

Temagami First Nation pictograph finally returns home



A close-up view of the pictograph, which "looks like it's a male caribou with a doe caribou with a stick man, which would have been a hunter at that time." (OPG)

A 25-year-long search for a historically significant pictograph missing since the mid-1970s is finally over.

Robin Koistinen, the director of lands and resources for Temagami First Nation, says she's been looking for the 300-pound rock painting that features three mysterious figures since it was removed from the Matabitchuan River in northeastern Ontario.

Decades ago, there were concerns that development on the river could cause water levels to fluctuate, potentially damaging the rock slab that contained the image, which is at least 370 years old. According to [information from Ontario Power Generation](#), the pictograph was removed and transported to a regional Ministry of Natural Resources and

Forestry office in Sault Ste. Marie for study.

Over the years, the identity and home of the piece were obscured.

In 1977, a pictograph depicting three figures was removed from the Matabitchuan River in northeastern Ontario. There were concerns that development on the river could cause water levels to fluctuate, potentially damaging the rock slab that contained the image, which is at least 370 years old. (OPG)

But for Koistinen and others from Temagami First Nation, questions still lingered around the whereabouts of the artifact.

It had eventually found a home at the Sault Ste Marie museum and was just recently re-patriated to the First Nation.

The painting features "what looks like a caribou," [Koistinen told Up North's Sam Juric](#).

"There was, back in the day, on our territory, caribou ... and it looks like it's a male caribou with a doe caribou with a stick man, which would have been a hunter at that time."

The repatriation of the pictograph took place in early December of last year, with help from OPG. A team from Temagami First Nation travelled to bring the piece home.

"The pictograph is now in a display case here on Bear Island, to the great pleasure and delight of all who have seen it," said Victoria Winsor, OPG GIS lands technician with the first nation.

"Its presence has sparked joy, pride and curiosity. The process of knowledge-sharing has just begun, and we are excited that more community members will see the pictograph and share their stories."

The pictograph will be displayed in Temagami First Nation's administrative building.