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INTERVIEW WITH TREVOR PECK, PROVINCE OF ALBERTA ARCHEOLOGIST

DOUG DIRKS (CBR-AM): A developer is proposing a new retail and housing development for the East Paskapoo Slopes. That's the slope natural area just east of Canada Olympic Park in Calgary's northwest.

Trinity wants to develop 100 acres of land along the bottom of the slope and transfer 160 acres to the city as parkland. The plan has its share of opponents. One of their concerns is the archaeological sites and artifacts in the area, which fall under the jurisdiction of the province.

Trevor Peck is an archaeologist with Alberta Culture and Tourism and joins me now.

Good afternoon.

TREVOR PECK (Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of Alberta): Good afternoon.

DOUG DIRKS: So what exactly are the artifacts on this site that we're talking about here?

TREVOR PECK: Well, you have to understand first that we're at the HRIA level, or historic resource impact assessment level, so we're just in the process of finding the sites. But I can tell you that there have been a variety of archaeological materials recovered from a number of sites and for the most part we're dealing with bison kill sites and ancient aboriginal campsites. So by a bison kill site, I'm talking about animals that were driven into small coolies or perhaps

DOUG DIRKS: Um-hmm.

TREVOR PECK: trapped on the terraces that are natural on the slope or campsites where the First Nations people camped again on these terraces on the slopes there.

DOUG DIRKS: All right, so this is early days but what are these items and features tell you about the early people who stayed and hunted there?

TREVOR PECK: Well, basically these initial studies are reaffirming quite a lot about what we already knew from the past Paskapoo Slopes and that is that while people have been in the Calgary area for probably the last 12,000 years were finding that the slopes were utilized at kind of four main time periods. They were specially used about 2,500 years ago in a time period that archaeologists called the Pelican Lake phase, and at this time period people were literally driving bison over the top of the hill, down onto these relic terraces into wooden pounds and killing bison off that way using what we call an

(inaudible) island dart.

And then over the last 1,000 years which again was (inaudible) quite a lot, during what archaeologists called the old wounds phase, they were killing bison in much the same way.

But in other time periods say about 7,000 years ago, they were doing things slightly differently. Some of the small coolies towards the base of the hill, animals were being driven up into them in these smaller coolies and they were used as natural traps and animals were being killed off here.

DOUG DIRKS: Um-hmm.

TREVOR PECK: And then again even slightly earlier, about 9,000 years ago, which is a time period that archaeologists called the paleo Indian time period because it is quite old, again animals were being driven into these small coolies and dispatched that way.

DOUG DIRKS: And as an archaeologist what excites you most about this site?

TREVOR PECK: It is a fantastic record of literally thousands of years and it tells us so much. I'll just give you one example. Archaeology is quite young in the province, 65 years literally when the first archaeologist started doing things professionally. But when you look at say historical documents everyone knows about heads smashed in buffalo jumps. Buffalo jumps are big things but when you look at historical documents, they hardly ever report things like bison jumps but they talk about bison pounds.

DOUG DIRKS: Um-hmm.

TREVOR PECK: And it wasn't until we started looking at the Paskapoo Slopes that we found the first real archaeological evidence of these pounds. Yet they have been talked about so frequently in the journals.

So things like that just really enlighten us.

DOUG DIRKS: Trevor, some opponents to this development have expressed concerns about what will happen to the artifacts and the archaeological sites that lie inside the development footprint. What happens to those?

TREVOR PECK: Well again we are at the historical resource impact assessment level. I can tell you though that my part of the government, the Archaeological Survey, has been working with the city of Calgary and the developer over the last two years regarding this project to ensure that the least amount of impact occurs to archaeological resources and we preserve as many of the archaeological resources in situ, as we call it, or in place.

Preserving resources in situ is our preferred management or mitigative option. That way

when things are left in the ground, of course future generations have the opportunity to study them because it is still there literally.

What I can tell you though is that at present everyone's efforts appear to take off especially for archaeology.

DOUG DIRKS: Yeah, how do you go about preserving those artifacts in site, in situ as you described it? Do you build around it? How do you mitigate that?

TREVOR PECK: That's exactly right. At the opening of this discussion you mentioned that the landowner was going to turn over some of the property to the city and then it would fall in the city to put that into some kind of environmental reserve or something that they would have a caveat on the land that they would know that the materials were there.

DOUG DIRKS: So most of the artifacts in sites are in the area that is currently proposed to be public parkland. What is your vision for how visitors would learn about the archaeological significance of that area?

TREVOR PECK: Well again the city is the proper governing body to address any kind of park or plans for that area. But I can assure you that one of Alberta Culture and Tourism's goal is to increase accessibility and to promote Alberta's historical resources. So our role would be to provide as much support as you possibly can with regards to displays and educational signage that the city would like to undertake.

DOUG DIRKS: Do you have a blueprint for another area of the province where something like this was proposed, a development and you managed to get it just right as far as development was concerned and preserving the archaeological integrity of the area that was developed?

TREVOR PECK: We like to think we do a really good job all the time but I have to tip my hat to the city and the developer in this case. They have worked exceedingly well together to come up with a plan where the least amount of impact is occurring.

DOUG DIRKS: Trevor thanks for your time.

TREVOR PECK: You bet.

DOUG DIRKS: Trevor Peck is an archaeologist with the Archaeological Survey of Alberta.
