

Abstract

Lawrence J. Jackson, Ph.D.

This paper focuses initially on the 2005 discovery of a small Early Palaeo-Indian site along the Otonabee River in the northeast part of the city of Peterborough and broadens to discuss the regional context of occupation in the South Kawartha Lakes/Otonabee River and Rice Lake watersheds based on 40 years of intermittent survey and excavations. The Waverly Heights site (BcGn-13) was found during a shovel test survey with a single positive shovel test leading to a full Stage 4 excavation. The site is on the gentle north slope of a small glacial drumlin between two branches of the Otonabee River. Assigned to time period on the basis of distinctive channel flakes from the manufacture of fluted points, the site had a small hearth with bifacial debitage, a projectile point basal ear and calcined mammal bone. The calcined bone from the site indicates not just the hunting of large cervids but also consumption of fish. Proximity to a possible caribou water crossing of the glacial Otonabee River is raised. Channel flake width measurements suggest a Parkhill or later phase Palaeo-Indian occupation, perhaps Holcombe at the end of the Early Palaeo-Indian fluting tradition.

Waverly Heights provides new information on small resource extraction sites and indicates there may be much larger regional networks of small Early Palaeo-Indian site types, originally predicted from comprehensive survey work in the Rice Lake region 20 km to the south (Jackson 1990). More than a dozen Early Palaeo-Indian sites in the western Rice Lake area include logistical game processing, hunting ambush, and multi-purpose residential camps. Significantly, reconstruction of palaeogeographic landscapes indicates that the entire western lakebed of Rice Lake would have been a mosaic of small wetlands and dry land in the late glacial period circa 12,000 to 10,000 years BP. Multiple discoveries of fossil caribou remains from later Holocene contexts at Rice Lake, circa 6,000 to 3,000 years BP strongly indicate that caribou was a persistent resource for human occupants of the area. It is highly likely that many Early Palaeo-Indian sites are currently inaccessible below the now flooded western Rice Lake basin because of the Holocene effects of isostatic rebound. Among these sites will be interception points for game animals, ambushes, and perhaps major pro-

cessing camps similar to the Gainey phase Sandy Ridge site on a north shore terrace of Rice Lake. The Rice Lake evidence, combined with that of Waverly Heights situated between two branches of the Otonabee River and the Chemong Portage site along a portage route between the Otonabee River and the south end of Chemong Lake, clearly indicates a complex network of interactions between hunters, game and the myriad waterways of the late glacial period when meltwater flooded the land.