



Ottawa Chapter

ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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Ontario History

Since the end of the ice age 10,000 years ago, people have lived almost everywhere in the Province. They have travelled by canoe on lakes and rivers, and forged trails on land in summer and ice in winter.

To learn about the life of our ancestors we have the oral traditions and histories of our Native Peoples which have been handed down. Since the mid-1500s, we have the written word of European exploration and expansion. Yet, these oral and written records may not tell the whole story.

So... for answers, we turn our attention to archaeological sites and the evidence left behind.

Archaeological Sites – Non-renewable Resources

Archaeological sites include aboriginal hunting and fishing camps, ceremonial sites and spiritual places, villages, traces of travel routes, battlefields, and remnants of pioneer cabins, trading posts, cemeteries and shipwrecks.

An archaeological investigation is not just about collecting artifacts; it is a disciplined approach to the collection, analysis and interpretation of cultural information using

materials and methods derived from virtually every other field of scientific inquiry. With patience, the archaeologist ‘unearths’ the past with a shovel or a trowel, revealing layer upon layer.

Like the investigation at a crime scene, no detail or association of objects is insignificant.

Each site tells its own unique story based on what happened at the site originally and what has survived through the centuries.

When a site is damaged or destroyed, then that part of our past is lost forever.

Save Our Archaeological Heritage

Please Don't Loot!



Brenda Kennett

“An archaeological find out of context is like a clue removed from the scene of the crime: it becomes a silent witness. To learn the truth, the archaeologist has to carefully study its position, the soil it was conserved in, the artifacts around it. Only by cross-checking all this information can we deduce what this item did.”¹



Rory Mackay

The Ontario Heritage Act

The Ontario Heritage Act states that it is illegal for anyone to alter a site, remove an artifact, or any other physical evidence of past human use or activity from a site without a license “knowing that a site is an.....archaeological site.....”

Under the Act, an individual or a director of a corporation found in violation of the Act or the regulations is liable to a fine of up to \$50,000, imprisonment for up to one year or both. A corporation is liable to a fine of up to \$250,000. Demolishing a heritage building or disturbing an archaeological site *knowingly*, carries a \$1,000,000 fine.

Licensing of Archaeologists

To undertake any kind of archaeological field work in Ontario, the Ontario Heritage Act requires that a person hold a valid archaeological license.

Licenses are not transferable, and are issued for specific sites or types of activity. License holders must report all research findings to the Province and all new sites found during fieldwork. More than 16,000 Ontario sites are registered on the province’s computerized Archaeological

Sites Database. About 600-700 new sites are registered each year.

Only licensed archaeologists can conduct archaeological investigations!



The Role of Municipalities

Under the Planning Act, municipalities, too, play an important role in managing cultural heritage resources. Many municipalities have also developed an Archaeological Resource Potential Mapping Study to help identify areas requiring an archaeological assessment and have put regulations in place to ensure archaeological heritage is not lost.

As an example, to obtain a subdivision permit, a developer must employ a licensed archaeologist to conduct a survey and submit a report to the Ministry of Culture.

What Can YOU Do to Help?

- Become aware of the importance of Ontario’s archaeological heritage. Visit: www.culture.gov.on.ca
- Learn more about archaeology from the Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS): www.ontarioarchaeology.on.ca and Ottawa Chapter: www.ottawaoas.ca
- If you find an artifact or a site, leave it undisturbed. That is the law! Note the location of the site. For help in reporting the find, contact the OAS: oasociety@bellnet.ca, the Ottawa Chapter: contact@ottawaoas.ca or your local museum.



Appreciation is extended to:

- ¹ Marguerite Bourgeoys Museum, Montreal
- Past Recovery Archaeological Services
- Ministry of Culture for the Province of Ontario
- City of Ottawa for a Heritage Grant

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