

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE
SOUTHEASTERN LAC SEUL REGION

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Abstract

This report describes a body of survey data from the lake-forest region of the southern edge of the Canadian Shield in Northwest Ontario, an area similar in physiographic and biotic composition to north central and northeastern Minnesota. The survey was carried out as part of a multi-year and multi-disciplinary project with the Ontario Government to investigate a large portion of Northwest Ontario under consideration for large-scale timber extraction. Survey data is included from the Southeast Lac Seul region and preliminary generalizations concerning boreal forest-shield settlement systems are offered. Problems inherent in northern lakeshore surveys are described and possible solutions are suggested. The primary purpose of this report is to disseminate basic survey data which so often remains buried and forgotten in laboratory files.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to describe the results of an archaeological survey of a series of interconnected lake systems near the southern edge of the Canadian Shield in northern Ontario. The survey was conducted by the author under the auspices of the Historical Planning and Research Branch of the Ministry of Culture and Recreation (MCR), a provincial agency governing the inventory, conservation and management of cultural resources in Ontario. This study was part of a regional study by MCR archaeologists to carry out archaeological survey within a planning area covering 223,500 square kilometers of northern Ontario lake-forest environment. Artifacts from the survey are housed in the laboratory facilities of the Regional Archaeologist's office in Kenora, Ontario.

The survey was carried out in the southeastern portion of Lac Seul during the summer of 1979 (see Figure 1). The study area is divided into three subareas: 1) the southeast Lac Seul-Deception Bay area, 2) Vermilion Lake, and 3) Minnitaki Lake. It lies within the Severn Upland region of the Canadian Shield, a region characterized by broad, undulating surfaces averaging between 275 and 366 meters above sea level (Bostock 1976:16). Extensive portions of the region are overlain by glacial till and lacustrine sediments. However, the majority of the land surface is either exposed bedrock or covered by a thin mantle of soil.

Previous archaeological research in the Lac Seul area has been very limited. Dr. J. V. Wright of the National Museum of Canada had carried out the only systematic survey prior to the present one (Wright 1967). During that survey in the early 1960s Wright located 34 sites in the vicinity of Sioux Lookout. The majority of the sites recovered by Wright were aceramic, i.e., lithic scatters. The remainder of the sites were shoreline camps of Laurel, Blackduck, Selkirk, Archaic, and historic period affiliation.

The single Archaic site discovered by Wright's survey is situated on a small island downstream from Pelican Falls. This site, designated EaKa-3 or Eaka, is one of the few known buried Archaic components in all of northwest Ontario. Wright excavated four ten-foot squares and a three-foot by twenty-foot trench on the site and encountered a six-inch Archaic stratum overlain by later Woodland period components (Wright 1972:23). A detailed discussion of the site is presented in Wright (1972).

HYPOTHESES

Although the 1979 survey was exploratory in nature, several working hypotheses were

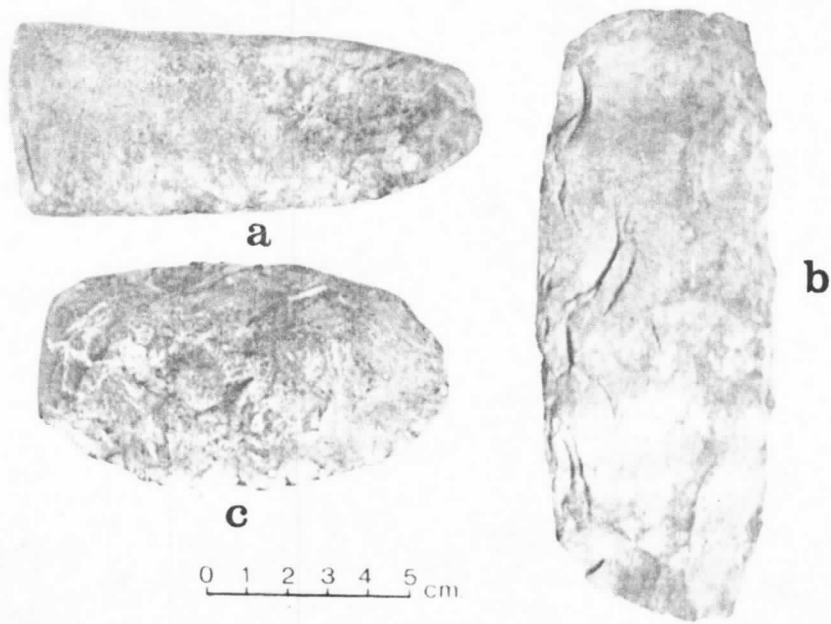


Fig. 19. a)EbJx-11 celt, b)EaKb-11 celt, c)EbJx-14 celt.

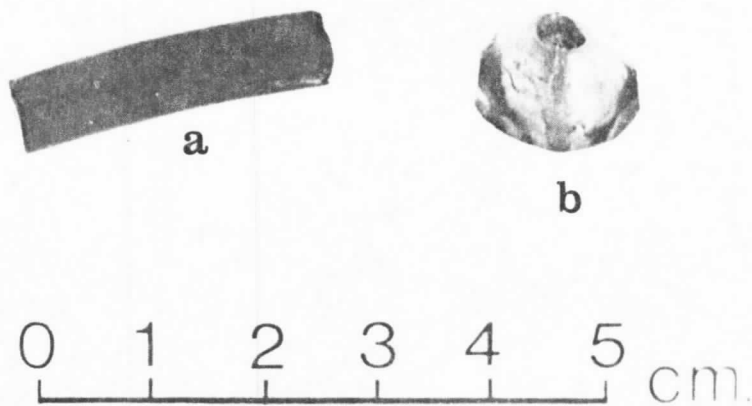


Fig. 20. a)D-lKb-7 glass bead, b)EaKb-8 glass bead.