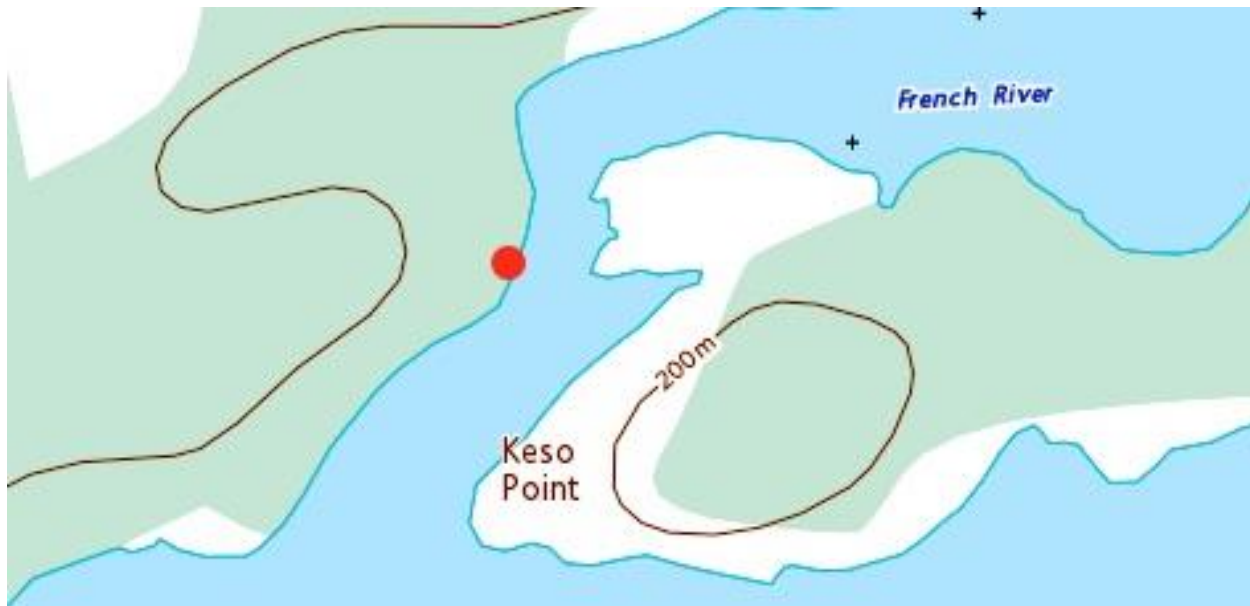


Keso Point Pictograph Site CaHa-06



Paul Kirtley's [Frontier Bushcraft](#) website has an entry from 2013- [Finding The Lost Bundle](#)– by Norman Dokis of the Dokis First Nation. In it, Dokis includes a few images of the Cradle Rapids/Keso Point pictograph site, including this one by Kirtley.



Given that the pictograph site is usually referred to as Keso Point, I assumed it was on river left. It is not! We looked on the wrong side of the river!

The site is misnamed; the use of a more fitting name should be encouraged. Cradle Rapids would make an easy choice. W.A. Allen makes an argument for an Anishinaabe name in his article referred to below. Ontario Archaeological Society's Arch Notes Jan/Feb 2010 *ANISHINAABEMOWIN: TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE NAMING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES*. See page 8.

<http://www.ontarioarchaeology.on.ca/Resources/ArchNotes/anns15-1.pdf>

In the article, Allen notes this about the Keso Point/Cradle Rapids site.

Site CaHa-06, in a treacherous rapids within Dokis First Nation on the French River, was named Keso Point Pictograph by Thor Conway in 1981. Keso is not an Aboriginal name. Conway never visited the site but a local report was sufficient under the policy of the day to result in the registration. Grace Rajnovich published a photograph of parts of the pictograph, interpreting the motif as a lattice sign of the Midewiwin along with what she called a smear of red ochre denoting the special spirituality of the site (Rajnovich 1994:33).

After I visited the site I consulted with Elder Leonard Dokis who told of a natural feature of stones shaped like a child and a cradleboard. The Dokis people call this place Cradle Rapids as a result and now are engaged in deliberations about the proper spelling of Cradle Rapids in traditional Anishinaabemowin. Another Dokis band member described the pictograph as marking the location of growth of a wider than usual range of medicines, possibly due to the humidity from the adjacent rapids. Still another elder described the motif in the pictograph as a sacred tree, not a lattice. There are multiple values at this site and the pictograph, a sign of sorts, is only one component of those values. The dialogue about naming the pictograph is still under way but Keso Point may not be the most appropriate name. As the consultation extended into a second year an additional pictograph, previously undocumented, was located, honoured in ceremony and registered as CaHa-20 (Okikendawt).

A few comments about Allen's account -

Re: "**treacherous rapids**"! A set of rapids with less than a 1-meter drop over 30 meters does not rate the description "treacherous"!

Re: "a photograph of parts of the pictograph".

Not a photograph at all but a drawing by Wayne Yerxa, who does all the book's illustrations. He does seem to over-saturate the smear and make it look more dramatic than it actually is. Check out the drawing below and compare it to the photo above.

Re: "**traditional Anishinaabemowin**". Since the Anishinaabe did not have a written language it seems somewhat odd to be talking about "traditional" Anishinaabe spelling. At the most, there are different ways of writing down the Anishinaabe sounds using Roman letters. Witness the various spellings of "Anishinaabe". Is any one of them the proper traditional way? or consider the transliteration of the word "pike" into English using Roman letters - I have seen ginoozhe, kenoji and kenoozha. Which one is "traditional"?

Re: **rationalizing the numerous different interpretations of the pictographs.**

Multiple explanations for the same thing is probably a sign that nobody really knows the intent of the "painter" some 250 years or more ago.

Allen writes that **Thor Conway** recorded the site in 1981 but despite an extensive list of references at the end of the article does not provide one to support this statement. Nothing comes up in Google search to clarify who and when the site was named. If you have any further info on this, please send me an email - true_north@mac.com

Grace Rajnovich includes a drawing of the Keso Point/Cradle Rapids pictograph(s) in her book **Reading Rock Art** (1994).

The image below is a drawing from the Rajnovich book. It shows the "lattice" and makes the ochre smear appear very strong and vibrant.

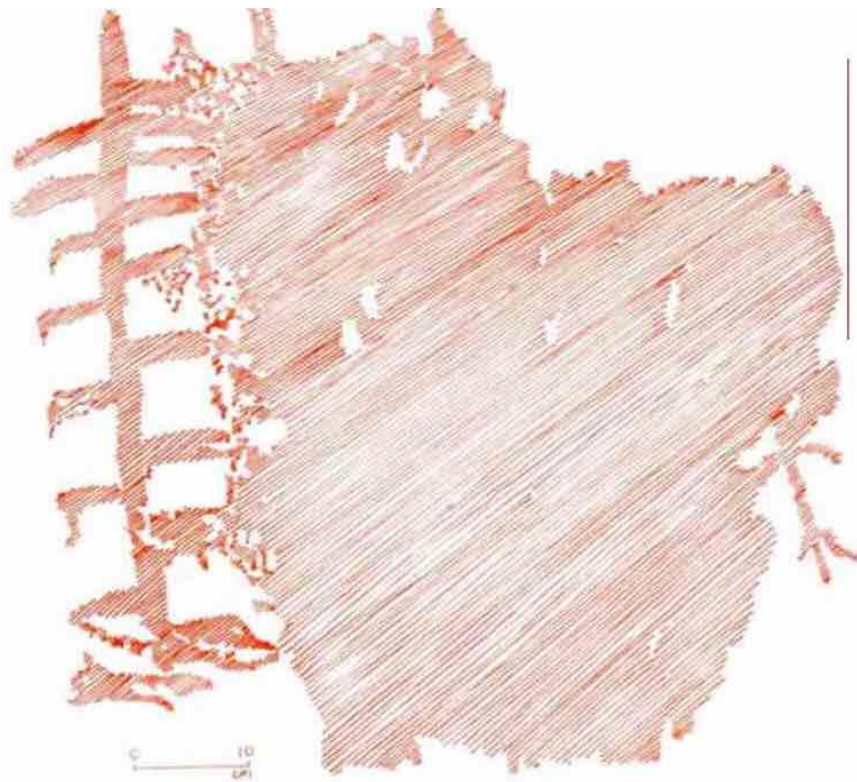


FIGURE 24. **KESO POINT** ON THE FRENCH RIVER IN NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO, DEPICTING THE LATTICE SIGN OF THE MIDEWIWIN AND A SMEAR OF RED OCHRE. THE PAINT WASH DENOTES THE SPECIAL SPIRITUALITY OF THE SITE.

The interpretation of the images is hers and based on her years of study of the Anishinaabe pictograph tradition. As the above quote by Allen shows, it is just one of many interpretations out there.

Selwyn Dewdney visited the French River area in the late 1950s-early 1960s. He includes three sites on the French river system in his **Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes**:

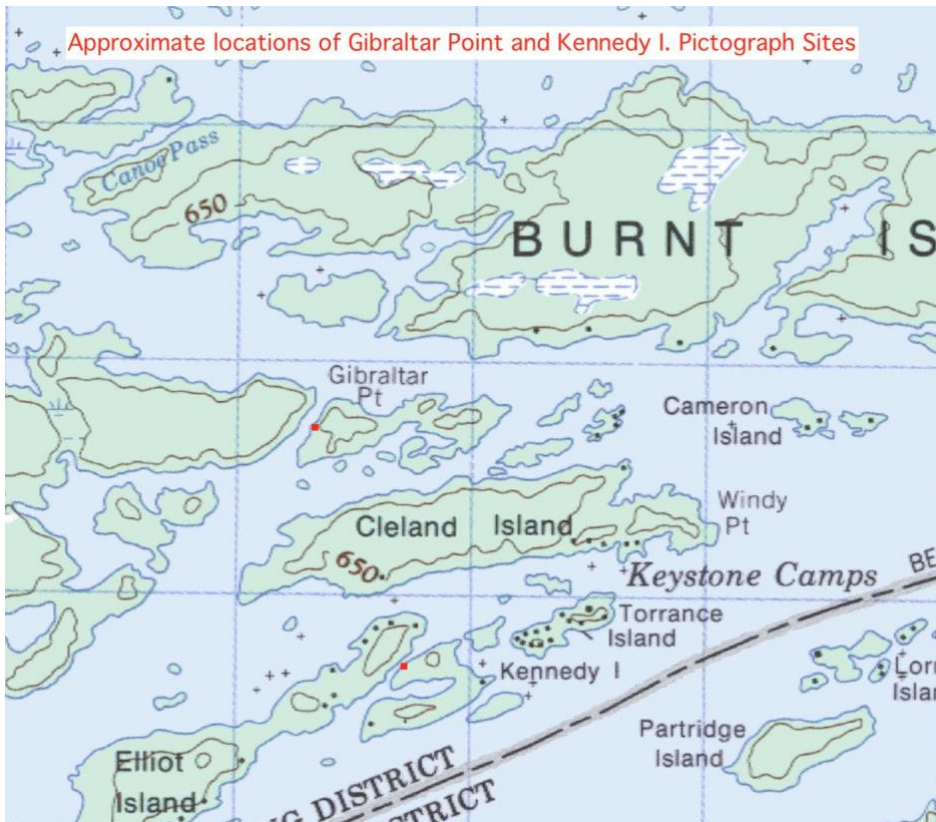
1. "Gibraltar" on Lake Nipissing
2. the Kennedy Island site
3. a site just east of Recollet Falls on the French River

He did not know about the pictographs by Cradle Rapids.

Eastward, the voyageurs ascended the French River to Lake Nipissing, crossed that lake, and portaged into the Ottawa watershed. In all that distance, so far, I have recorded only

three sites and have yet to receive definite reports of any others. Site #33, just above Recollet Falls, faintly displays a small human figure and one other vague mark. Sites #81 and #82 were recorded through the hospitality—and original report—of John and Bill Kennedy. Both sites are at the upper end of the French River, not far west of Franks Bay on Lake Nipissing. The paintings on “Gibraltar,” as it is called locally, are badly weathered, and little can be deciphered but a few canoes. Site #80, a bare half mile west of Keystone Lodge, is in clear, strong pigment. Only the thunderbird, turned on its side, is somewhat obscured by lichen. The stick figures remind us of those

at Diamond and Scotia Lakes. Among the others are a canoe, a pig-like bear, and a likely fish.



See this post for more on the "Gibraltar" and Kennedy Island sites.

<https://albinger.me/2019/07/28/canoeing-the-french-river-from-top-to-bottom-day-3-from-canoe-pass-to-below-the-portage-channel-dam/>

