

**City of Vaughan Official Plan  
Archaeological and First Nations Policy Study**

Prepared for:

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

An Archaeological and First Nations Policy Study is an important response to an old problem – how to deal with evidence of the past that is, for the most part, not visible because it is buried underground. The City of Vaughan has a long cultural history that begins approximately 11,000 years ago and continues to the present. The archaeological sites that are the physical remains of this lengthy settlement history represent a fragile and non-renewable cultural heritage resource.

The common response of “out of sight, out of mind,” however, is no longer possible in today’s political and legal climate. Recent court cases involving Aboriginal land claims, not to mention stop-work orders issued when human remains are uncovered on a development site, are but two examples of the ways in which archaeological resources affect property owners and the municipalities in which they are located. Policy initiatives, such as those found in the report of the Ipperwash inquiry, recommending that every municipality in Ontario adopt a master plan for archaeological resources so as to identify their flashpoints and put in place a way of dealing with them before they happen, coupled with more stringent heritage resource conservation policies in the Provincial Policy Statement (Planning Act), the *Ontario Cemeteries Act*, and the *Ontario Heritage Act*, require municipalities to more wisely plan for the conservation of archaeological resources. In other words, cities such as the Vaughan have no choice but to address archaeology.

The good news is that such plans are an excellent tool for municipalities. First, they tell you what is there by providing an inventory and evaluation of known archaeological resources. Second, they tell you where undiscovered archaeological resources are most likely to be found by identifying areas of archaeological resource potential. Both of these inventories are mapped onto the City’s GIS database, making them very accessible to staff and the public alike. Third, they tell you what to do with both the known and probable places in which archaeological resources are likely to be encountered, by providing the step by step process for managing such resources.

Once a study of this nature is in place, the risk of unfortunate surprises occurring (such as disturbing a burial site) is reduced.

This study has three major goals:

- 1) the compilation of inventories of registered and unregistered archaeological sites within the City and the preparation of an overview of the area’s settlement history as it may be expected to pertain to archaeological resources;
- 2) the development of an archaeological site potential model, based on known site locations, past and present land uses, and environmental and cultural-historical data; and



- 3) a review of the current federal, provincial, and municipal planning and management guidelines for archaeological resources, as well as the identification of a new recommended management strategy for known and potential archaeological resources within the City.

In summary, municipalities can no longer avoid dealing with archaeological resources especially since provincial policy has been strengthened in this regard. More importantly, there are clear precedents in law that demonstrates the severe financial and political costs of avoiding this responsibility. The City of Vaughan is making a wise choice in building on their past commitment and joining with other major municipalities in Ontario in adopting progressive policies for the wise use and conservation of their archaeological records.



## PROJECT PERSONNEL

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