

Point Pelee (11H) Visitor Centre Theatre Renewal 2015

Project Background:

Point Pelee National Park (PPNP) plans to rebuild the theatre within its Visitor Centre's (VC). The plan includes the demolition and the rebuilding of the theatre within the theatre's current footprint. The theatre is attached to west side of the VC. In addition the park will be removing a man-made earthen berm (on north and west side of VC), removing existing trees & replanting shrubs and grasses, and replacing existing interlocking brick pathways with concrete pathways. Drainage tiles within a soak away area will also be added to improve the drainage around the VC. In advance of this project, the relevant archaeological reports along with maps and engineering drawings provided by PPNP were reviewed by a Parks Canada Terrestrial Archaeology representative (PCTAR).

Archaeological Background:

Point Pelee has archaeological evidence of human use dating from the Middle Archaic period, (ca. 8000 – 4500 years ago).

Parks Canada's terrestrial archeology team has previously undertaken archaeological testing in the Visitor Centre area, in advance of infrastructure projects. The testing occurred in 1995, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010 & 2011. The areas tested included the east road, the parking lots, and the transit loop. The 2010, archaeological assessment concentrated on the transit loop (11H26Q). These 70 cm deep test pits found fill layers, loam layers, and sterile sand. Nothing of cultural significance was found. Generally the VC area has proven to be a highly disturbed area with fill layers, artificial grading and very little cultural remains.

However, despite the seemingly large amount of negative-result testing, Parks terrestrial archaeology team found *in situ* Native cultural remains, including post moulds and hearths, at the SE corner of the VC in 2010 & 2011 (11H26R, 26X & 11H56A to 56V). Although these findings are outside of this project area, they demonstrate that caution is needed for infrastructure projects within Point Pelee N.P.

Areas of Concern:

The theatre renewal project can be divided into 5 parts (see Figure 1):

- A) Theatre demolitions and rebuilding within the existing footprint.
- B) Area between the transit loop and the NW corner of the VC. This area will see the current path and sod removed and replaced by concrete paving. The concrete paving depths (See Map 4/L105 & 5/L105) indicate a required granular base of 275 mm, below 200 mm of cement. Additionally, 8 shade sail posts and 7 removable steel bollards will be installed. The bollards appear to set directly into the new concrete paving (9/L105). The shade sail posts are to be installed at a depth of 1250 mm or 4 feet (8/L105).
- C) Small area to the east of area B, where the weeping tiles and a trench drain to be installed. The trench drain (6/L105) will have a "poured in place" concrete base directly over undisturbed subgrade.
- D) Tree removal. The removal of 2 trees to the south of the VC, 2 west of the VC (in area B), 2 north of VC, plus 3 trees at the pond location.
- E) Man-made berm removal to the immediate north of the VC.
- F) Pond area between the VC and the main parking lot. The 1000 mm deep pond (2/L106) walls will be installed along with a 180 mm deep, 600 mm wide maintenance apron (8/L106).
- G) Use of heavy equipment/staging areas.

Note: There is some over-lapping of these effected areas, so the “areas of concern” are more in relation to the activity proposed, rather than the geographic location/areas.

Archaeological Mitigation Measures:

- A) As the demolition and rebuilding will take place within the extant footprint, there are no terrestrial archaeological concerns. However the use of heavy equipment for this process is a concern – see G) below.
- B) The removal of the current path and sod, pouring of the new cement path and installation of the bollards causes no archaeological concerns, as the area closest to the transit loop is known to contain 70 cm of fill layers.
However, the installation of the 8 shade sail posts to a depth of 1250 mm is a concern. It is recommended that test pits be excavated between the transit loop (past the placement of the bollards) and the NW corner of the VC to confirm the depth and continuation of the fill layers and/or sterile soil. If, as suspected, sterile soil is reached before the required 1250 mm, then the test pits will be considered complete. In other words, there would be no need to dig the full 1250 mm.
- C) This area, attached to Area B, should also be subject to test pit assessment due to the installation of the trench drain and weeping tiles. It is recommended that Areas B and C be subjected to a line of test pits that cross both areas from the placement of the bollards (L102) just east of the transit loop to the NW corner of the VC to confirm the depth and continuation of the fill layers and/or sterile soil. (see Figure 2)
- D) Currently there is no information on the tree removal, e.g., stump removal, etc. Mitigation measures will be updated once this information is provided by PPNP.
- E) There is no archaeological concern for the removal of this man-made berm.
- F) Although the pond location is close to known disturbed areas (e.g, parking lots, pathways) test pits maybe required here as this area has not been tested previously. PCTAR is awaiting some information from PPNP on this part of the project. The mitigation measures will be updated once the information is reviewed.
- G) It is recommended that the use of heavy equipment for this project be restricted to already disturbed areas, such as parking lots and pathways. If parking of heavy equipment and storing of supplies cannot be restricted to disturbed areas, then these areas should be covered with geotextile topped with approximately 20 cm thick granular “A” (or similar) to prevent damage to the underlying soils. These are to be removed at the end of the construction project. Also tracked vehicles are recommended as they create less compaction of the soil.

Archaeological testing is by its nature “sampling” (i.e., not 100% coverage). There is a chance, however low, that features and/or artifact concentrations may be encountered post-archaeological-testing. If significant features (e.g., structural remains and/or high artifact concentrations) are encountered, development work should stop in this immediate area, photographs taken, and the Parks Canada project manager informed. The project manager will then contact Parks Canada’s Terrestrial Archaeology section for advice. An assessment of the significance will determine what will be required to mitigate the chance find.

ADDENDUM:

On Sept, 8, 2015, PPNP forwarded the final drawings for the project and supplied answers to some outstanding questions.

1. The pond in the original plan will be expanded into 2 ponds on the north side of the VC. Both ponds are in highly disturbed areas between the parking lots, brick foot paths, a low wall, utility lines, and the (soon-to-be-removed) man-made berm. As these are disturbed areas there are no archaeological concerns.
2. Tree removal will involve grinding the stump to ground level. As there will be minimal soil disturbance, there is no archaeological concerns.
3. Daylight drainage pipe and soak away areas have been re-designed with the slope of new concrete pathways controlling most of the drainage. A 100 mm weeping tile will still be used in an area near the NW corner of the VC. Since this area is highly disturbed due to the berm and existing pathways, there are no archaeological concerns.
4. The sunshade posts have been moved from the original plan design. They now appear to be in more disturbed areas, e.g, closer to the VC, beside existing pathways, in berm area. As these are now in disturbed areas and areas with known fill layers, there are no archaeological concerns.
5. **The recommendations for the heavy equipment use, parking and storage are still in effect. As is the “chance find” clause (last paragraph before the addendum).**

Sources:

Field notes

2011, 2010, 2008, 2005, 2003, 2002, and 1995.

2003 Ross, Brian D.

Archaeological Assessment of General Works Asset Development Projects at PPNP