
Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump (Canada) No 158bis

1 Basic data

State Party

Canada

Name of property

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump

Location

Province of Alberta

Canada

Inscription

1981

Brief description

In south-west Alberta, the remains of marked trails and an aboriginal camp, and a tumulus where vast quantities of buffalo (American bison) skeletons can still be found, are evidence of a custom practised by the aboriginal peoples of the North American plains for nearly 6,000 years. Using their excellent knowledge of the topography and of buffalo behaviour, they killed their prey by chasing them over a precipice; the carcasses were later carved up in the camp below.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2020

2 Issues raised

Background

The property has been inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981 on the basis of criterion (vi). A retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value has been adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2018 (Decision 42 COM 8E).

During the 2nd cycle of Periodic Reporting for Europe and North America 2012-2015, it was noted that there was a discrepancy between the map showing the boundary and the estimated size of the property. It was indicated that the State Party would address this issue on the Retrospective Inventory in 2013.

The original nomination dossier of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump (HSIBJ) describes the property as having a total area of approximately 4,000 hectares. However, the map submitted with the nomination, which delineates

a rectangular polygon covering over 9,500 hectares, does not conform to the description or size parameters provided in the nomination dossier.

The Government of Alberta is unable to reconcile the map boundary as presented in the nomination dossier with either historical or current site records. Therefore, the State Party prepared a new map to correctly identify the boundaries of the property based on the description provided in the nomination dossier.

Modification

The proposed modification suggested in this minor boundary modification aims to clarify the intended boundary of the inscribed property as described in the nomination dossier by providing an updated map.

The boundary that is now proposed reflects an inverted-L-shaped area, covering 3,626 hectares, and represents more accurately the legal land descriptions noted in the original nomination dossier.

The original nomination dossier describes the site complex as comprising three elements: the kill (3 hectares), the campsite (30 hectares) and the gathering basin (3,600 hectares) encompassing a total area of 3,633 hectares.

Therefore, there is a discrepancy between the area described in the nomination dossier (4,000 hectares), the area delineated by the original nomination map (9,500 hectares) and the legal boundary of the property (3,626 hectares).

Given the significant degree of correspondence between the L-shaped polygon boundary and a variety of details in the original nomination dossier, the request for modification of the property's boundary is made on the basis that it best reflects the original intent at the time of inscription of the property and archaeological resource values on the ground.

The legal land description in the nomination dossier encompasses the three elements of the cultural heritage property which are protected as National Historic Site (1968) and Provincial Historic Resource (1979, 1981), as well as private property, delineated as "Primary Protection Area". ICOMOS notes that the "Primary protection area" coincides with the boundary of the "Proposed Land Use Control of HSIBJ" submitted in the nomination dossier.

In 2000, the Province of Alberta included HSIBJ in the program called Special Places 2000 in order to afford another level of protection through monitored use of cultural and natural resources. An area of 1,800 acres (approximately 728 hectares) surrounding the area designated as Provincial Historic Resource (approximately 162 hectares) is covered, giving a total of 890 hectares covered by the Special Places 2000 designation. However, no map has been submitted

illustrating this boundary and its relation to the new proposed boundary.

The lands owned, protected and managed by the province of Alberta cover roughly 1,230 hectares (34%) of the area that is now proposed. An additional 1,813 hectares (50%) of immediately surrounding freehold lands are currently under review for the establishment of provincial conservation easements under the *Alberta Land Trust Grant Program*, or situated within the Piikani Nation Reserve of the Blackfoot Confederacy who are engaged in the protection and management of the property. Significant archaeological resources that may be discovered in remaining private lands outside of the modified boundary are afforded protection from industrial or commercial impacts under the *Historical Resources Act* and the *Municipal Government Act* of Alberta.

ICOMOS considers that, even though the new proposed boundary does not conform exactly to any specific legal protection boundary, the area covered by the new proposed boundary includes all attributes expressing the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed modification will reinforce the management and protection of the property.

3 ICOMOS Recommendations

Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed minor modification to the boundary of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Canada, be **approved**.

