



The Association of Manitoba Archaeologists

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A word from the President...

Dear AMA members,

Since its reinstatement last January, the Association of Manitoba Archaeologists (AMA) has been finding its focus as an advocacy group for archaeology. Archaeologists work in a number of institutional contexts: museums, universities, consulting companies and government. The nature of the work changes from one context to the other, and we sometimes find ourselves following seemingly disparate paths. However, those paths all lead to the single goal that unifies us: the preservation of Manitoba's heritage. As an umbrella organization, the AMA can forge and maintain stronger relationships between institutions, consultants and the province, so that we

may all better meet that very important goal.

For example, the AMA would like to work with the Historic Resource Branch (HRB). Because HRB is the permitting authority, it might be best to work with them to organize:

1. regular meetings (a couple times a year) between the AMA and HRB
 2. a HRB liaison for the AMA to correspond with outside of regular meetings
 3. and develop in conjunction with HRB and other Archaeologists, standards for consultants (ex: changing of forms, requirements for site designation, requirements to hold a permit)
- the AMA constitution to allow for HRB workers to join

The AMA is particularly interested in working with HRB to develop standards for consulting projects, and together the AMA and the HRB could provide consultants with resources they need to communicate the importance of archaeology and archaeological methods to their clients. The AMA would also like to work with HRB on how consulting projects are disseminated in order to promote awareness and address concerns raised by members of the archaeological community. In the future, the AMA and HRB can work together to deal with these issues to support both the government and consulting company and AMA membership.



This issue's letter
contributed by
Dr. E. Leigh Syms,
Member of The Forks
Heritage Committee

Former Curator of
Archaeology, The
Manitoba Museum
(retired)

Adjunct Professor of
Archaeology,
University of Manitoba

Adjunct Professor of
Archaeology,
University of Calgary

Letters to the AMA

This is the section of our newsletter where we highlight the opinions of our diverse membership through publishing their letters to the AMA. If you have a contribution to make to some area of discussion related to archaeological practice in our province, please send it to newsletter@assocmanarch.com.

Canadian Museum of Human Rights and the Loss of the Buried Ancient Heritage

The Canadian Museum of Human Rights will soon rise as a magnificent \$265,000,000 edifice, showcasing a world class architectural structure. In addition it is expected to produce dazzling displays and vibrant programming with an annual operating budget of \$20,000,000. This structure will be built on a massive mountain of concrete that sprawls over 7,000 m² and is connected to other areas by service conduits across the other 3,000 m² of the property. Beneath the area of this massive concrete pad lies one of the densest and most important records of ancient First Nations heritage sites known in the province and a record that the consultant has identified as one of the 10 out-

standing sites in Canada. Preliminary assessment of the record, based on 21 of 24 mechanically excavated trenches during the winter of 2003 indicated that the upper Late Woodland levels of the deposits yielded about 72,000 artifacts from a mere 53 m². Based on these dense concentrations, it was estimated that the site could yield 7,000,000 artifacts within the area of the concrete footprint and 10,000,000 artifacts from the overall property, a record for which there is nothing that I have heard of that even comes close to approximating it in the province.

As of October 4, 2008, excavations for the single season of field work are planned to be completed by the end of the month. By that point, an excellently excavated sliver of the area representing less than 2% of the concrete footprint will have been

recovered through most of the upper levels, and the remaining 98% will be prepared to be buried forever under a massive concrete slab. The large number of artifacts recovered from this tiny area will have been catalogued for storage but will be lying unnumbered in plastic bags in boxes and therefore virtually unusable and inaccessible, probably deep in the sub sub basement of HRB's storage facility. How could so little and so inaccessible part of this rich heritage of First Nations and the province's ancient history be the final record of such an important site?

The problems occur at many levels. Canada is, I think, the only G8 country that does not have federal heritage legislation. At the federal level, the archaeological record is currently covered only under the environmental assessment act which is monitored by

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the Environmental Assessment Review Agency through Parks Canada. We know from numerous examples in the US and other countries that strong federal legislation has frequently overridden weaker or less committed state legislation to require more commitment and more comprehensive heritage recovery.

However, the CMHR property was subjected to an environmental assessment including an archaeological assessment. In a preliminary report in 2003 and a final report in 2004, the phenomenally rich record was revealed. Mechanical excavation of 24 trenches in the upper levels yielded almost 72,000 artifacts from a mere 53 m², with estimates of 7,000,000 artifacts from the 7,000 metres! As far as I know no reaction by the federal or provincial heritage agencies followed from these results except that the Environmental Screening Report of 2006 did make a number of recommendations including extensive consultation, recovery of materials according to high standards and to have the record interpreted in the Museum. In May 2006, I submitted a report to the The Forks and to all of the relevant agencies pointing out the outstanding record that existed and that a significant portion needed to be recovered and interpreted. I had also recommended that a minimum recovery should be 20-30% in a series of

widely-spaced block excavations with a better sample being more like 50-70%, although I did so cringing emotionally, realizing that it was leaving a large part of First Nations heritage buried for ever.

Unbeknown to me the CMHR decided in 2006 to put in a basement. They initially designed it for an area of 14,000 ft² (1300 m²), about 18.5% of the total footprint of the building. When the recovery costs were estimated by their consulting archaeologist, the CMHR decided it was too costly and redesigned a basement area of 440 m² (about 6.3% of the footprint) and I gather directed the consulting archaeologist to develop a salvage proposal on what appears to be a nickel and dime budget (of an undisclosed amount). The guiding principle appears to have been developed to do as little as possible as cheaply as possible, which still appears to be in action, and their contract archaeologist was left with the mandate to stretch a few dollars as far as possible. This decision applied only to the excavated area and not the remainder of the site that is to be buried.

The rationalization for the small budget has been in part that the federal government froze the CMHR budget when it became a national museum. Also, the Friends of CMHR were having trouble raising the last

few million. So the heritage recovery had to be sacrificed.

All this time, a project director had been seconded from Canada Heritage to get the CMHR going. He worked bureaucratic miracles by getting federal legislation passed, getting a board, and getting the land transferred from The Forks to the federal museum, but he worked at minimizing heritage recovery. He also stated that since this was a joint federal-provincial project, the federal government would defer all decisions to the province, to HRB. I don't know who made this decision, or if they had the authority, to transfer heritage responsibility from the Environmental Assessment Agency to the province, but in a single stroke absolved the CMHR of any legal responsibility and dumped all of the responsibility on HRB.

The resulting proposal entailed excavating only 60% of the basement construction, about 264 m² (3.8% of the footprint) during one summer with a large crew of 22 people over 70 days. Artifacts were to be thoroughly catalogued but left unnumbered. This was the proposal submitted to the Thunderbird House elders and to HRB, with some consultation with Parks Canada. Although the details of the contract have not been shared, I understand that Parks Canada recommended that there was to be some

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heritage enhancement analyzes such as dating, ceramic residue analyses, blood residue analyses, etc. HRB appeared to basically agree to the proposal with the caveat that all cultural levels be excavated by hand rather than mechanically. That is all that we have been able to learn through informal discussions.

First Nations consultation apparently consisted of meeting with the Thunder Bird House urban elders. One of my elder colleagues who is a senior administrator at Thunder bird House has little use for archaeology and stated cynically that “the record should be left in the ground for a 1,000 years until archaeologists learn how to analyze the materials”. Some of the elders were happy to see the materials stay buried but I gather that they agreed that the tiny area should be excavated down to the “peace meeting” level and that artifacts should stay in Manitoba. There appears to have been no consultation with the other First Nations sectors such as communities, teachers, students, and others who might be interested in their ancient heritage.

The summer excavations proceeded with exciting results!

The history of the occupation was even more complex than anticipated, and the stratigraphy was very complex. The pottery appears to be largely variations on the Late Woodland Rainy River culture with an occasional Blackduck sherd and an occasional unusual sherd such as one that I have suggested is closest to Wayne Ware from southwestern Ontario. It would appear on first impression that the excavation of this tiny area was not large enough to recover the ceramic diversity of the “peace meeting” area, not surprising given the tiny area. An impression of an ancient footprint was recovered. This was all accomplished with limited numbers of trained staff working with untrained Aboriginal interns and newly trained field school students plus some dedicated volunteers. The trained leaders truly worked wonders.

One problem was the inability to complete what little that was proposed to be recovered.

When I visited the site in early October, near the end of the one and only season, they had taken out a trench that appeared to be 22 X 5 metres (110 m²) and were working on the elevator shaft which involved another approximately 24 m².

The trench wall was beautiful but these two totals are only 134 m² (1.9%) of the footprint. It appeared as if they might not even complete level 3 and they certainly could not follow up on level 4, which was found sporadically, or any other deeper levels. These deeper levels were hampered by water which would have required special extraction techniques, but CMHR was not providing funds to do further work anyway. So, we have a partial record from the upper Late Woodland levels from approximately 2% of the building footprint.

And what about the other 98% of the rich heritage record that it will continue to lie under the Museum? It will be punctured with 360 drilled bore holes which will probably yield some exciting artifacts. Unlike other provincial heritage branches which insist on the careful excavation of squares over and around the piling holes, these holes will be augured out, which we know from other excavations results in large numbers of broken items. Again the problem of using cheap techniques to keep within an inadequate budget. The remainder will see the buried record probably damaged by heavy machinery during con-

struction, as has happened at other sites. And the fragile artifacts will probably be damaged by the compaction of 1,000s of tonnes of wet concrete being poured into the wood frames. This record is essentially “destroyed” in that it will be buried for ever, for time immemorial, so that no generations in the near or even distant futures will have access to the exciting heritage.

And what about the artifacts? During processing, the staff did an excellent job of cataloguing the collections but they were not allowed to number the artifacts or even glue rim sherds that were found together. This decision was made due to the need to set priorities in a very limited, inadequate budget. This means that 100s of thousands of artifacts that were recovered from this tiny area will now be left in boxes and be basically inaccessible for analyzes of the heritage except for a brief end of season inventory, will not be available for exhibits, nor for a variety of heritage enrichment activities such as ceramic reconstructions.

The artifacts were initially slated to go to The Manitoba Museum which specializes in collections management in controlled environmental setting. As soon as the CMHR became aware that there would be costs such as the numbering, obtaining storage cabinets, etc., discussions broke off. Again one gets the sense that CMHR is not willing to spend any more money on the

care of the collections. I understand that CMHR is looking at turning the collections over to HRB, in their unnumbered state, to be buried in the sub sub basement storage area of the HRB storage area. And it is rumoured that CMHR may even be considering sending the collection to CMC.

There are still many unanswered questions beyond the mentioned problems. Are the heritage enhancement analyses such as pottery residue analyses going to be carried out or do they also get the budget axe? Is the CMHR going to incorporate this rich record of displaced First Nations in their galleries? Are they going to provide funds to interpret the heritage of these materials in coffee table books, videos, etc to make up for the losses that they have imposed?

Finally who is going to respond to the First Nations who are angry that their ancient heritage is not considered worth saving as they learn the details of this project? Who see inadequate resources applied to rescuing their heritage? Who hear that the current system of CRM contracts tend to go to the lowest bidder? What will be your response as FN teachers, grad students, and others who ask you these penetrating questions? This whole project raises a variety of issues such as what are basic standards for CRM work and are there different standards for a human rights museum? What is the role and responsibility at the federal level?

I would suggest a number of actions:

1. Lobby immediately the CMHR, HRB, and perhaps Parks Canada, to insist that the CMHR complete the initial work such as numbering artifacts, finding the most appropriate storage venue, and completing basic heritage interpretation analyses such as dating, ceramic residue analyses, etc.

2 Announce widely that this standard of work, determined by inadequate budget, is far short of minimal standards, and encourage people to express their concerns to politicians and other contacts.

3. Insist that HRB sit down and, with consultation, develop and upgrade guidelines and standards for CRM work. Be supportive since they are to some degree victims of weak political commitment.

4. Get involved in the AMA to work for improving archaeological standards.

5. Lobby the (Cree) Minister of Culture Heritage, Tourism and Sport to work with his caucus colleagues to obtain more support and more funding for HRB to establish and enforce higher standards.

6, Contact the federal national Indian group and the Minister of Heritage to develop a National heritage policy so that major sites can be protected and the endangered record recovered.

7. And I am sure that you will have other ideas?

Employment Opportunity

For several years now, first under the guidance of Nick Adams and more recently Jean-Luc Pilon, the OAS has had a presence on the World Wide Web. While many of us remember the advent of the Web and all the hype about its potential, more and more of our members grew up using it. For them it is second nature. The expectations of both of these groups are markedly different, although there is significant overlap.

The OAS website is clearly a means of communication that will come to occupy more and more importance for the Society. It is now time that the OAS website take on a new look and contain new components that better reflect the more dynamic and diverse role it needs to assume

for the Society.

The OAS Board of Directors recognizes the significance of the website and as such the person who will take over its destiny will be, like the editors of our newsletter Arch Notes and our peer-reviewed journal OA, appointed by the board and called upon to participate at the board table as the OAS Web Editor.

The Board of Directors is now searching for an individual who might be interested in the challenges that are presented by the revamping the OAS website. Knowledge of the archaeology of Ontario and of the OAS is certainly required, along with website creation and maintenance skills. Good language skills in English and French are important.

This is much more than a technical responsibility, as determining and organizing content for the OAS website, under the guidance of the Board of Directors, will form the perception that people will make of the OAS.

Like the other OAS editor positions, there is no remuneration for the OAS Web Editor. If you are interested, please send a letter of interest and an outline of your web experience to:

Jean-Luc Pilon
President
OAS
president@ontarioarchaeology.on.ca



MAS/AMA/SAAM BBQ

The AMA would like to extend its thanks to everyone who came out to our first annual joint BBQ with the Manitoba Archaeological Society and the Society for Applied Anthropology in Manitoba! Food was eaten, friends were met and, of course, shop was talked. The AMA would also like to thank MAS and SAAM for the opportunity

to collaborate on putting together such a great afternoon!

As the BBQ was such a hit, ideas for a Winter get-together are being floated. Do you know of a place or event that would make an ideal setting for a fun, informal meeting of Manitoba's thriving anthropological community? If so, please let us know at suggestions@assocmanarch.com.

