

# Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment: Lot 28 Concession 7, Town of Blue Mountains, former Geographic Township of Collingwood, Grey County, Province of Ontario

MTCS PIF P474-0014-2016

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**Project Area:** 11.67 hectares (28.8 acres) of Lot 28 Concession 7, Collingwood Township (now Town of the Blue Mountains), Grey County

**Project Nature:** residential development

**Project Proponent:** The Myriad Group

**Archaeological Consultant:** WSP Canada Inc. (Kitchener)

**MTCS Assessment Stage:** Stage 1 background study (evaluation of archaeological potential including property inspection)

**Date of Property Inspection:** August 26, 2016

**Report Date:** November 14, 2016

**Report status with MTCS:** unknown

**SON Review (William R. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.):** November 2016

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## WSP Assessment Activities

- evaluation of the potential for the presence of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian archaeological resources based on landscape features, cultural overview, and property inspection of the project area
- recommendation for area-specific Stage 2 archaeological assessment (property investigation)

## WSP Stage 1 Assessment Results

- 8.2 hectares (20.3 acres) of the 11.67-hectare (28.8-acre) project area are considered to possess potential for the presence of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian archaeological resources
- archaeological potential is considered to be low for the remainder of the project area due to: 1. disturbance caused by preparatory residential development; 2. steep slopes; and 3. wetland conditions

## WSP Assessment Recommendation

- with SON technical input, conduct a Stage 2 archaeological assessment (property investigation) of the 8.2-hectare (20.3-acre) undisturbed, wooded section of the project area that possesses the potential for the presence of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian archaeological resources
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- based on Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport archaeological standards this would involve the excavation and examination of fill from 30cm-diameter shovel test-pits spaced at five-metre intervals along transects spaced five metres apart
    - across an 8.2-hectare area approximately 3300 shovel test-pits would have to be excavated and examined

### **Fitzgerald Comments**

Based on the review of WSP's Stage 1 archaeological assessment and a November 21 site visit with WSP's senior ecologist, a number of issues require comment.

#### **1. WSP Mapping Error**

WSP proposes that 8.2 hectares (20.3 acres) of the 11.67-hectare (28.82-acre) property possess archaeological potential and should be subjected to a Stage 2 archaeological assessment – i.e., the area highlighted in green in Figure 5 [8.2 hectares of 11.67 hectares being 70.3%]. Clearly the green area in Figure 5 does not constitute anywhere near 70.3% of the property.

While the proponent's Draft Plan of Subdivision (Figure 3) precisely defines the property as containing 11.67 hectares (28.82 acres), the 200-metre bar scale and 1:3500 ratio on the maps produced by WSP (Figures 2, 4-6) are seriously inaccurate. Any Stage 2 projections based on WSP's significant spatial overestimation of "8.2" hectares would similarly be greatly overestimated.

#### **2. WSP Evaluation of Archaeological Potential**

WSP claims that the potential for the presence of archaeological resources is high within "8.2" undisturbed wooded hectares. Not only is the size greatly overestimated, so too is WSP's evaluation of its archaeological potential. The latter is obviously not only the result of WSP's lack familiarity with the local post-glacial landscape and culture history, but the relationship between the two (i.e., how to evaluate archaeological potential).

In an effort to evaluate the property's archaeological potential, WSP begins with a generic, superficial overview of some 11,000 years of southern Ontario's Aboriginal culture history from the retreat of the Laurentide Ice Sheet to the Late Ontario "Iroquoian" period. Despite an abundance of readily-available archaeological evidence spanning this extended period – in addition to European and Euro-Canadian accounts and maps from the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, WSP provides no locally-specific First Nations or Euro-Canadian culture history.

Similarly, WSP's ecological and physiographic presentations are, respectively, trivial and erroneous, deficiencies that provide no – or inaccurate, insight into possible past cultural activities and, hence, archaeological potential within the project area.

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WSP did, however, proffer that a beach ridge associated with Glacial Lake Nipissing defined the south edge of the property. What was not presented or understood was the nature and antiquity of this landform or its possibilities for and hindrances to millennia of cultural activity. First of all, a body of water named “Glacial Lake Nipissing” does not exist. Between ca. 4200-2200 BC a highwater post-glacial body of water named the Nipissing Great Lakes (NGL) was stabilized at an elevation of between 190 metres and 195 metres above sea level. Second, what WSP calls a “beach ridge” is in fact the high-relief, steeply-sided NGL erosional bluff. The active NGL shoreline was at its base – eroding and creating the bluff, not at its top as claimed by WSP. Within the property, evidence of cultural activity could be present from any time that the NGL shoreline was active until the water levels descended to their present 176-metre above sea level elevation.

Readily-available literature is available on the Nipissing Great Lakes shoreline around present-day Georgian Bay and Lake Huron and its archaeological associations.

However, an active shoreline does not necessarily invite cultural activity. Shorelines and terraces of present and past sandy bays and inlets – especially those with fish-spawning rivers, are particularly attractive and are where archaeological sites are concentrated around Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. Conversely – and understandably, active and relict boulder-strewn shorelines are not. Location, location, location.

WSP’s Stage 1 archaeological assessment documents boulder and cobble pavement across the project area’s “8.2” hectares of undisturbed forest floor. This too was observed on the November 21 site visit as was botanical evidence of seasonal and permanent wetness. Identically inhospitable conditions along NGL and post-NGL shorelines that have been assessed archaeologically along Owen Sound Bay, in the Bruce Peninsula National Park, and the Bruce Nuclear site have been devoid of archaeological sites. Nearby areas with more favourable conditions possess, however, some of the greatest densities of archaeological sites – eg., Dunks Bay, the mouth of the Saugeen River, and Inverhuron Bay. Closer to Georgian Glen, a significant cluster of archaeological sites exists along and beneath the NGL bluff in the boulder-free area immediately inland from the bay between Craigleith and Long Point.

### **Fitzgerald Recommendation**

In excess of a century of archaeological investigation in the area contradicts WSP’s evaluation of high archaeological potential for the presence of Aboriginal archaeological resources within the undisturbed boulder-strewn sections of the project area.

While a thorough visual inspection and documentation of the culturally-inhospitable surface conditions within the substantially less than 8.2-hectare combined undisturbed sections of the project area is warranted (which could be conducted in several hours) – and would be acceptable to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, a Stage 2 shovel test-pit archaeological assessment is unjustifiable.