

# Ancient Iroquoian Burial Mounds

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## High Park: Bear Mound Complex

Registered Archaeological Site containing 12 mounds

Age: estimated to be 3,000 years old.

Location: the north side of Grenadier Restaurant's parking lot.

(Note: there are 5 more mounds throughout the park confirmed by material culture findings and additional 40 other unconfirmed mounds throughout the park)



As one might expect, throughout the history of this land, the Greater Toronto Area was home to several Nations of Indigenous Peoples, namely the Erie/Neutral (Erie: "people of the Cat Nation"), and evidence of their village life still remain in some areas. Most of these sites have been destroyed from the development of the city during the past two centuries; however, some sites still remain intact. When they became uncovered, and are re-

discovered either by passers-by or by construction crews, archaeologists and Indigenous Peoples are to be contacted and consulted.

In High Park, fifty seven such mounds have been identified. These are not village sites; they are burial mound sites. Burial Mound Earthworks were built by the Erie/Neutral and Iroquois as was by their predecessors the Hopia (Hopewell). The Anishnawbe were a group of northern Indigenous peoples who were nomadic and did not traditionally live on land that would support building earthworks, as they originally lived north of the southern limits of the Canadian Shield.

Two sites in particular are quite outstanding, for different reasons. One is exposed and unprotected by vegetation, and so is easily viewed and accessed, and therein lies the problem (Bear Mound Complex): because it is not naturally protected, it is open to wear and tear from pedestrian traffic. The Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Culture, has deemed it an archaeological site (AjGu-45), in 2003. It is bordered by West Road, the Grenadier Restaurant Parking Lot, the Colbourne Lodge Road and the baseball sports field. Another one of the other 56 sites, has been almost totally destroyed due to off-road bike enthusiasts, who unwittingly and illegally created an off road bike jump course at the southeastern corner of the park, (Snake/Serpent Mound).



Snake Mound Desecration due to illegal Bike Ramp construction/Bike activity

**Taiaiko'n Historical Preservation Society**

410-223 Jackson St. W., Hamilton, Ontario, L8P 4R4

905-522-5717 - [ogetgwiaotahioni@cogeco.ca](mailto:ogetgwiaotahioni@cogeco.ca) - attention: Rastia'ta'non:ha

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## Magwood Park: Thunderbird Mound

Age: estimated to be 8 000 years old.

Located in the Jane Street/Baby Point Road Area

Below the old Erie/Neutral, Seneca and Mohawk village site of Taiaiko'n (which was destroyed in 1687 by Marquis de Denonville, Governor of New France) within Baby Point Road area where 5,000 people once resided, in the ravine that leads into Magwood Park is another ancient Effigy Earthwork Burial Mound. Soil erosion and pedestrian traffic has been a problem here as well, even though it is off of the beaten track.

The Haudenosaunee of Six Nation's Confederacy of the Grand River, who, through long-standing agreements with the Erie/Neutrals, is sworn protectors and stewards of the ancestors. Events of desecration of Bear Mound, the Thunderbird Mound ( AjGu-44), and more recently at Snake/Serpent Mound have forced the Taiaiko'n Historical Preservation Services, through Rastia'ta'non:ha and his team, to step up surveillance and protection of these sites.



After the last Glacial Period of about 12 500 B.C., the people known as the Clovis culture, a Paleo-Indian cultural group had established themselves from east of the Mississippi to the Atlantic coast, particularly around Lake Erie (Oswego) and Lake Ontario (Cadarakut). These people were the ancestors of the Erie/Neutrals. Within the Woodland Period (700 B.C. – 1615 A.D.), they became more sedentary and agricultural, and so were able to take greater care of their dead, as well as take the time to build mounds to honour and bury them. Some mounds were used for medicine ceremonies, some were for burials, and both could be used for the purpose of interpreting the celestial calendar and for navigation. These particular mounds here in Toronto directly correspond to the same set of mounds in Ohio (Erie/Neutral), which represent all of the clans Today the family bloodlines of the Erie/Neutral are found among the Six Nations people.

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