



# Ontario Archaeological Society

## Arch Notes

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# Ontario Archaeological Society

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Vito Vaccarelli

The Ontario Archaeological Society gratefully acknowledges funding from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture through the Provincial Heritage Organization Operating Grant Program.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

I'm not sure if it is the time of year, or the year, but there does appear to be a number of issues preoccupying members these days.

Of late, it has been the consequences of the Federal Government's Budget Bill (C-38), which, it should be said, affect many, many people and issues across the country. But what has been of particular focus from our corner of the world were the recently announced cuts to Parks Canada, and especially the staggering cuts to archaeological staff and conservator programs, and the consolidation of regional collection holdings to the Ottawa Region.

Staff cuts in these areas have hovered around 80%, with the Ontario region office itself seeing cuts from 12 staff before the start of the year, to just one position after all the cuts have taken effect. While it seems Parks Canada is claiming core mandates will be preserved, it seems difficult to imagine good care and management of archaeological sites on federal lands can be achieved at this level of cut. And

certainly Parks Canada was not alone in receiving cuts, but they do appear to have been targeted for a shockingly disproportionate level of cuts. Notwithstanding keeping a skeleton crew on across the country, this decision effectively shuts down Parks Canada archaeological programs – a program that had been a world leader in the field until now.

Responses have been numerous, both from archaeological organizations in Canada, and from the United States. The Canadian Archaeological Association has done a good job at consolidating several of these expressions of regret and outrage, all of which can be accessed at: <http://canadianarchaeology.com/caa/dragonian-cuts-parks-canada>

The OAS Board has joined with others who have voiced their concerns, sending a letter to the federal government, which can be found elsewhere in this newsletter (Pages 13-15). I would encourage you to review the information on the CAA's webpage, and consider writing or

contacting your own MP about this issue.

As CAA President Bill Ross notes, this affects the archaeological community deeply and so it is important to voice our concerns. So please consider writing a letter, email, phoning or otherwise add your voice.

On other fronts, we are working towards renewing the OAS Strategic Plan for the OAS conference this Fall. To that end, a questionnaire is now up online. We would ask all members to please take the time to fill in the questionnaire, as it will help us draft that new plan. The questionnaire is easy to access online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3JG7LRH>

Filling it out online will allow us to readily and quickly compile results, so please add your thoughts to where you would like to see the OAS go over the next five years.

**Neal Ferris  
President**

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## **THE OAS NEEDS YOUR INPUT**

**Help us make the OAS better! This is your chance to tell us what you think about communication, publications and what our future priorities should be.**

**Just go to the link below and fill out the five minute survey.**

**The OAS Board of Directors will use the survey to determine the issues that concern our membership and plan accordingly.**

**The survey will be online until August 31st.**

**A PDF of the survey can also be emailed on request; contact Lorie Harris at the OAS office to obtain one.**

**The link can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3JG7LRH> and we encourage you to take part.**

**Results will be reported at the Annual Symposium in Windsor.**



# The Archaeology of the Great Lakes Area

The Annual Symposium of the  
Ontario Archaeological Society

**November 9 - 11, 2012**

**Holiday Inn Suites Ambassador Bridge  
Windsor, Ontario**

## Call for Proposals

*Concurrent Sessions on Saturday, November 10th*

Please submit your proposals by May 31, 2012 to Session Chairs.

Session	Chair	Email
<i>War of 1812</i>	Dena Doroszenko	Dena.Doroszenko@heritagetrust.on.ca
<i>Paleo &amp; Archae</i>	Chris Ellis	cjellis@uwo.ca
<i>Woodland</i>	Peter Timmins	ptimmins@uwo.ca
<i>Western Basin</i>	Christopher Watts Lindsay Foreman	christopher.watts@utoronto.ca ljforema@gmail.ca

\*Please note due to time constraints not all proposals will necessarily be accepted.



Visit us on-line for more details and registration.

<http://www.ontarioarchaeology.on.ca/>



# THE EMPEROR'S NEW ARCHAEOLOGY

by **P. J. Racher, M.A., CAHP**  
**Archaeological Research Associates Ltd.**

This isn't an academic article. It's so full of musings and ramblings and opinions that I'm not sure how it could be peer-reviewed. That being said, I hope it's not a rant. My accomplishments haven't been particularly lofty, so I cannot speak from a position of pre-eminence. I am neither an elder nor a sage. But I have been doing archaeology for a few years now, more than 25 at last reckoning, and I have had some experiences lately that have made me question my vocation.

Increasingly, over the last few years, I have been invited to give talks about archaeology – chats to school children, seminars for teachers, information sessions for engineers and planners, and talks to various First Nations gatherings. I enjoy these because they appeal to the blowhard in me who likes the sound of his own voice. They're also great because, unlike the conference papers that I rarely give, they tend to be about general subjects that academics aren't much interested in. I am drawn to this because it's less likely that I will say something wrong and make a fool of myself.

Whenever I give one of these talks, invariably the first reaction I hear (from all but First Nations groups) is: "We have archaeology in Ontario?"

I'm sure you have all encountered the same. As quasi-academics, it gives us all a good laugh. For my part, I love any chance, no matter how rare, to feel smarter than someone. From a wider social perspective, however, and even from that of motivated self-interest, we should all be horrified by this. Archaeology is a century old in Ontario. Professional archaeology is now 40 years old. We are forever gathering data, and increasing our collections, but to what end? And if our findings haven't filtered into the public consciousness in that long, what are we doing wrong?

My favorite talks involve kids. They always have the best questions and they LOVE handling artifacts (which I let them do – finger oils be damned). I usually bring artifacts from Iroquoian sites because they are the most recent, and have the best preservation. Here is a sample of the sort of questions these kids ask me:

"What did the First Nations eat?"; "How did their food taste?"; "How did they make these pots?"; "What did their clothes look like?"; "How did they wear their hair?"; "What games did they play?"; "How did they build their houses?"; "Did they use soap?"; "Did they go to school?";

"What were their families like?"; and "How did they cook their food?"

These are wonderful questions because they are about real life and the things that people believe matter to themselves. Some of them are well beyond the scope of archaeology. In particular, I wish I had better answers about hair and clothing and the taste of food. But I hear these children and what matters to them, and in it I recognize the shadow of the things that matter to us all. Contrast that with what we archaeologists think matters: ceramic decoration, chert sources, tool forms and settlement patterns.

When I was an undergrad, I recall being in awe of students who could tell Selkirk Chert from Onondaga Chert, or Pound Necked from Huron Incised ceramics. In a way, I think we archaeologists all still feel that way. We've convinced ourselves that these things are important; that they are a puzzle which, if unlocked, will explain something to us. We've studied them quite doggedly to see what they 'mean' – perhaps even more so as that meaning has eluded us. But while we've busied ourselves with such matters, the people 'out there' who in one way another pay for our work (buying homes, using infrastructure, paying taxes, etc.) are still at the same point they were 40 years ago: they barely know we exist.

In my time, I have seen some great theoretical edifices rise in archaeology – The New Archaeology, Structural Archaeology, Marxist Archaeology, Post Processual Archaeology, Feminist Archaeology, and so on. I have been one of 'those' graduate students who have been bewitched by one or another of these ideologies at different times. I think that the questions they pose are both interesting and important.

But, first things first.

When I was a little fellow, growing up in Lambton County, I was taught from a history book called *Breastplate and Buckskin*. It informed me that the First Nations of southern Ontario lived in longhouses, ate corn, beans and squash (the 'Three Sisters') and played lacrosse. I wonder how many of us have added anything further to this story. By 'us', of course, I do not mean the avocational archaeologists who do what they do out of love, nor the academic archaeologists who work in a spirit of pure inquiry. I mean the professional archaeological community – the consulting industry that seems to have 'eaten' Ontario archaeology over the last 30 years. Consultants who receive free licences from the province, are given free use of provincial resources (such as the sites

database), and are granted a pretty good livelihood. I mean me, and others like me.

My history book, like many others, was laced with all sorts of stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples (“child-like, living squalid, violent, and savage lives”). Many of these are still ‘out there’ in the public domain. A surprising number of people continue to believe that the First Nations of Ontario never did anything ‘good’ or left anything ‘important’ behind. These images are reinforced by the popular archaeology media – the glossy magazines and cable television shows that focus on the archaeology of the Old World or, in some (lamentable) instances, space aliens. In these media, OUR archaeology is effectively invisible.

So here we are. We gather artifacts. We gather money. We complain about the government’s support of our sector (indeed, I have made a second career out of the latter). We complain about each other. On a more positive note, we are privileged to work with wonderful, beautiful, and ancient things. Most of us are relatively expert on the accomplishments of the First Nations. Many of us have good friends in those communities. We all possess the knowledge and ability to serve as Apostles for Ontario archaeology – to take what we do, to acknowledge the privilege it is to be able to do it and, in that spirit, to give some of ourselves back to the cause.

I know that some archaeologists are already doing this in their own quiet, and deeply-committed way. Because

they are thoughtful and decent, I think they assume that the rest of us are like them and that the notion of using archaeology to make a difference is obvious. It wasn’t obvious to me though. Some kids had to tell me.

Because I am a bit thick, I am not sure what this archaeology ought to look like. I see elements of it, but not a complete picture. I know that it must be pragmatic – we can save the ideological differences for later. I know that it must be responsible – both to the people of Ontario and especially to the First Nations. I know that it must address the basic problems of how people lived (or what their stories were, if you will) and that it must get that message out to the people who need to hear it.

If a wonderful find is to sit forever in a drawer, is it better that it was found by an archaeologist rather than a looter? Where is the difference? That it may be studied someday? It is a fine distinction for most, I suspect.

Some of the questions we have cannot be addressed by digging alone. Answering them will require talking to the First Nations (who do still hunt, fish, play lacrosse and eat corn soup), or more experimental archaeology (in the spirit of what we did in the 1970s), or even the exercise of our ‘historical imagination’ (to quote the Post Processualists). My fear (and this is self-interest talking, as well as love of my profession) is that one day the paying public, in this time of cutbacks and dearth, will turn to us and see how irrelevant and ‘naked’ we have allowed ourselves to become.

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## LETTER TO THE THE OAS MEMBERSHIP

Open letter to OAS members:

I’d like to direct the membership’s attention to a recent piece in the *Toronto Star*: “Job Cuts will hurt preservation of Canada’s past, say experts” (<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/politics/article/1180275--job-cuts-will-hurt-preservation-of-canada-s-past-say-experts>).

Aside from the damage that will be done to local tourism by cutting back on the Trent Severn Waterway’s season, “cuts include a massive reduction in the number of staff conservators.” OAS President Neal Ferris is cited, saying “For archaeologist across the country, this is a rather frightening step.”

Those who attended the 2011 OAS symposium in Ottawa were given a tour of the Parks Canada conservation lab where, ironically, a large 19th century map of Peterborough Township was painstakingly being restored.

I would encourage all to submit a letter of protest to their Member of Parliament. Our national heritage ought not to be treated in such a manner, particularly in a year when archaeology has featured in our recognition of the War of 1812 as integral to the process that created our great land.

**Regards, Tom Mohr.  
President,  
Peterborough Chapter, OAS**





(PHOTO BY ERIKA ENGEL, BLUE MOUNTAIN COURIER HERALD)

## WYANDOTTES FROM OKLAHOMA VISIT ONTARIO

By Charles Garrad

From April 30 to May 4, eight visitors from the Wyandotte Nation, Oklahoma, spent a busy and sometimes damp week in Ontario. This was in response to invitations from Ella and Charlie Garrad during their visit to the Wyandotte Nation in Oklahoma last September to come and explore their principally Petun Ontario heritage.

Their tour began with a reception by Ellen Anderson, Mayor of the Town of the Blue Mountains, seen in the photo between Charlie Garrad and Second Chief Norman Hildebrand. Also in the photographs are Sherri Clemons, Historical Coordinator for the Nation, and five members of the Nation's Honor Guard – Larry Hamilton, Ted Nesvold, Dennis Smotherman, Grover Tanner and Isaac Tanner. The Honor Guard performs ceremonial functions and is composed of members of the Wyandotte Nation who have served with honour in any branch of the U.S. military. In the rear in the photo are the Warden of Grey County, Duncan McKinlay, and councillors Bob Gamble and Joe Halos and Troy Speck, CAO of the Town. Missing from the photo, as they were taking photographs, are Doug Spangler of the Wyandotte Nation, and Ella Garrad, and also local cultural representatives. The event was reported on local TV and in the print media.

To further the understanding their Ontario heritage through

archaeology, the group visited a number of Petun archaeological village sites, and also the Craigeith Heritage Depot, Blue Mountain Scenic Caves, Lookout Point, the Collingwood Museum, the Ossossané Ossuary, the Huronia Museum and Wendat Village in Midland, Sainte Marie Among the Hurons, the Martyrs' Shrine, the Simcoe County Museum, and other less formal places. On their last day in Petun Country they were received in the Collingwood Town Hall by Collingwood Mayor Sandra Cooper.

Throughout their stay they headquartered at the Blue Mountain Inn at Craigeith, for which much gratitude is due to Dr. George Weider. Everywhere they were received with enthusiasm, which they reciprocated, and thanks are due especially to Erika Engel, Doug Measures, Eleanor Pask, Margaret Thorburn, Susan Warner, Melissa Shaw, Jamie Hunter, Rosemary Vyvyan, Peter Vyvyan, Patrick Decoursey, Jason Honeyball, Kelley Swift-Jones and Jennifer Brunelle.

The group expressed satisfaction at the care taken to preserve their ancestral archaeological sites in the Blue Mountain area and their desire to return to further explore the period of their history there as the Petun. Perhaps the most unexpected memory is of our traversing the property of the Osler Brook Golf & Country Club in a stream of golf carts provided by the Club to enable us to visit the archaeological remains of a Petun village on the Club's property.



**The Ontario Archaeological Society Inc.**

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Submission  
to the  
Legislative Assembly of Ontario  
Standing Committee on General Government  
on its  
Review of the Aggregate Resources Act

Submitted by:  
Morgan J. Tamplin,  
Director of Heritage Advocacy  
Ontario Archaeological Society

16 May 2012

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The Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS) is a registered charitable organization founded in 1950 with over 600 members, mainly in the province of Ontario but also in Canada and internationally. The society advocates for the promotion, protection and publication of the archaeological resources in the Province of Ontario, to record and preserve our non-renewable cultural heritage.

As an interested stakeholder in these issues, the OAS appreciates the on-going Review of the Aggregate Resources Act by the Standing Committee on General Government. We note that cultural heritage has been already been addressed in previous hearing sessions by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

(Official Report of Debates, Monday 7 May 2012).

The Ministry of Natural Resources has issued policy statements (2.01.08, 3.01.06, and 4.01.07) on Reporting of Cultural Heritage Resources. Their guiding principle is that heritage values provide information about the past and reflect the human history of Ontario requiring a comprehensive review of the geographic and historical features of a property and its surroundings.

To the best of our knowledge, cultural resources affected by this legislation appear to be managed adequately and present practice should be continued to at least the same standard in future site assessments. We welcome the opportunity to present more detailed submissions and recommendations in any future reviews. [2/2]

## THE CONFERENCE ON IROQUOIS RESEARCH RETURNS TO THE CENTRAL FIRE – ONONDAGA TERRITORY

Hope Lake Lodge  
(nestled in the Greek Peak Mountain Resort area)  
Cortland, New York  
October 5, 6 & 7

### 2012 CALL FOR PAPERS, POSTERS, RESEARCH UPDATES & FILM

Submit your abstract online – [www.iroquoia.org](http://www.iroquoia.org)

The 2012 Organizing Committee is happy to announce that the 2012 edition of the Conference on Iroquois Research will be held at Hope Lake Lodge nestled in the Greek Peak Mountain Resort area near Cortland, New York.

As part of the Organizing Committee's mandate to rotate the conference throughout Iroquoia, the new location provides a number of significant advantages to all participants and will certainly draw new Haudenosaunee researchers:

- A wider variety of cheaper accommodation options
- Centrally located and easily accessible from HWY 81 and 90
- Free Airport Shuttle to Syracuse Airport
- Secluded, retreat-like setting
- Proximity to a number of universities (students)

### FREE PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES SPONSORED BY THE CONFERENCE ON IROQUOIS RESEARCH

Exploring St. Mary Among the Iroquois on the north side of Lake Onondaga and Tully Lake on Friday, October 5 at 1 p.m.

For those who choose we will meet at 1:00 p.m. at the site of St. Mary Among the Iroquois on the north side of Lake Onondaga for a wampum belt teaching and a traditional Onondaga story about when the Jesuits left the mission. Then on our way to Cortland we will stop at Tully Lake where it was said that Ayenwatha traveled to during the formation of confederacy and saw the ducks that revealed to him a lake shell that formed the first shell wampum strings.

## NOTEWORTHY

The OAS congratulates Helen Devereux, who was recognized at a recent Toronto Chapter meeting for her over 57 years of membership in the Society. Helen is a true pioneer in Canadian archaeology and was for many years a professor at Laurentian University in Sudbury.



Former OAS Executive-Director Charles Garrard presents Helen Devereux with a certificate acknowledging her long support of the OAS.

The Toronto Chapter recently marked its 30th anniversary as a chapter as well. The chapter has served as a model for the formation of many other chapters and maintains an active programme and newsletter.

Long-time Thunder Bay chapter member Bill Ross, who has also served on

the chapter executive many times, is the incoming President of the Canadian Archaeological Association. Well done, Bill, and we wish you all the best as you take on this leadership role with the national organization.

Windsor chapter member Rosemarie Denunzio reports that the Amherstburg War of 1812 Bicentennial Committee has organized a number of activities to commemorate this event. There is now a great 3 minute video on 1812 history in Amherstburg which includes a virtual tour of Fort Malden

(Fort Amherstburg). Take a look and see what you think.

It's at [www.1812amherstburg.ca](http://www.1812amherstburg.ca)

# SKANDATUT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE PRESERVED AS A RESULT OF AN HISTORIC LAND TRANSFER AGREEMENT

by Neal Ferris

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In the City of Vaughan, on the east side of the Humber River across from the site of the late 16th century Kleinburg Ossuary, lies the archaeological village site referred to as Skandatut.

This site was found in the mid-last decade during CRM survey of extensive lands planned for future development. The preliminary findings of the site indicated it was also a late 16th century occupation that may well have been associated with Kleinburg.

Given its temporal affiliation within the known, coalescent sequence of village relocations in the GTA region (see Birch 2010 for a detailed review of that trend) – and the fact that by the early 17th century Aboriginal communities in the Toronto region had relocated up to the lower Georgian Bay area and came to be known in European accounts as the Huron-Wendat – this site may well represent a pivotal moment in the history of the ancestral Aboriginal people from this region, and the crucial role their descendants would play in shaping the early history of Canada. Certainly the existing Huron-Wendat community of Wendake, Quebec has drawn much heritage value from and connection to the archaeological record of this region, and have specifically identified the Skandatut site as a critically important part of that heritage.

The value and significance of this site invited considerations of preservation, while development needs invited considerations of excavation. That tension came to a head in the fall of 2010, when the landowner contracted an archaeological consulting firm to excavate the site. Objections raised by members led the OAS to call on people to meet in order to try and resolve differences. Later on, the OAS was also asked to facilitate an evaluation of the conclusions made within a Ministry of Tourism and Culture inspection of this rare and significant site.

Ultimately the Ministry of Tourism and Culture facilitated a stoppage of excavations in order to enable mediation between the landowner and Huron-Wendat representatives. This led to a long and involved process of discussion, possible solutions considered but ultimately rejected, and continuing uncertainty over the fate of the site. The process proved extremely stressful

for the directly affected parties, and for the many others who saw and raised concerns for the site, the archaeology, the archaeologists, and the communities that all had an interest in the management outcomes.

So I'm pleased to say the OAS was recently informed that, on June 5th, 2012, the lands containing the Skandatut site and a surrounding buffer were transferred from the landowner to the Toronto Region Conservation Authority.

This will ensure that Skandatut, the river valley lands, and the location of the Kleinberg Ossuary on the other side of the river, will all be preserved within an important cultural heritage landscape, eventually accessible through a series of trails. As well, and importantly, this resolution also ensures the landowner can proceed with their development plan elsewhere on their property.

Many, many people worked very hard to ensure this agreement was satisfactory to the landowner, TRCA, Huron-Wendat, and City of Vaughan. Many more people, communities, the province, and the Region of York all worked hard to ensure this important archaeological site, ultimately, could be managed by preservation rather than excavation.

The OAS would like to commend the landowner, TRCA, City of Vaughan, and Huron Wendat for finding a solution that ultimately bridged the many competing pressures placed on this locale. The decision and transfer ensures that this specific, important part of Ontario's archaeological heritage has the chance to remain and be appreciated for generations to come as part of a landscape setting that, through their imagination, people will be able to be transported back to that moment in the past when the future history of Canada and Ontario – the heritage of all and available for all to appreciate – began.

## REFERENCES

- Birch, Jennifer  
2010 *Coalescent Communities in Iroquoian Ontario*.  
Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of  
Anthropology, McMaster University, Hamilton.

# ERNEST DU VERNET, Q.C.

## 1920-2012

by Charles Garrad

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The funeral of long-term OAS member Ernie Du Vernet took place Tuesday March 20, 2012. His lengthy obituary published in the Toronto newspapers Saturday March 17 detailed an incredible number of his interests and achievements, and yet did not mention them all, not even that he may have been the longest standing Ontario Queen's Counsel.

Ernie and his wife Sylvia, who survives him but is in a retirement home, held a Family Membership in the OAS for as long as I can remember, and for as long as they both were well. They were also sometime members of the Toronto Chapter.

It was on the tour bus to Delphi during the 1994 OAS trip to Greece and Turkey that I learned how Ernie became a Trustee of the Royal Ontario Museum, and that he was President of a Condominium Corporation at the Georgian Peaks Ski Club near Collingwood, a property of historical interest not only as the former Wensley's Mineral Spring Resort but because the spring was known to the 17th Century Petun and is shown on a Jesuit map.

Always the impeccable officer and gentleman, Ernie boarded the airplane back to Toronto dressed as casually as the rest of us, but somehow arrived wearing a suit and tie!

Visiting the Du Vernets' townhouse at Georgian Peaks, we found the stairs uniquely decorated with Aboriginal artifacts from various parts of the world, including from the Arctic, where Ernie

slept in an igloo, and boomerangs from the Aborigines of Australia. It was then we learned that during the war Ernie had served in the Royal Canadian Artillery and been posted to Australia as part of a Canadian liaison team. He left the Canadian army with the rank of Major.

This was recalled at the funeral service, which was attended by a military bugler and Honour Guard from the Royal Canadian Regiment, pallbearers from the Ontario Regiment, and pennant carriers from the Royal Canadian Artillery. It was interesting to observe that when the Last Post was sounded within the church, a number of elderly former service men in attendance, myself included, automatically came to attention.

As a member of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, Ernie entertained various OAS members in the Club's dining rooms on the Toronto Island and at the St. George's Street location. We remember crossing to the Island on the Club's ferry with Dr. Howard Savage not long before Howard's final illness. Ernie insisted on attending my retirement gathering at Ryerson University in March 1996 even though swathed in bandages due to a ski accident and broken ribs.

Ella and I were proud to represent the OAS at the funeral service. As was mentioned several times, Ernie will be greatly missed but never forgotten.

Our condolences go to Ernie's wife Sylvia, to their three sons, and the next generation of Du Vernets.

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## RESEARCH REQUEST

I am writing to invite research collaborators so that we can find, collect, describe and interpret passenger pigeon fossils. Fossil bones (usually the stout humerus) and gizzard stones of white or pink quartz occur in archaeological sites (cemeteries and middens) and in peat bogs.

In southern Ontario, passenger pigeons nested in colonies. Soils beneath these colonies should contain abundant gizzard stones, especially small discarded stones. Because the birds were hunted, lead shot should also be preserved in the soil. The project is to locate sites from publications and archives, to collect soil samples (1 litre in size), to sieve so as to concentrate stones and shot and to describe and interpret the results.

This link leads to a fuller description of the research:

<http://labs.eeb.utoronto.ca/mcandrews/PDFs/gizzard%20stones.pdf>

Please direct your reply to my email at: [jock.mcandrews@utoronto.ca](mailto:jock.mcandrews@utoronto.ca)

Thank you for your assistance.

**Dr. John McAndrews**





The Ontario Archaeological Society Inc.

*encouraging the ethical practice of archaeology*

June 02, 2012

To: Prime Minister Stephen Harper  
Government of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

**RE: Significant Cuts to Parks Canada**

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Ontario Archaeological Society, I would like add our voice to the growing number of provincial, national, and international voices decrying your government's decision to critically reduce the function of Parks Canada in this country. Parks Canada's mandate, to celebrate, educate, care for and protect the significant heritage places and remains of Canada, was a daunting and challenging one for a country as large and as diverse as this. But for over a century Parks Canada has not just met but excelled in meeting this mandate. It had become a world leader in this field, and, indeed, was THE world leader in the management of archaeological sites and cultural remains of especially the recent past. Their standards, guides, advice and overall leadership was sought and emulated around the world.

The recent decision of your government to disproportionately cut Parks Canada staff and operations is a regrettable act that will have irreversible impacts on the state of Canada's heritage. We note that archaeological offices were significantly cut, so that, for example, all but one limited duties archaeological position will remain in the Ontario office, down from 7 archaeology staff. And similar deep cuts are occurring across the country. This drastic reduction in capacity means the end of any kind of effective archaeological programming and management, as remaining staff will not have the capacity or in house expertise to properly manage or react to threats to Canada's archaeological heritage on Parks properties. Meanwhile, existing archaeological collections will be pulled from regional centres and warehoused in the National Capitol region. Current rhetoric that Parks Canada's mandates will continue to be served is difficult to accept, given this overall loss in capacity.

Others have pointed out the significant impact this and other cuts will have to the economic contribution Parks Canada makes across the country – which Minister Kent reported on just a few short months ago, ironically at the same time that he announced admission fees to Canada's parks and

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historic sites would be frozen for a number of years. Others have also pointed out what these cuts mean to the loss of educating and instilling in Canadians and people from abroad an appreciation of the rich, diverse and complex heritage that is this place – ironic that as the Federal government moves to celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812, many of the historic sites commemorating that important part of our past will be closed more often and less able to interpret that regional heritage to the visiting public and local residents.

We would also add that the logic and vision for how Parks heritage and archaeological programs will operate and look like in the aftermath of this decision remains largely unknown. Is there any real commitment to continue to care for the archaeological heritage on Federal parks land? If there is, how will, for example, Parks Canada be able to respond to development pressures that can impact archaeological deposits within parks and sites, when there are no staff to mount either exploratory assessments or salvage excavations? How will Parks Canada respond to the inevitability, then, of accidental impacts when there is simply no way now for archaeological staff to respond? And what will become of continuing materials recovered from Parks Canada archaeological sites (either through impact or investigation) – will they be identified and analyzed at the site, or need to be immediately shipped to the warehouse to be incorporated with existing collections? And what kind of accessibility will there be at the warehouse, or capacity to service remote and regional needs to access that heritage?

These questions underscore the absence of a vision, at least one that has been shared beyond the doors of upper management at Parks Canada. Can we get a commitment from your government that it still commits to ensuring good management and preservation of its archaeological heritage? And will archaeological, heritage, community and First Nation groups be consulted on how Parks Canada will continue to meet its core mandates, and what the operational policies and commitments will be for the centralized materials warehouse? A broader, community oversight will be the only way any degree of confidence can be re-instilled into Parks Canada meeting core mandates at this point.

A last important dimension of these cuts that we wish to remind you is that much of Canada's archaeological heritage is the material past of the First Nations of this land. This is a living heritage, and these communities have demonstrated a strong concern and desire to see that heritage is managed respectfully and carefully. This is underscored by the fact that major First Nations issues that arose in Ontario, for example, including Ipperwash and Caledonia, included strong concerns for burials and archaeological remains. Indeed, Canada has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure Aboriginal heritage is managed properly on behalf of our First Nations, something that seems will be difficult to achieve given recent drastic cuts. We hope your government has at least been speaking to Canada's First Nations on how you will continue to ensure respectful care of their heritage on Federal lands. We would point out that this obligation of the Crown to the Aboriginal archaeological heritage of this land has been well respected in most provinces. Indeed, in Ontario, successive provincial governments – including the Mike Harris Conservative government – have ensured for and even expanded on the good management of Ontario's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal archaeological heritage. We expect your government to sustain no less a similar level of good management for this vital record of our collective past.

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We join with the Canadian Archaeological Association, Association des Archéologues du Québec, the Nova Scotia Archaeological Society, Laval University, the Society for American Archaeology, and the Society for Historical Archaeology, along with the many other voices who have called on or will be calling on the Federal government to rescind these disproportionate cuts which otherwise will contribute to an immeasurable loss to Canada's heritage and our ability to learn from that heritage.

Sincerely,



Neal Ferris, President  
The Ontario Archaeological Society

cc. Hon. Peter Kent, Minister of the Environment  
Hon. James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage  
Hon. John Duncan, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

Mr. Alan Latourelle, Chief Executive Officer, Parks Canada

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