

kp'itl'els – Statement of Significance

March 7, 2020

Description of Historic Place

kp'itl'els/Brilliant is a large, flat expanse of land on the floodplain at the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers. The land is sparsely treed, except at its western end near the Columbia River, where the trees are denser. The landscape is marked by a few basic roads, and many walking trails.

Heritage Values of Historic Place

kp'itl'els is valued as a settlement site of the Sinixt people, who lived at this place for thousands of years prior to contact with Europeans, and well into the early twentieth century. For the Sinixt, this place was an ideal place to live because of the wealth of resources afforded them by its location at the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers. The nature of the land and water allowed for sustainable existence,



with plentiful fish and other rich food sources, ideal transportation on the rivers, and security. These qualities established this place as the Sinixt “headquarters” in the region. The evidence of the Sinixt people’s life on this land is a critical aspect of its heritage values, and can be seen in remnants of pit houses, burial sites, fishing locations, and in the flora (such as camas) and fauna (such as salmon) that are evident on the landscape. This place is highly significant for the memorial, spiritual, cultural, and physical associations it holds as a record of the Sinixt people’s presence on this land since time immemorial.

kp'itl'els is also valued for its association with the Christian family, the last Sinixt family to occupy the land. Having lived in this place for uncountable generations, the Christian family’s ouster from kp'itl'els by European settlement is symbolic of the overarching struggles for land ownership that have been central to the post-contact narrative in Canada for hundreds of years. The Christian family’s life on the land is reflective of the combining of Indigenous and European cultures that arose post-contact; the

family built European-style buildings, cleared the land for farming and fruit-growing, and continued to fish, hunt, and gather from the land in traditional ways.

This historic place, also known as Brilliant, is also valued for its associative and physical history related to Doukhobor settlement in the West Kootenay in the first decades of the twentieth century. Between 1908 and 1913, approximately 6,000 Doukhobors, religious refugees from Russia, relocated to this area



from Saskatchewan. Under the leadership of Peter V. Verigin, they pushed the Christian family out of their familial home and re-settled the floodplain as a utopian community founded on the principle of “Toil and Peaceful Life”. During the time of the Doukhobor occupation of this land, the landscape changed drastically, with extensive clearing making way for farming and fruit cultivation, and infrastructure build to

sustain three villages (Trubetskoff, Plotnikoff, and Gorkoff). Today, this place is still valued as a testament to the Doukhobor principles of self-sufficiency and enterprise that allowed Brilliant to thrive as a community until the 1930s/40s.

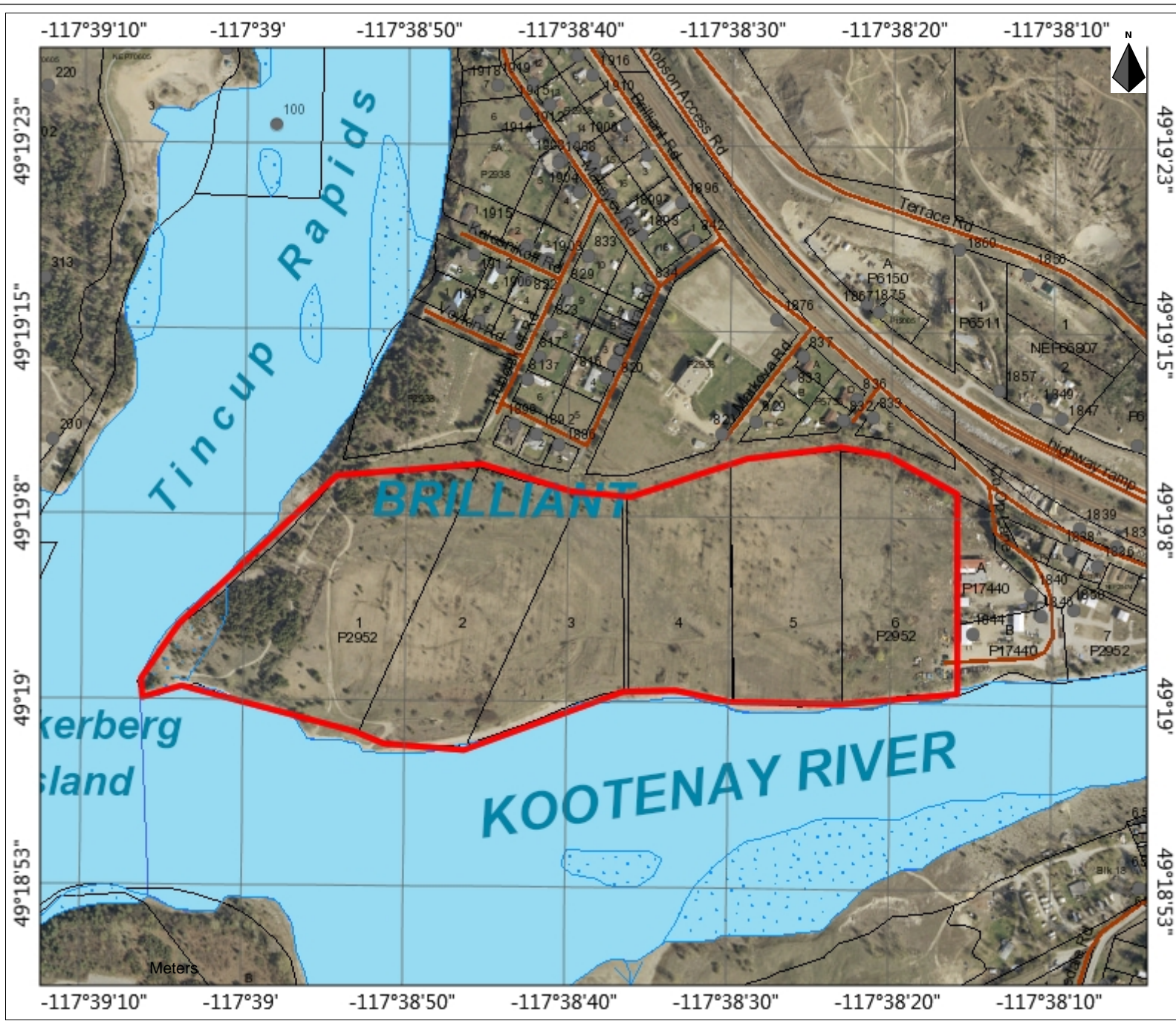
kp’itl’els/Brilliant is also a highly important site for its associative values related to cultural reconciliation between Indigenous and European communities. This place was the location of a reconciliation event in 2009, organized by the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College, which strove to meaningfully acknowledge past wrongs through information sharing, apologies, and physical connection to the landscape by its attendees.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of kp’itl’els/Brilliant include:

- The geographical location of the site at the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers, with the protection of the height of land to the northeast.
- The physical relationship of the land to the two waterways.
- The deep archaeological record of Sinixt settlement on the land, seen in such things as pit house locations, burials, fishing sites, and remains of European-style buildings constructed post-contact.

- The presence of flora and fauna associated with the sustainability of Sinixt settlement on the land, including camas plants and birch trees, and evidence of species of fish such as kokanee salmon, walleye, bull trout, rainbow trout, burbot, whitefish and sturgeon.
- Evidence of the Christian family's residence on the land, including the location of their homestead and fields.
- Physical relationship of this site with the land on the opposite side of the Kootenay River, where the Christian family was forced to live after their expulsion from kp'itl'els.
- Evidence of the community of Brilliant, seen in remnant transportation routes, remains of buildings and structures, fruit trees and clearings.
- The physical relationship of this place to Verigin Memorial Park, the grave site of Peter V. Verigin.
- Associations of this place with the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College, on the opposite side of the Kootenay River.
- Associations of this place with the Brilliant Cultural Centre.




kp'itl'els

Legend

- Civic Address
- Address Range
- Streams (Large Scale)
- Cadastre
- Lakes (Mid Scale)

Notes

Map Details



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