with a wealth of knowledge about our heritage, and a fragile link to our origins and the nature of our early history in B.C. If we fail to preserve them we risk losing their cultural and historic value forever. Therefore, the Province controls damaging activities within these sites by protecting them by law and requiring a heritage permit to develop within site boundaries.

### 2. What can I expect from my municipality, regional district and the BC Archaeology Branch?

Local governments may access the Provincial database to determine if these records show a site located within your property. You can also request archaeological information about a property yourself. If you are considering property improvements and find you have a site on your property, you must consult with a qualified archaeologist to determine the next steps. If archaeological studies are required, the BC Archaeology Branch will work with you to avoid or minimize site damage during property improvements.

### 3. Are there any costs involved?

The property owner is responsible for the costs of required archaeological studies. However, by taking early action, you can minimize the cost of managing impacts to the archaeological site.

## What are archaeological sites?

An archaeological site is a location where there is evidence of past human activity.

Archaeological site examples include stone carvings, remains of ancient houses and campsites, shell middens, culturally modified trees, and early trading posts. These sites provide information about indigenous life during the last 12,000 years and non-indigenous life for the past 200 years.

Archaeological sites are fragile. The information contained in an archaeological site comes from the context in which artifacts are found as much as from the artifacts themselves.

Once this context is destroyed through construction or landscaping, this information is lost, even if the artifacts are still there.

Archaeological sites, like mineral deposits, arable land, forests, fish and wildlife, are an important part of the environment.

The *Heritage Conservation Act* is the legislation that protects archaeological sites in B.C.

B.C.'s Archaeology Branch can help you to ensure that improvements made to your property don't do unnecessary harm to archaeological sites below the surface.

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## Where can you get more information?

Request archaeological information about a property:

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

Visit our website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use/archaeology>

Phone us:

(250) 953-3334



# PLANNING TO DEVELOP OR RENOVATE YOUR PROPERTY?

## Know your role in protecting B.C.'s archaeological sites.



# THREE STEPS TO INCLUDE ARCHAEOLOGY IN PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

## B.C.'s archaeological heritage is a precious non-renewable resource.

British Columbia's heritage includes archaeological sites – the physical evidence of how and where people lived in the past.

For most of the time that people have lived in B.C., no written records were made. Archaeological sites and oral tradition are the only vestiges of a rich history, and protecting and conserving this fragile legacy and non-renewable natural resource is valuable to First Nations, local communities and the general public. Archaeological sites in B.C. may also be of regional, provincial, national or international significance, and may be as much as 14,000 years old.

There are over 50,000 known archaeological sites in B.C. including ancient stone carvings, remains of ancient houses and campsites, shell middens, and culturally modified trees.

The scientific, cultural, and historical study of the physical remains of past human activity is essential to understanding and appreciating cultural development in B.C., and the Provincial Government recognizes the importance of archaeological sites through the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

## Plan ahead before you dig.

You may not be aware, but damaging an archaeological site without a heritage permit is unlawful, and the property improvements you are planning could destroy important archaeological sites.

Any project that alters the land – such as excavations for building an addition, or installing a pool or pond – can damage and sometimes destroy valuable records of our past

Planning ahead before renovating or building a new home, and integrating the management of archaeological sites at the outset can help ensure associated costs are kept to a minimum, and damage to the site is reduced or avoided.



## Find out if your property contains an archaeological site.

Your municipality or regional district is usually the first stop you'll make to obtain a building or development permit. Many of these offices can access provincial records of known archaeological site locations within their jurisdictions.

You can also request the archaeological information about your property here: <https://www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca/>

If you are told that your property may contain an archaeological site, you should hire a qualified archaeologist to confirm the site location. The archaeologist can also assess if the proposed project will damage archaeological deposits and discuss the steps to take.

Qualified archaeologists can be contacted through the British Columbia Association of Professional Archaeologists ([www.bcapca.bc.ca](http://www.bcapca.bc.ca)) or listings in the yellow pages.



## If you find something in the ground – stop digging!

There are numerous archaeological sites in British Columbia. Many are recorded, but some are not. Sometimes artifacts and other archaeologically sensitive material, or even human remains, can be discovered accidentally.

If you think you have uncovered an archaeological site during a building project or renovation, **please do not disturb the site further** and call B.C.'s Archaeology Branch immediately at (250) 953-3334.

Branch archaeologists will review your project plans and make recommendations to manage site impacts and secure the required permitting.

