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A R C H A E O L O G I C A L   A N D   H E R I T A G E   C O N S U L T I N G

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January 7, 2004

Renee Racette  
Woodward and Company

Dear Ms. Racette

Re: Walker's Hook Professional Archaeological Opinion

In my opinion, the Walker's Hook site, inventoried in the Registry of the Archaeology and Registry Services Branch as DfRu-2, is a place of burial and almost certainly habitation of the Coast Salish people. Although some early archaeological theories suggested migration as the explanation for changes in artifacts and human skeletons visible in the archaeological record (Borden 1950, Borden 1951, Hill-Tout 1895), these were replaced by a model of regional population continuity extending over the last 2,000-3,000 years or more (Borden 1968, Borden 1970, Mitchell 1971). No archaeologist has disputed this *in-situ* cultural development model in the forty years since. Burley (1989) has written "there is little doubt of the population continuity between Marpole [ca. 400 BC – AD 400] and Coast Salish people" (bracketed material added). Cultural replacement can be observed in the archaeological record (e.g., Magne and Matson 1982, McMillan and Claire 1982).

The size and depth of DfRu-2 makes it one of the larger sites in the region – the site inventory form gives dimensions of the site as 450 x 80 m and the depth as over 1 m. A site of this size suggests long-term and repeated occupation and use. It is not possible to determine (without further archaeological research or access to material, notes etc. collected under Permit 2003-123) if the habitation was in the form of large longhouses, such as a winter village would have, or a shorter term camp used by one or more families. Features that form around semi-permanent houses are currently absent from the surface, but may have been visible prior to agricultural use of the spit. Substantial amounts of intact shell midden appears to be present at this site, and study of these remains could provide a wealth of information regarding the ancestral inhabitants of the site, their relationships with the environment, their social relationships and how these things change through time. Such study requires that substantial parts of the midden are undisturbed so the relationships between artifacts, ecofacts, features, and stratigraphic layers can provide context to understand the site's development. Northwest Coast shell middens are one of the most complex archaeological formations anywhere and their excavation, analysis, and interpretation require considerable expertise (Stein 1992).

Human burials are likely to be found in any large midden in the Coast Salish area, especially where combined with easily-dug substrate such as is typically found on spits and tombolos. Large scientific excavations of shell middens is relatively rare due to the cost involved, and there

is a limited number of sites on which to base estimates of the number of burials present in a site. However, reasonable estimates can be made using an approach utilized for the East Coast Interceptor major sewer project in Victoria (Eldridge 1990). This approach uses the density of burials found at the Montague Harbour, Galiano Island site (0.13 burials/cubic metre) and the St. Mungo shell midden at the mouth of the Fraser River (0.03 burials/cubic metre) (data from Eldridge 1984, Eldridge 1989, Ham, et al. 1984, Mitchell 1971) as high and low density estimates for burials per cubic metre. The volume of midden dug from the DfRu-2 site for waterline and septic trenches was obtained from the Applications for Permit for Permit 2003-123 (290m x 0.35 m x 0.60m, = 60.9 cu m). Using the high and low densities multiplied by the volume of midden, I obtained an estimate of 2 to 8 burials would likely be found in the trench. According to the permit amendment application, 5 individuals were found. The spanning of the actual value by the high and low estimates suggests that these density values are appropriate to use on this site. The volume of midden for the whole site is estimated as 9000 cubic metres (300m x 50 m x 0.6 m). The high and low numbers of burials expected for the entire site are 270 and 1170 individuals. If the known density (found in the trench) is used, the number of individuals interred here could be 739.

The age of occupation and length of occupation at the DfRu-2 site can not be stated with certainty with the data available to me. Eight artifacts from this site were catalogued with the Royal British Columbia Museum in the 1970s. Sketches of these artifacts were made at the time. The sketches show a large rock tablet with an incised or pecked humanoid face – this is probably a pile driver. Such an artifact suggests the use of wood stake fish weirs nearby, but could also be used in a processing or habitation site to drive the many wood stakes needed. Although probably diagnostic of a particular time period, too few have ever been found in archaeological context to allow a time association. Several of the other artifacts are most likely Marpole or Locarno period (ca 1600-3500 years old). These include a contracting stemmed chipped stone point and what appears to be an ear spool (a large body piercing ornament probably indicative of high social status of the wearer). A flat triangular ground slate point suggests Marpole or Strait of Georgia periods (2400-200 year old). The remainder of the collection appear to be celts, or adze and chisel blades. These date to the Locarno and later periods (3500 BP maximum).

Yours sincerely,

Morley Eldridge, MA, RPCA  
President, Millennia Research Limited

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