



CHIEFS AND COUNCILLORS OVERSEE WORK AT GASPHEREAU LAKE ARCHAEOLOGY SITE

KMKNO ARCHAEOLOGY: *From the Ground Up*

Gaspereau Lake

May 2013

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A Message From KMKNO

By: Janice Maloney, Executive Director, KMKNO

Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO) was created to provide research and logistical support to the Assembly of NS Mi'kmaq Chiefs (Assembly) - ensuring that they had the research needed to make informed decisions during the negotiation and consultation processes.

KMKNO works to ensure the claims for Aboriginal Rights and Title are recognized, on behalf of the Mi'kmaq of NS, through the ongoing Made-In-Nova Scotia Process, as well as under the Terms

of Reference for a Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Consultation Process.

One of our many departments at KMKNO is Archaeology and this department is excited to present the first issue of "From the Ground Up" - a quarterly newsletter featuring their work.

We begin Issue #1 as a feature on the important area of Gaspereau Lake. In this issue, you will learn more about what KMKNO has done, and continues to do to protect this culturally significant area of Mi'kma'ki.

Our Rights. Our Future.

Why Is This So Important?

For thousands and thousands of years, Gaspereau Lake has been an important place for the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Its significance has many aspects - scientifically, culturally, legally and spiritually.

For over five years, the Assembly, through KMKNO, has been working with Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI) on their plans to refurbish and upgrade the Gaspereau Lake Dam. This work has resulted in KMKNO's direct involvement in all phases of the archaeological research and many revisions of engineering plans before any development takes place on this site.

Research as Gaspereau Lake has offered a chance to track, archaeologically, how L'nu'k responded to changes in climate, environment and society from the beginning to now. We have learned a lot from the archaeological evidence that has been uncovered so far. Work at this site has also taught us that laws around artifact ownership and protection acts need to change - our job is to ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of the Mi'kmaq.

KMKNO will continue to monitor the work that is being done at Gaspereau Lake, ensuring that this culturally significant area is protected and fully understood before any more development happen on these lands and waters.



What has been found?

This piece of decorated pottery is an example of what archaeologists have found. To learn more about the research of this area, turn to:

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Protection by the Chiefs

The Assembly is heavily invested in the work at Gaspereau Lake. To find out more see:

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Kelly Peters, Assembly's Aboriginal Monitor, watches archaeologists at Gaspereau Lake.



One of the many visits by the Assembly to Gaspereau.

Archaeological Finds

By: Dr. Heather MacLeod-Leslie, Staff Archaeologist, KMKNO

NSPI has been working on plans to refurbish the existing Gaspereau Lake Dam which are necessary to meet modern safety standards for the environment and local residents. Consultation was initiated with KMKNO and an archaeological assessment of the area began. To no surprise, a large number of artefacts and a very rich history were found!

From archaeological evidence we have learned that the area of the Gaspereau Lake Reservoir has been a major gathering area for the Mi'kmaq – quite possibly for as long as documented Mi'kmaq history (since the time of Saqiwe'k L'nu'k – what archaeologists usually call the Palaeoindian Period).

Archaeological studies have proven that ancestral Mi'kmaq were using and occupying this place and from the original shoreline and extending back hundreds of metres. Although some of today's reservoir water covers areas that were formerly homes and other activity areas used and occupied by ancestral Mi'kmaq, we still know that all sorts of activities took place here, including fishing and fish processing, gatherings from large regions and all of the social activities that result in those situa-

tions (alliances, trading, discussions, marriages and so forth).

There is no doubt that Gaspereau Lake and its surroundings were important to the Mi'kmaq way of life. Tools were made and repaired here, food was stored, special items were crafted, traded and used here.

Much of the evidence of Mi'kmaq use and occupation comes from stone tools and flakes, although a great deal of pottery fragments have been found. The pottery fragments have come from sites that have dated between about 3000 years ago to about 500 years ago. Older sites have been recorded around Gaspereau Lake, but, the majority of artefacts found during the latest excavations – those for the dam refurbishment project – have dated to the time of Kejikawe'k L'nu'k or the Ceramic period (3000 to 500 years ago).

Local community members have raised concerns and memories of an ancestral Mi'kmaq burial ground at Gaspereau Lake. However, to date, there have been no archaeological records of this. It is standard practice by Nova Scotia archaeologists to not dig or disturb the soils when Mi'kmaq ancestral burials are reported. In Gaspereau specifically, when archaeologists have worked their way up to the areas reported to have burials, testing is stopped and moved past the area to ensure that it is respected and remains undisturbed.

Digging Deeper

Dr. Heather MacLeod-Leslie is the Archaeologist for KMKNO and has been, and continues to be, an active participant in the studies, reports and research that has happens at Gaspereau Lake on behalf of the Mi'kmaq of NS.

Archaeological work at this site to date has achieved two very important things:

1. Avoided extensive and invasive disturbance of areas reported to be burial locations; and
2. Identified an area of the current shore and on an island to be the most likely burial areas.

Archaeological test units (small square holes, *pictured right*) have been dug to determine if artefacts or sites (examples are: fishing sites, encampments or tool making

sites) exist where NSPI proposes to build system upgrades, which will disturb soils or create other impacts (like flooding).

For each engineering plan that NSPI has presented, archaeological testing has been done to determine what the impacts may be. This is why archaeological testing has taken place for more than 5 years – each time there is a concern with a plan or it is thought that it may impact archaeological sites, a new plan is developed, which means more testing is done.

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Archaeologists working in test units .



As of yet, no archaeological evidence has been found of an ancestral Mi'kmaq burial

Digging Deeper (continued)

Sometimes testing has revealed the location of a site or concentrated activity area. Under the Provincial Special Places Protection Act, the regulator (working under the Provincial Minister for Communities, Culture and Heritage) sometimes allows archaeological sites to be removed, or excavated, and all the records of the site's layers, artefacts, pictures, field notes and reports are preserved in the Nova Scotia Museum system so that others may do research in the future.

While removing materials from their original location is not always supported, it is one of the main processes of archaeological investigations that we learn from. If we do not uncover the sites and artefacts, they cannot tell us their stories. Reports are always written for any archaeological testing and excavation projects so that we can try to put those stories together with the evidence that has been uncovered. In this case, the reports are held by the Nova Scotia Museum however, KMKNO has received copies of all reports in order to keep update on the findings to help us understand the meaning of the

place to Mi'kmaw ancestors.

In the case of areas that are reported to be an ancestral Mi'kmaq burial, archaeologists throughout Nova Scotia typically do not dig or disturb the soils. This has largely been the case at Gaspereau Lake.

A unique double notched point, never found in NS before.



Archaeological Excavation, 2012

By: Mike Sanders, Senior Archaeologist, CRM

Between 2007 and 2011, Cultural Resource Management (CRM) Group Limited was hired by Nova Scotia Power Incorporated (NSPI) to search for, identify, assess and delineate archaeological resources in possible construction areas for the enhancement of an existing hydroelectric dam and spillway at the natural outlet of Gaspereau Lake in Kings County. Combining reconnaissance, shovel testing and test unit excavation, this study resulted in the delineation of 21 archaeological sites. Although the sites included the remains of a nineteenth century lath and shingle mill, they primarily represented Mi'kmaq habitation from about 5000 years ago to the historic period.

Due to the nature of the sites identified as a result of the study, NSPI entered into discussions with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs through the auspices of the Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO). CRM Group worked with NSPI and KMKNO to facilitate these discussions. Included in the discussions were representatives of the Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the Special Places Program of the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

Using the site information provided by the archaeological work, NSPI engineers ultimately designed a replacement for the dam and spillway that met the requirements of the Canadian Dam Association's Dam Safety Guidelines, while maximizing the avoidance of archaeological resources.



The design ultimately avoided 13 of the 21 documented archaeological sites, including two orally reported burial sites. Despite all attempts for complete avoidance, the proposed construction footprint potentially included portions of eight archaeological sites.

Recognizing that the site areas within the proposed construction zone needed to be archaeologically excavated and properly documented before construction could begin, NSPI hired CRM Group to begin the excavation in the summer of 2012. The project, which was undertaken by a team of 25 archaeologists over a period of four months, involved the manual excavation of 743 square metres. It was one of the largest archaeological projects ever conducted in Nova Scotia.

By the end of the 2012 fieldwork, the excavation had encountered, documented and removed an unprecedented abundance of archaeological resources, including more than 240,000 artefacts. While most of these artefacts were stone flakes – the by-product of tool manufacture and sharpening – the excavation also yielded a wide range of

stone tools, pottery, copper and food bones. No traces of dwelling structures were found on any of the sites, but areas of intensive occupation were indicated by concentrations of hearths and artefacts. In some areas, hearths overlapped one-another and artefact concentrations rose to between 1000 and nearly 5000 artefacts per square metre.

The artefacts recovered during the 2012 mitigation have now been cleaned, catalogued and packaged. Under the Special Places Protection Act, artefacts are considered property of the Province of Nova Scotia, and so they will be submitted to the Nova Scotia Museum. Analysis of the excavation results is in its early stages and will continue through 2013.



Next Steps?

The Assembly has had individuals onsite to monitor the archaeological work ensuring they are up-to-date and a part of the whole process. In fact, since joining this project, 8 different proposed plans to refurbish the dam have been reviewed and rejected by the Assembly.

These rejections were made based on design, potential impacts to or destruction of Mi'kmaw heritage or archaeological resources, or because of operational requirements were not respecting cultural values.

NSPI is now on plan number 9 for the refurbishment. Plan number 9 currently does not have the support of the Assembly and, until concerns for impacts to possible burials can be appropriately addressed, the Assembly does not and will not support the plan.

Further testing to address if and where burial grounds are located would have to be done before plan number 9 receives any support. If testing results show that burials are present, a new engineering plan will need to be carefully considered.

The Assembly has asked KMKNO to see that an independent engineering assessment be done of the site to see if the dam refurbish-

ment can be done on a location further downstream since the area is so obviously rich with archaeological heritage.

If the refurbishment (which NSPI has indicated) cannot be done at another location, testing to verify the location of burial grounds may need to be undertaken. This will NOT mean digging into graves or disturbing any remains, neither the Assembly nor KMKNO would support that.

Archaeologists can often detect the location of graves by peeling off a thin layer of the top of soil and assessing soil colour, compaction, content and consistency. If there is a change between the natural soils and a distinct area, the archaeologist can determine that it has been disturbed. If the pattern of disturbance looks like a burial ground - it can give a glimpse past the surface while avoiding the need for any invasive testing. If there are burials - we'll have to move to plan 10.

One of the factors that has continued to affect archaeology at Gaspereau Lake is the intensive private collecting activity that has taken place here for decades by non-professionals. Artefacts have been removed from their original contexts without recording their exact contexts

(in the ways that archaeologists do) resulting in a loss of approximately 95% of the story the artefact could have told us. In fact, over the years private collecting has probably damaged the resources as much, if not more, than developments. Without artefacts and their contexts, we can only tell part of the story of the past. Artefacts, after all are a true connection to the lives, landscapes and cultures of our past.



The Five (5) Pillars of Mi'kmaw Values:

1. To achieve recognition, acceptance, implementation and protection of treaty, title, and other rights of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia;
2. To develop systems of Mi'kmaq governance and resource management;
3. To revive, promote and protect a healthy Mi'kmaq identity;
4. To obtain the basis for a shared economy and social development; and
5. To negotiate toward these goals with community involvement and support.



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