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# NORTHERN ONTARIO FUR TRADE ARCHAEOLOGY: RECENT RESEARCH

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# RUSHING RIVER PARK(DkKn-1): AN EARLY CONTACT SITE IN THE LAKE OF THE WOODS AREA

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## INTRODUCTION

The Rushing River Park site is located on a flat point on the north side of the mouth of Rushing River that connects Dogtooth Lake with Lake of the Woods approximately 7 kilometres to the West (Figure 19). It lies within Rushing River Provincial Park and was discovered by Mr Gerry Wells of the Ministry of Natural Resources. It was at the request of Kenora District of the Ministry that Mr MacLeod first evaluated and tested the site in 1971 to make recommendations regarding its management within the park context (MacLeod 1971).

A re-evaluation of the site's condition was conducted by Mr Reid in 1975, and to the artefacts from the initial 1971 test were added the surface collections from this second project. This paper presents the results of the two projects.

## THE TEST EXCAVATIONS

Four test units were excavated (Figure 65) in the 1971 evaluation and designated T1 through T4: two (T1 and T2) measured five by ten feet (1.5 x 3.1 m) and the remaining two (T3 and T4) were five foot (1.5 m) squares. Artefact recoveries for each unit excluding faunal material are shown in the Table below. It should be noted that considerable faunal materials were recovered from T1, T2, and the surface; however, full faunal analysis has not been completed beyond the identification of caribou, beaver, and possibly bear.

All excavated aboriginal cultural materials were recovered from a thin compacted dark brown organic stratum (figures 66, 67) just below the present humus layer, a stratum that undoubtedly was the humus zone at the time of occupation and which was never more than one inch thick. The thin stratigraphy would seem to indicate a single component site.



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The Hudson Bay Lowland chert biface fragment (Figure 68b) has also been heat affected.

The complete projectile point (Figure 68d) is roughly triangular in shape and is chipped from black chert available locally in the Lake of the Woods area. A small portion of the original flake's ventral surface remains. Blade edges are excurvate, the base has been thinned, transverse section is assymetrically biconvex, longitudinal section is concavo-convex, the base is subconvex, and the corners have been removed. Measurements are: length 24.4 mm; width at shoulder 16.0 mm, basal width 10.8 mm; maximum thickness 4.1 mm; and blade lengths 18.4 mm and 20.8 mm.

*TRADE GOODS*

A stemmed copper projectile point (Figure 68c) has been cut from trade copper and still bears cut marks/scoring at the juncture of the stem and body. The blade edges are convex, and have been ground. The stem tapers from 6.7 to 6.0 mm and is 11.0 mm long; the point is 26.1 mm long, 0.9 mm thick, and 20.0 mm wide at the shoulders.

The complete "seed" bead is glass, wire-wound, slightly barrel-shaped, and approximates the W1c type, Oyster White, in the Kidd Classification System (Kidd and Kidd 1970: 62) and Type 21 in Van der Sleen (1967 - facsimile: 32-36). It is 3.1 mm long with a 3.0 mm diameter. No date can be assigned as this is an extremely common bead from over a long time period.

The lead musket ball is .55 calibre.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The fabric impressed pottery falls within the range of Winnipeg Fabric-impressed Ware (MacNeish 1958:162-170), and appears most closely related to the Clearwater Lake Punctate Type thought by Hlady (1970:112) to belong to the Woodland Cree in the period A.D. 1500-1780. Since no associated rim was found for the plain neck and body, typing has not been attempted.

The lithics are fairly typical of Late Woodland sites in the Lake of the Woods area; however, the admixture of European trade goods with aboriginal lithics and pottery gives this site some considerable importance as it falls within that narrow range of the proto-historic and early historic period. The change from aboriginal pottery and lithics to European metal pots, points, and firearms was rapid with the advent of the fur trade, yet this site's artefact assemblage clearly demonstrates that its occupants had not yet effected the complete changeover to the new products. A date of *circa* A.D. 1600-1650 is therefore postulated for the Rushing River site.