



THE ASBC PAGES

ASBC +/- 40 Years

The Archaeological Society of British Columbia is 40-years old — a well-deserved milestone to celebrate decades of volunteer work to help protect and preserve the rich archaeological heritage of British Columbia. But from the broader, far more humbling measure of time, 40 years scarcely registers as the standard error of a conventional carbon-14 date.

Since 1966, the ASBC Society has been the only charitable, non-profit volunteer organization wholly devoted to the conservation and knowledge of our archaeological heritage (aside from our underwater counterparts, UASBC, of course). The Society has been key to the development and maintenance of public support for our provincial heritage legislation, the *Heritage Conservation Act*. Many threatened heritage sites have been helped preserved by the contributions of ASBC members over the years, whether through organizing volunteer emergency salvage excavations, assisting university research and heritage management projects, or directing public educational programs to build greater public awareness about archaeology, First Nation history and the importance of heritage conservation. Without the ASBC's volunteer work over the last four decades, British Columbia would be a far less historically-rich place.

Today, there is a real public need for the ASBC Society. The ancient heritage of this province is threatened by increasingly rampant, unregulated land development. Chronic provincial government cutbacks have left the effective regulation of the *Heritage Conservation Act* at crisis

levels. First Nations are struggling to create greater respect for their aboriginal rights, traditions and interests over their ancestral heritage. And while public opinion polls suggest there is an enormous interest in world archaeology, the public remains largely uninformed of First Nations' history of this land or the cultural diversity of pioneer British Columbia.

Meanwhile, the ASBC Society has its own mid-life challenges to confront. Funding from the BC Heritage Trust, dissolved in 2003, will soon run out. Membership remains static. The Branches threaten revolt. The nebulous relationship between the Society and its Branches persists to be a source of perennial bylaw review. There are membership concerns that programs are not reaching the greater public; that the society lacks any media profile or political influence; and that, as an organization, the ASBC is not living up to its original heritage conservation mandate.

It is an exciting time in British Columbia. Archaeology has never been more publicly relevant. The ASBC has a duty to resolve our internal challenges, allow the organization to grow, and be successful in our mandate. There are great opportunities for members to get involved in fund raising, increasing membership, providing public outreach, promoting stewardship, lobbying for heritage conservation, and, in our own means, help reconcile relations with First Nations in British Columbia.

Happy 40th Birthday, ASBC.

Eric McLay
ASBC President