



# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE FORMS**

**A bulletin for archaeologists in Ontario**

**Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport  
2015**

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# 1 Overview

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (the ministry) prepared this bulletin to advise licensed archaeologists on their responsibility to inform a high-quality public record of archaeological sites in Ontario. The bulletin also explains how to use Ontario's Past Portal (PastPort) to file archaeological site forms (also known as Borden forms) with the ministry.

The information in this bulletin is intended to help:

- licensed archaeologists meet the terms and conditions of their licence
- inform the public record of archaeological sites in Ontario in a consistent manner
- provide licensed archaeologists with support and good customer service, and
- promote government transparency.

## Information for consultant archaeologists

Throughout this bulletin, blue sections like this one contain information about site forms related to archaeological consulting projects.

## 2 Archaeological sites in Ontario

The *Ontario Heritage Act* helps to ensure that the province's archaeological sites are conserved. The Act makes it illegal for anyone, except a licensed archaeologist, to carry out archaeological fieldwork, alter an archaeological site, or remove an artifact (or any other physical evidence of past human use or activity) from a site, whether the site is on land or under water.

### 2.1 What is an archaeological site?

For the purposes of this bulletin, the following are definitions in Ontario Regulation 170/04 under the *Ontario Heritage Act*:

**Archaeological site:** a property (or part of a property) that contains an artifact or any other physical evidence of past human use or activity that is of cultural heritage value or interest.

**Artifact:** any object, material or substance that is made, modified, used, deposited or affected by human action and is of cultural heritage value or interest.

**Marine archaeological site:** an archaeological site that is fully or partially submerged or that lies below or partially below the high-water mark of any body of water.

### 2.2 When does an archaeological site need a Borden number?

The Borden system is used to assign unique identifying numbers (called Borden numbers) to archaeological sites in Canada.

If you discover a new archaeological site in Ontario, you are responsible for reporting the site to the ministry using a site record form and getting a Borden number for it. The new site's characteristics must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- three or more pre-19th century artifacts found within a 10 m radius
- ten or more 19th century artifacts found within a 10 m radius
- a single pre-19th century diagnostic artifact
- a single archaeological feature (e.g., petroglyph; pictograph; mounds), or
- post-19th century archaeological resources warranting documentation, as determined by the licensee.

#### Information for consultant archaeologists

##### Criteria for filing a site record form (and getting a Borden number)

These criteria can be found in Section 7.12, Standard 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists, available on [our website](#).

Get a Borden number for a site only if you (or your field crew) have directly observed artifacts or features in situ at the site location.

You must get a Borden number for a site that meets these criteria whether or not you consider the site to warrant further fieldwork or archaeological assessment. Even a site that consists of a single diagnostic pre-19th century artifact (such as a projectile point) that you recommend as having no further cultural heritage value or interest once you have collected it, needs a Borden number.

All sites that meet the criteria above must be referred to by their Borden numbers (and names, if applicable) in all archaeological reports that are filed with the ministry to document them.

### **2.3 Locations that do not meet the criteria for a Borden number**

Do **not** get a Borden number for a location in any of the following situations:

- the characteristics of the location do not meet any of the criteria listed in Section 2.2 for sites requiring a Borden number
- the information about the location was not acquired through direct observation you (a licensed archaeologist) or your field crew
- no artifact or other physical evidence of past human activity (e.g., a cultural feature) of cultural heritage value or interest was found at the location, or
- information about the location is based only on documentary research or informant reporting.

Locations that do not meet the criteria for requiring a Borden number may also be reported on a voluntary basis to inform the public record and support future archaeological research. For details on how to document these locations, see Section 3.3.

## 3 The Ontario Archaeological Sites Database

The *Ontario Archaeological Sites Database* is an inventory of the documented archaeological record in Ontario. It currently contains information on over 24,000 archaeological sites. Several hundred new sites are added to the database each year.

The database is populated with information from site forms filed with the ministry by licensed archaeologists. Once filed in PastPort, the information from the forms is automatically entered into the Sites Database.

### 3.1 Filing site record and update forms as a condition of your licence

To help ensure that the Sites Database is complete and up-to-date, you are required to file site record and site update forms with the ministry as a condition of your licence.

The ministry monitors your compliance with the terms and conditions of your licence. Failure to file a site record or site update form in the situations outlined in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 below may affect the status of your licence, including your ability to renew your licence when it expires.

#### 3.1.1 Site record forms

You must file a site record form each time you find an archaeological site that meets the criteria in Section 2.2 if the site is not already in the Sites Database.

Site record forms are most often filed with the ministry when an archaeological site is discovered as a result of pedestrian or test-pit survey (e.g., Stage 2 archaeological assessment). As the licensed archaeologist documenting the site, you are responsible for determining whether the site requires further fieldwork or archaeological assessment once it has received its Borden number. Your decision will be based on whether the site continues to have enough cultural heritage value or interest to justify further investigation. Your decision will form the basis of your recommendations in the archaeological report that you file with the ministry to document your fieldwork at the site.

Instructions on how to file a site record form with the ministry are provided in Section 6.

#### 3.1.2 Site update forms

You must file a site update form each time you visit an archaeological site already in the Sites Database. The purpose of your visit may have been to observe and document the site's condition or to carry out archaeological fieldwork.

Site update forms are most often filed with the ministry after a site assessment or excavation has been completed (e.g., a site update form should be filed after each of the following: Stage 3 site assessment and Stage 4 site mitigation).

Instructions on how to file a site update form with the ministry are provided in Section 6.

### **3.2 Site correction forms**

You can help improve the information about an archaeological site in the Sites Database. To do this, you may submit a correction for a site record or site update form already on file with the ministry. Your correction can provide either missing or corrected information and can be for any form, whether filed by you or another archaeologist.

Instructions on how to submit a site correction form to the ministry are provided in Section 6.

### **3.3 Isolated non-diagnostic find spot and site lead forms**

In order to allow you to document archaeological sites or other locations that do not meet the criteria in Section 2.2, the ministry has created two new types of forms:

- isolated non-diagnostic find spot form
- site lead form

You are not required to file either of these forms, but are encouraged to do so to help inform the public record and support future archaeological research.

#### **3.3.1 Isolated non-diagnostic find spot forms**

You may use isolated non-diagnostic find spot forms to voluntarily report and document new archaeological sites that do not meet the criteria set out in Section 2.2, such as:

- one or two pre-19th century artifacts found within a 10 m radius (e.g., one or two non-diagnostic lithic debitage flakes at a single location)
- nine or fewer 19th century artifacts found within a 10 m radius (e.g., a scatter of nine or fewer 19th century domestic artifacts at a single location), or
- a single 19th century diagnostic artifact (e.g., a single 19th century coin).

Sites that you report with this form will receive a unique tracking number and will be searchable through PastPort's Archaeological Site module.

#### **3.3.2 Site lead forms**

You may use site lead forms to voluntarily report and document the potential locations of archaeological sites in situations where you have not observed artifacts or features in situ.

Examples include:

- an agricultural field where a farmer has recovered artifacts but you (the licensed archaeologist reporting the lead) have not observed the artifacts in situ, or
- an archaeological site that is not listed in the Sites Database but is mentioned in historical documentary resources.

Site leads that you report with this form will receive a unique tracking number (not a Borden number) and will be searchable through PastPort's Archaeological Site module.

If you are able to confirm the existence and precise location of a site for which a lead already exists (and the site meets the criteria set out in Section 2.2):

1. Get a Borden number for it and file a site record form for the site.
2. Send an email to [Archaeology@ontario.ca](mailto:Archaeology@ontario.ca) to advise the ministry of your site record submission. If appropriate, the ministry will cancel the associated site lead.

### **3.4 How the ministry uses information from site forms**

Site forms provide the ministry with important information about archaeological sites in Ontario. The ministry uses this information to:

- track the discovery and location of archaeological sites in the province,
- inform the public record,
- help ensure that archaeological sites are appropriately conserved,
- trigger archaeological assessments, under certain legislation, when a development application is submitted for a property in proximity to a known site, and
- generate statistics about archaeological sites in the province.

## 4 Accessing and searching the Ontario Archaeological Sites Database

As a licensed archaeologist, you have direct access to the Sites Database through the Archaeological Site module in PastPort. The module offers the most up-to-date information about sites. PastPort provides a wide range of search criteria that can be used to look up sites in the database.

The ministry has created a quick reference guide to help you perform searches for sites using PastPort. It is available on [our website](#).

- *How to search the Ontario Archaeological Sites Database*

### Information for consultant archaeologists

#### Using PastPort as part of a Stage 1 background study

PastPort provides detailed information about archaeological sites that may be located in (or are in close proximity to) your project's study area. When completing a Stage 1 background study, use PastPort to search for information about such sites. The quickest way to do this is to search the Archaeological Site module using the Borden numbers that the ministry has provided you in response to a site data request.

For more information on how to make a site data request, see the bulletin *Project Information Forms* available on [our website](#).

### 4.1 Search results: Site Masters

Each archaeological site in PastPort has a landing screen called a 'Site Master'. It contains basic information about the site including its Borden number, site name, site type and location. This information is taken from the most recent site form filed with the ministry for the site.

On the Site Master you will also find a list of all site forms (records, updates and corrections) that have been filed with the ministry for the site. These are listed under 'Summary of Visits and Corrections'. You can view an individual form by selecting it from the summary table.

#### 4.1.1 Searching for individual forms

Using PastPort's Archaeological Site module, you can search for the following individual forms:

- site record
- site update
- site correction
- site lead, and
- isolated non-diagnostic find spot.

## 4.2 Statuses of archaeological sites in the database

### 4.2.1 Physical status

When filing a site form, you must provide information about a site's physical status. This can include whether the site is currently:

- completely excavated
- partially excavated
- disturbed, or
- eroding.

### 4.2.2 Development review status

When filing a site form, you must indicate whether or not the site continues to have further cultural heritage value or interest (CHVI) at the conclusion of your investigation.

The two possible statuses are:

- no further CHVI
- further CHVI

The status that you provide on the site form must match the status that you note in your recommendations for the site in the associated archaeological report that you file with the ministry.

## 4.3 Information sharing agreements

Information in the Sites Database is available upon request to groups and individuals other than licensed archaeologists, including the following:

- **Municipalities and First Nations** who need information about sites in their communities for land-use planning or cultural purposes.
- **Development project proponents, lawyers and other parties** engaged in due diligence with regard to archaeological sites on a property.

All information shared with such individuals or groups is subject to an information sharing agreement with the ministry.

## 4.4 Older site data in PastPort

PastPort's Archaeological Site module introduced data collection fields in site record and update forms that were not in the earlier versions of these forms. The new fields are intended to improve the amount and quality of information available for each site in the Sites Database. Because these

fields are new, you may find that they may be blank in older site forms in PastPort. Older paper or electronic site forms are those filed with the ministry before the launch of PastPort's Archaeological Site module in March 2015.

## 5 When to file a site form

### Site Record forms

File a site record as soon as possible upon discovering a new archaeological site that meets the criteria set out in Section 2.2. Filing a site record form (and getting a Borden number for the site) quickly is important for a number of reasons:

- **Protection:** when a site appears in the Sites Database, the site's location becomes available to municipalities and other approval authorities. This provides the site some level of protection as approval authorities will have the opportunity to help avoid impacts to the site as a result of any land development applications submitted for their approval.
- **Assessment triggers:** when a site appears in the Sites Database, it can help trigger an archaeological assessment under certain legislation when a development application is submitted for a property nearby.
- **Research:** when a site appears in the Sites Database, other archaeologists working in the vicinity of the site are able to take the site into account when carrying out background research for their projects.
- **Reporting:** all archaeological reports and maps filed with the ministry that document a site must refer to the site by its Borden number (if the site meets the criteria set out in out in Section 2.2). This includes reports on the archaeological survey that resulted in the discovery of the site.
- **Curation:** having a Borden number allows you to label all artifacts and samples from a site with the unique identifier for that site. This helps prevent artifacts from becoming misplaced from the collection for the site.

By filing a site form, you ensure that the information in the Sites Database is as up to date as possible. The information you provide appears in the database and is immediately available to all archaeologists.

### Site Update forms

File a site update following each instance of archaeological fieldwork at a site that already has a Borden number. A site update is required after each stage of archaeological assessment following that in which it was discovered. You must also submit a site update form before you can file a Preliminary Excavation Report.

### Report due date extension requests

You must submit a site **record** before the ministry will consider your request for a report extension, if the fieldwork to be documented in the report resulted in the discovery of a site. You must submit a site **update** before the ministry will consider your request for a report extension, if the fieldwork to be documented in the report involved a visit to a site that has already been given

a Borden number. In both cases, a further site update may be required when the report is eventually filed if more information about the site can be provided at that time (e.g., further artifact analysis completed for the report resulted in additional information gained about the site).

## 5.1 Site form due dates

When the ministry assigns a Project Information Form number (PIF number) to your fieldwork project, it also sets a due date for the report that you must file to document the fieldwork carried out under the PIF number. The report filing due date is sent to you in the email with your PIF number from [PastPort@ontario.ca](mailto:PastPort@ontario.ca). See the bulletin *Project Information Forms*, available on [our website](#), for more information.

In addition to the report, you must also file all relevant site forms by the same due date.

PastPort ensures that you meet this due date by preventing you from submitting the report associated with a site form until you submit the form.

See the bulletin *Archaeological Reports*, available on our website, for more information.

## 5.2 Site form due dates for consulting projects

### Information for consultant archaeologists

For **Stage 1, 2 and 3** archaeological assessments: the site form due date is **12 months** from the project start date.

For **Stage 4** mitigation projects: the site form due date is **18 months** from the project start date.

## 5.3 Site form due dates for research projects

The site form due date for research projects is **12 months** from the project start date if the project involves any of the following fieldwork activities:

- site condition inspection
- pedestrian survey
- test pit survey
- controlled surface pick-up, or
- test unit excavation.

The site form due date is **18 months** from the project start date if the project involves:

- archaeological site excavation
- field school, or
- public archaeology.

## 5.4 Missing a site form due date: effects on your licence

If you miss a site form due date and your site form becomes overdue, you will become ineligible to begin new fieldwork projects until the site form has been filed.

Missing site form due dates may also affect your record of licence compliance and your ability to renew your licence when it expires.

## 5.5 Keeping track of your site form due dates

PastPort helps you to track and manage your site form due dates. The 'Items Requiring Attention' section on your PastPort Home screen lists the site forms that you are required to submit along with their due dates.

## 5.6 Extensions to site form due dates

The ministry recognizes that from time to time extenuating circumstances may arise that will interfere with your ability to file a site form by its due date. In these cases, the ministry may grant an extension to the due date.

**Please note:** All extension requests should be made before the site form due date has passed.

Also note that site form due dates are not automatically extended when the ministry grants an extension for the associated report.

If you will not be able to finish fieldwork or complete a site form before its due date, you may request an extension by sending an email to [Archaeology@ontario.ca](mailto:Archaeology@ontario.ca). In your email, please provide:

- the Borden number for the site associated with the form
- the PIF number for the project
- the form type (record or update), and
- detailed reasons explaining your need for an extension.

## 6 How to get a Borden number

PastPort's 'Report a Site' self-serve feature allows you to quickly get a Borden number for a site that meets the criteria set out in Section 2.2.

In PastPort, select 'Report a Site', then 'Site Record (Borden # Request)'. You do not need to complete the entire form in order to get a Borden number. Only the mandatory fields on the form's 'Identification and Location' screen need to be filled out. Once you complete these mandatory fields, submit the form to the ministry. A Borden number will be sent to you in an email from PastPort@ontario.ca. You should receive the email within a few minutes of submitting the form.

The rest of the site record form must be completed and filed with the ministry by the site form due date (Section 4.1). This due date will appear on the 'Identification and Location' screen if you have opted to submit an incomplete form. It will also appear in your Home screen's 'Items Requiring Attention' section.

In the meantime, the information that you have provided in the site record form will appear in PastPort. The form will have the status 'In Database – Pending Completion' (Section 7.1). It will be visible to all licensed archaeologists and ministry staff. This allows important site location information to be used immediately by other users to inform their background research and archaeological potential studies while the form is completed.

The ministry has created a quick reference guide, available on our website, to help you get a Borden number using PastPort:

- *How to get a Borden number*

### 6.1 Borden numbers for sites near the Quebec and Manitoba borders

Ontario shares certain Borden blocks with the provinces of Quebec and Manitoba. Before you can get a Borden number for a site found in one of these blocks, the ministry must contact the government of the other province to ensure that duplicate Borden numbers are not created.

Once you submit a site record form for a site in a shared Borden block, we will contact the other province. While this is going on, the form has the status of 'Pending Borden Number'. It will only be visible to you and ministry staff until a Borden number is assigned to the site.

Once the ministry establishes the Borden number for the site, it is assigned to the site and sent to you in an email. You should receive the email within a few days of submitting the form. The site

form then becomes visible to other licensed archaeologists.

## 6.2 How to cancel a Borden number

On occasion you may get a Borden number that you later need to cancel. For example, you may inadvertently get more than one Borden number for a single site that you have discovered.

To cancel a Borden number, email the cancellation request to us at [Archaeology@ontario.ca](mailto:Archaeology@ontario.ca). In your email, please provide:

- the Borden number to be cancelled
- the PIF number for the project, and
- detailed reasons explaining the cancellation request.

If appropriate to do so, ministry staff will cancel the Borden number. You will receive confirmation of this by email from [PastPort@ontario.ca](mailto:PastPort@ontario.ca).

Once a Borden number is cancelled, it will not be re-assigned, either to another site or back to the same site (if the cancellation was made in error). This is to prevent confusion in the use of these unique identifiers. If necessary, a new Borden number can be obtained for a site when a Borden number has been cancelled accidentally.

### Information for consultant archaeologists

#### When *not* to cancel a Borden number

Do not cancel a Borden number when Stage 2 or 3 assessment or Stage 4 excavation has resulted in the determination that an archaeological site has no further cultural heritage value or interest.

## 7 How to file a site form

Licensed archaeologists must file all site forms with the ministry using PastPort. The ministry has created a series of quick reference guides to help you through the process of filing a site form. These quick reference guides can be found on our website:

- *How to file a Site Record Form*
- *How to file a Site Update Form*

### 7.1 Entering a series of site forms

To help you get Borden numbers for a series of sites on the same property quickly, the ministry has built a site record cloning feature. This feature becomes available once you submit the first site record. It allows you to quickly create additional site records (and get additional Borden numbers) by automatically carrying over basic information from the original record and using it to populate the new ones.

The ministry has created a quick reference guide, available on our website, to help you through the process of cloning a site form:

- *How to clone a Site Record*

The clone feature is only available for newer site records that have an associated PIF number. Older site records without associated PIF numbers cannot be cloned.

### 7.2 Maps and supporting documentation

In order to submit a site record or update form, you must upload a sketch map of the site as an attachment to the form in PastPort. Other supporting documents may be requested by the ministry.

The sketch map should include the following details about the site and its environs:

- a scale
- a north arrow
- drainage and transportation networks in the area
- terrain, including key land forms
- land use (e.g., fields, gravel pit, structures)
- areas examined
- concentration of cultural remains, and
- delineation of site boundaries as presently understood.

The map should also show the results of your fieldwork so as to:

- enable the site to be relocated in the field
- permit the site location to be accurately communicated for land use planning purposes
- provide an understanding of the site's situation in the landscape, and
- show the areas where fieldwork activities were conducted on the site.

### **7.3 How to make a correction to a site form**

The ministry has created a quick reference guide, available on our website, to help you through the process of making a correction to a site form:

- *How to submit a site form correction*

Once you have submitted a correction, the ministry will review it. If it is found to be appropriate, the correction will be entered into the Sites Database.

## 8 How the ministry processes and reviews site forms

The ministry reviews site forms to ensure that the information on the form is:

- complete and accurate
- consistent with the information about the site provided in the associated archaeological report
- consistent with any previous information about the site as documented in the Sites Database.

### 8.1 Site form statuses in PastPort

When you file a site form with the ministry, the information on it is automatically entered into the Sites Database. The form becomes visible to all licensed archaeologists and ministry staff. This helps to ensure that the database is populated with the most current information about a site at all times. This is important for the public record and to assist archaeologists who rely on the database for their research, including background studies for new projects that involve determinations of archaeological potential.

Site forms in the database have four possible statuses:

- **In Database - Pending Completion:** an incomplete site record form that has been submitted by an archaeologist in order to get a Borden number. Once the form is completed and re-submitted to the ministry, its status becomes 'In Database - Awaiting Ministry Review'.
- **In Database - Awaiting Ministry Review:** a complete site record, update or correction form that has not yet been reviewed by the ministry.
- **In Database:** a site record, update or correction form once it has successfully passed ministry review.
- **In Database – CHVI not demonstrated:** a site record or update form when the characteristics of a location reported on the form do not meet the definition of an archaeological site under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The ministry reserves the right to assign this status to any location in the rare situation that it is unclear from the information provided on the form whether the artifacts or features discovered represent physical evidence of past human use or activity or are of cultural heritage value or interest.

### 8.2 Ministry requests for revisions to a site form

During the course of a site form review, the ministry reserves the right to request a revision to the form if the information on it is incomplete, inaccurate or requires clarification. When the ministry requests a revision to a site form, you will receive an email from PastPort@ontario.ca outlining the matters of concern. The site form will also appear under the 'Items Requiring Attention'

section on your PastPort Home screen. The original due date for the site form continues to apply until a revised site form is submitted. If you need more time for your revisions, send a due date extension request to [Archaeology@ontario.ca](mailto:Archaeology@ontario.ca).

**Contact us:** If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this bulletin, please email us at [Archaeology@Ontario.ca](mailto:Archaeology@Ontario.ca).

# Glossary

## **archaeological assessment**

For a defined project area or property, a survey undertaken by a licensed archaeologist within those areas determined to have archaeological potential (the possibility that the property contains archaeological resources) to identify archaeological sites, followed by an evaluation of their cultural heritage value or interest, and a determination of their characteristics. Based on this information, recommendations are made regarding the need for mitigation of impacts to the sites and the appropriate means for mitigating those impacts.

## **archaeological project**

Any aspect of the archaeological assessment (Stages 1-4), including background study, property survey, archaeological site assessment, mitigation and reporting.

## **archaeological site**

Defined in Ontario regulation as “any property that contains an artifact or any other physical evidence of past human use or activity that is of cultural heritage value or interest”.

## **archaeological resource**

An archaeological artifact or feature (or other physical evidence of past human use or activity) that does not meet the definition of an archaeological site under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

## **artifact**

Defined in Ontario regulation as “any object, material or substance that is made, modified, used, deposited or affected by human action and is of cultural heritage value or interest”.

## **consultant archaeologist**

Defined in Ontario regulation as “an archaeologist who enters into an agreement with a client to carry out or supervise archaeological fieldwork on behalf of the client, produce reports for or on behalf of the client and provide technical advice to the client”. In Ontario, these people also are required to hold a valid professional archaeological licence issued by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

## **development proponent**

An entity, consisting of individuals, private corporations or government bodies, that is undertaking a development project.

## **marine archaeological site**

Defined in Ontario regulation as “an archaeological site that is fully or partially submerged or that lies below or partially below the high-water mark of any body of water”.

## **PastPort**

Ontario’s Past Portal. The ministry’s web-based archaeological licensing portal.

## **project area**

The lands to be affected by the project, e.g., the area of a development application under the Planning Act; the area to be licensed under the Aggregate Resources Act; the area subject to physical alteration as a result of the activities associated with the project. This may comprise one or several properties, and these properties may or may not be adjoining. However, all the properties must be part of one project that is being undertaken by one proponent.

## **Project Information Form (PIF)**

The form archaeological licence-holders must submit to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport upon deciding to carry out fieldwork (formerly called a CIF, or Contract Information Form.).

**property**

A piece of land with a defined boundary and an owner. See *project area*.

**standard**

In the context of the *Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists* (2011), a mandatory instruction or practice that the reader is required to carry out if they are doing the stated activity. Uses the words “must” or “should”.