

Tracing the “People of the Sea”: Archaeology and History of the Eeyou Marine Region

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- 1 Archaeology and the Cree Nation Government
- 2 Archaeological Potential of the EMR
- 3 Recent Research Near Waskaganish
- 4 Conclusions

Archaeology and the Cree Nation Government (CNG)

- The Cree Nation Government (formerly Cree Regional Authority) has carried out archaeological projects in many parts of Eeyou Istchee
- Within the CNG, the Cree Culture and Language Department is responsible for archaeology
- Over the decades, collaborative projects have taken place with all of the Cree communities



Traditional Knowledge and Archaeology

- Most of the projects have used Cree traditional knowledge as a starting point for research
- Cree Elders and land-users have pointed out many sites for investigation
- Their knowledge has been critical in understanding how and why these sites were used and in exploring broader patterns of history and land use



Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Program (ACHP)

- ACHP established under Nadoshtin and Boumhounan Agreements (*Paix des braves*)
- Focused on areas affected by hydroelectric development on the Eastmain and the Rupert Rivers
- Cree communities engaged in the process of exploring and preserving their heritage
- Archaeology as part of a broad cultural heritage program



Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Program

- A “Living Heritage” approach in which youth, land-users and elders engaged in activities such as canoe trips, winter walks and feasts
- Researching and creating an archive of the stories and knowledge of the areas affected by the projects
- Passing on knowledge, celebrating the lands and waters and commemoration to remember those buried in the flooded areas



Educational products and activities produced under the ACHP:

- Books and videos related to Cree heritage of the affected areas
- “Remember This” travelling exhibition which toured the Cree communities in 2011 and 2012
- Educational experiences for children such as summer “heritage camps”

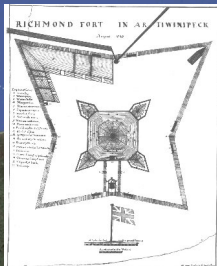


- Archaeology section occupies a well-equipped lab in Oujé-Bougoumou at Anischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute
- Many opportunities for collaboration with professionals in disciplines such as museology, conservation, education, linguistics, etc.
- Collections conserved in Eeyou Istchee for greater accessibility to Cree people



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Coastal Occupation in the 17th and 18th centuries: Documentary Sources



Richmond Fort. Mid-18th century. Regular trade with Yâtiwînipakw (Richmond Gulf) People at Eastmain and Richmond Fort.

Little Whale River, mid-18th century. Beluga whale hunting. People living in several communal dwellings.

Great Whale River, 1744. 157 Indians in three tents living on beluga whale (Thomas Mitchell).



1671. Albabel visits the "People of the Sea" at Miskoutenkasi. Says they came here from "time immemorial" for the purposes of trade.

Charles Fort estab. 1668. Brisk trade with local Crees.

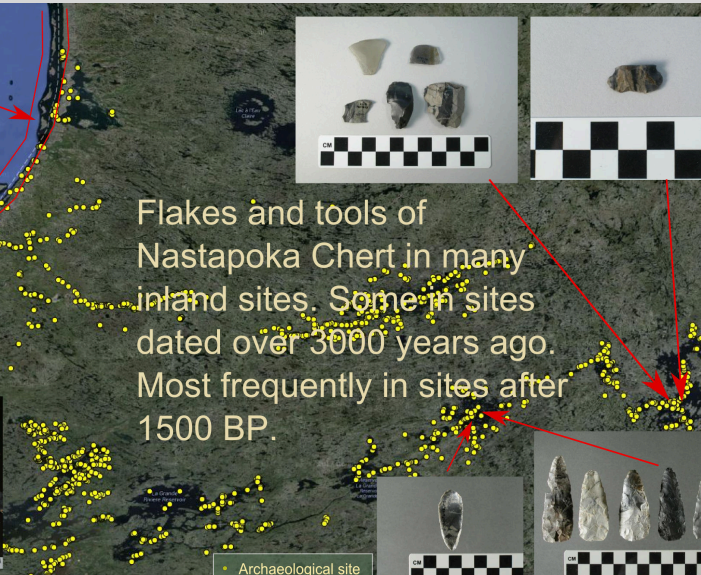
Henry Hudson's expedition 1610-11. Fleeting encounters with local people.



Indirect Evidence from Use of Nastapoka Chert



Nastapoka Chert
Raw material
obtained from
source deposits on
offshore islands

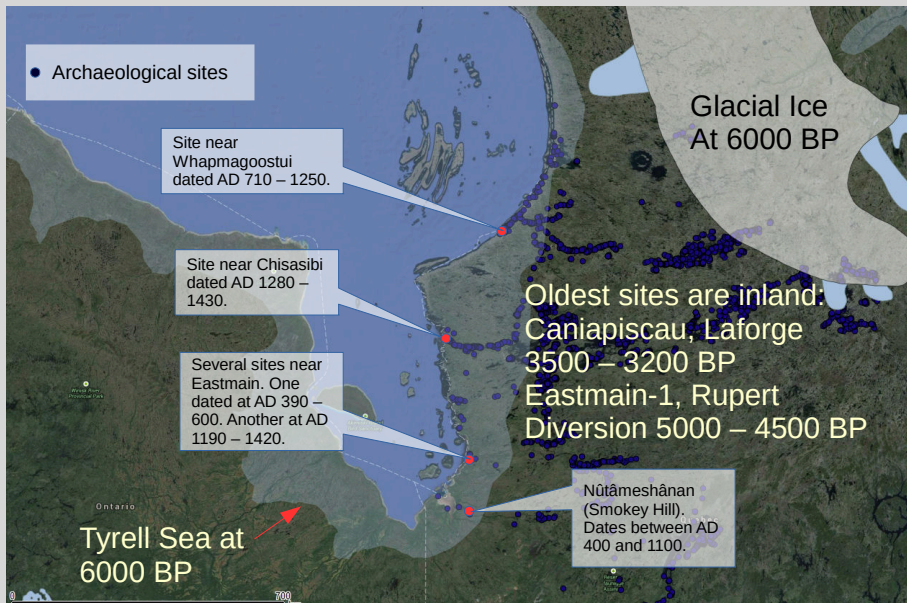


Flakes and tools of
Nastapoka Chert in many
inland sites. Some in sites
dated over 3000 years ago.
Most frequently in sites after
1500 BP.



• Archaeological site

A Dynamic Coastal Environment

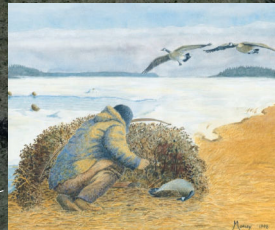


18th and 19th century Gathering Sites for Harvesting Coastal Resources



Mâtawâsis. 18th and 19th century whaling site. Possible earlier components.

Surveys and excavations on large sites where Crees gathered to harvest coastal resources (cisco, geese / swans, beluga)



Askwâpsuânûts, mid-18th century goose / swan harvesting site.



Nûtâmeshânan (Smokey Hill) traditional cisco fishing site. Major 18th and 19th century occupations.



Some Coastal European–EuroCanadian Sites Investigated

Little Whale River
1851 – 1891 post and
“Whale River House”
1793.

Richmond Fort
1750 – 1758. With
Avataq Cultural
Institute. Jurisdictional
issue: Is Cairn Island
part of EMR?

Fort George
1837 – 1980. Ongoing
Excavations in areas of
bank erosion.

Frenchman's Island
James Knight's expedition to
James Bay 1692-93. Ship
winterings late 17th – early
18th century. Northwest Co.
Post: 1803-06.

Charles Fort I. 1668 –
ca. 1681.
Waskaganish Cultural
Institute with support
from CRA

Big River House
1803 – 1816.

Akimiak Island
Bird Sanctuary

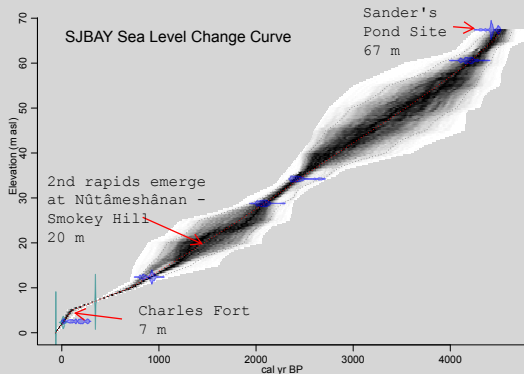
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Sander's Pond Site

- km 28 Waskaganish access road at elevation of 67 m
- Surveyed 2012; test excavations 2013
- ^{14}C dates Cal BP 4517 to 4303 (charcoal) and Cal BP 4240 to 4080 (calcined bones)
- Finished tools and blanks show this was workshop for ground stone tools
- Demonstrates that people were accessing southern James Bay ca. 4300 years ago



New Uplift Curve for Southern James Bay



- Paleo-geographic study in 2012 by Florin Pendea (Lakehead University)
- 10 cores in peat bogs at elevations from 60-10 m amsl; presently ^{14}C dates for marine-riverine transition from 4 cores
- Rate of isostatic rebound of approximately 1.4 m / century

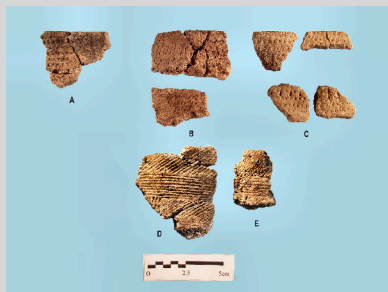
Southern James Bay (Tyrell Sea) and Sander's Pond: Shoreline at 60m



- 4200 years ago—when Sander's Pond was occupied—the shoreline was at about 60 m
- Site located on a long point extending into the Bay
- Point is a headland between Rupert and Broadback river valleys
- Although somewhat disturbed, intact areas of the site have more to reveal concerning the earliest occupations of the coast

Nûtâmeshânan – Smokey Hill

- Excavations in 2010, 2012 and 2013
- Substantial occupations with Middle Woodland ceramics with ^{14}C dates between 1400 and 900 BP (AD 600 – 1100)
- Contrast between historic (17th–18th century AD) and the precontact period hearths
- Question remains concerning the importance of cisco harvesting for earlier occupations



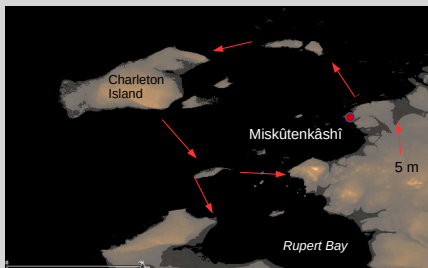
Rupert Bay and Rupert Estuary with Shoreline at 20 m



- 1400 years ago—when Nûtâmeshânan first occupied—shoreline around 20 m
- Figure on left shows shoreline at 20 m
- Site at the head of a long estuary; 2nd rapids almost completely emerged
- Rupert Bay had very different configuration
- Further work necessary to understand when site first used for intensive cisco harvesting

Search for “People of the Sea”

- Brief survey in 2012 at Miskûtenkâshî (north of Boatswain Bay) to find “Miskoutenkasi,” where Albanel visited “People of the Sea” gathered to trade
- Possible strategic point for “island hopping”
- Locations at higher elevations, back from the water, were tested
- Difficult terrain and problems targeting historic camping areas—nothing found :(
- Search for Miskoutenkasi will continue!

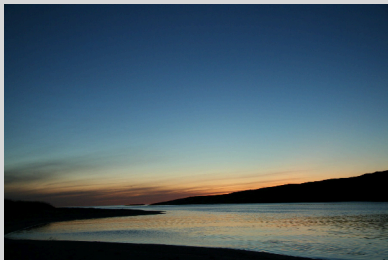


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- Rich archaeological heritage resources of the EMR almost completely unknown
- Shared heritage of Cree, Inuit and European
- Through EMR Crees should play key role in exploring and managing this heritage

Conclusions (cont'd)



- Historical / archaeological sites important for tourism and public education
- Collaboration with Inuit and Avataq Cultural Institute
- Role for CNG in researching and managing this heritage
- Cree knowledge starting point for research
- “Living heritage” and educational approaches developed by the CNG could be applied in EMR