## ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE BRANT RIVER,

## **POLAR BEAR PARK, ONTARIO, 1972**

#### A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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#### INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1971 Fred Cowell, Park Interpretation Specialist for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Mrs. Cowell, conducted wildlife studies in Polar Bear Park, Ontario (Map 1). Their base camp, near the confluence of the Brant River and one of its unnamed tributaries, was located some 12 miles south of Hudson Bay and 25 miles west of Cape Henrietta Maria and the west coast of James Bay (Map 2). At this location, the course of the Brant River changes from an easterly to a northerly direction. In the course of their work, they discovered two archaeological sites and collected a number of bones and artifacts. They thought that at least one of the sites might be prehistoric and because no other prehistoric sites had been reported from the Hudson Bay Lowlands, they considered this possibility important enough to warrant attention by an archaeologist. The bones and artifacts were sent to Mr. Donald MacLeod, Archaeologist in the Parks Branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources, who referred them to Irving for identification with an invitation to examine the sites. Our report describes these sites and our investigations. We have evidence that one of the sites was indeed occupied in prehistoric times.

In the first week in September, 1972, Irving and Tomenchuk were accompanied by Cowell to the sites, with transportation, supplies and equipment provided by the ministry. A fly camp was established at the site of Cowell's 1971 base camp. In three days, two sites were mapped and archaeologically tested, concentrating on those areas of the sites most threatened by erosion. Our field objective was to verify Cowell's and our impression that one or both of the sites were occupied in prehistoric times. We did this at Brant River Site No. 2 (BRS-2) and recovered materials that otherwise would have been lost during the 1973 spring floods. We then made a reconnaissance by boat some seven miles up the Brant River and found two recent Indian encampments. Unfortunately, no other prehistoric sites were located.<sup>1</sup>

In the analysis and interpretation of the data,<sup>2</sup> our principal aims are to: (1) demonstrate the likelihood of prehistoric (pre-1670) occupation at BRS-2, (2) to establish possible cultural affinities on the basis of the archaeological data, and (3) assess the nature of seasonal exploitation patterns, followed by historic and prehistoric Brant River site inhabitants, in the light of our evidence and the ethnographic literature. A paper, presented at the Canadian Archaeological Association Meeting in Vancouver this year, outlined briefly the results of our analysis. This report presents a more complete description and interpretation of the material recovered, and outlines the potential for further work in the area. Although our data are meagre, we think they are of interest because they are the first systematically described evidence for occupation of the Hudson Bay Lowlands in prehistoric times.

## **SETTING**

The Brant River sites are in the treeless coastal zone of the Hudson Bay Lowlands which is characterized by arctic-alpine floral forms (Savile, 1968:400-404). These include grasses, sedges,

heaths and, in sheltered areas, willows. Occasional black spruce and tamaracks grow in boggy areas. Wind damage and snow abrasion (cf. Savile, 1968:408) are evident on these solitary trees which are seen dotting the western and southern horizons. Some six or seven miles west of the sites, patches of white spruce indicate the transition into the open boreal forest. The Brant River area falls within the zone of discontinuous permafrost. Fortunately, no frozen ground was encountered in the deepest excavations (30") at either of the two sites. Nevertheless, the soil was wet nearly everywhere in September, 1972 and in 1971, Cowell found all but the highest campsites soggy.

The topographic relief in the area is provided by former beach ridges, possible sand dunes, modified remnants of glacial features and stream cuts. For the most part, however, the coastal zone is monotonously flat, lake-covered and along the coast, skirted by shallow waters: total relief within a 5-mile radius probably does not exceed 30 feet. During low tide, mud flats may be exposed from one to six miles wide (Robinson, 1968:218) making the coast virtually unapproachable from the sea, even by small vessels, and probably of little use to shore-based pelagic hunters or fishermen.

## ISOSTATIC REBOUND

Within the last decade, geological studies of the Hudson Bay Lowlands have provided information on the nature of geological formations and deposits in the area (Sanford, Norris and Bostock, 1968) including those of Quaternary age (Lee, 1968). Of particular significance to archaeological research in the area has been the research relating to deglaciation, marine transgression and isostatic rebound (Andrews, 1968, 1969, 1970; Webber *et al.*, 1970). During post-Pleistocene times, Hudson Bay Lowlands were almost totally submerged beneath the Tyrell Sea and covered with a thick mantle of marine clay. Continuing isostatic uplift has resulted in a gradual recession of the sea. Raised marine features delimiting the maximum transgression of the Tyrell Sea now occur at elevations ranging from 400 to 600 feet above the present average sea level.

Postglacial uplift curves for Arctic Canada (Andrews, 1968, 1969), and more specifically for the region of Cape Henrietta Maria (Webber *et al.*, 1970), indicate that the Brant River sites emerged above the waters of Hudson Bay perhaps as recently as 1,000 years ago. With specific reference to Map 1, it can be seen that the Brant River locality lies just outside the 1,000-year isochrone (Webber *et al.*, 1970). Using the parameters and formulae provided by Webber *et al.* (1970:322) and Andrews (1969:71) and the estimated present elevation of the Brant River sites (40-50 feet above the mean sea level), direct computations indicate that the sites were not suitable for habitation until around 900 A.D., and perhaps for some time later.

## I. BRANT RIVER SITE NUMBER I

Brant River Site Number I (BRS-I), situated some 1,500 feet west of our campsite (Map 2) is sheltered from the east, north and west by willows growing roughly 4-10 feet high. This site represents a sequence of post contact settlements and visitations, the most recent being no more than a few years old. All the material excavated at this site is recent, perhaps no earlier than the turn of the century. For the year 1947-48, Honigmann (1961) indicated that the coastal territory containing the Brant River area was being exploited for fur and game by the Lake River Swampy Cree. At that time, it was registered in the name of two owners and designated Trap Line Number 5, encompassing roughly 500 square miles (Map 3).

#### DESCRIPTION OF EXCAVATION

One day was spent mapping and testing the site (Maps 4 and 5). The former task was accomplished by pace and compass. As can be seen from Map 5, most of the testing was done along the river bank, and particularly along sections of the bank where Cowell had found artifacts. The bank trenches included Test Trench (TT) 1, 3, 4 and 5. In all, a total of roughly 60 cubic feet was excavated and back-filled from six text trenches (see Table 1). Without exception, cultural material was recovered from depths not exceeding 14 inches below the surface. The natural stratigraphic profile from various trenches exhibited bands of buried humus and sandy fluviatile deposits. Efforts to correlate the stratigraphy between various trenches proved futile.

Test Trenches 2 and 6 were non-river-bank trenches. Test Trench 2 was specifically excavated into a rectangular depression, interpreted in the field as a remnant sod quarry, in order to expose a profile which, it was hoped, would permit a correlation of this feature (No. 26) with the culture bearing stratum in TT-1. The attempted correlation was unsuccessful. Test Trench 6 was excavated in order to investigate the nature of a low, circular-mound, some 16 feet in diameter. The mound (Feature 14) proved to be a collapsed, sod-covered conical lodge with a central hearth surrounded by retaining rocks.

## DESCRIPTION OF MATERIAL

All of the cultural material from BRS-1 came either from the surface or from the humus layer up to 14 inches thick which could not be subdivided stratigraphically. The artifacts will be described in relation to the Test Trenches and cultural features in which they were found (see Maps 4 and 5):

## Test Trench 1

Cultural debris found here included goose bones, possible fire-cracked rocks and an overall button.

## Test Trench 2

No cultural material was discovered in this trench.

## Test Trench 3

Test Trench 3 yielded a few caribou bones, some goose bones, a tin can, about 8 inches of stove-pipe wire and an interior threated cap or bung with a vent hole. A smooth quartzite rock, weighing about 3 to 4 pounds, was found which exhibited extensive battering at the ends. This rock was probably used as a maul for either breaking marrow bones or pounding stakes into the ground. The recency of this layer is indicated by the recovery of a small, well preserved fragment of milled or planed softwood with a 1/4 in c h drilled hole.

## Test Trench 4

This river-bank trench may be outside of the southern limits of the site since no material was recovered.

## Test Trench 5

Test Trench 5 yielded some possible fire-cracked rocks, caribou bones, goose bones and a swan humerus. The fire-cracked rocks, like the possible stone maul in TT-3, may be an aboriginal trait but they are not necessarily prehistoric or even early historic in age.

#### Test Trench 6

Excavations into what proved to be the remains of a sod-covered, conical lodge, with a central hearth yielded recent materials. Tin-can fragments, stove-pipe wire (1 length twisted and bent into a hook), a 4-inch iron spike and 2 "Dominion" cardboard shotgun shells were recovered in addition to some fragmentary bird bones. The limited trenching did not reveal any other cultural debris.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE MODERN CAMP

The modern site covers an area of approximately 2-3 acres. Notes were taken on structures and other features, and a few implements such as hide stretchers were recorded. A collection of bones—primarily ptarmigan and goose—was recovered from the surface with no provenience data. (The role of 35 mm. film on which the features were recorded apparently has been lost.)

#### CANVAS TENT SITES

Field observations indicate the remains of three types of dwellings at the modern campsite. The most recent type of dwelling, probably the canvas tent, is usually indicated by rectangular stone rings measuring about 8 x 10 feet (Map 4:Features 2-4 and 8). A number of likely canvas tent sites are indicated by solitary patches of willow or spruce branches covering the ground (Map 4:Features 6, 20, 22), and the occasional implanted wooden stake. Feature 15 (Map 4) appears to be a specially constructed winter tent site. The perimeter of the dwelling (ca. 11 x 14 feet) is defined by rocks, while spruce boughs litter the entire enclosure except near the entrance facing south-southwest. A mound of sod, associated with scattered patches of ash and charcoal, stands 1 to 1-1/4 feet high in the centre of the tent enclosure, and may mark either a raised stove platform or hearth. The amount of plant growth that has invaded the enclosed area, particularly in the region of the central mound, suggests its abandonment 5 to 10 years ago. In all, a total of 8 probable canvas tent sites were recognized. Skin-stretchers for otter and beaver were noted near the standing conical lodge, and a few stone net-sinkers and fragments of gill net were seen near Features 2, 3 and 4 (tent sites).

Ethnographic data (Honigman, 1956, 1961; Rogers, 1963c; Skinner, 1911; Lips, 1947; Turner, 1894) indicate that a number of different house types were erected by boreal forest Indians of Eastern Canada prior to the adoption of canvas tents and log cabins, and may be expected in Northern Ontario. The most salient point is that these dwellings were constructed to suit the seasons (Honigmann, 1956:41). Among the Attawapiskat Swampy Cree and the Lake River Swampy Cree, conical dwellings with a three pole (rather than a four pole) frame were preferred (Honigmann, 1956:42). The conical lodge structures at the modern campsite conform to this general pattern.

Conical lodges, constructed on the tripod foundation, were lashed together at the apex with tanned skin, willow bark line (Honigmann, 1956:42; Skinner, 1911:12) and more recently, as our observations indicate, possibly with wire (Map 4:Feature 13). Whole or split logs were set up on end surrounding the foundation poles. The number of poles varied from 18 to 25 depending upon the size of the structure.

## SUMMER CONICAL LODGES

A number of conical structures were originally interpreted in the field as racks for storing fuel (Map 4:Features 13, 16 and 21) rather than summer conical lodges. There is no doubt about the validity of this interpretation with respect to Feature 21. However, the lack of specific detail in the field notes, due to the insufficient time for more adequate field

observations, makes such an interpretation with respect to Features 13 and 16 less certain.

According to ethnographic sources, conical summer lodges have a lower border of grass 1 to 1-1/2 feet high, woven between the upright poles. Sections of spruce or birch-bark (where available), up to 5 feet wide, were then laid over the wooden structure and sewn together with either spruce roots or willow-bark line. An 18-inch smoke-vent was left at the apex of the dwelling, while the entry was covered with a piece of hide (Honigmann, 1946:42).

In localities where bark was unavailable, the exterior of the structure might be covered with about 6 caribou skins, sewn together with sinew. During the hot summer days, the lower sections of the exterior covering were raised, permitting the free circulation of air, while the grass retarded the invasion of insects. The two possible surviving summer conical lodges at the BRS-1 are indicated only by the tripod frame and surrounding logs.

#### WINTER CONICAL LODGES

Winter lodges (see Figure 1 for a reconstruction based on our Brant River observations) differ from summer lodges in two fundamental respects. First, the floor is generally excavated to a depth of 1 to 1-1/2 feet (Honigmann, 1956:42; Rogers, 1963c:225; Skinner, 1911:13). The dirt was then piled around the sides and covered with brush, against which the occupants could recline. Secondly, the exterior covering consisted of a double layer of brush or grass over which sod or turf sections were then laid. "A skin flap or plaited rabbit skin robe weighted with a pole covered the entry" (Honigmann, 1946:42). No vestibule or annex was noted in association with the earth covered lodges at the modern campsite on the Brant River, nor does Honigmann (1956:43) indicate their use among the Attawapiskat Cree (however, compare Rogers, 1963c:221, regarding the Mistassini Cree from Central Quebec).

Mention must be made at this point of the numerous sod quarries (Features 1, 7, 9, 11, 12, 26 and possibly 5, plus those associated with Features 14 and 23). Although vestiges of collapsed sod structures could not always be found in proximity with suspected sod quarries, it is reasonable to expect that they would not have been more than 50 or 100 feet away (cf. Features 14 and 23). The fact that the sod lines were not recognized in some cases should be noted by those surveying for sites in this area.

Fireplaces were generally situated near the centre of the dwelling (Honigmann, 1946:44; Skinner, 1911:13) and were elevated or simply encircled with rocks. This latter type of hearth was identified in the partially excavated house structure designated as Feature 14. In the centre of the still standing earth-covered lodges, hearth areas are mounds, retained by boards and implanted pegs. (The present condition of one structure would indicate it was probably constructed long after canvas tents had become available.) A layer of sand over the mound probably acted as a fireguard either for an open hearth or, as in one case, a barrel stove which was noted in the still-standing structure (Map 4:Feature 23).

Rogers (1963c:223) delineated the known distribution of the earth-covered conical lodge:

It has been reported from the east coast of James Bay at the Eastman River Post (Skinner 1911:13) and the lower Rupert River (Rogers and Rogers 1948:84, Pl.VIII, No. 1). A variant covered with "brush" was observed on the coast north of Fort George (Leith and Leith 1912:117). No other reports for the Montagnais-Naskapi have been found. There are several for the Cree-Ojibwa of Northern Ontario: at the mouth of the Winisk River (Miller 1912:134); along the Albany River (Dean 1957:60); for the Round Lake Ojibwa (Rogers 1962:A25), and

for the Attawapiskat Cree (Honigmann 1956:43; 1961:85) and Abitibi (Jenkins 1939:25) and in eastern Manitoba at Island Lake (Hallowell 1938:134) and Berens River (Hallowell 1938:134, note 3).

Godsell had published a photograph of a lodge of this type but unfortunately its provenience is not given (1932:55). (Rogers, 1963c:223)

To this list we may add the earthen lodges from Lake Indicator, Central Quebec (Rogers, 1963c:211) and those from the Brant River Site No. 1 (Map 4:Features 23 and 24).

#### STORAGE RACKS AND CACHE PITS

One free-standing storage rack (Map 4:Feature 19) was noted and the remnants of another (Map 4:Feature 25) were discovered. Such racks may stand as high as 16 feet (Honigmann, 1956:44; cf. Lips, 1947). The estimated height of the one free-standing storage rack at the BRS-1 is on the order of 12 feet.

Honigmann (1956:44) also records the construction of subterranean cache pits, measuring from 3 to 5 feet square and about 3 feet deep. A number of small, remnant, sod quarries may, in fact, be cache pits (e.g., Features 1 and 5).

### DOG STAKE

This feature consists of two stakes driven obliquely into the ground and intersecting about 1 foot above the ground forming an "X". It is at the point of intersection that the dog tether could be securely attached. The presence of willow boughs, presumably for bedding, around the dog-stakes, designated as Feature 10 (Map 4), suggests occupancy during a cold or a wet season. In contrast, the absence of such boughs around the similar Feature 18 (Map 4) indicates a dry and warm season encampment.

### DISCUSSION

The foregoing observations permit some inferences about seasonality, group size, and activity of the site. These can, and should be, checked against statements from the former occupants themselves, some of whom are thought to be living at Lake River. In fact, we cannot be sure that the former pattern of site-use has ceased entirely, although we could perceive no indication that the site had been used within the past two or three years.

The absence of more specific data precludes all but a general statement on seasonality. Indications are that the faunal analysis which is currently underway will provide more specific information regarding seasonality. Thus, for the present, seasonal site occupation probably can be best categorized as cold weather and warm weather site-uses.

Sod-covered lodges, brush bedding near dog stakes, some canvas tents held in place by stones rather than stakes, and large logs piled tipi-fashion, stretchers for otter and beaver skins, all suggest occupancy during cold weather; early spring is the most likely season for trapping. However, it may be that bedding for dogs was meant to protect them from wet rather than from frozen ground; in any case, the stakes could not have been driven into frozen ground. Sods for the lodges could have been quarried in all seasons when the ground surface is thawed—beginning in April—or when it is frozen to a depth of no more than an inch or two—perhaps as late as November. Perhaps the lodges were built in the fall for use the following spring.

Some tents held in place by stakes and a large number of goose bones suggest warm weather occupancy. Fishing gear near the tents may have been in use in spring during the

spawning run (Honigmann, 1956, 1961). The near absence of caribou bone on the surface is hard to account for. Cowell noted caribou in some numbers during the summer of 1971, and E. R. Rogers (personal communication) saw caribou to the south in late winter.

Four stone-lined tent rings, four tent sites defined by stakes or brush bedding, and possibly two sod-covered tipis, used recently, suggest that the site, seldom if ever, was used by more than 12 people at once. Four or five seems a more likely number, and winter trapping could have been done by two men.

Travel to the site in winter and the importation of logs for tipis, tent poles and fuel probably was by dog team. The near absence of holes dug by dogs for protection against mosquitoes suggests that few dogs were kept there in summer, and that travel to the site was by canoe when the rivers were open. Travelling by any means becomes virtually impossible just prior to freeze-over and during breakup (cf. Honigmann, 1956).

In summary, the site appears to have been primarily a trapping-camp used in late winter and spring, and secondarily, a resort during one of the seasons when geese are readily available—spring, late summer, or early fall.

## II. BRANT RIVER SITE NUMBER 2

Brant River Site Number 2 covers approximately 6,000 square feet and is situated approximately half a mile away from the site of our fly-camp (Map 2). This is on relatively high, well-drained ground, in fact, a natural levy. Unlike BRS-1, there is no recognizable surface expression of major structures in the form of either collapsed sod-covered lodges or modern tentrings. The site is on the terrace of the west bank of the east tributary of the Brant River. During prehistoric times, fluviatile deposits sealed off older living floors during seasons of exceptionally high floods. These bedded, overbank sediments in places reach thicknesses of 2-1/2 feet (Appendix 1). The present stage of erosion (in contrast to the former stage of deposition) evidently indicates a change in the course of the Brant River tributary. The rate of erosion now is serious enough to threaten destruction of the entire site within a few years.

### DESCRIPTION OF EXCAVATIONS

Two days were devoted to mapping and testing the site (Map 6). Mapping was done with a brunton compass; short distances were taped; those over 50 feet were paced. A rock cairn TBM was set up and all measurements were taken from that point. The majority of the excavated trenches (except TT-3) were both exploratory and salvage excavations, concentrating on those portions of the river terrace most threatened by erosion. In all, a total of 124 cubic feet were excavated and back-filled (see Figure 2). An exceptionally good rate of excavation was facilitated by the absence of extensive root networks and permafrost. This is fortunate, because the site produced few artifacts per unit of excavated material.

## **STRATIGRAPHY**

At TT-1, a 12-foot-long stratigraphic profile was exposed to a depth of 2-1/2 feet. Six depositional sequences or zones were recognized (A-F; Appendix 1). Within these depositional sequences, and always associated with a buried layer of humus, we tentatively distinguished seven culture-bearing strata, the deepest of which is 22-1/2 inches below the surface. No artifacts or bones were found between the 22-1/2 inch and 33 inch level, which was the limit of the excavation in TT-1.

Certain pedological features which characterized the various zones made it possible to suggest correlations between occupational strata in virtually every excavated portion of the site. At the moment, five cultural strata have been tentatively identified, two of which may be further divided to make a total of seven. (For a more detailed presentation of the stratigraphy, the reader is referred to Appendix 1).

The discussion of the artifacts and other cultural material is presented according to the various cultural zones commencing at the earliest. Upper-case letters, rather than numerals, were used to designate the zones. In order to avoid confusion, it must be stressed these do *not* represent soil horizons.

## DESCRIPTION OF ARTIFACTS

A full description of the faunal remains awaits the completion of analysis. Only bone specimens of particular significance will be included in the present descriptions.

## ZONE E

Two cultural bearing strata occur in this zone.

#### Stratum E2

This stratum was reached in TT-1 and TT-4 only. The only material recovered was the sternum of a ptarmigan in TT-1.

## Stratum E<sub>1</sub>

This stratum was also reached in TT-1 and TT-4 only. The cultural inventory from this stratum was appreciably greater than from stratum E<sub>2</sub>.

# Unifacial Chert Scraper

One fragmentary, unifacial chert scraper (T1-E1-1) was discovered in TT-1. It has a scraping-angle of approximately  $42^{\circ}$  and a scraping edge measuring 16.7 mm.

#### Fire-cracked Rocks

A total of 8 fire-cracked rocks were recovered from TT-1 and TT-4. For the most part, they appear to be locally derived grey-black metamorphosed silt-stone which occurs in abundance along the water courses.

#### Bones

Mention can be made of two caribou, long-bone fragments which seem to indicate intentional breakage for marrow extraction.

## ZONE D

No attempt is made to consistently distinguish between the materials originating in either stratum  $D_1$  or  $D_2$ . The pair of strata is the "double layer" which is the key stratigraphic index for this zone (Appendix 1). There is some indication, particularly in regards to the hearth and associated material from TT-3 that these two strata represent a single occupation, or two occupations separated by a brief interval (vide infra).

## Feature 1

The hearth in Test Trench 3 appears to be associated with cultural stratum  $D_2$ . It consists of a patch of gray ash some 2 feet in diameter and 1/2 to 1 inch in thickness, in which pieces of burned caribou bones, mollusc shells and bird bones were recognized. Fire-cracked rocks were randomly situated around the edges of the hearth in addition to many heat spalls of the same grey-black silt-stone. A small subtriangular projectile point and a chert flake were found in the upper layers  $(D_1)$ , apparently associated with the hearth. Later studies of the hearth contents revealed three small body sherds of aboriginal ceramic ware.

#### Subtriangular Projectile Point

One small subtriangular chert projectile point  $(T_3-D_1-F_1-48)$  was the only diagnostic artifact recovered from this zone (Plate 1:1). Metrical attributes were measured and the results were compared with similar points in the literature.

The base and lateral edges are slightly convex and well controlled pressure retouch was employed to thin the base. The specimen measures 23.2 mm. in length, 17.1 mm. in width (basal) and 2.9 mm. in thickness. This specimen was fashioned from a flake; portions of the ventral surface lack surface retouch.

Comparisons with Eskimo end blades, such as those from Coats Island (Collins, 1956:99, Plate V) and with the Dorset end blades from the Tyara site (Taylor, 1968:Figure 26,f-j) do not support a relationship. Although the size range of these series could accommodate the Brant River point, the bases are straight to concave.

The closest comparison can be drawn with the Eastern Triangle from southeast Manitoba as discussed by MacNeish (1958). MacNeish (1958) describes the metrical attributes of the Eastern Triangle on the basis of 23 specimens which occurred in components of the Manitoba and Selkirk foci, along with others from surface collections in the region. The length ranges from 9 to 32 mm. with a mean of 24 mm., the width ranges from 11 to 21 mm. with a mean of 16 mm., and the thickness ranges from 1 to 6 mm. with a mean of 3 mm. MacNeish also notes:

These points are, for the most part, made from thin flakes fashioned into shape by pressure flaking along their edges. Only a few of them have pressure flaking on their surfaces. . . . In Eastern Manitoba, points of this type occur in components of the Selkirk and Manitoba foci from 1000 A.D. to 1750 A.D. (MacNeish, 1958:103)

Strata II and III from the Michipicotn Site (Wright, 1969),have also yielded subtriangular projectile points which are metrically comparable with the specimen from Brant River (Wright, 1969:27; Plate XI, Figures 8-11). In most cases, flaking is restricted to the edges and does not invade the surfaces. Stratum III at the Michipicoten site was radiocarbon dated 1460±70 A.D. (S-169) (Wright, 1969:20) which does not conflict with MacNeish's estimates for the occurrence of the Eastern Triangle in southeastern Manitoba. The Eastern Triangle is also present at Clearwater Lake, Manitoba, in association with the Clearwater Lake component, a Northern expression of the Selkirk focus (Hlady, 1970:113, Plate 18; 1971:33, Plate 1).

Other boreal forest sites from Quebec and Ontario have produced subtriangular projectile points (Rogers and Bradley, 1953:141, Figure 55,7; Ridley, 1958:46, Figure 2,e) which indicates the wide distribution of this type of point. We conclude that the point is probably not Eskimo, and that it is not inconsistent with late prehistoric northern Algonkian forms.

#### Chert Flake

One grey chert flake  $(T_3-D_1-F_1-47)$  was recovered from layer  $D_1$  in association with the hearth in TT-3. No evidence of utilization was recognized along the edges.

#### Pottery

In addition to the subtriangular projectile point and the grey chert flake, three body sherds were found in association with the hearth in TT-3. One sherd was suitable for analysis. The thickness was measured to be 3.8 mm. and the hardness, about 3.5 on the Moh scale. The technique of manufacture could not be determined because of the fragmentary nature of the specimens. The temper was probably crushed granite as evidenced by the presence of angular particles of biotite, hornblende and quartz, some of the particles measuring as much as 1.6 mm. The interior and exterior surfaces exhibit a brownish-grey colour (10 YR 5/2 and 10 YR 3/1, respectively, on the Munsell colour chart) and is darker grey in section. The surface was smoothed.

Comparisons can be made with the Selkirk ware from southeastern Manitoba (MacNeish, 1958:162-163) and the plain body sherds from Strata II and III from the Michipicoten site (Wright, 1969:16), at least in terms of the range of thickness. Nothing comparable in thickness or texture occurs associated with Thule remains from the Central Arctic (cf. Mathiassen, 1927:318, Plate 84,12; Collins, 1950:24, Plate VIII, Figure 21; Collins, 1952:Plate XI, Figure 10).

It is interesting to note that ethnographic records on the Swampy Cree in the area of the Hudson Bay Lowlands do not indicate any clear recollection of pottery making. Skinner (1911:30) records that vessels of steatite and soapstone, rather than ceramic containers, were employed during aboriginal times. Honigmann (1956:30) remarked that the nearest the Attawapiskat Cree came to making pottery was to coat woven spruce root vessels with mud and allow them to harden over a fire. He (Honigmann, 1956:30, n. 8) also reported that clay vessels were made by the Winisk Cree and fired in the oven of a wood-burning stove. We doubt that this was an established practice.

## Fire-Cracked Rocks

A total of 48 fire-cracked rocks of grey-black siltstone was recovered from all test trenches. The great majority (45), however, originated from TT-3 in association with the hearth. (Others, found on the surface, were not collected.)

## Bones

Both caribou and goose bones were recognized in the material from this zone; the former were the more numerous.

### ZONE C

Except for bone fragments, cultural material from this level was found only in the TT-4 extension. The extension was intended to expose a hearth occurring in this zone. Charcoal was recovered from the hearth area in addition to numerous fragments of caribou and goose bones.

# Utilized Flake

One linear chert flake (T4-C<sub>1</sub>-1) was recovered from TT-4 extension. Step marginal flaking invading one surface only indicates its use as a scraping tool. It does not suggest to us a microblade industry. No other cultural material was recovered from this zone.

## ZONE B

In addition to a fair quantity of faunal remains, a number of artifacts was derived from this layer. Unfortunately, these artifacts are not diagnostic in the sense of suggesting cultural affinities.

One diffused burned area, possibly a hearth, was discovered in TT-4. In addition to a number of caribou and goose bones, some of which were burned, 3 chert cores and 6 pieces of chert detritus were found in association with this feature.

#### Exhausted Cores

Three exhausted chert cores were recovered from TT-4, two of which were fragmentary ( $T_4$ -B-2,  $T_4$ -B-9) and one unbroken (T4-B-1). On the basis of colour and pattern of mottling, two of the exhausted cores (T4-B-1 and  $T_4$ -B-2) were probably derived from the same source. The unbroken specimen measured 45 mm. in length, 36 mm. in width and 10.4 mm. in thickness (Plate 1:3; Figure 4). Their small size suggests that good raw material was scarce in this neighbourhood.

#### Detritus

Six pieces of chert detritus were excavated from TT-4 associated with the exhausted core fragments and the possible hearth. Four flakes could be fitted into the scars on the three parent cores.

### Grooved Antler

A fragment of a grooved antler (T1-B-1) was encountered in TT-1 (Plate 1:5). The specimen measured 95.3 mm. in length, 15.9 mm. in width and 11.8 mm. in thickness. It appears to be evidence of the "groove and splinter" technique for getting long, narrow pieces of antler from which to make arrowheads and other implements. Although the technique often entails the use of burins, it is possible that other kinds of tools can be used.

Skinner (1911;24) records that the Moose Factory Cree manufactured points of antler and bone, cut by grooving with a sharp stone. This practice appears to be widespread throughout the sub-Arctic region of Eastern Canada (Skinner, 1911:24; cf. Turner, 1894:314-315). Wright (1971:14) reports the occurrence of a single piece of worked antler that had been bilaterally slotted and broken. The specimen came from the Neck Site on Southern Indian Lake.

### Caribou Scapula

This specimen (T<sub>3</sub>-B-1) was excavated from TT-3. Honigmann (1956:38) records the practice of scapulimancy among the Attawapiskat Swampy Cree. Few cracks or burned areas could be discerned to indicate that this specimen was so used.

## Caribou Maxilla

The right maxilla of a caribou with teeth still in place was recovered from TT-4. The length of the tooth row at the stain gum line (following Banfield, 1961) was measured to be 99.6 mm.

In connection with the exploitation of caribou, the question arises whether or not the barren ground caribou was available to the occupants of the BRS-2 during prehistoric times. Banfield (1961) indicates the southern limits of the tundra caribou distribution well north and west of the Brant River area during the last century.

Unfortunately, the tooth row measurement for this adult specimen falls within the range of

variation for those of the male (Banfield, 1961:133, Table 18) and the female (Banfield, 1961:134, Table 19) of the woodland caribou (Rangifer tarandus caribou) and the range of the tooth row variation for the male (Banfield, 1961:130, Table 14) of the barren ground caribou (Rangifer tarandus geoenlandicus).<sup>3</sup>

## ZONE A

The quantity of material collected from this level is rather meagre. Apart from a few bone fragments, only one recognizable artifact was secured, plus a number of fire-cracked rocks.

## Wooden Object

A curved wooden object, possibly a handle for a tool bag, or a fishing reel like that of the Central Eskimo, was excavated from TT-3 in a very bad state of preservation. It had been made of wood from a large tree, probably pine, with thick annular rings which suggests that the wood was obtained from some distance to the south.

## Fire-Cracked Rocks

Four fire-cracked rocks of the familiar grey-black silt-stone were recovered from TT-1.

## SURFACE COLLECTIONS

The surface derived material, all of which was probably eroded out during spring floods, adds considerably to the total artifact inventory. This section will deal briefly with both of the 1971 and 1972 surface finds.

## 1971 SURFACE COLLECTION

Among the specimens collected from the surface in 1971, by Fred Cowell and his wife, are two caribou long bone splinter awls. Both specimens are long, narrow fragments that have been worked at one end to a point, the point bears a sheen from use. Two additional items deserve mention: a nearly round shale or slate scraper (Plate 1:4) with a smooth edge similar to a tci-tho and a worked chert core fragment (Plate 1:2).

## 1972 SURFACE COLLECTION

Most of the material collected in 1972 was faunal remains; all of it was found among the lag gravel stratigraphically below the site, where it had been left by spring floods. It could have come from any of the stratigraphic units we have described. Five caribou bones (60'S-Sur-Sur-8 and 11, 38'S-Sur, 11/12 and 19) and one goose bone (60'S-Sur-9) show butchering marks. A caribou pelvis, possibly fetal in age, suggests occupation in late spring or early summer.

Two European items were collected in 1972. The first is a piece of lead (13'N-Sur-1) and the second is a piece of triangular-cut, sheet copper (T<sub>4</sub>-Sur-1). The Michipicoten site (Wright, 1969:10, Plate III, Figure 9) yielded a strip of lead from the uppermost stratum in association with other European elements. Similar trianguloid-cut pieces of copper are illustrated with the Tailrace Bay material (Mayer-Oakes, 1970:262, Figure 108,A) and with the Michipicoten material from Stratum I (Wright, 1969:10, Plate III, Figure 2).

## III INTERPRETATION

There is little doubt that the occupants of BRS-I modern camp are Swampy Cree from the Lake River band. It will be interesting, and perhaps useful, to check our interpretations with

those responsible for the evidence we have recorded, some of whom at least still live at Lake River. Although it would be premature to suggest definite cultural affinities for the BRS-2, we can exclude Eskimos as likely candidates. Comparable material in areas peripheral to the Hudson Bay Lowlands is somewhat meagre except possibly in remote regions farther south and west. The comparisons drawn with the Selkirk-derived material (assumed to be of Cree origin) do not appear to be unduly strained. However, the possibility of Ojibwa authorship for the BRS-2 material available from our excavations should not be summarily dismissed.

Although somewhat tentative, the analysis does permit a reconstruction of the annual cycle of both sites. As pointed out earlier, substantial dwelling structures were not recognized on or near the surface at the BRS-2, nor did any vestiges come to light during the excavations. Although only a very small portion of the site was tested, one is led to suspect that the Brant River area was abandoned in winter during prehistoric times. The shortage of fuel, which must have been more acute during prehistoric and early contact times, and the relatively high and exposed nature of the BRS-2 are considerations which would argue against its suitability as a winter camp site. Possible winter excursions onto the coastal plains may have been, and probably were, carried out by prehistoric inhabitants of the area. Caribou herds, it is noted, often remain on the Cape during winter since high winds tend to keep the snow cover shallow and expose the buried lichens (Honigmann, 1956:32). In light of the presence of the caribou pelvis, possibly fetal in age, there can be little doubt that the BRS-2 was being occupied as early as May by the prehistoric inhabitants. The presence of goose bones at both the sites indicates use of this food resource which is available from April until around September-October (cf. Honigmann, 1961).

Among the interior Attawapiskat Cree (Honigmann, 1956; 1961), the Mistassini (Rogers, 1963a) and the Round Lake Ojibwa (Rogers, 1962), to cite only a few examples, the summer settlement pattern is characterized by the aggregation of hunting bands for social, economic and ritualistic purposes. Winter settlement patterns, on the other hand, are dispersed. The BRS-I modern camp, occupied mainly in winter, fits such an annual cycle, if we assume that the geese were taken in spring or fall. Such an interpretation of the BRS-2 cannot be made. Rogers (1963a) in his discussion of the Mistassini would enter a caveat against the indiscriminate use of interior yearly cycle analogies in order to interpret a coastal situation. Coastal groups, he points out,

may well be found to have varied considerably in their subsistence pattern, perhaps in a significant way, from those of the interior. On the coast, the hunting of waterfowl, eel and such give a different emphasis to the yearly cycle and may have influenced the social structure and property concepts. (Rogers, 1963a:3, fn. 3)

Honigmann makes a very important observation in this regard as well. He notes that in the tundra area of Cape Henrietta Maria and adjacent barren grounds, caribou were present throughout the summer and families went there to hunt in that season. In contrast, "in the Sutton River area the people migrated to Sutton Lake where they caught lake trout and jackfish and lived either in single family groups or in clusters of families ..." (Honigmann, 1956:32).

The two Brant River sites, which we may assume for now were occupied by Cree, suggest changes in annual cycle and economic orientation which can be interpreted in several ways. There is no evidence for either the use of dogs or trapping of fur-bearing animals at BRS-2, whereas both are present at BRS-1. At BRS-1 there is clear evidence for occupation during cold

weather, whereas this is lacking at BRS-2. At BRS-2, caribou bones were more numerous than at BRS-1, and goose bones less numerous. The goose bones at BRS-2 suggest a summer occupation; the absence of winter structures there is consistent with this interpretation, although not compelling evidence for it. It is likely that the changes in seasonal use of the sites, that we infer, reflect changes in economic patterns that resulted from the fur trade. The evidence from BRS-2 calls into question the assumption that all prehistoric Cree gathered in large groups in summer. It also establishes the fact that the Cree or a closely related Indian population were in Hudson Bay Lowlands in prehistoric times.

We think this a very good case in which to compare archaeological observation and inference with ethnographic "fact," so we offer the following interpretations with the hope that others will test and elaborate on them:

- 1. BRS-1 was primarily a trapping camp, used regularly in early spring until 1968 or 1970 by two or three men, probably from Lake River, travelling by dog team.
- 2. Groups of similar, or perhaps larger size, visited this site in canoes, in early or late summer, fishing and hunting geese. Whether or not they hunted caribou is a moot point.
- 3. BRS-2 occupants were there in late spring and summer, to hunt caribou and geese, and catch fish.
- 4. There is no indication that the size of the camping groups changed from prehistoric to modern times; in both cases, the group size appears to have been small (i.e., ordinarily less than 5 or 6). We have no evidence from BRS-2 of group composition but we would expect groups of two or three related families. Modern boreal forest trapping patterns suggest that BRS-1 was used by two men working as partners, perhaps accompanied by portions of their families.
- 5. It is possible that BRS-2 was used by people intent on getting caribou skins for use as clothing—which are best for this in late summer. Because late-summer caribou probably were not available to some of the other Cree hunting groups, this raises the further possibility of a sort of prehistoric fur trade having some effect on activities at BRS-2.

These interpretations, however tentative, support Rogers' (1963a) cautionary note regarding the frequently made assumption that all northern Cree came together in large summer encampments. Those who went to the Brant River sites probably missed out on some of these opportunities for socializing. We must wonder especially where the summer visitors at BRS-2 spent their winters ... in large or small groups?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>At Hawley Lake some fire-cracked rocks were noted and a cervid bone was recovered during a brief stop to pick up equipment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Done in the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto. An analysis of the faunal remains in detail will be reported later.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>We are indebted to Dr. Howard Savage for advice on the interpretation of this specimen.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>The provenience of these two bone specimens remains uncertain and they may have derived from BRS-1.

### APPENDIX 1

## NATURAL STRATIGRAPHY AT THE BRANT RIVER SITE NUMBER 2

A discussion of the key pedological features, which were recognized in the field, will indicate the basis for correlation of occupational levels between the various Test Trenches.

At a depth of 8 to 13 inches below the present ground level, a compressed sequence of alternating organic horizons and sterile fluvatile deposits was noted in TT-3 (Zone B). This same stratigraphic group (7 to 10-1/2 inches below the present ground level) was appreciably truncated by several unconformities in Test Trenches 1 and 4. All cultural material from this zone was lumped together and no attempt was made to ferret out the individual culture-bearing strata.

The second, and possibly the best recognized feature, is a double layer of organic material separated by a very shallow deposit of sterile sandy silt. This feature was recognizable in all three test trench profiles (Zone D). Bch humus layers were relatively thick and organically rich, merging in some places into a heavy black band up to 1 inch in thickness. Cultural material was recovered from both layers,  $D_1$  and  $D_2$ , in all test trenches. In addition, Test Trenches 3 and 4 yielded cultural material from the intervening sandy silt deposit.

Some 1 to 2 inches above the double layer is a pronounced thick black stratum which is represented in all Test Trenches (Zone C). This stratum proved to be archaeologically productive in all test trenches.

Test Trench 3 was excavated only to the base of the double layer. Consequently, the fourth feature was discerned in Test Trenches 1 and 4 only. Underlying the double layer, the normally buff-coloured sterile deposits exhibit a marked increase in rust staining, and also appear to, have a greater clay content. The organic horizons are markedly attenuated both in thickness and colour intensity. This zone (E) yielded two archaeological strata, level  $E_1$ , occurring in Test Trenches 1 and 4 and level  $E_2$  in Test Trench 1 only. Bone preservation appeared to be fair to good in Stratum  $E_2$  although rust staining was noticeably greater.

Zone E terminated with the abrupt cessation of visible buried soil horizons at a depth of 2-3/4 feet, below the present ground level. The fifth and last feature constitutes a zone of sterile greyblue clayish alluvium saturated with streaks of iron stain. This gleying phenomenon is interpreted as the product of still water deposition. Only a portion of TT-1 was excavated sufficiently deep to reveal the existence of this zone. A penetration to a depth of 9 inches into this zone did not reveal the presence of any occupational levels. However, this fact may be a function of the limited area exposed. The possibility that older buried soil horizons have been totally obliterated by leaching cannot be ruled out although this is doubtful.

It should be mentioned here that the absence of material from TT-2 excluded it from consideration in this discussion on stratigraphy.

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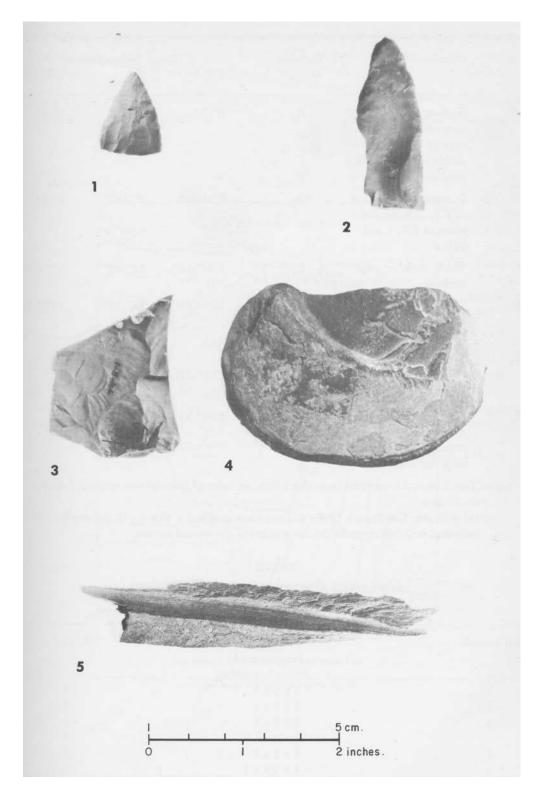


Plate 1

APPENDIX 1

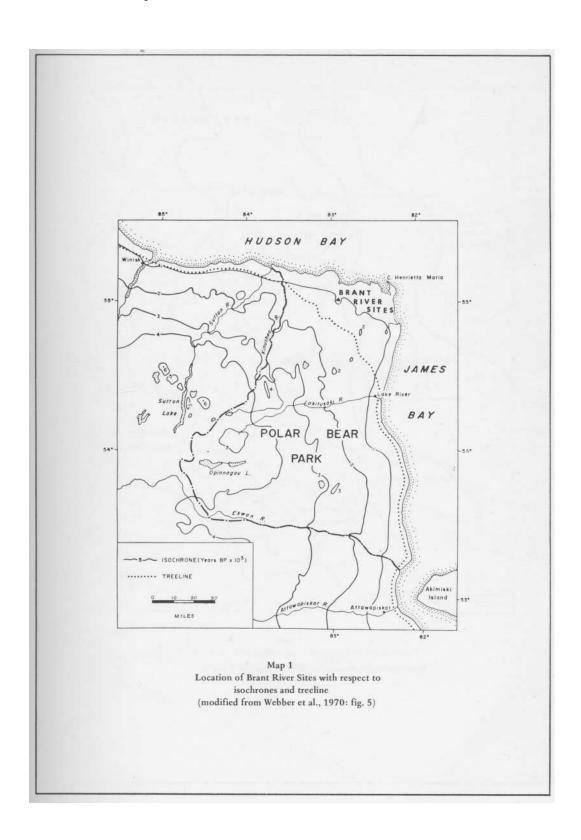
| Zone | Description   | Cultural  | Depth Below Surface |           |          |
|------|---|---|---------------------|-----------|----------|
|      |   | Strata  | T.T. 1              | T.T. 4    | T.T. 3   |
| A    | Surface and upper<br>series of buried soils:<br>organic levels weakly<br>defined; alluvium, fine<br>sand and silt | $A_1$   | 0"-7"               | 0"-7"     | 0"-8"    |
| В    | Compressed sequence in T.T. 3; truncated series in T.T. 1 and T.T. 4  | $\mathbf{B}_1$                                  | 7"-101/2""          | 7"-10"    | 8"-13"   |
| C    | Thick, dark, organic horizon  | $C_1$   | 10 1/2"-12"         | 10"-12"   | 13"-14½" |
| D    | "Double-layer"<br>with interrupting<br>shallow alluvium   | $egin{array}{l} D_1 \ and \ D_2 \end{array}$    | 12"-13½"            | 12"-13½"  | 14½"-16" |
| E    | Sporadic, thin buried soils: rust stained alluviur  | m $egin{array}{ll} E_1 \ and \ E_2 \end{array}$ | 13½"-22½"           | 13½"-16"* |          |
| F    | No visible organic levels: alluvium has higher clay constituent and is saturate with rust staining                | discerned                                       | 221/2"-33"          |           |          |

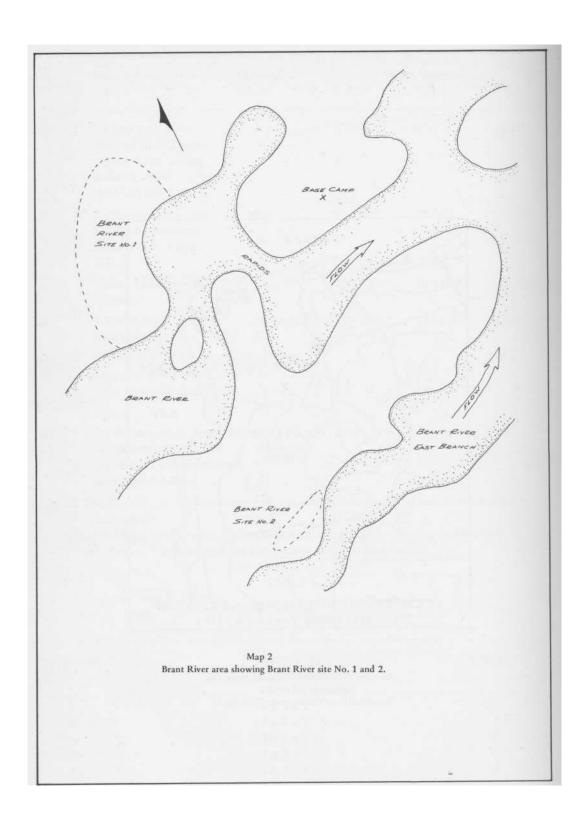
Note: Test Trench 2 is omitted from chart since no cultural material was recovered during excavation

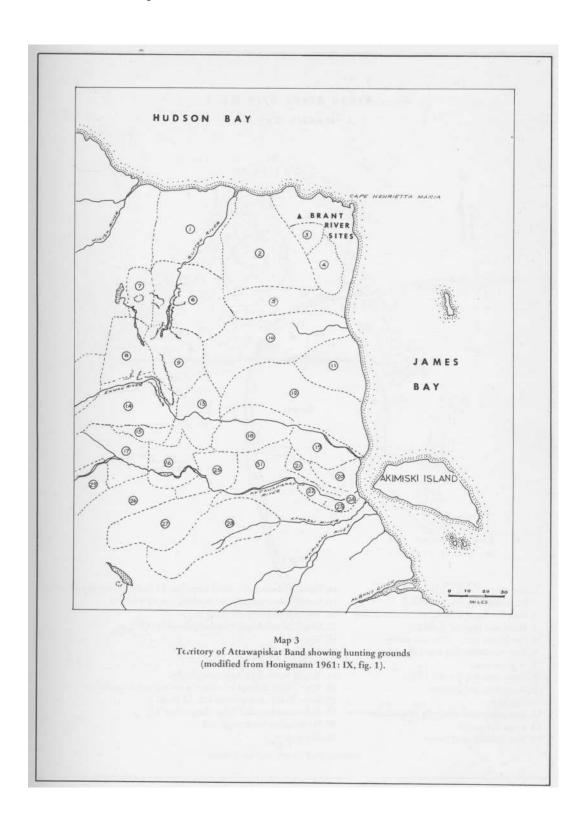
(\*) indicates Test Trench (T.T.) was not excavated below this depth. All depths are indicated with reference to the flat surface of the second terrace.

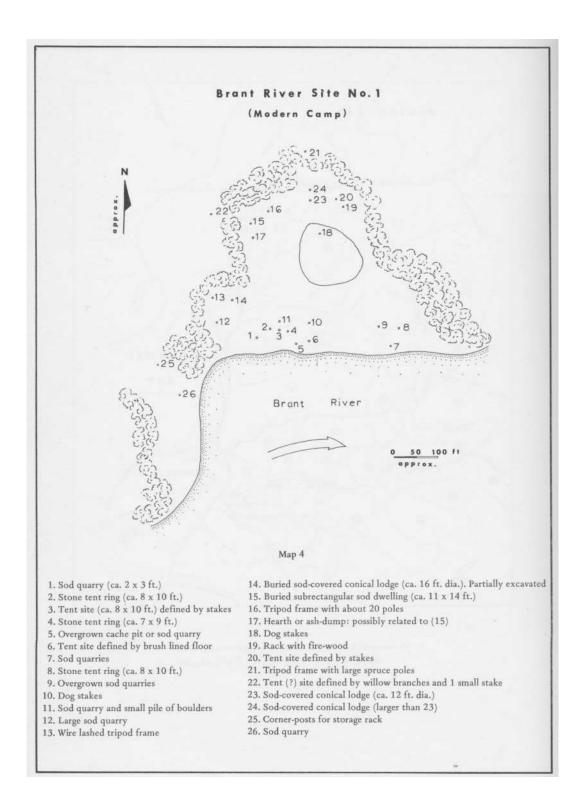
 ${\tt TABLE~1}$  DIMENSIONS AND VOLUME OF TEST TRENCHES 1 TO 6 AT BRANT RIVER SITE NO. 1

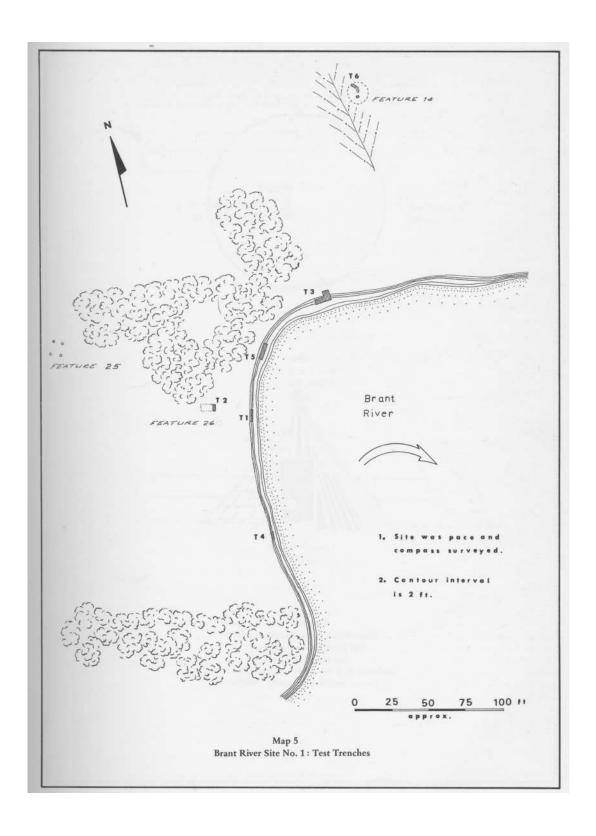
| Test Trench | Dimensions (approximate) | Volume           |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1           | 5 x 5 x 1                | 25               |
| 2           | 2 x 1 x 1                | 2                |
| 3           | 3 x 2 x 1                | 6                |
|             | 2 x 2 x 1                | 4                |
| 4           | 4 x 1 x 1                | 4                |
| 3           | 4 x 2 . 5 x 1            | 10               |
| 6           | 9 x 2 x 1 / 2            | <u>9</u>         |
|             |                          | Total 60 cu. ft. |

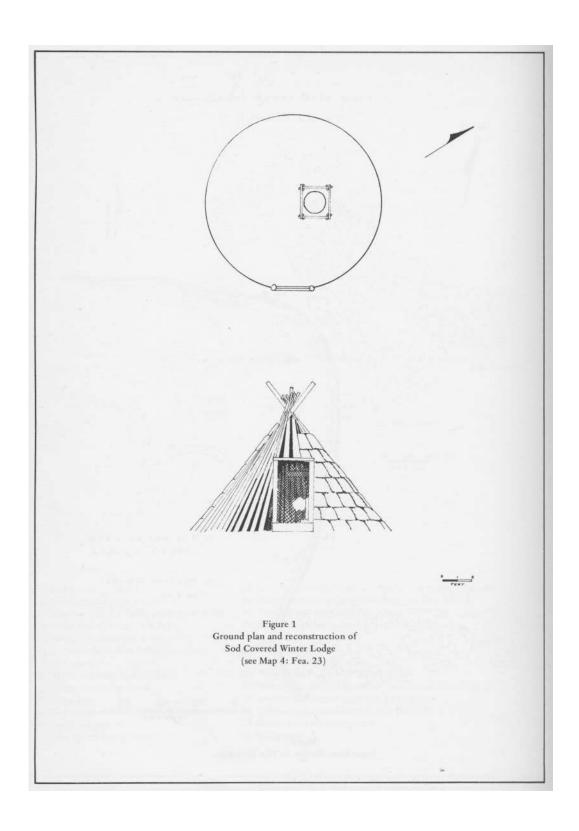


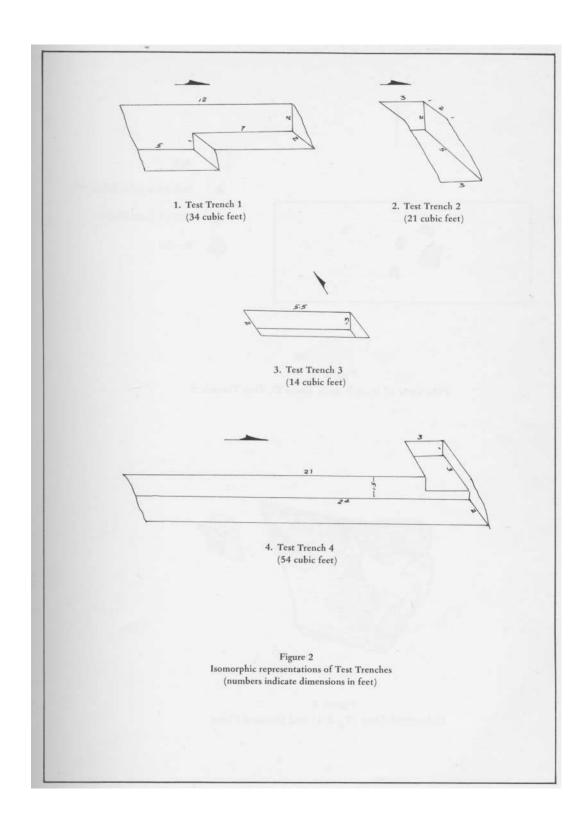












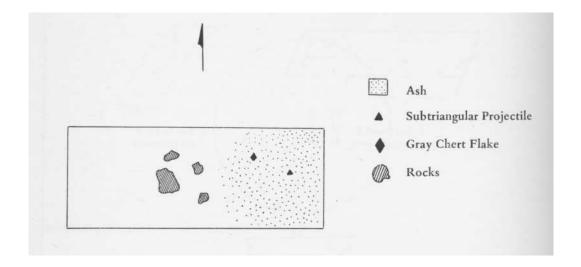
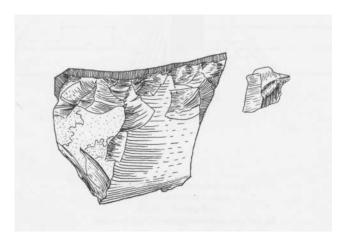


Figure 3
Plan view of hearth area, Zone D, Test Trench 3



 $\label{eq:Figure 4} Figure \ 4 \\ \textbf{Exhausted Core} \ (\textbf{T_4-B-1}) \ \textbf{and Derived Flake}$ 

## O.A.S. No. 22 ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

# ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE BRANT RIVER, POLAR BEAR PARK, ONTARIO, 1972 A PRELIMINARY REPORT

by

## JOHN TOMENCHUK AND WILLIAM N. IRVING

O.A.S. No. 22

Page 35, line 30: "threated" should read "threaded"

Page 52: Appendix I chart should have accompanying caption

"Natural Stratigraphy at Brant River Site Number 2"

Page 58: Figure 1 — include "Brant River Site No. 1" in caption
Page 59: Figure 2 — include "Brant River Site No. 2" in caption
Page 60: Figure 3 — include "Brant River Site No. 2" in caption

Figure 4 — include "Brant River Site No. 2" in caption

Map 6: Brant River Site No. 2: Test Trenches (see page 63 opposite)

