

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BONNECHERE PARKS

WINTER 97/98

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At a national conference on culture and heritage held last February in Ottawa, culture in Canada was succinctly defined as "who and what we are as Canadians". The mosaic that comprises our collective identities is what defines Canada — a country like no other. A truly unique melange of cultures and customs from around the world, continuously changing and evolving. And it's precisely because this collective community is ever-changing, that preserving the memories and artifacts of the past is vital in defining who we are as a people and what we will become as a nation.

Preserving local culture, in particular that of the Little Bonnechere watershed, continues to be a focus for the Friends. As many of you are aware, our long-term goal is to establish a Cultural Resource Centre at Bonnechere Park which will become a repository of stories and artifacts of and for this community. But a great deal of work must be accomplished in the interim including the publication of the Spirits of the Little Bonnechere Activity Book. This youth-oriented resource will promote local culture among our young people, and provide seed funding for the Resource Centre project. Already, both the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and Ontario Parks have offered encouragement and financial support. The backing of these two agencies is vital to our group as it reaffirms our belief in preserving the heritage of the Little Bonnechere River, and it spurs this group of volunteers on to accomplish even more.

Speaking of volunteerism... despite the busy summer for which I want to congratulate my fellow Board members and staff, we are all geared up for an active winter. For those of us in the know realize that no matter how busy we are during "Park" season, it's in the off-season that we get most done!

Betty Biesenthal, Editor

\$14,250 RAISED FOR YOUTH ACTIVITY BOOK

In 1996, the Friends published Rory Mackay's unique historical manuscript *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere — A History of Exploration, Logging and Settlement, 1800 to 1920*. In the 18 months since its release, over 900 copies of *Spirits* have been sold and sales continue at a steady pace. It's clear that this collection of stories is one that is near and dear to the hearts of many who have ties to this part of the Ottawa Valley. What's also evident is that the people of this community look upon the preservation of these stories as a legacy — one that we are fortunate Rory had the foresight to value so highly some 20 years ago when he gathered them. Our goal now, is to pass this rich heritage on to future generations — to the young people of the area whose lives have been uniquely shaped by the colourful characters who settled the watershed of the Little Bonnechere River.



Helen Armstrong, Activity Book Consultant; Guy Madore, MCZCR; and Tom Carroll, Fund raising Chair.

Plans are to release a *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere Activity Book* in July 1998. This 48-page publication, geared to youth (6 to 16), cultural program coordinators, and educators, will encompass several themes: archaeology and exploration, the cultural heritage of the pioneer settlement at Basin Depot, and the history of logging along the Little Bonnechere River.

Work on the book began in earnest last March with the formation of a round table of advisors who established the content of the book and consulted with writer Sandy Stephenson and illustrator Mark Kulas. This circle of advisors includes Helen Armstrong, Ottawa Chapter, Ontario Archaeological Society

Who Are Those People?

Occasionally, Park visitors may bump into strangely attired people carrying small burlap bags, trowels, dust pans and string levels. Upon closer study, they may be overheard to speak a unique language peppered with words like *chert*, *rim fragments*, *gaming discs* and *test pitting*. These folk spend a great deal of time peering down square holes, carefully removing each layer of soil while searching for anything that 'shouldn't' be there. Found items are carefully examined, described, photographed, catalogued and safely stored for further study. As these pieces of our cultural resource puzzle are examined, much discussion occurs, and a clearer understanding of our past slowly emerges. These people are researchers and students, accountants and school teachers, avocational and professional archaeologists. In many ways, people just like you and me. These folks, however, volunteer their time and energies as members of the Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS).

The Ottawa Chapter members of the OAS travel to Bonnechere throughout the summer months to support ongoing field research work. In addition, they host a highly successful education day featuring displays and demonstrations of archaeological techniques and discoveries. Members welcome questions and provide interesting examples of their experiences. The day concludes with a family evening program exploring such topics as archaeology and our imagination.

Discovering the past at Bonnechere provides volunteers with an excellent opportunity to learn more about our cultural resources in a natural setting. Join us, we'll help you with your wardrobe, expand your vocabulary, provide stimulating discussion and introduce you to an interesting cast of dedicated characters!



and Rory Mackay, author, educator and historian. Park Superintendent Jim Fraser, Native Rep Irvin Sarazin, and Youth Reps Brandon Burchat and Andrea Lemkay round out the circle. Betty Biesenthal, President of the Friends, is Creative Director for the project.

In August, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation announced a contribution of \$11,250 towards the publication of the Activity Book. At the same time, Ontario Parks presented a \$3,000 cheque for funding towards the project. This combined \$14,250 amounts to over half the funds required to see the project through completion. Efforts are currently underway to raise the remaining required monies from various corporations and foundations.

Plans are to distribute 100 copies of the Activity Book free to schools, libraries and institutions throughout the region. As well, the book will be available for sale at various bookstores in the Ottawa Valley and at the Friends Bookstore at Bonnechere Park.

To date, the first draft is near completion and some illustration work is underway. Kids will be able to learn how to shape and decorate clay pots as the Archaic people did, and to make hand-dipped candles just like the settlers of Basin Depot did. They'll learn the basics of archaeology, keeping a journal, and recording a family tree. The book will also be filled with unique games, and some special Native Indian stories which have been passed down orally for many generations at the Golden Lake First Nations Reserve.

The overall theme of the Activity Book is understanding the importance of preserving our heritage and keeping the stories alive. At Bonnechere Park we are privileged to have a wealth of natural and cultural heritage to protect, and we see this project as one more way of doing just that. Watch for the *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere Activity Book* on better bookshelves next summer!

UPDATE

Bonnechere Cultural Heritage Project

Last summer, the Friends were fortunate to receive Ontario Parks funding to continue its field research. Licensed archaeologist Tom Ballantine, curator of the Haliburton Highlands Museum conducted cultural analysis of Park areas slated for development, and the OAS Ottawa Chapter carried out extensive site evaluation and testing along the waterfront. These studies indicate that one of the earliest recreational activities carried on over the beach area was skeet shooting. Remnants of roadbeds and marsh areas were also discovered.

Themes from *A Typical Organization of Ontario History* as they relate to the resources of Bonnechere are being reviewed by Rory Mackay and expanded to be utilized by our Natural Heritage Education staff. Copies of the interviews of John Joe Turner, Hanna Hyland and the McGueys to name but a few have been preserved in cassette form. And finally, documentation stored at Bonnechere has been evaluated and catalogued, making it easier for staff to utilize and more importantly, easier for the Superintendent to find!

Plans are to feature the educational programs of the OAS Ottawa Chapter next season, and to return to the site work at Basin Depot.

Hard Work

Spirits of the Little Bonnechere: A History of Exploration, Logging and Settlement, 1800 to 1920. By Roderick Mackay. Friends of Bonnechere Parks. 152 pages. Illustrations. \$17.95 softbound.

Algonquin Park is today a preserve more for the appreciation of nature than of human nature, a place for relaxed vacations more than labouring vocations. But, as this book so sensitively documents, the watershed of the Little Bonnechere, in the eastern part of the park, was once home to a thriving lumbering industry and a struggling scattering of farm families. The memories of some who could recall earlier times were in the 1970s carefully recorded. Their reminiscences and the author's exhaustive research of historical documents and archaeological remains are neatly woven into a single narrative describing exploration, development and decline — the hopes and the hardships of living in the bush.

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Bonnechere Park's soil yields secrets of the past

By ANDREW WAGNER-CHAZALON
Staff Writer

BONNECHERE PARK — Under warm, sunny skies, Marian Clark and Diane Butterworth spent a late September weekend digging holes in the beach sand at Bonnechere Provincial Park.

Thousands of children do the same thing every year, but Ms. Clark and Ms. Butterworth weren't making sandcastles.

Ms. Clark is a member of the Ottawa chapter of the Ontario Archeological Society. Ms. Butterworth is on the park staff at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park. They were among the dozens of professionals, students, and volunteers digging holes all along the beachfront at Bonnechere Park, looking for archeological artifacts.

The two-day dig was organized as part of the Bonnechere Cultural Heritage Project, an ongoing attempt to map the cultural history of the upper Bonnechere River, from Eganville to its headwaters in Algonquin Park.

"We're looking to discover what kind of cultural sites are on this particular location," said park superintendent Jim Fraser.

With sandy beaches, and good fishing in Round Lake and the Sherwood River, Bonnechere Park is a popular camping spot, and has probably been so for thousands of years.

"The feeling is that if it's a good place to camp now, it was probably a good place to camp then," said Mr. Fraser.

Earlier work at the park supports that conclusion. When the shoreline was reconstructed following extensive ice damage seven years ago, 150 artifacts were found.

"We know somebody was hunting here around 3000 BC, because he left an arrowhead," said Tom Ballantine, the archaeologist in charge of the site.

To find out what else might be located in the park, the area between the parking lot and the lake was divided

PROJECT FACTS

The Bonnechere Cultural Heritage Project was created in 1994 to study the human history of the upper Bonnechere River watershed.

The project has identified more than 70 cultural sites along the Bonnechere River, from Eganville to the headwaters in Algonquin Park. Many of these sites had not been explored or even identified before the project began.

A book, *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere*, contains the history of many of these sites.

Eventually project advocates hope to create a comprehensive inventory of heritage sites between Round Lake and the headwaters, and to cre-

ate a repository of information and artifacts at Bonnechere Provincial Park.

The project also aims to develop educational programs about the importance of cultural recognition and protection.

People need to recognize that even the smallest artifacts can be useful, and should be shared, says Jim Fraser, superintendent of Bonnechere Provincial Park.

"Not a lot of people turn the artifacts in," he said.

Anything found within the park must be turned in. "No matter how small the artifact is, everything's protected," he said.

with a five metre grid and a test hole dug in each grid section.

The holes were about a foot across and went down 30 to 36 inches — "deep enough that we're sure we've gone through every soil horizon that might be occupied," said Mr. Ballantine. "Eventually you hit sterile soil."

All of the soil was sifted through a quarter inch screen, and anything that might be an artifact — be it a 2,000 year old pottery shard or a 200 year old logging chain fragment — was collected and catalogued.

When a particularly promising hole was found, an excavation was begun. A one metre square area was marked out and the soil scraped away with trowels. "We'll just take it down and see what happens," said Ms. Clark as she worked on one such excavation.

Even before they started digging, the archeologists had some idea of the site's history. Before Bonnechere Provincial Park was established 30 years ago, the site was a private campground. Long-time area residents had said part of the current beach was once a swamp, but had been filled in with loads of sand.

That version of the site's history is supported by the trees, Mr. Ballantine

said as he gestured down the beach. "Why are those trees all 40 to 50 years old and these trees are 100 or more? There has to be a reason."

The weekend on the site was expected to have implications for the park and beyond. Mr. Fraser said it will be easier to make development decisions in the park if any known cultural archeological sites have been identified. Even something as simple as erecting a new playground structure can be simplified if the dig indicates that some areas appear to be archeologically sterile.

The site is also useful to the Bonnechere Cultural Heritage Project, partly because of its history as a park. The cottage sites which line much of the rest of Round Lake are, for the most part, highly developed and almost impossible to systematically study.

Once the artifacts from the park are analyzed in a lab, they could have implications for the broader archeological community. Items made from materials that are not found locally can provide information about trade patterns hundreds or thousands of years ago.

"It's all more pieces of the puzzle," Mr. Ballantine said.

Gifts in Kind: *Tomorrow's Treasures*

At the AGM this past August, artist-in-residence Herschel Payne presented the Park with two original oil paintings depicting scenic vistas along the Bonnechere River. Herschell spent much of his summer painting in and about the Park and we look forward to enjoying more of his masterpieces next summer!

At the same time, Pembroke craftsman and avid Bonnechere camper Merrill Burchart presented the Friends with a scale model of the last remaining cabin at Basin Depot complete with pointer boat. Merrill crafted this unique piece of folk art from pine which he harvested as a young man many years ago while working in a lumber-camp along the Bonnechere River.

The Friends, gratified to receive such gifts-in-kind, plan to develop a museum of local art and artifacts at the reconstructed Depot cabins near the main gate of Bonnechere Park. Already various antiques reflecting the lifestyle and logging of past eras have been donated for display. Donations of such items are most welcome and tax receipts are available. It's a great way to give while preserving what you have!

Friends of Friends

Since January 1997, we have been working closely with Elizabeth Rajanayagam of the MCZCR. Her encouragement and support of the Activity Book project has been vital. In August, Elizabeth left her position with MCZCR to explore new career opportunities. We wish her well.

A warm welcome to new Board member Sean Norris. Sean was employed at Bonnechere Park as a summer student in 1995. We look forward to his experience and input.

Helen's Journey of Discovery

In October, the Friends lost one of our strongest allies when Helen Armstrong, ever-present and unfailing promoter of the Ontario Archaeological Society, Ottawa Chapter, and true friend of Bonnechere Parks, passed away after a short illness. Helen's life has been described as a journey of discovery from her youth near the United Empire Loyalist settlements along the St. Lawrence at Cornwall, through her teaching career and subsequent retirement.

Helen's penchant for history naturally translated into an exploration of local archaeology and led to affiliations with various provincial agencies and education programs. She also worked enthusiastically with the OAS organizing and implementing a broad range of events at various regional heritage centres, schools and provincial parks including Bonnechere. She instilled in others her unique brand of natural curiosity, and became known as a mentor and promoter of archaeology and history throughout the Ottawa Valley.

Since January 1997, Helen had worked diligently with the Friends' round table of contributors established to create the Spirits of the Little Bonnechere Activity Book. She brought to the project a wealth of knowledge and a unique understanding of the value of cultural heritage for today's youth. We will also remember her for her hearty laugh!

It is fitting that just before her death Helen was selected as the first recipient of the Peggi Armstrong Public Archaeology Award, named in memory of her daughter who passed away last March, which was established by the OAS to recognize commitment to the preservation of our archaeological heritage.

We gratefully acknowledge the legacy of Peggi and Helen's work with the Friends of Bonnechere Parks and offer our condolences to their family and friends.

Spirits of the Little Bonnechere Activity Book

The following is an excerpt from Spirits of the Little Bonnechere Activity Book. The publication promises to educate and entertain kids of all ages. Watch for it in better bookstores this summer. Better yet, plan to attend the launch at Bonnechere Park this July!

Journals and Letters from the Fur Trade

"Formerly the Beavers were very numerous, the many Lakes and Rivers gave them ample space, and the poor Indian had then only a sharpened stick shaped and hardened in the fire, a stone Hatchet, Spear and Arrowheads of the same; thus armed the Indian was weak against the clever Beaver who in the banks of a Lake made itself a house of a foot thick or more... crossed and bound together with pieces of wood... But when the arrival of the White People had changed all their weapons from stone to iron and steel and added the Gun, every animal fell before the Indian..."

David Thompson, explorer, 1636 — 1710

"Coureurs de bois are Frenchmen who were either born in Canada or who came to settle there. They are always young men in the prime of life, for old age cannot endure the hardships of this occupation... The profit motive is common to all men... These coureurs de bois will frequently commit a thousand base actions to obtain beaver from the Indians. They follow them to their hunting grounds and do not give them the time to dry and cure their skins. They endure the jeers, the scorn, and sometimes the blows of the Indians, who are constantly amazed by such ... greed and by Frenchmen who come from so far away ... to pick up dirty, stinking beaver pelts which they have worn and discarded."

Denis Riverin, leading citizen of New France, 1705

"What a fairer bastion [protection]... when one sees... sees his own chimney smook, or when we can kiss our wives? It is strange thing when food is wanting, worke whole nights and days, lye downe on the bare ground, and not allwayes that hap[py], wet and with feare, to have the belly empty, the weariness in the bones, the drowsiness of ye body by the bad weather that you are to suffer, having nothing to keep you from such a calamity."

Radisson, a coureur de bois, 1636 — 1710

Storyweaver Activity: *Every story has many sides — just like the story of the fur trade. Think of something that has happened to you, perhaps a chipmunk kept stealing your food while you were camping. Write a story about what happened from the opposite point-of-view, such as that of the chipmunk you chased away. It won't be the same story will it?*