

Chapter 2

Cultural Heritage

The Ottawa River is truly unique and significant on a national level. It is worthy of Canadian Heritage River status because of its extraordinary cultural heritage values, which derive from a particular geographical and natural context. The events most central to the history and formation of Canada occurred along and because of the Ottawa River, including Champlain's explorations, the fur trade, the square timber and lumber trade, and the related, shifting relationships between First Nations Peoples, French and English cultures. The Ottawa River was both the scene for these events and enabled them: the extensive watershed and sheer length of the river permitted routes for travel, exploration, and access to furs, trading partners and forests.

Human habitation along the river dates back over 8000 years. The history of the Algonquin Nation is intrinsically linked to the Ottawa River watershed, and the Algonquin heartland has always included the entire length of the Ottawa River. Evidence of wide networks of trading and communications existed thousands of years before Europeans followed suit.

Much of the early European exploration of North America began with a trip up the Ottawa River, whether in search of the Northwest Passage, mapping the Mississippi, or exploring the river itself. Many of the key explorers in Canadian history will be remembered for their exploits and discoveries along the Ottawa River, beginning with Champlain and his emissaries, and followed by Nicollet, Radisson, La Vérendrye, De Troyes, Jolliet, Mackenzie and Franklin.

Some of these explorers traveled up the tributaries of the Ottawa River to establish trade relationships with First Nations communities, laying the groundwork for the rapid expansion of the fur trade. This trading network quickly became the foundation of France's North American colonial economy, and led to the cultural development of the now famous *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* era. Later, British competition led to the creation of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies, key players in Canada's economic and political development.

The Ottawa Waterway attracted thousands of European immigrants who joined the logging and farming communities developing along its shores. The Ottawa River's limitless waterpower for mills and capacity for transporting logs first drew settlers, and these sites eventually became permanent settlements. Descendants of Irish, French Canadian, Scottish and other nationalities produced a unique Ottawa Valley culture that is expressed in language, music and dance.

The great white pines of the Ottawa River Valley were used to build the ships Britain needed for its war against France. As European demands for timber decreased, new markets in the northern United States used lumber from the Ottawa River Valley to build the growing communities of Boston, New York and Chicago. The timber trade of the Ottawa Valley benefited from the transportation corridors the river and its tributaries provided. These waterways were at the heart of the distribution process, and enabled large volumes of wood to be transported along even the narrowest tributaries. The Ottawa River's central role

in the transportation of lumber can therefore be said not only to have largely shaped the early social and economic development of the Ottawa River Valley, but to have affected the economies and policies of Great Britain, France, and New England, and, of course, to have contributed to the development of Canada as an emerging nation.

The canal and steamboating era involved localized transformations of the river environment of the Ottawa. With these modifications, the Ottawa River permitted even more extensive travel along the Ottawa, transporting immigrants and goods. An important part of the industrial heritage of the Ottawa River, canals and steamboats helped shape the settlements along the river.

Hydroelectric development over the past century has even more dramatically transformed the Ottawa River, impacting on its environment, economy and settlement. Hydroelectric development on the Ottawa was intertwined with the rise of the pulp and paper industry. Settlement followed this industrial and energy development that was crucial to the growth of the economies of both Quebec and Ontario.

2.1 Ancient History of the Upper Ottawa River and Lake Temiskaming

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The following archaeological overview provides a non-comprehensive pre-contact historical account of the Upper Ottawa River and Lake Temiskaming.

2.1.1 Cultural Pre-Contact History

Archaeologists generally divide northeastern Ontario's pre-contact history into the following generalized temporal/cultural sequences that are described below:

- Late Palaeo (circa 8,000 - 6,000 BC)
- Shield Archaic (circa 6,000 - 500 BC)
- Middle Woodland (circa 500 BC - AD 1200)
- Late Woodland (circa AD 1200 - AD 1600)
- Historic (circa AD 1600 - present)

Archaeologists classify the pre-contact groups of Aboriginal Peoples (as listed above) according to the artefacts they left behind. Because of the wet climate of northern Ontario, virtually the only materials that have survived to the present day are those made of stone, bone or clay. The way in which the stone tools or clay pots were made was strongly governed by the cultural traditions of the people. Also, the types and patterns of the finished products, as well as the way in which they were made, changed only slowly with time. This allows for some separation of past groups based on technology.

The picture is complicated by the fact that the earliest inhabitants of northern Ontario were not large in numbers, and because they followed a lifestyle of hunting and gathering food, they tended to be very mobile. In addition, they tended to follow certain species of animal. Thus, if a band was used to hunting Caribou in an area, and the Caribou moved further north, the band would move after the herds it was hunting, thus giving the impression that they had disappeared. This is in contrast to the traditional way of life of later First Nations Peoples who had traditional territories and family hunting grounds.

2.1.2 Descriptions of the Various Archaeological Cultures along the Upper Ottawa River

Late Palaeo (circa 8,000 - 6000 BC)

There are no known Paleo or Plano "early man" sites along the Upper Ottawa, although the Jordan site on Lake Abitibi may date to that era and the bottom component at the Fort Témiscamingue (Obadjiwan) narrows site on Lake Temiskaming may also date to over 6,000 years ago.

Ten thousand years ago the Upper Ottawa / Temiskaming area was covered by a more than one-kilometre thick layer of glacial ice during the last Ice Age. Numerous area rock outcrops are marked by the scour

marks of the glacier as it moved south. Between eight and nine thousand years ago, the climate warmed and the ice, which was stalled just south of North Bay, started to melt.

It took about 640 years before the major part of the ice sheet disappeared from the Lake Temiskaming area. The scenery it left behind, however, was much different from what we see today. The deep waters of Lake Barlow-Ojibway covered what is known today as the Little Clay Belt and Lake Temiskaming, and even flooded over the Height of Land. This lake was created by the remains of the glaciers to the north, preventing the northward drainage of the rivers to James Bay, as well as by a great mass of glacial debris blocking the southward flow of what is now the Ottawa River.

As time passed, the northern ice melted while the outflow from the lake cut through the debris blocking its flow south. In all, it probably took some two thousand years for the landscape of the area to become something like the one with which we are familiar today. Eventually this lake shrank so that it became two lakes with Lake Barlow covering what is now the Little Clay Belt. The surface of the land, however, would have been quite different from today. The residue left by the glacier would have been a thick mixture of ice and soil, much like the present day tundra of the Canadian Arctic.

The Plano peoples may have lived here some eight thousand years ago in what is now the Upper Ottawa River. This subarctic landscape would have supported small trees and animals, notably Caribou. Certainly, there would also have been First Nations Peoples hunting and living on the tundra. However, to date, no trace has been found of these first Aboriginal Peoples.

Slowly, the climate warmed and the ice melted from the tundra and the area as we know it today appeared. This process was completed some five thousand years ago and coincided with a climate that was warmer than today. In fact, the climate eventually became warm enough that, in the dry bed of Lake Barlow, the Little Clay Belt, the vegetation growing there was similar to that now found in southern Ontario. Shield Archaic Aboriginal Peoples lived in this area some five to six thousand years ago.

Shield Archaic Peoples (6000 B.C.-500 B.C.)

One of the pre-contact cultural developments is the Archaic. Developmental aspects of prehistoric cultures are based on technological and stylistic differences and variations in raw materials as well as the geographic distribution of technology, style, etc. The Shield Archaic Peoples, which may involve one or more separate cultural phases or groups, were widespread across northern Ontario and may have evolved their culture and technology from the preceding Plano peoples who lived in the Thunder Bay and Manitoulin Island areas. These Plano people originated to the south and west of the Ottawa River and may have come to this area in pursuit of their favourite animal, the Caribou. It is suspected that they lived in wood framed tents, presumably covered with skins or bark. However, as mentioned above, about five to six thousand years ago, the vegetation in the Upper Ottawa changed to resemble that now found to the south and a new group of Aboriginal Peoples moved into the area. This culture is called the "Laurentian Archaic" tradition. They appear to have come from the south and east up the Ottawa River and their remains are found in many areas of Ontario. These new Archaic Peoples found ample food supplies in the Clay Belt area.

Although it is possible to identify local differences in the way they made their stone tools, it is clear that members of the Shield Archaic cultural group lived in all parts of the Canadian Shield, from the Northwest Territories through to Nova Scotia. The Shield Archaic people lived in wood framed tents that, perhaps, looked like wigwams, and they were also the first people living in the Upper Ottawa to use metal: in this case, tools made from natural or native copper. People of the Shield Archaic tradition also started a trend away from a livelihood focused upon the hunting of large game animals like Caribou, and instead concentrated on fishing and hunting small mammals. The Shield Archaic people lived in Northern Ontario until around 800 B.C. and their artefacts and sites have been found throughout the district.

Laurel Peoples (500 B.C. - 500/900 A.D.)

The Laurel Peoples cultural tradition marks the first appearance of pottery in the region. Laurel sites tend to be found along major lakes and rivers. Moose and beaver were important food sources, as were fish. Clay pot making in North America was probably an invention of the Indians living in the southwest United States. Slowly, over trade routes, the technique spread across the continent and, quite possibly, was invented separately at other times and places. In any event, the Aboriginal Peoples who used both clay pots and metal (copper) tools appeared in the Lake Temiskaming area at about the time of the birth of Christ and are called the "Laurel" or "Middle Woodland" people. Aboriginal Peoples of the Laurel tradition also may have originally come from the south. They lived in fair numbers in southern Ontario and Quebec as well as the northern United States. Like their predecessors, they hunted the smaller mammals and fished extensively. The Laurel people also liked to set up camps besides the shores of the larger rivers and lakes and it is clear from the amount of use these people made of area rivers such as the Montreal River and the Blanche River that these were favourite camping areas. At the same time, the Aboriginal population of North America was expanding and the Laurel people had many links with other groups of Aboriginal Peoples in North America.

Late Pre-Contact and Historic First Nations Peoples (A.D. 500/900 - 1600 A.D.)

These Peoples were the groups who lived in northeastern Ontario just prior to the arrival of Europeans and European trade goods in what is now Canada. Many of these groups are known on the basis of their pottery vessels and distinctive decorations found on them. Pottery traditions found in the area include

Blackduck, Selkirk, and Ontario Iroquois. They are the direct ancestors of the present day Ojibwa, Cree and Northern Algonquin Peoples, all of whom call themselves "Anishnabeg" and speak various Algonquian languages. "Anishnabeg" means "real people" or "human beings." The self-designation Anishnabeg is common to a number of tribal groupings, all of whom speak dialects of the Ojibwa language. Other members of this dialect group include the Algonquin, the Mississauga, the Ottawa, the Potawatomi and the Sauteaux.

Late pre-contact Aboriginal Peoples used stone tools and were skilled at making ceramic pots and other artefacts. The tradition of hunting small mammals and relying heavily on fishing continued. People lived in hide and bark tents and used birch bark canoes for transportation. Their camp remains are found throughout the Upper Ottawa River and on Lake Temiskaming. As well, trade routes were developed and the people congregated in large numbers during the summer to trade, meet relatives and, in some places, mined flint/chert for stone tools and ochre for red paint. At the same time, the various groups of related Late Woodland people culturally evolved into the modern Anishnabek tribes and bands of Ojibway, Cree, and Algonquin with which we are familiar today.

It is probable that the late pre-contact and historic inhabitants of the Upper Ottawa and Lake Temiskaming in the 1400s and 1500s were most closely related to the Ottawa Valley 'Algonquin'. However, the ability to connect prehistoric populations in Ontario to historic groups such as the Cree, Ojibway and Algonquin, is extremely diminished by the New York Iroquois raids during the mid and late 1600s which caused a considerable movement and relocation of people. This, and the growing use of European trade goods and a 'fur trade' economy, created potential confusion as to group identities during the later historic periods.

Summary

After the last ice age, the melting of the ice and the warming of the climate, there may have been Plano people present in the Lake Temiskaming area as early as 8000 years ago. The earliest evidence of peoples living in the Upper Ottawa Valley was about 6000 years ago with the Shield Archaic Peoples, who may have come in search of caribou. Around 500 BC the Laurel peoples appeared and are known for their pottery and their choice of riverside campsites. From 500 AD until about 1600 the late Pre-Contact Peoples lived in the river valley, leaving numerous archaeological sites throughout the area. The Pre-Contact Peoples were the direct ancestors of today's Ojibwa, Cree and Northern Algonquin Peoples, and were known for using birch bark canoes for transportation. They were probably related to today's Ottawa Valley Algonquin Peoples.