



Arch Notes

The Newsletter of the Ontario Archaeological Society



See page 6 to learn about using Ontario's LiDAR datasets. Image by James A. M. Wright.

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President's Message

Well, it seems like spring has finally arrived and quickly decided to be summer. Field season is well underway (even here in Northern Ontario) and I finally have been able to get out on the big lake and start my work as well.

Of course, the OAS is still as busy as ever, despite many of us juggling field duties and increasingly busy schedules. We received funding for two student positions – while we have in prior years received funding for three, we have adjusted the positions, and hiring has just been completed. We are looking forward to more amazing students to help us with digitization, collections and symposium organization. Speaking of which, the OAS Symposium in 2026 will be hosted by the newly rebooted Toronto chapter on October 23 and 24, 2026, and I am already getting excited! The theme is 'Repairing Bridges: Collaboration, Community and Connection, and they are looking for folks to help out – please contact oas.tochapter@gmail.com for more information.

As Spring is considered a time of renewal, we would like to welcome Arwen Johns, our new Director of Outreach! We are so happy she is willing to join the board – see her bio later on in this issue. We would also like to thank outgoing

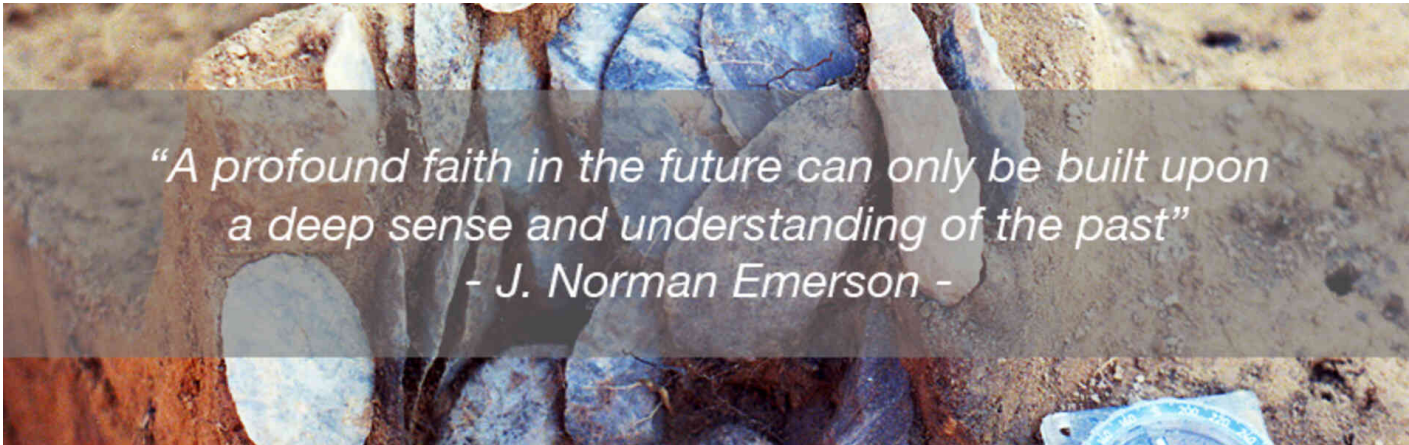
Director of Outreach, Breanne Reibl – we are sorry to see her go, but so thankful for all the great work she has done for the OAS over the past few years.

The Group of 21 continues its hard work advocating for consulting archaeologists across Ontario, meeting with opposition party critics to ensure that proposed changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act* and the *Standards and Guidelines* actually reflect the realities of the work they do.

For the OAS, we have an online all-members meeting coming up to discuss our new bylaws and provide additional updates to our members. We look forward to hearing feedback from our members. These by-laws will ensure that the OAS is compliant with the new *Ontario Non-Profit Corporation Act* (ONCA) and ensure our ability to continue our work into the future.

I hope everyone has a safe and productive summer, and we hope to see lots of folks at the Symposium in Toronto in October.

Lisa



*"A profound faith in the future can only be built upon
a deep sense and understanding of the past"*
- J. Norman Emerson -

Introducing the new Director of Outreach of the OAS

Arwen Jones (she/they)



Presently, Arwen is the faunal specialist for TMHC Inc., where they are also responsible for Indigenous artifact identification and archaeological report writing. In the past, they have acted as a field director on large-scale projects alongside Indigenous communities and stakeholders, organizing, coordinating, and supervising the performance of the field component of archaeological projects across Ontario in the cultural resource management sector.

Arwen earned her Master's degree in anthropology, specializing in archaeology, from Western University in 2017, having previously completed her Bachelor of Arts with Distinction in anthropology at the same institution. They have acted as the principal investigator on two multi-year research projects funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada, as part of the Virú Polity Project in Peru, and worked as an

archaeologist for Parks Canada in Newfoundland. Arwen's research specializes in social zooarchaeology, which takes a holistic view of human-animal relations, especially as these interactions relate to the diets of past populations.

When not working, Arwen enjoys reading and writing short horror fiction, camping and kayaking, as well as gardening, where they focus specifically on plants and trees native to their area of Ontario. Arwen is also a passionate advocate for mental health awareness, holding multiple professional certifications in mental health crisis de-escalation, anti-oppression and anti-racism, and teaching at the university level – earning an award for greatness in teaching from Western University.

Contribute to an upcoming issue of *Arch Notes*

We would like to hear about your experiences and perspectives, your research project, or a cool find that you want to share with the broader archaeological community! It's never too late, we are always accepting new contributions. These can take many forms, and short articles and photo essays are welcome. Contributions should be submitted electronically, in any word processing format, with as little formatting as possible.

Submissions to *Arch Notes* should be directed to the Editors: aneditor@ontarioarchaeology.org

Better Desk Assessments: Ontario Classified Point Cloud Data, How to Use it and Why You Should Start

By James A.W. Wright, University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology

I was inspired to write a short piece on this topic having become familiar with the robustness by which British consulting archaeology has adopted Light Distance and Ranging (LiDAR) as one of the first steps in a desk assessment. It has become so prolific in the United Kingdom that this practice now occupies entire positions within consulting firms. Having had the opportunity in the winter of 2025 to look through most stage 3 and 4 reports, and countless stage 1, ½ and 2 reports that are available on Past Portal (most postdating 2012 or so), I noticed that despite having better LiDAR data provided by the provincial government than our British counterparts (ours in Ontario is generally to a 50cm resolution, rather than 2m resolution in the UK's National LiDAR Programme 2019), this valuable resource is not being robustly engaged with in reporting for desk

assessments. Briefly, I want to highlight how easy this data is to access, some of the interesting results that researchers on the other side of the Great Lakes have had using LiDAR to detect archaeological features, and why it is a valuable tool that consultants should utilise prior to sending their Field Directors into bush lots and meadows.

How to Access this Data

There are a couple of ways that you can work with Ontario's LiDAR datasets. The first, and which is most practical for a consultant to get using LiDAR now, is to access it directly through ArcGIS Pro's cloud service for the 1x1km tile index (<https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=06c6239224b54f3289cc7966ed1f51da>) hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF).

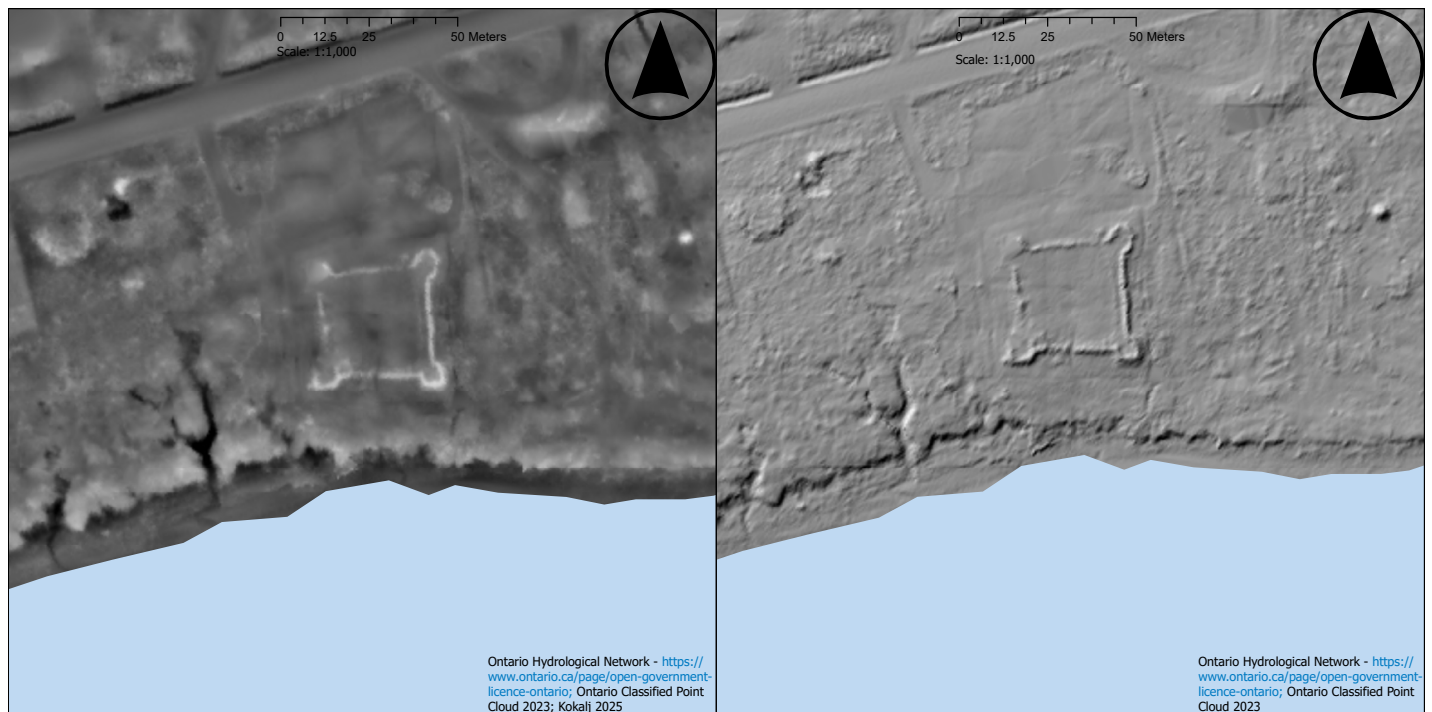


Figure 1. Saint Marie II's Bastion Fort (BeHb-1) cobble piles on Christian Island, compared between local dominance visualisation method (left) and hillshade (right)

This will overlay a tessellation grid over your map in ArcGIS Pro or QGIS, and allows you to click on each individual tile, access through its associated table, and simply click the URL in the Table Column labelled "Download". Some regions do not have directly hosted download URLs within the table, however, and will require a separate email to be sent to MNRF (Geospatial@ontario.ca). I find it best to work with the classified point cloud, as it means I can choose to include buildings but remove trees (this is done in the properties of the .LAS, and you can choose what to include or remove as the province has already classified the data for use), however, it is possible to download pre-interpolated Digital

Terrain Models (sans buildings and trees) or Digital Surface Models (includes all buildings and trees) from the province as well.

How to Use this Data

Once you have downloaded your .LAZ tile of interest (this is a heavily compressed version of the .LAS files which are readable within ArcGIS or QGIS) from the province's Geohub, you will need to convert it into LAS format, which is done by using the Convert Las (<https://doc.esri.com/en/arcgis-pro/latest/tool-reference/conversion/convert-las.html?tabs=dialog>) function in ArcGIS,

and leave all settings as default except File Version, which you need to set to 1.4. This has to do with the compression that the MNRF have started using to make the files easier to store. Once you have done that, you will want to use the LAS Dataset to Raster (<https://pro.arcgis.com/en/pro-app/3.5/tool-reference/conversion/las-dataset-to-raster.htm>) function to create a .TIF surface that you can then apply visualisations to. You will want to ensure that the Sampling Type's cell size value is set to that which the resolution of the LiDAR scans is (so, in this case, 50cm). When you have processed the raster, you are then able to use the integrated Hillshade Function (<https://doc.esri.com/en/arcgis-pro/latest/help/analysis/raster-functions/hillshade-function.html>) to create your first LiDAR visualisation without any additional steps. That said, you will likely realise quickly that the Hillshade function is fairly limited in its value, and will only visualise certain archaeological features well, leaving others very obscure. Hillshade is best used for visualising prominent surface expressions or depressions (you will need to experiment with the azimuth of the simulated sun in the function to discern depressions

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Relief Visualization Toolbox (RVT)

Project Team
Žiga Kokalj, PhD, assoc. prof., Klemen Zakšek, PhD, Peter Pehani
Show more

Project Leader
Žiga Kokalj, PhD

Financial Source
Slovenian Research Agency
European Commission's Culture programme

Duration
2 September 2013

DESCRIPTION

The Relief Visualization Toolbox (RVT) transformed how lidar-derived terrain data are used in archaeology and environmental analysis. By introducing accessible and scientifically validated visualisation methods, RVT made advanced terrain interpretation part of everyday professional practice in heritage management, research, education, and commercial spatial analysis. Available as standalone software, Python tools, ArcGIS functions, and a QGIS plugin, RVT is now used internationally by heritage agencies, researchers, consultancies, and community projects, with more than 100,000 downloads and adoption in official standards and training programmes.

It was developed to help scientist visualise raster elevation model datasets. We narrowed down the selection to include techniques that have proven to be effective for identification of small scale features. Default settings therefore assume working with high resolution digital elevation models, derived from airborne laser scanning missions (lidar).

Despite this, techniques are also used for different other purposes. *Sky-view factor*, for example, can be efficiently used in numerous studies where digital elevation model visualisations and automatic feature extraction techniques are indispensable, e.g. in geography, geomorphology, cartography, hydrology, glaciology, forestry and disaster management. It can be used even in engineering applications, such as, predicting the availability of the GPS signal in urban areas.

Methods currently implemented are:

- Visualisation for Archaeological Topography (VAT)
- Hillshading
- Hillshading from multiple directions
- Slope
- Simple local relief model
- Sky-view factor
- Anisotropic sky-view factor
- Openness
- Prismatic openness
- Local dominance
- Sky illumination
- Multi-scale relief model (MSRM)
- Multi-scale topographic position (MSTP)
- Enhanced multi-scale topographic position (eMSTP)

Keywords

sky-view factor, diffuse illumination, hill-shading, lidar, toolbox, high resolution DEM, terrain visualization

Downloads

- RVT manual, version 2.2.1 (5.64 MB)
- RVT 2.2.1 for Windows 64-bit (27.41 MB)
- DEM visualization techniques for archaeological interpretation (PPTX presentation with references) (9.4 MB)

Figure 2. Raster Visualisation Toolbox website (<https://iaps.zrc-sazu.si/en/rvt>)

vs. expressions on occasion) and therefore is not suitable for many subtle features, though prominent features are represented in a similar fashion as seen at Christian Island's Saint Marie II Site, where the small starfort there had cobbles piled against it in the nineteenth century (see Figure 1). For more subtle features, the Raster Visualisation Toolbox (Kokalj 2025) adds additional methods of visualisation that may be valuable. The documentation found on the Raster Visualisation Toolbox (<https://iaps.zrc-sazu.si/en/rvt>, Figure 2) website and associated documentation page (https://rvt-py.readthedocs.io/en/latest/start_main.html) provides explanations on how each function works.

Due to an update to ArcGIS Pro (3.6), the excellent Raster Visualisation Toolbox (RVT) for ArcGIS (Kokalj 2025; Zakšek et al. 2011) has stopped working. While I am hopeful for an update to patch this issue, currently using it in ArcGIS Pro is not functional, so users are left with four options. The first is to use it in Python, which has considerable benefits, notably for large sets of data that are split up, and which you want to iterate over for large scale desk-based observations, ideal for corridors, for example. Though a great option, it will require more technical abilities and some problem-solving skills to get it working. The second is to simply downgrade

your ArcGIS Pro copy, which may be a good solution for some but may also lead to crashes or loss of certain tools. The third is to use the standalone RVT to process rasters with. Fourth, the current version of QGIS (4.0.3) remains fully functional and is also a good option. For most users, especially if you are working on the regular size of lots which we generally survey in Ontario, this is probably the best option for most consultants, but for major companies working on corridors you will probably want to go with one of the other options as it allows for larger sets of data to be processed at one time.

RVT enables a variety of other visualisation techniques that have been developed for remote sensing over the last 20 or so years. Rather than the basic Hillshade, users can choose from 12 techniques for visualising LiDAR data, of which experimentation with all of them is probably the most useful route, but I will specifically draw attention to the Local Dominance function. This function works by essentially taking the height value to each cell and calculating whether it can "see" around each adjacent cell, like the way viewsheds work (Kokalj & Oštir 2018). The value of seeing around each adjacent cell is then assigned on a cell-by-cell basis. What this means is that very subtle reliefs are highlighted by

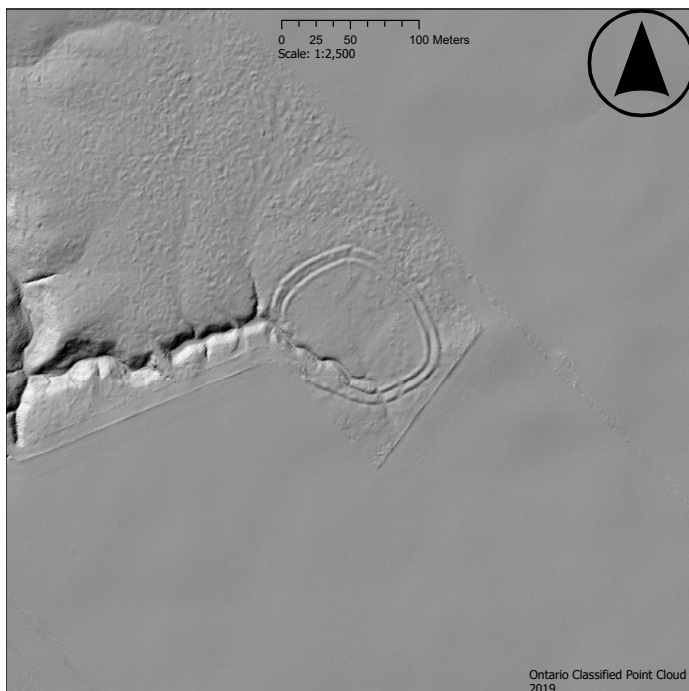


Figure 3. Southwold Earthworks (AeHi-1) in Southwold, ON. Visualised using a standard Hillshade, which works well for circular earthwork features

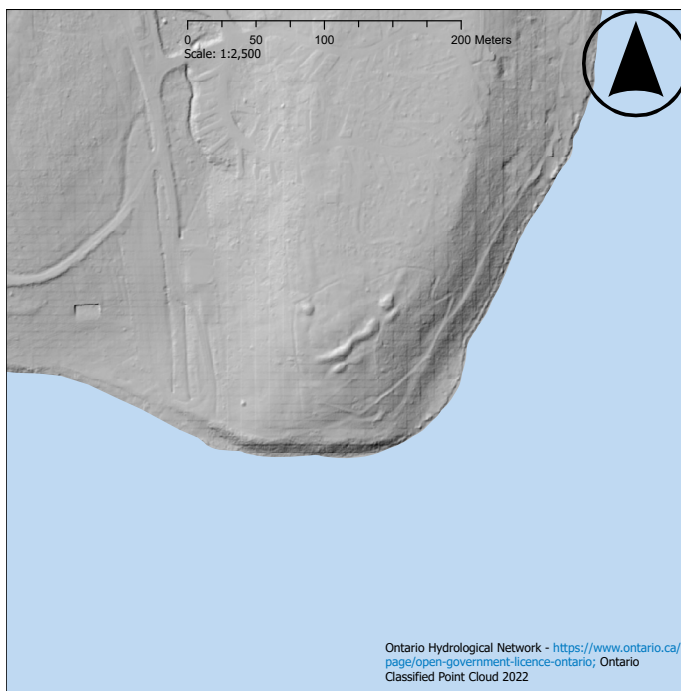


Figure 4. Serpent Mounds on Rice Lake (BbGm-2), within Hiawatha First Nation, Visualised using a standard Hillshade

using this technique, perfect for archaeological purposes such as detecting earthworks such as at Southwold (see in example Figure 3).

Why Should You Start to Use LiDAR Imagery Before Going into The Field?

As of spring 2026, using LiDAR imagery is not explicitly expected within the Standards and Guidelines (2011) for Stage 1 assessments, but that does not mean it does not have substantial benefits for consultants, clients and most importantly, giving more concern to landscape phenomena for the sake of understanding land use as it pertains to Indigenous and settler-period archaeology. Beyond the site, recent publications have shown the value of detecting Indigenous field systems/garden systems in Wisconsin (McLeester et al. 2024), greatly enriching existing understandings of Indigenous agriculture and horticulture in the Great Lakes (cf. Heydenreich 1974; Gartner 2003; Casana & McLeester 2021). Indigenous storage and mortuary features have also been convincingly detected using LiDAR for at least the last 10 years on the American side of the Great Lakes (Howey et al. 2016) and it is conceivable

that with greater attention in Ontario, especially with the requirement to assess pretty well any property that will be subject to development, that we may have similar results if we begin to utilise this accessible technology. Though many Indigenous earthworks have likely been destroyed, nineteenth century accounts demonstrate their presence throughout the province (Hamilton 2010), with the most notable being at Hiawatha First Nation on Rice Lake (Figure 4) and on the Rainy River (Kenyon 1986). It is also likely that, while thus far unpublished on, Indigenous sites of continuous occupation across time (not uncommon in the provincial archaeological record), may leave mounded expressions that are of particular importance and should be identified and flagged prior to physical property assessment.

Further, as settler land use features are often particularly obvious in LiDAR imagery, using LiDAR visualisations before going into the field may mean that we are able to alert developers that we are likely to need additional field work prior to physically finding a site, especially if such locations do not appear on 19th century mapping or which the historic mapping is somewhat vague about the specific farmstead location (Seen in Figure 5). Owing to the benefit of being



Figure 5. Comparison of Historic Mapping on the 1860 Tremain Map of York County, showing the Skinner Farmstead with LiDAR Visualisation using Local Dominance

able to identify locations of archaeological potential with relative ease, there is the unintended negative effect of being of potential use for looters themselves. However, the value in the use of LiDAR visualisations to detect expressions associated with looting (Danese et al. 2022), may have substantial value for research and monitoring for damage in certain areas of Ontario. Hopefully we can improve our practice in this province by adopting these methods and taking greater care to consider the many aspects of the landscape, both its more obvious locales and more hidden ones, in coming years.

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Publish or Perish, or simply Disappear into the Digital Age?

By Jean-Luc Pilon, Adjunct Research Professor, Carleton University

"En histoire, rien ne devrait se perdre : tout nous attire vers la réflexion; il est à propos de doter, compiler, publier les moindres bagatelles." (Benjamin Sulte 1894)

"In history, nothing should be lost: everything brings us to contemplation; it's about gathering, compiling and publishing the least trifle." (author's translation)

When I was employed by the Canadian Museum of History (CMH), I produced many electronic publications for the museum's website: full web pages and websites, blogs and virtual exhibitions. In the mid-1990s, when the museum's website was being created, a call went out to museum staff for content. At that time, I had just wrapped up the NOGAP (Northern Oil and Gas Action Plan) Archaeology Project in the lower Mackenzie Valley and I proposed putting all of the field reports online; my own as well as those of the various other researchers involved in carrying out fieldwork in the Lower Mackenzie Valley and the Mackenzie Delta region (Luc Nolin, Ray Le Blanc, David Morrison, Ken Swayze). Over the eight field seasons of research, this represented a massive amount of primary field data. In addition to the reports and their illustrations, I created modules aimed at a wide audience to help people understand the nature of the archaeological process, especially the one that takes place in remote areas of Canada's North. The website was aptly titled *Retracing an Archaeological Expedition to Canada's Northwest Territories*. Links were also inserted that allowed visitors to easily view the field data and field reports that eventually led to finished publications. Transparency was paramount and the web facilitated this.

This project represented several months of intense work: not only did I put together the raw text files and associated illustrations, but I also produced the requisite html code and created the web pages themselves with all of the internal navigation and links that a complex website like this one necessitated. While demanding, it gave me better control over the final product.

After publishing *all* the reports online, the museum, sometime later, decided to cut back the reports to summaries only. At that time, Luke Dalla Bona and I were responsible for the Canadian Archaeological Association's (CAA) website. Luke created the initial site and hosted it for many years on his company's server and I had been appointed as the CAA's first web editor by CAA president Mima Kapches. We decided to have a mirrored NOGAP website on the CAA's website where all the content would be available.

Both Luke and I eventually left the playing field that was the CAA's website but the NOGAP web component remained. It was a wonderful complement to two edited volumes of papers stemming from NOGAP Archaeology Project research that were published as CAA Occasional Papers (Cinq-Mars and Pilon 1991; Pilon 1994). However, sometime between 2010 and 2015 the NOGAP field reports mysteriously vanished from the CAA's website. I only found out about this by accident as I needed to access a particular field report and could no longer find it. As a result, all that publicly available information vaporized and unless you know about its existence in the archives of the Canadian Museum of History, you'll never know where to look, let alone that such data exists.

More recently I needed to consult some information contained in one of the web pages on the Canadian Museum of History website. To my great surprise, I was greeted by a page informing me that the web page in question had been removed. The reasons for such actions were provided by the generic message 'This page has been removed' pointing out that the pages:

- use obsolete web code and plug-ins
- contain out-of-date information or interpretive content
- no longer match the evolving direction and priorities of the Museum (CMH 2026)

However, disappointed visitors were informed that they could find an archived version at Internet Archive's *Wayback Machine* (<https://web.archive.org/>). Of course, what they did not tell you is that you needed the former site's URL to be successful in locating the page in *Wayback Machine*. Key word searches **can** work, if you're lucky, but again, no browsing of sites can take place. It is only for those who were committed to **RE**visiting the web pages they had once consulted.

Sadly, the decision by the museum is not unique. In 1996, the Ottawa Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society electronically published the proceedings of the Kingston OAS symposium (Pilon and Perkins 1996). The publication obtained an ISBN number from Library and Archives Canada (LAC). A set of five diskettes containing pdf's of the 11 individual papers were submitted to them as well, and LAC hosted the electronic documents which could be accessed via the Ottawa Chapter's website. Once again, I recently needed to consult one of the articles but the link to the LAC website was no longer live. LAC had apparently decided to withdraw support for the publication without informing anyone, at least neither of the editors (Rachel Perkins and myself). If you know the title of the proceedings volume, you can find a reference to it in their online catalogue but if you wish to consult the document, you'll have to arrange to go to the Wellington Street facility in Ottawa, where a single printed copy is kept, or perhaps the files on the diskettes could be copied and sent to you if they still have the technology to read 3.5 inch diskettes and if the files are not corrupted because, after all, it has been nearly 30 years since they were consigned to the diskettes.

When I began my involvement with digital publishing in the early 1990s, I had difficulty believing that all of this information would be made available at no cost to individuals and in perpetuity. The promise was indeed incredible. More than 30 years later I am brought to the

conclusion that the promise of the internet has not been fulfilled. Indiscriminate deletion of a different kind has, is, and will continue to take place.

When I consider the amount of work that went into the research, the report production and the electronic file creation among other direct costs, I am shaken at what a loss the disappearance of these web pages represents for Canadian taxpayers.

Reviewing the three reasons for which the files may have been removed from the Museum's website, I can vouch for the relative simplicity of the code used and the pertinence of the information presented. These pages allowed easy access to leading-edge, scholarly research and the interpretations were supported and backed up with full references making for transparent knowledge sharing. Moreover, some of this information was unique and only to be found on the Museum's website. This leaves only the third possible explanation to understand their disappearance, i.e. that the Museum's direction and priorities have changed and no longer necessarily include the creation and dissemination, let alone the preservation, of knowledge about Canadian history.

When I contacted the 'authorities' ultimately responsible for withdrawing these web pages, I was told that the material had been removed following consultation with 'Research' (the museum's division) and would not be restored...period. Interestingly, none of the Museum's archaeologists that I spoke with knew anything about this. The consultation that took place was likely at the management level, none of whom are archaeologists. Yet scholars should normally be at the vanguard of the protection of knowledge and in determining the fate of such data.

These are the components of the Canadian Museum of History's website that no longer meet their inclusion test, however that is determined:

The New Severn Post Archaeological Project

-five blogs from Fort Severn when I was undertaking field research in 2016; these are accompanied by videos made

in the community, on the river and during excavations, providing very unique, colorful and pertinent glimpses of far northern Ontario. These blogs and the videos were available in both French and English.

When Modern Science Connects with the Past

-a blog post on the AMS radiocarbon dating of what appears to be a European bone needle case recovered from the Roebuck St. Lawrence Iroquoian archaeological site near Prescott, Ontario by W.J. Wintemberg in 1912. In English and French.

Archaeological Mysteries in the Ottawa Area: the Ottawa Ossuary

-an extensive website delving into the location of an Indigenous burial place first reported by Dr. Edward Van Cortlandt in 1853 and now known to have been located on the site of the present-day Canadian Museum of History. In English and French.

Passions and Pastimes, Thomas Walter Edwin Sowter, the Ottawa Valley's First Archaeologist

-an extensive website dealing with Thomas Walter Edwin Sowter, an Aylmer, Québec amateur paleontologist and archaeologist who undertook archaeological research in the Lac Deschênes area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries just upriver from Ottawa. The website included both pdf copies and html versions of his six scholarly articles published between 1895 and 1917 as well as his 2004 article. In English and French.

Kichi Sibi, Tracing Our Region's Past

-a virtual expansion of an exhibit on the ancient history of the Ottawa area which was presented for more than three years (June 2001 to October 2004) in the W.E. Taylor gallery of the Canadian Museum of History, and which is now on permanent exhibit at the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Cultural Center. In English and French.

Retracing an Archaeological Expedition

-an extensive webpage presenting eight years of field reports of the NOGAP Archaeology Project (based at the Canadian Museum of History) from 1985 to 1994. This website reproduced the original field reports of five field

archaeologists and included background components detailing the complementary activities that were necessary to mount field expeditions in remote regions of the Canadian North. In English and French.

Behold! Ancient Treasures and the Dead Sea Scrolls

-an extensive virtual exhibition presenting all the exhibition text and images of all the artifacts presented during this unique exhibition at the Canadian Museum of History in 2002-2004. Also included were full recordings of eight lectures presented by a variety of international scholars on various aspects of Dead Sea Scroll scholarship. In English and French.

Gather Around this Pot..

-a virtual exhibition based on a CMH First Peoples Hall exhibit of a collection of 22 pre-contact Indigenous whole pots, mostly from the collection of the Canadian Museum of History. The webpage included basic information on the pots themselves, as well as information on pre-contact pottery-making techniques, pottery-making traditions and ceramic conservation. In English and French.

Once hosted by Library and Archives Canada:

Home is Where the Hearth Is: the contribution of small sites to our understanding of Ontario's past

-the proceedings volume of the 1996 OAS Annual Symposium held in Kingston consists of an introduction, 11 original articles and the summary of a forum discussion on priorities and practice in Ontario Archaeology.

Final Remarks

At this point, it is virtually (pun intended!) impossible to arrive at a conclusion about this situation. While I am obviously discussing materials that I was directly involved in creating, the main reason I am doing so is that I only became aware of the disappearance of publications because I knew where they should be and I was actively seeking to consult them. I hesitate to think of how many times other publicly funded and publicly hosted electronic information has similarly vanished with no one ever being aware of that fact.

In a number of respects, this is reminiscent of the regrettable loss of archaeological collections to a Michigan landfill site (Alphonso 2003) more than 20 years ago at the University of Toronto Scarborough. In other cases, the collections gathered by amateurs over their lifetimes are dispersed at their passing. In some instances, this has even been anecdotally reported when licensed archaeologists passed away and the collections they had been curating were summarily dealt with.

I can only conclude that an important threshold has been crossed when mandated, national cultural institutions such as the Canadian Museum of History and Library and Archives Canada, or cultural organizations like the Canadian Archaeological Association can succumb to the temptation to 'rationalize' their web spaces when online storage may be one of the cheapest components of the web. It seems difficult to accept the explanation that following "consultation with the Research division, internal stakeholders, and an evaluation of the functionality and navigability of the Museum's existing offer [...] Based on this review, as well as current best practices in usability and content delivery, the Museum decided to retire most blog posts created before 2018 as well as most online exhibitions" (Robyn Jeffrey, personal communication 2024). The chosen year seems arbitrary at best.

The nature and value of the content appear to be competing with what, to me, are superficial and secondary considerations of "functionality, navigability, usability and content delivery" (Robyn Jeffrey, personal communication 2024). And I dare say, content has lost out while a cynical voice might say that bells and whistles have carried the day. The rush towards popularity appears to have relegated rigor and integrity of content to a second or lesser tier of value. It may be time to reassess the ultimate purpose of the internet with regards to the creation and especially the preservation of knowledge and the strategies that are being developed to meet the future needs of the institutions, but also the importance of preserving the past.

I have placed as much of the information contained in the disappeared web pages on my Academia.edu and ResearchGate.net with the hope that they may be found.

A reprieve of sorts has been provided by the Ottawa Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society during the summer of 2025. They very kindly accepted to host the former CMH web components with immediate pertinence to the Ottawa area. Such a decision is very much in the interests of their members and serves to further their institutional mandate. We can only hope that future Ottawa Chapter boards will share the views in this regard with the current one. But what if they don't?

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Remembering Debbie Berg

By Trevor Orchard

I am sad to share the news that a prominent member of the Ontario zooarchaeology community, Debbie Berg, passed away at the end of May, 2026, at the age of 72.

Deborah "Debbie" Berg was the laboratory technician for the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) for more than 30 years prior to her retirement in 2014. Debbie also served as the departmental zooarchaeologist throughout this time, and her active involvement in zooarchaeology continued into her retirement-years after leaving the university. Her interest in zooarchaeology, as with many others in Ontario, began when she took Dr. Howard Savage's *Faunal Archaeo-Osteology* class at the University of Toronto in the 1975-1976 academic year, while she was an undergraduate student in anthropology (John O. Goyo, personal communication 2026). Debbie was hired as the first laboratory technician in the Department of Anthropology at UTM, then Erindale College, in 1980. Initially, Debbie was responsible for managing the departmental labs and teaching collections and assisting with the running of laboratory-based courses and archaeological field schools. She started creating what is now the UTM comparative faunal collection even before she was formally hired at the college, as the earliest specimens in the collection date to the late 1970s. Debbie's close friend and colleague Rosemary Prevec fondly recalls that they worked very closely together on animal collecting trips, on skeletonizing animals for their collections, and on identifying faunal remains from archaeological sites, a shared interest that led to a shared occupation (Rosemary Prevec, personal communication 2026). Debbie's husband, John, notes that Debbie initially processed animal skeletons at UTM using dermestid beetles, and recalls that UTM facilities was so worried about the larvae escaping that they moved her bug room to the incinerator room and built a little shallow moat around it to stop escaping larvae; she gave up on the beetles for various reasons (predation by spiders, finicky larvae that would not consume everything, problems with humidity, and dealing with greasy bones), and preferred boiling, which was much more "hands on" and created



Figure 1. Debbie and her horse, Teddy, in 2004
(photo courtesy of John O. Goyo)

more familiarity with the bones (John O. Goyo, personal communication 2026). Debbie's interest in zooarchaeology, and the impressive animal skeleton collection she was building, led to the creation of the department's own *Faunal Archaeo-Osteology* course (ANT415) in 1991. Debbie taught this course from its inception in the 1991-92 academic year until 2005, allowing her to pass along her passion for zooarchaeology to numerous students.

Aside from her involvement in teaching, Debbie contributed substantially to archaeology as a researcher and contract faunal analyst. Some of her early work involved the analysis of faunal material from areas such as Newfoundland (Berg 1978) and the American Southwest (Sullivan and Berg 1983), but the bulk of her work involved completing detailed reports on animal assemblages from numerous archaeological sites in Ontario. Beginning with her analysis of material from the Sewell site (AlGt-9) in 1976, as part of Howard Savage's course, and ending



Figure 2. Debbie processing a cow in 2006
(photo courtesy of John O. Goyo)

with an analysis of material from the Puce Site (AbHq-3) in 2018, Debbie produced well over 100 reports detailing the analysis of faunal assemblages from Ontario archaeological sites. Some of this work was ultimately published (Berg and Bursey 2000), but most remains part of the unpublished grey literature. Debbie believed that these reports belonged in the public domain and should be freely accessible, and to that end she generously made all of her reports available on her personal website (<http://www.riddermarkfarm.ca/>). This belief in the accessibility of faunal reports also led her to digitize and make available nearly 200 faunal reports completed by Rosemary Prevec, that were donated to UTM upon Rosemary's retirement (see "Notes and News", *Arch Notes* 18(4), July/August 2013)¹.

Debbie's legacy is also particularly well represented by what we now call the Deborah J. Berg faunal collection at UTM (<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/anthropology/research/ontario-archaeology-utm/zooarchaeology/utm-zooarchaeology-lab-and-deborah-j-berg-faunal>), a comparative library of animal skeletons for teaching purposes and for aiding in the identification of unknown skeletal elements from archaeological sites and forensic contexts. Debbie started the collection and expanded it into the impressive resource that now supports teaching and research by students and faculty. The existing UTM collection is substantial, containing more than 1,500 individual skeletons or partial skeletons representing more than 460 species, and includes large numbers of mammals,

birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and molluscs. The majority of the collection consists of species that are indigenous or introduced to Ontario, though there are also a variety of exotic species represented resulting from relationships that Debbie generated with various zoos in southern Ontario. As per Debbie's wishes, the personal faunal comparative collection that she used in her home lab and her extensive library of books related to archaeology and zooarchaeology have been donated to UTM Anthropology. This faunal collection, which includes both specimens Debbie prepared herself and a collection that Rosemary Prevec donated to Debbie upon her retirement, is also substantial, and will be integrated into the now much larger UTM Deborah J. Berg faunal collection in the coming months.

Beyond her academic interests, Debbie had a love of turtles and enjoyed watching the diverse birds that visited her backyard feeders. She also had a passion for riding horses, and for driving Porsches. Many of these interests are documented in pictures posted on her personal website, linked above. A short obituary, which includes information on where donations can be made if desired, can be found here: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/en-ca/obituaries/acton-on/debbie-%E2%99%A1-12906700>.

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¹Access to the PDF archive of Rosemary Prevec's reports is available by contacting Trevor Orchard (trevor.orchard@utoronto.ca).



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