

Archaeology Update: “Call Before You Dig”

Archaeological texts claim that, with the pace of global development, in 50 years there will be no undisturbed archaeological sites left. While I tell my introductory students this, I never really believed it applied to us in British Columbia.

After spending the past two years in the Fraser Valley searching out known ancient village sites, and observing how impacted even the most remote of them are, I realize that this statistic is very much about our home.

Here on Lasqueti, where we are lucky to have an abundance of archaeological sites, our heritage record is also threatened. I have seen a variety of sites across the island and there are none that are not at least somewhat altered by past and current land use. Many have been largely destroyed. This destruction is on-going at the same exponential rate that is happening in the rest of B.C. and world-wide. We continue to build on archaeological sites without trying to minimize the disturbance to the sites -- and some of us even dig local sites to augment our personal collection of artifacts.

Archaeology sites are more than a collection of artifacts – they are a detailed history of the lives lived in one spot. The spatial relationship of the artifacts to each other and to the layers of sediment are an essential part of telling that story. Without these details, the artifacts become little more than curios – isolated, incomprehensible fragments of a once rich history.

I have some suggestions to encourage the preservation of the archaeological heritage on Lasqueti:

1. If at all possible, avoid any disturbance to an archaeological site. If a project can be moved or altered to avoid a site, do so. Perhaps we could train some community members to recognize different kinds of archaeological sites and form a sort of community archaeological team that could be called upon for advice.
2. In cases where disturbance to a site is unavoidable, it is important to salvage as much information from the site as possible. Though it is more problematic, perhaps the community archaeological team could be trained to do basic archaeological excavation (including taking appropriate notes). Then, when people want to do a building project on Lasqueti, they could call the archaeological team in before they begin work.
3. Several people have asked me about conducting an archaeological excavation on Lasqueti, for instance, in the context of my SFU Archaeology field school. I hope to do this in the next few years—perhaps we could think about excavating parts of already damaged sites or ones that will be disturbed in the future.

4. I encourage Islanders to call me to see your sites if you are planning to dig/develop in them. If at all possible, I will try and come by and we can figure out a game plan to minimize impact.

To me, a defining thing about being a Lasquetian is knowing that we are privileged to live here and that it is our responsibility to look after this magical place. I am eager to discuss with people about how we might best take care of our archaeological heritage. Please call or email anytime.

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Apple Survey

We are planning on putting in a SMALL orchard and have been asking people advice about “the best” apple trees to plant. Naturally, we have gotten as many possible responses as there are apples.

So, we thought we’d try a “formal” survey. People can write or call us with responses, and we will submit the tallies in the Isle and Times.

In your opinion, what is the best Lasqueti apple variety in the following categories? Please consider things like, how long taste and texture last after picking, resistance to disease, and drought tolerance. We like an apple that is crispy.

Early harvest

Mid season harvest

Late fall harvest

Keeper

Best for drying

Best for baking/cooking

Best hardest and tartest overall

Best hardest and sweetest overall

Thank! Happy apple eating.

Dana and Ken (333-8860, 604 929-6678, dlepofsk@sfu.ca)