

## Wa-nant-git-che-ang: Canoe Route to Lake Huron through Southern Algonquia

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*The Severn River, its tributaries, and adjacent river systems, are centrally located in the Great Lakes watershed. The river, known to the Anishinaabeg as Wa-nant-git-che-ang, the circuitous river, forms an important travel corridor through central Ontario. Archaeological evidence, early historical records, Anishinaabe oral tradition, and place names all contribute vitally to knowledge of aboriginal use of this waterway and its region, defined here as southern Algonquia. The cross-disciplinary nature of this evidence will require a major study, with commitments by scholars from different fields, to further our understanding of this region.*

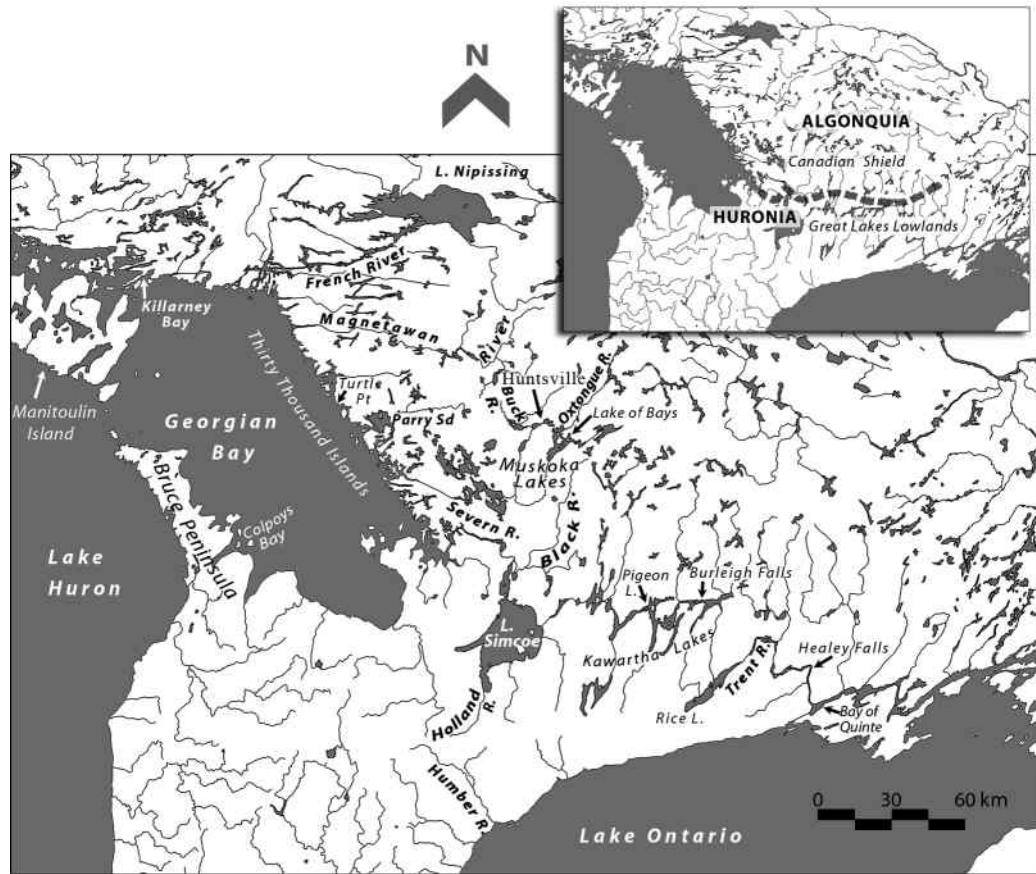
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### **The River in the Context of Algonquia: An Introduction**

The Severn River flows west into the southeast end of Georgian Bay of Lake Huron, its course passing in a broad arc across the Precambrian rock of the Canadian Shield, a few kilometres north of the northern limit of the Great Lakes Lowlands (Figure 1). The term, *Algonquia*, refers to the vast territory north of the Great Lakes between the Rocky Mountains and Labrador (Hamilton 1899:285; Rogers and Tobobondung 1975:255). The southern limit of Algonquia varied over time as the political constructs of Huronia, Petunia and Neutralia came into existence, then faded (Fox 1989:219). At the time of European contact, southern Algonquia was the region roughly between the Severn River and the Kawartha Lakes, to the south, and Lake Nipissing and the French River, to the north (Figure 1). This part of Algonquia is the same region labelled “Nations Algonquiniae” by Francois du Creux in his 1660 map (du Creux 1984). The edge of the Canadian Shield, a few kilometres south of the Severn River, represents a cultural boundary. Both before and after European contact, southern Algonquia encompassed the Canadian Shield to the north of and slightly south of this river, a region occupied by people belonging to the Algonquian language group and having a seasonally mobile settlement pattern.

Huronia, during the period of its existence, describes the region immediately south of the Shield, encompassing the Iroquoian-speaking Wendat, who established larger, more permanent communities based on an agricultural economy and a more sedentary settlement pattern (Latta 1985:166; Trigger 1987:29, 124, 125).

These two cultural groups can be distinguished on grounds of subsistence and settlement patterns, technology and cosmological worldviews. Puckasaw pits and pictographs, for example, are found exclusively in Algonquia (Wright 1981:58). Although Algonquians practised some marginal horticulture at the time of contact, their subsistence and settlement patterns varied little from those of their hunting-gathering-fishing forebears (Fox 1990a:457). These patterns are manifest in calendrical terms for each moon of the year, including locally adapted terms for “moon when the suckers spawn” (April), “planting moon” (May), “strawberry moon” (June), “blackberry moon” (August), and “trout fishing moon” (September-October) (Jeness 1935:12). The Algonquian seasonal cycle involved purposeful travel through a large region, the people exploiting a broad range of resources for food, tools, medicines and ceremonial use (Heidenreich 1987; LeBlanc 2003). In summer, bands congregated at food-rich shoreline locations where trading and social activity occurred. In winter, when food was less plentiful, bands dispersed into smaller hunting groups.



**Figure 1.** Central Ontario, showing river systems and some of the places mentioned in the text. The inset map shows the geological boundary between Canadian Shield to the north and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Lowlands to the south, and area of southern Algonquia and Huronia, respectively. Source: NRCAN (2002).

In contrast to the tribal designations used to describe the Iroquoian-speakers of southern Ontario, the people of Algonquia formed small, independent bands of hunters, loosely related through marriage and clan affiliations, and connected by language and way of life (Wright 1972:91). The nations of southern Algonquia are known individually as the Ojibway or Otchipwe (the same word as Chippewa), Nipissing, Mississauga, Odawa, and others, but the people refer to themselves collectively as Anishinaabeg<sup>1</sup>, “the real people”, making their uniqueness part of their identity.

Even as some of these groups spread to the northwest, they retained their ties with southern Algonquia. During the seventeenth century, for example, the Odawa, whose territory later includ-

ed the Bruce Peninsula, Manitoulin Island (Fox 1990a:459), and the region north of Lake Huron (Del’Isle 1984; Gentilcore and Head 1984:21), may have been associated closely with the Severn River: the name given to the river by the French was *Chemin des Outaouacs*, “Route of the Odawa” (Raffaix 1984). By the nineteenth century, the group known as the Chippewas of Lakes Simcoe and Huron was the one most closely connected with the Severn River and Muskoka District, and it is from their chief, Mesqua Ukie or Mesquakie, “Yellowhead,” that Muskoka District, immediately north of the Severn River, derived its name (Murray 1963:liv).

At the time of European contact, the Jesuits recorded a “multitude of tribes...who all speak the Algonquin language” and remarked that “the tribes

of the Huron tongue almost seem to be at the centre, as it were, of a vast circumference filled with Algonquin tribes" (Thwaites 1896-1901:27:47). The people of Huronia and Algonquia interacted in many different ways (Tooker 1967:19, 52, 80, 94, 122). They travelled to each other's regions and shared hunting territories (Jeness 1935:7; Trigger 1987:133). In the first half of the seventeenth century, the Wendat of Huronia regularly travelled through southern Algonquia on trading missions to Quebec, meeting with their Algonquian neighbours along the way. In September 1641, some twenty leagues (100 km) from Huron country, on an inlet of Georgian Bay, Huron guests were present at an Algonquian Feast of the Dead, an event attracting some 2,000 Algonquians (Allen 2003a). At this occasion, "the Algonquin Nations were served apart, as their Language is entirely different from the Huron", and the Hurons present assembled separately (Thwaites 1896-1901:23:221). Joan Lovisek (1991) argues that Algonquian-speaking peoples achieved cultural definition because of their geographic and political position in an environment where year-round subsistence was based on fishing, small game, and corn, either traded or cultivated (Lovisek 1991:iv). Later, between 1820 and 1850, the history of the Anishinaabeg occupying the Georgian Bay region was characterized by frequent immigration and political change (Lovisek 2001:281). Since the Severn River is the most southerly in the Canadian Shield, its position indicates proximity to the seventeenth century cultural boundary a few kilometres to the south. Clearly, it is important not only to distinguish Algonquia from Huronia, but also to understand the significant role the river played in the lives of the Anishinaabeg and their ancestors.

#### Anishinaabe and European Naming

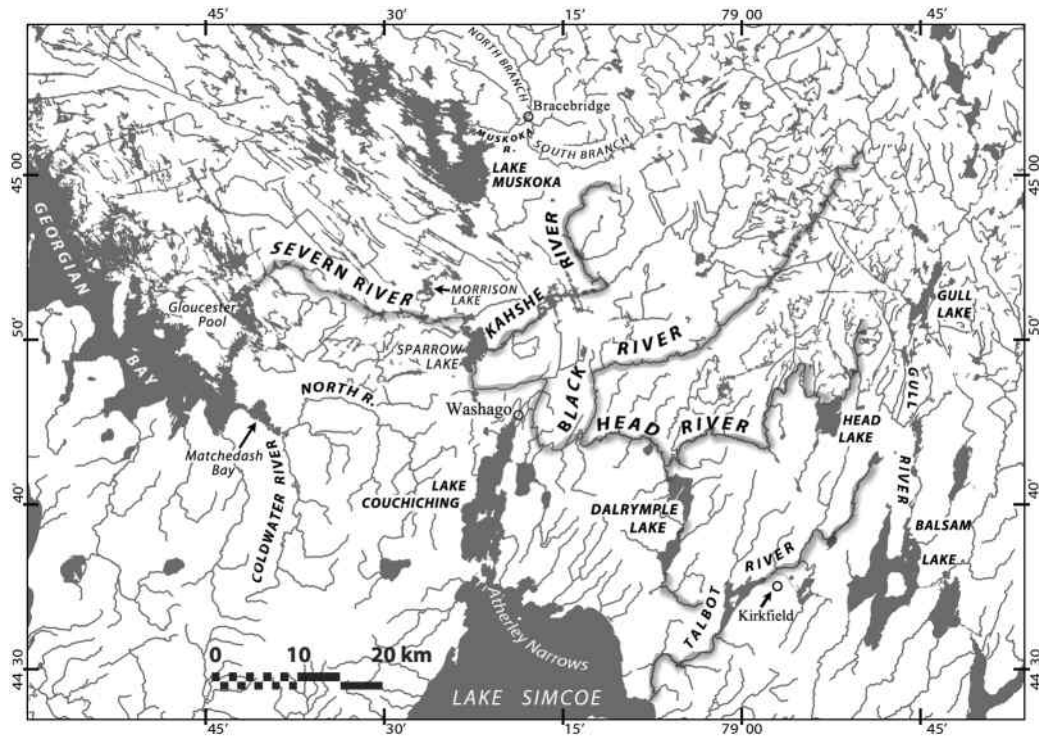
Consideration of the linguistic construction and meaning of *Wa-nant-git-che-ang* in the Ojibway language allows a relevant description of the river. *Wana* means "it is hollow or deep" and implies that "there is a basin of water" (Baraga 1878:2:398). *Wanatan* means "there is a whirlpool" or "where the water turns around" (Baraga 1878:1:287). When *kitchi* (*git-che*), "big," is added (Baraga

1878:2:193) *Wa-nant-git-che-ang* can be interpreted as "where the water turns around on a big scale." In 1866, McEvoy suggested that the word meant "circuitous river" (McEvoy 1866:15). This meaning provides an apt description for a river whose course stretches first to the north from Atherley Narrows at Lake Couchiching to Sparrow Lake, then to the west between Sparrow Lake and Gloucester Pool before turning sharply south and emptying into Georgian Bay, well south of most of its westerly course (Figure 2). From 1793, after Governor John Graves Simcoe renamed the river, the Severn, in honour of a sluggish English stream, *Wa-nant-git-che-ang* lost the accurate descriptive element characteristic of Anishinaabe river names.

To shorten the river's circuitous course, travellers portaged across the base of the river's arc between the narrows at Lake Couchiching and the Coldwater River (Figure 2), where navigation could resume.<sup>2</sup> This portage, which became known as the "Portage Road", was surveyed in detail by Samuel Proudfoot Hurd in 1835, thereby giving researchers specific information about nuances in its course for every lot and concession that it crossed (Hurd 1835; Winearls 1991:110). From this Portage Road, later renamed the Coldwater Road, the connecting trail northward toward the Severn River was on the high ground west of Lake Couchiching, close to the shoreline ridge of glacial Lake Algonquin. Andrew Hunter (1904:105, 108) documented this Muskoka-bound trail, along with associated village sites and portages to the Severn River.

#### Features of the River and Travel Routes

Although the Severn River itself flows through the rocky Canadian Shield, two thirds of its 5,832 km<sup>2</sup> drainage basin is south of the Shield, in the basin of Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching (Chapman and Putnam 1984:86). The areal extent of this drainage system allowed aboriginal people access to several long-distance travel routes. The Severn drops 43 m in 57 km from Lake Couchiching to Georgian Bay, descending in places through narrow gorges (Blandford 1967; Parks Canada 1987). However, if the Severn is considered to start at the narrows of



**Figure 2.** The Severn-Black River and adjacent watersheds; some important routes discussed in the text are highlighted. Source: NRCAN (2002).

Lake Couchiching, as depicted in Bressani's 1657 map, the river is somewhat longer than 57 km (Bressani 1984). Similarly, if its major tributary, the Black River, is considered as part of the Severn River, the overall length of the river is 225 km (Long 1989a:4). Mean annual daily discharge for the period 1996-2003 is slightly above  $82 \text{ m}^3\text{s}^{-1}$  at the mouth of the Severn (Bruce Kitchen, Parks Canada, Peterborough, personal communication, 2004). Originally, the river had seven rapids and falls<sup>3</sup> that were mapped by Pilkington in 1793 (Pilkington 1963; Winearls 1991:98). Glacial outwash high on some rocky bluffs overlooking the river has left a legacy of huge kettle holes (Figure 3), a cluster near Swift Rapids ranging from 0.4 to 2.7 metres in diameter. Some may have been used as caches and sacred offering sites. Historian Marc Lescarbot describes a ceremony on a portage at such a kettle hole site where "an orator throws a tobacco offering into the basin, and all together raise a great shout, and they think that without this offering their journey could not be a success" (Lescarbot 1914:33).

A kettle in a rock by the Ottawa River was used by the Ottawas and Chippewas, who offered tobacco as they passed, believing that rock depressions, including the kettle, were the tracks of Manabozho (Nanabush), the spirit of the northwest tempests and the personification of strength and wisdom (Hamilton 1899:310). The formation of kettle holes is best understood within the context of the sequence of receding post-glacial lakes in the period after glacial Lake



**Figure 3.** Kettle hole in bedrock. The diameter of the hole near ground surface is about 1 m. Photo by the author.

Algonquin. By 5500 B.P. the Severn River was more extensive than at present, stretching further northwest into the Georgian Bay basin to low water phase Lake Hough, past areas now submerged (Davidson 1989:63; Eschman and Karrow 1985:90; Karrow and Warner 1990:17). The fact that most of the river is open for much of the winter, when nearby inland lakes are ice-bound, must have been attractive to early Anishinaabe travellers.

The landscape adjacent to the Severn River offers alternative travel routes, as indicated in Sagard's description of "byways over land and through lakes, which are very frequent in that district, rather than to follow the direct route" (Wright 1939:251). The term "crooked route" is embedded in *nin washkika*, "I make a crooked route" (Baraga 1878:1:216) and, possibly, in the place name "Washago," where the Severn River jogs northeast before turning sharply west (Figure 2).

No fewer than four travel routes from the Severn River to Georgian Bay are available to canoeists, all four routes requiring portages (Figure 4). The first two lead through Six Mile Lake, the Gibson River route, and the McDonald River route. The third and most direct route is through Little Go Home Bay, Baxter Lake and Honey Harbour; and the least direct route follows the natural course of the river through Gloucester Pool and Little Lake, passing the final falls at current day Port Severn and reaching the mouth of the river at Waubaushene Channel in Georgian Bay (Figure 4). The Six Mile Lake routes leave the Severn River at three locations: first, above Big Chute along Pretty Channel, a natural spillway during times of high water; second, from Horseshoe Island below Big Chute via Six Mile Lake Channel as indicated on Pilkington's 1793 map (Pilkington 1963; Winears 1991:98); third, via White's Falls below Little Chute. Once on Six Mile Lake, the northernmost route crosses Hungry Bay and takes the Hungry Creek portage to the Gibson River, which converges with the Musquash River and flows to Georgian Bay, just north of Bone Island. The second route across Six Mile Lake follows Crooked Bay to McDonald Lake, past McDonald River Stone Circle (BfGw-4), a structure believed

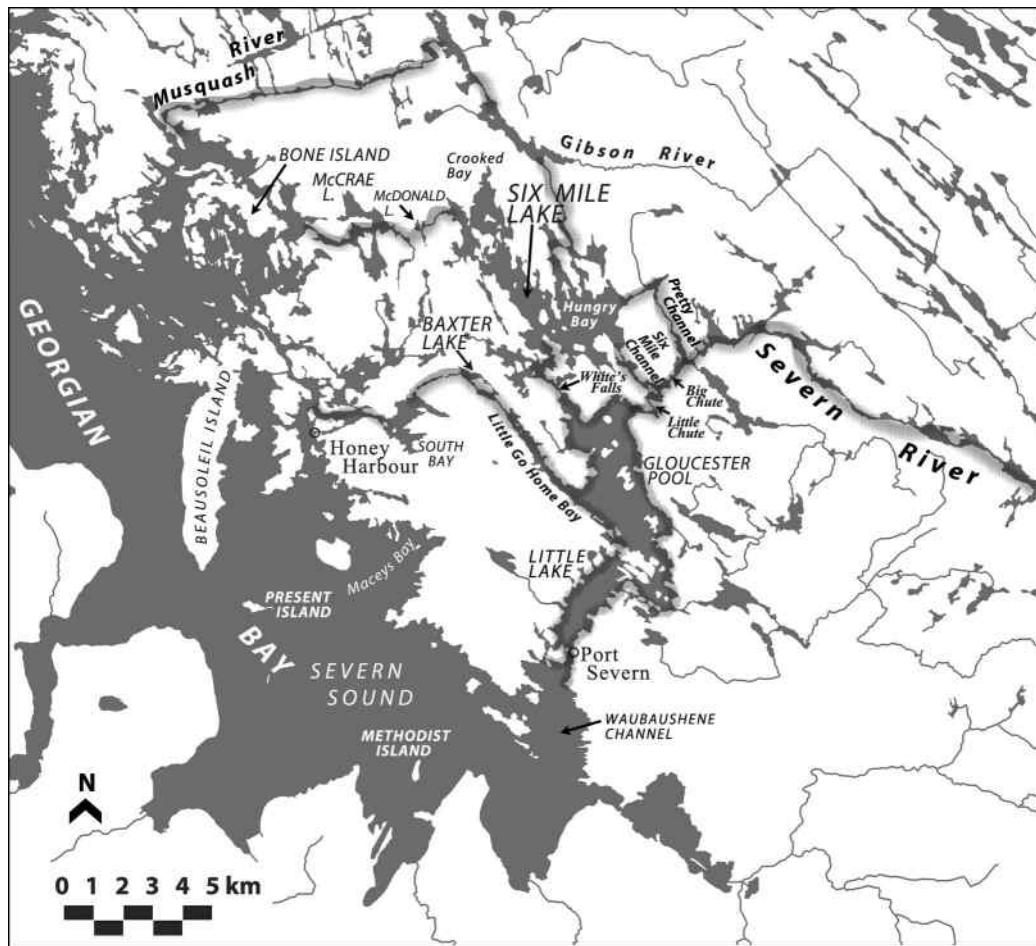
to be associated with Algonquian vision-seeking, and on to McCrae Lake and Georgian Bay, just east of Bone Island. The Baxter Lake Route, the shortest and perhaps the most used route before and after the European presence, leaves the Severn River at Little Go Home Bay, crosses to Baxter Lake within view of the Baxter Lake Stone site (BfGw-3), and enters Georgian Bay at South Bay of Honey Harbour, passing the Schlegel site (BfGw-6) and the Grise site (BfGw-2) directly opposite the Kitchi site (BfGx-13) on Beausoleil Island (Ross and D'Annibale 1995) (for site locations, see Figure 5). The fourth canoe route follows the Severn River southward through Gloucester Pool and Little Lake, past Port Severn at the Severn Bridge site<sup>4</sup> (BeGw-21), to the river's outlet into the Waubaushene Channel of Severn Sound, past Methodist Island, Port McNicholl's chert deposits (Eley and von Bitter 1989:33) and Present Island (Figure 4).

The Severn and its four canoe routes to Georgian Bay are connected, in turn, to a web of local routes to the interior of southern Algonquia. When considered in conjunction with the *bon-ka-nah*, or "special winter trails," leading from the Severn River overland to interior locations (Macdonald 1985:183), these *nastawgans*, or "routes through the country," are critical for a comprehensive understanding of the traditional Anishinaabe seasonal cycle.

#### The Northern Tributaries and Aboriginal Hunting Grounds

Nastawgans to the northern interior of Algonquia were important travel corridors for the Anishinabeg. Early nineteenth-century routes leading northward from the upper Severn River included the Black River route, the Kahsheshobogamog route, the Morrison Creek route, and the Moose Lake Portage.

The Severn River's largest tributary, the 165 km long Black River, rises on the Canadian Shield (Figure 1) and enters the Severn River just north of the Lake Couchiching outlet, after making a hairpin turn or *wa-nant-git-che-ang* (Figure 2). Some 11,000 years ago the Black River's upper course was a major meltwater spillway,



**Figure 4.** The lower Severn River area, showing the four possible routes to Georgian Bay discussed in text. Source: NRCAN (2002).

moving gravel, sand, and silt that filled the depressions in the landscape so that few lakes now grace the river's course (Long 1989b). For most of its course now, the Black River follows a narrow, swampy, sometimes meandering sand-filled valley, merging with the Severn just east of Washago (Chapman and Putnam 1984:86). At the time of the original surveys of Rama and Carden Townships, the branch coming from the east, now called the Head River, was labelled "Black River Middle Branch" (Dennis 1861; Roche 1858; Winearls 1991:476, 557) (Figure 2). The Middle Branch provides access to central Haliburton by a portage from Head Lake to the Gull River. Early nineteenth-century maps show both the location of portages and the position

and height of falls (Murray 1963:38) as well as the routes and interior waterways as "laid down from Indian Charts" (Knowles 1834; Winearls 1991:154). On their seasonal rounds, some nineteenth-century Mnjikaning families used the Black River for their fall return to Lake Couchiching (Bigwind 1911; Bigwin 1923).

The interior "channel of communication" to Lake Nipissing via the Kahsheshebogamog River, now known as the Kahshe River, was documented by Portlock in 1819 (Portlock 1963:25). The McNeice site (BfGt-1), an Archaic site in eastern Muskoka Township near the height of land between the Kahshe River and Muskoka River watersheds (Figure 2), offers evidence of one possible crossover corridor on Portlock's channel of

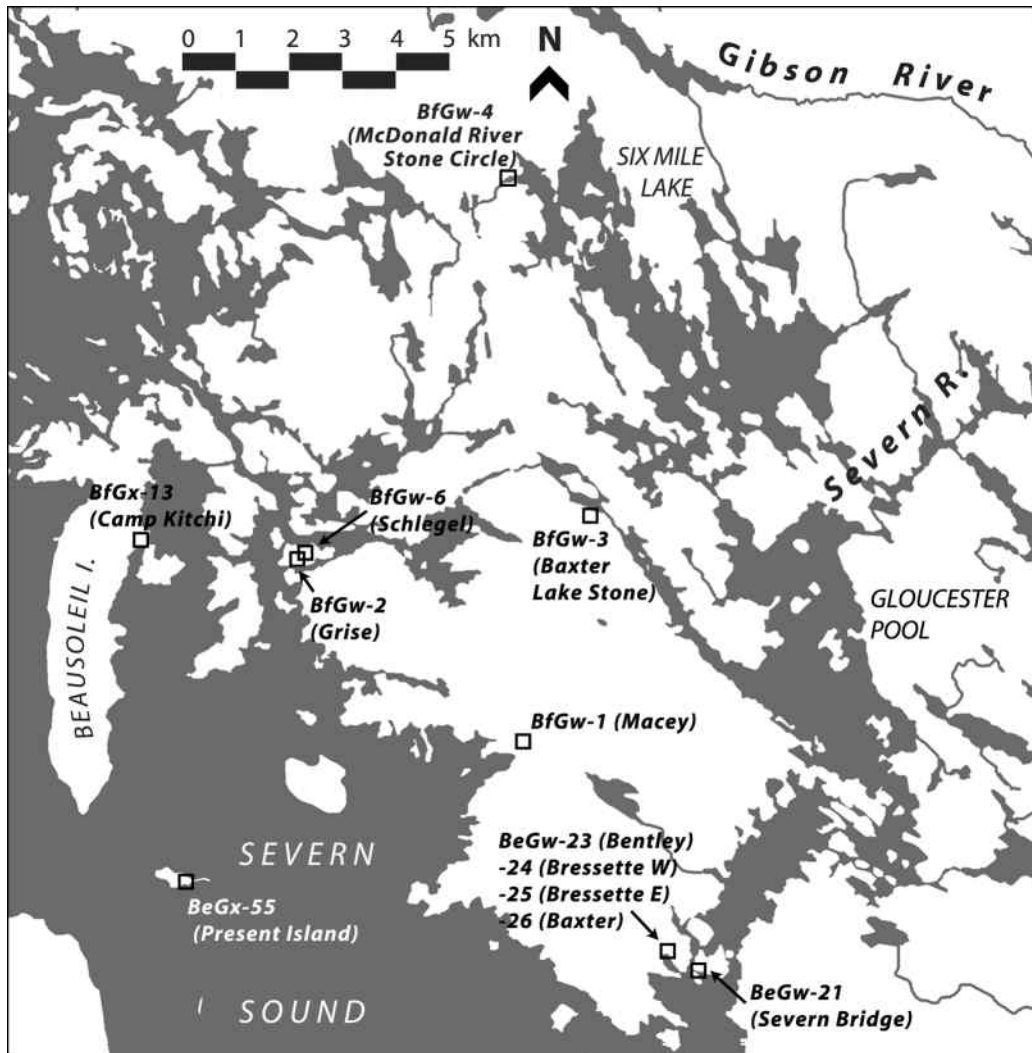


Figure 5. The lower Severn River area site locations. Source: NRCAN (2002).

communication. The Morrison Creek canoe route emerged as the most significant and heavily used tributary of the Severn River, entering the river from Morrison Lake, five kilometres downstream from Sparrow Lake (Figure 2). This route, documented by Briscoe in 1826 (Briscoe 1963; Winearls 1991:153), proceeded via Morrison Lake, South and North Muldrew Lakes (formerly Leg Lake), Muskoka Lake and points further north in the interior. In 1860, Provincial Land Surveyor J.O. Browne recorded a minor alternative to part of this route, leaving the Severn River by an initially precipitous portage north through

Morrison Township via Moose Lake to Leg (Muldrew) Lake (Browne 1860; Winearls 1991:540). The Morrison Creek canoe route was heavily used during the 1800s by the Mnjikaning families of Rama on the interior Chippewa travel corridor to the Muskoka Lakes and beyond.

It is, however, through the documented stories of individuals that the major interior travel corridor from Sparrow Lake northward is becoming better understood. For example, Francis Gaudaur of Rama, grandson of Chief Big Shilling, became known in fur trapping circles soon after 1828 when the area north of the Severn River was the

most productive fur-trapping zone close to both Rama and Penetanguishene (Murray 1963:327). The Morrison Creek route was central to Pee-to-beeg (Alexander Bailey), the fur trader located at the confluence of the North and South Muskoka Rivers (Bigwind 1911), now the site of Bracebridge (Figure 2), and to Pahtahsega (Rev. Peter Jacobs), who continued to hunt in the area northwest of current day Huntsville while working as a Methodist missionary, after settling at Rama, first in 1827 and, later, after missionary work in western Canada (French 1982:660; Smith 1987:96; Statistics Canada 1871; Woitowich 1994). The route to Jacobs's hunting grounds was along the upper Severn River to Sparrow Lake, then into the northern interior on the Chippewa travel corridor through Morrison Creek, the Muldrew Lakes, Lake Muskoka, Muskoka River (North Branch), Buck River and parts of the upper Magnetawan River (Miles 1871a, 1871b:1e; Murray 1963:64; Woitowich 1994). By 1865, tourists at Rama were hiring "well known Indian guide Charles Jacobs, a son of Rev. Peter Jacobs," for a trip down the Severn, "taking dinner at the head of Sparrow Lake" before taking the canoes north into the interior towards Jacobs's hunting grounds (Murray 1963:394, 395) (Figure 6).

The Morrison Creek route also influenced Chief John Assance (Aisance), who moved his community from Coldwater to Beausoleil Island

in Georgian Bay in 1842 (Hall 1988:11). For Aisance and his band, the Severn River provided a direct route to meetings with colleagues at Lake Simcoe (Murray 1963:116) and to the interior of southern Algonquia to hunt, fish, and collect medicines and ceremonial items. In 1923, the Williams Commission mapped the hunting limits of Aisance and others "so that the Indians and the Commission might more fully understand the purport of the evidence as it was adduced" (Bigwin 1923; Jackson 1923; Williams 1923; Williams et al. 1923:2, 3). As a member of the Otter (Ni-gig) Clan, the clan entrusted with knowledge of medicine, Aisance signed documents with his otter totem (Murray 1963:116; Sims 1996:35). The study of totems helps researchers to trace the clans of First Nations leaders (Sims 1996:37). The Otter Clan burial grounds are reported to be near the Muskoka River along the interior Chippewa travel corridor, accessible from the Severn River via the Morrison Creek route (Woitowich 1994).

By the late nineteenth century, descendants of earlier Mnjikaning First Nations personalities found a market for their quillwork baskets among the tourists of the Muskoka Lakes resorts. Annually these craftspeople would canoe north via the old Morrison/Muldrew Lake route to sell their wares. By the 1930s, as private land ownership by individual families spread, this tourist trade continued and the Mnjikaning visitors would tell their cottaging



**Figure 6.** Tourists canoeing on the Severn River in the late nineteenth century. Photo courtesy of Sara Clipsham.



clients how, each year, they needed to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors (Jean Allen, personal communication, 2002). The ethnological collection of century-old baskets at Muskoka Heritage Place in Huntsville attests to the scope of the quill-work sales.

Ina Trolove, a direct descendant of Chief Big Shilling of the early nineteenth century Mnjikaning First Nation (Murray 1963:115), achieved another impressive feat. She was born in 1911 in Rama Township but, in 1949, she and her husband, Ronald, purchased several hundred acres at Sterling Falls (BkGu-1) along a substantial south flowing waterway in the Magnetawan River watershed. The property is accessible by canoe via the Chippewa travel corridor through the Jacobs hunting ground. Sterling Creek also is part of one of the canoe routes to the north to Lake Nipissing. The Trolove property features a significant trout spawning bed, an abandoned nineteenth century industrial community and an interesting knoll, known through oral tradition to be a women's coming of age and birthing place. Impressively, the property had been part of the hunting grounds of Ina's Shilling ancestors generations previously (Woitowich 1994). In 1950 Ina's daughter, Elizabeth, was born, a seventh generation descendant of Chief Big Shilling. In her 93<sup>rd</sup> year Ina continues to visit with people of the Mnjikaning Fish Fence Circle (Douglas 2003) and to use her traditional ecological knowledge as custodian of the wood, water and wildlife on her property. In 2003 a pipe ceremony was held to honour the sacred and private "Anishinaabe-kwe Site" on the property.

### Heightened Significance For Mnjikaning

During his 1835 survey, William Hawkins mapped an "Indian Hunting Fence" on the Black River (Hawkins 1836; Winearls 1991:155). The structure, which Hawkins shows extending for several kilometers (Figure 7), is reminiscent of the five-mile-long (8 km) deer fence in the adjacent Victoria County. At that location, a long row of felled trees and brush was used by beaters to drive deer to gaps in the fence, where hunters waited in ambush (Kirkconnell 1921:133; Laidlaw 1917:103). The land-based hunting



**Figure 7.** Detail of a map of exploration of Severn-Black river region in 1835 by Hawkins (1836), showing Indian hunting fence. Reproduced by permission, Archives of Ontario, RG 1 SR5554 A-15.

fence on the Black River appears to have been used to drive deer into the water where they would be more vulnerable to hunters. The hunting of swimming deer from a canoe, after driving them to water with dogs, was a practice employed in the region in the nineteenth century (Watson 1888:140-142). The hunting fence may have been in the hunting territory of the Yellowhead family of Mnjikaning. In his will of 1861, William Yellowhead mentions "that lot of land owned by me on the Black river" in the same sentence as his hunting ground (Murray 1963:131). Whether owned by Yellowhead or not, the hunting fence would have required cooperative efforts similar to communal practices of people during spring and fall fish migrations at the Mnjikaning<sup>5</sup> fish weirs at Atherley Narrows (Parks Canada 2000:5; Shilling et al. 2002). In fact, the Black River hunting fence may have been used by the same people who used underwater fence technology at Mnjikaning (BdGu-6) (Cassavoy 1995:12; Johnston and Cassavoy, 1978:697; Mayer et al. 1998:32). Henceforth, researchers might consider the broader implications of fence technology in the Severn River watershed, land-based as well as underwater, and be open to evidence of fence technology elsewhere in the region.

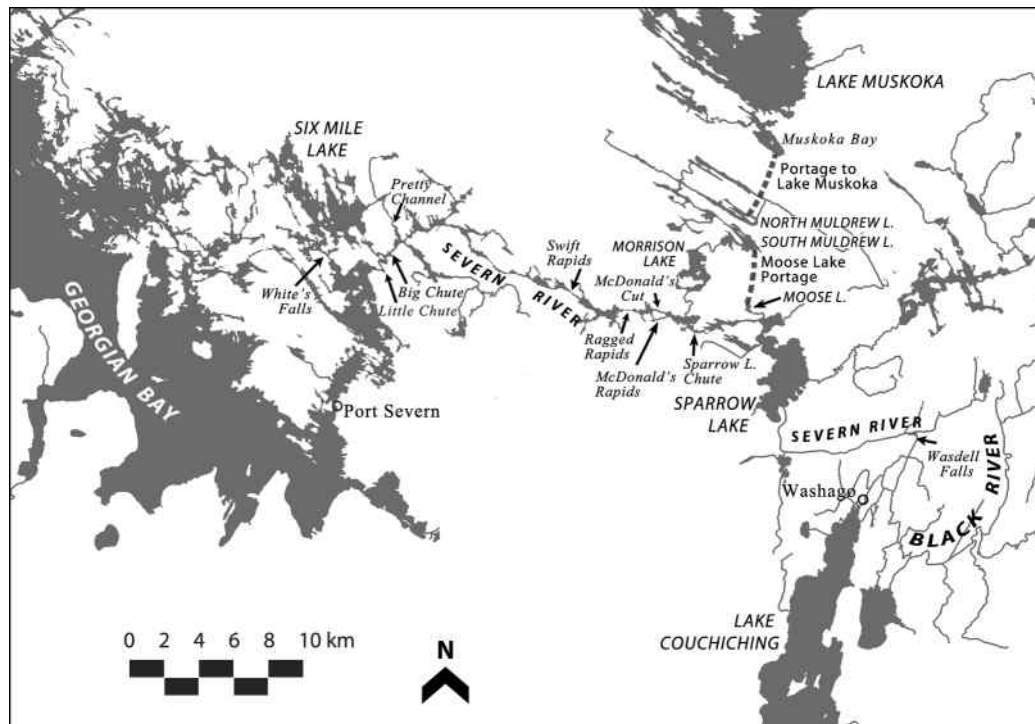
### *A River Changed*

In the last 150 years, a series of developments has destroyed many natural features of the Severn River (Figure 8). In the 1850s, timber leases were issued for huge tracts of land. The Severn River and the outlet from Six Mile Lake were dammed to regulate water levels in the lower river and to

increase the cutting capacity of the mill at Port Severn (Angus 1994:38). In 1899, the construction of a coffer dam at the top of McDonald's Rapids flooded Sparrow Lake Chutes upstream (Angus 1995:29) (Figure 9). The 1915 excavation of a cut at McDonald's Rapids destroyed the former portage there (Angus 1988:389).<sup>6</sup> When hydro-electricity generation became popular in the early twentieth century, the Severn River provided favourable locations for plants at Ragged Rapids (1902), at Big Chute (1911) and at Wasdell Falls (1914) (Angus 1995:36; 2000:108, 110; McCraw 1998:16). In 1917, the 9-m high Hydro Glen dam at Ragged Rapids was blown up and flooded to make way for the larger 15-m Swift Rapids dam and generating station two kilometres downstream. Extensive flooding of the original shoreline occurred along the first few kilometres upstream behind the dams at Swift Rapids, Big Chute and Port Severn (Figure 9). Six Mile Lake also was flooded above original levels, with dams at White's Portage, Crooked, and Hungry Bays (Angus 1995:43). A dam at



**Figure 8.** Log water control dam on the Severn River, circa 1860s. The waterlines on rocks show fluctuating seasonal flows. Photo courtesy of Sara Clipsham.



**Figure 9.** Historic names of features along the Severn River and canoe route to the Muskoka River system to the north. Source: NRCAN (2002).

Pretty Channel allows water retention for power generation at Big Chute at times of low water and also allows, at times of high water, a release to Six Mile Lake, which serves as a reservoir (Bruce Kitchen, personal communication, 2004). By 1920, further blasting and damming for the Trent-Severn waterway destroyed more natural features and some of the earlier developments. After construction of the dam and lock at Port Severn, spawning sturgeon, once a common sight, were never again seen on the Severn River (Angus 1988:380).

### The Presence of the British and the French

The Severn River figures prominently during both the early French and British regimes in Canada. The earlier French occupation of the river provides some of our most interesting documentation about the strategic importance of the Severn and its use by Algonquian-speaking people. Significantly, all of the major seventeenth-century maps by French cartographers show the Severn River. Champlain's map of 1632 shows unlabelled tributaries flowing from the north in the position of the current day Head (Black) and Gull Rivers (Figure 2), and includes aboriginal village sites and "chasse des caribous" (caribou or deer hunting grounds) in the region between Lake Nipissing and the Severn River (Champlain 1984). A 1641 masterpiece drawn by a French cartographer on an animal hide has been attributed to Rene Menard, sometimes Menart (Campeau 2001:294). This map, which is a uniquely Canadian treasure (Hayes 2002:58), shows the unlabelled Severn River prominently just north of "Huron" country. The work is unique because it is the only surviving map of Canada, as it was then understood, shown from the perspective of some of its original inhabitants, with Huronia depicted as an island (Hayes 2002:58). Bressani's 1657 map shows what appears to be the Black River flowing into the Severn, as well as connecting links to Gull River and Balsam Lake to the east, and to the Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays to the north (Bressani 1984). By 1660, du Creux's map labels that part of the mainland east of Beausoleil Island (Figure

4) as "Chion Kiara" and Beausoleil Island itself as "Schion de Kiaria Ins" (du Creux 1984). On the so-called Belmont map of 1680, Lake Simcoe is "Lac de Tarenteau" and the Severn River, "R de Tarenteau" (Murray 1963:xli).

A French map, circa 1680, possibly by Bernou, stylistically shows the Muskoka Lakes connecting to the Severn, which drains Lake Simcoe, known then as "Lac de Toronto" (Rogers and Smith 1994:85). There is no consensus among scholars on the meaning of the word "Toronto" but the linguist John Steckley offers the most compelling analysis, concluding that "Toronto", more accurately "Taronto," originates from the Mohawk *tkaronto*, meaning something like "where there are trees in the water," a reference, in his opinion, to the poles used to construct the fish weirs between Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching (Steckley 1992:27). Others note that Lake Simcoe was known to the Wendat as Ouentaron, meaning "beautiful lake" (Leitch 1967:230) or some other meaning such as "a place of meeting" (Steckley 1992:28), before being known as Lac Toronto. Because the river was used as a travel route between Lac Toronto (Lake Simcoe) and Baie de Toronto (Georgian Bay), it was widely known, from the time of the military officer and cartographer Lahontan, in 1697, as "gateway" or "pass" (Hunter 1948:11). This meaning seems to make sense because of the location of Lac de Toronto at the crossroads to so many routes, but does not explain the derivation of the word Toronto as well as Steckley does. Bernou's 1680 map also shows locations that, at a glance, we now recognize as being in the immediate vicinity of archaeological sites at Shebeshekong Bay-Turtle Point (BiHb-9 and BiHc-1) (Allen 2001a:25-36), Frank Bay (CbGw-1) and Port Carling, known previously as Obajewanung (Murray 1963:175).

Coronelli's 1688 map shows Lake Simcoe as "Lac Taronto" and immediately below that label are the words "Les Piquets," an obvious reference in French to the stakes of the fish weirs (Coronelli 1984; Hayes 2002:62-63). Coronelli's map also shows and labels the "Portage de dix Lieues" between the rivers known in modern times as the Holland and Humber (Figure 1), a

reference to the major ten-league (50-km) portage used between Lake Simcoe and Lake Ontario (Coronelli 1984; Hayes 2002:62-63). Coronelli labels the first major bay north of the mouth of the Severn River as “Baie Sakinam”. This bay may be South Bay of Honey Harbour, which is the first part of Georgian Bay seen by travellers coming from the Severn River via the Baxter Lake route. Alternatively, the name may apply to all of Georgian Bay. Curiously, as of 1670, Sakinam was the name of Saginaw Bay, recorded by Louis Hennepin in his account of August 23, 1679 while sailing north on Lake Huron with La Salle in the *Griffon* (Hennepin 1697:130). Like the Sakinam at Honey Harbour, Sakinam or Sakinand of the lower Michigan peninsula was the major cross-country route to the next Great Lake—Lake Michigan.

Del’Isle’s 1730 map *Carte du Canada ou de la Nouvelle France* still shows the label for Lake Simcoe as “Lac de Taronto” but does not label the river draining from it to “Lac Huron” (Del’Isle 1984). As well, the Del’Isle map labels the peninsula, now known as the Bruce Peninsula (Figure 1), as “Michigan P.” Both Michigan and Mnjikaning are cognates of the Ojibway root word *mitchican*, meaning “fence” (Baraga 1878:2:254), suggesting a possible connection between the Anishinaabe fishers on the west shore of Georgian Bay and people in the Mnjikaning community using fish weirs on the upper Severn River. The name change to Bruce Peninsula obscures any historical connection that might exist between the fishing people of Georgian Bay (Baie de Tarenteau) and Lake Simcoe (Lac de Tarenteau) along the Wa-nant-git-che-ang corridor. By way of contrast, the early nineteenth-century English maps did not have the same accuracy or detail as the French maps of almost two centuries before. Unlike France, England had no official cartographic organization and had to depend on the commercial map publishing trade (Gentilcore and Head 1984:22).

These non-aboriginal influences are recorded in numerous name changes that, for the most part, reflect the political interests of a particular period. For example, while the traditional

Anishinaabe name for Beausoleil Island continues to be Baamidoonegog, “rocky place floating about the mouth of a river” (Buggey and Smith 2003:1), its meaning corresponds with the meaning given for the Wendat name Schiondekaria. A.E. Jones (1908:207) translates this name as “This Land to appear Floating Afar” or “A Stretch of Land Looming up in the Distance over the Lake”, translations consistent with the appearance of the island on a calm sultry day (Jones 1908:207). The eighteenth-century French named Beausoleil Island *Isle au Traverse* but by 1793, the British changed it first to I. Prince William and then to Prince William’s Island (Gentilcore and Head 1984:69; Murray 1963:19). Soon afterwards, the lake now known as Sparrow Lake was called Welsh Pool, the area north of the Severn was labelled “Prince William Henry’s Land” and Georgian Bay, strangely, was labeled “Lake Iroquois” (Boynton 1836; Winearls 1991:38).

The period of decline in French influence and rise in British influence follows the late seventeenth-century Anishinaabe slaughter of a great number of Mohawks on the lower Georgian Bay island of Pequahkoondebaminis, or “Island of Skulls” (now called Bone Island; Figure 4). A large group of “Mississauga-Ojibway” Anishinaabeg used the Severn passage for their invasion of the region between Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario, the portion of their Proto-Algonquian ancestral land controlled by the Iroquois at that time (Fiedel 1999:196, 200; Siebert 1967). This account was reported by Robert Paudash (and Paudash 1957),<sup>7</sup> who explains how the advancing Mississaugas travelled from Georgian Bay up “what is now the Severn River to Shunyung, or Lake Simcoe” on their way to the eventual defeat and dispersal of the Iroquois (Guillet 1957:10).<sup>8</sup> The Anishinaabe expulsion of the Iroquois set the political context for the development of Ontario after 1700.

At the beginning of the British period in 1760, Major Robert Rogers, responsible for taking possession of former French forts on behalf of the British Crown, heard of the Severn River route from the Anishinaabeg (Murray 1963:xli). In 1764, explorer and fur trader Alexander Henry, while travelling

with Anishinaabeg from the upper lakes to Fort Niagara, apparently went by way of the Severn River, which he described as “the navigation which leads to Lake aux Claiés.” This vague description might also apply to the North River or the Coldwater River (Figure 2), especially since Henry mentions only “two short carrying places, at each of which were several lodges of Indians” (Henry 1809:179). Lac aux Claiés, corrupted to Lac La Clie, was an earlier French label for Lake Simcoe and derives from the French word *la claié*, meaning “wattle” or “screen,” (Bouce 1947:47) in reference to the fish weirs at the outlet of the lake (Leitch 1967:230). By the 1780s, the Severn was called the River Matchadosh and that name appears in the 1788 orders of Sir Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester, Governor-in-Chief of British North America (Murray 1963:14). Also in 1788, Gother Mann, Commanding Royal Engineer in Canada from 1785 to 1791, reported to Lord Dorchester that the River Matchadosh leads to Lake La Clie, and is “impracticable to pass with large Canoes, on account of the Rapids and difficult carrying Places” but that it “should ever be thought an object of consequence, in view of a Communication (a travel route) sometimes used to Toronto on Lake Ontario” (Murray 1963:15). Although the community at the mouth of the Humber River had been called Teiaigon by the French (Murray 1963:8), and the major communication to the north started there, “Toronto” and its derivatives were reserved for features now known as Lake Simcoe, the Severn River and Georgian Bay, all components of this “communication.” The word “Toronto,” though not accepted as the name for the settlement of York until the 1830s, does appear on a British map as early as 1785 (Taylor 2001; Winerals 1991:5). The simplicity of this map emphasizes how scanty British knowledge was of Canada’s interior at the time (Swift 2001:54-55).

The southward arc of the Severn River towards Severn Sound meant that the most expedient route to northern Lake Huron was not via the river’s mouth but rather through Baxter Lake to Honey Harbour on the Georgian Bay shoreline (Figure 4). The Baxter Lake route was documented by an officer under the command of Major Robert Mathews, military secretary to Governor

Haldimand from 1778 to 1786, after he was ordered by General Haldimand, Governor-in-chief of Quebec, to open a communication with Michilimackinac from Niagara by way of Toronto (Murray 1963:9). The officer chosen is believed to have been Peter Hare (1748-1834), a captain in Butler’s Rangers. The journal detailing the exploration was, however, attributed to William Hare, a so-called Indian trader (Murray 1963:10), suggesting, perhaps, that two Hares were on the expedition. In 1780, Hare’s Anishinaabe guides took him from Toronto to Lake Simcoe (still called both Lake Toronto and Lake La Clie at that time), then part way down the “Severn” River before turning north, via the Baxter Lake route, to Georgian Bay at Honey Harbour, thus avoiding the longer route and the last falls on the river (Murray 1963:12). In 1911, the efficient route through Baxter Lake to Honey Harbour was recommended by engineer E.B. Jost to be the preferred terminus of the Trent-Severn Waterway and engineering drawings based on this preference were completed (Angus 1988:375). In the end, however, early twentieth century politicians chose Port Severn at the river’s mouth to be the waterway’s terminus. The circuitous Wa-nant-git-cheang won out. The Baxter Lake route continues to be significant because some key archaeological sites are along that route. They include the Schlegel site (BfGw-6), which appears to have been occupied at the time of a high-water Algoma-stage beach (approximately 3200 B.P.) when the site on the current peninsula was on an island, “Schlegel Island”. At that time, higher water levels along the Baxter Lake route permitted travel by canoe without portages.

### French Regime Documentation

In the seventeenth century, the Severn River played an important role in transporting French Jesuit priests and travellers into and through Algonquia. Fortunately for contemporary researchers, these early visitors left written records of their journeys (see especially the *Jesuit Relations* [Thwaites 1896-1901]). The Jesuits, headed by the very few Jesuit priests who spoke the Algonquian language, had, in addition to their

pronounced focus on Huronia, a mission to the Algonquian-speaking people of the southern Canadian Shield (Allen 2001b). When Claude Pijart arrived on Lake Huron in 1640, his mandate, unlike that of any of the other twelve priests there at the time, was “to instruct some Algonquins and non-Huron nations in these quarters” (Thwaites 1896-1901:20:93). In 1641, only two Jesuits spoke the Algonquian language, Father Claude Pijart (not to be confused with his brother Pierre Pijart) and Father Charles Raymbault. Their mobile mission in southern Algonquia was known as “The Mission of the Holy Ghost Among the Algonquins, the Nearest to the Hurons” (Thwaites 1896-1901:23:205, 207). By 1643, after the death of Raymbault, Claude Pijart was described as “the only one left us able to speak the Algonquin tongue” (Thwaites 1896-1901:27:55).

For a while in 1641, one Algonquian group occupied land near the north end of Lake Couchiching, where the Severn River begins. The Mission of Ste. Elizabeth there was short-lived and, like other missions to Algonquian-speakers, it was mobile (Thwaites 1896-1901:27:37). Nearby, a small hand-bell was unearthed in the 1950s at the Clochette site (BeGu-7) at a location on Sparrow Lake, a site which was used until the early twentieth century by Mnjikaning First Nations people from Rama on their seasonal rounds on the Severn River (Allen 2002a).

The Severn River is also recorded in the journals of several early French travellers, many accompanied by Anishinaabe guides. Among these seventeenth century explorers were Pere and La Salle who camped along the banks of the Severn, leaving no apparent trace (Murray 1963:xxxix). However, the recovery of a seventeenth century French L-Heart ring at Camp Kitchi on Beausoleil Island suggests that artifacts such as this one may be more attributable to these early explorers than to the Jesuits (Mason 2003).

Another French source may refer to the Severn River as it pertains to the November 1645 trip of Father Brébeuf to Tangouaen, a mobile “village” of Algonquian-speaking people with some Huron members. The site is described as being in the inte-

rior, a five-day ice-impeded journey from Saint Marie. While scholars such as Heidenreich and Campeau place Tangouaen further north in the interior of the Seguin River watershed, possibly at or near the find-site of the 1636 bronze French apothecary mortar (BiGx-1), Thwaites places the location in either Wood or Baxter Township, both townships in the Muskoka District bordered by the Severn River (Allen 2001c; Campeau 1987; Thwaites 1896-1901:30:87; 36:247).

It is Lahontan’s detailed, late seventeenth-century examination of the Severn River, however, which leaves us with something more significant. Lahontan described the river as being 20 or 25 leagues long (100 or 125 km), and 15 leagues (75 km) broad at its mouth, an apparent reference to the multiple routes to Georgian Bay from the upper Severn (Lahontan 1905:317). Lahontan’s greatest legacy to archaeologists may well be his reference to “a large village of the Hurons, that was destroy’d by the Iroqueuse,” a discovery he considered significant enough to locate on his General Map of New France on the north bank of the upper Severn River in the Sparrow Lake area (Lahontan 1905:156). This village has never been found in modern times. The soil along the Kahshe River, east of Sparrow Lake, would have supported horticulture and may point to the location of this village.

### Archaeological Evidence of Early Occupation

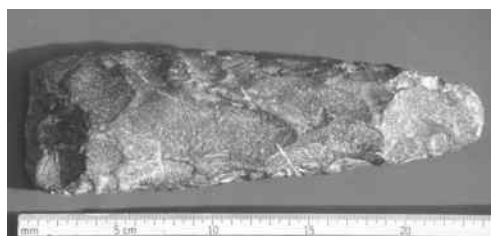
Currently, the Severn River’s archaeological record is concentrated in two zones: upriver around Sparrow Lake (Skene 1981:318) (Figure 2); and downriver at Gloucester Pool (Skene 1981:330, 331) and near the river’s outlet on the shoreline of Georgian Bay at Port Severn, Macey’s Bay, Honey Harbour and Beausoleil Island (Figures 2, 4 and 5). The rugged central section of the river has no registered sites but the high, steep granite banks (Figure 6) provide excellent locations for long distance sightlines (Allen 2002b). Evidence of the influence of Iroquoian horticulturalists on the rocky landscape on both sides of the Severn River is limited to two multi-component sites, the downriver Severn Bridge site (BeGw-21) at Port Severn, and

the upriver Darker site (BeGu-9) on Sparrow Lake. Pottery occurs only on some of the sites along the Georgian Bay shoreline and usually belongs to the Middle Woodland period.

#### *Upriver Sites*

Diagnostic artifacts in the upper Severn River area tend to be Archaic. For example, of the first six sites registered at Sparrow Lake (BeGu-1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and BfGu-1), none has a ceramic component, and several yielded diagnostic Archaic period stone tools (MacDonald 1994:32-43). Of the next 14 sites registered at Sparrow Lake (BeGu-7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21) only the Darker Site (BeGu-9) yielded ceramics (Allen 2001a:11-16, 71-73; Allen 2002c:11-12, 45-50). The Pope Petroglyph site (BeGu-4), near the mouth of the Kahshe River tributary, includes inscribed features of unknown age on a small vertical rockface. It is not clear whether this is the site reported by Henry Montgomery "in the borders of Muskoka," as an engraving of the "text of a treaty between the Hurons and Sioux" (Montgomery 1878). Further confounding this uncertainty is an inscription of similar size, dated 1892, which occurs on a large shoreline erratic at the Massey site (BeGu-10), directly across Sparrow Lake from BeGu-4 (Allen 2001a:73).

Most other Sparrow Lake precontact sites have yielded only pre-ceramic lithics or non-diagnostic artifacts, or both, including: a large percussion-flaked celt or adze preform from the Ken Thomson Site (BeGu-11; Figure 10), which is strikingly similar to artifact #108 from the KI Site in Rutland County, Vermont (Ritchie 1965:Plate 28); a black ground stone axe and a flat, heavily pecked and worn 256 mm-long rubbing stone at the Wiancko site (BeGu-12); and a 60 mm-long narrow point from the Dennis site (BeGu-14) that is reminiscent of a Piedmont northern variety of Bare Island or Snook Kill points (Figure 11). Late Archaic narrow points similar to the Dennis point have been found further east at Healey Falls (BcGk-6) on the Trent-Severn waterway (Ellis et al. 1990:162; Farvacque and Ross 1999:30; Ross and D'Annibale 2000:160). In contrast, the multi-



**Figure 10.** Flaked adze preform from the Ken Thomson site (BeGu-11). Photo by the author.



**Figure 11.** Late Archaic narrow point tradition projectile point from the Dennis Site (BeGu-14). Photo by the author.

component Darker site (BeGu-9) has considerable quantities of Middle Woodland pottery, including evidence of possible Princess Point influence, but also a range of flaked stone tools. They include a Genesee projectile point of Onondaga chert, quartz projectile points, an unusual Onondaga chert spear point, the tip of a large quartzite biface, and ground stone axes of slate and other material (Figure 12).

Upstream from Sparrow Lake, and a few hundred metres from the Severn River, the Tom Parish site (BeGu-16) yielded a corner-notched ground slate projectile point (Figure 13) of a barb-stemmed type more often found farther to the east (Wright 1962:133, 134). This Tom Parish discovery, a rarity in Algonquia, adds to the discussion about the significance of the distribution in Ontario of this type of slate point typical of the Vergennes phase of Middle Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Archaic culture, usually situated far to the east in Vermont, Quebec and eastern Ontario (Wright 1995:224). The flat surfaces and diamond-shaped cross-section of the Tom Parish point are similar to those from the

**Figure 12.** Banded slate scraper (178 x 55 x 17 mm) from the Darker site (BeGu-9). Photo by the author.



**Figure 13.** Corner-notched ground slate projectile point from the Tom Parish site (BeGu-16). Photo by the author.



Coteau-du-Lac site in Québec (Lueger 1977:25, 80). As well, the notching of this artifact is like that of several examples from the KI Site, especially artifact #145 (Ritchie 1965:Plate 27).

East of the Severn River, sites that also contain barb-stemmed slate projectile points are found in the Trent River watershed at both Burleigh Falls (BdGn-12) and Healey Falls (BcGk-6; Ross and D'Annibale 2000: 161, 162) (Figure 1). Another Archaic ground slate projectile point was recovered by Parks Canada at a submerged site (60M5A3) at Big (or Boyd) Island, Pigeon Lake, in the Kawartha Lakes (D'Annibale 2004; Stevens 2002; Figure 1). These finds raise the possibility of a cultural link between the Trent River and Severn River at the time of deposition.

In the early 1960s, J.V. Wright compared the distributions of gouges and slate points within southern Ontario (Wright 1962:129, 134). For both types, most specimens occur in eastern Ontario, but gouges are also strongly represented in southwestern Ontario and along the east side of Lake Huron. More recent finds have expanded this distribution northwards. On the Bruce Peninsula, west of the mouth of the Severn River, there is evidence of a ground slate gouge industry

during the Nipissing high-water stand of Lake Huron (5500-3700 BP), as represented at the Caudle site (BgHh-2) (Fox 1991:9). In southern Algonquia, the Stan Clipsham site (BeGu-2) has yielded one gouge, an example of Wright's "Short, Deep Depression Class 1," and the Sara Clipsham site (BeGu-3) yielded another, one of Wright's "Boat-shaped Class 3, Subclass 2" (Wright 1962:126). A gouge of red slate recovered in the Huntsville area of the North Muskoka River watershed (Figure 1) was found along the interior Algonquia canoe route leading directly from the Severn River (Boyle 1906:7; Kidd 1935: artifact #27,024). Slate artifacts found at several sites in Algonquin Park (Hurley et al. 1972:203) suggest that the finds from the Huntsville area and the Tom Parish site may, in fact, be part of a larger regional pattern (MacDonald 1994:43; Skene 1981:331).

#### *Georgian Bay Shoreline Sites*

Just north of the mouth of the Severn, along the Georgian Bay shoreline, lies a cluster of eight registered sites (Figure 5), all concentrated on the Algoma strandline slightly above 180 m, approximately five metres higher than present Georgian



Bay water levels and, typically, within easy view of the current Georgian Bay shoreline (Allen 2003; Larsen 1985:69). All have Archaic or Middle Woodland components, or both. Some of these sites appear to have been located on islands at the time of occupation. Macey (BfGw-1) and Grise (BfGw-2) are Middle Woodland sites found by J.V. Wright (1968). On the four Port Severn sites discovered during mitigation for the 1991 widening of Highway 69/400 (Bentley [BeGw-23], Bressette West [BeGw-24], Bressette East [BeGw-25] and Baxter [BeGw-26][Dodd 1996; Lennox et al. 1994:38; Lennox and Anderson 2002:15]), Dodd found that the flaked lithic assemblages share traits with northern Ontario sites—namely, small projectile points and large numbers of scrapers (Dodd 1996:16, 141-142). Furthermore, cherts were identified as originating from various sources in northern Ontario and Michigan (Dodd 1996:15-16, 158). The Baxter site also produced an Early Archaic bifurcate base projectile point and some heavily patinated chert debitage, indicating inundation by high lake levels after deposition (Lennox and Anderson 2002:14).

Artifacts collected by a landowner from a seventh Georgian Bay shoreline site were examined in 1968 by J.V. Wright and, in 2002, the author located, surface-collected, and registered that site as Schlegel (BfGw-6). Located at Honey Harbour on the Baxter Lake canoe route, the site bore a mound that was destroyed about 1953. The site was later excavated by the property owner's family in 1962 (Wright 1968; 1999: 667). According to Wright (1999:558), the family collection contained an array of typical Adena or Hopewell mortuary complex traits. The elements excavated at Schlegel include mass copper, fabric preserved by copper salts, and large, advanced-stage bifaces ("cache blades") of a wide variety of cherts (Figure 14). The cherts, only tentatively identified, include Bayport, Kettle Point, Onondaga, Flint Ridge and several unidentified exotics. Three artifacts of Ohio "pipestone," described variously by archaeologists, who have observed them as cupping tools or blocked-end tubular pipes, display interior and exterior bevels, a saddle-shaped end, and grooved interiors. A polished ground stone adze is of a style unlike that of others from nearby sites. One dark, thin translucent biface (Figure 14: row 3 from

top, item 5 from left) is 162 mm long and 8 mm thick and may be Diana, Dogs Island, Mistassini or Ramah chert (Jack Holland, personal communication, 2002). It has patches of grey inclusions that are reminiscent of the Ramah chert of the lanceolate biface collected at L'Anse du Diable, Labrador (Loring 1998:261). Other artifacts recovered from the Schlegel site in 1962 include a biconically drilled pendant, an undrilled ground stone awl/scrapper, a fossil-laden chert preform measuring 212 mm long, a banded slate gorget preform similar to examples from the Baxter site, several hundred rolled copper beads, and a sample of ocher-stained sand.

The eighth Georgian Bay shoreline site located near the mouth of the Severn River, three kilometres west of Schlegel, is Beausoleil Island's multi-component Camp Kitchikewana site (BfGx-13) at Georgian Bay Islands National Park (Carpenter 2003:13; Ross 2004; Ross and D'Annibale 1995:21, 1996:112, 2000:164; Ross et al. 1997:112; see also Ross and Smith in this volume). Archaeological evidence, ranging from the Middle Archaic period to nineteenth century Anishinaabe occupation, establishes a 5,000-year record of the island's use as a site for fishing, trade and travel. The identification of 16 different chert types (Dodd 1996) in the lithic assemblage reveals a strong northern influence similar to the mainland sites near the mouth of the Severn. While the majority of the chert is from the Michigan peninsula, and consists of Norwood, Detour and Bayport cherts, other northern Lake Huron cherts such as Manitoulin, Bruce and Gordon Lake are present (Ross and D'Annibale 1995:22). The assemblage also includes Collingwood cherts from the southern Georgian Bay area as well as southern cherts from Ohio and from Kettle Point on southern Lake Huron, Ontario. Onondaga chert is present but does not constitute a major source. Hopewell-related goods are seen in cut mica sheets, bladelets and ochre-washed ceramics (Ross and D'Annibale 1995:22).

### Long Distance Connecting Routes and Implications

The central location of the Severn River played a key role in the history of long distance travel and trade networks within the Great Lakes watershed.



**Figure 14.** Artifacts in a case comprising a private collection from the Schlegel site. From top and left, rows 1 and 2: ochre-dusted bifaces; row 3, item 5: biface, possibly of Ramah chert; item 6: polished stone adze; row 4: rolled copper beads (recently restrung); projectile points and preforms; bevelled awls of polished stone, human molar (in box) and ochre-stained sand (pill bottle); tubular pipes or cupping tools of Ohio pipe stone (damaged during excavation, mounted on copper wire). Bottom: banded slate gorget preform; mass copper (in small plastic box); tightly woven, multiple-ply braid plaited fabric with twisted fibre loop and coarse black fur, possibly bear, all preserved by copper salts (in large plastic box); chert preform with crinoid fossils and fossil impressions (possibly Swan Hill gravel chert). Photo by the author.

Artifacts at several sites near the mouth of the Severn attest to links to both the southeast and south via Lake Simcoe, while canoe routes that fan westward from the Severn outlet to the Bruce Peninsula and to the north shore of Lake Huron allow access to Lakes Superior and Michigan. If precontact copper artifacts at several sites in the Trent River system do indeed originate from the upper Great Lakes, it is likely that these materials were transported along the Severn River (Popham and Emerson 1954:16).

#### *The Southeastern Link*

From the southeast, the major route follows the current Trent-Severn waterway from the Bay of Quinte area, up the Trent River and through the Kawartha Lakes (Figure 1), over the height of land at Kirkfield and down the Talbot River,

known as recently as 1856 as the Saugeen<sup>9</sup> River (Napier and Herrick 1856), to Lake Simcoe (Figure 2). An alternative route from Balsam Lake to the upper Severn River is via the Gull River, Laxton Portage Trail, Head Lake and Head River (formerly the Black River, Middle Branch), a route with both Woodland and Archaic period evidence in the Dalrymple Lake (formerly Mud Lake) area (Chewett 1963; Kirkconnell 1921:126; Laidlaw 1917:104; Richardson 1968:4-7; Skene 1981:318) (Figure 2).

Dodd (1996) reports on several lines of evidence that support a connection between the southern Georgian Bay region in the four Port Severn area sites named earlier (Bentley, Bressette West, Bressette East, and Baxter) and distant regions to the east and south via the Trent and Severn Rivers. Similarities in ceramics occur

between the southern Georgian Bay sites and sites in southeastern Ontario (Dodd 1996:141). Gorget and pointed whetstone preforms that occur at the Baxter site are similar to forms recovered at southeastern Ontario sites, suggesting that these ceremonial items were made at Baxter for export (Dodd 1996:139-140). Dodd also reports a high proportion of unidentified and exotic cherts, as well as identified materials such as Indiana Hornstone, all originating from locations in the south. Whereas the lithic assemblages of the Port Severn sites contain many raw materials from northern sources, polished stone artifacts, such as the gorgets and pointed whetstones recovered from Port Severn sites, are rare on northern sites. Dodd suggests that the occupants of the Port Severn area travelled the Trent-Severn river system as part of their seasonal rounds (Dodd 1996:142). The evidence at the Port Severn sites for materials originating in the south, the deliberate production of trade items, and the proposed seasonal usage of the river system, support the likelihood that the Severn River was the preferred route between eastern Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay during the Middle Woodland period. The connection between the Severn River and locations to the east reinforces the Anishinaabe oral tradition that traces the lengthy precontact *chibimoodaywin*, migration, from the Atlantic Coast westward (Benton-Banai 1988:94).

#### *The Southern Link*

From western Lake Ontario, and regions beyond, the main route to the Severn River proceeds along the important Humber River-Toronto Carrying Place-Holland River trail to Lake Simcoe (Figure 1), the same route traversed by, among others, La Salle in 1680 (Murray 1963:8, 14; Robinson 1947:41). This trail is also featured by J.V. Wright as one of three likely routes used to move copper from Lake Superior to the Adena heartland in the Ohio Valley (Wright 1987, 1999: 601). Evidence from the burial mound at the Schlegel site (BfGw-6), as noted above, seems to support this hypothesis (Wright 1999:668). Components of the Schlegel collection are similar to material excavated by Emerson Greenman at Killarney Bay 1 (now known as Speigel [BlHj-

1]) (Buchanan 2001; Greenman 1966:540; Wright 1999:667), suggesting that an Adena or Hopewell association may be more widespread in the Georgian Bay region. Several recent finds support this idea. An Adena projectile point was found at the Bressette East site, and pointed whetstones, whetstone preforms, and gorget preforms were found at both Baxter and Bressette East (Dodd 1996:64, 137-140). Also, Ohio cherts have been found at the Kitchi site (Ross and D'Annibale 1995:22). Besner (BkHd-2), on the Still River, near the mouth of the Magnetawan River in northern Parry Sound District, is yet another Georgian Bay site with material usually associated with areas south of Lake Ontario. An elaborately decorated, biconically drilled coal gorget from the Besner site is the only such artifact reported to date in Canada (Allen 2003b). It is similar in style to artifacts in Ohio and Michigan where they are described as being of Terminal Archaic Glacial Kame origin (Allen 2003b; Converse 1979:68-73). The coal, sometimes called cannel coal because it burns with a flame similar to that of a candle, probably originated south of the Great Lakes. This material may, therefore, have moved to northern Georgian Bay, either via the Lake Huron-Bruce Peninsula-Manitoulin Island-Killarney route (Figure 1), or by way of Lake Ontario-Lake Simcoe-Severn River. The route to the northwest leaving the Severn River offers the advantage of protection from the wind because of the Thirty Thousand Islands stretching along northeastern Georgian Bay (Figure 1). The Great Sacred Turtle at Turtle Point (BiHc-1) was a location where offerings were left to appease the wind. There is a strong possibility that many of the materials originating south of the Great Lakes arrived along the Humber-Toronto Carrying Place-Lake Simcoe-Severn River route. Even before the discovery of some of the sites mentioned, Wright seems to have identified correctly an early Ohio connection with Georgian Bay.

#### *The Northern and Western Links*

Canoe routes on the open water of Georgian Bay may be more complex than on the Severn River itself. Transit of the open water well offshore

from the mouth of the French River was reported in 1764 by Alexander Henry, who documented a route taken by a group of Anishinaabeg headed toward the southeast end of Georgian Bay, “steering across the lake, to an island which just appeared in the horizon; saving, by this course, a distance of thirty miles, which would be lost in keeping the shore” (Henry 1809:177). The routes along the northeast shore of Georgian Bay and north shore of Lake Huron used during both the French and British regimes are presumed to have been in use in precontact times. Evidence from the Kitchi site, and other nearby sites, indicates traffic of northern cherts to the southeast end of Georgian Bay. Further research is required to determine whether any of these cherts have been found in the upper Severn River, or in the adjoining Trent River watershed. If northern cherts are found, a Severn River route to eastern Lake Ontario could be inferred. Supporting this idea is the name, Chemin des Outaouacs, given to the Severn during the French regime on a map oriented with south at the top of the page (Raffeix 1984). Another clue is a chert artifact from a submerged site in Rice Lake on the Trent Waterway, reported to be made of chert possibly from Gordon Lake, north of Lake Huron (Binnie et al. 2004).

Not all routes westward from the mouth of the Severn followed the northeastern shore of Georgian Bay. The Bruce Peninsula portage route across the base of the peninsula via Colpoys Bay (Figure 1) allowed access to Lake Huron, west of the peninsula. Mapping of the peninsula by Bill Fox depicts the Nipissing high water stage some 4500 years ago, approximately 14 metres above the present water level, and indicates that the Colpoys route and other strategic crossings would have been shorter because of longer channels for paddling (Fox 1991:9). There seems to be little doubt that the Severn River was a two-way corridor for long distance travel and trade in both the precontact and postcontact period.

### Interpretations, Conclusions and Challenges

The Severn River has had a host of names. To the Anishinaabeg it was Wa-nant-git-che-ang, the circuitous river; to the Wendat it was Chionkiara,

the place where the sun rises. To the French it was Chemins des Outouacs, the route of the Odawa, or Rivière de Tarento, the gateway river to the lake of the fish weirs. The British changed the name, first to River Matchedosh, and finally to the Severn. The river has long been an important canoe route connecting the highland interior of southern Algonquia, the Lake Simcoe basin, and southeastern Georgian Bay (Madill 1994:4; Rogers and Tobobondung 1975:274; Wilson 2003). During some periods, the river represented only a portion of several much longer routes. Archaeological evidence indicates long-term occupation of the river, extending back to the Archaic period, a time described by the Anishinaabeg as “*Kitchi-west-kut*, the time so long ago that nobody knows what happened” (Pollock 1994:3).

Based on archaeological evidence, occupation of the Severn River itself (excluding the Black and other tributary rivers) appears to be centred within two zones. The first location is Sparrow Lake, where important features include long sight lines, extensive wild rice beds and cranberry beds, fish spawning beds, well drained mainland and island camping locations, some arable land and connections to the interior highlands. The second place, near the mouth of the Severn River on Georgian Bay, attracted Middle Woodland period settlement. There is evidence here for interaction with Adena or Hopewell complexes, or both (Fox 1990b:172; Spence et al. 1990:143). The sparse distribution of sites at Sparrow Lake and along the Georgian Bay shore of Algonquia indicates that archaeological work in northeastern Ontario has been neither extensive nor fully synthesized, no less so now than 20 years ago (Noble 1982:38). A comprehensive multidisciplinary study of the watersheds flowing to northeastern Georgian Bay is required to address this deficiency. The study should include native language, oral history and traditional knowledge (Allen 2002c:66,67; Contin 2003; Jacobs 1996; Jacobs and Lytwyn 2000; Jenness 1935; Johnston 1982; LeBlanc 2001; Proulx 1982; Rajnovich 1994; Vastokas 1996; Williams 1996), inventories of plants used in traditional medicines (Erichsen-Brown 1979), detailed mapping of

abandoned beach shoreline features (Allen 2002c:65), as well as archaeological, petrographic and geochemical work. Many of the archival and published literature sources concerning Georgian Bay that would have to be consulted are in French only. A compilation of original Anishinaabe names for rivers, lakes and other features would help further understanding about the traditional occupation of southern Algonquia. A starting point would be the translations of place names from the original Ojibway language recordings made by Gete-zhitwaawin (Arthur J. McGregor; born 1917) from interviews with his grandfather (Wilder and Wemigwans 1999:8). Consultations with Anishinaabe elders who are fluent in the Ojibway language and review of the names and lives of early Anishinaabe leaders would provide fresh insights (Ilko 1995).

An aspect of this study might focus on the role of the Severn River as a potential route by which people during the Archaic period reached the upper Muskoka watershed, both northwest of Huntsville in the Buck River area and east of Huntsville where Algonquin Park is today (Figure 1). This research would address the presence of four sites in the Buck River watershed (Allen 2002c:21, 57, 58, 64; Orr 1919:116, 117; Stothers and Stothers 1973), 12 sites in the Oxtongue-Muskoka drainage system (Hurley et al. 1972:202) as well as Plano or Early Archaic evidence at such sites as Rat Bay (BhGs-9) on Lake of Bays (Allen 2002c:16). This site yielded a lanceolate point (Figure 15) similar to one in the Inderwick collection from the Rideau Lakes which, in turn, may represent early side notching in the late Palaeo-Indian period (Watson 1990:12). The enormous 273 mm x 135 mm biface (Artifact #38169) from the outskirts of Huntsville represented the largest chert specimen in the provincial collection when it was donated in 1919 (Orr 1919:116, 117). In south Muskoka, Kenneth Kidd's work on Anishinaabe occupation at Six Mile Lake (Kidd 1951) needs to be reassessed in light of new evidence of Anishinaabe occupation at Methodist Island (Cooper et al. 2003; Watts et al. 2002).

Another aspect of study of the upper Severn Watershed concerns the possible link between



**Figure 15.** Notched lanceolate projectile point from the Rat Bay site (BhGs-9). Photo by the author.

fence technology at the Mnjikaning fish weirs and historical evidence of land-based hunting fence technology located nearby, along the Black River tributary. The French name for Lake Simcoe, Lac aux Claiés, Lake of the Hurdles, underscores the significance of the fish weirs at the outlet of the lake and implies a need to investigate archaeological evidence for the possible weaving of horizontal elements in the wattle. In addition to the weirs, the presence of submerged boulder fish fences in streams in Algonquia, the existence of oral narratives and archaeological evidence of other wooden fish fences (Binnie et al. 2004), the place name of Wausswaugunning “the place of torch fishing,” (Johnston 1982:9), and the use of weighted wooden fish decoys during winter spear-fishing (Kirk 2001:4), all indicate the need for a comprehensive study of Anishinaabe fishing techniques.

The Severn corridor has a number of identified links to long-distance and long-used travel routes. The presence of copper, exotic cherts, Ohio pipestone or fire-clay (Wright 1987, 1999:2:668), and a burial mound at the Schlegel site (BfGw-6), suggests influences from both the upper Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley. In light of the distribution of precontact copper artifacts in the Trent Valley and at Farquar Lake (BgGn-1) in Haliburton, the Severn River and its tributaries may have been integral to the movement of material culture of the Old Copper industry (Popham and Emerson 1954:5). The possibility exists for a range of cultural and temporal links between the Severn River and the Trent River. Furthermore, the concentration of sites in the Sparrow Lake area suggests the need for a review of earlier observations of landscape features nearby. One example is David Boyle's 1897 description of the peculiar embankment at Lake St.

George, which was labelled a “very remarkable circum-lacustrine barrier,” a feature that may have attracted people from a much earlier period (Boyle 1905:87).

Most significant is the location of the Severn River a few kilometers north of the interface between the rugged Canadian Shield bedrock-dominated landscape of northern Ontario and the Great Lakes-St Lawrence Lowlands to the south, which is dominated by glacial and lacustrine sediment (Figure 1, inset). The Severn is near the southern limit of the lake-strewn, north-land Shield, which supported and required highly mobile patterns of settlement and subsistence, made possible by the river and its northern tributaries. The Algonquian-speaking peoples and their forebears thrived in this environment, even as larger populations came into existence further south and subsequently diminished. The unique character of the Anishinaabe relationship with the land endures in the descriptive names for many lakes and rivers, in the names of the seasons and in the resources of the landscape and the waters. Thus, Algonquia is defined and the distinctive Wa-nant-git-che-ang makes its mark as the circuitous river flowing across its southern margin.

*Acknowledgments.* I am grateful to the people of many centuries past who travelled and occupied the Severn River and left evidence of their presence. I also recognize Calvin Emes, my ancestor, who settled at the southern Lake Simcoe part of the watershed in 1802, the first of six generations of Emes who, including my mother Olive, lived on Lake Simcoe and befriended Georgina Island Anishinaabeg. This bicentennial project honours the Emes family memory. I thank numerous colleagues. Charlie Garrad has been a mentor and role model, putting people before artifacts and providing timely advice. Chris Andersen channelled my energy into the study of the river system as a whole. Bill Fox was my long distance adviser. Jim Wright, Sheryl Smith and Gordon Dibb recommended specific references in the literature. Members of the Georgian Bay Islands National Parks Cultural Advisory Committee sharpened my awareness of Anishinaabe perspectives. The Mnjikaning Fish Fence Circle shared wisdom

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The word Anishinaabeg is the plural form. When used as an adjective or in the singular the form is Anishinaabe. Woman is Anishinaabe-kwe. The Anishinaabeg are the largest Aboriginal group in Canada and in Ontario and have been known by more than 100 names over the past 500 years (Buggey and Smith 2003:3; Parks Canada 2003).

<sup>2</sup> The Anishinaabe word for cold is *kissina* (Baraga 1878:1:52). The Coldwater River is known as Gis-sinau-se-bing, literally the "cold river" (Leitch 1967:285). In the English language the sounds of both *g* and *k* are the closest approximations representing the single sound of the corresponding consonant in the Ojibway language (Baraga 1878:1:x).

<sup>3</sup> In 1687, Lahontan travelled the Severn and described it as forming "several cataracts that are equally impracticable both upon ascent and descent" (Lahontan 1905:318).

<sup>4</sup> The "Severn bridge" of the Severn Bridge site should not be confused with the town of Severn Bridge that occurs further upstream, near Washago.

<sup>5</sup> In the Ojibway language *mitchikan* means "fence" and nibing "in the water" (Baraga 1878:1:99, 283). The word *mnjikaning* means "place of the fish fence" (Shilling et al. 2002). It has been adopted by the Chippewas at the township of Rama as their community name: Mnjikaning First Nation.

<sup>6</sup> A published sketch of the Sparrow Lake Chute survives in Cumberland (1886:88). Various other publications show photographs of the original rapids and water levels (Angus 1995:2-11; Dean 1995:32; McCraw 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Paudash was the son of Paudash, who was the son of Cheneebesh, who died in 1869 at age 104, who in turn was the son of Gemoaghpensse, "Bald Eagle" (Burnham 1905:7-11; Guillet 1957:9; Paudash and Paudash 1957).

<sup>8</sup> To the Wendat *chion*, pronounced *shee-on*, reportedly meant "reaching a place in the distance" (Dean 1995:22). "Shunyang" may be a corruption of "Chion".

<sup>9</sup> *Saugeen* is an Anishinaabe word for "river mouth" and was applied to name many river mouths (Rayburn 1997:307). The name for the Trent is Saggettewedgewam "river hard to travel" (Guillet 1957:xxxvi) and the Talbot Portage between Balsam Lake and the Talbot River was known as Ouskebawkning "green leafy place where we leave the river" (Guillet 1957:xxxvii).

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