LAKE TEMAGAMI AND THE NORTHERN EXPERIENCE

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My current research in Ontario archaeology is centred on the analysis and interpretation of the Three Pines Site (Druid's Cove) CgHa-6, a multi-component site on Lake Temagami in northeastern Ontario. Lake Temagami is located 50 miles north of the city of North Bay. This paper title: Lake Temagami and the Northern Experience, caused me to reflect on how this current work has been influenced by my previous experiences in prehistoric archaeology and ethnoarchaeology in Boreal Forest regions of Subarctic Ontario and Quebec. In this paper, I would like to give an impression of what it is like to do archaeology in the northern forest, show how I have approached research on Lake Temagami, and indicate how this current work has developed out of my own earlier northern experiences.

Now, for some people, Northern Ontario starts around Barrie, while others consider Arctic Canada to be the true North. My interest falls somewhere in between in the Subarctic Boreal Forest and the northern limits of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Mixed Forest.

In 1977 and 1978, I worked with archaeologist James V. Chism of the Ministère des Affaires culturelles and a crew of 6 in the Baie James area of northwestern Quebec (about 150 miles inland from the James Bay coast). We conducted archaeological investigations as part of a salvage program for the massive James Bay Hydro-electric Project. We worked for 2 summers at the northern limits of the proposed La Grande -2 reservoir, excavating prehistoric sites along a wide, open parkland sand terrace on Lac Washadimi (Chism 1977, 1978). These sites contained mostly lithic debitage, the occasional lithic tool, small burned fragments of animal bone and a few undecorated ceramic rims. Eight metre hearths were the major structural features on the sites. Digging was easy in very shallow soil where sterile layers were encountered at a depth of 6 cm.

Of great interest to me were the remains of more than 60 conical tents (michuaps) sharing the terrace alongside the prehistoric sites. These were marked by fallen poles, or circular rings of banked-up earth with raised hearths in the centre. We recorded these rings as well as winter camps, spring goose hunting camps and small, two man travel camps (Chism 1978). When we returned in 1978, a winter camp used the previous year by two families from Fort George, was at the western end of the lake (Gordon 1980). Clearly this part of the world was very much the domain of hunter-gatherers, albeit people using some of the amenities of modern technology, but nonetheless gaining a living from the land.

In the final two weeks of our last summer at Lac Washadimi everything changed. Three elder Cree, Sam Pashagumskum, Job and Mary Bearskin, and the younger William Fireman of Fort George joined the archaeologists along with ethnographer Adrian Tanner of Memorial University. Dr. Tanner was conducting ethnographic studies in conjunction with the archaeology (Tanner 1978a, 1978b; see also Tanner 1979). These Cree men and woman, who had hunted and trapped in the bush all their lives taught us many things. For instance, they showed us how to construct a michuap placing the smoke hole just forward of the hearth to ensure proper ventilation and how to collect spruce boughs for the flooring. We visited many of the old campsites, where the old men pointed out things my city eyes could not see: scratches on trees made by a porcupine, prints of

small animals, and man-made items lying in the moss. Through their eyes, this was a completely different world. Even the prehistoric sites seems to come alive, no longer just collections of stone and animal bone but the homes of hunters from long ago.

For my M.A. research in 1981, I wanted to continue working with local native people doing the archaeology of a remote Boreal Forest lake (Gordon 1982, 1985a, 1985b). Dr. Ed Rogers extensive ethnographic and ethnohistorical research of the Weagamow Lake Band in remote Northwestern Ontario, provided a solid background for archaeological research (Rogers 1962, 1963; Rogers and Black 1976; Rogers and Black Rogers 1980). His interest in fur trade history and archival work influenced me to consider how to bridge the gap, both conceptual and methodological between what we define as prehistory and history.

For 2 months in 1981, I and a field assistant explored North Caribou lake east of Weagamow Lake, examining both historic/modern and prehistoric occupations assisted by Job Halfaday, his daughter Patty and other family members. Job had spent most of his 65 years hunting and trapping at North Caribou Lake and surrounding areas. Out of this fieldwork emerged a number of findings concerning the criteria for campsite selection in the Boreal Forest (Gordon 1982, 1985a), the different attitudes and behaviour towards material items held by hunter-gatherers (Gordon 1985b), and the need to consider the whole range of human occupation on a lake; prehistoric, historic and modern (Gordon 1985a).

Thus from work in James Bay and other areas of Quebec, and at North Caribou Lake and other areas of northwestern Ontario, I had gained some experience in ethnoarchaeology, ethnohistory and the use of cultural ecological approaches in the Boreal Forest. Now, I wanted to apply what I had learned about hunter-gatherers to prehistoric situations in a new, and preferably more accessible area. In particular, I was hoping to find a large multi-component site but this is not always possible in an unknown area.

I chose to work in northeastern Ontario which is more accessible from Hamilton and thus less costly. Also comparative material would be available from research at Lake Abitibi (Lee 1965; Kritsch-Armstrong 1982), Larder Lake (Noble 1982), the Montreal River drainage (Pollock 1976; Knight 1977) and Lake Nipissing (Ridley 1954; Brizinski 1980). Lake Temagami was chosen for a number of reasons. The lake is a relatively large, deep water lake which could conceivably be examined as a unit. Both development and access are controlled. In terms of prehistoric occupations its deep water means good fish resources, it has a diverse shoreline offering a variety of landforms to examine, and excavation of the Witch Point Site CgHa-7 (Conway 1982) has demonstrated the archaeological potential of the lake. Finally, more as a factor relevant for future research than this project in particular, the Land Claims by the Bear Island Band has resulted in a wealth of ethnographic and historical information which I hope to examine in the future.

How does an archaeologist look for sites on an unknown lake? Initial work was done by taking a tour of the perimeter of the lake in a Cessna 180 photographing and recording likely locations. What types of locales have a higher probability of yielding prehistoric sites? From ethnographic studies, we know that hunter-gatherers in the forest regions maintain a seasonal economic round, periodically moving to new camping locations in order to be close to seasonally available subsistence resources. Other factors, such as the need for fresh sources of firewood, construction material and even the desire for a change of scenery influence the cycle of movement. However, while subsistence strategies govern the range of movement, the actual choice of one location over another follows certain criteria. Three factors of settlement selection appear to be important on northern, forested lakes (Gordon, 1982, 1985a):

1. Protection from cold winds and storm tracks
2. Sufficient flat and well-drained ground
3. Convenient access from shore to water and water to shore.

Lake Temagami has much exposed bedrock with both steep cliffs and rounded hills along the lake margin. Flat ground is at a premium. In the central section of the lake, 2 locations stood out due to deposits of sand. These were the esker forming Witch Point (Witch Point Site CgHa-7) and the long sand beach and associated terraces at the entrance to the Northwest Arm (Three Pines Site CgHa-6).

With a grant from the Ontario Heritage Foundation, I and a crew of 3 began an 8 week field season in 1986 with the intention of examining the Three Pines Site and other sections of the central part of the lake. At first, the Three Pines Site CgHa-6 looked like a major disappointment. Its outward appearance was that of a badly disturbed, badly eroded terrace, with camping and picnicking leaving it denuded. However, on the surface were chert flakes, quartz flakes, a tiny projectile point and a kaolin pipe stem. A site!

Excavating a northern forest site requires a different approach compared to southern Ontario sites. The podzolic soil development is very shallow and subject to erosion, both natural and that caused by human usage. Also periodic forest fires can burn right down to bedrock as seen along the Northwest Arm. Thus cultural material tends to be deposited in a highly compressed format.

We excavated using alternate one metre square units. Each unit was trowelled in 3 cm. levels, recording all artifacts and soil features on standard plans for each level, then screening the material. Once the unit was excavated to a completely sterile level about 15 cm. deep, the walls were profiled providing long cross-sections of the entire excavation.

Unlike many northern forest sites, Three Pines has actual soil features, many of them remnants of hearths and possibly living floors. The hearth features contain fire-reddened soil and calcined faunal bones. Animal bone, when heated, is very fragile, hence its fragmentary nature that is not easy to identify to species. Analysis by Rosemary Prevec (1987) shows that beaver, wolf or dog, deer and moose, with some loon and ruffed grouse are the major species represented on the site. In my experience, beaver bone is fairly easy to identify in crunched up pieces, and this may skew the relative importance of the animal in a sample. The more delicate fish bone, on the other hand is rarely found in northern forest faunal assemblages although it is a major subsistence staple for modern hunter-gatherers.

The grey ashy features are comprised of the eluvial (Ae) horizon of a Podzolic soil, to which has been added ash and other organic matter. The soil texture of these features is fine and hard-packed compared to off-site soil samples. The occurrences of these grey, ashy features is strongly correlated with the distributions of prehistoric lithics and pottery. These features are interpreted as living floors.

Various disturbances are also evident at the Three Pines Site. Among these are a modern picnic fire mound, intrusive garbage pits and a possible tree fall.

Over 16,000 items were recovered from the Three Pine Site. They include 7,000 lithics (of which 200 are tools); 6,500 faunal bone; 1,300 pottery; 20 historic items and over 900 items of modern metal, plastic and glass. A wide variety of lithic raw materials was used in the manufacture of tools. Certain materials are found locally such as white vein quartz, a poor quality chert and mudrocks which are particularly abundant on Lake Temagami. Other materials including Hudson Bay Lowland chert and clear quartz were brought into the area. Tracking down the sources of exotic raw materials will add to our understanding of trade patterns in Northeastern Ontario.

The cultural chronology of the Three Pines Site and comparison with other sites in Northeastern Ontario is one major question on which I am working. A number of

archaeological periods and cultures are represented. Shield Archaic is represented by an assemblage including a side-notched projectile point, a clear quartz biface, a large chert scraper and large mudshale flake knife. Middle Woodland Laurel is represented by pseudo-scallop shell pottery and colourful, small chert scrapers and projectile points. Laurel material accounts for a large percentage of the total artifact recovery. I see this as an indication of substantial time depth for Laurel cultures, as opposed to a Middle Woodland population increase. Unfortunately no organic material suitable for radiocarbon dating was recovered. A few Blackduck pottery sherds of the Late Woodland period were found. One vessel is thin walled and very brittle. Historic artifacts include kaolin pipe fragments, gunspalls and gunflints. One pipe stem is stamped "Henderson Montreal" and dates to 19th century. Modern material includes mostly picnic and camping refuse, although the need for a New York City transit token at Lake Temagami still puzzles me.

Another important research question is: how did this site form? At present the site occupies a sand terrace beside an extensive peat bog. Did the lake form a protected embayment beside the sand terrace when the site was first occupied? When did peat bog formation begin and how long has this bog been cut off from the lake by the barrier spit which now forms the long sand beach? Also, the Three Pines Site contains material older than the Sand point Site (CgHa-1) investigated by Conway (1986.p.c.). Sand Point located at the other end of the beach from the Three Pines Site, is a spit that juts out into the Northwest Arm. It is being maintained by the same littoral activity that enclosed the peat bog (Burbidge 1988 p.c.), suggesting that the point was established later than the Three Pines terrace.

One clue to the geochronology of the site is through palynological studies. A pollen core from Three Pines Bog was taken by Dr. Jock McAndrews of the Royal Ontario Museum in June 1987. Coring a bog involves determining the depth of the peat deposits, pushing the piston sampler into the dense peat and extracting 1 metre segments at a time. Microscopic analysis and counting of the fossil pollen grains at intervals along the core, coupled with radiocarbon dating helps to chart the changes in vegetation over time. Also a C14 date of basal organic sediments will date the beginning of the formation of the bog.

Another question being explored is: Why was this location so popular? The highly productive nature of the site suggests that it was occupied over many seasons, years and centuries. How does it compare to other sites found during our 1986 and 1987 surveys? Other sites identified were not on sandy well-drained soil, but on thinly covered bedrock, where only limited areas were flat. For example, the Argillite Site CfHa-31 is a very small travel camp suitable for one perhaps two tents. The Blueberry Site CfHa-32 is a lithic workshop located 200 m. from a vein of fine-grained white quartz. This site gets blasted by southwest winds but it would have been suitable for a short term stay in order to process the quartz, as seen by the quantity of quartz debitage recovered. At Cross Bay, where no sand occurs, another major site is located where smooth rocks are found along the shore for convenient access from shore to water and vice versa. However, these sites are just not as attractive as Three Pines which has one of the largest expanses of flat, well-drained land, a long sand beach and protection from both cold north winds in winter and from rainstorms brought by southwest winds in summer.

The Three Pines Site was used likely in both warm and cold seasons with repeated use over many years, in fact over centuries to contribute to the high artifact counts. Sand Point, once it was established, probably acted as an overflow camp. The Three Pines Site also enjoys a strategic location. It would be an obvious stopping point in any journey up or down the west arm of the lake. The Lake Nipissing drainage basin is accessible to the south while the Ottawa River drainage is accessible to the north via Diamond Lake. The location is also strategic in that its tremendous view of the lake would allow for possible control over groups who passed up and down the Northwest

Arm.

This paper has offered a brief glimpse of what it is like to do archaeology in the northern forested regions of this province, an area not particularly overflowing with archaeologists for reasons which escape me. The study of hunter-gatherers, either through contemporary studies, such as those done by Adrian Tanner and Ed Rogers, or though prehistoric and historic archaeology is a subject of endless fascination to me. I hope that with this paper I have shown you why.

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