

WALTERDALE BRIDGE HISTORICAL RESOURCES FAQ

Updated March 2014



As construction progresses on the new Walterdale Bridge, the project team continues to provide regular status updates to the public. For more information, visit edmonton.ca/WalterdaleBridge

What is the historical significance of the area near the Walterdale Bridge?

For centuries the North Saskatchewan River valley has been considered of cultural and traditional importance for Aboriginal peoples. Particularly significant is the area around the north end of the Walterdale Bridge, known as Rossdale Flats. Early versions of Fort Edmonton were built there and included a cemetery. This area today is known as the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery. The current site includes a memory circle, re-interment area and historic period graveyard.

Prehistoric archaeological sites have also been found in this part of the North Saskatchewan River valley. Early work on the Walterdale Bridge replacement project included identifying additional sites on the south side of the river. These sites were subject to management measures under the Provincial *Historical Resources Act*, such as avoidance or site-specific mitigative archaeological excavations as needed.

Where is construction being done on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River?

The west edge of the new bridge will be right next to the east edge of the existing bridge. The new bridge will cross the river at an angle, more closely aligning with 105 Street to the north. New roadworks at the north end of the new bridge will tie into the existing 105 Street south of River Valley Road/Rossdale Road without disturbing the memory circle, re-interment area or historic period graveyard.

How has the Aboriginal community been consulted for this project?

The project team has worked and will continue to work closely with the City's Aboriginal Relations Office (ARO) throughout the project. The project team gathered with Elders from various First Nations and Métis communities during concept planning for guidance on respectful approaches to the project. A stakeholder input panel assembled for the project design and construction phases also included First Nations and Métis representatives. Prior to construction, First Nations and Métis communities were invited to carry out ceremony. When

construction began in January 2013, members from 21 First Nations and Métis communities were invited to participate as on-site monitors for relevant excavation and in-river construction activities.

Have traditional Aboriginal ceremony and knowledge played a role in the project?

Yes. The project team is involved in ongoing consultation with First Nations and Métis communities, many of whom have observed traditional protocol and ceremony in regard to this project. In October 2010 the ARO and local Elders hosted an Elders gathering and pipe ceremony. Such activities will continue to play an important role in the City's ongoing consultation process.

Have any human remains or graves dating prior to the Fur Trade Period (pre-AD 1800) been documented in the project area?

Human remains and grave features have been recorded on the north side of the river in and around the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery dating to the Fur Trade Period (19th Century AD) only. Many of these have been documented. However, the exact location of such features potentially associated with the historic period cemetery is not completely understood. The Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery includes locations known to contain human remains as well as industrial infill from Edmonton's past development. Bridge construction will not affect any known burial locations.

Where have human remains been found in the Rosedale Flats area?

Both intact grave features and previously disturbed human remains were found in the area of the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery many years prior to construction beginning. Human remains have previously been recovered from overburden deposits in the area of the EPCOR Power Bellamy substation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that human remains have been recovered from other locations as well, though to date these locations have not been found.

As of February 2014, no human remains or grave features have been found during project-related excavation.

Has there been any prior attempt to locate human remains or graves in the project area?

Yes. Numerous ground-penetrating radar studies have been carried out in the area around the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery. A stakeholder group identified numerous grave locations, 49 of which were subject

to subsurface investigation. In 2007 an archaeological study (permit number 2007-124) assessed several of these locations and found no human remains or grave features in test areas.

What will you do if human remains are found during the course of this project?

Although discovery of human remains is unlikely, a procedure has been developed to deal respectfully with human remains if they are encountered. This procedure was developed as part of consultation with 21 Aboriginal communities, and with Aboriginal Elders.

If any human remains or historical resources are discovered during construction, all work in the vicinity will stop. The Edmonton Police Service and the medical examiner will be notified, as well as the Office of the Minister of Culture and the ARO. The City intends to fully comply with directions from all authorities to ensure that any human remains or historic resources are protected and preserved in an appropriate and meaningful way, and that any discovery is treated with respect. Any disturbance or removal, including potential reburial, will only occur once these procedures have been followed.

Has there been any prior archaeological study of the project area?

Yes. Thirty-three assessments have been carried out in and around the project area since 1967. The most recent assessments relate to the new Queen Elizabeth Pool, the decommissioning of the EPCOR Power substation and the Walterdale Bridge project. Each assessment is identified by a unique permit number and the reports are on file with the Historic Resources Management Branch of Alberta Culture. The permit numbers for the Walterdale Bridge project are 12-135 and 13-003; future work will be recorded under 14-003.

Have any archaeological sites dating prior to the Fur Trade Period (pre-AD 1800) been recorded in the project area?

Yes. Pre-Fur Trade Period artifacts have been found in the project area in small, isolated scatters. In 2009 a small, well-preserved campsite approximately 2,000 years old was subject to study near the project area. Data from this site was recorded. More recent studies identified three prehistoric period archaeological sites on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River.

In 2011 and 2012, archaeology related to bridge construction took place on both sides of the river. This included investigation for artifacts and mitigative excavations at a prehistoric campsite referred to as FjPj-108. This site is a well-preserved aboriginal

campsite used between 870-1,050 years before present. It includes a central hearth, stone tool-making debris and butchered animal bones. Over 3,900 artifacts were recovered from the site and analyzed. A final report was sent to and accepted by Alberta Culture. Further information can be obtained from the project team and the project archaeologist.

How does the project team ensure that bridge construction and roadway re-alignment do not inadvertently disturb historical resources?

A pre-construction historical resources impact assessment was required before *Historical Resources Act* clearance was given in January 2013. Since construction began, Aboriginal monitors have been on site to observe pertinent excavation and in-river work, including comprehensive archaeological investigation and soil sorting on the north side project area.

Who manages the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery?

The Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery is owned and maintained by the City of Edmonton and is subject to Provincial legislation.

Why did the project require an amendment to the legal boundary of the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery?

The north roadway from the new Walterdale Bridge falls within the original legal boundary of the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery, thereby necessitating the amendment. The City recognizes and values the traditional and historic significance of the area and has taken steps to minimize impacts. The location chosen for the new bridge minimizes potential impacts to historical resources, as the bridge foundation excavations are entirely within 20th Century industrial fill.

Where is the boundary of the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery?

The legal boundary for the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery was originally set in 2005 through Alberta's *Cemeteries Act* and was defined by 105 Street, Rossdale Road, the EPCOR Power substation and near the top bank of the North Saskatchewan River. The boundary encompassed the memory circle, re-interment area and historic period graveyard to the north, as well as intact flood plain deposits and areas of extensive 20th Century industrial fill to the south. The 2005 boundary did not reflect the historic period cemetery location, which falls within the northern portion of this larger original boundary. The precise boundary of the historic period graveyard has not been fully determined. It is currently based on the excavation of

sections of a rectangular fenced enclosure that is believed to represent the 19th Century Fort Edmonton Cemetery fence line.

In May 2013 the Province, through an Order in Council, amended the legal boundary of the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery to exclude an area of 20th Century industrial fill. The excluded area fell within the southern portion of the original 2005 boundary. The historic period graveyard, memory circle and re-interment area were not affected by the amendment. However an Interpretive Belvedere, which contained information panels explaining the historic and cultural features of the area, was removed from the edge of the north riverbank.

What has happened to the information panels from the Interpretive Belvedere?

The information panels are being refurbished and will be temporarily relocated in the northeast corner of the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery in late spring 2014. Installation of the panels will not cause any ground disturbance. The permanent location for the information panels will be determined in consultation with Aboriginal communities and local stakeholders following completion of the Walterdale Bridge. Alberta Culture has approved this relocation.

Is access to the memory circle area restricted during construction?

No. Access to the memory circle area has been maintained from the north side of the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery.