

News from the Nanaimo Branch of the ASBC

Welcome to the Nanaimo Branch of the ASBC. The summer of 2005 began with our June Annual General Meeting, bringing in a new face and the exiting of valued partners. Nola Nahirnick joins us a treasurer and veteran Exec members Daphne Paterson and Imogene Lim take a hard-earned break for this term. Thanks to you both who have worked so hard in the past and know that your knowledge and guidance has made all the difference. Our Exec looks forward to a busy year!

Summer saw the continuation of the analysis phase of our *Hands On Heritage!* project, with a large amount of the work being completed by September. Thanks again to those who are working to complete this project. There is still analysis to do so there are ample volunteer opportunities on site. Contact Colleen Parsley (handsonheritage@asbcnanaimo.nisa.net) if you can volunteer your time. The HOH lab has flexible hours can accommodate those who want to volunteer.

The summer also saw the 4th installment of our "Discover Archaeology" Interactive Bones Display at the Nanaimo District Museum in August. This year's display focused on forensic archaeology, illustrated by various skeletal examples of such diseases as Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis, as well as examples of breaks and infection. Most examples were non-human but we did have a few human casts and one real skeleton courtesy of Malaspina University. We also had a section on Archaeoparasitology, designed by our resident expert Nadine Simpson, which showed how the past could be illuminated by using insect remains. She also brought some real specimens and the maggots were a hit with the kids. Thanks to those who volunteered that day: Nadine Simpson, Daphne Paterson, Colleen and Jasper Parsley, Natalie Michaud, Cecilia Fuentes Hansen, and Charlene Riches. Your hard work was much appreciated. Despite a last minute appearance on the A Channel morning show for publicity and a lot of advertising, this year's display did not see many visitors, partly due to the fact that a good portion of the buildings surrounding the Museum were being demolished. Regardless, the event was a success in that it brought many institutions together under one roof, donating their specimens for educational purposes. I would like to thank Malaspina University College Anthropology Department (Imogene Lim, Gay Frederick, and Cheryl Roy), the University of Victoria Anthropology Department (Becky Wigen), Simon Fraser University Archaeology Laboratory (Heather Robertson), and the University of Calgary Archaeology Department (Brian Kooyman) for lending specimens for this display. In developing this display I learned a lot about forensics and never to hold another display during demolition. Stay tuned for the display next summer that will focus on Experimental Archaeology!

Summer of 2005 also found the Nanaimo ASBC busy on the local scene with the historic site of the Foundry being slated for demolition to make way for the new Nanaimo Convention Centre. In an age where heritage is constantly being overlooked or undervalued, it was felt by some of our members that it is the responsibility of citizens and local governments of British Columbia to preserve and protect our heritage landmarks. The Nanaimo Foundry building represents a rare physical link to Nanaimo's

industrial heritage, reminding us of Nanaimo's rich history and prosperous future. Thus letters were written in protest, e-mail discussion with the Mayor of Nanaimo ensued, and many of our members made their concerns known at various levels of government within Nanaimo. By adding our voices to those of other concerned groups in Nanaimo, it was decided by Nanaimo City Council that the oldest portion of the building be retained, demolishing the remainder, and discussions have begun on the possible future use of the building. ASBC Nanaimo will be watching in earnest as archaeological investigations are now underway at the site to ensure that any First Nations sites are not impacted by the construction.

ASBC Nanaimo also has also been busy writing letters regarding the awarding of the 2005 "Best Resort Development" Award to "Poets Cove Resort and Spa" by the Urban Development Institute - Pacific Region. You may remember Poets Cove Resort and Spa is currently being charged with violation of the British Columbia Heritage Conservation Act for damaging a First Nations burial site in building a resort on South Pender Island. The awarding of this title sends the message to other developers that First Nations' sites and heritage do not matter in the face development. First Nations sites, and archaeological sites in general, are fighting an increasingly uphill battle against development in this province. Developers, First Nations, local and provincial governments, and the archaeological community must work together in order to protect our past while planning our future. Unfortunately, the Urban Development Institute did not revoke the award, stating that they were conducting their own review and will await the courts' decision on the matter. One wonders if they will change their position once this goes to trial?

In a somewhat related matter, we also wrote a letter to Premier Campbell protesting the placement of the Archaeology Branch under the guise of the Ministry of Tourism, Sport, and the Arts. We felt it was inappropriate and illustrates lack of knowledge of the importance of our heritage resources as well as disrespect towards all British Columbians, past, present, and future. To place the protection of archaeological sites in the same ministry as resort and alpine ski developments demonstrates the unwillingness of this government to recognize the fundamental nature of archaeology and the important role it plays in protecting and enhancing our knowledge of the past. The archaeological record is fragile and in areas of dense population, especially along the South Coast where enormous ancient villages exist, the pressures to substitute this irreplaceable past with towers, housing and other developments is very high, yet not high profile, particularly in this Ministry. The current proposal not only fails to appreciate the irony of placing the management of archaeology with development but also illustrates a foreboding trend for the future. As funding to the Archaeology Branch has been drastically slashed and positions terminated, it is appalling that the protection and maintenance of 23,000 archaeological sites within the Province has been left to eight Branch staff members. It is not logical that an irreplaceable resource be mismanaged

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in such an alarming way. Other Branches have not been gutted in this manner, which illustrates that archaeology is not a priority on the government agenda.

We suggested that a review of the placement, structure, and staffing of the Archaeology Branch is warranted and that consideration be given to placing it within the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. With 99 percent of the recorded archaeological sites in the Province being of aboriginal origin, it is logical that management and administration of those sites be conducted within a Ministry that has a vested interest in heritage conservation. The current lack of policy regarding First Nations interests at the Archaeology Branch must be addressed. It is only fitting that the First Nations people of British Columbia finally become the acknowledged stewards in their role of conserving and managing their own history as they build towards their future. By placing the Archaeology Branch within the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, the government would illustrate their renewed commitment to aboriginal relations within this Province as stated in the Speech from the Throne on September 12, 2005.

To date, we have not received a response from our letter but we live in hope that the government will review its policies and make heritage a priority.

We are looking forward to the 2005-2006 year, which includes an upcoming Tri-Branch meeting with Vancouver, Victoria, and Nanaimo Executive members meeting in Nanaimo to discuss provincially related issues and ASBC business. We see this as an opportunity for the Executives to work together to plan the future of the ASBC, one that will see us working together to increase archaeological knowledge and heritage awareness in this province.

I am also happy to report that the Nanaimo Site Survey has been completed

and our consultant Nicole Oakes has submitted her final report. This project has taken a few years to complete and we thank all those that worked so hard. Much of the credit can be given to Dorothy Young who worked many years and pulled out many hairs over the course of this project. Thanks, Dorothy, because without you this would have never been completed. For those who are interested, copies of the report (excluding detailed maps with site information) are available for review. You can contact us by email (mail@asbcnanaimo.nisa.com) for further information.

We hope to see you all at the lectures and events planned for 2006!

Julie Cowie, Acting President
ASBC Nanaimo Branch



ACTIVATE!

The ASBC is seeking volunteers to help compose *The Midden*. First, we are considering applicants for an **Artistic Editor**, with interests in graphic design for composition and layout of our issues.

Second, we are seeking another **News Editor** to compose and solicit short news stories, and a **Publications Editor**, to handle book reviews.

Third, we would also like to attract **regional Contributing Editors** to provide and/or solicit news and articles from various regions and institutions in BC and the wider Northwest Coast and Interior.

If you are interested, please contact the editors: Bill Angelbeck (angelbec@interchange.ubc.ca) and Patricia Ormerod (cbarc@interchange.ubc.ca).