

# Archaeology and Historical Research

## **The Fall 2005 Season - Community Archaeology at Kamestastin**

In September Stephen Loring rendezvoused with Innu colleagues from the Tshikapisk Foundation (an Innu experiential education program) and flew into Kamestastin (in Innu-aimun "the place where the wind blows everything off the ground") where he conducted an archaeological training program with a group of Innu youth. The genesis for the research at Kamestastin comes directly from the Innu communities of Sheshatshit and Natuashish, and from the Tshikapisk Foundation. The project combines Loring's long-term research interests in Innu history, archaeology and culture with a research and training program geared to provide training and opportunities for Innu students. The Tshikapisk Foundation, an Innu educational initiative centered in Sheshatshit, is committed to developing the Kamestastin camp as part of an experiential education program aimed at providing land-based Innu culture-centered training and experiences for Innu young people. An applied side of this program seeks to provide employment opportunities for Innu living in the country as research fieldworkers, fishing guides and leaders in adventure tourism initiatives. Integral to the archaeological research at Kamestastin is its commitment to training Innu students in the full-range of cultural resource preservation and management and provide instruction in cultural heritage, geology, and environmental studies that would enable Innu guides to lead subsequent visitors to the region while assuring that cultural and ecological resources were not severely impacted.

Innu archaeological research at Kamestastin began in 1999 and has continued to the present day. Under the co-direction of Anthony Jenkinson (Tshikapisk Foundation, Sheshatshit) and Stephen Loring more than 30 archaeological and historical site localities have been identified in the country surrounding the lake. This fall a brief archaeological reconnaissance and testing program provided documentation on several sites that appear to represent some of the oldest known Maritime Archaic sites in Labrador. As well, the first trace of a paleo-eskimo presence in the interior was documented by Jenkinson who found a Late Dorset stemmed biface on a beach near the outlet of the lake. Made of an unusual banded grey chert that is not at all common on the Labrador coast had us speculating that perhaps the artifact originated in Ungava. Loring has long suspected that there must have been some sort of trading and/or interaction between Middle and Late Dorset and ancestral-Innu groups on the Labrador coast. Perhaps – and its all speculation at this point — with the arrival of the Inuit in northern-most Labrador and the disruption to former relationships predicated on Ramah Chert procurement may have led to social alignments stretching from the interior of Labrador north to Ungava Bay.

Another exciting aspect of the fall research program at Kamestastin was a brief stint of helicopter support provided by Altius (here a conspicuous note of thanks to Altius president Roland Butler and the head of the Labrador operations, Wayne Broomfield) which enabled us to conduct archaeological surveys to the south of Kamestastin, in the country between Kamestastin and Border Beacon, where Tshikapisk survey teams had previously identified several significant Maritime Archaic sites, and to the north of

Kamestastinat Long Pond, an important point on the Innu travel route between Mushuaushipu (the George River) and Emish (Voisey's Bay). At Long Pond we were able to relocate the old Innu camp where, in 1910, William Brooks Cabot photographed the skull of a bear that the Innu had placed in a ceremonial fashion upon a long wooden pole. Recent analysis of the Cabot photograph has led Stephen Loring and Arthur Spiess to make a tentative identification of it as having belonged to a barren ground grizzly bear. Results of this research have been submitted for publication to Arctic and should appear later this year.

Stephen Loring concluded his summer's fieldwork on the 14th September with the arrival, at Kamestastinat, of the first phalanx of the George River caribou herd, as over 7000 animals passed by (and sometimes over) the archaeological sites.



*Tshikapisk students Uashekan Benuen, Pashin Penunsi, Makatan Jonathan Pinette and the ASC's Stephen Loring screen soil from newly excavated squares at the Tshumushumapeu complex. Photo: Paul Piggot (larger version)*

## **The Kamestastinat story - 7500 years of human occupation**

COMING SOON



*Jordanna Benuen at Kanahastkuanakanist with blade of a large Ramah Chert knife (approx 5000 years old) found by Wayne Broomfield (larger version)*