

LAKE NIPIGON ARCHAEOLOGY:
A FURTHER STUDY

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT PREPARED FOR
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ABSTRACT

This report is a site description and analysis of cultural material from Lake Nipigon. Fourteen sites were surveyed during Autumn 1977 in order to collect carbon samples and additional data. The remainder of the material herein analysed was collected during 1972 and 1973 by employees of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The cultural material was recovered from a total of twenty four sites. The evidence suggests that most of the locations studied were occupied during the open water season by ancestral Algonkians. Occupation on the lake began during the Shield Archaic period, expanded in the Initial Woodland period and decreased until the advent of the Terminal Woodland period when it then flourished. The arrival of Europeans resulted in a population decrease but by the Late Historic Era Algonkian occupation of the shores of Lake Nipigon had again expanded.

The ceramic types included in the collections reveal cultural traditions emanating from northern, eastern and southern influences. The frequency and variation of ceramic types change through time. Seven sites did not yield any ceramics.

The lithic recoveries which represents the Shield Archaic occupation are distinct from the following Woodland period lithic recoveries. Both are homogenous within their period of occurrence. Lithics were recovered from all but one site.

The historic artifacts mostly represent the Hudson Bay Company fur trading establishments on the lake during the Late Historic Era (1821-1890).

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evenings and weekends in order to prepare the figures. David Ventrudo undertook the photography of the specimens. Anne Sutherland and Debbie Webster provided generously of their time, knowledge of report preparation and typing skills during the draft preparation of the report and completion of the manuscript.

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Title Page

The Pictograph Maymaygwashi ("Rockmedicine Man") is found on a rock face at the mouth of the Nipigon River. The illustration is a reproduction of a painting done by M. R. Hedican, 1962.

INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted in fulfillment of a research grant obtained from the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

Drought conditions in northwestern Ontario during 1976 and early 1977 resulted in a general lowering of the water table. Lake Nipigon, which forms the reservoir for the Ogoki Diversion, dropped nearly sixty centimetres by break up of 1977. A wide area of shoreline was left exposed, probably for the first time since water control on the lake was introduced in the 1920's. The condition was ideal for an archaeological reconnaissance of the shoreline. The author considered drawing up a proposal. At the same time a Nipigon resident, L. M. Lien, applied for an archaeological license to do surface collection on the inundated shorelines of Lake Nipigon. Summer was quickly approaching and little time remained to attempt to field a survey crew. Hence it was decided that L. M. Lien would do a surface collection reconnaissance under the license that had been granted to him and the author would follow up with an analysis of the materials recovered.

The inundated shoreline recoveries were expected to yield abundant and different evidence for cultural activity on the lake, than that reported on by Professor Dawson (1976), Lakehead University. He conducted extensive surveys and two large scale excavations during the summers 1967-69. Dawson reported extreme shoreline erosion as a result of the diversion of the Ogoki River. Fifteen sites (42.9%) were destroyed and an additional fourteen (40%) were threatened

(Dawson 1976). Hence an opportunity to recover specimens from the flooded shorelines would have yielded valuable evidence. However, L. M. Lien found the logistics, of examining the vast shoreline that defines a lake 60 miles in length and forty miles in width, far too demanding for his personal modest income to support. Hence, material was not collected. The author did however proceed with the study of unanalysed existing collections.

During the summer of 1972-73, three employees of the Ministry of Natural Resources undertook a survey of Lake Nipigon. The specimens recovered were reported on by Marylyn Cook. The collection was stored in Thunder Bay with the Historic Planning and Research Branch, Ministry of Culture and Recreation. The more "aesthetic" specimens were retained by Blacksand Provincial Park as part of their Interpretive Centre exhibit. The Cook collection, along with some other specimens were gathered together for analysis.

The initial stage of the study involved five reconnaissance trips out on Lake Nipigon in order to collect C^{14} samples and provenience data. During autumn 1977, often under severe storm conditions twelve sites were visited. All were mapped and tested and nine carbon samples were collected. (Four were submitted to the Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory in Saskatoon). Three small scale test excavations were undertaken. The analysis of existing collections and artifacts recovered were completed at Lakehead University during winter and early

spring of 1977-78.

The archaeology of Lake Nipigon was virtually unknown more than a decade ago, at which time Dawson undertook extensive shoreline studies. The results of that work are embodied in one report specifically about the archaeology of Lake Nipigon (Dawson 1976) and two others, on the archaeology of northwestern Ontario (1975b, 1977). An additional two reports, on excavations conducted at Wabinosh River site (EaJf-1) and Nozeteka Point site (DkJf-1), are in preparation. Those two reports along with this one will complete the analysis of all known recoveries taken from Lake Nipigon.

Archaeology collections from the lake are stored at Lakehead University, The national Museum of Man in Ottawa, Historic Planning and Research Branch, Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Thunder Bay, Blacksand Provincial Park (name soon to be changed to Lake Nipigon Provincial Park), Nipigon Museum and a small quantity of specimens are in the possession of local private collectors.

Lake Nipigon has been described as the northernmost of the Great Lakes (Wilson 1910:11). It lies directly north of the north shore of Lake Superior in northwestern Ontario. Access to the latter is gained by the short, rapidly falling course of the south flowing Nipigon River. An additional seven major rivers flow into the lake.

The lake shoreline is characterized by Shield outcroppings of granite and the omnipresent black spruce. The lake environment has a discrete plant community. Paper birch,

balsam poplar, willow and alder are generously distributed throughout the stands of black spruce. In addition, white spruce, jackpine, fir and tamarack are found. Mosses and boreal berry plants carpet the forest floor. The author observed evidence of black bear, moose, beaver, porcupine, hare and red squirrel. Other known animal species on the lake are weasel, lynx, wolverine, red fox, and woodland cariboo (Cleland 1966). Many species of ducks, gulls and other migratory fowl inhabit the lake. The author saw mergansers, pidgeon hawks, osprey, many young seagulls, ravens, migrating geese and one bald eagle during the autumn survey of the lake. Commercial fisherman are supported by catches of lake whitefish, lake trout, northern pike, walleye and yellow perch. Burbot and white sucker are also found in the lake. For a more detailed description of the natural environment of the Shield the reader is directed to Cleland (1966), Bird (1972), Hosie (1975) and Wilson (1910).

This report describes the cultural material recovered from a total of twenty four sites. Table 1 is a tabulation of the classes of artifacts from all sites discussed in the text. Maps, illustrations, photographs, tables and a detailed description of the sites and artifacts are included. All descriptive terminology used was already established in the literature by Dawson, Wright and Fitting (see references). All measurements given are maximum lengths, widths, thicknesses, angles, etc. The reader should allow $\pm 5^{\circ}$ for subjectivity in the angle measurements.

Artifacts	Sites																						f/category	
	Townsend DJJA-4	Cook DJJA-5	Woch DJJA-6	Beach No. 1 DJJA-7	Poplar Point LODGE DJJA-3	Rent's DJJA-6	Sturgeon River DJJA-7	Auden Island DJUB-1	Deasland DJUB-3	Albert Island DJJC-1	Long Point DJJC-4	Laird DJJC-5	Paul DJJD-2	L'esperance DJJC-1	Sutherland DJJC-1	Abaki Point DJJC-1	Cariboo Island DJJC-1	Griffith DJJC-1	Wabinoosh River EAJJ-1	Wabinoosh Cache EAJJ-3	Arc EAJJ-4	Qababika River EAJA-1		Monana EAJA-3
Ceramics																								
Rim Sherds	3		3					4								3	2		4	12	1	1		
Body Sherds	12		24	1			1	9		2					119	42		1	34	20	12	22	2	
Sherdlets/Unanalysable sherds	8		19				3	16	6	11			194		130	2		7	7	7	38	41		
Total	23		46	1			4	29	6	13			194		252	46		8	45	39	51	64	2	
	13.8		54.8	5.0			13.8	24.6	10.9	36.1			96.0		99.6	70.7		30.8	58.4	18.1	32.5	57.6	66.6	
Lithic																								
Projectile Points	2	2	1					1	2								1	1	4	1				
Scraper - End		3	2			2	1	2		2	2	1			1	1		2	1	9	2			
Scraper - Side	1	1	3					2	2	1	1				1	1			9	1				
Bifaces	1							7		2	1		1						2	1				
Flake Knives/Chopper	1		1					1					1											
Perforators								1																
Hammerstones								1								3								
Detritus																								
Flakes -Decortification	6	5	11	8	1	2	10	33	16	5	1	2	1					3	37		13			
Utilized/Micro	5	4	2					2		4	1		1			7			4		5			
Random	15	2	7		14		14	40	28	7	5	1	5	1		6		5	10	66	85	16	1	
Cores/Core Fragments		1	1																	2				
Other										1														
Total	31	18	28	8	15	4	25	89	48	22	11	3	8	3	1	19	1	8	15	133	90	38	1	
	18.6	90.0	33.3	40.0	51.7	80.0	86.2	75.4	87.3	61.1	100.0	99.7	4.7	75.0	0.4	29.2	100.0	30.8	19.4	61.6	57.3	34.2	1.9	
Bone Refuse	31				14	1							1	1				4	16		16	9		
	18.6				48.3	20.0							0.5	25.0				15.3	20.7		10.2	8.1	1.5	
Copper									1									1						
									1.8															
Historic -Kaolin Pipes		2																						
Porcelain	5		5	1															10				21	
Glass	15		3	6																			3	
Cartridges	4			3														3		8			1	
Nails	17																			31			4	
Misc. Metal	32		2	1																1			11	
Other	11									1								2					5	
Total	77	2	10	11						1		x			x			x	22			1	1	
	46.4	10.0	11.9	55.0						2.8		0.3						19.2	6.1	20.0			33.3	
Problematical Artifacts	4																							
	2.4																							
TOTAL	166	20	84	20	29	5	29	118	55	36	11	4	203	4	253	65	1	26	77	216	157	111	3	
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0	99.9	

TABLE 1 Classes of Artifacts from all sites discussed in Text

