Passport to the Past

Archaeology Days at Bonnechere Provincial Park

Highway 58, 4024 Round Lake Road
Killaloe, Ontario 613-757-2103

July 12 and 13, 2025 and tentatively July 14-16

Activities take place at the Davenport Centre by the beach, or on-site July 14-16 unless otherwise noted

Please join the Ottawa Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society, and staff and Friends of Bonnechere Provincial Park for a weekend or a week. Chapter members and their families are invited to participate in delivering and supporting the activities or coming to learn more about what we do and the archaeological techniques we use. There's something for everyone and every age group. Meet with archaeologists and bring the past to life with hands-on activities and demonstrations.

Brad Drouin making stone tools

SATURDAY 10 am – 12:30 pm
Public Archaeology Activities

Every sherd tells a story – Mend broken ceramics; we love a puzzle!
Flintknapping – Learn how stone tools were made with Brad Drouin.
The Great Wall of China - Be inspired by old ceramics and decorate a plate. Help build the campers' own *Great Wall* display.
Meet the Historian of the Little Bonnechere – Roderick "Rory" MacKay will be on hand to share the *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere*.
Friends of the Park – Learn everything about the history and natural diversity of Bonnechere Park.
Plus - Posters, displays, photographs, artifacts, stories and more!

SATURDAY 7 – 8 pm
A *PECHA KUCHA* EVENING – "The Good Stuff"

Join archaeologists for a fun and interesting evening. Short, 10-minute presentations will demonstrate how the mysteries of the past are revealed through a focus on artifacts - some odd ones, some that give us headaches, and some that are just very cool.

This *Pecha Kucha* story-telling format will feature visuals, artifacts, and lots of chitchat. Presentations include *A Goldilocks Story – Shanty Style*; *An Archaeological Pipe Dream*; *Feeling Flush;* plus a few others.

SUNDAY 10 am – 12:30 pm *Ick! Yuck! Eew!*

Our Gross Ottawa Valley Archaeology and History

What was daily life back in the early days of the Ottawa Valley really like? Explore some of the gross things from the past by examining archaeological artifacts and objects. You'll be saying ***"Ick! Yuck! Eew!"*** and happy to be living in 2025! Match icky artifacts and objects to their less-icky modern versions. Draw your favourites and contribute the picture to a booklet about our gross Ottawa Valley archaeology and history.

MONDAY – WEDNESDAY 9 am–3 pm

THE DICKERSON SITE revisited (to be confirmed)

Plans are being developed for a return to the Dickerson Site following investigations which took place last year with Chapter members participating. This is a multicomponent mid-late 1800s and Indigenous archaeological site on the shores of the Bonnechere River, north of the park proper. Tentative activities might include unit excavation and test pitting plus investigations of shoreline instabilities which have potential to impact the site. More details will be available in the next few weeks, however, if you are interested in participating, please let us know. No prior training required.

Brought to you by the Ottawa Chapter, Ontario Archaeological Society in cooperation with the staff and Friends of Bonnechere Provincial Park ottawaoas@gmail.com www.otttawaoas.ca

Excavation and screening activities at the Dickerson Site in July 2024
Images courtesy of Marian Clark.

Why Are We Helping to Investigate The Dickerson Site?

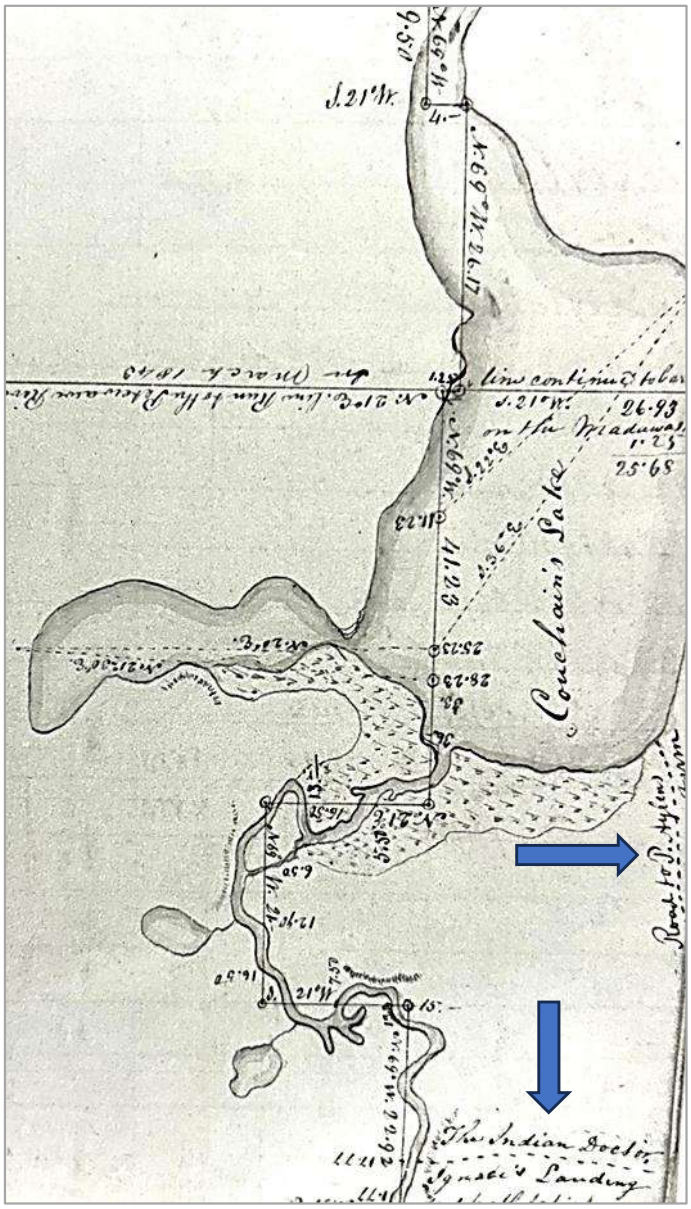
by Rory MacKay

The Dickerson Site in Bonnechere River Provincial Park is of interest because it represents a period of contact between an Indigenous population and the European industrial activities of the fur trade and logging, but it may also represent a much earlier period as well. Further research may provide more answers. The Dickerson Site, BkGk-6, is named after Luke Dickerson, a former Natural Heritage Education Leader at Bonnechere Provincial Park who expressed interest in locating the landing, described below.

An early reference to what is now called the Dickerson Site appeared on a map by surveyor James McNaughton, who in the 1840s was responsible for surveying the Bonnechere River and the Little Bonnechere River. On his map is written "The Indian Doctor Ignace's Landing and Path to His Sugar Bush" (McNaughton 1848). McNaughton had surveyed sections of the river during the early 1840s and as he travelled up the river with a guide he came upon signs of human activity.

The earliest reference to the Indian Doctor appears as part of the 1835 Timber Limit application of James Wadsworth: "To commence at the South Branch of Bonnechere, above the Indian Doctor's Sugar Bush . . ." (MacKay 2016:54). Another mention was made in the description for Wadsworth's timber limit in 1836: "commencing one mile below Enoes' [sic] or the Indian Doctor's Landing" (MacKay 2016:54). In records, the names Enoes, Eneas, Aneas, and Ignace seem interchangeable as surnames, with those names sometimes used with the surname L'amable. Local resident Fred Turner suggested that at one time the lake farthest downstream on the chain of lakes was once locally called "Eneas" Lake rather than Eno's Lake as it is today.

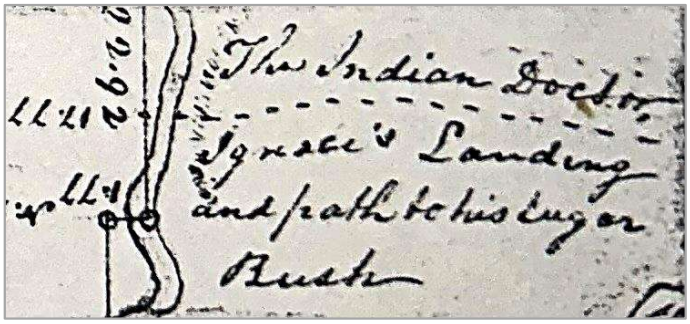
At the upstream end of the Couchain Lakes,



"The Indian Doctor Ignace's Landing and path to his Sugar Bush" and "Road to P. Aylen's Farm", in 1840. *Ontario Archives (McNaughton fieldbook).* *Source: MacKay 2016:38.*

downstream from the Indian Doctor's Landing, McNaughton noted a road to P. Aylen's Farm (labelled incorrectly in the first edition of *Spirits of*

the Little Bonnechere, 1996:26). The name suggests that the informant with McNaughton was not up-to-date with changes on the river, for in the 1840s the timber limit and farm were held by lumberer John Egan. Egan's presence in 1845-6 is verified in the description of his limit: "To commence at a Norway Pine tree marked on four sides, south side of Couchain's Lake and extend up the Bonnechere River" (MacKay 2016). However, just as this author lived for twenty years in a house locally known as "the old Sparks place", and because there is evidence that at one time lumberer Peter Aylen was timber-making on the Little Bonnechere, so the farm in the sugar bush may have been cleared by him prior to 1835.



Detail of the 1840s map on page 6

There is indeed evidence that someone had cleared a farm on the hillside on the south side of the Bonnechere River; demonstrated by an abundance of rock piles or clearance cairns. The farm would have been somewhat on a northeast slope, as is often the case with such old farms, but also directly south of the aforementioned path to the sugar bush from the Indian Doctor's landing. In the 19th century it was said that the best land for farming was where there was a stand of hardwoods. The clearing of a depot farm on an Indigenous sugar bush would appear to be an excellent but sad example of colonialism.

In 2011, avocational archaeologist Donald Webb and this author, acting as Webb's mentor and assistant, set out to identify the location of Dr. Ignace's Landing. Under Webb's license and with Park permission we identified a few possible locations and conducted shovel testing at five metre intervals at the most likely spot. Artifacts were found and are considered representative of a 19th century fur trade period. The most notable artifact was a lock-plate from an early flintlock musket, identified by flintlock expert, James Gooding, as a Northwest trade gun of British manufacture, not military, and dating from around 1760. It had been stripped of parts. Not far from the flintlock, a .56 calibre musket ball was recovered. Other 19th century artifacts included a complete pair of scissors, snare wire, and two prongs from what may have been a beaver or muskrat spear (MacKay 2016). Two features were noted: one was a circular depression, near where the flintlock was recovered; further east was is a U-shaped feature with a mound somewhat centrally located. A 1 metre by .5 metre unit in the latter mound yielded a file and a logging chain swivel, tools associated with logging. This second feature was similar to shanty remains that the author has studied elsewhere.

In 2011, there was no evidence of a foundation mound near the presumed landing place. It is noted that there was no indication on McNaughton's 1848 map of any structure at that location, although structures were indicated at other locations on his map. In addition to the fur trade artifacts and possible shanty feature, a few pre-contact artifacts including two quartz scrapers were found, indicating that this was a multicomponent site spanning pre-contact times to the timber trade.

Extensive follow-up excavation in 2024, under the supervision of archaeologist Courtney Cameron, confirmed the likelihood that the mound was a camboose from a shanty. The earliest date of manufacture of a pipe stem recovered in 2024 from the camboose mound suggests the shanty was not indicated on McNaughton's map because it was not there when that section of river was mapped.

Evidence that the site was occupied during the Woodland Period was found in additional test units.

There is opportunity for more archaeology to be done on the Dickerson Site in July 2025, as described elsewhere in this newsletter [see page 5].

A Henderson pipe stem gave a date range for the camboose. *Image: R. Mackay, 2024.*

Courtney Cameron and assistant.
Image: R. MacKay, 2024.

Rory MacKay working on camboose mound.
Image courtesy of R. MacKay, 2024.

References Cited

MacKay, R.
1996 *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere: A History of Exploration, Logging, and Settlement, 1800 to 1920.* Friends of Bonnechere Parks, Pembroke, Ontario.

2016 *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere: A History of Exploration, Logging, and Settlement, 1800 to 1920.* Second Edition. The Friends of Algonquin Park, Whitney, Ontario.

McNaughton, J.
1848. Map. Survey of the Bonnechere River. Ontario Archives, 7931.