



# Archaeology News

## The 2010 B.C. Archaeology Forum Reviewed

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This year's BC Archaeology Forum was co-hosted by the Musqueam Indian Band and the Laboratory of Archaeology of the University of British Columbia (UBC). Held at the Musqueam community hall, the lineup featured 23 speakers on behalf of First Nation communities, universities, and professional consulting firms from across the province. With so many presenters, the timeline was tight with several presentations at just 10 minutes, and no time for questions. However, an organized panel and end-of-day open discussion provided the chance for some audience participation, an essential feature given that over 160 people attended the event.

Several themes emerged from the presentations this year, offering a fresh take on what archaeology is now about in British Columbia. These include integrating cultural understandings with archaeological approaches; a focus on minimal-impact methods, and growing concern over repositories for collections; establishing long-term research projects; public and community outreach; and a commitment to teaching good archaeological practice. All of these issues revolve around one core concept: *professional responsibilities*.

### Teaching Archaeology

Teaching archaeology is possibly the most important professional responsibility of archaeologists, and field schools were well-represented at the forum (several are detailed on pages 7-14). Opening the day's event, Andrew Martindale discussed the Musqueam-UBC field project that began forty years ago with Charles Borden's

work in the area and was renewed in 2006. Operating as a collaborative project, the research agenda is created in large part by the Musqueam community with "the pursuit of scholarship" as a mutual aim; thus far, the field school has trained 55 undergraduate students, and hosted perhaps a record 40 barbeques.

Moving up the Fraser River, Doug Hudson of the University of the Fraser Valley provided an outline of an "archaeological field school on a shoestring." This two-week "mini" field school in Castlegar was tied into an introductory course, allowing students to learn excavation techniques at a pithouse site. Supported by the local college, press, and community of Castlegar, this project was primarily about "building sensitivities" by creating a 'buzz' around archaeology, and aimed to "sensitize students to the cultural landscape" of the Kootenays. Doug is planning a community field school for 2011 and is in search of an appropriate site for student projects; please contact him if you have some ideas.

Further north, Farid Rahemtulla discussed the University of Northern B.C.'s field school undertaken with the Babine Lake First Nation at Nikitara Lake, north of Fort Babine. Their focus is on 'cultural resource management' (CRM) techniques but, as Farid noted, "there's no real break between traditional knowledge and archaeology," which is emphasized in the range of skills that students learn, including flintknapping, bark stripping, repairing fishing nets, and experimental cooking with a roasting pit. They'll return in 2012 for a multi-year project looking at a coastal-style village long estranged from the Babine Lake First Nation, in a move

that Farid described as "taking back the site." Read more about the project on page 9.

Speaking for the Simon Fraser University crew, Nyra Chalmer described the "community outreach" and teaching focus of their field school with Sliammon First Nation. Although in Desolation Sound, they managed to arrange weekly field trips and maintained an "open door policy" for visitors. Excavation was focused at Cochrane Bay, dating between 4000 and 850 BP, while survey and sampling explored the relationship between shell middens and intertidal resource management. (Details of the field school can be found on page 7.)

Nick Waber presented for the University of Victoria's field program with several local First Nations and Parks Canada, integrating student learning with an existing parks program. Set up as a CRM project, students began with risk management training and finished with lab work. Each student prepared an individual project based on work at Portland Island, Arbutus Point, and Sidney Island, focusing primarily on intertidal sites and erosion monitoring. See Nick's field school review on page 13 for details.

### Establishing Long-Term Research Goals

Several long-term projects were discussed, including the work of Parks Canada discussed by Daryl Fedje in Gwaii Haanas. Their goal is to enable marine resource decisions by collecting pre-industrial data to create a baseline. This has meant a focus on intertidal features, weirs, and rock walls, and identifying ancient

shorelines and areas of coastal erosion, as part of a 5-year intertidal and subtidal inventory and assessment project. Also concerned with erosion, Lenore Thompson of Millennia Research described their work with Tsay Keh Dene crew members on a Williston Reservoir Dust Abatement project north of Prince George. Here, a 9-year project is underway using Lidar to identify patterns of erosion resulting from reservoirs, which involves documenting artifacts but not collecting them. Lenore described this project's goals of First Nation capacity building and establishing a local repository as "looking to work ourselves out of a job."

Charles Menzies (UBC) presented his "Laxyup Gitxaala" project as "new research in an ancient place." He discussed how the permitting process restricts the identification of sites, which in Gitxaala territory has produced a perception that there are no sites in the area. Negotiating with potential developers is thus frustrating, and so Charles' aim is to document sites in the area to provide baseline data, primarily using a percussion corer to produce "an idealized model" of stratigraphy with initial and terminal dates. Jim Stafford's (Coast Interior Archaeology) recent archaeology on the south central coast with 'Namgis First Nation also documented new sites, including 'arborglyphs,' complex CMTs, and a rock shelter. At the Kokish river, Jim described a lithic scatter dating 5600 to 9400 BP, while a raised beach in Port McNeil was dated to 8600 BP. At Kingcome Inlet, a large site with a 4000 year-old raised beach 5.5 metres above high tide revealed 200 intertidal artifacts. Together, these sites contribute to a better understanding of the sea-level curve for this region.

Peter Vigneault and Ryan Dickie of AMEC presented the results of a shorter-term project completed at a hydro line near Pemberton, where they recovered long-term hearth dates between 7000 and 3000 BP. This includes a pithouse feature dating to 6900 BP, one of the oldest housepits known. Peter and Ryan's focus was on the lithics of the area, which were primarily local river cobbles, although microblades found may represent a different kind of technique than usually seen (i.e., soft-hammer not punch technique). Also dealing with lithics, David Pokotylo (UBC) presented the results of the 3rd

year at Hat Creek investigating the use and intensification of roots with colleagues from UBC Okanagan. Having excavated about 25 earth ovens around a wetland, his research team recovered 20,000 lithics from only 9 test pits. Their 37 radiocarbon dates, as David said, "traces the roots of intensification" to around 2400 BP (perhaps the best pun of the day).

### Repositories and Preservation 'In Perpetuity'

Speaking from her experience working with LOA and now in archival science at UBC, Elizabeth McManus discussed the role of archives, repositories and institutions in managing archaeological collections. She emphasized that all documents generated during field work are needed, otherwise the context is lost. Her talk was followed by a panel on repositories, where Dave Schaepe (Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre) stressed the need to include 'what happens after field-work' in curricula and field schools. Sue Rowley (UBC) noted that we presently have a "curation crisis" where the primary responsibility of repositories - to hold collections 'in perpetuity' - is being undermined and now questioned. In the ensuing discussion, several people noted that the official repositories are mostly full, and while suggestions were made to build *more* warehouses to hold archaeological materials, this is a 'band-aid' solution perpetuating a practice that is simply not sustainable. Even where materials are held, they are often without the accompanying documents putting the artifacts into context.

As one audience member noted, "without the records, artifacts are just things to put on your mantle." Thus, the intangible value, or 'intellectual property,' of material culture needs to be addressed, as the two concepts and components are really indivisible. George Nicholas's (SFU/IPinCH) multi-year, international and collaborative project on 'Intellectual Property in Cultural Heritage Issues' seeks to investigate just these issues (<http://www.sfu.ca/ipinch/>). Yet Dave put it simply: the only way to get rid of the problem is to stop collecting things. (There is something in this, but just try telling that to a room full of archaeologists.)

### Cultural Approaches to Archaeological Problems

The role of local Indigenous knowledge in understanding heritage sites has proven essential in archaeology. In his archaeological and ethnographic study, Michael Klassen (SFU and Klahanee Heritage Research) addressed 'shaped standing trees' (SSTs) and in particular trail marker trees (TMTs). He noted that both may be relevant for Aboriginal right and title cases but are not accepted by the Archaeology Branch, foresters and developers, and many archaeologists. This is because it is very difficult to establish the cultural origins of these culturally modified trees; indeed, Michael observed that even forestry professors couldn't definitively say whether the marks were cultural or natural. For this research, Michael had the good fortune to work with several people who were responsible for creating these SSTs years previous. He is now reviving a scoring system using weighted criteria to give a "less subjective" confidence level, and convince foresters and others that these 'artifacts' are real.

Looking at the problem of dating rock art, Chris Arnett (UBC) discussed his attempt to draw upon Indigenous theory alongside meticulous excavation techniques designed to collect pigment and charcoal for dating Stein Valley pictographs. He referred to this as "linking the material deposits to immaterial stories through excavation," stressing that creating rock art is a living tradition, still in use today, and thus it is only right to call these sites by their Indigenous place names. Also focusing on the spiritual and cultural aspects of heritage, Susan Crockford (UVic and Pacific I.D.) presented a convincing argument for intentional dog burials in British Columbia, stressing the spiritual significance of dogs as potential spirit guardians to guide people into the next world. Susan advertised her new book, which is a field manual to dogs and dog burials, conveniently printed on write-in-the-rain paper to survive this coastal weather (available for \$56).

### Public and Community Outreach

Speaking on behalf of the Archaeological Society of British Columbia, our President, Rudy Reimer, provided an

update of ASBC activities including a recent project with the Sunshine Coast Museum where archaeologists volunteered in the cataloguing, photographing, analysing, and curation of artifacts held by the museum (more on this in a future issue of *The Midden*). Our partnership with the Museum of Vancouver will also include public education events, fulfilling the core mandate of the ASBC; look to our website for more information on these projects as they develop in the coming months ([www.asbc.bc.ca](http://www.asbc.bc.ca)).

Dave Schaepe presented an update of activities on behalf of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, including a field school directed by Anthony Graesch (University of California Los Angeles), and over 100 permits issued so far to archaeologists working in the area. Of particular note, however, is the newly opened Stó:lō Resource Centre, an amazing structure where curated objects will be on display for the first time. This is a place for communities to interact, and showcases an indigenous ethnobotanical garden, large sculptures and design features that make the centre truly a sight to behold.

Casey O'Neill from the British Columbia Association of Professional Archaeologists (BCAPA) gave a run-down of their goals, which in the long term include increasing their "profile and professionalization." In the short term, priorities include organizing workshops, such as an upcoming osteology workshop in February 2011, and forging new partnerships; a new membership category of 'Intern' has also been introduced to fill a gap between 'Students' and 'Associates.' The BCAPA annual general meeting will be held in Victoria on March 5th, 2011, location TBA.

In an important and long overdue project, John Welch (SFU) is creating a database of Heritage Conservation Act violations in the province to explore the causes behind the ongoing destruction of archaeological heritage sites. John's project has identified 56 well-documented cases so far, and is calling on the archaeologically-interested community to assist in this endeavour, which he sees as the first step in "strategic mobilization" toward affecting a conservation ethic in practice. Please contact John if you can help: [welch@sfu.ca](mailto:welch@sfu.ca).

### 'Professional' Responsibilities

The day was wrapped up with a presentation by Wayne Point, who is a Musqueam Indian Band member, a long-term employee of LOA, and has been involved in archaeology in the area since he was 7 years old. Wayne's discussion focused on the concept of 'site monitors,' a term often applied to First Nation people who are present for archaeological field work. 'Monitor' is defined as "to stand and watch," yet in practice it means really participating in all aspects of archaeological field work. For this reason, Wayne advocates a name change from 'monitor' to 'field worker,' a title that is now in use for Musqueam Indian Band.

Such terms are more meaningful than may be realized at first glance, and Wayne's talk quietly but powerfully highlighted a core tension in B.C. archaeology: control. As Wayne noted, archaeology in the local area all the way back to Borden has always involved First Nation individuals on the digs, and a "cohesive relationship" between Indigenous field workers and archaeologists has been integral to these projects. Yet 'field workers' are often not considered 'real' archaeologists by the archaeological community. Wayne put it simply: "given the opportunity most field workers can excel in archaeology." The ensuing discussion highlighted that there are few First Nation archaeologists because the 'community involvement' that has become so popular over recent years (especially on field schools) *does not extend post field work*. This means that cataloguing, analysis, and writing up reports are skills that 'field workers' are not exposed to and do not learn. In a province where First Nations are increasingly taking control of their cultural heritage, such practice is simply untenable; but until this changes, field workers and monitors are *designed* to remain 'grunt labour,' and control remains firmly in the hands of degree-laden archaeologists.

### The Future of Archaeology

To conclude this forum review, I would like to reflect upon some comments made by Wayne's mother, Rose Point, well-known locally for her ethnobotanical knowledge. During the discussions on repositories and monitoring, she voiced

concerns about archaeologists encountering contaminated soils, and about structures in the Lower Mainland that were built using pine beetle wood. In the literal sense, Rose's concern, as an ethnobotanist, was for the health and safety of people encountering or building with 'diseased' materials. But I also took her comments metaphorically, speaking to something larger that resonates with the theme of professional responsibility: how to build a healthy community, and a healthy future. In this endeavour, as Rose said, it's not just about ethnobotany or archaeology, because drawing lines prevents us from coming together and seeing the whole picture; instead, we must focus on *helping each other*.

If the forum presentations are representative of a larger trend, then archaeologists in British Columbia are transcending their traditional roles as 'material culture analysts' to become increasingly concerned with living people, remodelling archaeology into something that is respectful, relevant, and really more about its practice than its products. This means *breaking down boundaries*: between archaeologists, communities, 'monitors' or 'field workers,' student, teachers, CRM, academia, museums, archaeology, traditional knowledge, and between the past and the present. This year's forum highlights that 'helping each other' needs to be, and is becoming, a core value for archaeologists who work in a province where heritage remains politically and legally estranged from its descendants. Such an ethic moves away from a preoccupation with 'preserving things' to conserving *relationships* built on solid, healthy, and respectful foundations. This is the future of the archaeological community, and it is one we can only build together.

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