

Craig Bay Heritage Land

Qil-xe-mait

History

The waterfront land that lies between the Craig Bay community and the Salish Sea is not only a lovely space – it is also a significant archaeological site that is sacred to the local Snaw-naw-as First Nation.

The developer of Craig Bay Estates had planned to build on the site, until excavation activity in 1994 unearthed over 100 ancient graves. Upon further investigation by the Archaeology Branch of the BC government, it was determined that a First Nations village called Qil-xe-mait was located on the site some 4,000 years ago. Several thousand artefacts were found at the site, along with hundreds of First Nations graves.

Given the archaeological significance of this site, the Province purchased the land from the developer in 1995.

In 2011, the Snaw-naw-as First Nation held a ceremony on the site to re-inter the bones that had been unearthed during the 1994 excavation.

Status of the Heritage Land

The Province owns the Heritage Land. Neither the Craig Bay community nor the City of Parksville has authority over this land. We do, however, have a right of access over the land, and as members of the public, some obligations with respect to the usage of the land.

1. Our Obligations

The Heritage Land is protected under the BC *Heritage Conservation Act*. The land is considered to be a heritage site under the *Act*, as it has heritage value to British Columbia, and to the First Nations people.

The *Heritage Conservation Act* sets out the activities that are prohibited on heritage sites. These include:

- Damaging or desecrating the site;
- Removing a heritage object from the site;
- Damaging, desecrating or altering a burial place;
- Excavating, digging or altering the site.

While the Province has not, to date, established additional policies or regulations with respect to the usage of the Heritage Land, the Archaeology Branch has requested that the land be treated in a respectful manner. Respectful use of the land includes:

- no picnics, sports activities, fires or camping;
- ensuring that dogs are kept under control.

2. Our Access Rights

As part of the 1995 purchase agreement between the Province and Craig Bay Estates Ltd., the Province granted an access easement and restrictive covenant with respect to the Heritage Land.

The Access Easement (EJ63550) gives Craig Bay residents and the general public a right of access over the Heritage Land for the purpose of using the land as a provincial park.

The Restrictive Covenant (EJ63552) prohibits the construction of a building or other structure on the Heritage Land. (The restriction does not apply to the construction of park improvements, such as fencing, benches and signage.)

Both the access easement and the restrictive covenant are registered on individual Craig Bay strata lot titles.

3. Maintenance Obligations

Craig Bay

Through a storm drainage easement agreement (ET12286), the Province has given Craig Bay the responsibility to maintain the watercourse running through the heritage lands to drain storm water from the pond system.

The Province

As owner of the Heritage Land, the Province is responsible for general maintenance of the land. The Archaeology Branch (Department of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development) oversees annual maintenance activities, which focus on fire hazard reduction and noxious weed suppression. Over the past several years, the Archaeology Branch has contracted with the Snaw-naw-as First Nation to conduct the annual grass cutting.

The City of Parksville

The Province has granted a statutory right of way to the City of Parksville for the purpose of maintaining storm and sewer pipes, and facilitating emergency access to the beach.

Future of the Heritage Land

For a number of years, the Province and the Snaw-naw-as First Nation have been in discussions off and on with respect to the future of the Heritage Lands. These discussions have focused on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two parties to acknowledge the cultural importance of the land, and to further protect the land. The Craig Bay strata councils, through the Presidents' Round Table, have formed a Heritage Lands Committee to monitor these discussions as they occur, and to liaise with the Archaeology Branch.

Craig Bay residents Rick Barrette and Susan Wismer are currently the designated representatives on the Heritage Lands Committee. The 4 key priorities of the Committee are to ensure:

- continued ownership of the property by the Province;
- continued pedestrian access across the property;
- continued maintenance access to the watercourse that empties our pond system into the bay; and
- consistently applied maintenance standards for the property.

Appendices

1. Purchase Agreement: Province of British Columbia and Craig Bay Estates Ltd (1995)
2. [Access Easement EJ63550](#)
3. [Restrictive Covenant EJ 63552](#)
4. [Storm Drainage Easement Agreement ET12286](#)
5. [History of the Heritage Lands \(2018\)](#)
6. [BC Heritage Conservation Act](#)