

# ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MEDIA: the Site C Dam

In our last issue, we featured an editorial and reprinted article concerning archaeology, heritage and BC Hydro's Site C dam. In response to these, David Conway, BC Hydro's Community Relations Manager, wrote to us with corrections and clarifications. I have included his comments in full here, along with my own response below.

Dear Editor:

Re: Site C & Dam Archaeology (Volume 44, No. 1 – 2012)

A recent article on the Site C Clean Energy Project (Site C) requires three points of clarification.

First, the 200 hectares identified as having archaeological potential refers only to areas in which systematic survey with shovel testing was completed before September 2011. Crews also inspected other areas using different methodologies, including more than 2,000 hectares of systematic surface inspections and judgmental survey in areas of high, moderate and low potential. In 2012, we are planning to complete more than 150 hectares of systematic survey, providing that crews can access all areas. Additional systematic surface inspections and judgmental surveys will also occur.

Second, contrary to what was stated in the article, the findings of the heritage program will be publicly available as part of the environmental assessment process. The Environmental Impact Statement, the application for the environmental assessment, will include the results of the field inventory and an effects assessment on heritage resources. Consistent with the province's approach to managing and protecting sensitive archaeological information, archaeological site locations will be redacted from the public version of the report. However, the full results will be available to First Nations, some stakeholders and the professional archaeology community.

Third, with respect to Rocky Mountain Fort and Rocky Mountain Portage House, the current heritage program includes visits to both locations to document their present condition. Where the project is likely to have an effect, an effects assessment will be completed and mitigation recommendations will be made. As both sites pre-date 1846, they are automatically protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act*. The BC Archaeology Branch will review the assessment and any proposed mitigation.

More information about Site C is available at [www.bchydro.com/sitec](http://www.bchydro.com/sitec).

Dave Conway  
Community Relations Manager, Site C  
BC Hydro

My response to David:

Site potential and survey:

This is an important point of clarification. Of course, "surface inspections" are extremely limited if the goal is to actually find *buried* sites. But, given the sheer size and scale of the Site C dam, it would take a lot more time and money to conduct more sub-surface investigations, such as shovel testing, over such an expansive area...

Public reporting:

As stated in my editorial, information on archaeology undertaken for the Site C dam is being controlled by BC Hydro. The project results are written up in a by-request-only report that is filed with the Archaeology Branch; the report is confidential and the results inaccessible to the interested public or media for critical review. To compound matters, the individual archaeologists who are involved with the project are not themselves able to independently write or speak about it, in the media or even with each other: they are legally sworn to silence. This means that *the project proponent is in control of all information concerning heritage impacts resulting from their development*. This is a conflict of interest, as it is in BC Hydro's, and thus the provincial government's and Archaeology Branch's interests to downplay any "bad press" concerning what has for decades now been a controversial and much criticized dam construction project. Legally-binding non-disclosure agreements remove one of the only means by which to produce independent evaluations or critique of the project for public consideration.

Rocky Mountain Fort and Portage House:

I know everyone will be glad to hear that the impact of the dam on this important site will be assessed and "mitigation recommendations" will be considered. What exactly this means remains to be seen; however, short of moving or reducing the size of the dam, it is unlikely that these or any other heritage sites encountered will be protected or conserved in situ. These places will be gone and no amount of research will change that.

Marina La Salle, Editor