

Camosun Archaeology Field Assistant Program

2025

Thank you for your interest in the Archaeology Field Assistant Program. Here is some information to help prospective students understand the scope of the program and specifics about the delivery of the program in 2025.

First, a few things to be clear about in terms of this program:

1. Students are not 4 weeks away from becoming an archaeologist. Generally, contract companies hire field assistant who are at least part way through a degree in archaeology, these applied skills really help as a complementary skillset (often have students who have completed their undergrad but do not have any field experience. An exception may be Indigenous participants who may work on field crews in their territories regardless of where they are at with other types of education.
2. Do not expect to be doing excavation like you see in National Geographic. Most archaeology in BC is survey level, and these are the skills that we focus on in this program.
3. You do not need any prior archaeology experience to be successful in this program. Over the years we have had a wide range of students, including people participating purely out of interest; why go and learn about heritage and archaeology in Greece when you can do something similar right here at home?
4. The AFA program is recognized by the BC Archaeology Branch as equivalent to RISC certification, which means that students get a credential from Camosun and a certificate of competency from the provincial government for successfully completing the program. RISC certification determines the skills taught and the level of competencies that must be met for successful completion of the program.
5. We cover a lot every day so full attendance is mandatory for every day of the program. It's impossible to reteach material or get a student caught up for anything more than 2 hours of missed content.

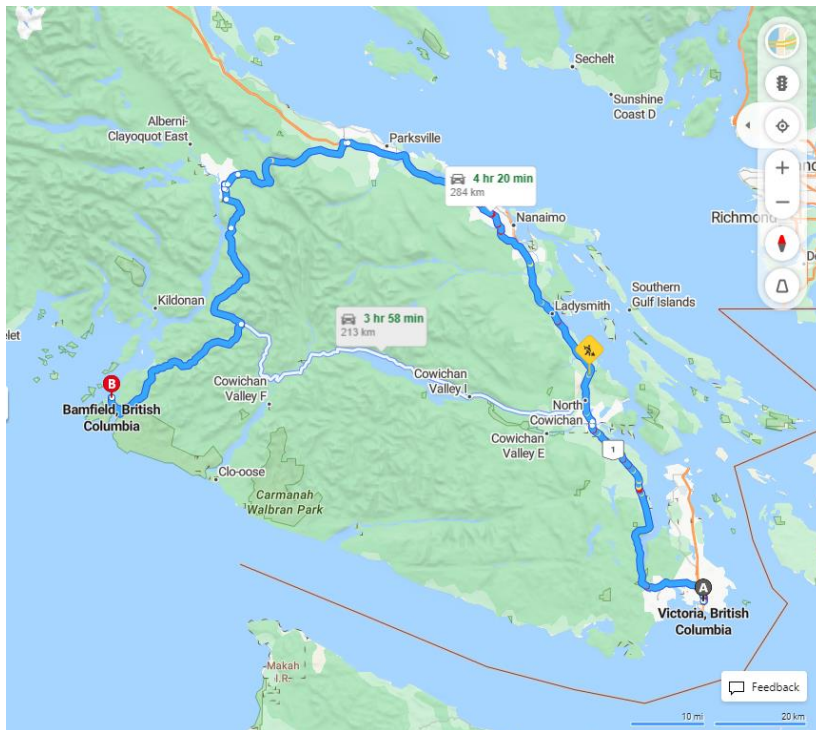
This year we have the opportunity to offer this program in an intensive 10 day format. We ran the program this way in 2024 and it was a big success. Here is some information to help you decide if you would like to participate this year.

We will start with 3 full days of learning in Victoria at Camosun's Lansdowne campus and in local field sites. The AFA program works with consulting archaeology companies, the Archaeology Branch and Indigenous communities to ensure that the skills being taught are what field assistant need to be contributing crew members. We will learn about the provincial legislation that structures archaeological work in the province, look at the material record to learn how to

recognize different belongings and features, and learn how to take fieldnotes, complete efficient pedestrian surveys, and practice basic navigation skills.

After being introduced to the basic skills, students need time to practice, ask questions, and get feedback to be able to hone and improve these skills to meet the competency benchmarks. This is where the applied field project comes in. Applied projects in this program are always crafted in partnership with indigenous communities to provide information that is considered important to them for looking after the ancestors and guiding stewardship and land use in the future. It also helps students learn Indigenous perspectives and protocols and to learn alongside Indigenous knowledge holders. In 2024 the program started a project in partnership with the Huu ay aht nation and Dr. Tommy Happynook from UVic (and a hereditary leader of the Huu ay aht nation). Tommy and I have worked together for about 20 years, and are excited to be collaborating together in Tommy's territory, adding an archaeological lens to telling the stories of this landscape. We will continue the project in 2025, that includes surveying, feature recording, and learning from both Indigenous and archaeological perspectives.

Since Huu ay aht territory is 4.5 hours drive from Victoria, we will be camping near our project areas at Pachena Bay, near Bamfield. After our first 3 days of learning students will have a rest day and get ready for 5 nights in the field. You can get more information about this campground at <https://pachenabaycampground.ca>.



Transportation to and from the campsite at Pachena Bay is provided by the West Coast Trail Bus, and then local transportation to field sites will be with smaller vehicles like pick-up trucks. Transportation is covered by the college, as is the cost of camping. Students can borrow camping gear from the college if required. The only thing that students will be required to provide for themselves is food, and we can discuss as a group whether we want to do this collaboratively (which we did in 2024 and it worked really well).

Expect field days on the west coast to be long and intensive (but fun), rain or shine. We may get lucky with the weather, but anticipate very wet conditions. We have to be flexible to work with the weather, tides, and opportunities that come up in community; this lets us make the most of our time in the field but may mean we start a worked day early, or get cracking on dinner a bit

later than planned. We will spend a lot of time in the bush surveying an area that the nation is considering as a future site for eco-tourism development; accessing this location is about 30 minutes of walking, and then expect to body surf over and through salal well over 1m in height while carrying a small amount of gear. Work days will be about 8 hours long, with less formal learning around the campfire at night. Students may need extra time to work on fieldnotes as well; you will more than get your money's worth in terms of instructional hours!

It's worth noting that this field location is somewhat remote. Wifi was patchy in camp in 2024, which can be painful for those of us who need to be connected to the outside world (or it is a beautiful, imposed break!). Bamfield is not within walking distance of camp but we can arrange visits as needed. The town has a general store for small items like salty snacks but not much more. There is basic first aid in camp, and nurse's station in Bamfield, with transfer to an area hospital if required.



In 2024, managing our camp during and after the rain was challenging, but we were rewarded with locations like this for fieldwork.

In 2024 we had torrential rain, and gorgeous sunshine. Some students had never camped more than one night before, and found 5 nights in a row challenging (but exciting). The work is physical, and should help everyone sleep well at night. Working in the field is intensive; it is certainly part doing contract archaeology and not something that can be mocked up in a classroom. This intensity, both during the work day and in camp collaborating on activities is not for everyone. If the prospect of camping and crashing around in the bush is not appealing, or you are concerned that you may not be physically able to manage this kind of sustained learning and work, this program may not be a good fit for you. If you have questions please reach out in a

timely manner as you make your decision to join the cohort. I want everyone to feel comfortable and confident in their success! My email address is kilburn@camosun.ca.

