



Ontario Archaeological Society

# Arch Notes

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# Ontario Archaeological Society

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*Dena Doroszenko, Marti Latta, Andrew Murray*

### **... editor's note**

*As you pick up this issue - notice the ease with which the entire volume is lifted, the light weight resting on your lap ... Arch Notes Needs You! Please contribute your articles, letters, random thoughts, news flashes, symposium papers, etc!*

*In this issue, many thanks to Madelyn Della Valle, Assistant Curator of Windsor's Community Museum for her informative discussion on artifact collections.*

*Congratulations to our new and returning Board Members.*

## President's notes

Happy New Year and welcome to 2004!

This year will prove to have many changes and challenges for the Society. First, I would like to inform you that due to budgetary restraints, and the conclusion of the McGaw Site Trillium funding, the Executive Director's position has returned to part-time status. Please be aware of this change when you call/write to Jo. The Board has indicated in our Strategic Plan, 2003-5, that the first priority of the OAS for 2004 will be membership.

As you know, the Town of Richmond Hill has told us that we have to vacate our current office as of March 31, 2004. The Board of Directors has been actively seeking new space. We have looked at several properties. We would like to rent space in a heritage property, if possible, to encourage adaptive reuse of older buildings. We have determined that, with the strategic planning emphasis moving away from large-scale programming, we would need about 400 square feet to work in. Larger flexible space for special events could be acquired on an as needed basis. We also determined that a move back into the Toronto area, where the bulk of our membership lives, would be appropriate as we try to reestablish and grow our membership base. We are close to a decision and you will be informed in the next issue of *Arch Notes* where our new space will be.

I am happy to report that the 2004 OAS Board of Directors election is now concluded. We had a record 46% of eligible voters cast a ballot in this election. That is about twice as many as last year and waaaaay better than the last provincial government election turnout! Thanks to all of you who voted this year. I would like to thank Cathy Crinnion, Chair of the Election Committee for stick-handling the election process. My thanks to Kristi Bates for running for election and showing her support for the OAS.

The following members, in alphabetical order, were elected to the 2004 OAS Board of Directors: Terri-Lynn Brennan, Christine Caroppo, Dena Doroszenko, Mima Kapches, Holly Martelle, Tony Stapells, Henry van Lieshout

My peers on the Board elected me, once again, as President for 2004. Henry will be serving as Treasurer. The remaining portfolios are: Terri - Lynn - Outreach, Dena - Publications, Mima - Chapter Services, Holly - Membership, Tony - Advocacy.

The OAS Chapters were busy with elections over the Christmas/New Year period, too. The newly elected Chapter Executives can be seen on the back of Arch Notes. Congratulations to all of the new Chapter Executive members!

You may have heard that the federal government's privacy legislation (Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act) came into general effect on January 1 this year. <[www.privcom.gc.ca/information/guide\\_e.asp](http://www.privcom.gc.ca/information/guide_e.asp)>

This legislation encompasses small, non-profits groups like us as well as big corporations. Under this legislation we are obliged to adopt an Information Privacy Policy outlining what kind of information we collect, how we collect it, what we use it for, with whom we share it (if any one), where we keep it and for how long, etc. Certain information, such as your name and telephone number (assuming that it is not unlisted) are considered to be in the public domain, as I understand it. Other information, such as your e-mail address, is not. Rest assured that the OAS has always been careful about your personal information. The only difference is that now we have to be explicit about how we go about dealing with that information. We have been working through the requirements of the Act and the Board has drafted an Information Privacy Policy which was tabled at our meeting on January 17, 2004. The final text is not yet ready and therefore the Policy has not been approved. The approved text will be published in the next issue of *Arch Notes* and on our web site as soon as it is finalized. Certain correspondence will have to be modified to reflect the Act, such as our Membership/Membership Renewal forms.

Take care,  
*Christine Caroppo, President*

## From the OAS office

Happy New Year to all and a special welcome to the new Board Members, Holly Martelle and Terri-Lynn Brennan! Congratulations to returning Board Members, Christine Caroppo, Mima Kapches, Dena Doroszenko, Tony Stapells, and Henry van Lieshout.

Although new members are sitting around the table, at this time of year we say good bye to those who served the previous year. Goodbye to Rob Pihl and David Smith. Thank you for all your work and interest in Society affairs, good luck on your various pursuits.

Over the past semester, the OAS has enjoyed the company and talents of coop student, Megan Tay, from Bradford District High School. Meg had a wide ranging experience from field work with Rob Pihl, to quieter pursuits within the OAS suite. Meg's term with the Society finished on the 22nd of January; I would like to thank Mrs. Roberta Allen for working with us and providing such an exceptional young lady.

Please mark your calendars for Sunday, February 15, 2004. The Society is hosting an Open House from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at 11099 Bathurst Street, Richmond Hill, Ontario.

Many of our members know Sue Anderson. Sue is an Elder of the Chippewa, Mnjikaning Nation, and a member of the Barrie Historical Society. Lieutenant Governor, James K. Bartleman presented her with an Eagle Feather, for the volunteer time she has given to students within the Province, particularly in the Orillia area. Congratulations Sue!

As many of you are aware the office is moving. If you have some time available during the week, especially in early March, I would greatly appreciate extra hands as I pack up the office. Please phone the office, at (905) 787-9851 and we can work out a day or afternoon that would be convenient for you to come up and help; there's always coffee on and I'm sure I can have your favorite cookies at hand!

Jo Holden, Executive Director

# ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY HERITAGE DAY OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, Feb. 15, 2004  
11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Visit with the OAS 2004 Board of Directors  
And view artifacts from the McGaw Project

Join us for tea, coffee, hot chocolate and cookies.

The OAS office is located at 11099 Bathurst Street  
Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4C 0N2  
(905) 787 - 9851

## To our Volunteers

There is no greater gift than the gift of yourself! For all the time and expertise you have given the Society, THANK YOU so much for all your help. You are appreciated more than you will ever know.

*Respectfully,*

*Jo Holden, Executive Director and the 2003 Board of Directors*

The following poster abstract was omitted from the program for the 2003 OAS Symposium:

*Crawford Lake Iroquoian villages are 14th and 15th centuries: new dates and fossils*

C.L. Turton, Department of Botany, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3B2,

J.L. Teranes, Scripps Institute of Oceanography, La Jolla CA 90293-0224,

Tom Guilderson, Center for Accelerator Mass Spectrometry, Lawrence Livermore National Labs. P.O.  
Box 808, Livermore, CA 94551-0808, and

J.H. McAndrews Department of Botany, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3B2

Fossil-laden varved (annual layered) sediments of Crawford Lake, Ontario, date two episodes of local Iroquoian prehistoric village settlement. To improve the chronology, we made 29 AMS carbon-14 dates on a new 75-cm long core. When calibrated, these dates show that the published varve chronology is about 100 years too brief; we identified five layers of massive sediment, which account for the missing varves. Pollen of corn, squash, sunflower, purslane and grass and spores of corn smut, a new fossil, signal Iroquoian farming. In addition, we found two quids of sunflower seeds. Pollen-climate transfer functions show that the farming flourished during the Medieval Warm Period and ended with the Little Ice Age. Fossil corn pollen spans 1266 to 1460 with peaks around 1330 and 1460, indicating two local villages. Blooms of planktonic rotifers (new fossils) indicate eutrophication from human-supplied nutrients. Varving also begins with Iroquoian occupation.

# *The Archaeology of Culinary History*



*Saturday 21 February 2004  
Montgomery's Inn  
4709 Dundas Street West (at Islington), Toronto*

This day long symposium, co-sponsored by the Culinary Historians of Ontario and Montgomery's Inn (Culture Division, City of Toronto), will bring together historical archaeologists and culinary historians to discuss how material culture research can inform culinary history.

Pre-registration is required as a limited number of spaces are available.

Members of CHO or  
Friends of Etobicoke's Heritage: \$20  
Non-members \$30.

Please register with Rita Wagner  
at Montgomery's Inn  
tel: (416) 394-8113  
email: [rwagner@toronto.ca](mailto:rwagner@toronto.ca)







## *The Archaeology of Culinary History*

### **MORNING SESSION: MATERIAL CULTURE FROM THE GROUND UP**

- 10:00 AM Opening Remarks, Mike Lipowski (Curator Montgomery's Inn)  
and Eva MacDonald (CHO Programme Chair)
- 10:10 – 10:40 AM Archaeological Evidence of Food Plants in Ontario Prehistory  
Rudy Fecteau, Paleoethnobotanist
- 10:45 – 11:15 AM Archaeological Evidence for French Cooking in 17th-century Nova  
Scotia  
Heather Henderson, Historic Horizon Inc.
- 11:20 – 11:50 AM Privy to Family Consumption: Archaeology at Inge-Va, Perth, Ontario  
Dena Doroszenko, Archaeologist, Ontario Heritage Foundation
- 12:00 – 1:30 PM LUNCH. Included in the registration fee is a 19th-century mid-day  
meal catered by the Inn's Volunteer Historic Cooking Group.

### **AFTERNOON SESSION: MATERIAL CULTURE IN ACTION**

- 1:30 – 2:00 PM Before Chop Suey: Chinese Immigrant Foodways in  
1930s Montgomery's Inn  
Philip Cheong, Programme Officer, Spadina Museum, City of Toronto Culture Division
- 2:05 – 2:35 PM From Pumps and Dishpans to Taps and Sinks  
Fiona Lucas, Programme Officer, Spadina Museum, City of Toronto Culture Division.
- 2:40 – 3:10 PM The Cookstove and the Transformation of the Kitchen in  
Pre-Confederation Ontario  
Eva MacDonald, Archaeological Services Inc.
- 3:15 – 4:30 PM TAVERN. Bill Nesbitt, Curator of Dundurn Castle, Hamilton.  
The day will conclude with a tutored session on nineteenth-century  
beverage appreciation in the restored

# Sherds on the Shelf & Arrowheads in the Attic

## Issues with Archaeological Collections in Smaller Museums in Ontario

*Madelyn Della Valle,  
Assistant Curator, Windsor's Community Museum*

*I ascended the rickety ladder and carefully balancing on the very top rung, I poked my head through the recently-uncovered trap door in the ceiling... I was on a quest – a quest to find at least one more little corner into which to squeeze a few artefacts, archaeological artefacts to be specific – enough room to house 40 or 50 bankers boxes would be ideal...*

THIS quest to find more storage space is one of the pressing issues facing museums dealing with archaeological collections. I hope to explore this and a number of other issues that museums in Ontario face when curating the archaeological collections in their care.

My interest in the subject of this paper was peaked when archaeologist Heather Henderson approached me regarding a presentation she was doing on Issues surrounding Archaeological Collections for a Collections Management Workshop at the Annual Symposium of the Council for Northeastern Historical Archaeology in October 2001. She had me fill out a questionnaire collecting information on how repositories are dealing with the archaeological components of their collection. In subsequent conversations with her I began to think more about the use we made of the archaeological collections in our care and also the different ways museums and archaeologists catalogue collections.

In order to make good use of the collections they house, museums do need certain information regarding the collection, which is not

always apparent (or, as Heather pointed out to me, might be cost prohibitive) to the archaeologist depositing the collection. Also, museums are sometimes unaware of the needs of the archaeologist with regards to the collection, or even the language used to describe the collection. Hopefully this paper will give archaeologists some idea of what museums need in order to maximize the public use of the archaeological collections.

As I conducted some background research to this paper, one thing became very clear early on: There isn't a lot of readily available information on the scope of the problems and opportunities for museums dealing with archaeological questions. Most of the work being done on this subject seems to be taking place in the United Kingdom if I can generalize what usually popped up on the screen anytime I typed in "museum" "archaeological collection" and "storage" as key words. Of particular interest is the report "Archaeological Archives: Documentation, Access and Deposition, A Way Forward" prepared by Kathy Perrin in 2002 for English Heritage. To go into this document in any



depth would require a whole other paper. I just mention it because I think it's an excellent summary of many of the common issues facing what they call the archaeological archive here "used to describe all parts of the archaeological record, including the finds and digital records as well as the written, drawn and photographic documentation." (p.3).

At the more local level, the first question I considered was "How Many Museums in Ontario House Archaeological Collections?" In order to get a rough idea I went to the Virtual Museum of Canada website ([www.virtualmuseum.ca](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca)) and did a search of museums in Ontario listing archaeological collections. Of the 641 museums listed in the database for Ontario, 117 indicated that they housed archaeological collections. While not a 100% accurate figure, it does give a good idea of the large numbers of museums that have responsibility over this type of collection.

In order to get feedback from other museums in Ontario I decided to send out a quick questionnaire requesting their feedback as to various issues in curating archaeological questions. The questionnaire was sent out via the Ontario Museum Association-list serve ([on-muse-l@chin.gc.ca](mailto:on-muse-l@chin.gc.ca)) and (several pleading) follow phone calls were made to increase the number of questionnaires filled out. Ultimately I received 25 completed questionnaires.

What I would like to do now is to go over some of the issues that came up in the questionnaire, and provide answers using Windsor's Community Museum as an example, and also a summary of the results from the other responding sites.

### Description of the collections

Windsor's Community Museum houses a significant amount of archaeological material. My rough calculations indicate 31 sites from

the Essex/Kent area excavated in the late 60s and early 70s, 3 sites excavated in the 90s and 1 more site promised to us. In addition we have a scattering of artefacts taken (I hesitate to use the word "excavated") from various sites in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

My survey responses indicated a great deal of variety in the size of the collection, ranging from none ("We borrow what we need") to a collection of over 2 million artefacts housed at the London Museum of Archaeology. Many places indicated that they had a few boxes and some indicated more substantial collections.

The source of these collections mirror the situation at Windsor's Community Museum – the older collections are largely assorted artefacts collected in a haphazard way; the newer collections were deposited by agreement with an archaeologist doing work in the area. Some museums indicated long-term loans.

Additionally...

- ~ One place has had material from the National Museum in Ottawa (now the Canadian Museum of Civilization) since 1967.
- ~ Another indicated that they hope the field archaeologist who loaned the material will eventually donate it to the museum.
- ~ Some museums indicated that although they have never acted as a repository for local archaeologists, they would be willing to consider material relevant to their area.
- ~ One mentioned that a factor in their decision to accept or reject a collection would be what might happen to the collection if the museum were to refuse it.
- ~ One museum cc:d me on a letter they sent to the ministry regarding the very frustrating case of underwater archaeological artefacts which they can't by law collect, but which are being looted on a daily basis.

## Storage issues

Storage (or more precisely the lack thereof) is definitely an issue for Windsor's Community Museum. The museum is located in the François Baby House, a structure built in 1812 and substantially changed throughout the years. The 2050 square-foot storage vault was added in the late 1960s and is climate-controlled. It's a good space, but it is full. Things are to the point that when we consider new acquisitions, the first question we ask is "How big is it?".

In the past we have acted as a local repository for certain archaeological collections resulting from city-funded digs. We've promised to shoehorn in the 50 boxes of material from the General Brock archaeological site. The search for room to house this material is what led me to explore the attic of the museum, as I described in the introduction. Unfortunately, although there is some space up there, the access would be difficult and the lack of a floor in that space does pose a small problem..! Ultimately the registrar and I discovered an unused piece of wall in the storage area which will soon sprout new metal shelving in anticipation of this collection. However, after this one is wedged in, that's IT! No more room on site.

This realization has led us to search for off-site storage with less than satisfactory results thus far. Storage lockers tend to be unheated, non-climate controlled spaces which often sport sprinkler systems for fire control. They're also expensive. The cheapest one we've researched involves crating up your material which is then warehoused (and access becomes very difficult). However, this does lead to the question: Does all archaeological material require climate-controlled storage? What about our boxes of fire-cracked rock? The large quantities of butchered bone? Aside from the issue of the necessity of climate-controlled storage, is it really necessary to keep all this material? I know according to current legislation that

culling from archaeological collections is a no-no; but perhaps this could be considered in the future?

Of the museums that actively collect archaeological items, 11 indicated that storage space was an issue, while 6 indicated that they still had a decent amount of space and would be willing to accept more collections.

Other comments include:

- ~ "We are not looking to accept any other collections. We may consider collections that do not duplicate what we have..."
- ~ "Very limited storage. Would accept relevant collections and make space"
- ~ "We could accept more, but lack of climate control in our building has been an issue for years now. Heat, cold and humidity are more of an issue than actual space"
- ~ "Space is always an issue, no matter what the artefact is!"

## Repositories

In January 2003 the Ontario Archaeological Society issued a "Policy Statement on Archaeological Collections Ownership and Curation" made a number of recommendations, including the establishing and funding of 2 provincial repositories (one in the north and one in the south). While it is clear that something needs to be done regarding the current untenable situation, I thought it would be interesting to ask museums "Is it important that archaeological collections from local sites remain in the local vicinity – or – for example, would it be preferable to be able to send them to a central repository, if one were available?" Many stressed the importance of having access to archaeological collections locally.

Here is a sampling of the responses:

- ~ "Yes [archaeological collections from local sites should remain in the local

vicinity]. People's interest is primarily piqued by the fascinating things that occurred in their own community or area"

- ~ "To some extent, I believe it important that local collections remain local – if appropriate facilities exist, and some use can be made of them i.e. display, study. Similarly, if they were sent to a central repository, I would expect that they would be studied. Such a facility may be so large, and encompass such a large geographic area, that the collection would wallow in storage for decades, which would be inappropriate."
- ~ "Yes, definitely artefacts should/must stay within the region from which they were found. Provincial government need to formally establish and fund regional repositories so the thousands of artefacts unearthed each year by licenced archaeologists can stay within the proper region."
- ~ "I think it is best if they stay local or at least some of them did. If they were out of [our area], I doubt I would ever use any of it. The time consumed travelling to the site, finding suitable artefacts, bringing them back, etc. would probably discourage a lot of use. Now we can go into storage and easily find items and return them. Perhaps if a selection of quality artefacts were left at the sites, then they could be utilized for displays and programs but the other items, that are duplicate or faunal, could be in the repository".
- ~ "I feel it is important for them to remain in the local vicinity as long as they are cared for and displayed appropriately. Would the collections be displayed more often if they were located at a central repository? How accessible would these collections be to museums to use in displays and for educational purposes? Having these collections at the museum allows us to educate the local students

about early history."

- ~ "Yes, [they should remain in the local vicinity]. Collections tend to get "lost" in large institutions, where as if a local repository were available it can be used locally".
- ~ "Yes [ they should remain local]. And one of these days, the Ministry may just deal with this issue and designate local museums as official depositories for the archaeological work being done in their regions".
- ~ "For us, we would be the logical site of a central repository of a region currently experiencing a great deal of development and therefore a great deal of salvage archaeology."
- ~ "Local history is highly important and local collection should be a priority. Duplicates or similar artefacts should be shared with a central repository such as the ROM."
- ~ "Desirable to keep local, in the area of greatest significance, IF there is a professional repository available and enough staff/time/budget/storage available to house"...This individual goes on to say that "recent approaches to house archaeological collections on behalf of the Province whereby they expect local museums to assume all costs of housing this material while they continue to own is a totally unrealistic expectation of the part of the Province. We must all collectively band together to either a) get substantial funds to house the material, and b) receive rights of ownership and decision-making over these collections."
- ~ "We feel that it is important to have collections like these available locally to visitors, students and researchers".

Some of the museums were in favour of a central repository, or several more centralized repositories:

- ~ "Central repository ok provided there is good access".

- ~ "A central repository would be a good idea as long as it is organized into region"
- ~ "I feel that a central repository would be a far more satisfactory system. Small rural museums are not the place to "bury" archaeological material."
- ~ "Central repositories should be somewhat localized (i.e. Windsor would not be a good place for material [from the other side of the province])"
- ~ "Definitely!!! I feel that areas rich in certain finds should each have a central depository. But don't make them stagnant – link them with actual sites and ongoing field schools. Let's build on the interest of students in this field".
- ~ "Provincial government need to formally establish and fund regional repositories, so the thousands of artefacts unearthed each year by licenced archaeologists can stay within the proper region"

Therefore, there is a range of opinions on the whole issue of repositories which needs to be explored in further detail. My personal opinion is that the concern of most smaller museums is that they have easy access to the material that would be in a repository – i.e. that it would be fairly close geographically, and also that material could be easily borrowed. The current system with archaeologists housing material in their basements has its own set of problems – the major ones being that a) archaeologists do not have unlimited basement storage, and b) the artefacts are supposed to be housed in perpetuity – a definite mismatch with the average lifespan of an archaeologist. Lack of access (when the collection is held in someone's home) can definitely be a problem as staff at Windsor's Community Museum found out a couple of years ago when we attempted to borrow some artefacts for a display from an archaeologist who had excavated an amazing site in the Windsor area. The archaeologist would not lend us the material.

For most smaller museums, just having a small selection of artefacts from any one dig would probably be more than enough. Some of the medium-sized institutions have indicated interest in being the repository for the area (as long as the appropriate funding comes with the responsibility).

### Uses of the Collection

The archaeological collection at Windsor's Community Museum is used in a number of different ways – for research, for programming and for exhibition

Windsor's Community Museum offers an education program entitles "Be a Museum Detective" which includes a slide show of a dig done at the Duff-Baby House, a discussion on archaeology, and some hands-on time in a sandbox dig, and also the opportunity to try putting clay pots back together. Real artefacts which have no provenience are used in the mock dig. The pots are specially-purchased at Home Depot and broken in house (there is quite an art to breaking a clay pot into just enough pieces to be challenging for the students). After several years of use this repair-a-pot activity bears a striking resemblance to the real thing, due to missing pieces, frayed edges – I guess it all adds to the authenticity of the activity!) The program ends with a "guess-what-the-artefact-is-game" using real pieces of a recent dig which a local archaeologist was kind enough to identify for us.

We have incorporated archaeological materials into our permanent exhibition and, a couple of years ago developed an exhibition on the Western Basin tradition people, which used a combination of our own artefacts and several borrowed from the University of Toronto at Mississauga.

This particular loan leads me to the research use I mentioned earlier. It's actually kind of a funny story because it does illustrate that



you never know what might be interesting to archaeologists in the future. While we were negotiating the loan of the pottery for the exhibit on the Western Basin Tradition people, we mentioned that we housed other archaeological collections and it turned out that one of our collections – the Van Hooste site - which had been excavated in the early 70s was of some interest to the archaeologist and a grad student of his. When we went to pull the collection for the outgoing loan we realized that \_ of the boxes were labelled "sordid rock", obviously someone's attempt at humour given that the contents of those boxes were largely fire-cracked rock. The archaeologist was quite interested in this "sordid rock" and had some scientific analysis that he wished to do on it. He freely admitted that he rarely kept this type of material from his own digs, but he was really glad we had been storing these boxes of sordid rock for 30 odd years. Technically the loan expired a year ago, but we're in no hurry to recover the delinquent "sordid rock".

Most of the other museums surveyed made active use of their collections as well. Of all the museums claiming an archaeological collection, only one said it did not use the collection in some way, shape or form. Museums are anxious to use the collections, either to illustrate the history of a particular area or to promote public education on archaeological issues. Some sites want to make more use of their collections, but can't because of lack of documentation.

The question on the survey asked: "Do you use your archaeological collections in research, interpretation or programming at your museum? If yes, describe how..." Here is a sampling of the answers:

- ~ "We do not research the collection; To tell the story of the dig we also have local archaeologists who give lectures of the site; Occasionally flint knapping demo's, student tours, etc."

- ~ "Yes, we conduct two educational programs using these items. We actually let the students handle the items in a controlled atmosphere respecting religious and conservation practices. (We do not allow the students to handle pipe fragments on request of local Native circle)"
- ~ "Research (including graduate student theses); Interpretation/exhibits/displays; Education programs"
- ~ "Yes-has been used by professional archaeologists for papers and presentations..."
- ~ "Part of exhibits, if we knew more about it we would use it in programming too."
- ~ "Artefacts used in exhibits to interpret Native land case. Pottery in exhibits – early industries."

#### Documentation/Conservation Issues

The use of an archaeological collection is either enhanced or inhibited by the quality of the documentation that accompanies the collection and the condition of the collection. This is a very important issue for at least some of the museums surveyed.

By and large, most of the recent archaeological material received recently is decently housed in safe packing material. The conservation problems arise largely in the older collections which are often rattling around in old cigar boxes (guilty as charged!). Windsor's Community Museum's archaeological collections excavated in the 1970s are still largely wrapped in newspaper (or even toilet paper – I kid you not – I did discover this on a foray into one of the boxes one day!) A couple of summers ago we managed to hire a student for the summer to go through and identify the significant material and rehouse it properly and catalogue it to museum standards. However, much works

needs to be done to bring the rest of the collections up to conservation standards.

Documentation issues with regards to archaeological collections continue to plague many museums. Most of the museums surveyed complained mostly about the quality of the documentation of their older collections:

- ~ "Early accessions are very poorly documented..."
- ~ "Not recent donations – documentation was poor"
- ~ "There is essentially no documentation, and much is uncatalogued"

Of the more recent donations, a number of museums were satisfied with the documentation that accompanied the collection when it was deposited; however, a number of others noted that there is quite a difference between the archaeological system of accessioning and the way museums generally catalogue items. In answer to the question "Are the archaeological collections at your museum well documented and catalogued? Is this documentation easy to understand?" One site responded, "Yes. But only by the primary researcher... there is a deep philosophical difference in the archaeological cataloguing method and those used by the museum."

So what documentation would make life easier for museums? Let me use Windsor's Community Museum as an example.

1. A good first step is to make sure that accompanying the archaeological collection are copies of all the site reports (including related studies such as faunal reports), archaeological licences, publications, photographs, maps and complete artefact inventories. I am still trying to chase down copies of an inventory and a site report for one of the collections deposited here in the early 1990s.
2. When museums look at an archaeological

collection for purposes of display or public/education programming, we are looking for a) the overall history of the site, b) interpretation of the dig, and c) details on the artefacts such as specific identification, age, cultural affiliation, material. It is this latter detail which often gives museums trouble when they puzzle over inventories and site reports attempting to select, for example, a range of artefacts illustrating the history of a people or industry. Obviously to individually catalogue artefacts to this extent for a whole collection would be hideously expensive. In our case we were lucky enough to have a local archaeologist assist us with selection and identification of artefacts for a small display on the archaeological site. These same artefacts are now being used in an education program – A little interpretation can go a long way! It would be helpful to separate out some of the more significant artefacts from the dig and provide more information on those artefacts. This would be very useful to museums.

Especially since we have started cataloguing archaeological collections as part of our collection (with the understanding, of course, that our own policies on deaccessioning do not apply to these collections). We generally give the entire site a museum catalogue number and then we subdivide from there on. We do not have the time or staff to catalogue each and every item in the collection. This is probably unnecessary. We do like to catalogue the more important pieces in the collection (i.e. those we are likely to use for display or education programming). There are a couple of good reasons for this. One is that since we include location information in our cataloguing, it is easier to locate and replace the artefact in the appropriate location, and secondly, since our catalogue system is computerized, it makes the archaeological artefact much more accessible to staff



when we are doing research on a potential exhibition or education program, or to the public who are looking for information.

3. Another problem I have run into is that I often cannot locate a specific artefact after I read about it in the site report. One example is that while we were developing the permanent exhibition on the history of Windsor, our exhibit designers read the site report of one of the digs done recently and noticed that the faunal report mentioned passenger pigeon bones. This would have been an interesting item to display; however, after searching through the faunal material, I was unable to actually locate the passenger pigeon bones.
4. One other resource that would be tremendously helpful would be a book or report on how to catalogue archaeological collections in a museum. Perhaps having a standard reference would help to ensure a consistency in the way the information is recorded in the museum environment.

Comments by other museums:

- ~ "Both collections have a lot of documentation and are catalogued. It is not that easy to use and has a number of lists...There is some useful information that can be used to create labels but more basic information would be helpful, i.e. a summary of the findings and what they prove, disprove, etc...Research on why this stuff is important and what tangible information it provides. How does a bunch of broken pottery translate into important information on [the area] and its development."
- ~ "Most of the information regarding the site is provided in the site report. Without this report most of the artefacts would not have much meaning. The site report is a very useful tool for researchers."

- ~ "The site material has site reports, but is often merely descriptive and even analysis of historical material suffered because archaeologist is not familiar with area...Documentation and cataloguing of archaeological collection is frankly a low priority while the rest of the collection still needs to be inventoried and the mistakes of 35 years of poor collections management need to be rectified"
- ~ "We hope that the field archaeologist will give us copies of his field notes or the catalogue recording the numbers and description of every artefact. To tell the story of the excavation, we'd like to know the names of the students who helped him/her, how long were the digs, did they live in tents, what were they paid, did any of them make archaeology their career, etc."
- ~ "It would be great to have more Masters' theses [on collections]"
- ~ "The items from ASI are very well documented and catalogued"

## Training

The survey revealed that there are a few archaeologists camouflaged in museum positions, although in one case the respondent writes, "I am a contract administrative assistant and curatorial matters are outside my usual functions..." Other respondents indicated some training at least, but many said they had no background at all in archaeology. Many indicated a desire for more information and a few mentioned participating in the joint OAS/OMA workshop "Unearthed: Working with Archaeological Material in Study Collections and Museum".

I believe it is crucial to have more training available for museum personnel in how archaeologists operate, what sort of cataloguing system they use, how sites are numbered, etc. This would help museum staff in interpreting the resulting site reports. Also helpful would be more information on the

current legislation and proposed changes. At the workshop in January, one of the most popular sessions was the one on Ethics and Legal Issues presented by Neil Ferris, Regional Archaeologist with the Ministry of Culture. There were many questions about how to deal with public who show up with archaeological material, or metal-detector enthusiasts, or about the responsibilities museums have regarding the archaeological material in their collection. Judging by the level of interest in this session I would predict any future educational opportunities related to this would be welcomed.

### Conclusion

In conclusion I hope I have given you some idea of the issues that museums in Ontario face when curating the archaeological collections in their care. I think it's vital that avenues of communication between the museological and archaeological communities remain open and that information exchanges occur on a frequent basis so that together we can ensure that Ontario's archaeological heritage is maintained for the future.

### Acknowledgements

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## JOURNEY TO THE COUNTRY OF THE HURONS

JOINT ESAF - OAS MEETINGS  
NOVEMBER 4, 5, 6 and 7, 2004  
HIGHLAND INN AND CONFERENCE CENTRE  
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**The Ontario Archaeological Society (31st Symposium)  
and the Eastern States Archaeological Federation (71st Annual meeting)  
are please to announce joint meetings to be held in Midland, Ontario, in November of 2004.**

The conference will focus on the Iroquoian and French archaeology of the Penetang Peninsula, with guided tours of significant archaeological sites on the Thursday led by Dr. Dean Knight (The Ball and Bauman Sites) and Jamie Hunter (Huronian). On Friday morning an historic French workshop at Ste. Marie Among the Hurons is planned. Friday afternoon will accommodate contributed papers as well a workshop on historic farmsteads in Ontario is planned. On Saturday there will be a full day of papers as a Celebration for Dr. Marti Latta and on Sunday a bus tour of Petun sites with Charles Garrad.

"Journey to the Country of the Hurons" will be an opportunity to see the homeland of the Huron and Petun Iroquoians in a manner never experienced before.

The banquet speaker is the well-known archaeological crime fiction novelist Lyn Hamilton. "Lyn Hamilton is the author of a successful series of archaeological mysteries published by Berkley Prime Crime in New York. The series, the first of which, *The Xibalba Murders*, was nominated for the prestigious Arthur Ellis Awards for best first crime novel in Canada, features the peripatetic sleuth, antiques dealer Lara McClintoch. Lara travels the world in search of the rare and beautiful for her store, finding more than a little murder and mayhem along the way. Each of the novels is set in a different, and exotic, location, and draws on the ancient past in a unique way." Hamilton's novel "The Celtic Riddle" was made into a TV Movie for *Murder She Wrote* starring Angela Lansbury. Read about Lyn at [www.lynhamilton.com](http://www.lynhamilton.com).

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Midland is a small city located about 1.5 hours drive north of the City of Toronto, on beautiful Georgian Bay. For those flying into Toronto cars can be rented at Pearson International Airport or a private shuttle bus can be taken from the airport to Midland.



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