

March 8, 2019



### Commission Follows Up on Archaeological Complaint

The BC Oil and Gas Commission (Commission) received a complaint from the Dark House/Unist'ot'en of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation at 3:51 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 14, 2019 regarding cultural artifacts at a work site where construction was underway for an industrial camp (Camp 9A); part of the Coastal GasLink (CGL) Pipeline Project. Camp 9A is situated southwest of Houston, B.C.

The complaint stated two "lithic stone tools" had been found and recovered from Camp 9A by Unist'ot'en supporters and additional artifacts were observed but left in place.

The Commission immediately responded, dispatching a team to the site to determine if CGL was operating in compliance with its permits as well as the broader regulatory framework under the Oil and Gas Activities Act and the Heritage Conservation Act. The team included a senior archaeologist and compliance and enforcement officer from the Commission, supported by an archaeological specialist from the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD). Given the complexities of mobilization as well as security and safety considerations, the team arrived at the site on the afternoon of Friday, February 15.

Observations from the site at the time, included:

- No work was underway at the site. Work had stopped upon notification artifacts may be present.
- An area of the site had been marked off by parties other than CGL. CGL noted this was the area where artifacts were reported to have been seen.
- CGL had established a 100 m buffer around the area as an additional exclusion zone and had not entered the area, which had been graded down to glacial clay deposits.
- Upon entry into the marked area and after some snow clearing, the team observed lithics (stone artifacts) on top of frozen clay soils.
- The lithics were gathered for their protection and further examination under the proper authority of the Heritage Conservation Act.

Subsequent to the site visit, it has been determined:

- The soils upon which the artifacts were found would not typically contain any such cultural artifacts and this was likely not their original location. However, a definitive determination on their exact location of origin can not be made.
- The artifacts referred to in the complaint as "recovered" were not present.

Initial examination of the artifacts is complete. Additional work is ongoing but does not require the further retention of the artifacts. As such, the Archaeology Branch within FLNRORD is working towards the return of the artifacts to the appropriate Indigenous communities.

The Commission's permit for Camp 9A includes a condition governing the steps to be taken should artifacts be discovered during the course of work. This permit condition requires CGL to stop work if heritage objects are found and notify the Commission. The permit further requires CGL to file a

Mitigation Plan acceptable to the Archaeology Branch of FLNRORD before work can resume – that Plan has now been accepted by the Archaeology Branch and the Commission.

The Plan requires CGL to determine if there is additional cultural material on the site by having archaeologists:

- Assess the area surrounding the location where the artifacts were found – if no cultural material is found in this assessment, CGL will be able to resume work on the site.
- Sample the topsoil stockpiled on the edge of the site once it is no longer frozen.
- Supervise construction operations on the site once work restarts.
- Further assess the topsoil when it is spread back on the site during future site reclamation.

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