

# Meet the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw's Archaeology Team

## Protecting our lands, resources, and culture through archaeology

The Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw's (Squamish Nation's) Archaeology team, part of the Nation's Ta na wa Yúus ta Stitúyntsarh (Rights & Title) department, is relatively new, created in late 2020. Our Nation's archaeology manager, Nick Weber, works with Nation Members, trains Nation specialists and has built a 10-person team in Archaeology. Now, in its sixth year, the Archaeology Department is less reliant on outside consultants, and the majority of the team are Squamish Members.

### Our ACE Team

Among the team are six Archaeology, Culture and Environment (ACE) Technicians that Weber refers to as the 'boots-on-the-ground' for the Nation. The day-to-day work of an ACE varies greatly, from forest sites to city streets. They suit up in personal protective equipment (PPE) most days and monitor municipality or city workers from Vancouver to Squamish to the Sunshine Coast who may be digging a new sewer or replacing a hydro pole. Other days may be spent in our forests looking for evidence of Archaeology sites.

"Their main objective is to be on the lookout for archaeological material (soils, features or belongings) at their worksite, and if found, to flag it for the team, record the information, and help to recover the material. At the same time, they are also making sure that the necessary cultural protocols are being respected by the crew, particularly if ancestral remains are encountered. Trained in the subjects of archaeology, culture, and environment, the technicians use their knowledge to represent the Nation as they work alongside crews conducting or monitoring archaeology assessments. Some ACE Technicians continue their professional development with Simon Fraser University for courses on topics such as lithic (stone tool) analysis, zooarchaeology (animal bone) analysis, and human osteology (human bone) analysis.

Many of the early alumni of the ACE Technician program have gone on to bigger roles within the Nation. This includes Kevin Rivers and Jonny

Williams, who are both now councillors, Amy Baker who moved on to Ta na wa Ns7éyxnitm ta Snewíyelh (Language & Cultural Affairs), and Nick Baker who is now with Ta na wa Yúus ta Stitúyntsarh (Rights & Title) as its City of Vancouver Liaison/Referral Analyst.

***'Our Archaeology Department consults with anyone who wants to develop or build anything within Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Territory'***

### What Does Archaeology Find

As can be imagined, the archaeology team finds a lot of objects.

"Even the smallest of these have a spiritual power as connections with the Ancestors," says Nick "However, some of the most interesting discoveries our team has been involved with have been a massive rock shelter site along the Rainy River on the Sunshine Coast and a pictograph/rock art at the base of Siyárh Smánit (The Chief)."

The archaeology team is working to build stronger connections with cultural authorities and knowledge keepers within the Nation, as well as coordinate regular brushings as spiritual cleansing for team Members who encounter these sacred sites and objects

A risk inherent to the work of the Archaeology Department is looters, or those who seek to profit from ancestral objects. Because of this threat, the team often will not identify the areas of their discoveries, to keep them safe and protected

The mandate of the Rights and Title department exists to protect, preserve, and manage the Nation's rights and title interests, including all its lands, resources, and cultural heritage – including any ancestral objects which may lay hidden.

Archaeology team ACE Technicians examine details on a pictograph (rock art) site near Furry Creek, (left to right) Alex Hall, Matthew Moore, Aaron Skye and Kris Skinner



## PROJECTILE POINT (SPEAR)

**Found:** In June 2023 in site material from just west of Iyálmexw (Jericho Beach).

**Age:** Dates to 2,400-3,500 years old.

**Details:** Made by flintknapping (chipped stone) of Jasper/ chert (an exotic material, likely from the Fraser Canyon). Archaeological evidence from this time period suggests that ancestors were increasingly hunting and eating sea mammals, shellfish and birds — in addition to land mammals.

## PROJECTILE POINT (SPEAR)

**Found:** In June 2025 on Stá7mes Reserve.

**Age:** Based on the shape/style, it dates roughly to 3,500-4,500 years old.

**Details:** This is a fine-grained volcanic stone, typically called Dacite (a type of basalt) originating from a tool stone source at Xwelxwelítn (Watts Point). The material was probably brought by canoe to the water's edge where Squamish People were making hundreds of these types of spearpoints, possibly for trade — an industrial toolmaking workshop.

