

NIIJII CIRCLE

Ontario ignores First Nations in archeology digs

BY JENNIFER ASHAWASEGAI

THUNDER BAY -- Thousands of artifacts up to 9,000 years old have been excavated at a site near Highway 11/17 and shipped off to Lakehead University without consulting any area First Nations.

"I haven't seen anything come across my desk," says Red Rock Chief Pierre Pelletier, who said he will have his staff double-check because the Ministry of Transportation insists that it consulted with First Nation stakeholders.

Fort William Chief Peter Collins also says his community was not consulted and, even if the provincial ministry did send a letter "this is not meaningful consultation."

MTO responded to an interview request by sending an e-mail claiming that First Nations and First Nation organizations had been sent letters Jan. 17, followed up by e-mails on April 1. "The Ministry and its consultants are more than willing to discuss and accommodate First Nations interest in this project," they wrote.

Chief Pelletier says the person in charge of the dig site - about 40 kilometres east of Thunder Bay - told him that MTO told them to consult with us. "He didn't have a clue on how to do that seeing how he was from out west."

MTO hired archeological firm Western Heritage Services Inc. to undertake the dig. The Alberta-based company specializes in work-

ing in the industry development sector to conduct Heritage Resources Impact Assessments, heritage management and heritage resource development.

Over the past five years, First Nation provincial/territorial organizations have been working with government groups - including Ontario's ministries of Transportation and Aboriginal Affairs -- on the heritage and Burial Sites working group of the Ipperwash Inquiry Priority Action Committee of IIPAC.

Nathan Wright, Justice Coordinator for the Chiefs of Ontario and co-chair of that working group says, "Ontario developed a guideline for archeologists to follow. The province is still not following the guidelines. The incident in the Northern Superior region should not have happened."

It's been 15 years since Dudley George was shot and killed by police at Ipperwash Provincial Park. Dudley George was one of a group of community members occupying the park, and protecting a burial site.

Among the 100 recommendations of the Ipperwash Inquiry report released three years ago are two pertaining to consultation and accommodation and seven related to heritage and burial sites.

"The provincial government should promote respect and understanding of the duty to consult and accommodate within relevant provincial agencies and Ontario municipalities," reads one recommendation.



Deputy Grand Chief Glen Hare on controversial dig near Fort William First Nation.

The only recommendation on heritage and burial sites that has been

The Report recommends that government and Aboriginal stakeholders develop policies acknowledging the sites, and promote First Nations participation in decision-making, which should eventually be incorporated into government legislation and policies.

"The provincial government, in consultation with First Nations and

Aboriginal organizations, should determine the most effective means of advising First Nations and Aboriginal peoples of plans to excavate burial or heritage sites."

Chief Collins says if MTO wanted to follow proper consultation protocol, they should have met with Chief and Council at Fort William First Nation.

"A traditional ceremony would have taken place prior to the excavation," he says, and participation

in the project would have included a community member on site for the duration of the dig, which is to wrap up at the end of October.

For now though, Chief Pelletier says the site near Thunder Bay is being closely monitored. "We've been keeping a very close watch on it. In fact we have a community member working with them on a three-month program that we put together with the Union of Ontario Indians, so that we'll have some-

body there to document what's coming out of there. Then we'll decide what we'll do once we see the level of information."

According to MTO, the artifacts from the dig "will remain at Lakehead University indefinitely ... to enable long-term curation of the collections so that they be studied and used for educational purposes in Thunder Bay and throughout the region."

Developers bulldozing historic Native sites

BY GAIL SWAINSON/TORONTO STAR

TORONTO -- The province must ban the bulldozing of important native sites by developers without the consultation or even notification of First Nations people, says a spokesperson with the Huron-Wendat nation.

"We are not against development, but there should be a duty to consult so we can work together," said Luc Laine, Ontario spokesperson for the Quebec-based Wendake First Nation. "We are pretty upset with what is going on out there, particularly with what is happening at Teston Rd."

Laine's comments came after the archaeological excavation this month of a small soybean field at the northeast corner of Teston Rd. and Jane St. in Vaughan.

Laine says native stakeholders only found out about the dig by accident, although it is thought to be on or near the site of a historically and culturally important Huron village from the 13th and 14th centuries. He contends this dig should have led to some form of notification.

The three-week excavation, which included tearing up the field with earthmoving equipment, was wrapped up by archaeologist Keith Powers in August.

The dig site is also just metres away from a mass grave containing the remains of some 400 Hurons, discovered in 2005 during the widening of Teston Rd.

When Huron-Wendat officials heard of the dig a few weeks ago, their Toronto lawyer David Donnelly frantically emailed Tourism and Culture Minister Michael

Chan and Vaughan planning officials, demanding without success that the work be halted until the Huron-Wendat could be drawn into the process.

"In the old days, at least the First Nations got muskets and beads when we took their sites," Donnelly said. "Now they can't even get a phone call returned."

There is currently no legal requirement that First Nations be consulted in such cases, though there is a patchwork of legal decisions and a consultation recommendation from the Ipperwash Commission of Inquiry, which found that 8,000 native village and burial sites have been destroyed province-wide.

A 2004 court decision in Ontario also ruled that the province has a duty to consult with native stakeholders when selling property.

But there are no provincial regulations currently in place requiring consultation when native sites are found on private property, although a set of guidelines is "imminent," says ministry spokesperson Danell Balfour.

"The ministry is updating the standards and guidelines for archaeology to bring more consistency and predictability," Balfour said. "Aboriginal engagement will be a key part of the new standards and guidelines."

Balfour said the ministry has been in contact with the Huron-Wendat since the Teston Rd. dig came to light and will have further talks next week, all aimed at getting a process in place requiring notification of First Nations groups when village or ossuary sites are discovered on private land. When York Region road crews uncovered the Teston Rd. gravestone remains in 2005, the region called an immediate halt to construction -- as required under provincial law when human remains are found -- and notified native groups. A study determined that the burial site was a Huron-Wendat ossuary.

In the end, the road was moved slightly to accommodate a new gravestone, and the bones were later reburied with ceremony under the eye of elders representing First Nations from across Ontario and Quebec.

Landowner Gold Park Homes refused to comment on the matter when contacted. No development application has been received for the site. However, Powers, the archaeologist, said the developer informed him they were proceeding with a dig because "they wanted to make sure there was nothing on the site to impact development."

Powers said Gold Park officials were told best archaeological practices dictated that First Nations representatives should be notified of the dig, but they refused. Powers was asked by Donnelly, ministry and Vaughan officials at the site to stop excavation until proper notification could take place but he told them Gold Park wanted the dig to continue.

"They didn't want anything to hold this up. They wanted to go fast," Powers said. "They didn't want to contact aboriginal groups. That is clear. But I don't want to be the bad guy here. I did what my employer said to do."

Based on what he uncovered at the site during his dig, the village site is likely located mostly in a forested area adjacent and to the north of the field, Power said.

The tips of longhouse shadows found at the northern edge of the field and the small scattering of artifacts at the site all led him to deduce the village is in the forested area, which is environmentally protected and can never be built on, Powers said.

The village, which is considered important both archaeologically and historically, would likely contain storage pits, hearths, post moulds and other longhouse remains. There are even possibly more burials.

Student supports growth of children's program

BY CAITLIN DOBRATZ

As a summer student at the North Bay Indian Friendship Centre, and I want to acknowledge the Centre and thank them for providing me with employment as a Student Program Assistant in the Aboriginal Best Start program.

This job saw me working closely with Jayne Jansen, the Aboriginal Best Start Coordinator. As a Métis student going into my second year at Nipissing University, and studying Social Welfare and Development and Sociology, this opportunity couldn't have been a more perfect fit.

The Aboriginal Best Start Program offers a chance for our young children in the district to experience Aboriginal culture by participating in various teachings on First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditions and life ways. We work with educators and other service providers to ensure that Aboriginal children have their learning needs

met in a learning environment that understands respects and incorporates the values, traditions and lifestyles of Aboriginal people. Our program promotes awareness and respect for Aboriginal cultures through a variety of fun educational activities.

During July and August, children and their parents at the Best Start child and family centres in the Nipissing district had an opportunity to listen to some storytelling on the strawberry harvesting moon season and had an opportunity to create their own edible moon. These moons were made from home made bannock dipped in maple syrup or a choice of a mini sponge cake shaped a form of a moon topped with some fresh picked strawberries and whipped cream.

Many more interesting cultural

teachings and workshops are on the horizon for the upcoming year. Family involvement is strongly encouraged at all our Best Start centres. I encourage parents to check out the nearest Best Start location to learn more about the services that are available.

I helped to create our Aboriginal Best Start program binders and resource kits, which will be taken into schools this September. These resource kits are filled with Aboriginal information and lessons including poems, songs, crafts, food recipes and much more. I also had the chance to go into some of the Best Start locations in the Nipissing District to do some storytelling and creative crafts with the children. This was a great experience for me

because the children really enjoyed themselves and we received such a positive response at all of the locations we visited.

I am walking away from The North Bay Indian Friendship Centre with a great sense of fulfillment knowing that I have had a hand in shaping a program that will enrich the lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in the North Bay area.

The Friendship Centre values education and has graciously provided me with the opportunity to gain valuable work-related experience while helping to expand my knowledge on the Aboriginal population. All of these experiences will help to prepare me for my future career as a Social Worker and for this I am thankful.

For more information about the Aboriginal Best Start program, call Jayne Jansen at the North Bay Indian Friendship Centre at 472-2811. Miigwech.



Jayne Jansen and Caitlin Dobratz

Sagamok grad/mom put in 18-hour days

BY JORGE ANTONIO VALLEJO

TORONTO -- "I belong to Sagamok," says Ericka Brosseau, 28, with pride.

A hug from her mother welcomed her as she walked through a sea of graduates following June's ceremony at Convocation Hall at University of Toronto.

The certificate clutched in Ericka's hand represented two years of hard work in the Masters of Information Studies Program.

Brosseau describes those two years - consisting of days that started at 6 a.m. and ended at midnight - as "tough."

Raising a baby - Zoe, aged three - working at the First Nations House University of Toronto resource centre, and studying in a competitive Masters program, Brosseau thrived under pressure.

Facing adversity is nothing new for her. Born in Sudbury and growing up in nearby mining towns of Cartier and Onaping Falls, Brosseau recalls being the only Native girl in her class, and being the subject of ridicule for being "different."

An avid reader and music buff, she switched to the Sudbury

Performing Arts School at the age of ten.

"I couldn't handle the small-townness anymore. I was different than the rest of the kids," says Brosseau. She learned to read before junior kindergarten, and her mom refused to buy her books because she would finish them within 45 minutes.

"I was at the top of my class. I wasn't necessarily the geeky kid. When you're the smart kid in class there's kind of an animosity that exists in any class."

"I read a lot," says Brosseau of her youth. A lover of English classics and Russian literature, Brosseau read widely, from Dickens to Dostoyevsky to Orwell to Anne Rice.

Half Acadian, Brosseau was a French Immersion Honour student throughout high school and a fluent speaker today. She describes her family of hard workers as coming from a long line of trappers, miners, rail workers, and lumberjacks. That hard work ethic transferred to Brosseau and her seven years of study in different universities in Ontario.

Earning an Honours BA in History in 2006, she traveled Europe and had a child during a

two-year break, before being coaxed by a friend to enter the Masters in Information Studies program at University of Toronto in 2008.

"I'm really into history," says Brosseau. "My major interest is 19th Century history with all the revolutions and the revolts and uprisings." With such a love for the past, archiving is a perfect fit for the Sagamok First Nation citizen.

"Archives is where history is. It's the historical records that are used to support historical arguments," says Brosseau. "You need archives because libraries are full of published books. Archives are separate documents like photographs, letters; things aren't published as a set."

Recently starting a website, <http://aboriginalarchives.info>, Brosseau says she wanted to promote discussion about archives in Aboriginal communities.

"What I want to do is make communities build their own archival programs. I want to facilitate it but I don't want to do it all myself."

"I think Aboriginal communities really have to take a hold of their own history," says Brosseau. She credits her mother for

much of her success: "I don't think I would have been able to do this without my mom because she's been such a help during this and she did it because she wanted Zoe and me to have a good life."



Ericka Brosseau

Waabi-ma-iiing Traditional Teaching Lodge Presents: "Voices from the Past, for Tomorrow" September 21, 22, 23, 2010 at the Chippewa Park, Thunder Bay, Ontario



FOR REGISTRATION OR INFORMATION Contact Cindy Crowe, 807-473-9851; 1-888-852-5856

www.greywolfteachinglodge.ca



Nijii Circle Vision Statement

"To build relationships which create respect and understanding among all peoples in the Anishinabek Nation territory."

Nijii Circle Initiative in Public Education

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