

# Site C Project Heritage Program

February 2019

BC Hydro has been studying the Site C project area since 2010 in order to understand and mitigate the project's impact on heritage resources.

Heritage resources include archaeological, historical, and palaeontological sites, objects and features.

For thousands of years, the Peace River Valley has been home to Indigenous peoples. To develop the project's Environmental Impact Statement, archaeologists sought the input of Indigenous groups to understand the area's significant sites and study the impact on heritage resources and areas of cultural importance.

Archaeologists also sought input from Indigenous groups to develop a set of mitigation, management, and monitoring plans guide the program.

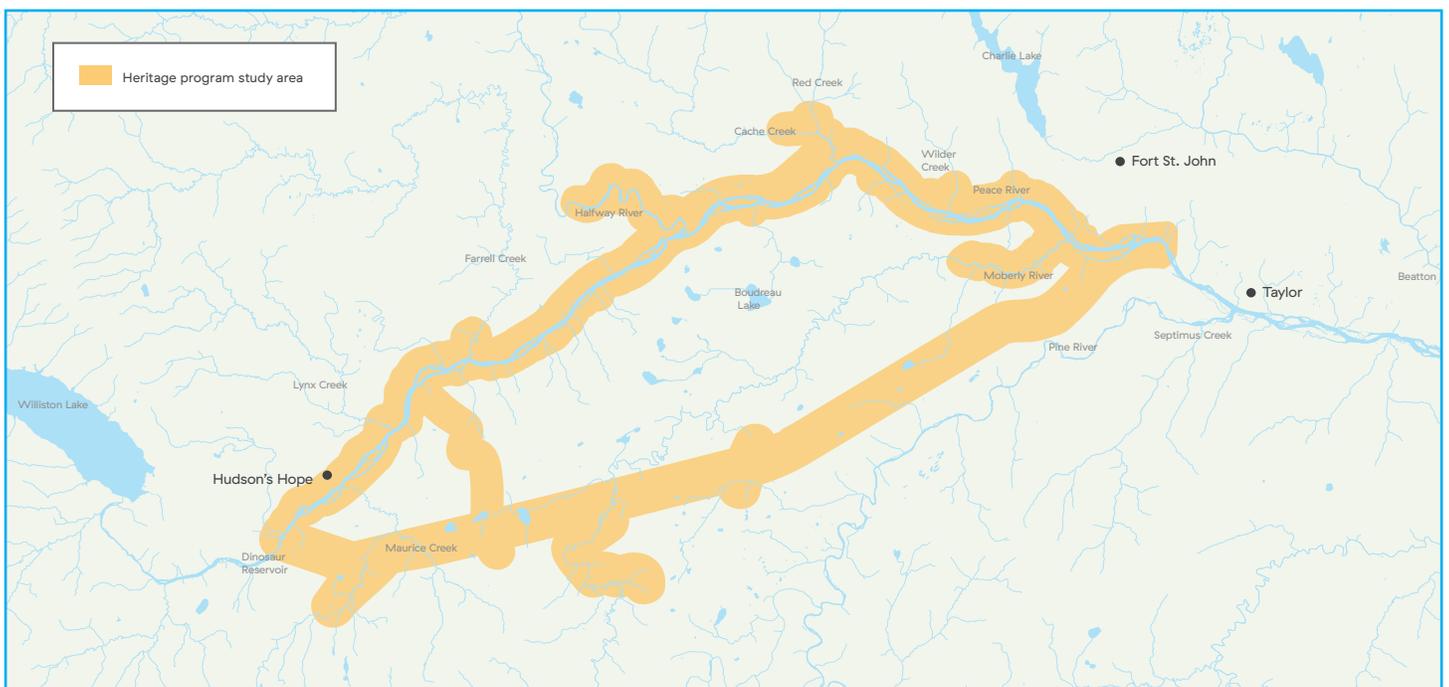
The plans meet requirements set out in the conditions of the project's Environmental Assessment Certificate and the federal Decision Statement. The activities are authorized by permits issued under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

The Site C heritage program covers the work done before and during construction to identify heritage resources. The program focuses on three main areas:

- Archaeology (the study of human activity prior to European contact)
- Palaeontology (the study of ancient organisms and fossils)
- Historical sites (the valley's early Euro-Canadian settlement sites)

The heritage resources management plan describes the ways the project plans to mitigate adverse effects on heritage resources. Learn more at [sitecproject.com](http://sitecproject.com)

## Approximate area studied as part of the Site C heritage program



## Field studies

Considering the size of the Peace River Valley, the level of effort, and the number of heritage resources identified, the Site C heritage program is the largest of its kind in B.C. history. The majority of the program consists of on-site field studies that build understanding of the existing condition of the area. We will continue to complete field studies throughout construction.

**To reduce and mitigate the project's impact on heritage resources, archaeologists conduct three types of field studies:**

### Archaeological inventory and impact assessment

Before any land alteration starts, archaeologists create an inventory of archaeological and historical sites in an area and conduct an impact assessment. To identify sites, archaeologists conduct shovel tests by digging test pits in a grid over an area considered to have archaeological potential. The soil from the test pits is sifted through a screen and returned to the hole after being inspected. Any artifacts recovered from the shovel tests are collected and recorded.

### Systematic data recovery

Systematic data recovery takes place after an archaeological site has been discovered. The purpose of this step is to carefully record, recover, and analyze artifacts and features found within the site. This is usually done with field crews of five to 20 people, including archaeologists and field assistants from local Indigenous groups.

The artifacts discovered during field studies will be stored at the Fort St. John North Peace Museum.

### Post-ground disturbance inspections

For archaeological sites that we cannot avoid, the project team conducts a post-ground disturbance inspection. During the inspections we remove the upper layer of soil using machinery, exposing the depths where artifacts are located. This gives us an opportunity to conduct another assessment of the area.



Archaeologists conduct post-ground disturbance inspections.



A project archaeologist completes an auger test during archaeological impact assessment fieldwork.



An archaeological crew on site for systematic data recovery fieldwork.



Since 2010, field crews, made up of Indigenous representatives working with archaeologists, have carried out approximately 80,000 shovel tests.



Over 450 archaeological sites and hundreds of thousands of artifacts have been analyzed.



The presence of these sites and artifacts demonstrates Indigenous peoples' use of the Peace River Valley for over 10,000 years.



More than 100 archaeological field assistants come from nearby Indigenous communities.

## Protecting heritage resources during construction

We conduct heritage assessments at all construction sites prior to the start of construction activities. In many areas, these assessments were completed during the project's environmental assessment phase. Our objective is to avoid disturbing archaeological sites when possible. For example, several important archaeological sites have been fenced off and permanently preserved in project areas. Other parts of the project, including some of the transmission line tower sites and access roads, have been redesigned to avoid impacts.

Before work starts, our contractors must include heritage requirements and procedures as part of their work plans. They also work with archaeologists to schedule their activities.

### Construction chance find procedure

Our contractors are aware of any recorded heritage sites in their work areas. However, if they discover an unrecorded heritage site during construction, they must stop work immediately and implement the chance find procedure. Archaeologists will then examine the site and recover any artifacts for further study. Work can only resume once the site has been studied and any artifacts removed.



Archaeologists take part in field studies.

## Ongoing monitoring

After reservoir filling, we will monitor the effects of the reservoir, including potential erosion, on heritage resources for five years. Approximately half of the predicted erosion over 100 years is expected to take place during the first five years of reservoir operation. We will also maintain chance find procedures while the dam is operating, in case any new heritage resources are exposed due to erosion. These procedures will cover an area the length of the reservoir and 2.5 km downstream of the dam.

## Examples of artifacts

Site C's heritage studies have unearthed hundreds of thousands of artifacts. The archaeological artifacts will be stored at the Fort St. John North Peace Museum.



Red Chert projectile point.



Palaeontological find of a fossilized antler (possibly elk).



Quartzite projectile point.



Systematic data recovery fieldwork in progress. The unexcavated portion in the center of the excavation unit is the remains of a hearth or fire pit.



Projectile point.

### Timeline of heritage program

