



# Arch Notes

The Newsletter of the Ontario Archaeological Society



Taking a closer look at Ontario chert (photo courtesy of Peter L. Storck)

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[aneditor@ontarioarchaeology.org](mailto:aneditor@ontarioarchaeology.org)**Webmaster**

Joshua Dent

**Contact Information**

The Ontario Archaeological Society  
1444 Queen St. E. Toronto, Ontario M4L1E1  
(416) 406-5959

[info@ontarioarchaeology.org](mailto:info@ontarioarchaeology.org)  
[www.ontarioarchaeology.org](http://www.ontarioarchaeology.org)

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# President's Message

Dear Members,

I hope that you are staying well and enjoying the wintry weather. Many of you will be in report writing mode as we inventory the previous summer's activities (me too!).

Reflecting on 2024, it has (as usual) been very busy for OAS members, chapters, and the board. We continue to receive many questions from the public and concerns from members about heritage advocacy. Recently, we received a letter from Hon. Graham McGregor, Acting Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism (MCM), advising us that there are plans for a "new initiative to transform Ontario's heritage framework" (that sounds good!). But also it would "ensure that Ontario is future-ready to deliver effective regulatory oversight and make timely decisions that supports our government's ambitious plan to build housing and other critical infrastructure across the province" (well, that makes me nervous). We met with employees from the Archaeology Program Unit in mid-December to discuss this initiative and they explained that the Optimus SBR consultant company will be conducting part of a phased, multi-year approach that will begin early in 2025. We will provide you with updates as we learn more. Let's hope that we will see some actual changes resulting from the MCM initiative, particularly around Indigenous engagements!

With support from colleagues, we were able to branch out and run more Indigenous Archaeological FLR/technician training sessions of different types in Northwestern Ontario, the Nipissing First Nation area, and even Wendake, Quebec this year. These projects were possible thanks to support and in-kind support from the communities and a federal Community Services Relief Fund grant from United Way Thunder Bay of just over \$66k in 2023 and 2024. There is a critical shortage of all Ontario archaeologists, so we need to continue offering these training opportunities for people here.


Our big annual event of the OAS 51st Symposium

was held from October 25-27 in Thunder Bay, which was challenging logistically for our mainly Southern and Eastern Ontario base. However, it was very successful and also attracted participants from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan (our Annual Lake Superior Basin Workshop colleagues mainly). Hopefully, we will not wait another 30 years to host it here! I want to especially acknowledge our generous sponsors and silent auction donators. See an upcoming issue of *Arch Notes* for a longer report and information about the 2024 OAS awards winners.

## Changes to the Board of Directors

As we close out 2024, there are some changes occurring with the OAS Board of Directors. Long serving Vice President Abbey Flower (six years maximum reached), Director of Member Services Josh Dent (four years but also staying on as Webmaster!), and Director of Heritage Advocacy Jeff Seibert (four years) are moving on to other opportunities. I cannot thank you enough for all of your time, work, and skills on the board. We also welcome new board members Peter Popkin (VP), Sarah Clarke (Member Services), and Lara Wood (Heritage Advocacy).

The OAS Executive Director, Kaitlyn Malleau, resigned as of October 23, moving on to other endeavours. Kaitlyn had also volunteered on the OAS board in years past, so she knew a great deal about the organization from the start, which really helped her to hit the ground running. The board and I acknowledge all that she did to help us in 2023 and 2024 to facilitate the efficient running of the society. We wish her well in all of her future adventures!

Also, this is my last message as the OAS President, as I move to the Past President position for 2025. Please welcome my friend and colleague, Lisa Sonnenburg, who moves from President-Elect to become the new President of the OAS as I pass on the 'red trowel' to her (maybe our archaeological version of a gavel for 

those 'rowdy' OAS Annual Business Meetings?).

There were many reasons why I joined the OAS Board of Directors. One of the most knowledgeable Northwestern Ontario archaeologists, William Ross (winner of this year's J.V. Wright award!), had contacted me in 2019 to see if I was interested in joining the OAS Board of Directors as a "Northern" representative. He had explained that "it was not too much work" (I was suspicious about this). Former Ministry archaeologist Bill had to leave the board as Director of Member Services, so was looking for an archaeologist from Northwestern Ontario to replace him. Thus, I was elected in 2019 at the OAS Annual Symposium hosted by the Toronto Chapter. I appreciate that Bill thought of me and I have endeavored to continue providing that Northern viewpoint since joining the board (e.g., often reminding the Archaeology Program Unit that there is only one person working for them representing **all** of Northern Ontario - the size of a European country!).

I feel honoured to have had the opportunity to spend the last three years as the OAS President and thank you to all of the members, chapter executive, donors, sponsors, Indigenous individuals, professional archaeologists, students and other colleagues who have helped the

society (and me) during some challenging times with the Provincial government heritage-related legislative changes in particular. Additionally, I am grateful to the phenomenal Board of Directors and the appointed OAS colleagues who have assisted me in countless endeavours. I have learned so much from all of you and your kindness and support has been invaluable! A note of thanks also to the former Presidents of the OAS, since I have reached out to most of you for advice over the last few years too!

We are looking forward to engaging with you as we review the previous **OAS Strategic Plan** (2019-2024) and work with colleagues to co-create the next five-year plan. I can remember President Alicia Hawkins and her partner visiting Thunder Bay to hear from the chapter members, which was so amazing. Only five years later and so much as changed in Ontario archaeology and the larger world (but Zoom will certainly help us with this endeavour to reach people across the province). Although the last few years in post COVID-19 times continue to be challenging, I am certain that by working together, we will continue to improve Ontario archaeology.

Chi-miigwetch/thanks very much,  
Jill

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# Windows Through Stone into Past Social Landscapes: the ROM's Provincial Chert Reference Collection

By Peter L. Storck and Peter H. von Bitter  
Senior Curators Emeriti, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

We are pleased to announce the newly reorganized Provincial Chert Reference Collection held by the Royal Ontario Museum will be available for study in 2025. The reference collection is intended to document cherts and their geological sources in the province and to assist archaeologists in the source identification of chert artifacts.

The collection consists of 105 samples of different chert types, supported by 86 bulk samples. The collection was initially assembled by Betty Eley, and her husband Norman, under the direction of von Bitter and during the course of research for the publication *Cherts of Southern Ontario* by Eley and von Bitter, published in 1989 by the Royal Ontario Museum, Publications on Archaeology. The reference collection was subsequently expanded by von Bitter, Storck, David Rudkin (an Assistant Curator in the ROM's Department of Paleobiology) and others to include chert and other toolstones from geological sources and locales in both Canada and the United States. The identification of geological sources of chert is useful in archaeology for investigating trade between people and/or the movement of people across the landscape. In our studies of the early occupants of southern Ontario, two toolstones – Onondaga Formation chert (a major Devonian stratigraphic unit that outcrops in Ontario along the northeastern margin of the Lake Erie Basin and is an extension of the same bedrock formation in western New York State) and the Beaver Valley facies of Fossil Hill Formation chert (which outcrops in the Niagara Escarpment Uplands south of Georgian Bay) – have been particularly useful in tracking the movements of Indigenous people during the Early and Middle Paleo-Indian periods between south-central and southwestern Ontario (including the Niagara Peninsula) (see, for example, Ellis 1989; Storck and von Bitter 1989). Most recently, in a

publication with Williamson and colleagues (2023), we suggested that Clovis/Gainey people moved seasonally between south-central and southwestern Ontario for hunting and fishing associated with glacial Lake Algonquin (Storck et al, In Press; Williamson et al 2023; see also Storck and Spiess 1994). This may not, however, have been an annual activity, the seasonal movements of caribou possibly being more localized between offshore island and lake-margin feeding/birthing habitats and inland winter refuges, possibly even in the Lake Ontario basin during periods of lower lake levels associated with early Lake Ontario. Generally speaking, macroscopic identification of a particular chert type, unless the material is visually highly distinctive, may need to be followed up by petrographic and geochemical studies to characterize the lithic material. In our work, we also came to realize that a greater knowledge of geographic variation of chert within a bedrock formation may lead to new insights about human activities. A good example is how our work with Fossil Hill chert in south central Ontario led to similar questions as those raised about geographic variation between New York State and southern Ontario in Onondaga chert (von Bitter and Eley 1997). Studies of the stratigraphy, lithology, and fossil content of Fossil Hill Formation chert in the southern Georgian Bay region suggest that outcrops in the eastern Beaver Valley region constitute a distinct local facies, the result of its depositional history during the Silurian Period. Stott and von Bitter (1999) named this the Beaver Valley facies. It is this visually distinctive material that was used as a toolstone by Indigenous peoples during the Early and Middle Paleo-Indian periods in southern Ontario. The question raised is whether other facies of Fossil Hill Formation chert occur east of the Beaver Valley and north on the Bruce Peninsula and Manitoulin Island, facies that might pinpoint other

locations of Fossil Hill chert procurement during the Paleo-Indian and later periods. For us, the need to pinpoint sources of chert acquisition, beyond the level of identifying the host bedrock formation, also arose when we attempted to interpret the significance of Onondaga Formation chert at the Clovis/Gainey site of Mt. Albion West in the Niagara Peninsula east of Hamilton. At Mt. Albion West, Onondaga chert constitutes 91% of the tool/debitage assemblage, while 8% is attributed to the Beaver Valley facies of Fossil Hill chert. We assumed that the Onondaga chert was from the bedrock formation of that name that extends across the northeastern part of the Lake Erie basin in southern Ontario but recognized that it could have come from that bedrock unit in New York State. The former would imply range behavior in southern Ontario between the Niagara Peninsula and the southern Georgian Bay region; the latter would imply a colonizing movement from New York State into southern Ontario. Two very different scenarios. We are exploring the possibility of conducting geochemical studies to see if we could pinpoint the source of Onondaga chert used by the people at Mt. Albion West. We would also like to conduct similar studies with Fossil Hill chert throughout its area of occurrence. Through these studies, and building on the work of Parkins (1977), Luedtke (1978), Jarvis (1990), Clark (2003), Hawkins et al. (2008), and others as appropriate, we hope to obtain insights into, not just the movements of people associated with Clovis/Gainey stone tools across the landscape, but possibly also whether different bands used different facies of Fossil Hill and Onondaga chert. This could provide glimpses into other aspects of the social landscape than band movements. Although, highly speculative at the moment, surprising discoveries could come from such forays into the unknown. Identifying chert to the level of bedrock formation, itself often difficult, is but the beginning. The ROM's Provincial Chert Reference Collection is expected to be available to the public in the spring of 2025 and may be accessed for research purposes by contacting the curator of the Mineralogy section of the Natural History division at the ROM.

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## The Stephenson Site Camboose Shanty in Algonquin Park - Erratum

Roderick (Rory) MacKay

The originally published version of this article includes an error on page 8, first column, second paragraph. It should read:

"It happened that I was acquainted with Ed Addison, a former member of the research facility, who I approached at a friend's retirement party and asked if he had heard about a camboose shanty having been found there. He was able to provide a general description of the location and a simple map, drawn on a serviette. Later, former Director Peter Smith also provided a sketch map."

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 Web Design/Photography: Chris McEvoy  
 E-mail: [clarence.surette@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:clarence.surette@lakeheadu.ca)  
 Meetings: TBA BB2002, Braun Building, Lakehead University  
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Institutional	75 (includes OA)	
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