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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The completion of this manuscript involved the tapping of many resources. The number of peoples who contributed time, energy and support cannot possibly all be mentioned but they are all remembered.

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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.

Finally, I would like to express my utmost appreciation to Ken Dawson who provided continual support, advice and encouragement during the many months this study was in progress.

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.

OMBABIKA RIVER SITE
(EaJa-1)

This site was described by Marylyn Cook as being on the north shore of the Ombabika River about one thousand feet from the mouth. It was recorded as the McWilliams Site, EaJa-2. However, the author suggests that it is the same site earlier recorded by Dawson (1976) as Ombabika River site, EaJa-1, which he described as being located in a clearing on the north-west bank about 300 feet upriver. Given the continual fluctuating water levels on Lake Nipigon and estimated measuring of distances, the location difference between the two sites is negligable. Ombabika River flows into Ombabika Bay in the northwest portion of Lake Nipigon. The artifacts herein described will be considered as recoveries from Ombabika River site, EaJa-1.

RECOVERIES

Test pits were sunk when this area was again surveyed in 1972. All recoveries came from the test pits some of which were sunk to a depth of 23 inches (58 cm.). Stratigraphy could not be sorted out. However, the material represents a diversity of cultural influences. Four rim sherds and three tool fragments, twenty-two body sherds and forty one unanalysable body sherds, thirteen decortification flakes and twenty four random flakes were recovered.

CERAMICS

One Laurel rim sherd was recovered. It had vertical to oblique pseudo-scallop shell motif over horizontal rows of pseudo-scallop shell. The lip thickness is 5.8 mm. The second

rim had an abundance of carbon adhering to the exterior. The paste texture appears to have a Blackduck tradition quality, but the lip form and rim profile reflects a Laurel culture influence. The specimen is Laurel transitional by Dawson's definition (1977). Its' presence reflects possible co-habitation by carriers of Laurel and Blackduck traditions. The third rim sherd exhibits evidence of southern influence. It is a Peninsular Woodland ceramic with thick widely spaced oblique cord-wrapped object impressions below an encircling row of rectangular punctates. These impressions also occur on the lip and the interior rim of the vessel. The ceramic has a very thick heavy structure. The lip thickness is 12.0 mm. and the thickness, 25.0 mm. below is 9.8 mm. Punctates are 3.0 mm. below the lip and the spacing is 6.0 mm. The punctate length is 7.9 mm. and the width is 3.2 mm. The fourth rim has discontinuous oblique rows of cord-wrapped object impressions over encircling rows of tiny punctates. The punctate spacing is 3.4 mm. and the diameter is .8 mm. The punctates were 5.5 mm. below the lip.

Additional ceramic recoveries include thirteen plain body sherds, nine decorated body sherds and forty one unanalysable sherdlets. Among the decorated sherds there are two smoothed over cord malleated and three cord malleated/fabric impressed, two dentate stamp, one incised and one punctated and fabric impressed. This last one was a shoulder sherd.

LITHICS

All three lithic specimens were severely fire spalled. One

fragment had a straight retouched margin 23 mm. in length and 3.0 mm. thick. The second fragment had two straight, near converging margins 22.0 mm. and 27.0 mm. in length and 3.0 mm. thick. The third, although fire fracturing obliterated definite identification, appeared to be a basal fragment of a corner notched projectile point. It looks as though all three fragments were part of the same specimen.

Detritus

Thirteen decortification flakes, sixteen random flakes and eight micro flakes were recovered. All were medium to small size.

BONE

Nine tiny bone fragments were recovered, eight of which were burnt. The one unburnt fragment is a rodent fibula.

CONCLUSIONS

The ceramics Dawson (1976) recovered exhibit evidence of a southern area Algonkian influence which occured during the Terminal Woodland period. The additional recoveries collected by Cook exhibit evidence for an earlier occupation occuring during the Initial Woodland period and a Transitional, early Terminal Woodland occupation from a western Ontario area Algonkian influence. Dawson also recovered trade items which indicate use of the site during the historic period.

NONAME SITE
(EaJa-3)

This site was surveyed and recorded by Marylyn Cook in 1973. It is located on a point of land at the mouth of a

small creek, one kilometre north of Ombabika River in Ombabika Bay. Recoveries were only sufficient to designate the location as a site.

The recovery of two plain body sherds indicated a prehistoric presence, while the recovery of one round metal disk with a hole in centre (diameter of disk, 75.0 mm., hole 18.2 mm.) and two small metal fragments suggested a late historic use of the site. It may also be a small auxillary (satelite) location to the large site (EaJa-1) at the mouth of the Ambabika River.

NIPIGON HOUSE (1850-1937)

Nipigon House was established by the Hudson Bay Company in 1850. It is situated on the mainland opposite the Jackfish Island Indian Reserve. Dawson (1969) discovered its' actual location in 1969 while undertaking a search for the early fur trading posts on Lake Nipigon. The post was closed in 1937. Marylyn Cook surveyed the post location in 1973. All artifacts recovered were from the late historic era (1821-1890) and early modern era. The following is an inventory of the recoveries. Porcelain specimens includes one white and blue fragment, one white and green fragment and one that is plain white. Two glass fragments were found. One is green tinted and one is purple tinted. Eleven square nails were examined; nine are small, one is medium and one is spike size. Other metal specimens included one large fish hook, one small file fragment, one broken knife, one metal gun plate and one fragment with a broken handle and two unrecognizeable pieces. Three

shell cases were found; one is a Colt 44, another is a Winchester 44, and the third is a Winchester 38. Large metal specimens included an axe head and a hoe.

Kaolin Pipes

Sixteen Kaolin pipe stem fragments and five bowl fragments were recovered. Thirteen of the fragments were plain. There were three with identification. One stem was stamped GLASGOW on one side, upside down as the pipe is held normally and the opposite side has T or C 78 --? also stamped upside down. The second specimen has MONTREAL stamped on one side of the stem and HENDERSON stamped on the opposite side. The orientation of both stamps are the same but whether they are stamped right side up or upside down it cannot be determined. Henderson pipes were produced 1847-1876. The third specimen is stamped ERMAN which probably stands for BANNERMAN (ca 1858-1907). Identification of these specimens was assisted by Thor Conway (personal communication).

Gunflint

Two gunflints were recovered. One is the large black English variety and the other, although burned appears to be the smaller French variety.

Miscellaneous

One stone pipe bowl fragment was recovered. It appears to be a black, green tinted highly polished stone.

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 $\pm 5^{o}$ for subjectivity in the angle measurements.

Artifacts / Sites	Townsend DjJa-4	Cook DjJa-5	Noch DjJa-6	Beach No. 1 DjJa-7	Poplar Point LODGE DjJa-5	Rents DjJa-6	Sturgeon River DjJa-7	Auden Island DjJb-1	Desland DjJb-3	Albert Island DjJc-1	Long Point DjJc-4	Laird DjJc-5	Paul DjJd-2	L'esperance DjJc-1	Sutherland DjJc-1	Abeki Point DkJc-1	Cariboo Island DkJf-3	Griffith DjJf-1	Wabinosh River EaJf-1	Wabinosh Cache EaJf-3	Arc EaJf-4	Ombabika River EaJa-1	Nonamm EaJa-3	Nipigon House	#/category
Ceramics																									
Rim Sherds	3		3					4							3	2			4	12	1	1			33
Body Sherds	12		24	1			1	9		2					119	47		1	34	20	12	22	2		301
Sherdlets/Unanalysable sherds	8		19				3	16	6	11			194		130	2		7	7	7	38	41			489
Total	23		46	1			4	29	6	13			194		252	46		8	45	39	51	64	2		823
%	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	—	47.1
Lithic																									
Projectile Points	2	2	1					1	2								1	1		4	1				15
Scraper - End		3	2			2	1	2		2	2	1			1	1		2	1	9	2				31
Side	1	1	3					2	2	1	1					1				9	1				22
Bifaces	1							7		2	1		1							2	1				15
Flake Knives/Chopper	1		1					1																	3
Perforators								1																	1
Hammerstones																3									3
Detritus																									
Flakes - Decortification	6	5	11	8	1	2	10	33	16	5	1	1	2	1					3	37		13			155
Utilized/Micro	5	4	2					2		4	1			1		7				4		6			36
Random	15	2	7		14		14	40	28	7	5	1	5	1		6		5	10	66	85	16		1	328
Cores/Core Fragments		1	1																	2					4
Other										1						1			1			3			6
Total	31	18	28	8	15	4	25	89	48	22	11	3	8	3	1	19	1	8	15	133	90	38	.	1	619
%	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	35.4
Bone Refuge	31				14	1							1	1				4	16		16	9		1	94
%	18.6				48.3	20.0							0.5	25.0				15.3	20.7		10.2	8.1		1.5	5.4
Copper									1									1							2
%									1.8																
Historic - Kaolin Pipes		2																		10				21	33
Porcelain	5		5	1																				3	14
Glass	15		3	6														3		8				3	36
Cartridges	4			3																3				4	14
Nails	10																		1					11	22
Misc. Metal	32		2	1						1								2						9	47
Other	11											1	x			x			x	22			1	1	35
Total	77	2	10	11						1		1						5	1	43			1	52	204
%	46.4	10.0	11.9	55.0						2.8		0.3						19.2	0.1	20.0			33.3	98.1	11.7
Problematical Artifacts	4																			1					5
%	2.4																			0.3					
TOTAL	166	20	84	20	29	5	29	118	55	36	11	4	203	4	253	65	1	26	77	216	157	111	3	54	1747
%	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	100.0	100.0

TABLE 1 Classes of Artifiacts from all sites discussed in Text

Since Dawson (1976) made the initial statement about the archaeology of Lake Nipigon and this report serves as an additional study, the general format and descriptive style presented by the former is embodied in this report.

The report begins with a summary discussion, followed by detailed site and artifact descriptions. For the reader looking for specific comparative information the site and artifact descriptions should be referred to. The appendix contains field notes compiled during the autumn 1977 reconnaissance of the lake.

It is hoped that the manner in which the data has been presented can serve other researchers seeking comparative information.

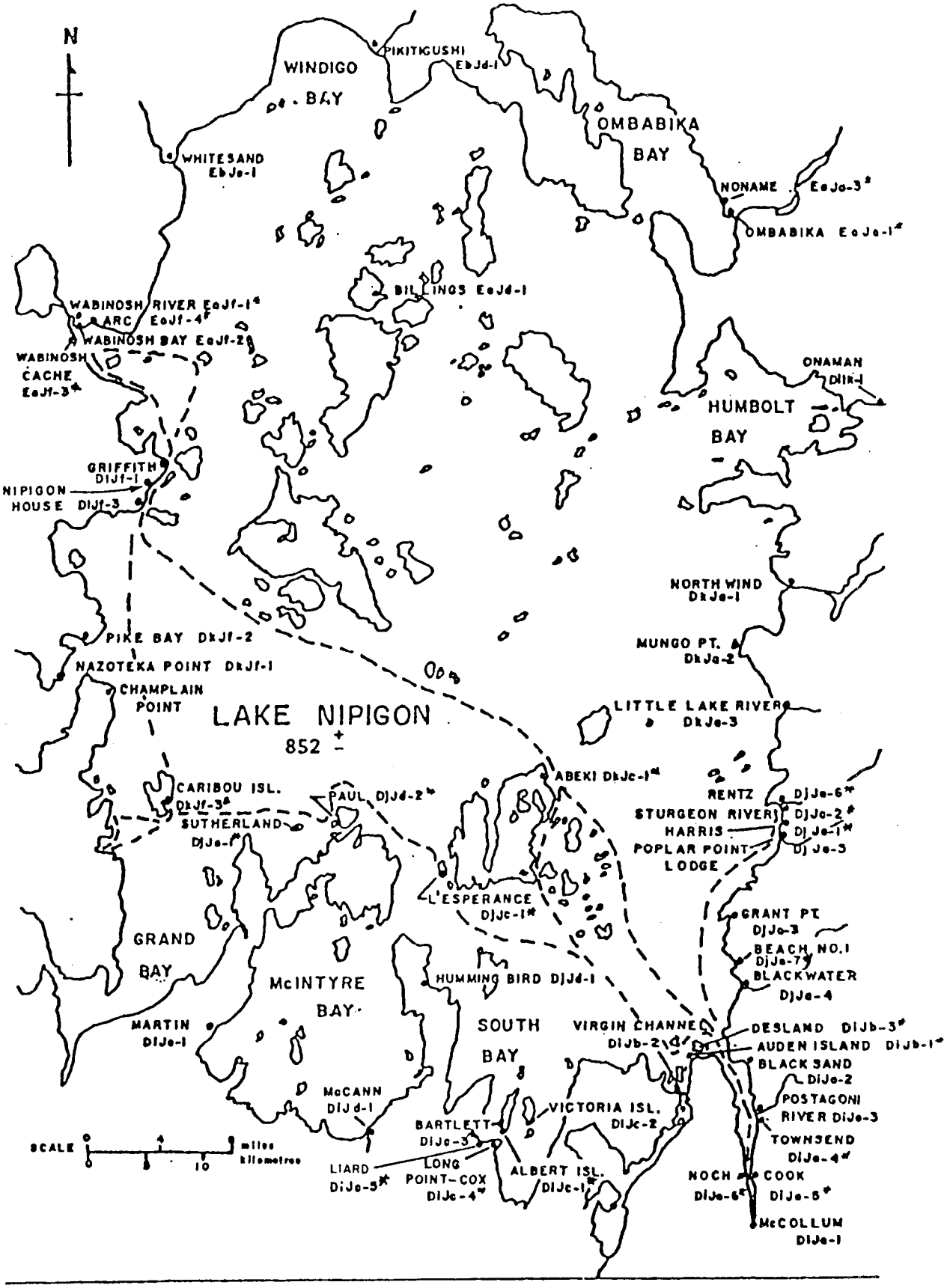

Figure 1. Sites on Lake Nipigon
*Site referred to in text.
----Survey Route