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ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HERITAGE CONSULTING

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Summary of findings: Site DcRu-15 Mitigation and Monitoring; Site Alteration Permit 2018-0058

Archaeological site DcRu-15 is an inland shell midden site located on the northern crest of the Durrell Creek valley in Saanich, BC, near the intersection of Interurban Road and Courtland Avenue[1]. The site is partially within the footprint of a pump station constructed for the Residual Solids Conveyance Line of the Capital Regional District Wastewater Treatment Project (WTP). Site DcRu-15 is situated approximately 800 m upstream of the confluence of Durrell and Colquitz creeks, overlooking the Courtland Flats which Durrell Creek floods during the fall and winter seasons. During summer months, the water level in the creek is much lower, some of its tributaries are dry, and water temperature is too high to support salmon species. Although the creek has been impacted by agricultural practices and diversion, small freshwater fish species[2] have been recorded in the creek. The site is, at its closest, 2.8 km (straight-line) from the ocean, with the next closest shoreline 4.3 km distant.

The site was first recorded archaeologically in 1959, when a property owner reported collecting artifacts including a fine lanceolate point, ground slate point, and other projectile point tips. No archaeological work was conducted at the site until 2018, when a joint effort by Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples was undertaken with Millennia Research in support of the Wastewater Treatment Project.

The archaeological work conducted at the site supports Indigenous knowledge of use and occupancy of the land - the deep historical connections to place, the interconnectedness of places and people, near and far, and continuity of these connections to the present. Radiocarbon dates,

[1] Archaeological site locations are confidential and should not be publicly disseminated
[2] Stickleback, sunfish and sculpin

artifacts, and fauna recovered during field work at DcRu-15 indicate that the investigated area of the site was occupied repeatedly over at least the last four thousand years, and was a likely seasonal base for deer hunting. Many artifacts recovered from the site appear associated with tool manufacture and hunting, with other multipurpose/other artifacts likely used in animal and plant processing. An abundance of deer bones, especially lower limb bones, many of which appear burned or calcined from exposure to high temperatures, was recorded. These findings suggest that, among other day-today activities, deer hunting and processing were focal activities of people living at the site.

Radiocarbon dating of a charcoal sample collected from a hearth feature during archaeological hand excavations returned a date of 4,800-4,450 years before present (cal BP), providing the minimum earliest (oldest) date of activity at the site. This radiocarbon date does not preclude the possibility of older occupations not identified in the archaeological data. The youngest radiocarbon dates returned from the site are between 1,815-1,620 cal BP. Input from the field crew indicates that use of the area as a hunting location continued within the lifespan of crew members.

A diverse range of faunal remains were recovered, likely reflecting planned use of the area rather than opportunistic hunting or resource extraction, with transport of fresh foodstuffs[3] from shoreline locales and hunting of immediately available resources, as found in the faunal assemblage. These animal foods include:

- seven identified saltwater fish species (no freshwater fish);
- five non-domesticated land mammal species, including harbour seal;
- six identified bird species; and,
- seven identified shellfish species.

Blacktail deer remains were the most common mammal bone identified from the site. Many of the deer bones were burned or calcined from being exposed to high temperatures. Dogfish were the most common fish element recovered. Salmon too, were present in relatively high numbers. Analysis of the fish remains suggests that residents were travelling from this location to marine water to fish or transporting fish inland to support an extended stay. The same is suggested for the shellfish remains which, being transported fresh, suggest, perhaps repeated travel to and from the site. At least seven shellfish species from a range of environmental contexts were identified.

Missing from the record is direct evidence of plant harvesting and use. The Courtland Flats wetland would undoubtedly have been an appealing area for the gathering of vegetal foodstuffs and resources used for basketry, clothing and numerous everyday implements. The absence of these materials may be a result of poor preservational conditions within the investigated area of the site.

The artifact assemblage suggests that activities at the site were varied. A total of 156 artifacts were recovered during field work at site DcRu-15 (Table 1 lists all artifacts by type and material). Artifacts are associated with hunting; tool manufacturing; and multipurpose activities, many of which could have been used for processing plant and animal remains. A selection of the artifacts is presented below and photos are found at the end of this document.

[3] As opposed to preserved foods

Hunting tools consist of the 19 ground slate, 13 chipped stone, and two bone projectile points and comprise 38% of recovered artifacts. Projectile points could have been part of an arrow, spear, or harpoon head. Diagnostic projectile point styles (points that are known to have occurred in a specific time period) range broadly from 9,000 uncalibrated radiocarbon years before present (BP) to 200 years BP. Of the diagnostic points, over half consist of long, thin, ground slate point that are hexagonal (six-sided) in cross section (examples shown in Figure 1). It is likely that the points were made on site, rather than being brought in as numerous pieces of slate debris are present in the site and several artifacts show slate being reduced in various stages. These long, thin, ground slate points are most commonly found between 3,500-1,100 BP but are also found in later assemblages as well. Remaining diagnostic artifacts consist of one serrated point, six contracting stem points, two barbed points, two foliate points, and two triangular slate preforms (artifacts shown in Figures 2, 3 and 4). These points are less temporally diagnostic and are associated with a wide range of dates between 9,000-200 years BP.

Multifunction tools include four microblades (shown in Figure 5). Microblades may have been used in a wide range of activities including plant and animal processing. X-ray fluorescent analysis of one microblade was traced to Whitewater Ridge in Oregon. Whitewater Ridge is one of several obsidian sources located near the headwaters of Oregon's Deschutes and John Day rivers that comprise a significant portion of obsidian artifacts from archaeological sites across southern British Columbia, signifying established and long-term trading relationships. Microblades are commonly found in deposits dated between 2,400-1,600 BP, however they are also present in assemblages as old as 3,500 BP.

Ground stone adze DcRu-15:77 (Figure 6) is made from green nephrite and has a single beveled distal end with a flat proximal end. Nephrite adzes are usually considered indicative of woodworking; however, they may also have been used for ceremonial, warfare and animal processing purposes. Differential polish wear is visible on the edges, likely a result of the hafted/used components of the adze. There is use wear damage on the distal end and edges on the non-beveled (flat) side. Adzes are commonly found from 3,500 BP onwards.

Four artifacts recovered from site DcRu-15 have been classified as manuports and have characteristics similar to sling stones. They were first identified in the field by Ina James of Pauquachin First Nation, who recognized the uniform, smooth, ovoid shape as characteristic of sling stones. All are small, spherical or ovoid pebbles of either dacite/basalt or quartzite. Their size and shape fall within the range of sling stone variation detailed in a report on an assemblage of sling stones found in Pitt Polder; these manuports are naturally spherical and ovoid stones displaying no evidence of modifications. The size and shape of the identified sling stones fall within the range described in the Pit Polder report.

Sling stone technology is usually associated with hunting birds. While birds are not strongly represented in the faunal assemblage recovered for the investigated position of the site, the species identified include those found in inland near wetland environments such as created by Durrell Creek, which is still an attractive location for waterfowl. Waterfowl congregate at Courtland Flats primarily in winter, with 13 species, including mallards, recorded in winter and

spring counts[4]. Ethnographic place-name data reflects use of sling stones. Swartz Bay is known as *S,JELKES* in the SENĆOŦEN language, which means "hand sling" and *s-CHUL-kus*, a type of sling.

As noted in correspondence with the communities, five bone fragments identified as either ancestral human or likely human remains were identified and recovered during excavation and screening. Guidance on care of the remains and the crew working at the site was provided by knowledgeable community members; these remains are currently awaiting reburial in blankets in the Grave house established at Mill Hill for this purpose. The presence of ancestral human remains at the site is consistent with its interpretation of a repeat or longer-term occupation, one that was revisited over the course of millennia.

Table 1. Summary of artifacts recovered from site DcRu-15 by artifact and material type.

Object	Antler	Basalt/Dacite	Bone	Chalcedony	Chert	Diorite	Igneous	Metamorphic	Nephrite	Obsidian	Quartz	Quartzite	Sandstone	Slate	Object Total
Abrader													3		**3**
Adze									1						**1**
Biface		2												1	**3**
Blade		1								3					**4**
Core, Informal		5												1	**6**
Flake Debitage		57			3			1		3				3	**67**
Flake Tool		8													**8**
Graver										1					**1**
Ground/Pecked Stone							1		1				3	1	**6**
Hammerstone		1				2									**3**
Manuport		2									2				**4**
Ornament			1												**1**
Point		6	2	1	1			2				1		21	**34**
Worked Antler	2														**2**
Worked Bone			13												**13**
Material Total	**2**	**82**	**16**	**1**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**7**	**2**	**1**	**6**	**27**	**156**

Overall, the findings indicate the site is archaeologically highly significant with a range of artifact types and faunal remains, inferred site uses and dates. While not a unique site type, inland sites such as DcRu-15 are relatively poorly understood regionally, despite the significant archaeological data they can contribute to informing and supporting existing understandings of the past. While the site is also assumed to be highly culturally significant for the same reasons, the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ are best suited to comment on the site's cultural significance.

While archaeological ways of understanding the past are limited by material constraints, we trust this summary of the archaeological materials found at DcRu-15 provides a glimpse at the long, rich history of Indigenous occupation of the area now referred to as the CRD.

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References

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Figure 1: from left to right, hexagonal ground slate point catalogue IDs: DcRu-15:52, 107, 49, 103, 27, 94, 95b, 99.

Figure 2: from left to right: foliate point DcRu-15:140, biface DcRu-15:132, foliate point DcRu-15:123, biface DcRu-15:131.

Figure 3: from left to right: point DcRu-15:139, DcRu-15:142, DcRu-15:2, DcRu-15:146, DcRu-15:147.

Figure 4: from left to right: point DcRu-15:144, DcRu-15:141, DcRu-15:145, DcRu-15:143, DcRu-15:46.

Figure 5: from left to right, microblades: DcRu-15:8, 148, 120, 121.

Figure 6: Ground adze DcRu-15:77.

Figure 7: from top to bottom, left to right, manuports: DcRu15:134, 133, 135, 136.