



Archaeology within the Cranston Community

Over 50 archaeological sites have been recorded within the community of Cranston. Several sites are historic in nature, meaning they reflect activities associated with European settlement, 1883 onward. Two sites are considered 'multicomponent' meaning the land contained evidence of both a historic settler occupation, and more deeply buried evidence of pre-contact Indigenous activities. The remaining sites reflect pre-contact, Indigenous occupations.

Historic Settler Sites

The historic archaeological sites in Cranston consist of homesteads, farms, dwellings, and middens (historic dumps). Site types were identified archaeologically through features: hearths (fire pits), building foundations, standing structures, and artifacts: glass bottles, bricks, wire, machine parts, coal, slag, and various building materials. The Cranston Farm site reflects activities of a family, who lived on the farm for over 70 years, and is the present-day community's namesake. Archibald Cranston applied for Homestead entry in 1902. Over the years, three generations of Cranston's added to the homestead before the land was sold in 1978. The site was first recorded by Archaeologists in 1996, at which time many of the historic buildings had been dismantled and burned except for a large red dairy barn built circa. 1935-1936, an outhouse, wooden grain sheds, and subsurface features including an underground reservoir, water pumps, and a burning pit. Some of the dismantled buildings' locations were identified using the concrete floor pads and foundations that were still present, along with historic documents and photographs. These buildings included a milk house (1950s), a three-stall garage (1958), a machine shed (1970s), and a dwelling (building date unknown).

Pre-contact Indigenous Sites (Pre-European settlement)

Pre-contact sites recorded in the area reflect habitation campsites. At such sites we often see features such as stone circles (tipis rings), hearths (campfires), faunal remains (bones), and artifacts such as Fire Broken Rock (FBR), stone tools, and the stone waste material left over from making stone tools. Three of the sites recorded were classified as 'isolated finds' which reflect singular artifacts recovered, often from a disturbed context such as a cultivated field. Such sites are indicative of the presence of pre-contact Indigenous groups using the area but rarely provide any other information.

FBR are pieces of rock that have very irregular and angular breaks, which is only caused by intensive and repetitive heating and cooling. This type of artifact is indicative of food preparation using, what Archaeologist's call, a boiling pit. A pit would be excavated into the ground and lined with raw hides prior to being filled with water, plant materials, meat, and bones. Rocks would be heated in an associated fire and then transferred into the boiling pit, causing the water to boil and the food to cook. The rocks would be cycled between the water and fire resulting in the distinctive breakage patterns.

Making and resharpening stone tools results in broken tools and stone waste material (referred to by Archaeologists as flakes, debitage, and shatter). In archaeological sites, lithic (stone) materials can be very informative. For example, some formed tools like projectile points are diagnostic and Archaeologists can use them to determine a rough date of occupation for the site. A projectile point, referred to as an Oxbow point by Archaeologists, was recovered at one site in Cranston indicating the site was being used between 5,500 and 3,500 years ago. A point recovered from a different location at

the same site indicated occupation between 1,750-200 years ago. Suggesting the area was a well-known/used for a long period of time. Other tools recovered include scrapers, (for scraping flesh from animal hides), and tools with a cutting edge such as choppers and knives. One knife in particular was made of Swan River Chert, a rock type not local to the Calgary area. Swan River Chert deposits are found in Manitoba and Southeastern Alberta meaning the raw material would have either been collected during seasonal movements across the landscape or obtained through trade.

Thank you for your interest in learning about the archaeological record in The City of Calgary. If you are looking to learn more, be sure to check out the online publication *Uncovering Human History: Archaeology and Calgary Parks* found at:

<https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/csps/parks/documents/history/archaeology-and-calgary-parks.pdf>