

Construction Projects and Archaeology in CRD

Archaeology in British Columbia

Archaeological sites are physical evidence of how and where people lived in the past. There are over 57,000 known archaeological sites in B.C. Archaeological and culturally significant sites are present throughout the Capital Regional District (CRD) including First Nation cemeteries, stone tool manufacturing sites, culturally modified trees, cultural shell deposits, middens and many other site types that reflect a wide range of past land use and cultural traditions.

Protection of Archaeological Sites

Archaeology sites, whether intact or previously disturbed are protected under the Province of British Columbia's *Heritage Conservation Act* (HCA). The CRD, property owners, developers, contractors, and the general public are legally required to comply with the HCA and protect archaeological resources, including in relation to building construction and land alteration. Failure to do so can result in significant fines and criminal charges.

Under the HCA:

- All archaeological sites are protected, whether recorded or unrecorded
- Protection applies to both private and public land
- Archaeological sites, materials, features and deposits that pre-date 1846 are automatically protected
- Human burials and remains, regardless of age are automatically protected under the HCA, *Cemeteries Act* and other forms of legislation
- It is illegal to alter or damage an archaeology site without prior authorization under the HCA.

These requirements apply regardless of previous site disturbance or existing development.

Building Permits Applications

As part of the building permit application process (including demolition permits), an archaeological desktop review is required for all applications involving ground disturbance. Interior renovations that do not involve ground disturbance do not require an archaeological review.

The review uses available provincial archaeological information and may be completed by either the BC Archaeology Branch or a qualified professional archaeologist at

[BC Association of Professional Archaeologists](#)

Requests to the BC Archaeology Branch can be submitted through a [BC Archaeological Information Request Form](#).

If no archaeological concerns are identified, the building application may proceed. If potential or known archaeology resources are identified, further assessment by a qualified professional archaeologist will be required before work can proceed.

It is important to note that archaeological resources may still be present even if not identified during the desktop review. If human remains or archaeological materials are encountered during excavation, all ground disturbance must stop immediately, and the find must be reported to the BC Archaeology Branch. This is a legal requirement under the HCA.

Implications for Construction Projects

Archaeology requirements may affect project timelines and require design changes. An archaeological review early in the planning process can help identify potential issues and reduce delays during construction.

More Information can be found at the [Province of BC's Resource Hub for Property Owners and Developers](#).