

The Roles of the Provincial Government in British Columbia Archaeology*

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Provincial government involvement in archaeology underwent considerable changes during the 1980s. Those changes primarily reflected a process of role clarification and definition stimulated by a number of external pressures on the government during that time. In particular, two areas of concern coincided to create a need to critically examine all existing government programmes. These included the major economic downturn experienced by the province in the early part of the decade and increasing demands from First Nations to become more directly involved in issues concerning their cultures.

Public expectations regarding government archaeological programmes had been raised throughout the 1970s, but the ability for government to continue to deliver programmes dropped dramatically in the early 1980s. For example, at the close of a decade which saw annual double-digit inflation, the provincial Archaeology Branch was operating with a budget only 6 per cent higher than when the decade began. By 1983, the motto "do more with less" was commonly heard in government circles.

Coincident with the diminishing capacity for government programmes, many aboriginal people began to escalate demands to have long-standing land claims and self-government issues recognized and addressed. Numerous legal and political strategies employed to achieve those goals had, and will continue to have, significant impacts on the government's roles in archaeology. They will also continue to influence non-government agencies, institutions, and individuals engaged in academic research and resource management.

ROLES

Government agencies derive their basic programme mandates from legislation. In British Columbia, two pieces of legislation define the govern-

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ment's role in archaeology: the Heritage Conservation Act (HCA) and the Provincial Museums Act. Under the Heritage Conservation Act, the role of the provincial government is an administrative/regulatory one, focusing primarily on protection and conservation of archaeological resources: "The purpose of this Act is to encourage and facilitate the protection and conservation of heritage property in the Province" (Heritage Conservation Act, 1979, section 2). In the early 1980s, resource protection and regulatory programmes were considered the responsibility of the Resource Management Section of the Heritage Conservation Branch. Today, the Archaeology Branch fulfils that mandate separate from the Heritage Conservation Branch. Those agencies will be discussed in a later section.

The Museums Act enables the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM) to provide the government with a stewardship, educational, and artifact conservation mandate under which the province's history is to be interpreted to the public:

The objects of the Provincial Museum shall be

- a) to secure and preserve specimens and other objects which illustrate the natural history and human history of the Province; and
- b) to increase and diffuse knowledge in these fields by research, exhibits, publications and other means. (*Museums Act*, 1979, section 3)

While the mandated roles of these agencies would appear to be fairly clear, in the late 1970s much of their respective programming had not been clearly defined, and in fact often overlapped. That situation developed primarily from the fact that the Royal British Columbia Museum had been established long before either the Archaeology Branch or the Heritage Conservation Branch, and in collaboration with the province's post-secondary educational institutions, was often looked to for assistance in implementing the province's heritage protection legislation.

To understand the nature of government programmatic changes, it is useful to take a brief look at the history of government involvement in the area of archaeology from the perspective of its two separate legislative directions: (1) regulatory/protection and (2) stewardship/education/artifact conservation.

PROTECTION AND REGULATION

Prior to 1960, legislated archaeological site protection had been inconsistent and limited. The Colony of British Columbia enacted the Indian Graves Ordinance (IGO) of 1865, which made it an offence to "... steal, . . . cut, break, destroy, damage or remove any image, bones, article, or

thing deposited on, in or near any Indian grave in this Colony, or induce or incite any other persons to do so, or purchase any such article or thing . . . knowing the same to have been so or dealt with.”

That ordinance, however, was later repealed by the federal government in its Revised Statutes of 1886. There appears to have been no complementary repeal by the provincial legislature of the day, suggesting the federal action was likely a result of legislative house-cleaning.

Recognition of the need for *in situ* archaeological site protection re-emerged in 1925, when the province enacted its first antiquities legislation, the Historic Objects Preservation Act (HOPA). That Act was primarily designed to protect rock-art sites, although its wording did provide for a number of other site types to gain legislative protection through the process of designation as “Provincial Historic Sites.” However, as with the previous Colonial legislation, the HOPA (1925) did not incorporate a complementary enforcement policy or strategy.

In my opinion, the first significant legislative protection for archaeological sites in British Columbia was the passage by the provincial government of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Protection Act (AHSPA) in 1960. For the first time, a regulatory implementation strategy was incorporated into heritage legislation in the form of a requirement for provincial permits to authorize archaeological work at sites. That Act also mandated creation of the first provincial body specifically devoted to advising the government on matters concerning archaeology — the Archaeological Sites Advisory Board (ASAB). The Board convened for the first time on 15 August 1960 and officially met only twenty-nine times before being incorporated into a broader Provincial Heritage Advisory Board in 1977. During the 1960s, however, the ASAB co-ordinated all archaeological activity in the province and was responsible for administration of the heritage legislation as it pertained to archaeological issues.

In addition to the creation of the ASAB, the 1960 legislation expanded the range of automatically protected site types from the earlier focus on rock art to include all burial places, as well as “any Indian kitchen-midden, shell-heap, house-pit, cave, or other structure, or *other archaeological remain* on Crown lands, whether designated as an archaeological site or not” (AHSPA, 1960, italics added). Legislation designed to protect sites, however, is a far cry from actually achieving site protection. Within only a few short months of their appointment, the ASAB realized that full-time staff would be required to administer the legislation. While initially the provincial museum, and later the University of Victoria, assisted in that effort it took ten years to fully achieve that objective (Apland 1992).

Although technical drafting problems and the restriction of protected sites to Crown lands inhibited effective enforcement of the AHSPA (1960), the implicit effects of its policy were astonishing. Most archaeological sites went from being unprotected under the previous legislation to being automatically protected. This advancement, unfortunately, was to be significantly diminished during the 1970s through two subsequent legislative changes: a new AHSPA in 1972 introduced the concept of "compensation," which effectively checked the use of "Designation" as a tool to protect sites on private land which were not included on the list of automatically protected sites; and passage of the current legislation, the Heritage Conservation Act of 1977, effectively diminished the range of site types that were automatically protected by legislation. At present (1993), rock-art and burial sites must have "historic or archaeological significance" (undefined in the Act) to be automatically protected. Additionally, the catch-all category of other archaeological sites or objects, as well as "mounds," are no longer included in the legislation. This reduction in the scope of legislated site protection during the 1970s went relatively unnoticed by many people involved with archaeology at the time. Even today, there appears to be a lack of understanding as to the limits of site protection offered by the current Heritage Conservation Act (1977).

Paralleling the legislative changes, direct government regulatory involvement in archaeology expanded in 1972 with the establishment of the Office of the Provincial Archaeologist (PAO). Prior to that time, the field of archaeology for all intents and purposes had been considered an academic discipline. Administration of regulatory mechanisms designed for the protection and conservation of archaeological sites brought new demands on archaeologists which were not specifically oriented to the traditional academic goal of furthering the understanding of past cultures. Instead, there was a need to devote considerable efforts toward simply preserving sites and/or the archaeological data they contained. This inevitably led to a major debate comparing academic research goals and objectives (i.e., "pure" research) with the more limiting environment of what was then referred to as "salvage (applied) archaeology" (Fladmark 1981). This discourse consumed much of the archaeological community's attention during the 1970s.

The government's regulatory role in archaeology does not fit comfortably into the "pure research vs. applied archaeology" debate. Administration of legislation and its accompanying regulations is not in itself an archaeological activity. Rather, the purpose of legislation is to provide for the conservation and protection of archaeological sites which coinci-

dentally ensures a continued resource base for the discipline. There is perhaps no other field of scientific endeavour that is as strongly dependent upon legislative intervention for the resource protection needed to ensure its future. Government's regulatory role in archaeology, therefore, is not only to ensure mitigation of potential site losses due to development, but also to serve as an agent for "conservation archaeology" transcending the more narrow perspective of "pure research" as it is used in the anthropological sense, but it also has its own academic research requirements to develop effective resource recognition and assessment procedures. In many ways the major post-secondary institutions of the province have yet to fully comprehend this need and develop adequate programmes to address it.

Throughout the 1970s, the Provincial Archaeologist's Office established various referral contacts with other ministries as a means of gaining advance notice of proposed land developments. It identified potential resource conflicts, hired staff to assess those conflicts, and where necessary, conducted salvage or rescue operations. The office also continued to manage the provincial archaeological permit system, and in collaboration with the Provincial Museum, began the development of a centralized provincial site inventory.

By the end of the 1970s, the Archaeology Branch was directly involved in virtually every aspect of archaeology, in both the research and resource management areas. This introduced new problems rooted in the conflicting interests which are inherent when one agency "wears all the hats" in a regulatory process. A re-evaluation of the Branch's role in archaeology was necessary; a process hurried along with the introduction of government restraint in the early 1980s.

At the time the government, through the Archaeology Branch, was faced with the task of determining how it could effectively administer the Heritage Conservation Act as it pertained to the protection and conservation of archaeological sites, in an environment of declining staff and funding commitments. In point of fact, the Branch's only direct legislative obligation was, and remains, administration of the provincial permit process. All other programmes and/or services of the Branch were, in a sense, discretionary, in that they did not automatically flow from the legislation.

In reviewing the status and history of Branch programmes, it was evident that while most actions were initiated for the purpose of protecting archaeological sites from threats due to natural exploitation and other land development activities, actual regulatory initiatives tended to focus on the activities of archaeologists. Interestingly, this trend can be traced

back to the initial lobbying activities of Charles Borden, who had stated that one of the primary objectives of legislation should be aimed "at the control of outside archaeologists" (Borden 1951). The initial advisory board was composed of the only professional academic archaeologists working in the province. It may have been a great deal easier for those archaeologists to regulate internally their own small community through the use of the permit system than it was to get a handle effectively on the wide-ranging and complex array of external threats to the resource base. This was especially true since there was no infrastructure or support for implementing regulatory programmes, and virtually all interested professionals were fully employed in teaching and research capacities at major universities and/or museums.

The creation of the Archaeology Branch (then the PAO) provided some relief for this situation, but the inward-focused pattern of issue management had been well established. This unfortunately meant that, given the limited human and financial resources available, increased demands for internal regulation by the community constantly decreased the ability to affect overall resource management. While considerable activity was taking place, no central focus or planning strategy appears to have emerged through the 1970s.

At the outset of the 1980s, expectations that the Branch should initiate and fund archaeological assessment studies, where conflicts between archaeological sites and developments were identified, exceeded the ability of Branch programming to meet demands. Those expectations appear to have been established on a basic premise that archaeological sites are public resources, and that protection and management should therefore be a public responsibility. The Branch began to examine that premise in a different and perhaps more realistic way: archaeological sites were seen as important and valuable public resources which remain latent with regard to active management requirements until threatened. In the case of threats resulting from land development, it should therefore be reasonable public policy to expect management costs resulting from a development proposal to be the responsibility of the development proponent. This "proponent pays" approach was perhaps the most significant change in Branch approach to resource management in the 1980s, and complemented a number of initiatives that were developed in other management jurisdictions.

The "proponent pays" approach to resource management was not a new concept to B.C. archaeology. In fact, its adoption in the 1980s realized a vision eloquently espoused thirty years earlier by Charles Borden (1950):

... the granting of permission to build factories or other structures at places where [archaeological] sites are located, should be made contingent on the provision by the interested parties of funds for the investigation of such sites before construction commences. We cannot prevent urban expansion and industrial development, but by intelligent legislation they could be turned from a bane to a boon to archaeology.

Throughout the late 1970s several major project-related review processes were being developed initially under the guidance of the then provincial Environment and Land Use Committee (ELUC) Secretariat. This eventually resulted in the publication of a series of development-specific assessment guidelines: the Guidelines of Linear Development (ELUC 1977), Guidelines for Coal Exploration (MEMPR 1981), the Energy Project Review Process (MEMPR 1982), the Mine Development Review Process (MEMPR 1987) and the Major Project Review Process (MoE and MRED 1989). Those guidelines all have one thing in common: they were designed to provide a phased environmental impact assessment review process, to be co-ordinated with normal development planning procedures.

Also during the 1970s, archaeological resource management programmes were being developed in many parts of the United States (where they are more commonly called Cultural Resource Management). In view of those initiatives, the Archaeology Branch (then the Resource Management Division of the Heritage Conservation Branch) supported the development of their own impact assessment guidelines for Heritage Resources in British Columbia (Germann 1982). Those guidelines combined the format of the existing provincial environmental review processes with much of the archaeological resource management being developed in the United States (McGimsey and Davis 1977).

The introduction of impact assessment guidelines in 1982 allowed the Branch to provide development proponents with reference information. Developers appreciated a sense of security that there was now a defined process respecting archaeological resource management, including suggestions of how best to address expectations. It was apparent from numerous experiences of the 1970s that development proponents were willing to do what was required as long as the requirements were stated "up front" and that the rules did not constantly change. This, of course, did not preclude the occasional situation where re-assessment of management options was required.

Two particular examples of this are worth discussing. The first involved the Nicola to Kelly Lake transmission line project. In 1982, the initial

recommendations for the management of twenty-six recorded archaeological sites located within the right-of-way of the (then proposed) transmission line called for limited mitigation at only eleven of the sites (Warner and Magne 1982). The remaining fifteen sites were considered of insufficient importance to warrant further attention. Upon reviewing the assessment report, the Branch questioned a basic assumption regarding the threat to the archaeological sites. In essence, all sites found within the proposed right-of-way were assumed to be subject to negative impacts from construction if the project went ahead.

That assumption, even today, is a very common failing of archaeological impact assessments. Archaeologists often tend to go into the impact assessment process with the belief that any sites located in an identified development zone will be adversely affected. Rather than assessing potential impacts first, this view instead focuses the study on assessing the archaeological significance of the sites for the purpose of prioritizing potential protection recommendations. While in many cases sites within proposed development areas will indeed receive direct negative impacts, there are also numerous instances where the proposed development does not necessarily have to impact the site negatively. Often a project can be completed in a manner where impacts to sites can be avoided or considerably lessened. The immediate focus of these studies, therefore, should be on the exact nature of the development and how it will impact on sites (Archaeology Branch 1992:10). In any archaeological impact assessment study, site protection, where feasible, should always be considered first.

In the case of the Nicola-Kelly Lake transmission line, the Branch and B.C. Hydro engineers found that by careful and specific alteration of construction practices, *all* sites within the right-of-way could be avoided by construction activities irrespective of site significance. In fact, long-term site protection could be enhanced by being located within the right-of-way, by virtue of the fact that no future development would be likely to threaten them. Although a postconstruction field review found that some sites had suffered disturbances in the form of limited surface damage along their edges due to the sites being slightly larger than initially defined, the lessons learned have been useful in avoiding similar situations in subsequent projects. In fact, as part of that project, B.C. Hydro developed an Environmental Procedures Manual for transmission line construction which includes specific reference to archaeological and heritage site protection and management (B.C. Hydro 1985: 4-5).

The second example involves a situation where mitigative excavations recovered more data than anticipated, requiring additional support fund-

ing. In the early 1980s, Cominco Ltd. began plans for expanding their open-pit copper mining operations in the Highland Valley, near Ashcroft, B.C. A number of archaeological sites were found to be unavoidably threatened within the project area, and mitigative excavations were required (Stryd and Lawhead, 1983, Lawhead, Stryd and Curtin 1986). Considerably more data than expected were recovered. These provided new contributions to the local and regional culture history, particularly with regard to the definition of the Quiltantan Complex, Lochnore Phase, and revision of the Lehman Phase. New information on habitation structures as well as the function and age of microblades was also recovered, including the development of new methodological advances in "shallow site" investigations (Lawhead, Stryd and Curtin 1986: 196-197).

Initial funding for the project had not anticipated the wealth of material that was recovered. In consideration of the high scientific significance of this information, the Branch requested that the proponent provide considerably more funding than originally called for to complete the analysis. The company complied with that request, and instead of resenting having to underwrite the archaeological research in the Highland Valley, they commissioned a professional writer to prepare a story on the work, which became the lead item in the company quarterly magazine *The Orbit* (Cominco, 1982).

While working to establish an effective impact assessment and management process, the Branch also recognized that implementing an efficient regulatory programme requires a reliable and up-to-date resource system, with procedures that are understood by all users. Responsibility for the provincial site inventory had been transferred from the Royal B.C. Museum to the Archaeology Branch in 1981. Dramatic growth of the inventory throughout the 1970s had outstripped the ability to monitor and review data entry records and compromised the standardization essential for a computerized data base. This problem was further compounded by the need to keep up with rapidly changing technology. It was not enough to make changes in recording formats and computer programmes and simply download old records into each new programme as they became available. "Cleaning up" the records in the existing data base (then exceeding 13,000), while adding several hundred new records each year, was a major task during the 1980s.

In addition to upgrading the site inventory, other new challenges were developing within archaeological resource management. Demands for the recognition and protection of cultural resources not previously considered "archaeological" in nature were beginning to surface. These resources in-

cluded natural landscape features important in aboriginal mythology, as well as resource procurement sites such as berry-picking or bulb-digging areas. While the significance of these "Traditional Cultural Resources" (Parker and King, 1991) to any particular cultural group may be highly valued, existing legislation offered few, if any, legal mechanisms to affect site protection. For example, in the late 1970s, a number of scarring features on living trees, particularly cedar, were gaining some notoriety as examples of past cultural practices. The term "Culturally Modified Tree" (CMT) was soon introduced into the archaeological lexicon of the Pacific Northwest. While it was unquestionably true that most cultural practices involving the use of forest resources would leave distinctive scars if practised on standing trees, it was also true that natural processes could leave similar scars. In fact, given the extensive history of non-aboriginal use of forest resources in B.C., many scars on standing trees may be cultural but not necessarily induced by pre-contact aboriginal peoples. This raised a major conundrum for archaeologists: here were examples of past human activity, which should be considered archaeological features and therefore should be respected for their intrinsic value with respect to interpreting past activities; but how does one distinguish cultural modifications from natural modifications?; and what constitutes a CMT site?

Among the province's cultural resource managers, CMTs soon became an area of interest with the Meares Island debate of 1983-1984 bringing much of this issue to a head. Logging proposals by MacMillan Bloedel had incorporated archaeological site data and provided for site protection. However, no recognition was made for CMTs. At the request of the Archaeology Branch, MacMillan Bloedel agreed to underwrite investigation of these features, and with Branch guidance developed terms of reference to address the basic questions of what constitutes a CMT and a CMT site. The Meares Island study (Eldridge, Eldridge and Stryd 1984) complemented another CMT study on the Queen Charlotte Islands which the Branch had also commissioned in co-operation with MacMillan Bloedel (Bernick 1984). Those studies provided early guidance in recognizing CMTs, but the question of what constitutes a valid CMT site still causes problems today, as discussed in the Stryd and Eldridge paper in this volume. This issue will continue to be a challenge in the 1990s.

The Meares Island controversy also marked the appearance of a new strategy by aboriginal representatives and others, to define traditional cultural resources as "archaeological" sites in the (mistaken) belief that the Heritage Conservation Act would provide protection (Wickwire 1991). Unfortunately, the Heritage Conservation Act, as noted earlier,

provides automatic protection for only a handful of specifically defined site types, all archaeological in nature. It does not, however, provide protection for all archaeological sites. Redefining what constitutes an archaeological site, without changing the legislation, does not broaden the types of sites protected by that legislation.

The lack of automatic legal protection for traditional cultural sites did not mean those resources were ignored, and the Heritage Conservation Branch renewed efforts to have the heritage legislation reviewed and amended. Staff at both the Heritage Conservation Branch and the Archaeology Branch have continually recommended changes to the HCA (1977), virtually from the time it was first passed. In fact, in 1979 a task force was established to recommend amendments to the HCA. That group found the Act's shortcomings to be so pervasive that it recommended passage of entirely new legislation. Unfortunately, the issue was not considered significant enough by the government of the day, and no action was taken. Over the next seven years, staff continued, to no avail, to put forth proposals for band-aid amendments to deal with the most serious problems, including limitations on site types protected, the statute of limitations restrictions, and the meagre penalties.

A new government in 1987 brought with it a promise to develop new policy directions and engage the public in the policy process, opening a window of opportunity for achieving legislative change. In the fall of 1987, the Heritage Conservation Branch, with full ministry support, initiated the Project Pride review process. A preliminary discussion paper was developed and mailed to all heritage organizations, post-secondary educational institutions, and aboriginal bands and tribal councils throughout the province, with an invitation to provide comment and recommendations. Another task force was established and sponsored public hearings and community forums throughout the province. Nearly four hundred submissions were received and summarized in a report entitled *Stewardship and Opportunity*, released in December 1987 (Project Pride 1987). Subsequently, a government White Paper was released in January 1990 (B.C. 1990), followed by a second White Paper released in March 1991 (B.C. 1991). On 6 July 1993, the B.C. legislature gave first reading to Bill 70, the Heritage Conservation Statutes Amendment Act, 1993.

During that same time period, the Archaeology Branch began to formally require ethnographic study components to be included in Branch-funded archaeological impact assessments and other related projects. Direct consultation with local aboriginal elders, or other long-time residents in a particular area of study, has long been recognized as a first step in

conducting research, in both resource management and academic research projects. Unfortunately, direct consultation between archaeologists and aboriginal groups began to decline during the 1970s and 1980s while, at the same time, demands from aboriginal groups for consultation were on the rise. The desire for stronger aboriginal involvement in archaeological site protection and management was forcefully brought out during the Project Pride review, and remains a difficult issue in developing a new Heritage Conservation Act.

The effective integration of aboriginal concerns into archaeological research and resource management is crucial to the creation of a responsible and productive management regime. Developing co-operative management programmes that fully involve aboriginal people will be necessary where sites of aboriginal ancestry are under consideration. In addition, the encouragement of local and regional community management of archaeological resources is also gaining considerable momentum, complementing aboriginal initiatives. These challenges will forge much of the government's regulatory role in archaeology throughout the 1990s.

STEWARDSHIP/EDUCATION/ARTIFACT CONSERVATION

The Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM) had its beginnings in a petition submitted to the provincial government by a group of influential citizens in Victoria in January 1886. That petition articulated the need for raising public consciousness about stewardship and educational matters concerning the province's heritage (Corley-Smith 1989): "It has long been felt desirable that a Provincial museum should be established in order to preserve specimens of the natural products and Indian Antiquities and Manufacture of the Province and to classify and exhibit the same for the information of the public" (Begbie et al 1886). Their efforts eventually culminated in the establishment of the Provincial Museum of Natural History (later named the "British Columbia Provincial Museum," and presently, the "Royal British Columbia Museum."

Although the Provincial Museum was effectively born in 1886, it was not until 1913 that the Provincial Museum of Natural History and Anthropology Act was passed, formally providing the institution with enabling legislation to

- a) . . . secure and preserve specimens illustrating the natural history of the Province:
- b) . . . collect anthropological material relating to the aboriginal races [*sic*] of the Province:

- c) obtain information respecting the natural sciences relating to the natural history of the Province, and to increase and diffuse knowledge regarding the same.

It is interesting to note, from an archaeological perspective, that while the collection of cultural material was identified as a function of the museum, the focus of the museum's educational roles was the research and interpretation of the province's natural history. Archaeology, as a discipline of anthropology, was apparently not seen as an educational interest area. Anthropological goals were focused primarily on collecting and exhibiting symbols of the living aboriginal cultures occupying the province at the time of contact with non-aboriginal people.

Focused integration of anthropological research into the operations of the museum effectively began in 1950 when Wilson Duff was hired as an assistant in anthropology. While the position had been established in 1944, and previously held by A. E. Pickford until 1948, Duff was the first professionally trained anthropologist hired by the museum.

Duff's interest area was primarily ethnology, and during his tenure he played a pivotal role in the development of dialogue and partnerships between the museum and aboriginal peoples that embodied a respectful and culturally sensitive philosophy for anthropological research at that institution which continues to the present day (Inglis and Abbott 1991). In his first year at the museum, Duff also began raising concerns about the loss of archaeological sites in the province threatened by major hydro-electric projects then under consideration. (Duff 1950).

In collaboration with Charles Borden at the University of British Columbia, Duff lobbied both the provincial and federal governments to establish legislation to protect archaeological sites (Apland 1992). In 1951, he proposed that the Provincial Museum and the University of British Columbia could combine resources to provide the necessary archaeological programme to mitigate site losses due to hydro-electric development (Duff 1951). These efforts led to the first archaeological impact assessment project undertaken in British Columbia, and possibly in Canada, the 1952 Nechako Reservoir Study in Tweedsmuir Park (Borden 1952).

In 1967, passage of a new Museums Act clearly mandated anthropological research by the provincial museum for the first time. Prior to that time, the museum had occasionally provided support services to the Archaeological Sites Advisory Board, as mentioned earlier. After passage of the new legislation, the museum took on more directed archaeological research initiatives, including a major excavation project at False Narrows in 1967

(B.C. 1968), excavations at Active Pass (Helen Point and Georgeson Bay) in 1968 (B.C. 1969), initiation of archaeological surveys and site investigations in provincial parks, as well as the beginning of a major multi-year research programme of Hesquiat Harbour, in collaboration with the Hesquiat Band in 1971 (B.C. 1972). Other initiatives included new joint ventures with the National Museum with the computerized "Canadian Historic Inventory Network" (CHIN) and a joint research venture with the Canadian Armed Services on the Central Coast (the Raleigh Passage project) in 1973 (B.C. 1974); initiation of a collections and research protocol with the Songhees Band in 1975 (Songhees and BCPM 1975), and a major mitigative excavation at Duke Point in 1978 (B.C. 1979). The museum also completed a major human history exhibit focusing on aboriginal cultural developments in British Columbia in 1977.

The expansion of archaeological studies throughout the 1970s resulted in the museum acquiring a massive collection of artifacts and other associated material. In the early 1980s, the impact of funding restraints imposed by the government began to raise fundamental problems for the museum. For all intents and purposes, curation and storage costs for collections are fixed costs inextricably tied to inflation rates. The necessity of adapting to an environment of decreasing funding throughout the 1980s and continuing today required a critical review of existing programmes within the museum. To bring new collections into the system would not be appropriate if proper care could not be ensured. Research soon focused on existing in-house collections and on collaborative projects with other agencies. For example, during the mid-1980s, the RBCM conducted a major archaeological and ethnological study of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve in collaboration with the Nuu-chal-nulth peoples and the Canadian Parks Service. In addition, other programmes and services were also re-evaluated. For instance, maintenance of the provincial site inventory was not considered to be a museum function, and it was transferred to the Archaeology Branch in 1981.

Continued downward pressure on support funding forced the RBCM executive, as it has all museums across the country, to begin to examine more seriously basic philosophical issues relating to collection stewardship responsibilities — a process which had begun during the 1970s. Adding to the programmatic pressures at that time, escalating desires by aboriginal peoples to take control of their own heritage were being articulated through demands for "repatriation of artifacts" from museums.

In British Columbia, as in other areas of North America, those issues often publicly focused on collections which contained human skeletal re-

mains. Socio-political issues, expressed in terms of morality and ethics, evoked considerable public sympathy for correcting a perceived injustice. Not surprisingly, however, concerns of this nature were much more complex than they appeared on the surface. Wider issues of legal encumbrances and professional ethics had to be examined. For example, in 1989, the museum was approached by a group of aboriginal people from Washington State, and was asked to turn over some human skeletal remains recovered from an archaeological site at Vallican in the Slocan Valley in 1981. While not involved in the collection of those remains, the RBCM was holding them in its role as a provincial repository. The people making the request stated that the remains were those of their ancestors and that they wished to have them reburied at the site.

Reburial of those remains, on the site from which they had come, was not considered an unreasonable request by the province. Unfortunately, the passage of the new Cemetery and Funeral Services Act (1989) (CFSA) at that time appeared to hinder that request. Section 56 stated it was an offence to remove or attempt to remove human remains, or any part of human remains, from the place they are held or interred.

Compounding this situation, in 1981, the archaeologist in charge of the Vallican project had been consulting with the Lower Kootenay Band at Creston, as recommended by permit policy (Government policy for archaeological permits then, as now, recommends that archaeologists consult with local Indian bands if human remains are encountered during an excavation). The band indicated support for the procedures respecting the handling of human remains at the time (Mohs 1981). In light of these circumstances, the museum indicated they would require some time to ensure there would be no legal impediments to a transfer (Hoover 1989).

Unfortunately, that communication was interpreted by the original request group as a strategy by the museum to avoid implementing the transfer. Public statements were issued raising considerable controversy. That controversy also brought claims of ancestry from other groups of aboriginal peoples, and the museum was faced with having to decide who had the best claim of ancestry. While the museum worked to bring all involved aboriginal groups together to sort out the issue, there developed a public perception of government stalling and inaction. A publicly funded institution such as the museum must ensure that all issues of potential liability are taken seriously. If the museum had proceeded in addressing the first request without question, and another group subsequently demonstrated a better claim of ancestry, litigation involving breach of trust could possibly have resulted.

Prehistoric archaeological material, especially material dating back many thousands of years, is particularly susceptible to these problems. In consideration of growing trends in "repatriation" claims, the Royal British Columbia Museum formally developed a policy on the transfer of cultural material and human osteological remains (RBCM 1989). That policy sets out the procedures that should be employed by any group who may feel they have a special claim to collections housed in the museum in order to make a request for possession of that material.

The strong economic and socio-political issues arising in the 1980s resulted in a critical re-evaluation of the government's role in archaeological heritage stewardship, education, and artifact conservation by institutions such as the RBCM. Fundamental questions concerning cultural authority, ownership, and collections management have been raised and are still not adequately answered. Re-defining those roles in an environment that maintains the long-established museum ethic of sensitivity to and respect for the needs and aspirations of aboriginal peoples will continue to bring major challenges for the museum throughout the 1990s.

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