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KFN CHIP 2025-83 Preliminary Field Reconnaissance of Montrose Park



Photo 1. Montrose Park Study Area, view northeast.

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This survey and report have been conducted by the consulting archaeologist on behalf of the K'ómoks First Nation's (KFN's) Cultural Heritage Investigation Permit (CHIP) program.

Project Overview

This report details the results of the preliminary field reconnaissance (PFR) survey conducted under K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) Cultural Heritage Investigation Permit (CHIP) 2025-83: Montrose Park, applied for by The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD).

Montrose Park (the "Study Area", Photo 1, Figure 1, Figure 2) is a 1.1-hectare area located 4709 Montrose Drive (Dedicated Park [Montrose Park], Plan Number VIP31464), within the Craigdarroch neighbourhood.

Montrose Park is a dedicated park through the Craigdarroch neighbourhood subdivision and is currently undeveloped. The Craigdarroch community has requested that the CVRD explore options to add amenities such as trails, a playground, or a gazebo (etc.) to the neighbourhood, either within Montrose Park or at one of the beach access locations nearby (beach access locations are not reviewed within this report). As this request is currently still under review, amenities and their anticipated impacts to the park are not yet identified.



Photo 2. General Forest cover within Montrose Park, view southwest.

The Study Area falls within an area of high archaeological potential as defined by the KFN Cultural Heritage Policy (CHP; KFN 2020) (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 4). As such, KFN requires a Preliminary Field Reconnaissance (PFR) of the Study Area (surface inspection) to assess the archaeological potential of the project location, to observe the area for archaeological deposits, and to determine necessary next steps in advance of any proposed development.

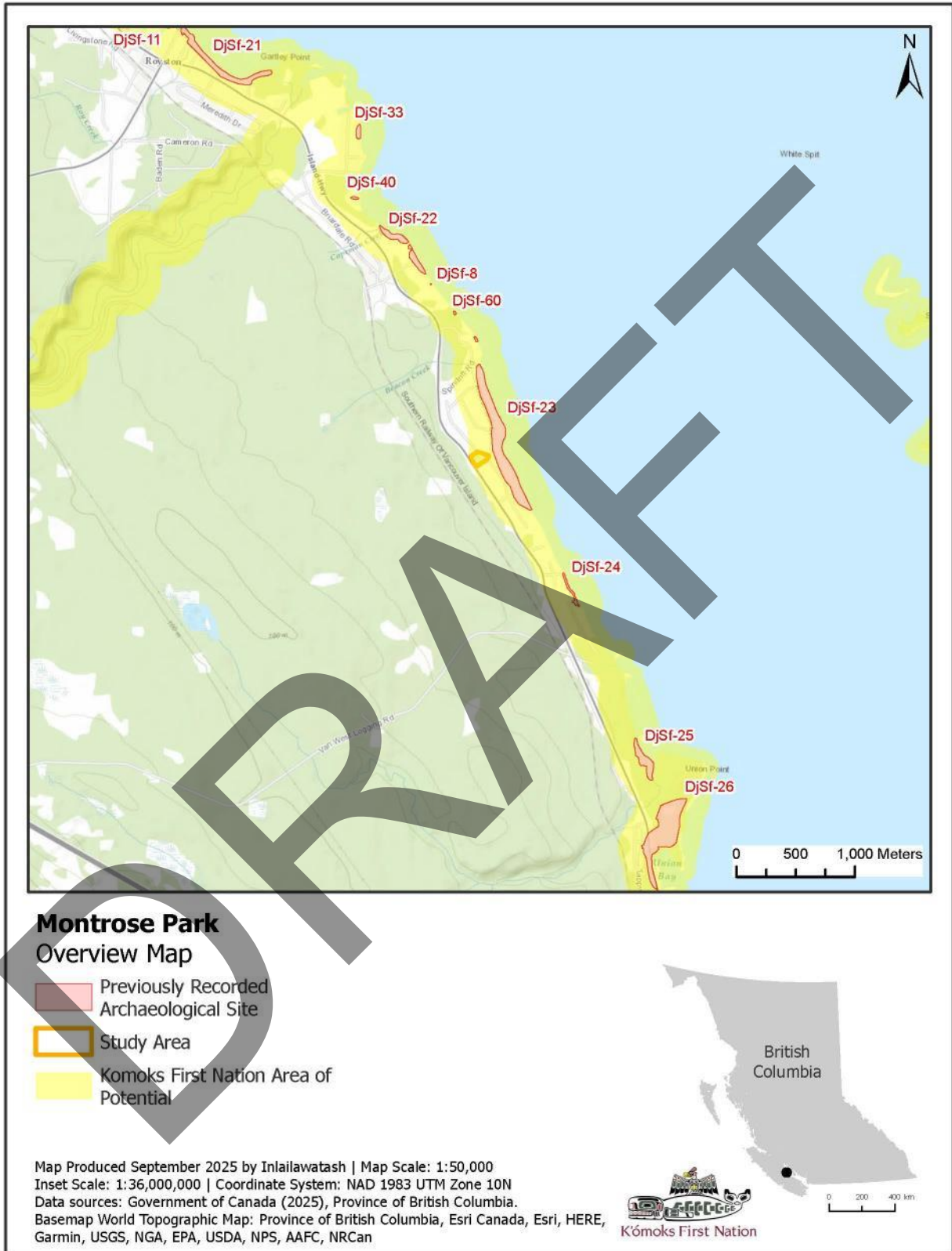


Figure 1. Area Overview Map showing general location of the Study Area [Inlailawatash 2025].

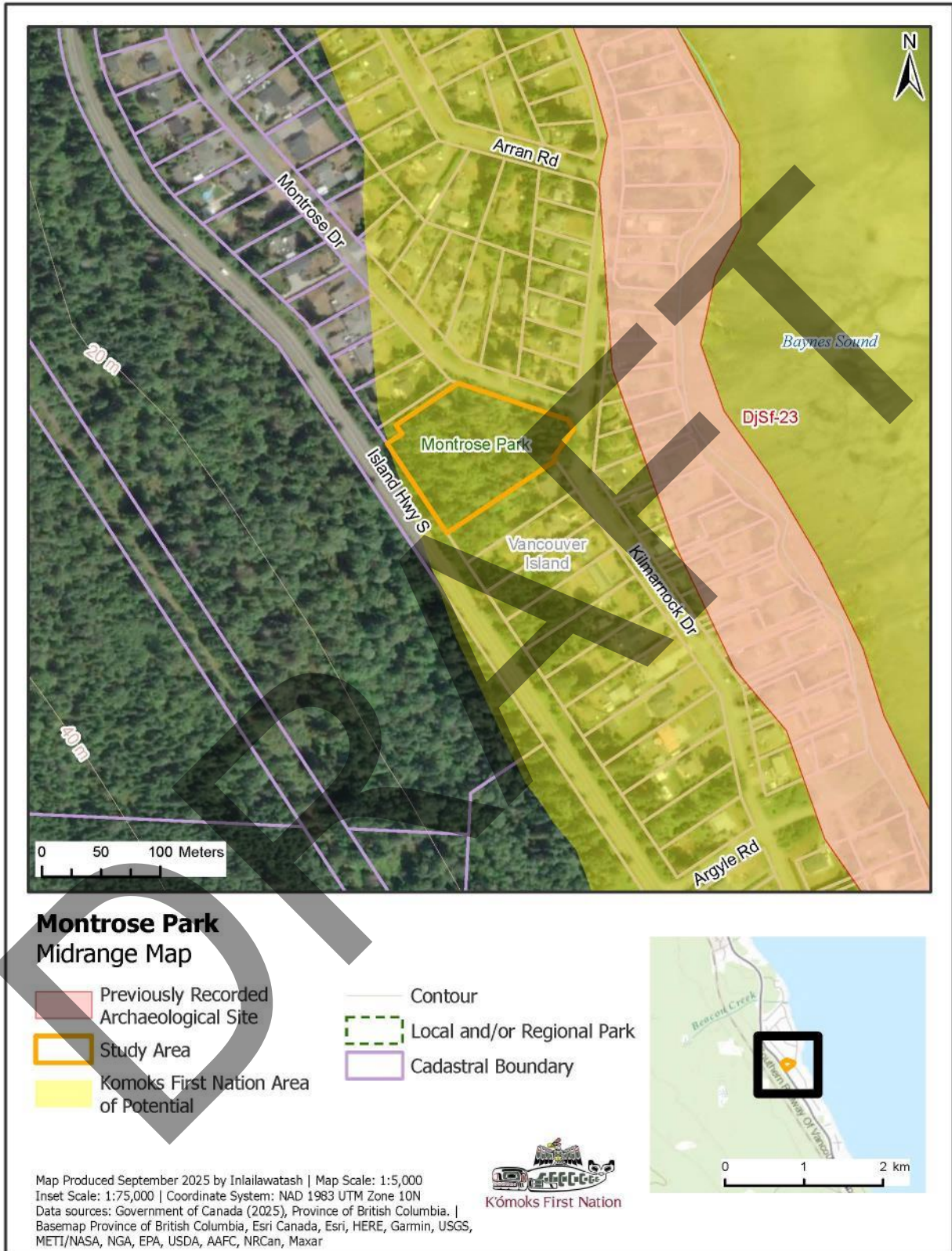


Figure 2. Midrange and Pre-Survey Map of the Property [Inlailawatash 2025].

Methods

To evaluate potential for the Study Area to contain unrecorded archaeological resources, we reviewed existing archaeological, historical, and ethnographic sources along with biophysical characteristics and landform typology. Spatial data for registered archaeological sites was accessed through the BC Provincial Remote Access to Archaeological Data (RAAD) system. The basic document review searched for general information on pre-contact archaeology, settlement, land-use patterns, and historical land-use patterns on and near the Study Area.

The fieldwork portion of this PFR consisted of a pedestrian survey throughout the Study Area. The survey was conducted by a crew of archaeologists and KFN field technicians to inspect the surface of the Study Area for archaeological materials, features, deposits, and areas of elevated archaeological potential, as indicated by fragmented or stacked native species of shells, fire-altered rocks, dark/black greasy sediments, artifacts, faunal (animal) bones, Culturally Modified Trees, paleoshorelines, anthropogenic terracing, Ancestral Remains, among other common archaeological features in this region. The survey was conducted with crew members spaced 2 to 20 meters apart, with spacing adjusted to ensure visibility between surveyors. Notes, photos, and geospatial data were collected using Avenza Maps.

Ethnographic Background

The following summary is drawn from Jesse Morin's three volume work: Evidence of K'ómoks First Nation's History of Land Use and Occupation (Morin 2019a, 2019b, and 2019c).

The broader landscape surrounding the Study Area has a rich history with an occupation record of at least 8,000 years. Indigenous peoples were active throughout the territory from the mountain tops to the open ocean—living, harvesting, feasting, traveling, and stewarding their substantial territories. This area falls within the modern KFN Southern Core Territory. However, it comprises the traditional territory of the formerly distinct Pentlatch and Island Comox Peoples whose descendants amalgamated with both Qualicum First Nation (QFN) and K'ómoks First Nation (KFN).

Pentlatch territory spans from Kye Bay in Comox to the Craig Bay in Parksville, including the Northern Gulf Islands of Hornby and Denman. Island Comox Territory spans from Kye Bay to Salmon River including Quadra Island, Hardwick Island, and West and East Thurlow Islands. Four distinct groups of the Pentlatch have been identified in ethnographic works: the Pentlatsch, the Saamen, the Chuachuatl, and the S'oksun, with the Pentlatsch residing between Cape Lazo and Union Bay, the S'oksun between Union Bay and Deep Bay, the Saamen between Deep Bay and the Little Qualicum River, and the Chuachuatl between the Little Qualicum River and the Englishman. The Pentlatch were a substantial community with villages and resources across their territory. However, the 1862 smallpox epidemic severely reduced their community and contributed to their amalgamations with nearby groups. The Pentlatch are represented in the modern period by the Qualicum First Nation (QFN) located along the Big Qualicum River at Qualicum I.R. 1 and the K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) located in Comox Harbour at Comox I.R. 1, with two other reserves: Puntledge (I.R. 2) and Goose Spit (I.R. 3).

While the QFN remain predominantly Pentlatch, the contemporary KFN community is made up of an amalgamation of Island Comox (Sathloot, Sasitla, and Ieeksen) and Pentlatch tribes. Both groups fall within the Northern Coast Salish territory along with the Homalco, Klahoose, Sliammon, and Sechelt. Both traditionally spoke dialects of the Coast Salishan language family, with Island Comox speaking Ayajusem and the Pentlatch speaking Pentlatch. The Island Comox were pushed southward into Pentlatch territory

in the early 1700s by the Lekwiltok, a Kwakwaka'wakw group, speaking the Lik'wala dialect of the Wakashan language. By 1850, the Comox Harbour became the main village for the remaining Island Comox. In 1886, Anthropologist Frans Boas noted that Pentlatch, Island Comox, and Lekwiltok lived in three separate sections of the Comox Harbour village.

The semi-sedentary hunting-gathering-fishing economy of the Pentlatch and Island Comox included a seasonal round based on terrestrial hunting (predominantly deer and elk), fishing (mainly salmon and herring), and gathering a wide variety of shellfish, berries, roots, tubers, and seaweeds. Western red cedar and yellow cedar were logged and bark-stripped throughout the territory to construct semi-permanent and permanent plank houses, canoes, massive wooden fish weir complexes, ceremonial items, cloths, and tools. Other common tools were made of stones, bone, shell, and antler. Expected site types throughout the territory include, but are not limited to, Culturally Modified Trees (CMTs), habitation sites including cultural shell deposits (midden) and rockshelters, lithic sites, trails, resource procurement sites, intertidal sites including fish weirs, fish traps, canoe skids, and calm gardens, wet sites, cultural depressions, fortification sites, and rock art sites.

Archaeological Background

The Study Area is located along the southern shoreline of Baynes Sound, between Montrose Drive and Island Highway South, within an area of high archaeological potential as defined by the KFN Cultural Heritage Policy (2020) and a high potential area defined by the archaeological overview assessment (AOA) layer available on RAAD (Eldridge et al. 2007). Dozens of sites line the Comox Harbour and Baynes Sounds shoreline, forming a continual and interconnected cultural landscape. There is one previously recorded archaeological site located within 1 km of the Study Area (Figure 1 and Table 1).

It is important to note that this region lacks extensive archaeological surveys, therefore site locations and boundaries are often inaccurate, incomplete, and may not fully represent actual archaeological site boundaries in the area.

Table 1. Previously recorded sites within 1km of the Montrose Park Study Area.

Borden Number:	Site Type	Location from the Study Area
DjSf-23	Cultural Shell Deposits (Midden)	50 m east

DjSf-23 was recorded in 1975 during the East Coast Vancouver Island Survey (Nanaimo – Courtenay) by Gordon Hanson (*Heritage and Conservation Act* [HCA] permit 1975-0006). The site was recorded as a cultural shell deposit (midden) extending 1,200 m along the shoreline. Hanson notes that at that time, archaeological deposits reached a depth of 2 m (visible extent), comprised of dark brown organic matrix with layers of whole and crushed shell, fire cracked rock, and ash. Hanson also notes that in 1975, the southern end of the site had been destroyed by bulldozers preparing for the Craigdarroch Beach Development, and the northern two-thirds of the site were currently at risk of impacts from the expansion of this development.

Subsequent surveys (HCA permits 2015-0288 and 2017-0385) did not encounter archaeological materials within Lot 11 and 4754 Kilmarnock Drive, likely due to the impacts from the Craigdarroch Beach Development. In addition, the site boundary was amended in 2012 to exclude properties on the west side

of Kilmarnock Drive, as no archaeological materials were observed in this area. Overall, archaeological site DjSf-23 is considered a poorly defined and heavily impacted site, and may not fully represent actual extent of archaeological materials present within the area. It is important to note that displaced archaeological materials are still afforded protection under the HCA.

Historical Background

Euro-Canadian settlement in the Comox Valley began in the 1860s, when immigrant settlers began clearing farms along the Tsolum, Courtenay, and Puntledge Rivers (Mackie 2000). Much of the forested sections within the valley were impacted by logging between 1890 and 1920 as well as extensive forest fires in the mid-1900s (Mackie 2000:28). Original vegetation along the Comox Harbour was described as primarily Douglas fir, Spruce, and western red cedars growing up to 200 feet tall (James Richardson 1872 in Mackie 2000:13) However, any existing CMTs predating Euro-Canadian settlement would have been removed during this time. Some potential for remnant CMT stumps is possible within the Study Area.

Shoreline sites would have been cut by transportation development during this period of rapid immigration and settlement. Highway 19A cuts along the southwestern boundary of the Study Area and a small railway, likely associated with logging operations in the Trent River Valley, was present by at least 1925. This small railway extended from the Trent River falls area to the foreshore of Baynes Sound, terminating at a small pier or sand spit approximately 1 km southeast of the Study Area (Figure 3; Boyd 1924).

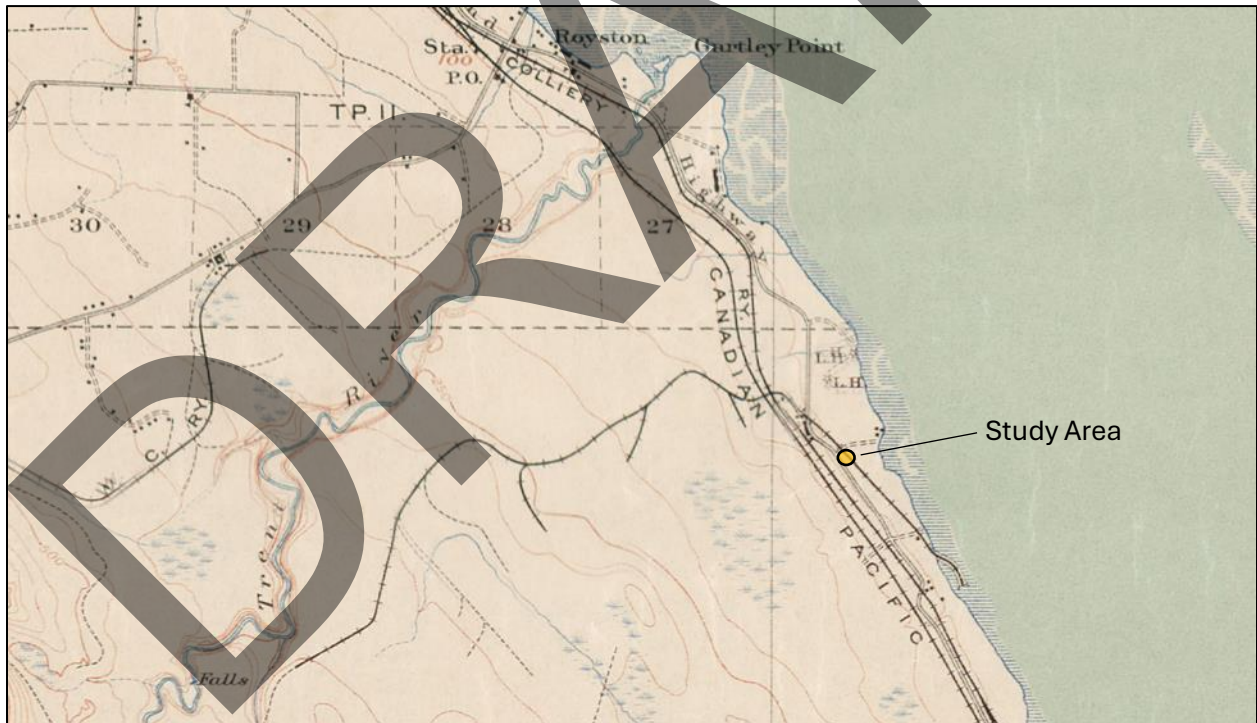


Figure 3. Detail from 1924 Geological Survey Map of Courtenay (Boyd 1924) showing the location of the Study Area in relation to early road and railway lines.

Field Reconnaissance (PFR) Results

On August 13, 2025, Morgan Bartlett (AIM Collective Partnership), Greg Dawson (KFN representative), and Izzaiah Dawson (KFN representative), visited the Montrose Park Study Area to conduct a PFR (Figure

4). The crew inspected the park for surficial archaeological remains, and recorded evidence of disturbances. Overstory was relatively open (Photo 1 and Photo 2), comprised of Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), red alder (*Alnus rubra*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), and big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). Diameter at breast height (DBH) of these species ranged from 20 cm to 50 cm, indicating a stand age between 60 – 80 years old in parts of the Study Area.

Understory was variable and included trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), ocean spray (*Holodiscus discolor*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), and huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*). Ground cover included several species of grasses, western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), horsetail (Equisetaceae family), and rushes (Juncaceae family). Visibility was poor to moderate (5m – 15 m) due to dense understorey in some parts of the park.

The topography of the eastern two thirds of the Study Area was low lying and likely saturated from autumn through spring, indicated by the many species of wetland flora (horsetail, rushes, salmonberry; Photo 3). Areas of standing water as well as meandering channels (Photo 4) were observed within this portion of the Study Area, resulting in hummocky topography throughout. A small pile of unsorted gravels, cobbles and boulders in a medium brown silty matrix running 8 m long (N-S) and 1-2 m wide (E-W) was noted along the northeastern boundary of the park (Photo 5), adjacent to Montrose Drive. The pile appeared to be recently disturbed (within the past 50 years) and was likely associated with the construction of nearby roadworks and water mains.

The topography of the western third of the Study Area slopes gently upward towards the South Island Highway, gaining approximately 6 meters of elevation from the low-lying swampy areas to the east. A small dried-up stream was noted in the southwest corner of the Study Area with a bedrock bed littered with cobbles and medium brown silts (Photo 6). The stream channel was clearly defined (2-3 m wide, 2-3 m deep) and may have been modified as a ditch during highway construction, as it runs parallel to the highway before veering northeast along the park boundary (Photo 7). Disturbances observed within this upland area included evidence of historical logging (large saw-cut stumps), as well as a historical rail bed running approximately northwest – southeast through the Study Area (Photo 8). The railbed is likely a portion of the small railway associated with logging operations from Trent River falls area (Figure 4), or a similar small spur line.

Subsurface exposures throughout the Study Area showed unsorted silty matrix with sub-angular gravels (20%) and cobbles (5%) (Photo 9). Saturated areas showed dark brown organic rich silty matrix, characteristic of wetland soils. All natural exposures showed minimal soil development and low potential for archaeological materials or sediments.

All accessible portions of the Study Area were surveyed for surficial exposures of cultural material and areas of archaeological potential. During the survey, no surficial archaeological materials were observed within the Study Area.



Photo 3. Species of wetland flora (horsetail, rushes, salmonberry) observed in the eastern portion of the Study Area, view west.



Photo 4. Small meandering dried-up stream channels observed in the eastern portion of the Study Area, view west.



Photo 5. Modern soil pile likely associated with roadworks, view northwest.



Photo 6. Stream noted in the southwest corner of the Study Area with a bedrock bed littered with cobbles and medium brown silts, view south.



Photo 7. Stream noted in the southwest corner of the Study Area, Greg Dawson (KFN) as scale showing channel width, view south.



Photo 8. Historic Rail bed, view southeast.



Photo 9. General subsurface exposures observed throughout the Study Area: unsorted silty matrix with sub-angular gravels (20%) and cobbles (5%).

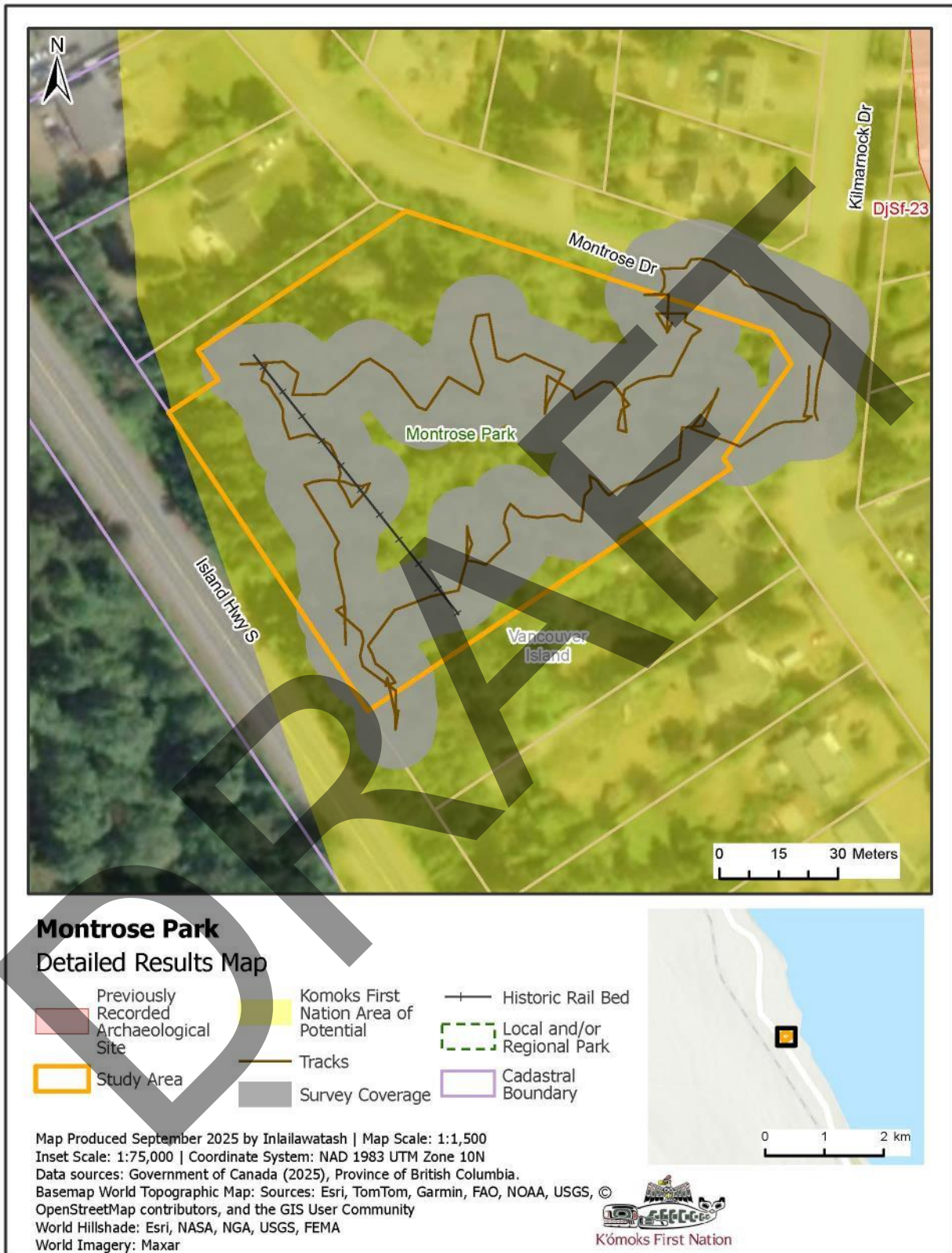


Figure 4. PFR Survey Map [Inlailawatash 2025].

Recommendations

The PFR survey of Montrose Park found no areas archaeological potential, testable landforms, or evidence of archaeological materials within the Study Area. Based on the results of the PFR survey, it is unlikely that further archaeological work is required for the proposed activities. However, KFN requires:

- CVRD and all on-site personnel must review the **KFN Chance Find Procedure** that has been provided to you by KFN.
- CVRD informs all contractors and tradespeople working within Montrose Park that **all archaeological remains in B.C. are protected under the Heritage Conservation Act, and if such remains are encountered during construction, work must cease, and appropriate permits must be obtained from the Archaeology Branch.** Please note, timelines for BC Archaeology Branch permits are considerable and can take up 16 months.
 - Common archaeological materials include: large quantities of fragmented or stacked native species of shells, fire-altered rocks, dark/black greasy sediments that stain your hands, faunal (animal) bones, and Ancestral Remains.
- If archaeological remains are identified, KFN must be notified immediately.

Given that no archaeological materials were previously recorded within Montrose Park, and none were observed during this PFR, permits from the Archaeology Branch are not required in advance of development.

Disclosure Statement

This report is concerned with potential impacts to archaeological sites by the proposed activities. It does not address potential impacts to traditional use activities and sites by the proposed activities, and as such, it does not comprehensively document all First Nations' interest in the land.

This study was completed under KFN CHIP #2025-83 and adheres to the standards and requirements outlined in the K'ómoks First Nation Cultural Heritage Policy (KFN 2020) but does not fulfill the requirements of an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA). It should be understood that "low potential" does not mean "no potential" and without the fulsome study in the form of an AIA there is always the potential to impact unrecorded archaeological resources.

The study was conducted without prejudice to First Nations' treaty negotiations, Aboriginal Rights, or Aboriginal title. The recommendations apply solely to the physical archaeological evidence of past human activity and in no way attempt to encompass any traditional land use or heritage concerns of the K'ómoks First Nation. Please note, this study falls within the consultative boundaries of other First Nations who may have additional archaeological policy recommendations and guidelines.

Sincerely,



Morgan Bartlett, B.A.
AIM Collective Partnership
Archaeologist and Report Author

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