

## Digging up the past: Albertans invited to take part in archaeological survey of Fort Macleod townsite

Items discovered so far include felt, wool, beads, jewellery, leather and children's shoes and toys

By Dave Dormer, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jul 29, 2017 8:00 AM MT Last Updated: Jul 30, 2017 12:36 PM MT



Shoes are among the artifacts unearthed at the Fort Macleod Historic Townsite. (Atlasl Archaeology)

Residents are invited to take part in an ongoing archaeological dig at the Fort Macleod Historical Townsite this weekend, which is revealing a glimpse of everyday life in one of the southern Alberta's earliest communities.

The original townsite was unearthed during a dig last year when items from the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) were discovered, along with domestic items like felt, wool, beads, jewellery and leather and children's shoes and toys.

Some First Nations artifacts were also found, including glass tools and trade beads.

"We're getting a really unique look at the time period from 1874 to 84-ish," said Rachel Lindemann, owner of Atlatl Archaeology, the company behind the project.

"We have excellent preservation of the site, so it's this really great capsule, and we're seeing a lot of family life going on. We're seeing evidence of children and children's toys and children's shoes and that's something we don't usually see."



Rachel Lindemann, owner of Atlatl Archaeology, says artifacts found at the site are giving a glimpse into everyday life in the original Fort Macleod. (Terri Trembath/CBC)

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Fort Macleod is about 175 kilometres south of Calgary.

The fort was the first NWMP post to be established in southern Alberta and served as the national headquarters for the NWMP from 1874 to 1878.

It sits on Macleod Island along the Oldman River, a few kilometres from where the town of Fort Macleod currently sits.

The original townsite was abandoned due to repeated flooding, which actually helped preserve many of the artifacts, said Lindemann.



Glassware unearthed from the original Fort Macleod townsite. (Atlatl Archaeology)

"It gave them the opportunity to seal the site essentially, so we get this snapshot of, 'the area flooded, this what everybody left behind,'" she said.

The goal of this weekend's work is to continue digging a trench started last year in an attempt to find the southern edge of the townsite, which was originally a single street.

"This is where Fort Macleod started," said Lindemann.

"Basically when the troops were coming through, the North West Mounted Police at this point, this was their first post as 'west' in western Canada, so they established the fort and within a couple of year this sprang up. They had a surgeon with them, he started a shop and a kind of pharmacy, there was two saloons.

"So what this trench represents is the backyards of at least one side of the street, but we don't know which side of the street we're on."



Tools found during an archaeological dig at the original Fort Macleod townsite. (Atlas Archaeology)

It would have looked a lot like the small towns seen in western movies, said Lindemann.

"Town was just one line street with one cross street with buildings on one side and buildings on the other and that's all it was," she said.

"There were corrals and stables right in town. Very rustic, very basic, and lots of flooding."

*With files from Terri Trembath*