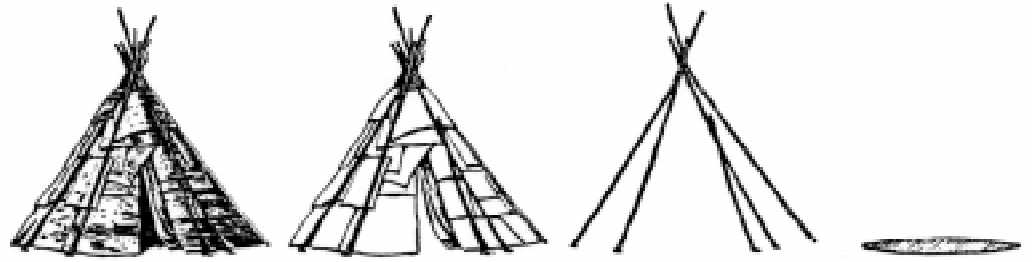


**HOME
IS
WHERE
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IS**



The contribution of small sites to our understanding of Ontario's past

**Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Symposium of the
Ontario Archaeological Society**



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The contribution of small sites to our understanding of Ontario's past

Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Symposium of the Ontario Archaeological Society

edited by

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the Canadian Museum of Civilization and Digital Equipment of Canada.

This volume is dedicated to the late Peggi Armstrong, a fervent and active member of the Ottawa Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society. Peggwith would be pleased.

About the front cover:

The Symposium logo was drawn by Peggi Armstrong and represents some of the stages between what archaeologists find (stains and a few discarded and lost objects) and what archaeologist try to understand (fully functioning worlds). In both instances, hearths act as focal points to the activities of the people in the past and the archaeologists of the present.

The photograph of the newly-renovated Donald Gordon Centre in Kingston, Ontario was taken by Peggi Armstrong.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTH IS

An Introduction



The subtitle for this symposium, and you can just imagine how much fun we might have had with this one, could have been “Its not the size that counts” or better yet, “Site envy.” My own experience in archaeology has been with small sites, sites characterized by thin scatters of material, usually only lithics, around hearth features. This is the dominant site type in Ontario and throughout Canada, although you might not conclude that from a quick perusal of the literature. In part, that may be due to the great difficulty of writing monographs based upon such sites; they tend to be short and the plates are uninspiring. But most of the history of this land, however, took place in small camps and the material remains of millenia are to be found grouped around these centres of warmth, both physical and psychological, that hearths represents. Around the fireplace is where we find people, not just artifacts.

Even in Iroquoian archaeology, the role of small sites is becoming better appreciated and more important to our understanding of Iroquoian culture. Of special note is a recent publication on small sites archaeology in Southwestern Ontario by the London Museum of Archaeology and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (Lennox 1995). For every multi-hectare village there were dozens and dozens of small, special purpose hamlets and cabin sites. They contribute to the big picture of the Ontario Iroquois what knowledge of Kingston, Belleville, Madoc, Sioux Lookout, Timmins, and even Vankleek Hill contribute to our understanding of an Ontario otherwise based solely on knowledge of Toronto.

The times, they are a changing. Some recently elected governments do not share our appreciation for culture, or at least, they wouldn't treat it the same way archaeologists would, especially when it comes to the allocation of public dollars. Everyone is feeling the pinch and large scale excavations are becoming a thing of the past. It is thus a good time to check our focus and our depth of field, to see what we might have been missing, ignoring because we choose not to attribute enough significance to some kinds of sites.

At the 23rd Annual Symposium of the Ontario Archaeological Society, held in Kingston Ontario, researchers from throughout Ontario gathered together to address some of the questions revolving around the contributions of small sites to our understanding of Ontario's past. Many of these presentations are presented to you in this e-volume. They represent, in most instances, versions of the presented papers, upgraded or modified for publication. They provide us with

food for thought, examples of how small sites have yielded up their cultural information and how we might all better appreciate their potential. I thank them all for accepting the invitation.

Just as the climate under which we all work is changing and we must re-evaluate our research designs and questions to incorporate a broader range of pertinent data sources, so too must we adjust the ways we practice our craft. In this sense, I'm thinking of the ways we deal with reduced government funding for fundamental research, the elimination of some funding sources altogether, the changing attitudes of government vis-à-vis environmental protection, the stronger Native voices demanding equitable participation in the process, etc. During the Kingston OAS Symposium, a forum was held to attempt to examine our archaeological future in Ontario, and to use a well worn phrase, to look at the future of the past. This forum was moderated by Peter Carruthers of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. The objectives were straight-forward. To offer Symposium participants the opportunity to collectively reflect, exchange, increase their awareness, perhaps develop some resolutions or directions. Four speakers presented their perspectives on the practice of archaeology in Ontario and attempted some crystal ball gazing before discussions were opened to the floor. An account of these exchanges is also presented in this *e*-volume. The challenge is take something positive away from these words and affect the future of archaeology in Ontario.

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