

OUR HISTORY IS WRITTEN IN PLACES AND SPACES

Snuneymuxw history on Gabriola Island reaches back to time immemorial or beyond a written record. Our history dates back thousands of years. The history of our people and the land is not told through a Western chronological time lens. Spaces and places rather than time is our organizing principle of history and knowledge. Snuneymuxw history is inscribed on the land and in the places and spaces where Snuneymuxw people live. Our stories are evidence to our deep connection and relationship to the lands and our way of life on these lands. Landmarks and places on Gabriola hold those memories and connection to Gabriola Island.

There are several Gabriola landmarks that provide important knowledge of Snuneymuxw rich history to the place. Burial and petroglyph sites are recorded in the archaeological record, and many of these sites hold important and cultural significance to Snuneymuxw People. From our Ancestors' time, there are stories that have been handed down in connection with some of the petroglyphs.

One significant site is the Salmon petroglyph located in the Jack Point area. It is told that every fall season the spiritualist who took care of the Salmon petroglyph would offer a salmon ceremony calling on salmon to enter back into the estuary and the Nanaimo River.

Snuneymuxw history exists because of the connections we have to the lands through cultural practices, traditional place names, spirituality we hold of these places, stories shared and passed down, and specific landmarks and petroglyphs. The Snuneymuxw Elders recorded Snuneymuxw place names that were given by our Ancestors. Some of these locations are now known as Twin Beaches, Degnen Bay to False Narrows, Flat Top Islands, and several other areas around Gabriola Island. There are also sites of significance that hold our Ancestors' stories, such as the site located at Orlebar Point, the rock known as Xuwtluqs.

IT IS TOLD THAT ...



Photo: Geraldine Manson



Photo: Geraldine Manson

Figure 4: New petroglyph sign at Gabriola Museum

Figure 3: Old petroglyph sign at Gabriola Museum. This signage was replaced with a new sign, "It is told that..."

XULSI'MALT, GARY MANSON

Snuneymuxw Knowledge Keeper & VIU Elder-in-Residence



Figure 5: Xulsi'malt (Gary Manson) is a Snuneymuxw Elder who holds sacred knowledge about specific petroglyphs. Photo courtesy of VIU Communications Office

Xulsi'malt shares words about images

“Gabriola Island has many petroglyphs. You cannot name these petroglyphs or their reproductions. We don’t try to name these as they do not belong to us. We can only say, ‘It appears to be a sea-wolf, a bird.’ The story of the petroglyph image is lost to us. The original person that made the petroglyph is the one who owns it and named it. This person would have had a special gift and a spiritual connection to it. They may have been trained as a spiritualist, perhaps fasting for the image to come to life. They had to be careful because they could be putting themselves in danger by bringing an image to life. Perhaps it was a dream or a mythical thing or animal that they had seen. The story of them is lost to us. When did it stop? The emotional disturbance of the petroglyphs with the coming of the colonial era is part of the story. When visiting sites of the petroglyphs, acknowledge your presence, place your hand over your heart, meaning a sign of respect and that you intend no harm. Even if we do not understand what meaning to give an image, we honor it by arriving to the site.”

Petroglyphs come with no written language, but there are those in the Snuneymuxw First Nation community that hold the wisdom of knowing what these images mean, such as Snuneymuxw Elder Xulsi'malt, Gary Manson. Xulsi'malt is connected to the rare links of our Ancestors' way of life. Images that record coming-of-age ceremonies, burial markers, or guardians for the dead. Certain sites are considered sacred, and today these

spiritual images are held with the highest respect by our Sacred Knowledge Keepers, especially those related to our Longhouse Ceremonies.

Figure 6: Snuneymuxw Knowledge Keeper Dave Bodaly sweeping petroglyph replica at Gabriola Museum



Photo: Geraldine Manson

GABRIOLA ISLAND PETROGLYPHS

*Au si:em s'ulxwe:n, si:em siyeyu;
si:em mustimuxw*

Uy' kwunus si lumtula

*Hay ce:p qa kwuns ulup skaqip tu
xe:xe Snuneymuxw tumuxw*

Respected Elders, friends, visitors to
this land

We are happy to see each one of you

Thank each for gathering on the sa-
cred land of Snuneymuxw.

We welcome each onto this ancestral,
sacred ground where over 70 sacred
images were placed thousands of
years ago. Several represent spiritual
transformation, then there are those
who guide you through stories and
seasons left to the minds standing
before them. We ask that everyone
please do respect this space, and no
rubbings are to be done on any of the
images.

Several of these images are no longer
visible due to weathering, covered
naturally by moss, erosion, and also
vandalism. There have been 30 images
selected and replicas made and placed
on the Gabriola Museum grounds.



Photo: Geraldine Manson

Figure 7:
Earl and Geraldine Manson standing
next to Heritage BC sign at the Church
site on Gabriola island

This sign will be replaced with
Snuneymuxw First Nation
language and knowledge.

GABRIOLA ISLAND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

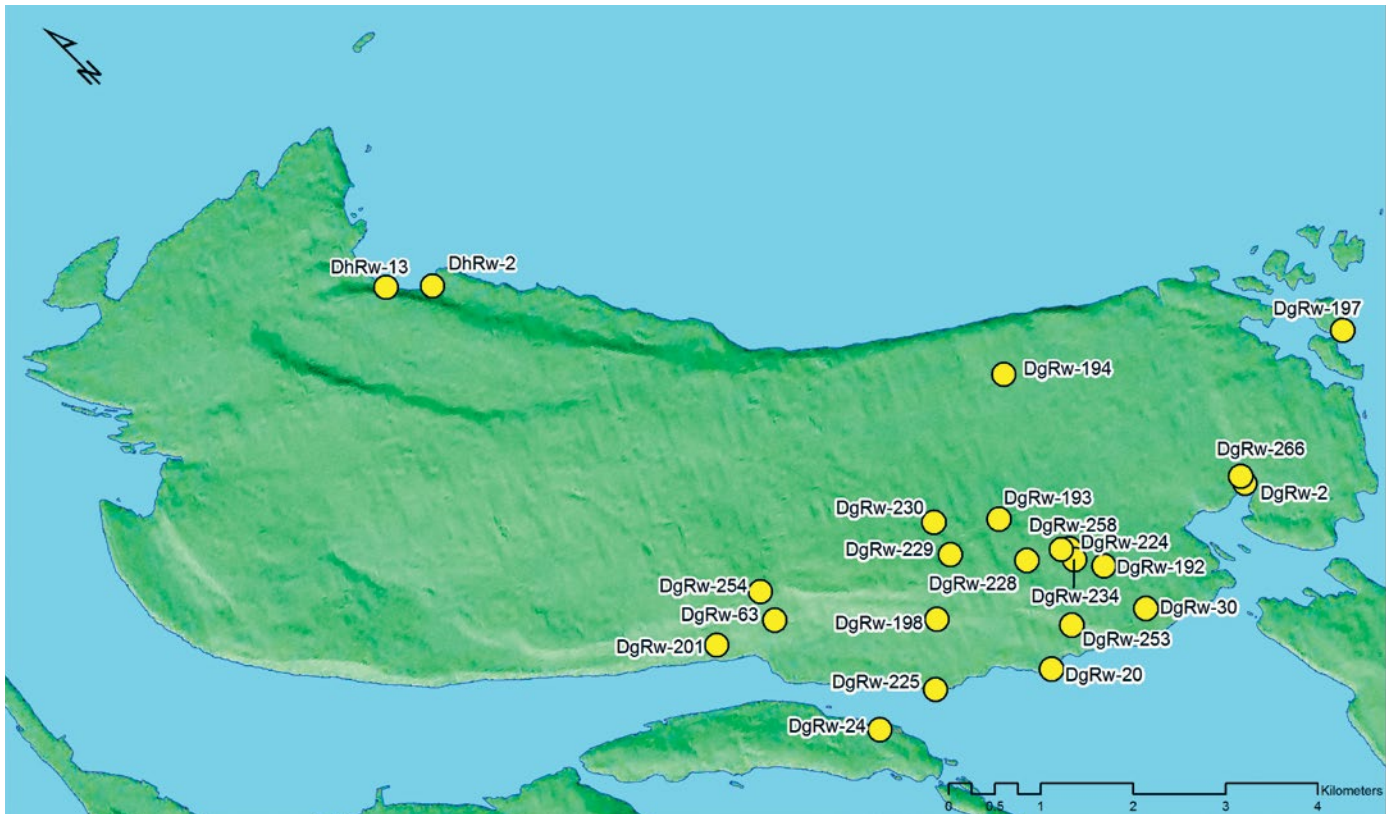


Figure 8:
Map of archaeological
sites (Courtesy of BC
Archaeological Branch)

Many archaeological sites on Gabriola Island are identified by a Borden Number, using a grid system such as DhRx and DgRw. The Borden System was created by Charles Edward Borden in 1952, who was an archaeologist at University of British Columbia.

These numbers are used in Canada to register archaeological sites, associated artifacts, and petroglyph sites.

THE MOUSE WOMAN PETROGLYPH REPLICA



Figure 9 (left):

Mouse Woman DgRw198

This image is located on private property where it's believed that the image holds healing properties. Several individuals have visited the site to receive help in healing from a variety of illnesses. David E. Young published his book, *The Mouse Woman of Gabriola*, in 2014 and speaks about the notion of the healing power that this petroglyph holds.

Figure 10 (above): DgRw 229 appears to be a male figure.

These two petroglyph replicas are located at the Gabriola Museum and share a likeness. One has been given the title of "Mouse Woman".