

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES DATABASE**

Under present agreements with territorial and provincial governments, the Archaeological Sites Office, Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the official site inventories for Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and PEI. The inventories reside in the CMC Archaeological Sites Database.

From 1972 to 1981 the Sites Office, part of the Archaeological Survey of Canada (ASC), acted as Co-ordinator of the National Inventory of Prehistoric Sites (NIPS.), a countrywide inventory of archaeological sites. During this period, ASC co-ordinated the entry of approximately 35,000 site records from across Canada using a database system known as ISIS. N.I.P.S. was a component of the National Inventory Programme (NIP), a National Museums of Canada programme that operated a computer service for museum applications.

In 1980, the National Museum of Man (now CMC) was approached by NIP regarding a pilot project testing a new database system known as PARIS (Pictorial and Artifact Retrieval Information System). NIPS was abandoned and in September 1981, ASC transferred its Yukon, NWT and PEI site data to the new PARIS system. Approximately 4,000 records were transferred. ASC became the first client of the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN), a renamed version of the original National Inventory Programme (NIP).

From 1981 to 1998, the CMC Sites Office<sup>\*</sup>, along with participating provincial Sites Offices, used CHIN resources to maintain their institutional sites database and to upload to CHIN's National Database of Archaeological Sites. Participating agencies also formed CHIN's National Archaeological Sites Working Group. The group worked at creating data entry standards and at developing consistent approaches to the computerization of site data. A data dictionary was compiled by the Group and published by CHIN in 1994.

In 1998, a change in CHIN's mandate meant that the Network no longer supported institutional databases and that new, individual in-house systems would have to be developed. CMC began developing and implementing the Cultural Assets Information System (CAIS) using a database known as KE Emu. In April 1998, the CMC Sites Office uploaded approximately 20,000 Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Prince Edward Island site records to the new database.

The KE system is operational however the final version of the Sites module as well as a Web Interface to the CMC Sites Database are still in development. This resource will give the territories and provinces access to CMC Sites Database via the Internet. An ArcView GIS 8.1 with a dynamic interface to the Sites Database is also in development.

An informal association named the “ Archaeological Sites Inventory Group ” was formed during a National conference and workshop held at CMC in April 1999. Members are from every province

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<sup>\*</sup> In 1991, the Archaeological Sites Office was moved from ASC to Collections Management Services under the Information and Collections Branch. In 1998, the Sites Office was moved to Library, Archives, and Documentation Services under the Research and Collections Branch where it resides today.

and territory and exchange ideas and information on matters related to managing archaeological sites database.

In October 2000 the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC) developed a GIS facility using MS Access and ArcView GIS software. The PWNHC GIS facility has acquired a copy of the CMC Sites Database for the NWT, and has expanded it to include avocational reports of archaeological sites. The NWT Archaeological Sites Database is updated twice annually with downloads from the CMC. The PWNHC GIS facility also maintains the NWT Geographic Names Database, and is developing a land use database, and a registry of Aboriginal burials.