

## Shelter Point – History Beneath Our Feet

As you enjoy your burger and ice cream on a hot summer evening at Shelter Point take a look around you and imagine that over 3000 years ago First Nations people looked out from their village onto the same spectacular view.

Beneath your feet are middens of broken clam shells embedded in the oily-black soot left behind from fires that smoked and dried the clams. The same ground may also conceal an arrowhead or a fragment of a stone tool or the broken, charred bones of fish, deer and small mammals. A few cedars show signs of bark harvesting for baskets, clothing, nets – “the tree of life”.

Looking out to the west you can discern 6 to 12 depressions along the beachfront where houses once stood. In front of you is a gently-sloping cobble beach – ideal for hauling canoes. With a sharp eye on the beach rocks below your feet you may spot a small stone with a hole bored through the centre – a fishing weight.

A short walk toward Dick Island makes clear the superior defensive position of this site – an unobstructed view of the sea in two directions. Further along the shoreline, low tide reveals semi-circular rock walls enclosing shallow lagoons – fish traps for Mouat Creek-bound salmon.



In 1987, while digging postholes in the park, student summer helpers Nadine Nyl, Paul Silveira and Mark Wilson discovered fragmented human remains. The RCMP and Heritage Conservation Branch (Victoria) determined that the discovery was of “archaeological” (over 100 years old) and not “forensic” significance.

In 2008 a Tla’Amin First Nation-led project explored three small beach sites on the South-West coast of Texada. As well as chipped flakes left from crafting stone tools, they discovered mussel shells sharpened for use as a knife. A major find was a 2kg oval stone with a hole ground through – an anchor? part of a hunting trap?

Recent archaeological research is opening a whole new window into the life of First Nations on Texada. We are only just beginning to discover the extent of the history that lies right here – beneath our feet.

