

Submission to the Anishinabek News - May 2010

Digging Ipperwash Park

KETTLE & STONY POINT FN – Ipperwash Project Coordinator Nicole Latulippe spoke with Brandy George, citizen of Kettle and Stony Point. Her mom's family is mainly from Kettle Point and her father's family is from Stony Point. For the Ipperwash Park Archaeological Assessment, George is the Project Archaeologist responsible for mobilization and project planning. She works directly with the community – providing updates and conducting the actual fieldwork. As well, the project is being conducted under her licence which means that she is responsible for any artifacts found and any notes and pictures taken until an appropriate community facility can be built to store them.

What is going on at Ipperwash in terms of the archeological work?

Under the Land Transfer Agreement signed last year, an archaeological assessment was required in order to document any sites of cultural interest. These sites may include sacred sites, archaeological sites, traditional usage areas, and the like. The work is set to continue this year to finish up the archaeological assessment from last year. The way that I tried to organize and conduct the archaeology was in a way that was respectful to the community. For example, by being aware of medicinal, traditionally used, or rare plants, the crew were able to avoid these plants so they remained undisturbed. In cases where these plants could not be avoided, they were carefully dug up and then replanted. I also checked throughout the assessment to ensure that any ceremonies that needed to be conducted were done prior to work in areas potentially considered of high interest to the communities. I also gave opportunity for myself and the crew to smudge if we wished. As a show of respect to the knowledge gained from the artifacts, they were also smudged and kept in breathable paper bags instead of the standard plastic. It was also very important to talk to community members and elders as they came through to see what was being done in the park.

When did the study begin? When is it expected to end? What would be some expected outcomes of the work?

The archaeological assessment began in Spring of 2009 and is at this point an ongoing project. The major outcome of this work would be to clear one of the hurdles in the way of the land transfer. To transfer land in Ontario, it generally requires an archaeological assessment to document any sites of cultural importance and to suggest ways to protect or excavate any of these sites. It is also hoped that the information gained from the assessment would add to the already rich cultural background of the communities involved.

Where in particular are your sites of interest – in the park, at the beach, in and around the military camp?

This assessment was focused on all of the lands within the boundaries of the former park itself. This included the beach, former campsites and day use areas. I am unable at this time to say anything specific in regards to what may have been found. This information may be released at a later date at the discretion of the Kettle Point and Aazhoodena communities.

Why is this work important?

This work is extremely important for a few different ways. Any archeological sites or artifacts discovered would lend physical evidence to the oral history that has been passed on by elders and families for years. Anything archaeological would also bring potentially new information to these existing oral histories. As well, any archaeological sites and artifacts discovered would hopefully provide another way to relate the oral histories to those living today. When you can see the objects left by your ancestors as they went through their own daily lives, it brings a sense of pride and connection to know that others were there before you. I think by adding to the cultural and oral histories, the artifacts and sites found during any archaeological assessment in traditional territory can help communities to say this was us back then, this is us now and we will still be here in the future. Community-based archaeology is important and this is where we need to get to within Ontario archaeology, and that is something that I hope to be able to work on any way I can.