yiyχmɛštəm qʷaqʷtəm
Willow Creek Stewardship

October 1, 2026

What Does Archaeology Have to Do With Flood Risk Mitigation in Willow Creek?

As χʷɛmaɬkʷu works to mitigate flood risks around the community and plan for risk-reducing infrastructure upgrades and developments, we also are taking care to assess our lands for the possibility of finding archaeological heritage materials.

Flooding events pose a risk to archaeological resources, where fast-moving water can wash away surface materials and substrates, exposing buried heritage materials to damage. Development and construction can also pose a risk by disturbing or damaging heritage materials when we dig into the ground. So while we work to plan new culverts to reduce flood risk in our community, we are also checking the substrates and floodplains near those sites for the possibility of finding archaeological materials. The goal is that we can preserve any potential findings at the sites where we plan to build larger, more capable culverts, and that these new larger culverts can prevent flooding in our community while also preventing flood risk to potential archaeological sites elsewhere in the Willow Creek watershed and floodplain.

Earlier this year in January, In Situ Archaeology and the χʷɛmaɬkʷu Guardians conducted an archaeological impact assessment (AIA) at 3 geotechnical test sites on Homathco Drive. No archaeological heritage resources were found in the test sites; the substrates under Homathco Drive have low potential for archaeological heritage findings, since the substrates have been heavily disturbed in the past from road, culvert, and powerline installations, and from logging activities.

Then, in March, In Situ and the Guardians conducted a preliminary field reconnaissance surface survey of our χʷɛmaɬkʷu-owned lands in Campbell River. Again, no archaeological resources were found. However... (continued on next page) -->

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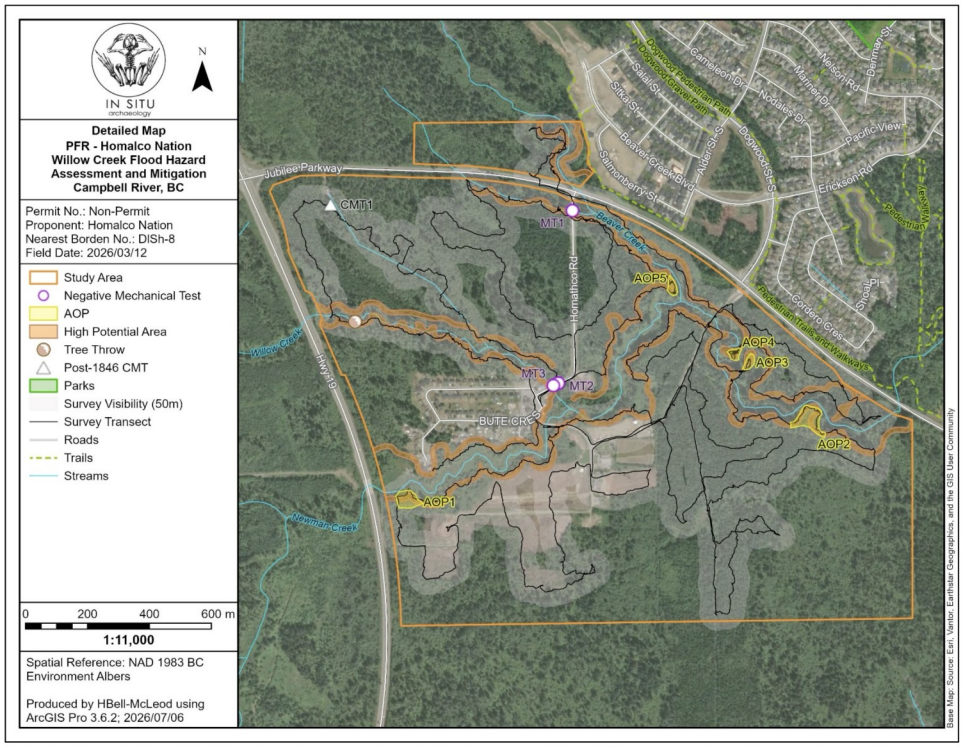
the team identified 5 areas of high archaeological potential (AOPs) at well-drained terraces alongside Willow Creek that have had limited disturbance to them. To determine these sites as AOPs, the terrain was visually inspected for archaeological potential, considering factors such as slope, access to resources, general suitability for human habitation, and extent of past disturbances. These AOPs have a higher chance of containing archaeological heritage materials.

Knowing where these AOPs are provides χʷɛmaɬkʷu with much more certainty as to how we move forward with future development projects. We can be more certain where we're able to work without disturbing our archaeological heritage resources, and where we must avoid or take more caution when considering stewardship of our lands. This ultimately helps us protect our heritage, eliminate delays, reduce costs, and plan our future developments more confidently.

Our yiyχmɛštəm qʷaqʷtəm Willow Creek Stewardship continues to be an important component of our community's plans for the future.



Map 2. *Detailed Results Map of the Study Area showing geotechnical test locations, AOPs, CMT 1, and marking out terraces that are higher potential for archaeology.*

Learn more about the Willow Creek Stewardship Project here