



ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER

Issue No 1: December 2012 & January 2013

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

Welcome to the 1st issue of the Archaeological Society of Alberta Archaeological Newsletter!

The Power of the Atlatl

by Janice Andreas, ASA Southeastern Centre

The Southeastern Alberta Archaeological Society otherwise known as Medicine Hat Centre meets the third Wednesday of the month. We usually have speakers but in September we did something different; we brought in Ralph and David Heydlhauff from Manyberries to give a demonstration of atlatl throwing. Anna and John Brumley of Havre, MT. had spoken highly of David and Ralph's enthusiastic support in the demonstrations and atlatl competitions held during Open House days at the Wahkpa Chu'gn Buffalo Jump and their special knack for teaching everyone how to throw. (Under their guidance a three year old girl hit the target at the open house this year.)

It was a last minute request but they were game to make the two hour trip to Medicine Hat. They supplied all the equipment and we just had to find an area that could be roped off - they suggested 300 yards of distance or preferably an embankment as a backstop. Thankfully the Police Point Nature Centre staff were supportive as usual and supplied the necessary location. When we saw the distance roped off as requested some of us laughed - little did we know of the gifts of the atlatl.

The first gift was the power of attraction. People walking by just had to come over and see what we were doing. At first they were shy of trying it, "no thanks, I'll just watch - well maybe ... then, hey! You've got to try this!"

The second gift was instant passion for it. I soon saw that this gift was a double edged sword. People were laughing, cheering or loudly groaning and after a few turns it was a struggle to politely step aside. Hmm, I began to wonder who I was going to elbow to get my turn.

Finally I was up. Now there is a mistake that everyone makes when they first throw the atlatl. I had heard Ralph and David say over and over "don't stop, let your arm follow through". I was ready and with the first throw I ... *did not* follow directions. Rats! only two more tries. In a moment of brilliance born of desperation I visualized whipping the ground in front of me; the atlatl sailed through the air. Yay! Of course I didn't hit the target but geez I went past the target - what more do you expect from me? I'd discovered third power of the atlatl - even my little chicken arms could make me feel like superman.

As daylight faded we wrapped it up. One of our members, 11 year Kale had shown a real talent for throwing and I heard him say to his family as they left "Dad that's what I want for Christmas".

"Me too" I thought. Now I can hardly wait to book the Heydlhauffs for another demo next year. Of course I'm not going to advertise it. It will be just Kale and me hitting that bull's-eye and having fun.

Strathcona Archaeological Society Flintknapping Workshop

by Christie Grekul

On Saturday November 24th the Strathcona Archaeological Society hosted a Introduction to Flintknapping Workshop at the University of Alberta. This workshop, the first one held by the SAS, was a huge success! The event was organized by Kurtis Blaikie-Birkigt and and led by Sean Lynch.

Sean Lynch is an Department of Anthropology MA candidate at the U of A with the Baikal Hokkaido Archaeology Project. Sean's MA research is an obsidian sourcing project on Rebun Island, Japan. He is using portable X-ray fluorescence to characterize obsidian artifacts and source them.

Sean started flintknapping during his undergraduate degree at McGill University. "Flintknapping got me hooked on archaeology," Sean shared. "I had a

blast making tools, perfecting my craft, reading about knapping, and watching YouTube videos on it." Sean feels that flintknapping is a very accessible form of archaeology that attracts participants of all ages: "It grabs the attention of the public and is the oldest representation of everyone's ancestry."

Fourteen participants took in the workshop, including anthropology students, members of the public, and people interested in learning traditional life skills. Participants learned the basics of flintknapping and the SAS is planning on hosting another introductory workshop in early 2013, followed by a more advanced workshop led by Tim Rast.



Three novice knappers learn the tricks of the trade. Left to right: Lee Solotki, Nathan Kowalski, and Stu Blaikie.



Rigel Borch, a 10 year old fiddle player who had never flintknapped

ASA December 2012 and January 2013 Events

Contact Christie Grekul at cgrekul@shaw.ca for detailed information on any of these events

Dec. 3: "The Farwell's Trading Post," Bill Perry at New Dynasty Restaurant in Lethbridge.

Dec 13: SAS Christmas Social at the RAM in Edmonton.

Jan 15: Lethbridge AGM: "Graffiti Removal at Writing-On-Stone," John Easton at the Community Room, Lethbridge Public Library, Downtown Branch.

Jan 16: Bodo Archaeological Society meeting.

Jan 16: "Industries if Angkor Project: Material Production and the Decline of the Khmer Empire, Cambodia," Mitch Hendrickson at the U of C.

Jan 16: "The Gatling Gun of Batoche: The impact of American technology on the Canadian battle. Bruce Shepard at Police Point Nature Centre, Medicine Hat

Jan 17: "Seeing Things: How a North American Archaeologist looks at African Wildlife and Heritage," Jack Ives at the U of A.



Sean Lynch, showing off an obsidian tool that he recently crafted.

Call for Papers

38th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Society of Alberta

May 10-12, 2013 in Medicine Hat, AB

Papers and posters on all topics relating to archaeology, history, and the heritage of Alberta, the Great Plains, and Canada are welcomed. We particularly wish to encourage presentation from the consulting community of interesting finds documented during the course of CRM projects. In keeping with the ASA mandate, we also encourage the participation from students, avocational archaeologists, and the public.

Please contact Janice Andreas at Banjomh1@telus.net for more information or to submit an abstract. Submission deadline is February 1, 2013. Also visit www.arkyalberta.com for more information.

2013 ASA Awards

The ASA has established two awards that may be awarded each year to recognize the work of an individual(s). Winners of these awards are honoured during the ASA annual general meeting.

Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award is granted to an individual(s) who has provided a distinguished, long-term record of services to their local centre of the Society, participated in the provincial level of the society, contributed to the discipline of archaeology in the province, increased awareness and/or education on public issues of archaeology, and contributed to the promotion of the Society.

Johan (John) Dormaar Award

The John Dormaar Award is granted to an individual who, through production of a substantive piece of written work, has significantly advanced the understanding and appreciation of Alberta archaeology and related disciplines.

For more information on either of these awards or to nominate someone, please contact Jim McMurchy at jnmc@telus.net

Hunting Buffalo Under the Ground: Encounters in Heritage Management *by Claire Poirier*

At a well-known archaeological site in Alberta a diverse group of individuals gather together on a large tarp to participate in a ceremonial feast. A Plains Cree woman, having discovered that the ancestral spirits at this site were hungry, had invited a ceremonialist from her community to carry out the feast. I tagged along since, as an anthropologist studying archaeological and heritage management practices in Alberta, the gathering greatly sparked my interest.

As many people working in Alberta's heritage sector are aware, First Nations' ceremonial activity at archaeological and heritage sites has undergone a recent increase in frequency. And, people working in this area are likely familiar with the broad range of issues which may arise as ceremonial laws and practices interact with the laws and practices of Alberta's framework for heritage management. While in some instances these interactions result in meaningful dialogue, long-term relationships and collaborative solutions, in others they may lead to countless roadblocks and failure to reach any kind of consensus.

My own research, carried out through the archaeology department at Memorial University of Newfoundland, sets out to understand the complex and subtle dynamics which both inform and emerge from processes whereby Plains Cree heritage is managed by the province of Alberta. I start by drawing into question the assumption that there is a single, stable, agreed-upon reality, and from there I investigate how and why contestation and conflict, or collaboration and cooperation, emerge as interactions between more than one reality take place.

To illustrate, here I return to the scene described above in order to recount a brief exchange, as the feast came to a close, between the site's archaeologist and the Plains Cree ceremonialist.

Archaeologist: Thanks for coming, I'm so glad you could make it.

Ceremonialist: Yeah, glad we could come.

Archaeologist: You should come back sometime, I'd love to tell you more about the work we do here.

Ceremonialist: Yeah, sounds good... you know, we have our own way of finding buffalo skulls under the ground, and we don't even have to dig to find them.



Evidently, the archaeologist and the ceremonialist see material under the ground in very different ways. Though referring to the same material objects, the archaeologist sees them according to their training in excavation, documentation, and interpretation; the ceremonialist sees them according to knowledge derived through adherence to a system of ceremonial protocols. These sets of practices, though situated in very different realities, also have many parallels. Each is passed on through a particular lineage of teachings. Each carries its own conceptions of time and space, and its own methods of ethically transmitting information. And, perhaps most importantly, each carries its own obligations which are mandated as 'law'.

My research asks: where is one reality or set of laws given priority over the other, and with what consequences? Under what circumstances can meaningful dialogue take place?

Claire Poirier is a PhD student (www.mun.ca/archaeology) and an IPinCH Fellow (www.sfu.ca/ipinch/) Please direct comments or questions to: ccp368@mun.ca

CRM, Winter Conditions, and the Boreal Forest

by Kurtis Blaikie-Birkigt, Tree Time Services Inc.

Specializing in forestry archaeology in Alberta, I haven't had much opportunity to work in winter conditions. One of the nice things about forestry is its long planning horizon and the freedom to schedule our work. Unfortunately, this season, a variety of factors conspired to push some of our fieldwork into late October, and then we got an unusually early and heavy snowfall in northwest Alberta. The heavy snow prevented the ground from freezing, so we went ahead with our planned surveys of forestry cutblocks, conducting landform evaluation and shovel testing as normal.

Trudging through 50 cm of fresh powder gave me some perspectives on moving and living in the boreal forest under winter conditions that I hadn't previously gained. I'd wondered what effect snow cover would have on mobility patterns. Summer travel in the forest tends to follow linear features like river and stream valley margins, but I'd wondered if under winter conditions that would still be the case. This fall it certainly was. We were working on the Chinchaga River upper valley margin, and found that travel along the valley margin was much easier than cutting cross-country or on the slopes or lower terraces. I'd say the advantage was even greater than under summer conditions. The level backcountry had deeper snow than the exposed margins, and the snow on the slopes was even deeper than that. The grey

overcast sky and falling snow also obscured the sun, which made it very hard to maintain a bearing cross-country without a compass. Without a landform to follow, I could have been walking in circles and wouldn't know until I hit my tracks.

If I was camping under those conditions, however, I think I'd be choosing very different locations than I would in the summer. The distinct valley margins, corners and points that we tend to focus our assessments on, while having great views of the river, and being on our preferred walking paths, were also very exposed to the biting wind coming out of the northwest. Even the south-facing edges were more exposed. The most comfortable locations we found to break for coffee were just back from the edge, sheltered by immature spruce. For the last couple seasons, I've been suspecting that our focus on exposed corners and points was only finding one class of sites, and this experience reinforces that suspicion. I think that winter camps in particular, and possibly all larger camps, would be located back from the sharp landform edges that we're testing most. Drainage is still a factor, especially on warm winter days when the snow turns to mush, so we should still be looking for local elevation. But maybe we should be testing some less distinct elevated landforms a little back from the edges if we want to find sites occupied during less than ideal weather.



Kurtis Blaikie-Birkigt is a senior project archaeologist at Tree Time Services. Please direct comments or questions to: kurtis@treetime.ca

To comment or contribute to this newsletter, please contact the ASA Provincial Coordinator, Christie Grekul, at cgrekul@shaw.ca.