

# Trustee Notebook *David Graham*



Islands Trust

On July 31<sup>st</sup>, Trustee Borthwick and I were invited by members of K'omoks First Nation (FN) to accompany them on a site visit, here on Denman. We were joined by Islands Trust Planners - Narrisa Chadwick and Margot Thomaidis, Qualicum FN Chief - Michael Recalma, Daniel Smallacombe - Natural Resource Officer in the Compliance and Enforcement Branch and Lia Tarle, Raini Bevilacqua and Jesse Morin - K'omox FN Archaeology Branch members, as well as a number of other K'omok members whose names and titles I did not get for this article.

The purpose of the invitation was to walk the area of one of four K'omok Village sites on Denman Island. This particular site covered beach and uplands on lower Lacon Rd. It is a substantial site; dating back thousands of years, based on archaeological evidence, and has been substantially disturbed by residential construction and landscaping.

Based on the size of the site, by the depth of shell middens in the area etc, experts suggest that the village population would have been in the hundreds. This strategic village site would have provided excellent visual access to travelers coming from the southern Salish Sea etc.

As we walked the gently sloping coast line of this village, FN archaeologists pointed out "fire cracked" rocks (a common remnant of earth oven cooking facilities) and simple stone tools, scattered amongst beach stones.

It was easy for me to imagine the sounds of children playing on the beach, and turning inland, to imagine the living and working structures that would have existed along the shore of this once busy village.

So what does this all mean to those of us living on Denman now?

The Heritage Conservation Act (HCA) protects public and private lands which include recorded FN archaeological sites, as well as sites that have not yet been recorded. HCA protection applies even if a site has been disturbed in the past. Construction, renovations and landscaping can damage and destroy an archaeological site. Property owners and developers have a legal responsibility to ensure archaeological sites are not disturbed without appropriate permits in place.

There are four steps to follow if you know, or suspect you own land containing archaeological evidence of a site:

- 1) Submit a free Archaeological Information Request [www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca](http://www.archdatarequest.nrs.gov.bc.ca) or contract a professional archaeologist.
- 2) Contact the Housing Navigator Service to determine what authorizations, including local government permits, are needed if you are planning a project which requires land disturbance etc.:

[permitconnectbc.gov.bc.ca/#one-place](http://permitconnectbc.gov.bc.ca/#one-place) and learn about HCA permitting requirements.

- 3) Get a Heritage Inspection Permit which allows an archaeologist to conduct an assessment. This will assist you in protecting a site during any development you have planned.
- 4) If you know you have a site on your property, you will need a HCA Alteration Permit to impact or disturb the site. The permit allows for relocating archaeological material, such as stone tools and bone fragments, in a way that ensures their care. Ground disturbing activities may require the oversight of an archaeologist during excavation or other ground disturbing activities. The province will consult with K'omok FN during the permit application process.

Property owners are responsible for the costs of archaeological work. The costs can be minimized by taking early action and employing a low-impact approach to development. HCA permits and information requests issued by the province are free.

The Archaeology Branch of the Ministry of Forests has an information bulletin that contains a number of low-impact construction methods which can minimize ground disturbances.

Spending time with members of K'omok FN, as we wandered this site, home to their ancestors, we walked amongst the shell middens, a living record of lives lived and lost, of ceremonies held, stories told around fires, and ancient scenes of abundant foods, collected and preserved. This unique experience, left me with a deep sense of wonder and awe.

Sometimes being a Trustee can be frustrating, but participating in this simple but profound witnessing of how things were, here on Denman, for thousands of years, was an amazing experience.

All governments are trying to find their ways through the reconciliation work that we are tasked to do. Talking in circle with K'omox FN members, Trustee Borthwick and I shared our desire of finding ways to work with them, as we do our Trust work of land use planning, and the protection of the natural environment.

**Next meeting of the DLTC will be in October, the 8<sup>th</sup>, at 10am in the Activity Centre Lounge.**