

Mima Kapches
Editor

This is an Editorial Note announcing many changes. This, Volume 19, 1995, is my last issue as Editor of the *Canadian Journal of Archaeology/Journal Canadien d'Archéologie*. I am pleased to announce that the selection committee of the CAA, chaired by President David Pokotylo, has appointed Dr Carole Stimmell to be the new Editor of the CJA/JCA. (Carole can be contacted at the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1 [stimmell@epas.utoronto.ca]). I wish Carole all the best for her term as Editor of the CJA/JCA. Just a note to all those authors who currently have manuscripts in the CJA/JCA files, these are all now transferred to Carole and if you have any questions you may write her directly.

Claude Chapdelaine has served as Associate Editor for French language to the journal. His prompt and thorough translations of abstracts and articles were very much appreciated by me as I completed this and previous volumes of the Journal. Claude has decided to step down as Associate Editor and his replacement will be announced by Dr Stimmell.

In this issue Martin Magne once again completed the duties of Book Review Editor. He too has notified the Editor and the CAA Executive that he wishes to step down. This then is Marty's last volume in that capacity. His efforts in the task of coordinating the many aspects of the review process are well appreciated. The CAA selection committee has appointed Dr Martha Latta to be the new Book Review Editor. (Marti can be reached at the Division of Social Sciences, Anthropology, Scarborough Campus, University of Toronto, Scarborough, Ontario M1C 1A4 [latta@lake.scar.utoronto.ca]).

I would personally like to thank Claude Chapdelaine and Marty Magne for their advice and assistance over the past few years. The Executive of the CAA have been very supportive over the years of my appointment as Editor and I would like to thank David Meyer, Jane Kelley, David Pokotylo, Lesley Nichols, Bev Nicholson, Anna Sawicki and Pat Sutherland. I would also like to especially mention the assistance of Bjorn Simonsen, without whom the CAA, and all of its various functioning parts, would not be able to operate.

My publisher was Michael Kirby of Associated Heritage Publishing. His support has been very important, as it is Mike who manages to publish and mail the journal within our very strict budgetary limits. The continued voluntary copy editing assistance of Demetra Georgakopoulos has been essential to the production of this volume of the journal.

I would finally like to acknowledge the support of the Royal Ontario Museum during my term as Editor. The ROM considers service to professional organizations part of an employee's advancement of their chosen academic discipline, therefore I was able to fulfill my duties and responsibilities as Editor with the full backing of the museum.

Scott Hamilton, Ron Morrisseau and Chief Theron McCrady

ABSTRACT

Human skeletal remains were encountered during construction of the High Falls hydro dam in northern Ontario. Salyage excavations were conducted under the authority of the Ontario Cemeteries Act with supervision by Native Elders. These Elders provided information about traditional Ojibwe spirituality, and the ongoing relationship between the living and the dead involving sacred waterfalls as one means of supernatural communication. This information greatly enriched the archaeological interpretation, but also highlighted profound cultural differences between Native people and non-Native land managers and resource developers. These differences threaten resolution of an acrimonious political and legal dispute, and identify weaknesses in current environmental assessment procedures.

RÉSUMÉ

Des restes de squelettes humain ont été trouvés récemment pendant la construction du barrage hydro-électrique de High Falls dans le nord de L'Ontario. Conformément à la loi sur les cimetières en vigueur en Ontario, des fouilles ont été effectuées sous la supervision des autorités autochtones. Les autochtones ont fourni des informations sur la spiritualité traditionnelle des Ojibwe, ainsi que sur la relation continue entre les vivants et les morts qui implique les chutes sacrées comme étant une voie de communication sumaturelle. Cette information a grandement enrichi l'interprétation archéologique mais souligne aussi les profondes différences culturelles entre les Autochtones et les non-Autochtones qui doivent administrer les terres et développer les ressources. Ces différences empêchent la résolution d'une dispute politique acrimonieuse et judiciaire car elles mettent en évidence les faiblesses des procédures en cours portant sur l'évaluation de l'environnement.

INTRODUCTION

In early September of 1992, construction workers discovered human skeletal remains upon a heavily eroded hillside overlooking the High Falls dam construction site near Beardmore Ontario (Figure 1). The High Falls dam is located upon the Namewaminikan River about eight km upstream from its outlet into Lake Nipigon, and the small hydro dam and generating station will contain the reservoir extending about 15 km further upstream (Figure 2). The dam project has been the subject of a protracted dispute between the Poplar Point First Nation, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR), and the Nipigon Hydro Corporation. The Band has consistently maintained that High Falls is a sacred place, and that human burials are located in the immediate area of the falls. The recent disturbance and discovery of human skeletal remains escalated this tension, and led to further legal confrontations. As part of the Ontario Cemeteries Act investigation of the site, important aspects of Ojibwe spirituality came to light which emphasize often overlooked differences between Native and non-Native perceptions. We propose that the inability of the protagonists in this dispute to identify and address these divergent cultural values assured that a mutually satisfactory compromise could not be achieved. The dispute is also symptomatic of a much larger gap in cultural values that has always affected the relationship between Natives and non-Natives, but which remains unresolved and often unrecognized in the late twentieth century.

As northern Canadian land and resources continue to be developed, increasingly forceful protests are being made by First Nations who assert that development is taking place at their expense and without consulting them. Often these complaints focus upon issues of Native land ownership. Non-Natives often interpret this resistance as a demand for rapid settlement of outstanding land claims, and financial payments to redress past grievances and to compensate for



FIGURE 1. Map of Ontario Showing Location of Beardmore
 the loss of traditional use of the land. These interpretations of Native reaction often fail to recognize profoundly different attitudes, cultural perceptions and cognitive rationales that are at the heart of Native resistance to resource development. This sometimes leads to significant misunderstandings of motivations, and miscalculations regarding the appropriate responses by both Native and non-Native protagonists in such disputes.

THE POPLAR POINT FIRST NATION

The discovery of human skeletal remains on the High Falls construction site offers an outstanding example of the gulf in perception and world view that exists between some Native traditionalists, developmental capitalists, politicians and public servants. The disturbance of the human burial acted as a catalyst in dramatically escalating political tension, initiating costly rounds of litigation, and ensuring ongoing distrust between negotiating partners.

The project was controversial from its inception because it is located along a river that is central to the traditional land use area of an unregistered Indian band called the Poplar Point First Nation. Members of this band trace their presence in the region back to *at least* 1814 in Catholic church records (Reid 1991). The band is unregistered because their ancestors apparently chose not to travel to Lake Superior to meet with the commissioners of the 1850 Robinson Superior treaty. As a result, they were not signatories of the treaty, never received treaty status, and were never allotted a reserve. Consequently, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources considers what they consider to be their traditional lands as provincial Crown land, and they are not legally recognized as a registered First Nation.

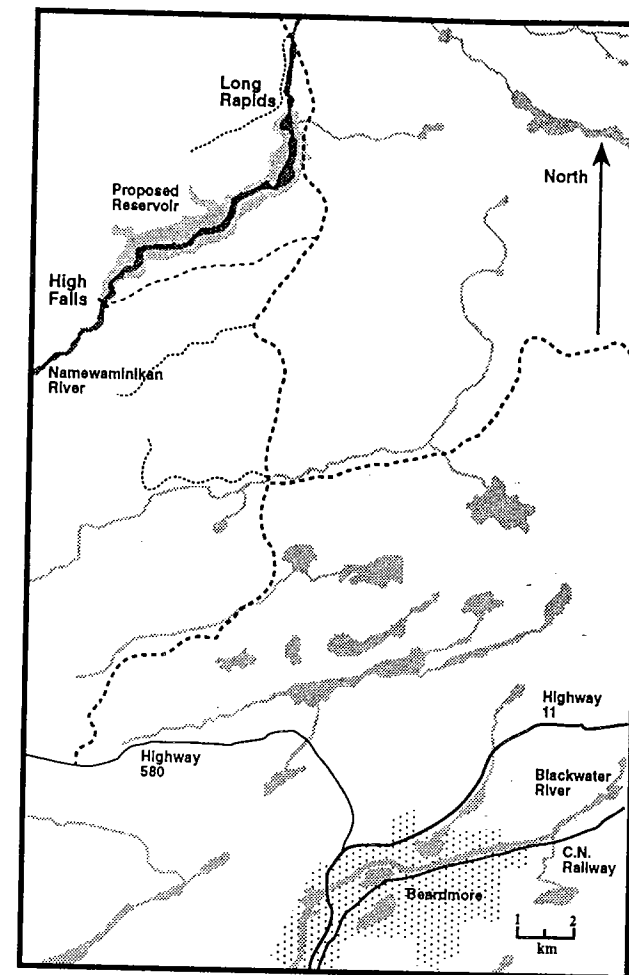


FIGURE 2. Beardmore and the High Falls Dam and Reservoir

From a settlement at the mouth of the Namewaminikan River, the Poplar Point community utilized the region for subsistence hunting, fishing and trapping until the late nineteenth century. At that time, development of the community of Beardmore and leaching of cyanide into the river system from nearby mine operations gradually forced them to disperse. Poplar Point ceased to exist as a geographically discrete community by the late 1930s as people moved to nearby reserves, or into communities such as Beardmore. Despite this, they continued to exploit the resources of their traditional territory throughout the twentieth century, and important social connections persisted that linked key families together. Since the passing of Bill C-31 in 1985, many members of the Poplar Point First Nation have had their Indian status legally reinstated, and have been seeking to re-establish their community identity with their own discrete land base. Ironically, members of the band are now officially recognized as Indians, but their political identity as a distinct First Nation is questioned because they were never officially registered.

Because of their uncertain legal status, Poplar Point was not consulted when the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Nipigon Hydro Company began planning the construction

of the power generating station at High Falls. Instead, only "officially recognized" First Nations in the area were consulted. To add to the controversy, the company sought and received an exemption from conducting an environmental assessment for the project.

When the Poplar Point First Nation learned of the development in the summer of 1991, they immediately initiated legal action to stop the project. After several legal skirmishes, a road blockade was raised leading to multiple arrests on mischief charges. As the debate raged through the fall and winter of 1991, Elders of the Poplar Point First Nation asserted that the High Falls locality was a sacred place and contained human burials. When provincial officials of OMNR and Nipigon Hydro management were informed of this, they asked the Elders to plot the location of the grave sites on a map. No doubt, the intention was to determine the magnitude and credibility of the potential burials problem, and to narrow the search for confirmatory evidence of these graves.

DIFFERING WORLD VIEWS AND LEADERSHIP STYLES

The Elders had a somewhat different perspective regarding this search for confirmatory evidence. They were unwilling or unable to pin-point the precise locations of the grave sites in the eyes of the non-Native land managers and resource developers, this discredited the Native claim. When asked about their unwillingness to provide this information several Elders said that, as children, they had been told by their Elders that High Falls was a sacred place, and that the dead were sometimes buried there. In their view, it was not an appropriate place for the living to go except to communicate with the dead. They were never told the precise locations of the graves, and they would never have presumed to directly ask. It was enough that an Elder, who as a widely respected healer and shaman, told them to stay away. Persistent questioning would have been perceived as impertinent and inappropriate. It was also pointed out that for the Elders indiscriminately and casually talk about the sacred falls, or for people to walk among the marked graves, could compromise the sacred character of the locality. At least one Elder commented that to give precise descriptions of the grave sites would result in very sensitive information escaping their control, and potentially falling into the hands of looters.

This debate introduces the first and perhaps, one of the most problematical issues encountered at High Falls. Euro-Canadians share a cultural ethos which gave rise to the western scientific tradition, and which is also the basis of the Canadian legislative and judicial systems. Following this perspective, to have significant credibility and legal weight, statements must be supported by "concrete proof." From this point of view, assertions by the Elders that burials were located on the construction site had to be accompanied by some confirmatory proof. Without it, traditional knowledge was deemed to constitute little more than hearsay evidence. Concrete evidence could include grave furniture, grave depressions, or human skeletal remains. For non-Natives this seems eminently logical. In the context of a tense dispute, many Native people viewed this assertion as unacceptable. The suggestion that traditional knowledge from respected Elders was merely hearsay evidence, unless independently proven using non-Native standards, was seen as a gross personal insult to the Elders in question. To appreciate the implications of such a demand for "concrete proof," we must review the role, position and responsibility of traditional Elders in many Native communities.

Political authority within band societies is not based upon individual decision-making by a few people of power. Ideally it is based upon consensus within the community, with the opinions of elders and women being especially important. Even these important people do not possess coercive power. The basis of their authority and credibility is in the respect that the community has for their opinion. This respect is not something one is born with. It develops over

a lifetime of responsible behaviour, careful decision making, and demonstrated abilities. These are the individuals described as Elders, and they play a critical role in traditional Native society. Respect for an Elder is a social value that is carefully nurtured in the young. The authority of an Elder is a sort of moral influence. They are the repositories of sacred knowledge and the collective wisdom of a people, and are entrusted with transmitting it to succeeding generations. This traditional knowledge can involve medicinal knowledge, sacred ritual, allegorical stories of important culture heroes, and the collective history of the band and its neighbours.

The basis of an Elder's moral authority rests upon the demonstrated wisdom of the individual. Elders are not omnipotent, nor are all elderly people considered to be Elders in the socio-political sense. In recognition of this, and mindful of the considerable influence that his or her words carry, the ideal Elder is unlikely to make hasty, rash or doctrinaire decisions. A responsible Elder is one who carefully considers the situation, consults with colleagues, and makes a well reasoned response. One does not pressure an Elder, or directly question the credibility of such a person. To do so is to directly challenge his or her personal honour, integrity and wisdom. Differences of opinion between Elders are handled very delicately with care being taken to avoid confrontation, and to protect the feelings and the social role of those involved.

This social etiquette, debate and decision-making process forms a marked contrast to the adversarial process of debate and legal dispute in the western European tradition. Explicit demands for confirmatory proof (which is the basis of the western scientific and legal tradition), can be interpreted by Elders either as a personal insult, or a challenge to their credentials as community leaders and people of wisdom. Viewed in this context, the bitterness and anger that several Poplar Point Elders expressed in meetings with government officials is understandable. Archaeologists struggling to integrate Native traditional knowledge and archaeological data also face this dilemma involving confirmatory proof.

The behavioural ideal for an Elder is epitomized by quiet dignity, whereby one respects the words of others and listens carefully to the issues before expressing an opinion. When differences of opinion occur, the Elder uses great care to not devalue or ridicule the opinions of others. An Elder does not seek to dominate the debate, and does not overtly claim the role of leader and spokesperson. Such an ideal of behaviour for community leaders stands in sharp contrast to other cultural traditions. For example, in the western European tradition, adversarial debate, overt bids for leadership, and forceful expression of personal opinion are socially valued. Given these divergent expressions of ideal behaviour we can understand the astonishment and mild distaste privately expressed by traditional Native people towards "pushy white people." Alternatively, Euro-Canadians engaged in dispute negotiations with Native bands often fail to even realize who the key people of influence in the band really are. Indeed, new kinds of political leaders have emerged among many First Nations who serve as the primary negotiators with non-Natives. These individuals have developed the adversarial skills needed to deal with outsiders, but do not possess the authority needed to make important decisions on behalf of the community. The final authority remains with the community, who seek a consensus as to the most appropriate action. In such solicitations of opinion, particular attention is paid to the Elders who have remained quietly in the background.

POLITICS AND BUREAUCRACY: CONFLICTING PRIORITIES

When the objections of the Poplar Point Band to the dam construction project were overruled in 1991, it proceeded with continued controversy up to the fall of 1992. Shortly before the dam was scheduled for completion, construction workers encountered human skeletal

