

## Thomas Raddall Provincial Park

Located within Thomas Raddall Provincial Park is a very special kind of archaeological site of shell middens. A shell midden or shell mound is an archaeological feature consisting mainly of mollusk shells. A midden contains the debris of human activity, and should not be confused with wind or tide created beach mounds. Some shell middens are areas where ocean resources were processed directly after harvesting. Some shell middens are associated with villages, as a designated village dump site. In all cases, shell middens are extremely complex and very difficult to excavate fully and exactly. However, the fact that they contain a detailed record of what food was eaten or processed and many fragments of stone tools and household goods makes them invaluable objects of archaeological study.

"The E'se'get Archaeology Project at Thomas Raddall Park derives its name from the Mi'kmaw word "E'se'get" meaning dig for clams. The middens in this location, made up of clam, mussel and oyster shells, were collected and eaten by Mi'kmaq people 500 to 2,500 years ago. Researchers from the Canadian Museum of Civilization have been working with undergraduate archaeology students from the University of New Brunswick to explore and preserve this ancient shell heaps. The calcium in the shell heaps help preserve organic materials like bone, antler and other biodegradable materials of cultural significance which would otherwise be dissolved into the Maritime's acidic soil. Artifacts like stone tools, pottery, fire hearths and dwelling features found in and around the middens provide an opportunity to learn about the Mi'kmaq way life on the coastal shores of Mi'kma'ki, land of the Mi'lunaq. The E'se'get Archaeology Project is looking to understand the connection between the Mi'kmaq and their marine ecosystem and environment.

