

CONTEXTUALIZING THE REINDEER LAKE

ROCK ART

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By

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ABSTRACT

The rock art that is found in the region of Reindeer Lake, Saskatchewan is part of a larger category of rock art known as the Shield Rock Art Tradition. At present, there are more than 400 known and recorded rock art sites throughout the Canadian Shield region. These sites are found over an extensive geographical area and can be found from south-western Quebec across the Shield westward, up to north-western Saskatchewan. The majority of these rock art sites are comprised of imagery that has been painted on rock surfaces.

The rock art sites at Reindeer Lake, or “panels” as they are called, depict a variety of symbols and characters that portray humans, animals, anthropomorphs, ceremonies and motifs of a spiritual nature. A variety of explanations have been proposed as to the function and meaning of rock art in general. Among the more accepted explanations are that rock art paintings were created by shamans; that they depict dreams or visions of an individual seeking medicine or participating in a vision quest/puberty rites; that they are a form of hunting magic whereby the author in capturing the animal in a painting assures capture of the animal in life; or that they serve as markers for travellers. Regardless of function and meaning, all of the rock art sites on Reindeer Lake are of immense heritage value and should be regarded as sacred locations.

Very little is known about the rock art in the Reindeer Lake regions. Before any significant analyses of their meaning can be conducted, they must first be relocated and properly documented. At present there are only a very small number of publications that document or mention the Reindeer Lake rock art. This thesis surveys the rock art of Reindeer Lake, Saskatchewan. It discusses the general nature of pictographs from the Shield Rock Art Tradition and how the panels at Reindeer Lake fit into the overall scheme, and applies a systematic method to the recording and analysis of pictographs using a contextual approach. Although the primary focus is on recording the painted imagery, the specific context of each panel as well as the surrounding landscape is also considered.

Recording these ancient rock art sites using a proper systematic method has ensured that this significant element of Aboriginal culture will endure not only for future research, but also for the benefit of future generations of the local Cree people.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my ancestor, the Hudson's Bay Explorer and Cartographer, Peter Fidler, in whose footsteps I frequently find myself following while working in the field. The same curiosity and passion he had for finding out what lies beyond the next bend in the river, or over the next hill, I believe has been passed down from him to me.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO ROCK ART

1.1 Introduction

Rock art sites offer a unique contribution to the archaeological record. Rock art panels can be regarded as windows into the past giving brief but detailed information about ancient worlds and cultures. More so than any other archaeological resource, rock paintings have the means to convey, through artistic imagery, a visual narrative of the past from the viewpoint of the people living in that time. This visual narrative is a direct record of an ancient world, as well as the artist's personal perception of that world.

Rock art has been created all over the world for thousands of years, serving a number of purposes in human history and playing a role in human cultural development. Beginning within the Upper Paleolithic era (and perhaps even earlier), the act of creating and using these features has extended through history to fairly recent times. As evidence of its widespread usefulness, rock art is virtually universal and occurs in almost every populated region of the world.

Like any other art form, rock art represents a unique physical expression of an artist's ideas or imaginings. Rock art is differentiated from other forms of visual art in that rock surfaces constitute the sole canvas on which these artistic renderings are created; therefore, the defining characteristic of rock paintings are their placement on natural rock surfaces. Because of the nature of these images, Whitley (1998) has posited that such images could also be appropriately called landscape art.

The study of rock art provides archaeology with a unique opportunity to view elements of culture and daily life as they were perceived by those ancient cultures. Rock art has recorded and reflected virtually every aspect of prehistoric Aboriginal life including scenes of hunting activities, vision quests, mythologies, human relationships, ceremonial behaviours, history, daily life, accomplishments, spiritual powers and even the arrival of new ideas and technology (Hays-Gilpin 2004). Rock paintings also hold important information about both the artists themselves and about the societies in which they lived.

The styles of rock paintings or pictographs vary from one culture to the next. In some cases, diverse regional variation can exist within a particular culture as well. Rock art panels, like all other forms of archaeological features, are as significant as other types

of material culture in providing information on a specific people or society. It may even be the case that rock art is more valuable to the archaeologist because such panels portray an image that has been captured in time, thus becoming a conduit into that specific moment in the past and presenting a viewpoint from the first person perspective.

Context is essential when it comes to rock art. Throughout the world, locations in the natural landscape where rock art has been created share a remarkable consistency in that they are or have been designated as culturally significant areas by the peoples residing there. This relates to how human beings need to order our world, whereby space only becomes “place” by attaching some sort of human significance to it. One of the ways human beings have symbolically marked landscapes is through the creation of rock art. This is, as Tacon and Chippendale (1998:1) observe, “one of the ways we socialize landscapes.”

1.2 Introduction to Thesis Research

The subject matter of this thesis is rock art and specifically the pictographs that exist in the Reindeer Lake region of northern Saskatchewan (Figure 1.1). The panels that are found in this region are part of a larger category of rock art known as the Shield Rock Art Tradition which encompasses the majority of the western part of the Precambrian rock shield. Although the majority of the rock images in the Shield Tradition are of the painted variety or pictographs, examples of petroglyphs (imagery incised in stone) and lichenoglyphs (lichen scraping) are also present. Currently, there are more than 400 known and recorded rock art sites throughout the region which extends from southwestern Quebec through northwestern Saskatchewan to the southern portion of the Northwest Territories (Rajnovich 1994).

Although the primary focus of my research will be on the Reindeer Lake paintings themselves, the specific context of each panel as well as the surrounding landscape will also be discussed. Recording the Reindeer Lake rock art sites using appropriate methods and reporting on the collected data in this thesis will ensure that the paintings, as a significant element of Aboriginal culture, will be accessible to both the local Cree people of Reindeer Lake and future researchers.

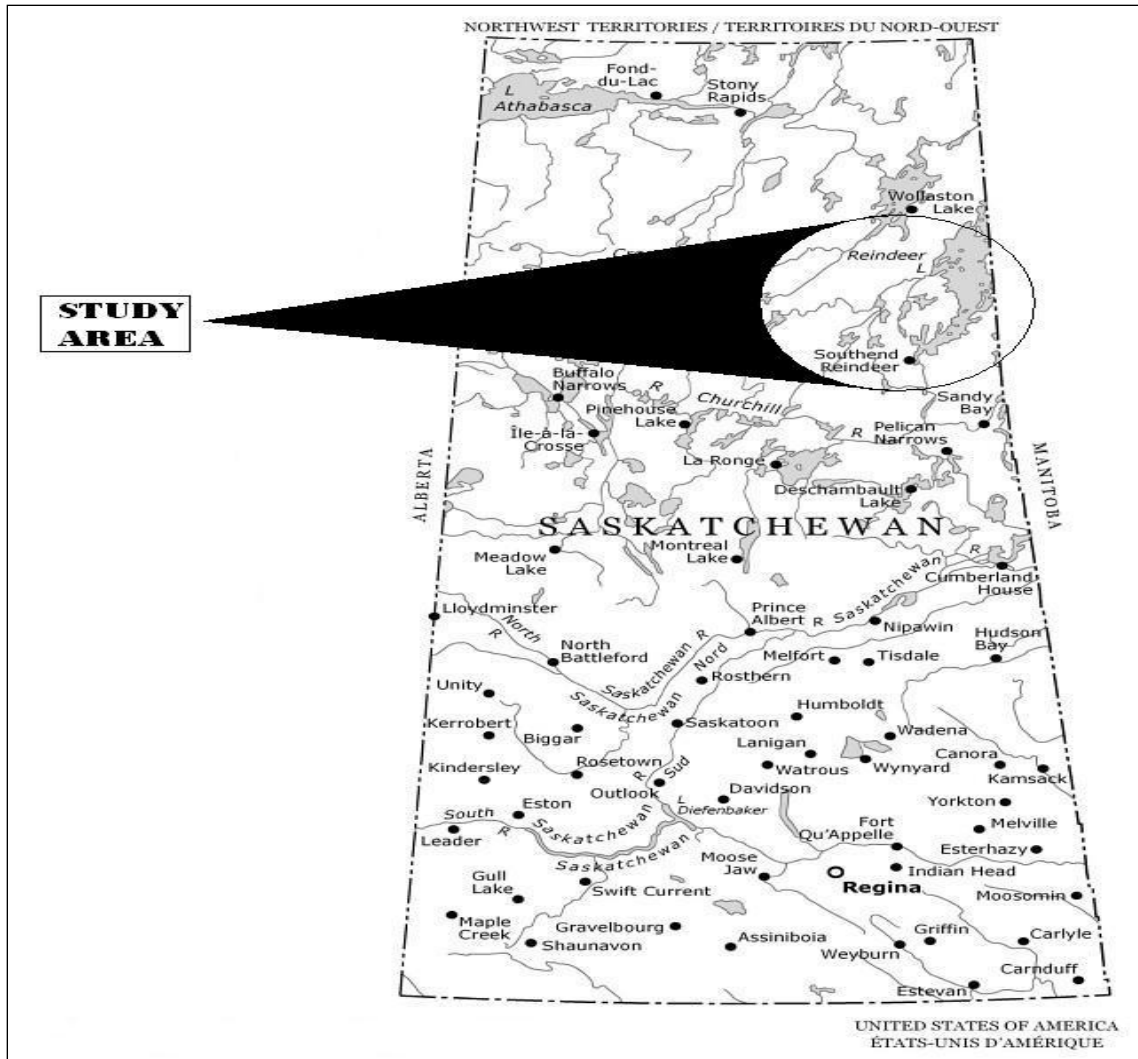


Figure 1.1: Map of Reindeer Lake with Study Area.

1.3 Overview of Precambrian Shield Rock Art

Rock art in the Canadian Shield has played a major role in the lives of both the ancient Aboriginal peoples and their contemporary counterparts. The creation of rock art was one of the ways these cultures were able to express and celebrate aspects of their belief systems in a timeless manner. Pictographs also served to record the cultures' many stories and legends. These painted stories, along with their many embedded lessons, were viewed with the utmost of respect. Producing these paintings, as physical manifestations of thoughts, ideas and perspectives, was one of the ways that local Aboriginal cultures paid tribute to their spiritual beliefs, while at the same time ensuring that their heritage would be preserved for future generations.

The panels on Reindeer Lake depict a variety of symbols and characters which portray humans, animals, anthropomorphs, religious symbols and spirit-beings of legend. A variety of explanations have been proposed about the function and meaning of the rock art within the Churchill River drainage region. There were likely a number of reasons for creating these images, but it could be assumed that, for the most part, the artists were trying to leave behind lessons for future generations (Rajnovich 1994:35). Among the more accepted explanations are that they were created by shamans, that they depict dreams or visions of an individual seeking medicine or participating in vision quest/puberty rites, that they are a form of hunting magic whereby the artist assures the capture of the animal in life through capturing the animal in a painting (Rajnovich 1994:115-116), or that they serve as markers for travelers.

Previous research regarding the rock art of northern Saskatchewan has been completed by a select few authors, archaeologists and rock art researchers. Notable works have included the writings of Tim Jones, Zenon Pohorecky, Selwyn Dewdney and David Meyer among others. Beginning in the 1960s, much of the archaeological fieldwork conducted in this region of the shield was focused largely upon the locating and recording of sites. This was driven by a need for preservation in light of impending commercial developments such as hydro-electric generating stations. Rock art sites were in part, recorded by way of documenting those elements that could be measured mathematically such as panel size, dimensions of painted figures and geometry of landscape. It is perhaps due in part, to this somewhat minimalistic approach, that very few comprehensive publications have been produced surrounding the Shield pictographs of Saskatchewan. However, the reports that do exist on the subject are for the most part technical in nature and rich in empirical data and observations. Indeed, Kenneth Kidd has remarked upon the reasoning behind such an approach, stating, “We are still in the recording stage – analysis will come later” (Jones 1981:78).

Leading the way into significant rock art research, Selwyn Dewdney conducted several rock art surveys throughout the Shield region of Canada during the 1960s. His work included visits to northern Saskatchewan where he documented panels within the Churchill River drainage system and also paid particular attention to the multitude of paintings found at Hickson-Maribelli lakes (Dewdney 1963).

Detailed archaeological surveys of the Churchill River drainage system throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s brought to light several more pictograph sites as well as numerous archaeological sites of the traditional sense. Among the most significant contributions to the study of pictographs in northern Saskatchewan during this time was the work completed by Tim Jones and Zenon Pohorecky. Undertaken over the course of several field-seasons, Jones and Pohorecky surveyed the Churchill River and recorded 20 rock art sites in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Of this series of surveys, Jones was the principal investigator and the data which he collected culminated in his 1974 Master's of Arts thesis *The Aboriginal Rock Paintings of the Churchill River*.

An extensive archaeological survey of the Churchill River region which also included the Reindeer River system was conducted by David Meyer and Sydney Smailes over the field seasons of 1973 and 1974. The Churchill Archaeological Study did not uncover any new pictograph site locations; however, the results of the survey contributed immensely to the understanding of how the rock art sites of the region fit within the archaeological record. Meyer and Smailes (1975:51-52) have found a distinct correlation between the occurrences of rock art panels and that of sites containing Clearwater Lake complex pottery of the Selkirk Composite. It has been widely accepted that Selkirk Composite pottery is attributed to the ancestral Cree peoples and thus, the correlation as discussed above places authorship of the panels to that of the Cree and further provides a temporal context placing the relative age of the panels within the Late Woodland period.

Archaeological research in this region of northern Saskatchewan continued and the time period from the 1980s through to the 1990s brought to light several more instances of rock art panels which had previously been unrecognized by earlier surveys. David Meyer recorded the McDonald's Bay Site on Pinehouse Lake in 1980 and brought the total number of rock art sites found along the Churchill River to 22 (Jones 1981:12). Three separate research trips to Reindeer Lake by David Meyer in the 1990's led to the discovery and recording of six additional rock art site locations and brought the total number of known pictograph sites on the lake to nine (Meyer 1996).

1.4 Objectives

Before any significant analyses can be conducted regarding the significance of the rock art, the sites needed to first be located and properly documented. At present, there are a limited number of publications which document or mention the pictograph occurrences in the Reindeer Lake region. Completion of this thesis will not only contribute to a better understanding of the area's cultural past, but will in part fill the void created by this deficiency of information.

The objectives of the research conducted for this thesis are:

- To compile data regarding the study region's rock art sites
- To record these sites in order to preserve the information
- To place this region's specific rock art into the broader context of the Shield Rock Art Tradition
- To provide interpretations for the sites where possible
- To make this information available for the use of future researchers

1.5 Methodologies

This section will provide a brief overview of how the locating and recording of the rock art sites. A variety of methods and tools have been utilized in order to be as precise as possible in the data collection. Fundamental to these methodologies is an approach where the specific site as well as its associated environment is taken into consideration. Rock art panels are not happenstance occurrences; sites were selected by the artist for specific reasons. Therefore the context in which the panel is found is as significant as what is portrayed.

The methodologies used for this research include a review of primary source documents, locating the rock art sites, and extracting and recording the empirical data. The documented exploratory fieldwork conducted on Reindeer Lake by David Meyer and Doug Frey in 1993 and 1994 has provided a good starting point for the collection and review of the primary data regarding the Reindeer rock art sites (Meyer and Frey 1994;

Meyer 1995). Meyer and Frey, with students Todd Paquin and Patrick Young returned to Reindeer Lake in 1996 and traced two of the rock art panels.

Published and unpublished documentary sources that report the locations of some panels offered further valuable information. The next step was to locate additional sites through word of mouth. Inquiries made of residents of the local community provided valuable insight into where additional sites could be found. In particular, residents who operated outfitters camps and knew the area well were particularly knowledgeable (Meyer and Frey 1994:75). Consultation with individuals from the local band (Peter Ballantyne Cree Band) also produced a significant amount of data useful to the project (Meyer and Frey 1994:79; Meyer 1996:1). Therefore, because Dr. Meyer had already completed three surveys of the region's rock art, his direction allowed for the efficient relocating and recording of sites in 2006.

The next step was to physically access the sites. As all of these rock art panels are located on or near the water's edge, travel and reconnaissance by boat and guide was necessary. Upon locating a panel, the recording process was then carried out by myself and Dr. Meyer, taking note of details ranging from the broadest to the minute. Careful recording of the context of each panel was necessary to gain a full understanding of the site as a whole. Taking a broad perspective and recording elements of the surrounding landscape as seen from a distance proved to be essential. Field note documentation, as well as photographs from a number of perspectives, has ensured that this aspect is sufficiently dealt with.

Weather impacted the overall visibility of these panels as well as the elements that could be captured by photography. The atmospheric conditions, as well as its general effect on the panels were recorded for each site encountered. Changing weather conditions alter natural ambient lighting and even slight gradient changes may make a noticeable difference in what can be seen in a rock art panel. Thus attempts were made to view these sites repeatedly under varying light conditions.

Access to the panel locations and whether or not they were easily accessible has important implications regarding the contextual nature of sites as well. I recorded the physical features and how they affected the overall ease/difficulty of reaching a particular site. Artists chose locations for their rock art with specific criteria in mind. Consequently,

I examined the physical features of each rock face in detail including the angle and orientation of the cliff and its aspect. Other physical attributes I considered were the presence of cracks, natural inclusions, erosional processes, type of rock, damage (natural or otherwise), vegetation (lichens) and general surface shape.

The very base of this project was the need for these sites to be recorded and documented in detail. As such, precise recording techniques involving measurements, notes, and photography formed the core of the research. A Saskatchewan Archaeological Resource Record form had previously been completed for each rock art site and I reviewed these forms at each location in order to note possible changes in the environment and/or preservation. Using the standardized form ensured that I accounted for all of the basic and necessary empirical data.

In addition to textual documentation, I also employed a variety of photographic methods. Extensive use of a digital camera from multiple perspectives and angles permitted me to record a large number of images. Capturing images in digital format has allowed for numerous options for editing and color manipulation to enhance the images. Close-up shots of individual elements and characters were taken as well as photographs that capture the entire panel.

I supplemented photographs of the panels with tracings and drawings. Tracings and drawings are useful for obtaining accurate portrayals of the art motifs and their scales. Employing a GPS receiver, information and measurements were obtained regarding precise geographic coordinates, elevation, and orientation of cliff face for each rock art panel. Each of these methods alone provides a piece of significant data, therefore, employing this variety of recording methods has ensured the precise and complete recording of each panel. I will outline my methods in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.6 Language and Terminology

Using English terminology to describe rock paintings can be limiting and inaccurate because the metaphorical nature of Aboriginal languages is far more complex than the literal, single-meaning terms of the English language. There has been an ongoing debate in the field of rock art research over whether the term “rock art” is appropriate for this type of cultural feature. Critics argue that labelling these panels as art would unintentionally place them within the framework of a modern, westernized idea of art and

therefore would cause them to be subjective rather than objective. They also assert that, because some panels would seem to depict a purely utilitarian message (landmark), referring to such panels as art may inappropriately assign a higher level of significance to the site itself. Others argue that, because art at its very core is subjective in nature, those who attempt to study rock art from a purely methodical, objective, and scientific perspective find their methodology and dataset at irreconcilable odds. David Whitley (2001:22) clarifies this perspective:

...As many rock art researchers have noted, traditional peoples often lack a term that translates literally as “art”; “rock art” is inappropriate as a term for their pictographs or petroglyphs. The justification for this conclusion is the view that we have a unique Western meaning for “art,” one that specifically implicates aesthetic concerns – art for art’s sake – that traditional cultures lack. By applying the term “rock art” to the paintings and engravings of these traditional cultures, this reasoning goes, we are projecting onto them values and implications that they do not have.

As archaeologists, we must interpret rock art images in an unbiased and objective manner in order to really learn what information they can provide us with. It is easy to view a particular image and ascribe to it an interpretation that is literal in nature, however, it has been shown that the majority of rock paintings portray meaning and significance in a way that is highly metaphorical. Because of this metaphorical imagery, archaeologists can only speculate on the meaning and purpose of certain rock art imagery. As the Ojibway writer Basil Johnston points out, “the stories too are not to be read literally; there are four degrees in the operation of the mind, and ‘listeners are expected to draw their own inferences, conclusions and meanings according to their capacities.’ The same must be true for rock paintings, and a master Midewiwin would coach us, ‘go ahead. Try to understand the paintings. But once you’ve found one meaning, go back and find more’” (Rajnovich 1994:21). Moreover, it is important to recognize that the only concrete interpretation of an image died along with the original creator (Dewdney 1963:4).

Despite the problems associated with deciphering these images, it is still possible to derive meaning from them as the empirical data contained within the images themselves hold valuable clues that can indicate to the archaeologist some idea as to the purpose of the paintings. I believe that these cultural features are indeed art, whether the

panels depict mythological creatures, sacred ceremonies, deities or even subjects of the seemingly utilitarian. Like any other form of visual art, rock paintings can be seen as adhering to those basic principles of what makes art, *art*. First of all, like any other visual artistic representation, rock art panels are meant to be viewed. They were brought into the physical world so that they could be seen. Whether the audience is composed of a single person or many does not take away from this fact. Secondly, like other art, rock art was created to convey meaning. What this means is that art is not purely an image with a singular function but it can be used to convey thoughts, meaning, emotions, feelings, ideas or even simple messages. Art, when viewed in this most basic sense, can then be seen as an indirect means to communicate with others.

In just the same way that conventional art has served a number of different functions throughout history and has evolved over time, so too has rock art. For this reason, it is difficult to assign specific meanings to these images. Like all forms of art, they are also highly subjective, in that the true meaning (interpretation) of the image can only be deduced by the one creating it. Rock art can then be said to be a physical manifestation of the expressive and conceptual intention of the one doing the creating.

In order to be as objective as possible while exploring the subject matter of this thesis, I will be using standardized and accepted anthropological terms to describe aspects of the rock art. Because the generic term “rock art” could be applied to any of several types of cultural features that involve the meaningful manipulation of rock surfaces, a brief explanation of the major forms of rock art are discussed. Rock art is both limited and defined by its primary medium, rock. The general term “rock art” has come to encompass a number of artistic varieties. Included within this designation are pictographs whereby the surface of the rock has been coated with a mixture of pigment and a binding agent. Petroglyphs result when a rock surface has been artfully modified by incising, cutting, pecking or abrading to produce an image. Petroforms (sometimes called earthforms or geoglyphs) are produced when the ground surface is modified or arranged in a meaningful way (e.g. rock effigies, boulder alignments, stone circles and intaglios) (Dudzic 1995:99). Lichenoglyphs occur when lichen has been scraped off of the rock surface to create a negative image. For the purposes of this thesis, the term rock art, unless other-wise stated, will refer to imagery of the painted variety (pictograph).

Many of the descriptive terms referring to the depicted characters and symbols that I will make use of should also be briefly explained. Much of what is depicted in rock art falls within one of two categories, realistic or abstract. Keyser and Klassen (2001) refer to the same concepts as either representational or non-representational. Representational imagery or pictogram refers to those depicted images that are easily recognizable as something that exists within the real world. Included within the representational category can be depictions of anthropomorphs, which describe characters or motifs that have a distinctly human form, and zoomorphs, which describe images that are clearly of an animal nature.

Non-representational imagery refers to those symbols, elements, characters and motifs that are not recognizable as being of something tangible within the real world. These can include abstract or amorphous shapes, geometric designs, spirals, lines and sequential markings. Also included in this category are ideograms, which according to Keyser and Klassen (2001:11) are depicted elements “that clearly symbolize a concept or an idea rather than represent an object.” I feel that depictions of a therianthrope nature should be included within the non-representational category. Therianthropes are those characters that have the qualities of both humans and animals whether created intentionally or not. In the case of much of the Shield rock art, therianthrope motifs were undoubtedly the intended result as they likely represent spirit beings or Manitous whose very nature is that of both human and animal.

1.7 Concluding Remarks

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Chapter Two is an overview of previous work pertaining to pictographs of the Shield Rock Art Tradition, and presents some of the key concepts used in studying Shield rock art. It will also consider the significance of the Reindeer Lake region environment (both ecological and socio-cultural) to the panels. Chapter Three examines the methods I used to locate and record the Reindeer Lake rock art panels. Chapter Four provides detailed descriptions of the rock art sites that were recorded. Chapter 5 discusses possible interpretations of the images in the rock art panels, and Chapter 6 summarizes key points and offers some overall conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO: PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY AREA

2.1 Introduction

The topic of this thesis is set within the Canadian Precambrian Shield and, more specifically, the area of the Churchill River drainage basin that encompasses Reindeer Lake. The Precambrian Shield region is an ecologically and physiographically diverse environment which has allowed the various cultural groups who occupied the region to adapt and grow as unique societies for thousands of years. The pictographic panels found here are among the most geographically widespread of the rock art traditions of North America, and are distinguished by their stylistic consistency over this large geographic expanse. This chapter will explore the environmental and social context for the production of Churchill River style paintings in the Reindeer Lake region and provide an overview of the Shield Rock Art Tradition.

2.2 Environmental Context

The rock paintings that decorate the cliff faces of the Canadian Shield region stretch over a vast area and exhibit a distribution that is limited and conformative to this geological formation's arc-like geographic positioning (Figure 2.1). These rock art panels have been observed as far northwest as the Slave River, as far east as the St. Maurice River in Quebec, and as far south as the Shield permits. The ecological diversity that characterizes the Shield region is a product of the extensive land modifications that resulted from the advance and subsequent retreat of glacial ice sheets during the last ice age. These ice sheets effectively shaped the landscape by scraping away the surface soils and leaving the Precambrian era bedrock exposed in many areas. Glacially transported soil was deposited in a pattern that was wholly irregular, unpredictable and inconsistent. The overall result is that the landscape is now composed of a mixture of woodlands, swampy wetlands, peat-bogs and rocky uplands, and is infused throughout with a multitude of lakes and waterways (Winterhalder and Smith 1981).

In the millennia since the glaciers of the last ice age retreated, the environment of the Shield region has remained relatively consistent and has developed into the diverse, ecological mosaic that currently exists.

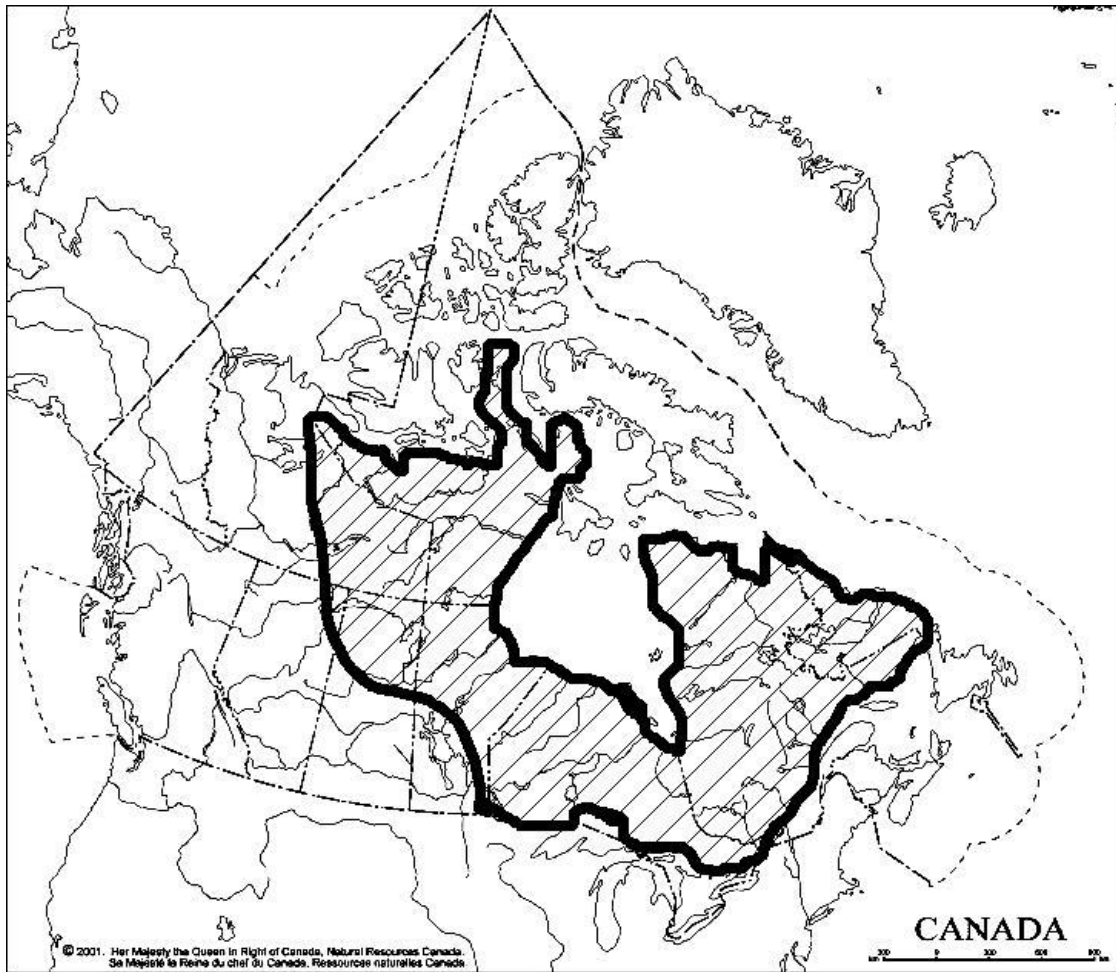


Figure 2.1: Geographical extent of the Canadian Shield.

Tim Jones (1974:17) comments on this unchanging nature by pointing out that the typical landscape of the shield region is dominated by three main environmental characteristics: boreal forest, water features and exposed bedrock. In his published thesis *The Aboriginal Rock Paintings of the Churchill River*, Jones (1981:4) remarks that “everywhere the waterways and thickly-forested mainland dominate the topography. Rock exposures, at times from 1 to 30 m or more in height, outcrop along the shores of lakes and streams. It is such rock ‘canvases’ that were utilized by aboriginal artists for rock paintings.”

2.3 Cultural Context

The major rivers and chains of lakes in the Shield region served as natural highways by which bands of people could efficiently travel long distances by birch bark canoe to hunt, trap and fish or even visit other bands to trade. A complex network of well-established traveling routes provided the means by which many of these bands

completed their seasonal rounds which assured the continuance of their livelihood. Base camps, small seasonal villages, and annual ingathering locations were located along these waterways because these sites could be easily accessed and provided all of the necessary resources to sustain a population.

The majority of rock art is found along these well-travelled routes and some tributaries. The Reindeer Lake drainage system is a prime example of one of these major travel routes. To the south, Reindeer Lake drains into the Churchill River (another well-known traveling route), and to the north the lake is bordered by the barren lands. Reindeer Lake, therefore, seems likely to have functioned as both a major transition area of travel and as a gateway to the north or south.

The community of Southend Saskatchewan has a population that is predominantly composed of persons of Cree ancestry. Many of these local Cree people are also band members of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation (Rocky Cree). The traditional beliefs, values and life-ways of Algonquian speaking peoples such as the Cree and that of the Ojibway are reflected in the rock art of the Precambrian Shield; thus, it is critical that some mention is made of those governing ideologies in order to better understand the cultural context in which these panels exist. Intrinsic to all aspects of traditional Cree culture is the concept of connectedness which Ermine (2007) explains as:

The earth, plants, animals, elements and everything in nature exhibit an intelligence that is perceptible and responsive to human endeavour. Within this perspective, dividing the universe into living and non-living things has no meaning: animate and inanimate matter is inseparably interwoven, and human life is also enfolded in the totality of the universe. The attitude of a personal relationship with the spiritual and natural worlds is moulded into a systematic code of conduct and behaviour and includes agreements with the spirits of creation.

At its foundations Algonquian cosmology is composed of a quadripartite system whereby the four realms are represented by The Sky, The Earth, The Underground and The Underwater. The medicine wheel which is composed of a circle divided into four equal parts is a manifestation of this concept where each of the four sections represents one of the above defined realms and further symbolizes the circular worldview. The two top sections of the medicine wheel symbolize the realms which are inhabited by all benevolent beings and represent Sky and Earth. The two bottom portions of the medicine

wheel symbolize the realms of The Underground and that of The Underwater; and are the place where malevolent entities reside. The foremost being within this ideological system is known as *Kitche Manitou* or “Great Spirit” and represents the most powerful of all entities. The spirit beings which inhabit these realms are known as *Manitous* and can be either “good” or “bad.” *Manitous* are the spirit parts of everything that exists and include both animate things such as plants and animals and inanimate objects such as rocks and soil (Rajnovich 1994:35-36).

Within the traditional Algonquian belief system much emphasis is placed upon the dream experience. It is through the experience of dreaming that guiding spirit helpers called *Pawakan* are found where spirit assistance can be acquired, and where medicine power is gained. “Dreaming” refers to any experience from within an altered state of consciousness where interaction with a Manitou takes place and may be had through dreaming of the traditional sense (during sleep), through wakeful dreams, through ceremonies such as the Shaking Tent and sweat lodge purification rituals, through visions resulting from a vision quest or through direct inducement using medicines. The vision quest was a very important ritual for Algonquin peoples as it comprised a rite of passage that initiated youths into adulthood and provided them with the means to secure spirit assistance that would benefit them for the rest of their lives (Lipsett 1990:116). Amongst the primary reasons for obtaining visions or dreams is to acquire medicine that would be of benefit to the dreamer or their associated community. Lipsett explains that: “ ‘Medicine’ was a term informants associated with power, as its connotations go beyond the ability to heal the body” (Lipsett 1990:136). The concept of “power” within Cree culture supersedes the common-place westernized notion of what power is and is viewed as being more than just the ability to physically or mentally manipulate your environment but rather, as detailed by Lipsett (1990:134-135):

Power was directly related to the ability of the individual to tap into the supernatural realm and to change things within the natural world through its use. Informants stated...that power obtained through the vision included abilities to heal and cure people of illness and injury, to predict future events, and to excel as a hunter, particularly supernatural actions, such as transformation of form or size, telepathy, and kinetic transference of objects over great distances.

The traditional Algonquian belief system placed a large amount of significance on acquiring such dream power. It was believed that everyone had the ability to receive

dream power but also that certain individuals were more inclined to receive larger amounts. As well, dream power could supplement a variety of useful abilities important to the dreamer whether it was hunting prowess, trade negotiating, gaming aptitude or that which represented the most highly prized of abilities, healing (Rajnovich 1994:25).

The ability to heal wounds and cure illnesses of both the physical and spiritual sense has always been at the forefront of interest for Algonquian peoples as it provided a measure of security and helped to ensure the general well-being of the community. It is therefore logical that healers often held positions of status within the community or were revered with respect. As it was only individuals who had the capacity to secure large amounts of power that became medicine practitioners, it is not surprising that formalized medicine societies that implemented governing rituals and ceremonial protocols were formed. Amongst the Algonquian peoples there were three different types of medicine practitioners. The oldest and most respected of these societies is the *Midewewin* of the Ojibway which translates as “the society of good hearted ones” and is sometimes referred to also as, The Grand Medicine Society (Rajnovich 1994:28). The *Jiissakid*, a second type of medicine practitioner is predominantly associated with the Cree and were known for their abilities to communicate with spirits and Manitous during the Shaking Tent ceremony. The third form of medicine practitioner was the *Wabeno* of the Ojibway who have their origins from the Midewewin and were sometimes seen as engaging in “bad medicine” or practicing for personal gain. Of these three forms of healers, Rajnovich explains that both the Mide and the Jiissakid were known to create rock Paintings (Rajnovich 1994:29).

2.4 Canadian Shield Rock Art

The paintings that occupy the Shield region, sometimes called rupestral rock art, are one of the most extensively distributed Aboriginal petrograph styles in the New World. According to Jones (1981: 70), “the available evidence suggests that the cultural groups who created rock paintings across the Canadian Shield were probably the ancestors of Algonkian-speaking groups who live in the area today. In eastern Manitoba and in Ontario these are the various Ojibway and Algonkian subgroups, and in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, including the Churchill River, they are Cree speakers.”

The type of rock imagery in North America is typically diverse from one region to the next and therefore may reflect and distinguish the numerous lifeways and socioeconomic patterns of the local Aboriginal groups. In contrast, however, rock art of the Shield Tradition can be found over a vast geographical expanse but remains stylistically consistent (Meyer 1996:19). The Shield Tradition paintings are simplistic and naturalistic in character and portray a variety of themes ranging from shamanistic imagery to supernatural events.

The locations of the Shield paintings are unique compared to other painting traditions of the world. The European Upper Paleolithic images, for example, are generally in areas that are difficult to reach such as in deep caves or on steep cliff ledges. These types of images were more private and personal and so were placed in out of the way areas so that the “public” could not easily reach or see them. Shield paintings, on the other hand, are quite the opposite in that they are out in the open and relatively easy to access (Jones 1981).

The rock art panels found in the Shield region are situated on rock outcroppings and almost always face the water. Only 20 out of the 400 known images are of the incised (petroglyph) type; these differ from their painted equivalents in that they are usually hard to find and are generally located away from water (Dewdney 1970; Rajnovich 1994). The predominant placement of Shield rock art images near the water contributes was because of their sacred nature; they were located at what was considered to be the “home of the manitous” where the sky, earth, water, underground and underwater converged (Rajnovich 1994). Meyer (1996:19) also argues for the sacred nature of pictograph sites, stating that “such art is spiritual in nature and these sites must be regarded as ancient sacred locations.”

While the most detailed research to date in northern Saskatchewan has involved the pictographs along the Churchill River, studies of the rock paintings beyond the Churchill River have been more limited. However, all of those recorded to date are of the Canadian Shield Rock Art style. One of the major occurrences is on the Hickson/Maribelli Lakes to the north of the Churchill River. The paintings that are found at these lake sites are very diverse and show a number of different images that range from depictions of shamans and anthropomorphs to scenes of communication between animals

and humans (Jones 1976; Dewdney 1970). The Hickson/Maribelli sites are rich not only in diversity, but in terms of general numbers of images as well. Indeed, this is the location of one of the largest concentration of rock painting faces in all of the Canadian rock shield (Dewdney 1970:7).

2.5 Researching Reindeer Lake Rock Art

Pictographs were very important to the peoples of the Canadian Shield region. They were not created just for the sake of creating art, but had many complex and deeper meanings attached to them. Archaeologists have speculated about the possible meanings and significance of these rock art forms. Some researchers have suggested that rock art depicts famous events of that particular culture. Others argue that it is not art, but is actually a form of written language. Rajnovich (1994:9) appropriately points out that the Algonkian-speaking people who inhabit the Canadian Shield region “traditionally put picture writing on their birchbark, copper, stone and wood objects.” Since they were first discovered by colonists and fur traders, people have tried to figure out what rock art images mean and how they got there. Who was responsible for producing these images? How long have they existed there? What methods were employed in creating them? And maybe most significantly, what do the images represent or signify?

It is my belief that much of the uncertainty regarding Shield rock art that still remains is due to the lack of adequate, contemporary research into the subject. Most of the previous research focusing on Shield rock art is largely descriptive in nature and tends to rely heavily upon making comparisons of common characters or motifs. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, the primary objective of pictograph research in the Churchill region was to discover and record sites. In Manitoba in particular, this research was in large part motivated by the 1969 Churchill River Survey. This survey was part of a huge environmental impact study carried out in anticipation of the creation of two large hydro-electric dams in Manitoba. Given the pressure of circumstances, more intensive studies were not possible at the time.

Later research projects that did attempt an in-depth analysis of function tended not to focus on a single area or region, but took into account the whole breadth of rock art occurrences across the Shield. This, in my opinion, has only provided a base from which broad generalizations can be made. Consequently, and in contrast to previous studies

undertaken in the Precambrian Shield, the research project that I conducted focused entirely upon one isolated portion of the Churchill River drainage system, Reindeer Lake.

This area interests me for a number of reasons. First, distinct subsets or groupings of rock art panels can be identified here. Second, Reindeer Lake is one of the major entryways to the northern barrenlands and therefore exists as a potential nexus or crossroads of cultures. And, finally, this area may represent a major transitional area of culture overlap. The documented archaeological sites in the region have revealed material evidence of this culture overlap. For example, near the village of Southend on the south part of Reindeer Lake, archaeological sites have contained an Oxbow projectile point (Meyer and Frey 1994). This is the most northerly occurrence of such a point style. As well, a possible Pre-Dorset knife has been found at a site in my study area (Meyer 1999:24). This is the most southerly known occurrence of Pre-Dorset in Saskatchewan. Further evidence of culture overlap is also evident in archaeological sites on Reindeer Lake that represent two coinciding and temporally concurrent cultural groups; the ancestral Algonquin and ancestral Dene. These two separate but contemporaneous groups are represented by Thaltheilei (pre-contact Dene) artifact assemblages (Meyer 2005:721) and Selkirk (ancestral Algonquian) assemblages (Hanna 2004). These elements together are evidence that the region is a transitional area.

A large portion of the research for this project is based on existing data, thus intensive study of all of the sites in the region was deemed unnecessary. Preliminary investigations using only textual sources had already shown some positive outcomes and provided valuable information on how to properly proceed with the research. As I will outline in Chapter 3, a combination of field work and the use of previously collected datasets provided the basis for this thesis.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

Although I rely on textual resources to provide my research framework, my fieldwork coupled with ethnographic evidence has effectively shed some new light on the subject of Shield Tradition rock art in the Reindeer Lake region. Chapter 3 will explore the methodologies I employed to explore the rock art of Reindeer Lake.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Recording precise data is an integral component of any type of archaeological fieldwork. This is an especially important consideration for recording significant sites like rock art. Particular care must be given to recording information that allows for accurate site interpretation. The very nature of pictographs demands that every consideration be paid to obtaining the most accurate and objective dataset possible.

Conventional buried archaeological sites represent a largely unintentional by-product of human activities. These sites exist as static remnants of previous occupation in both a temporal and spatial aspect. The subsurface components of these sites contain artifacts that were not meant to convey ideas or significance by being deposited there. Rock art sites, by comparison, represent intentional constructs produced expressly for the purpose of conveying a message. In further contrast to traditional archaeological sites, these panels were consciously made to be both dynamic and interactive in nature.

Pictograph sites represent a unique type of archaeological site in that the approach to recording them requires the use of traditional archaeological recording methods along with techniques of analysis that quantify their dynamic presence. This chapter will outline the methods that I employed for recording panels in the course of my fieldwork. Along with covering the evolution of various recording methods and their efficacy, I will discuss the techniques I employed for this research including accessing the sites, field documentation, contextual analyses and visual reproduction techniques.

3.2 Methodological Considerations

Given that rock art panels are themselves a visual representation, it is fitting that I chose photography as the principal means of recording and analyzing these features. Photographs provide accurate and consistent reproductions, but the information that can be gleaned from using photography on its own is limited. The benefits to using photography as a recording method; however, far outweigh these limitations by providing a level of truthfulness and reliability of image reproduction that cannot be achieved with other manual illustration techniques. Nevertheless, the photographic record represents only one line of evidence for providing clues to understanding a site. In addition to

photography, my field research employed other recording methods which resulted in a series of complimentary data subsets.

3.2.1 Site Considerations

Sorting out what type of data is more or less important when recording rock art poses a problem. Like recording other archaeological sites, it is important to glean as much data as possible from the site and its artifacts to be able to interpret the site appropriately. Rock art panels are infrequently associated with physical artifacts, thus effectively removing several lines of evidence needed for site interpretation and reconstruction. Consequently, rock art researchers rely heavily on extracting numerous datasets of empirical information from the rock art panels themselves. The impetus behind such mass data extraction is the idea that the field of rock art research is still far from being complete and that the future may see techniques for reinterpreting collected information. All collected data must therefore be regarded as contributing equal value.

The way to ensure that a sufficient dataset is acquired is to record as much information in the field as possible. The geographic location, physical access to panels, the surrounding landscape, panel size and context, motif/character placement and scale of individual elements are all properties that should be measured. Information regarding aspects of geo-spatial relationship must also be noted. These include cliff face orientation (compass bearing in degrees), angle of cliff face, context to water, and exposure to the elements. Environmental parameters such as geological features, mineralogical makeup, hydrological impacts and ecological components (flora and fauna) should also be considered as they all affect the preservation of rock art panels.

3.2.2 Panel Considerations

Additional consideration must be given to those aspects of a panel that are identifiable as having post-production human origins. Information regarding any impacts or modifications to the rock art panel that have occurred due to the activities of humans needs to be recorded and examined. Impact to rock art sites caused by human intervention can be through either direct or indirect means. Direct or primary impacts stem from activities related to a first-person account, meaning that the individual was physically present at the site and interacted with the panel with a conscious intent. Examples of direct interaction are the leaving of offerings, misguided panel maintenance

(e.g. lichen removal or “touching up” painting), vandalism (e.g. removal of panel material, attempts at obscuring, and damage from bullets), authorized maintenance/preservation activities, and post-panel production add-ins (painted, inscribed, or scraped) such as extra motifs and autographs.

Indirect or secondary impacts stem from human activity whereby conscious intent is not involved; the humans themselves do not necessarily need to be physically present at the rock art site for these effects to have an impact. Examples of indirect human impacts are rising water levels from hydroelectric dams, chemical degradation of panels from pollutants, forest fires, and even wave erosion from increased motorized travel on the water bodies. Many of the rock art panels located in the Shield region have withstood the elements for centuries or even millennia, but within the last one hundred years or so, the panels have begun to degrade at a consistently rising rate. This damage is undoubtedly the result of human actions and it is because of this continual degradation that human intervention and its effects at rock art sites needs to be recorded, examined, and monitored from a logical and objective perspective.

3.2.3 Depiction Considerations

The individual characters and motifs that make up the subject matter of the panels themselves also need to be examined from an objective standpoint. Again, such investigations should only be limited to recording metric measurements, placement of individual characters and their context to one another, description of the pigment regarding color, hue, and saturation and application method.

Attempts to describe the subject matter of the panel, its overlying themes and character depictions during the recording process are laden with potential fallacy. Other than those elements that are immediately recognizable (e.g. a stickman = man; a smoking pipe = pipe), only the most basic observations regarding individual painted elements should be noted. Like all forms of artistic expression, rock art is highly subjective and, consequently, noting observations on perspective and interpretation should be kept at a minimum. Even in the above example where a pipe is described, the motif is recognizable for its depiction of representing the real world item of a smoking pipe. However, this could also be an example of an ideogram where the symbol is meant to convey a deeper idea or metaphor.

3.3 Locating Rock Art Sites

3.3.1 Written and Verbal Clues

One of the most challenging aspects of studying rock art in the Shield region is gaining access to the sites themselves. It is difficult to locate panels based on rumour or second-hand accounts. Even following the directions of an assumed reliable source can sometimes prove to be a trying task (Jones 1981:7). The difficulty in locating sites has a lot to do with human error and misinformation, but it also has much to do with the physical geography of the Precambrian Shield itself. Understanding the complexities of locating panels and the work that goes into reaching their location provides important context as to the significance of landscape in the positioning of panels.

Due to the rugged terrain of the Precambrian Shield, finding new, undocumented sites as well as relocating sites that have been previously recorded is a difficult task for someone who is not familiar with the area. Consequently, the best source of information on pictographs and how to find them is through interviewing local informants from those communities most closely associated with the panels (Steinbring et al.1969). Local informants have always been the most important agents in documenting rock art. Indeed, the majority of known pictograph sites within the Shield region owe their recognition to local aboriginal informants. If possible, employing informants to also act as field guides is highly advisable and makes the task of accessing these sites several degrees easier. Additionally, such informants can oftentimes provide valuable insight into the significance of these sites from a first person (and possibly the community's) perspective.

The first step in locating pictograph sites for an area is to review the existing data on the region. Government-produced heritage site recording forms, published and non-published literature, and documents outlining relevant research that has been conducted in an area can provide valuable information. Surveying similar work that may have already been conducted serves to streamline research objectives and minimizes the chance of acquiring redundant data. Previous rock art documentation and research within the Reindeer Lake area has been relatively minimal, but what has been completed is quite varied. Other than the knowledge of these sites that the local Aboriginal peoples have always had, the first documented recognition of rock art on Reindeer Lake was provided by Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) explorer and surveyor Peter Fidler. While traveling

on Reindeer Lake in 1807, Fidler passed through the area known as Canoe Channel (sometimes referred to as 'Birch Narrows' by local residents). He plotted on his map one location which he labelled "painted stone two places" (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, E.3/3).

The next instance where Reindeer Lake rock art was noted was by P.G. Downes who, in 1936, took the time to document the Canoe Channel site in detail. Downes completed a field sketch of the images, recorded detailed notes on the site's setting and acquired a narrative from a local Cree Elder relating information on this particular set of pictographs (SDC 1936). It is very fortunate we have two separate accounts of this site's existence and whereabouts because, as Meyer (1996:11) relates, the situation is quite ironic in that "while this is the only regional pictograph site for which historical and cultural information is available, we have not been able to find it."

Further fieldwork documenting pictographs in the area did not officially occur again until the mid-1960s when two more pictograph sites were recorded. In the summer of 1965, Tim Jones located and recorded sites HcMt-4 and HcMt-6 as part of the extensive surveys conducted for his Master of Arts research. David Meyer also undertook work in the region in 1993, 1994 and 1995. He recorded an additional six pictograph sites (Figure 3.1) in the area bringing the total number of known sites within Reindeer Lake to nine (Meyer 1996). I chose to concentrate on seven of these nine panels for my field research (see Figure 3.2).

Locating the rock art sites for my research proved to be fairly uncomplicated as they had been previously documented and were well-known to both my advisor, Dr. David Meyer, and to our guide, Southend Elder Larry Clarke. Their knowledge and experience of the sites and the area proved indispensable.

3.3.2 Accessing the Sites

Gaining access to the sites requires more than simply travelling to the locations. A well-thought-out plan that accounts for transportation, logistics and time management is important. The first step in undertaking archaeological fieldwork in any part of Canada is obtaining the proper permission from governing bodies, communities, land owners and individual people. Notifying communities, local government bodies and First Nations when research is to be conducted that directly affects or relates to them both demonstrates

due diligence and shows appropriate respect and consideration. Before commencing the fieldwork aspect of my research, the councillors of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation as well as members of the local band administration for the community of Southend were made aware of my research intentions.

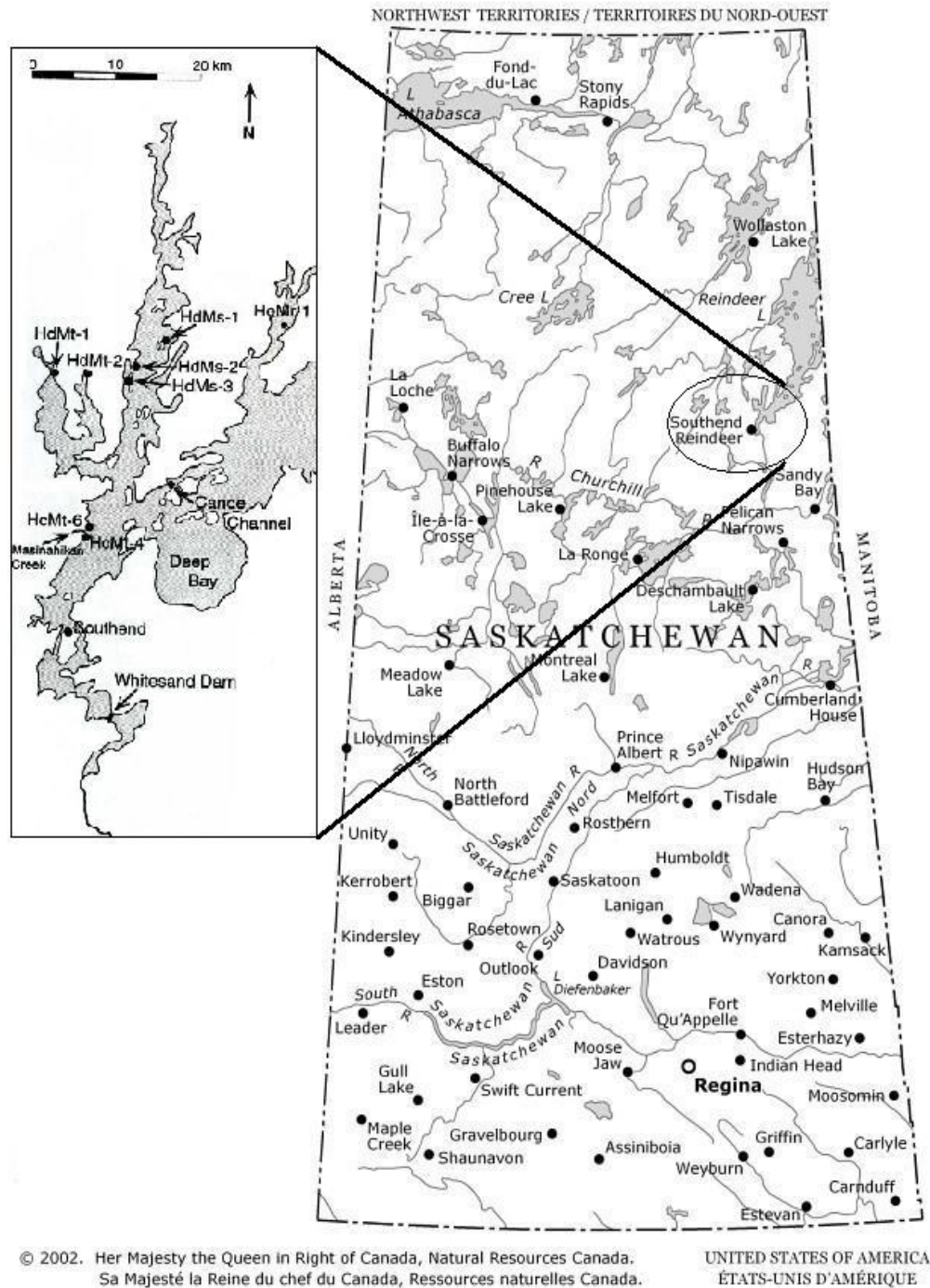


Figure 3.1: Map showing the nine known pictograph sites on Reindeer Lake.

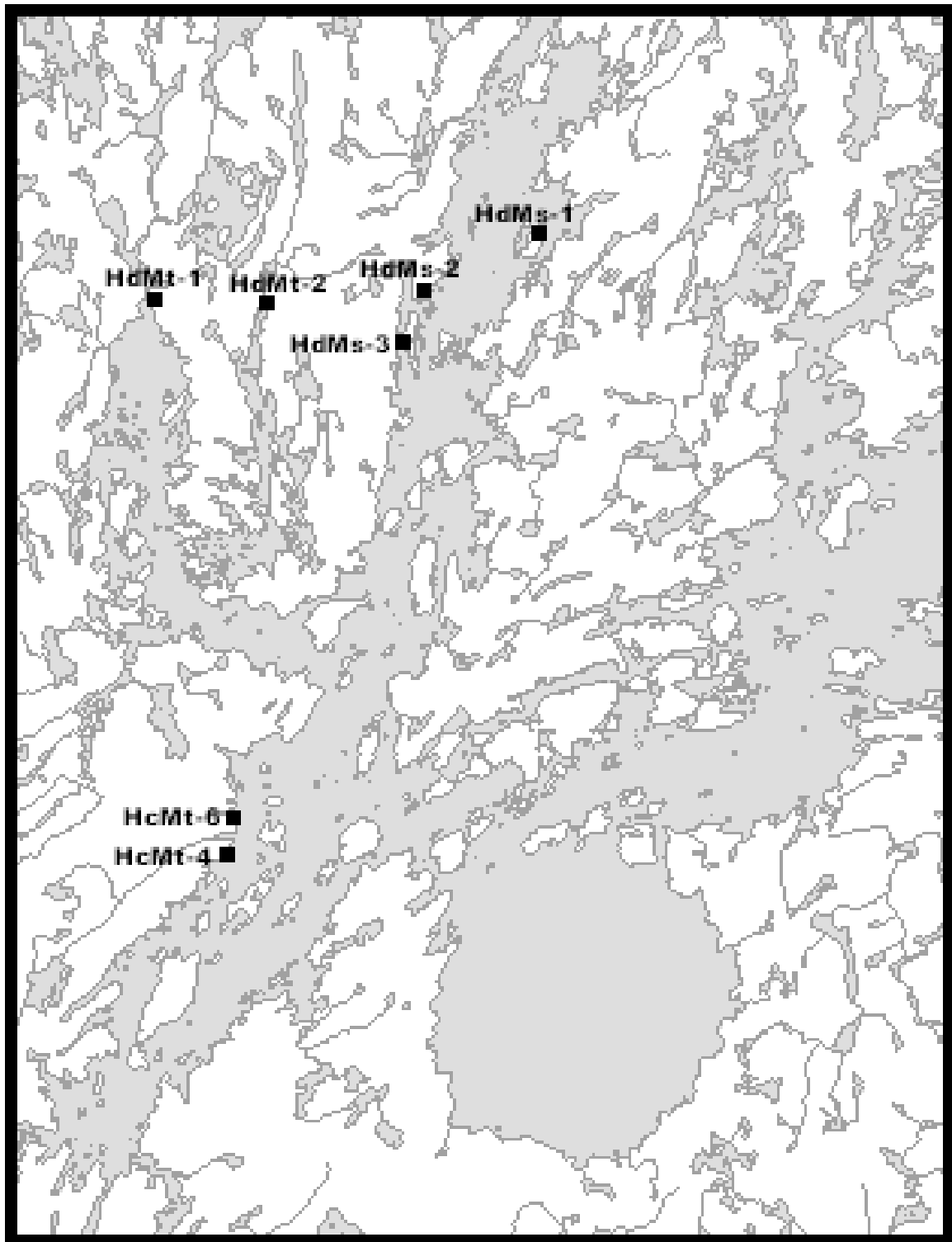


Figure 3.2: Map of Southern Reindeer Lake showing seven sites investigated in 2006.

The second step was to acquire a permit. In order for heritage sites to be properly protected, maintained, and preserved, it is essential that any fieldwork regarding heritage be regulated and authorized by the proper officiating bodies. In Canada, a permit

allowing an individual to conduct archaeological investigations needs to be obtained from the provincial government before any fieldwork is completed. For this project, work was conducted under the Government of Saskatchewan's Archaeological Resource Investigation Permit numbered 06-107. This permit was held jointly by myself and Dr. David Meyer, and allowed us to complete the necessary archaeological field research in July 2006.

The third step was to access the sites themselves. The work involved in physically accessing the pictograph sites located on Reindeer Lake shows a remarkable consistency with that of reaching such panels elsewhere in the Shield Region. Shield rock art sites are typically located in areas that are both isolated and rugged topographically. The use of either a boat or a floatplane is necessary for reaching many of these sites during the summer season. During the winter months when water surfaces are frozen it is possible to access the sites by snowmobile, dogsled or ATV. It has been noted that for many sites within the Shield, accessing, viewing and recording panels during the winter from the ice is actually easier and in some cases preferable to that of fieldwork conducted in the warmer months (Wainwright et al. 1988). In order to accomplish the specific goals set out in my research framework, access during the summer was the best option. Using a motorboat, the services of a local guide, the instructions of my advisor, and my own diverse knowledge of rock art and field methods, I was able to fulfill to my research objectives with efficiency.

Finally, I set about recording the sites. A number of modern tools and 'high tech' resources make the job of recording the panels much easier than when past studies were conducted. However, I used many of the more traditional recording methods as well. Indeed, using high tech gadgetry is not always appropriate for acquiring the most complete data. As Lee (1991:16) correctly points out, "an individual who is experienced in this field and trained in recording skills is likely to make observations overlooked by technological equipment." The more traditional rock art recording techniques were, therefore, used to both gather data and as a failsafe in case the more technologically complex recording methods failed.

For the most part, the panels included in this study had previously been documented by Dr. Meyer and relocating the sites proved to be fairly easy. Both Dr.

Meyer and Elder Clarke had visited each of these sites prior to this season and knew the lake quite well. Using the site forms for reference, along with a handheld GPS and 1:50,000 NTS map sheets, we were able to relocate the sites with minimal complications.

The basic purpose behind recording archaeological sites is to preserve information so that if the site is destroyed or lost there will be a complete documentary record through which the site could be reconstructed. For this reason, every possible attempt was made to accurately record both the details of these panels and that of the sites in the larger context. This attention to detail is important because many of the rock art panels in the Reindeer Lake area have either been adversely affected by hydroelectric developments or completely lost. For example, the panel observed by Peter Fidler in 1807 and again by P.G. Downes in 1936 in the Canoe Channel area of Reindeer Lake is now lost due to rising waters resulting from the construction of the Whitesand Dam in 1939. In 1939, after the waters had risen, Downes observed that “with the heightened water level due to the dam these figures now must be entirely submerged” (1988:53). David Meyer and associates travelled to Reindeer Lake in 1994 on a field trip during which a significant amount of time was devoted to relocating the Canoe Channel paintings; unfortunately, their efforts were unsuccessful (Meyer and Frey 1995:79). During my fieldwork in 2006, a small portion of time was set aside in again attempting to relocate this panel. Using Downes’ detailed notes and sketch maps for reference, Dr. Meyer and I scanned the shorelines in the immediate vicinity of the recorded coordinates, but failed to recover any significant clues that would indicate the presence of this panel’s location.

3.3.3 Rock Art Site Recording Methods

The value of extracting numerous forms of empirical data through documenting the physical aspects of a rock art panel including visual observations, physical properties and metric measurements should not be understated. It is through the evaluation of these objective datasets that scientific inferences can be made. At first glance, many of these observations may seem basic or irrelevant. However, due to the progressive nature of archaeology and that of science in general such notations are critical for analysis and re-analysis in future studies. So, it is partially for the sake of posterity that I employed these empirical methods.

3.4 Observations and Field Notes

As has previously been mentioned, producing accurate, precise and complete field notes is among the most important aspects of recording any archaeological site. Through the process of creating field notes researchers are able to assess, interpret and convey aspects of being physically present at the site that empirical datasets such as site recording forms cannot relate to the same degree. When used properly, field notes provide the basis for a final report that is well organized, logically flowing and complete. For the purposes of my research, field notes were critical and comprised at least one-third of the total data acquired from the fieldwork. Beyond the use of purely textual documentation, the field notes also served as a photo log, panel sketchbook, map sketch, ethnological record, a method reference manual, and a key/index connecting together the maps, forms, photographs, tracings and sketches.

Upon arriving at each rock art site, we immediately went to the panel to gain a close-up view of what was depicted there. This initial step was carried out for a number of reasons. Viewing the panels close-up and then again from a distance allows for some interesting observations especially in terms of perspective variation. This allowed me to better understand the context and scales of each individual motif/character, how they related to one another, and how that scale fit into the panel as a whole.

For example, when viewing panels close-up I was not always able to see the subtle differences in scale between two figures, but moving a measured distance back from the rock wall provided the right elements for such contrasts to be noted. Observations regarding scale, context and even positioning of panel elements were important for producing an accurate field sketch of the rock face and of the paintings themselves. From this measured distance, other recording methods such as field sketching, landscape observation and overview photography were also implemented. Indeed, moving away and outwards from a panel in a series of set measured distances provided good comparative data for future contextual analyses.

Another benefit of this proximity evaluation is that I was able to gain a better perspective of what lies in direct opposition to the panel itself. As stated earlier, landscapes and the context of rock art panels within those landscapes hold just as much significance as the paintings themselves. This was the place where the Manitous lived

and could be reached (Rajnovich 1994:35). Before an artist created a rock art panel, many elements personally significant to the artist needed to be present for the location to be deemed a suitable place for its creation. These suitability requirements undoubtedly varied from one painter to the next, as well as varying to coincide with the overall schema and intent of the depicted message. Jones (1981:48) has also noted that many panels are found in locations that, to the outsider, may not seem to be ideal at all. The one consistency that exists among almost all of the rock art panels of the Shield tradition is that there is a preference for vertical rock faces in close proximity to water (Dewdney and Kidd 1967).

Katherine Lipsett (1990:107) has documented several ethnographic accounts from Northern Cree people that state that these panels were located at places connected directly with part of the vision quest process. The vision quest or other ceremonial activities should be considered when studying rock art sites. Numerous ethnographic accounts have explained rock art panels as depictions of visions or representing paintings of dreams. Failing to consider how such phenomena may translate into the landscape or the panel itself would result in an incomplete study and serves to discredit the validity of extant cultural beliefs. Temporal distance does not factor into whether such phenomena can be quantified. These pictograph panels, further complemented by the physical properties of the landscape, were created to interact with and affect the human experience. Thus, the only tools a researcher requires for experiencing these sites as was intended is human sense.

While undertaking the work of recording the panels on Reindeer Lake, many of these physical experiential phenomena were pointed out to me by both Dr. Meyer and Elder Clarke. The effects of such experiential properties were noted and, where applicable, I described the collected elements that together brought the phenomena into being. In order to gain a better understanding of these properties and the resulting sensations they provoke, it is important to review the anthropological data collected on such behaviours and then see if it translates in any way within the archaeological record.

Attempting to enter into trance states by way of isolation and deprivation, the dream seeker would often find and use a visual focal point within a direct line of site on which he or she could fix their concentration. These focal points were usually represented

as distinct, unique or obvious geographical landscape features. In recording rock art panels it is thus a good idea to observe and record any obvious changes in perspective of what can be viewed in the landscape directly opposite that of the panel.

Relating to this notion of experiential variation of the landscape is what Arsenault (2004: 303) refers to as “material conditions.” These material conditions are the physical traits of the landscape that make the location unique or somehow different from the rest of the surrounding area. Most often these traits work in such a way that human perception of place becomes distorted. Depending upon the type of rock art, what the artist wished to convey, and even who the artist was in life (e.g. a shaman vs. an adolescent [puberty rites]), visual, tactile and even acoustical phenomena may have been the motive for placing panels within a certain location (Meyer and Frey 1994:76). Playing upon all of the senses, the experience of such a place is almost unreal, providing the sensation of a hallucination without having applied any mind altering substances.

Depending upon the physical geography of an area surrounding a panel, one or several of these perception-warping factors may be present. A common condition of Shield tradition rock art panels is that they are placed on sheer vertical rock that faces directly over water bodies. The amplified echo effect of sound bouncing off the cliff and out into the open expanse of lake, possibly being carried for miles, is an example of such auditory phenomenon. Add to this echo effect an enclosed area of rock (e.g. an inlet or bay) and the effect is that of a natural amphitheatre. Many panels found in the Shield are situated in lake or river narrows, which are constrictions of the waterway where sheer rock faces extend upward several metres to form a border on at least two sides of the water passage. The audio phenomenon here is almost paranormal in experience; reverberations and bouncing echoes can last remarkably long as well as alter the sounds’ volume and notes. Many of these structural properties serve to amplify sound outward, but these places can also capture sound and voices from far away, acting as a receiver of sorts. It is likely that this amplification of sounds was attributed to spiritual phenomenon and served as a “medium through which the spirits made themselves heard” (Arsenault 2004:305). Moving outward at measured distances from panels, any observed auditory phenomenon should be recorded among the overall site’s attributes.

Any visual phenomenon relating to geographical and landscape context must also be noted and described in detail. These observable phenomena, it should be noted, are very dependent upon the right atmospheric conditions being in place. It is likely that incorporating specific conditional factors in order to see the message as it is supposed to be seen was wholly intentional. It is possible that some panels were only meant to be visited at a certain time of the year, certain time of day, or even during certain weather conditions.

Given that rock paintings convey ideas, messages, instructions and other intangible concepts through visual representation, it then follows that among the most significant of those experiential elements of perception are those relating to physically observing panels with eyesight. The experience of approaching a rock art panel from a distance and moving progressively closer until directly before the paintings can be dramatic. In calm waters, rock paintings can be reflected in absolute clarity on the surface of the water. The resulting mirror effect can generate a variety of illusions. Depending on how far away the viewer is from the panel, as well as the angle of approach, the reflected image can warp, stretch and skew, thereby creating any number of alterations to the original depiction (Steinbring 1998:92). Changing conditions in either direct light (e.g. sunlight) or ambient light can also induce perceptible effects.

Sunlight reflecting from the water's surface may dapple the panel with dynamic light, creating the sense of movement within the picture. Movement can also be witnessed in the slight ripples of surface waters where a mirror image has been created. Indeed, there are some panels in the Shield that exhibit physical properties that undoubtedly incorporate such visual phenomena as an intended effect. Steinbring (1998: 92) has noted this effect. He documents visiting the same pictograph site on two different occasions. Due to the effects of sunlight and panel orientation, each visit offered variable lighting conditions so that on the second trip he observed several paintings that had gone unnoticed during the time of his first visit. According to Steinbring et al. (1969:17), the possibility exists that "shamans among the Ojibway were aware of the fact that the sun's position could be of importance in rendering a pictograph visible or virtually invisible."

Alongside recording details related to proximity, further notes on initial observations should be documented. As already explained, it is very important that

atmospheric conditions during the visit are described in detail. This should include items such as the date, season, time of day, position of the sun, lighting conditions, elemental exposure, active weather and atmospheric phenomena as well as if and when any of these states change and their resulting effects.

3.5 Documenting Geographical Location

When recording the geographical locations of rock art sites it is very important to provide a sufficient amount of information so that there can be no ambiguity regarding those locations. Making use of more than one coordinate system can minimize such issues. At the very least, the researcher should record the location beginning with latitude and longitude in degrees, minutes, and seconds. Following this, the UTM coordinates in both the NAD27 and NAD83 systems should be recorded. The National Topographic System (NTS) scale map sheet projections in Canada will always make use of at least two of these coordinate systems. Lines of latitude and longitude are always present alongside the projections of a metric geodetic network represented by a Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid. On NTS topographical maps, these UTM projections will be in either NAD27 or NAD83 format and these relate to the fixed reference points used by geographical surveys from the years 1927 and 1983. Because the centre nodes, from which the rest of the reference points were set, differ between these two geodetic network systems, these coordinate systems cannot be interchanged. It is vital, then, to make explicit on any and all documentation regarding the recording of sites which reference system has been used.

The advent of publicly accessible, handheld Geographical Positioning System (GPS) receivers has made the process of recording a site's geographical location exponentially easier and more efficient. Field recording the location of archaeological sites in the times before the wide availability of GPS receivers required the researcher to complete manual calculations of geographic coordinate systems. For this process, researchers needed a basic understanding of coordinate systems, orienteering, and NTS map sheets. Without the use of precise survey equipment (e.g. Transit) calibrated from a fixed reference point like that of a Geological Survey of Canada benchmark, researchers had to rely upon their skills of site description and accessibility to accurately convey where a site is located. Through the use of NTS maps and compass, many sites in the past

were recorded with limited accuracy. When using simple coordinate systems such as that of degrees of latitude and longitude, or even metric systems like that of the North American Datum (NAD), precise location was difficult to pinpoint, often having an estimated probability of error of 50m or more.

The ease with which precise coordinates can now be acquired through the use of handheld GPS receivers has made the recording of site locations as simple as the push of a button. Most basic receivers can pinpoint a coordinate to within 7m proximity. For those GPS receivers that are Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) enabled, providing accuracy to 1m or under is not uncommon. Many modern GPS receivers come equipped with several different user-enabled datums already in place. In such cases, location of panels should be recorded in more than one coordinate system. Although it is possible to, at a later time, switch between reference systems and get several coordinate readings from a single saved waypoint, it is important to point out that relying on a digital record alone can be disastrous and the best practice is to always back up data through handwritten notation. In recording the geographical locations of the panels for my own research, I used a (WAAS) enabled GPS receiver to acquire the most accurate positioning possible. On top of saving the location through creating GPS waypoints, I also recorded the coordinates by hand in my field-notes, utilizing several coordinate systems.

3.6 Notes on Site Details

One of the most important parts of documenting a rock art panel through notation is making observations and comments on the current condition of the panel and its immediate surroundings. I did this in my fieldwork by noting the presence of human modifications, environmental degradation, pigment fading and visibility, water depth lines, effects of ice scouring, geochemical processes and encroaching biological factors. This step is very important for making comparisons with the conditions noted through previous recordings. It is here that any dangers to the preservation of the panel will be most apparent and thus can be dealt with. This step is especially important if it is the first time that the panel has ever been recorded officially. The recording of site details is beneficial, not only for further archaeological research, but also because these initial observations will act as a baseline from which all future assessments regarding the preservation of the site will be made (Wainwright et al., 1988).

General observations on the more prominent or obvious features of the surrounding landscape are important to note. Such generalized feature descriptions proved their value over the course of my detailed study and acted as a reference manual to which I frequently referred. Beginning with the broadest of subjects regarding geography and environment, the notations made then proceeded to a more detailed approach where I described specifics of the panels' physical properties. I also made notes describing aspects of the immediate environment. Employing the same procedure, I began again making notes on the broadest of topics and worked towards the more specific. Basic descriptions regarding the biological, chemical, geological, mineralogical and hydrological aspects of the panel alongside details of the rock surface like relief, texture, consistency and colour were assessed, measured and noted whenever possible.

Although it is inadvisable for a researcher to attempt to interpret what the panel is depicting while in the process of recording the panel, due to the risk of compromising scientific objectivity, basic observations of recognizable shapes and patterns should be recorded in note form. As mentioned in the first portion of this chapter, it can be somewhat of a fallacy for modern-day outsiders to try and guess at the subject matter of a panel. This is even more true for the researcher who has not reviewed the entire collected dataset and considered all of the elements in turn. Formulating an unconscious bias while still carrying out the recording process can result in a compromised interpretation. It was therefore essential for me, when providing descriptions of painted elements in written note form, to remind myself to stay focused on outlining only the general details rather than narrating the depicted events. When done correctly and completely, field notes should act as a structured framework for conducting research, a reference manual, an index or key and a foundation by which all of the other datasets are tied together. Without detailed notes outlining and accounting for those information gaps created when producing sets of empirical data, gaining a complete understanding of the site as a whole would be more than simply difficult, it would be next to impossible.

3.6.1 Metric Measurements

I employed an approach in the work conducted at Reindeer Lake similar to that which Tim Jones followed in his 1974 thesis research on the Churchill River pictographs. Basic measurements of panel angle (tilt), panel orientation and context to water were

supplemented by incorporating observations on lighting conditions, elemental exposure and properties of preservation. Recording the orientation of the panel on the rock face began with first noting the basic direction it faced (e.g. N, NW, SE etc.). Further recording required the use of a compass placed against a portion of the panel that was representative of the overall orientation, and was within an area that avoided direct contact with the paintings themselves. After ensuring that the compass was positioned properly, a bearing was then taken. Using magnetic north as the constant, the magnetic declination offset was recorded in degrees. This process can also be completed using a handheld GPS receiver that has compass functions. However, using a GPS is not advisable due to accuracy issues related to line of site obstructions and mobility. A measurement using magnetic north as a static reference point offers the best way to ensure that results are reproducible.

Another important observable property that was measured and recorded during my research was the gradient or inclination of a rock face in degrees. A number of technologically advanced survey instruments exist that can be used for this process, but I chose to use a line level and sliding protractor which ultimately provided the same information. The mean tilt angle of the rock face is important to note as this property is directly linked to other observable conditions of the panel. For example, if two panels within the same general locale and of the same approximate age exhibit differential rates of pigment fading, measuring the face angle may show that one is more directly exposed to the sun's rays or that water runoff occurs at a slower rate.

Noting the panel's relationship to water is especially relevant when recording rock art within the Shield region as the majority of sites are found along lakes, rivers and other waterways. Although modern water levels can vary dramatically (due to developments like hydroelectric dams that control flow rates) in comparison to the natural seasonal water cycles, the contextual information is still important to note. High and low water marks can be used as temporal baselines to which comparisons can be made in future research. As well, many rock faces exhibit a sheer verticality so that the base of the panel extends directly upwards from the surface of the water. In areas where the water levels have remained historically consistent, this measurement is valuable for witnessing the visual effects produced by reflection on the water surface noted earlier in

this chapter. For my recording needs, I found using brief textual descriptions, followed by a tape-measured distance afforded the most efficient way to quantify this context.

Noting whether a panel has been positioned within an area that is sheltered or open to the elements can give clues as to the panel's function, antiquity and intended visual effects. From a heritage protection standpoint, the positioning of a panel can also show which sites are in danger of being lost due to elemental exposure keeping in mind, however, that such specific placement and awareness of the effects may have been intentional. A number of biological processes can adversely affect the preservation of rock art panels; it is thus prudent to note any observable characteristics of panels that relate to such phenomenon. Again, detailed descriptions of panels at current conditions provide important baseline datasets that can be compared with subsequent site revisits. I chose to note/measure factors like encroachment of lichen, pigment hue as it relates to fading, mineral depositions, physical degradation (exfoliation, ice scouring etc.) and chemical degradation (i.e. acid rain).

3.6.2 Sketch Mapping

Measurements relating to the contextual properties of the painted elements themselves followed the observations of physical properties of the panel and rock face. Because the following recording procedures require detailed measurements for their completion, the approach to measuring the spatial characteristics will be detailed here. The method of producing accurate, detailed sketches and drawings of rock art panels follows that used in creating a photographic record. The basic concept is a layered approach, starting at a broad perspective and then, by degrees, refining down to capturing individual elements and motifs. This layered approach to sketching is basically comprised of producing drawings from at least three different scales graduating in detail from broad to fine in scope and scale. It should be noted that several of these methods or aspects thereof were already completed for many of the sites I visited. Consequently, I chose to conduct the process at only some of the panels to avoid producing redundant data.

The first step in this layered approach to visual recording is producing site overview field sketches. These sketches do not require explicit measurements or a high degree of detail, but are nonetheless important for establishing the context of the panel and its elements within the landscape. Field sketches should be produced with a level of

accuracy that will allow someone else at a later date to use the sketch as a tool for locating panels within a site. As Loendorf remarks, the process of producing a field sketch is the step in recording that requires the least amount of time but is valuable in that it “identifies the elements on a panel and establishes control for the photography and further panel recording” (Loendorf 2001:63).

After locating all of the painted elements associated with a panel, the next step is to move back and away from the panel to gain a suitable perspective for drawing. The distance from which a proper perspective can be gained varies and is dependent on the complexity, number, size, scale, context and positioning of painted elements within the panel. The most important aspect of producing a usable field sketch is to ensure that the perspective encompasses the entire panel at a scale that does not obscure the context and relationship of the individual characters to one another. Basic dimensions of the panel elements and their relationships can be acquired using a tape-measure. Transferring these measurements to a scaled drawing on graph paper will produce a fairly accurate rendition of the site.

The most important elements to be drawn in a field sketch are the painted figures and motifs themselves, any obvious geological features of the rock face, the surface of the ground or that of the water (the latter is most often the case in Shield rock art sites), and any distinctive, encroaching vegetation. When recording more complex pictograph panels (in terms of the number and proximity of figures to one another) where it is not possible to create an accurate small-scale depiction of all of the characters in detail, it sometimes becomes necessary to produce a field sketch that implements a logical but arbitrary motif/character labelling system.

Consistency is key when assigning image provenience to a site overview sketch, especially if the sketch is to be employed as a diagram of the panel’s distributional properties. To simplify the process, I chose a single geometric shape or other type of symmetrical symbol to represent individual figures or clusters of related characters. Opting for this method provided the same contextual information without being subjective. On the other hand, if an overview sketch will be used as a referential index to which other recorded media is to be linked, then it is worthwhile to devise labelling that will facilitate both the needs of a provenience map and that of a reference system.

3.6.3 Contextual Scale Drawings

Creating detailed scale drawings should logically follow as the next step in producing accurate visual facsimiles of rock art panels. Due to time limitations over the course of my field research, this step was not conducted for all of the panels that were visited. Rather, I focused on completing detailed tracings and capturing digital photographs. It is advisable to complete this step if recording a single panel and time allows for it; however, transparent film tracings offer the most accurate and complete copies of paintings, producing a duplicate image on 1:1 scale. Because emphasis was placed on digital imagery and tracings for my field research only a brief overview of the process of creating scale drawings will be discussed at this point.

Producing scale drawings of rock art panels with the ultimate goal of acquiring an accurate visual reproduction requires patience and an awareness to detail. Employing basic drafting methods using standard graph paper or similar grid medium with metric scale properties, alongside the use of tape measures and rulers, can produce a reasonably accurate drawing (Loendorf 2001). Offering even more controlled precision is the additional use of line levels, plumb lines, grid frames and established datum reference points. If time allows for it, this latter method is advisable as it makes use of skills commonly held by field archaeologists who are acquainted with recording stratigraphic profiles.

The first step in ensuring scale consistency is establishing a fixed datum reference point from which all other measurements will be made. The ideal positioning for this fixed reference node is central to the panel and immediately beneath the painting. If possible recording the geographic coordinates from this point should be made with a GPS utilizing a Wide Area Augmentation System (WAAS) so that the accuracy rating is within one metre. Measurements regarding the location of the datum as it is situated in context to the panel itself are necessary. To establish lateral boundaries, distances are measured from the reference point along the horizontal axis to the edges of the outer painted elements. Vertical control requires measuring distances from the reference point downwards to the ground or water surface, and then again from the reference upwards to the edge of the highest placed painted element. Once this fixed reference point has been

established, then measured contextual drawings can be completed in single point provenience.

Further precision can be obtained by setting up linear reference points that provide for a control on both the horizontal and vertical axes. This can be accomplished through the use of a string and line level strung between two points along the horizontal axis (ensuring that there is no danger of adversely affecting the panel in any way) and hanging plumb line(s) to form the vertical axes. Setting up such a controlled system allows for accurate drawings to be made in two-point provenience. Additionally, leaving the string reference lines in place during photography can be valuable as a means of orthorectification during digital enhancement.

3.6.4 Tracings

The next recording method utilizes a number of the same procedures for completing scale drawings. Representing the most accurate form of freehand recording methods, tracing allows for a one-to-one ratio in duplicating panel elements and contextual positioning. The method was initially implemented by Selwyn Dewdney who used water-soaked rice paper and artist's chalk. This procedure, although very progressive at the time, was eventually replaced by methods that reduced both the level of direct contact with rock art panels and the risk of pigment contamination. The method most accepted today, and the method that I employed in my recording activities, uses a transparent plastic film on which ink tracings can be made. Devised by Tim Jones, this method utilizes transparent cellulose-type plastic film (cellophane) and felt tipped ink markers (Steinbring et al. 1969).

The immediate advantage of using a cellophane sheet is that it is totally transparent as well as inexpensive. However, some noted disadvantages are the limited width of the medium (usually requiring that more than one sheet be taped together), the effect of temperature warping, physical stretching and ink transfer (Steinbring et al. 1969). I found that these issues can be overcome with a little care in handling, storage and the use of quick dry, smudge-free permanent markers. Steinbring (1998:128) has also noted that the trace chemicals from the sheets themselves may pose a preservation risk, but at this point this has not been determined.

The actual method I employed in producing tracings involved placing the sheets of transparent film directly over top the paintings and securing them to the panels using a non-toxic tape and then completing the tracings with ink. After noting the context to water, outlining scale and drawing the line level on the lower portions of the sheets, the figures were then added. It was essential that I paid close attention to lighting conditions so that the work was done when the clarity was best. Working slowly and paying attention to detail ensured accuracy and prevented mistakenly adding or distorting elements. Much like the levels of drawing, the procedure started off outlining the main characters and motifs and then led to progressively adding in the details of colouring and hue. The finishing touches of tracing included drawing encroaching lichens, mineral depositions, breaks and cracks in the rock face and any post-production modifications (Loendorf 2001:64).

After the tracings are completed, proper storage conditions are of immediate concern as heat from the sun can warp the film or make it easier to stretch through handling. Following the instructions of Dr. Meyer, I found that placing them between large sheets of paper and then carefully rolling them up ensured proper insulation and stasis of dimension. These rolls were then placed inside a container that further protected the tracings from physical damage, providing insulation and minimal exposure to light.

3.6.5 Photographic Recording

Photography has revolutionized rock art research to a degree that it has almost come to be regarded as the definitive solution to recording pictograph sites. Previous rock art researchers did indeed place a lot of significance on using photographic methods but they soon came to also realize its limitations (Whitley 2001). The physical characteristics of rock art panels within the shield represented a problem, especially for black and white photographic recording. Due to the fact that many panels make use of rock faces that are already of a grey hue or that of a similar neutral earth tone, and that many of the paintings exhibit faded pigments, capturing accurate detailed images was a very difficult process. Wainwright et. al. (1988:2) has noted that red ochre paint often has a low inherent subject contrast with that of the underlying rock surface, thus making black-and-white photographic recording of painted panels very difficult. Understanding that film recording has its limitations, the need for coupling photographs with other types of data

was immediately apparent. Even into the modern era of rock art research, with its multitude of high technology image-capturing devices, the need to extract data from many sources to gain a better understanding of the whole site is still widely accepted as the standard approach.

Capturing the landscapes, sites, panels and individual painted elements through a photographic record comprised the last method I used in recording the Reindeer Lake panels. Over the course of the last three decades or so, an emphasis towards developing and using photographic methods for recording rock art has resulted in a multitude of scientific, high technology methods for image recording and analysis. Examples of only some of these methods are the use of polarized light, infrared film, color-specific lens filters, black & white/colour superimposition, panoramic wide lens photography and stereophotogrammetry. Due to the limited field time available for this project and the lack of funds needed to acquire complex imaging equipment, none of these methods were employed for this research. However, the progressive nature of digital imagery allows many of the same results and effects of the above listed equipment to be achieved by either choosing the right setting on the camera itself or by digital enhancement with the use of image editing software.

Much of the photographic recording methods used in my field research have already been explained somewhat as photography was incorporated into virtually every stage of the recording process. As well, many of the previously outlined procedures that relate to visual recording methods on perspective and view were applied to photography in the exact same instance. For the completion of my field research, I cannot understate the importance of keeping a detailed photo-log that documents image file number, site, view (e.g. NW) and depicted elements. This has been critical for keeping track of the several hundred photographs I obtained.

Digital cameras operated by both Dr. Meyer and myself were used to capture a multitude of images. These were chosen over the use of their film equivalents for a number of reasons. Digital cameras are inexpensive, compact and have the ability to produce high quality still and video images. The variability of digital picture modes within a single device made it easier to explore new avenues without requiring additional equipment. Using large capacity digital media photo cards allowed for several hundred

photographs to be taken and immediately viewed without having to wait for film to be processed or incurring the large cost of developing. Digital cameras made it easier to deal with variable lighting conditions through the simple step of choosing the correct mode setting. And, finally, digital media allows for easy transport, exchange, and storage of information as well as facilitates digital enhancements through the use of image editing software.

To maintain a consistency of form, as well as to ensure that the photographic recording was conducted with the same degree of rigour used in the other forms of graphic reproduction, I again utilized a layered approach for photographing the sites. Careful attention was paid to capturing images of panels from numerous angles, perspectives and distances. Beginning with the broadest perspective, landscape shots were taken on approaching a panel location and again on leaving. Mid-range distance shots proved to be a good supplement to both landscape shots and site overview photographs. Closer in proximity to the panel, site overview shots were completed and these varied in size and scope from site to site.

In consideration of the importance of landscape to rock art panel placement, I undertook to capture numerous images that represented the surrounding environment in its entirety. Photographing perspectives from a distance that included the natural borders of the lake surface and the skyline established the overall landscape context which I was later able to use as an important reference of scale and setting. At closer proximity to the panel, I employed panoramic photography in order to create a photo mosaic. The resulting images have allowed me to examine the physical elements of the landscape in greater detail while still maintaining the properties of scale.

Capturing panel overview shots comprised the next logical step in this multi-layered photographic recording process. Panel overview shots were taken by moving as close to the panels as possible while still capturing all of the painted elements in a single frame. Whenever it became possible, shots were taken that included a measuring tape as indicator of scale. Some of the sites exhibit panels that stretch across a wide area, making it difficult to complete a panel overview shot without obscuring the painted figures themselves. To account for this, a series of photographs were taken in sequence to form a

panoramic shot. By using the digital camera's photo stitch function, these panoramic shots were easily incorporated into a single detailed picture.

Following completion of the panel overview shots, the next stage was to photograph those individual depicted elements that represented the subject matter of the paintings. Ensuring that scale was represented within the shots, photos showing the measurements of each figure along both the "x" and "y" axes were captured. These measurements were further documented in the field notes to serve as both a reference document and as a paper backup. Additionally, for the individual recording of each painted figure, the measurement from the water surface or established reference point to that of the figure itself was also noted. While every single element was photographed individually in this way, figures that were meant to be observed together were further photographed as groupings or subsets of the entire panel. After capturing all of the digital images, I made sure to employ the proper steps in storage, curation, and distribution of the digital data. Many of these photographs I printed as tangible, hard copies to be used as reference materials for further site analysis, while the electronic files and folders were transferred to recordable media and appropriately curated. As a last measure, any of the data saved to computer hard drives are maintained and backed up periodically.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

The evolution of methods used in rock art recording has seen many varied and creative techniques, especially within the last forty years or so. Some of these methods have been phased out due to the risks they pose to the preservation of the pictographs, while others have been replaced by systems that achieve the same results more efficiently. Forming the basis of my methodology for this project are several of the most basic, tried-and-true methods of recording pictographs that have been in use from the very beginnings of rock art research. A traditional method like tracings combined with the new technology of digital imaging has allowed me to record the rock art panels of southern Reindeer Lake in detail. Subsequent chapters of this thesis will detail the results of these recording methods.

CHAPTER 4: ROCK ART SITES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of detailed descriptions of each of the seven pictograph sites that were visited during the 2006 research trip to Reindeer Lake. I have chosen to order the descriptions of each of these sites based on their geographic positioning. They are described in the order that they may be encountered when travelling from south to north for each portion of the lake whether they are located along the main channel as with the sites HcMt-4 and HcMt-6 or within one of the three main bays (Figure 4.1). This ordering is in no way indicative of site significance nor does it reflect a research preference or bias. The order in which the site descriptions follow is: the Thunderbird Bay Site (HcMt-4), the Reindeer Lake Creek Mouth Site (HcMt-6), the Stackhouse Bay Site (HdMt-1), the Creswell Bay Site (HdMt-2), the Numabin Bay Site (HdMs-3), the Long Tree Site (HdMs-2), and the Fox Island Site (HdMs-1).

The way in which I have chosen to illustrate each site follows a consistent formula that begins with a general description of locale and moves towards categorized sub-sets of data that present increasingly detailed information and concludes with a textual narrative of each individual painted element. For the most part, all of the data that are relayed here represents a text-based approach for presenting quantifiable empirical information, with the possible exception of descriptive terms that liken motif shapes to various unrelated real world objects used to help the reader with a mental image of that being described. Since ‘a picture speaks a thousand words,’ photographic images are also provided as necessary.

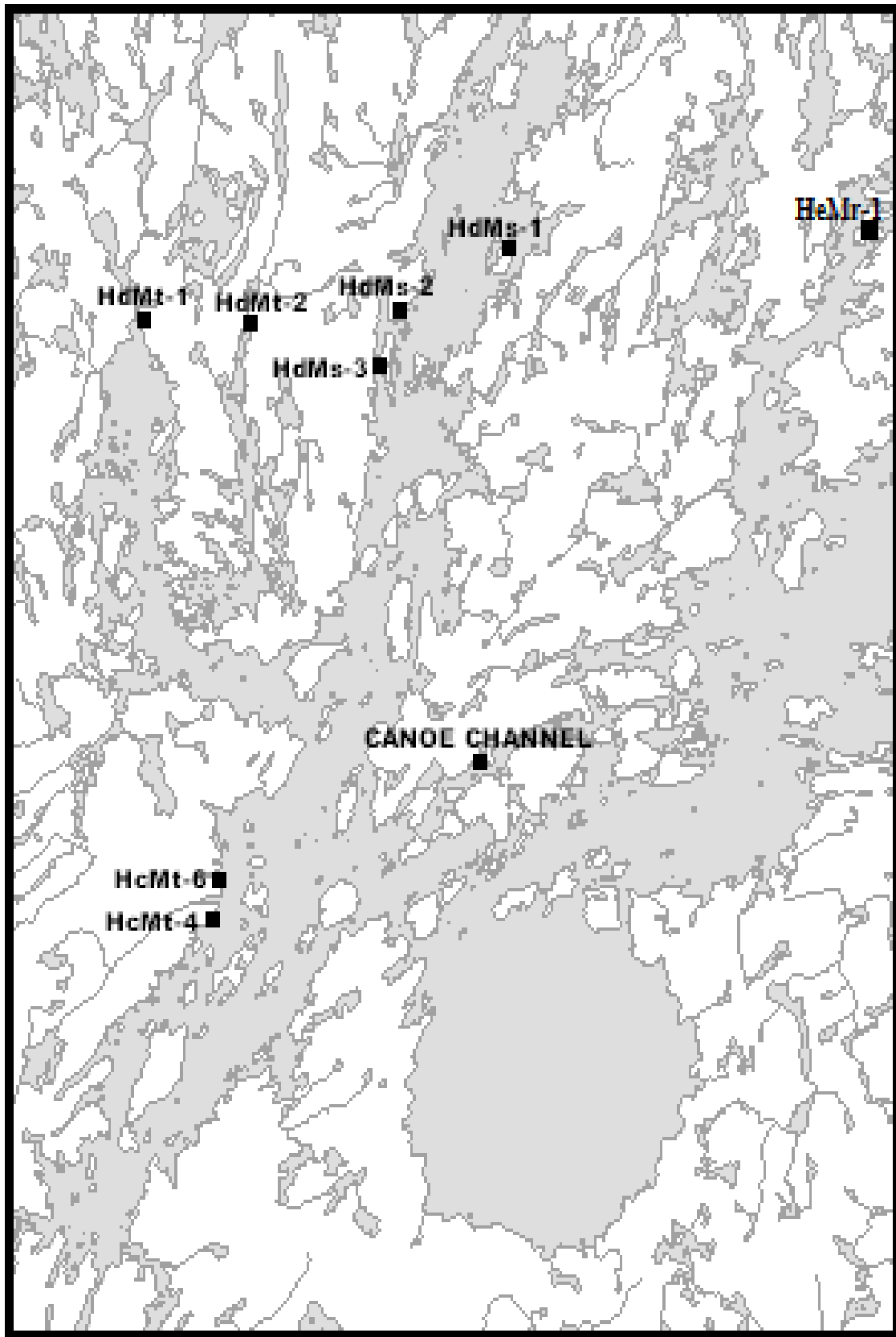


Figure 4.1: Map of southern Reindeer Lake showing the locations of known pictographs.

4.2 Pictograph Site Descriptions

4.2.1 Thunderbird Bay Site (HcMt-4)

4.2.1.1 Notes on Collected Data

The painted panel at HcMt-4 is one of the most visually complex rock art panels found in the region. The immediate area in which this panel is situated is the location to a second rock art occurrence in the form of a lichenoglyph. This lichenoglyph has been created upon a rock face at a significantly higher elevation than that of its painted neighbor. This carved lichen image is quite large in dimension. Owing to the density of the black lichen covering the rock from which this relief image has been created and its stark contrast from the exposed light coloured rock underneath, this lichenoglyph can be viewed from quite a distance. What is depicted in this lichenoglyph is the Algonquian spirit being “Thunderbird” (Figure 4.2). This Thunderbird image is also responsible for HcMt-4 site’s namesake, *Thunderbird Bay*.



Figure 4.2: The Thunderbird Bay lichenoglyph (courtesy of Tim Jones, 1963).

4.2.1.2 Site Location and Access

The Thunderbird Bay site is the southernmost rock art panel on Reindeer Lake (Figure 4.1). This panel is located on the western shoreline of Numabin Bay approximately 12 km north-by-northeast of the village of Southend and approximately 350m south of the mouth of "Masinahikan" Creek (Meyer 1995:80). It was examined by Tim Jones in 1965 and visited by Meyer in 1983 and in the 1990s (Meyer and Frey 1994:75; Meyer 1995:80).

4.2.1.3 Geographic Coordinates

NAD27: 13V 610886E 6256345N

NAD83: 13V 610843E 6256565N

LAT/LONG (NAD27): 56° 26' 26.01"N 103° 12' 05.33"W

4.2.1.4 Landscape

The surrounding landscape at the Thunderbird Bay Site is typical of Precambrian Shield Boreal forest lacustrine environments. Bedrock outcrops dominate this area so that the majority of shorelines are represented by steeply inclined rock faces that extend upwards from beneath the lake water surface. Many of these rock faces have formed elevated benches or shelves at their vertical termination point, allowing for some soil development to take place. On these flatter areas, vegetation is abundant and, where possible, trees (predominantly coniferous) have taken root.

4.2.1.5 Panel Context

This panel is situated on a rock face on the north side of a small bay that opens to the east. This cliff face extends upwards from beneath the water surface to reach a height of approximately 5m above water surface and terminates as an elevated, treed shelf (Figure 4.3). The painting was partially inundated at the time of recording and thus extended vertically from the water surface.

4.2.1.6 Geo-spatial Context

Orientation

The panel itself and the cliff it adorns faces a general southerly direction and a line of sight bearing of north-by-northwest. A magnetic north compass azimuth bearing of 318° was recorded as the orientation of the rock face and further translated as a north compass bearing of 42° west of north.



Figure 4.3: The landscape setting of the Thunderbird Bay site (P. Blomquist July, 2006).

Face Tilt Angle

Extending from the water surface, this rock face exhibits a tilt that slopes outward towards the lake creating a slight overhang. Measured with a protractor, this rock face has a measured face tilt angle of 104° .

Context to Water

Directly in association to the water, the bottom portions of this panel were submerged at the time of our 2006 examination (Figure 4.4). Extending upwards from the surface water, the maximum height reached by a painted element was recorded as 82cm. It was further noted that a flat horizontal bench of rock was visible beneath the surface of water at a depth of approximately 2m. The latter bench was above water when Meyer and Frey (1994:75) visited this site in 1993 (Figure 4.5).



Figure 4.4: Partially submerged panel at the Thunderbird Bay site (Blomquist July 2006)

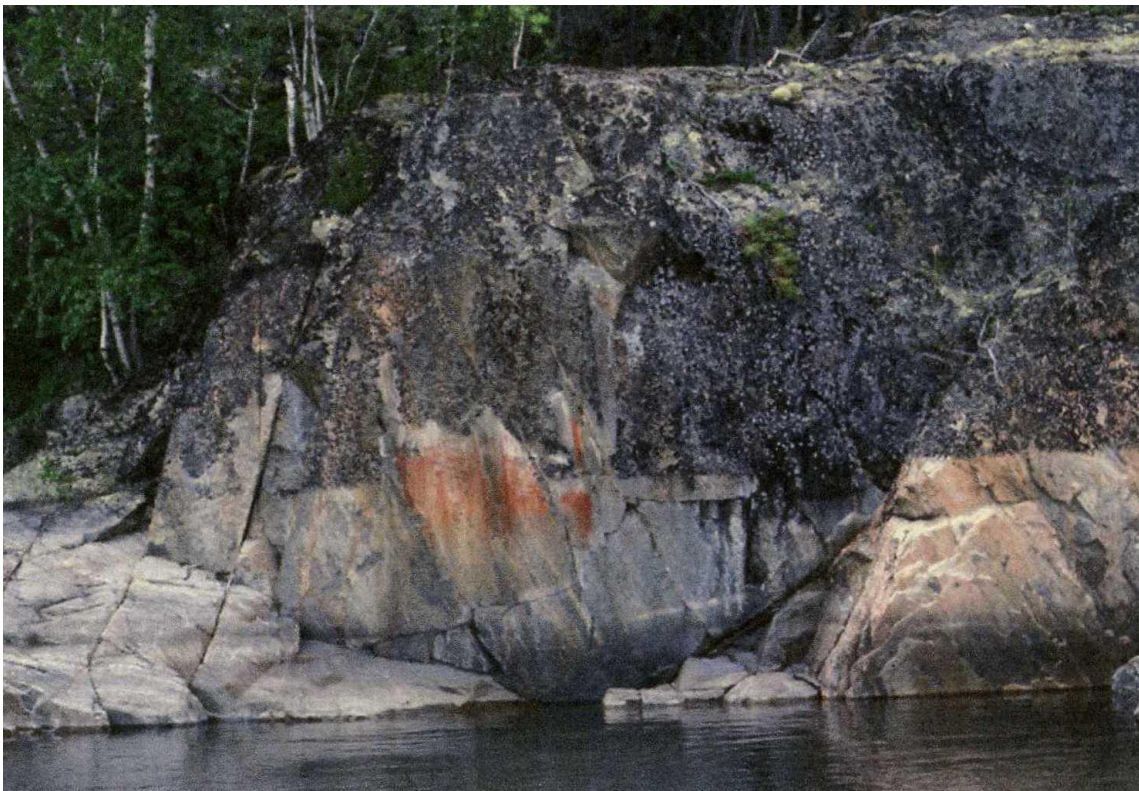


Figure 4.5: Thunderbird Bay site at low lake level (courtesy of David Meyer, 1993).

4.2.1.7 Panel Properties

Elemental Exposure

Owing to the slight overhang tilt of the rock face this panel has been, at least in part, sheltered from certain elements. As this panel is south facing, it is exposed to sunlight throughout the year. The tilt of this rock face does little to prevent direct exposure from the sun, but does provide a small amount of protection from precipitation (rain and snow), animal droppings and rock exfoliation events from above.

Condition and Preservation

Overall, this panel has exhibited quite good preservation. Kept free of lichen by high water levels, ice scouring and obvious human intervention, this panel is remarkably noticeable. The distinctive red-coloured paint over the off-white color of the rock beneath allows this panel to be seen from quite a distance away. Although some fading was observed, it has happened in a way that is consistent for the whole painting. Some figures are better defined than others, but this likely relates to their significance within the painting and that they were created to stand out from the lesser elements. Even those elements that are now submerged show a consistent degree of clarity. Unfortunately, this panel also shows evidence of a fairly recent, intentionally destructive act. A single shotgun blast has obliterated a small portion of the painting, central to the panel itself. Distinct pellet imprints within a tight grouping would indicate a shot taken from fairly close range (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6: Shotgun blast damage at the Thunderbird Bay site (P. Blomquist July, 2006).

4.2.1.8 Painting Properties



Figure 4.7: Reproduction of tracings at the Thunderbird Bay site.

This panel presents a painting that is largely ceremonial in nature and thus contains many significant elements that are complex and symbolic. All of the painted elements at this site were done in ochre of a deep red hue. The prepared pigment was likely applied using a finger, as evidenced by the approximate finger width outlines of the elements and tally marks. Depictions include two distinct and opposable walled enclosures, housing an anthropomorphic figure within each and centrally separated by an obviously intentional divide containing power lines and tally marks or tracks. Lattice structures are well defined within the left of the two enclosure motifs. A consistent, systematic sequence of at least 30 circular (solid dot) tally marks organized in two rows, one atop the other, have been placed above the top (horizontal) wall of the left enclosure. A single row of at least three round tally marks are visible above the top wall of the right sided enclosure and a set of three similar tally marks are visible at the “top” entrance to the divide that separates the enclosures. Further motifs are represented by a large indistinct smudge to the right of the right enclosure, with a large possibly horned serpent rendering directly above that (Figure 4.7). Other than some tally marks, those elements that have become submerged had proven to be more difficult in attempts to distinguish a recognizable pattern or shape.

4.2.2 The Reindeer Lake Creek Mouth Site (HcMt-6)

4.2.2.1 Site Location and Access

The Reindeer Lake Creek Mouth Site is located in close proximity to the Thunderbird Bay Site. Situated approximately 790m north of the latter and exhibiting a similar positioning, HcMt-6 is 13km north-by-northeast of the village of Southend (Figure 4.1). This panel is located on the western mainland shoreline of Numabin Bay and approximately 300m north of the mouth of Masinahikan Creek.

4.2.2.2 Geographic Coordinates

NAD27: 13V 610989E 6257142N

NAD83: 13V 610941E 6257360N

LAT/LONG (NAD27): 56° 26' 51.69"N 103° 11' 58.10"W

4.2.2.3 Landscape

The landscape in the immediate vicinity of the Reindeer Lake Creek Mouth Site is a prime example of the topography that characterizes this region of the Canadian Shield. The same glacial activities responsible for carving out the bedrock exposures in this region are also responsible for depositing the sediments which form the sandy beaches that are found in the area. The landscape that surrounds the panel at HcMt-6 is representative of both geographical types. The panel is located within a small, sheltered, crescent-shaped bay that opens to the lake towards the east (Figure 4.8). Bordering the bay on the north and south sides are elevated uplands composed of shield bedrock exposures. These exposures make for a rocky cliff-like shoreline on both sides of the bay. The western (and furthest inland) shore is a relatively flat lowland with a sandy beach that extends into the lake, thus providing the bay with a sandy bottom.



Figure 4.8: Site HcMt-6 landscape setting (P. Blomquist July, 2006).

4.2.2.4 Panel Context

This panel is situated on the north side of the bay on a rock cliff exposure that faces towards the south. In contrast to the other panels of the Reindeer Lake area, this panel has been placed on an elevated rock face that requires a short but treacherous upward climb in order to be reached. Extending upwards from the lake surface, the rock wall exposure has been formed as a series of steps that follow natural fault planes within the rock. These elevated benches exhibit a successive altitude gain with each step. Directly beneath the panel, one of these steps has created a narrow ledge that must be carefully navigated and which undoubtedly served as the surface on which the author of the panel stood to create the painting. With each successive step upwards and above the panel, these benches widen, providing benches that are able to support a variety of vegetation and trees (Figures 4.9, 4.10).



Figure 4.9: Succession of benches at site HcMt-6 (P. Blomquist July, 2006).

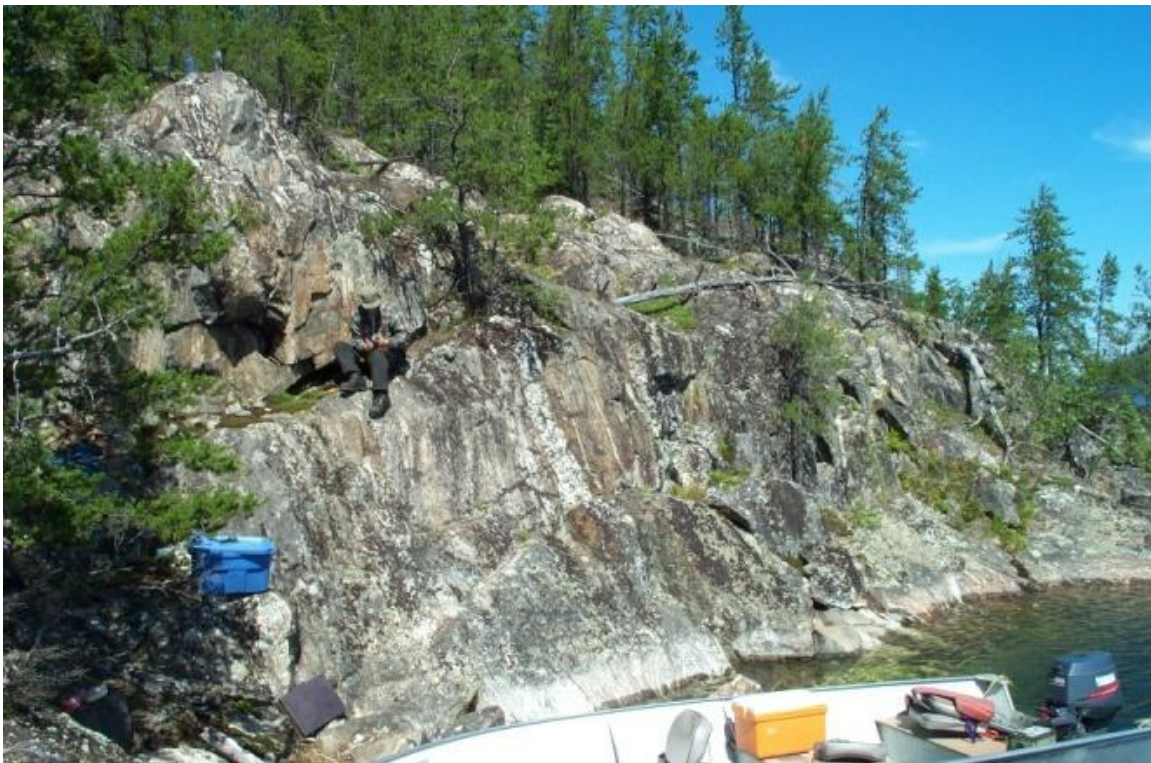


Figure 4.10: Succession of benches reverse view, site HcMt-6 (P. Blomquist July, 2006).

4.2.2.5 Geo-spatial Context

Orientation

The cliff face exposure that holds the panel is oriented in a southerly direction and has an obverse line of site bearing almost directly north. A magnetic north compass azimuth bearing of 346° was recorded as the mean orientation of the rock face and further translated as a north compass bearing of 14° west of north.

Face Tilt Angle

Extending from the lake water surface, the rock face initially inclines inland. This inclination terminates as it reaches the first of the elevated benches. Moving upwards from the first fault-plane bench, the sequential steps and their corresponding rock faces show a reversed mode whereby the inclines now move outwards from the cliff as they gain height. The rock face that houses the panel exhibits this outward inclination and shows an even more dramatic angle of overhang due to exfoliation of the cliff along the underlying fracture plane directly beneath the panel. The mean outward angle of tilt for this panel was measured as 78° on the protractor.

Context to Water

Although this panel is set on a cliff that is in direct association with the water, it stands out as different from the rest of the panels found on Reindeer Lake because of its greater elevation above the lake's surface. In 2006, measuring 415 cm from the lake water surface to the bottom edge of the lowermost motif, this painting represents the highest elevated panel within the Reindeer Lake rock art sites. Thus, it contrasts with the context of the rest of the sites, which are located within approximately 2.5m of the lake surface.

4.2.2.6 Panel Properties

Elemental Exposure

This panel's orientation of almost directly south, coupled with its unsheltered exposure to the elements, has led it to become significantly faded. The fact that total pigment fading from direct sunlight exposure has not occurred is perhaps owing to the outward tilt of this rock face. Mineral oxide staining covering much of the surface of this panel is evidence of seepage water running down and over the painting. This seepage has produced a slight mineral patina that has also served to preserve the painted elements.

Condition and Preservation

Overall, this painting is in a state of poor preservation. The effects of its placement upon an outwardly inclined and fractured overhang, as well as being exposed to the elements, have played a negative role in its preservation. The effects of gravity on the overhang, coupled with ice and frost build-ups on the fracture-plane ledge has caused significant damage to this panel in the form of multiple exfoliation events. Portions of the rock face have collapsed carrying with it pieces of painted rock (Figure 4.11).

Fortunately, a search immediately beneath the panel at the foot of the cliff and near the water's edge resulted in locating several of the missing pieces. The panel was thus temporarily reconstructed as we manipulated the puzzle-like pieces back into their original locations for the purpose of photographic recording, measuring and tracing (Figure 4.12). Unfortunately, not all of the missing pieces were located, and one of the four characters was therefore missing entirely. Luckily, this panel had been previously recorded and sketched by Tim Jones in 1963. These image sketches, along with our piecing together of this panel, afforded us the opportunity to make contextual observations on the panel as a whole.



Figure 4.11: Fractured panel at site HcMt-6 (P. Blomquist July, 2006).



Figure 4.12: Reconstructing the fractured panel at site HcMt-6 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.2.7 Painting Properties

This panel was originally composed of four individual characters painted in red ochre. Tim Jones' 1963 panel sketch provides an accurate record of these four characters in their original positioning (Figure 4.13).

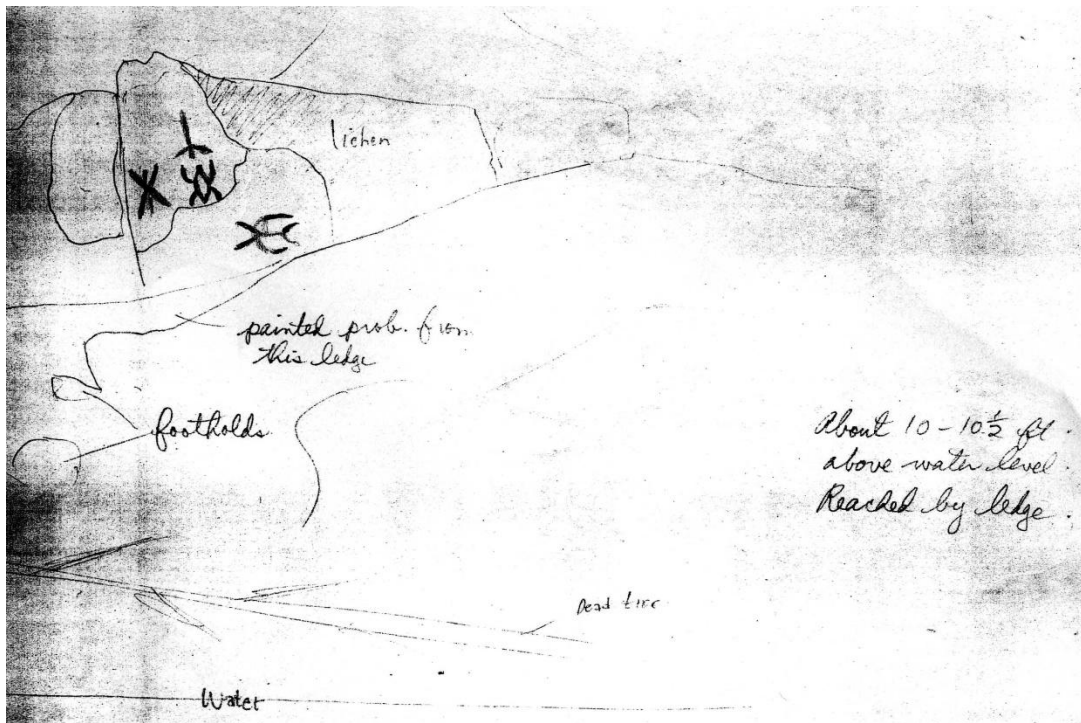


Figure 4.13: Tim Jones' sketch of the HcMt-6 panel, (S.A.R.R. form, 1963).

The once brilliant red ochre pigment that was used for creating the images has faded dramatically and now exhibits an advanced level of fading resulting in a hue that is a rusty orange in colour. This faded rusty orange colour results in poor visibility as the rock face that the panel is situated upon has natural iron oxide stains that are very close in color and tone to that of the applied pigment. These four images were grouped fairly close together and covered only a small area of the cliff face measuring approximately 45 cm in width and 73 cm in height.

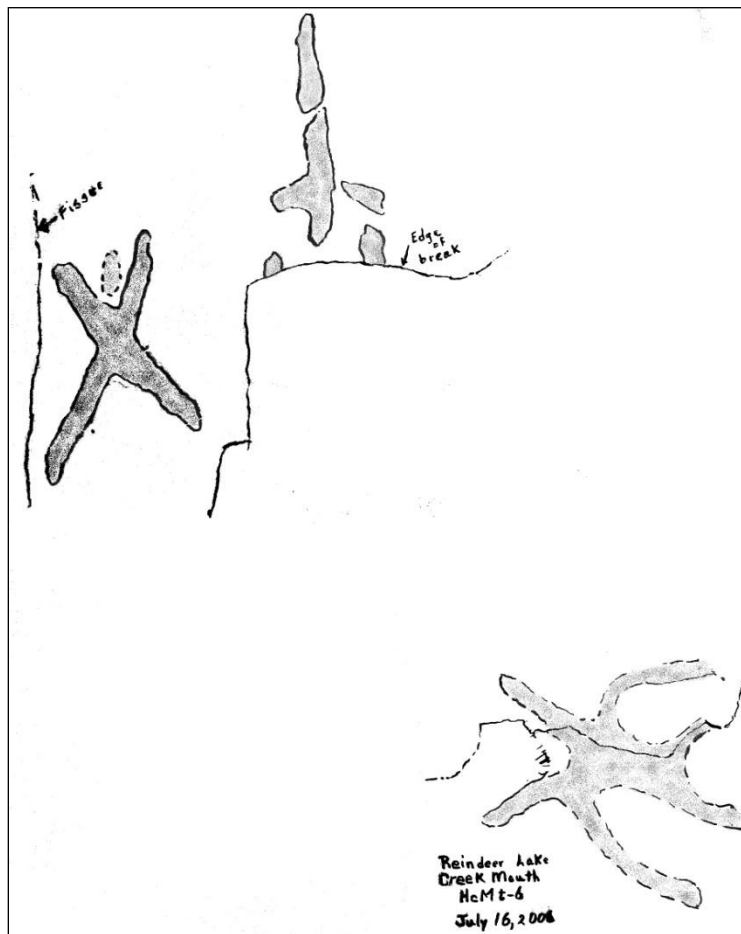


Figure 4.14: Reproduction of paintings at site HcMt-6 (Blomquist July 2006).

The first and topmost figure is a stick-form painting composed of a central vertically oriented line with two short, downward slanting projections on either side. The central vertical line measures 18 cm, the bottom of which has a short (4 cm), left pointing downward slanting projection. Measured from the top of the line downwards at 12 cm, and to either side exist a pair (one per side of the line) of downward slanting and outward projecting fringes. These projections showed a measured length of 6 cm (Figure 4.15).



Figure 4.15: Winged line figure at site HcMt-6 (Blomquist July 2006).

Immediately beneath the first character is where the second image would have been originally located. Only a small portion of the top parts of this image was left intact and exist as two short, robust vertical slashes approximately 10 cm apart and directly beneath each of the wing projections of the first figure. The left of these short thick extensions measures 1.5cm long, the right being slightly longer at 3 cm. Referencing Tim

Jones's detailed sketch-maps (Figure 4.13), this element resembles a four legged insect or beetle and the ends of the upper two legs compose that part of the image which is left intact on the cliff face. This four legged creature image has an oblong, oval shape for a "body" which has been drawn in line form, leaving its mid-section unfilled. At the top of this oval shape resides a small conical projection which likely represents a head. Extending outwards from either of the lateral edges of the oval shaped body is one pair of arching, upward projecting legs and a similar set of bottom, downward arching legs.

A third character in this panel's set of images has been placed to the second character's immediate left, with a separating distance of approximately 5 cm. This third character has a simply drawn composition that resembles the letter "X" with a dot set floating above the apex and immediately central between the upper outward flaring extensions. This "X" shaped figure resembles a crude depiction of a humanoid, whereby the extensions of the "X" represent arms and legs and the dot above the apex could be seen as the head. This "X"-man has a measured width of 16 cm and a height of 27 cm (Figure 4.16).



Figure 4.16: "X"-shaped figure at site HcMt-6 (Blomquist July 2006).

The lowermost of these four figures, set approximately 20 cm below and slightly to the right of the beetle-like image, represents the most complex and obscure of the four characters. Obtaining accurate measurements was made difficult as this lowermost image had to be pieced back together from several exfoliated rock pieces. A general measurement of approximately 20 cm was observed as this figure's width and 17-18 cm for a height. This image is difficult to describe, but the general impression is that it resembles a horned humanoid that was drawn sideways. This humanoid, or perhaps anthropomorphic figure, consists of a general, elongated "X" shaped body with long, over-extending, and arching arm-like projections. Depending upon which side of the image represents the proximal or superior portion, this horned figure could be seen in either an "arms-raised" pose or, conversely, in the "arms-down" posture. The figure has been obscured too much from the fading and fracturing damage to determine which side is "up" so to speak (Figures 4.17-4.18).



Figure 4.17: Sideways horned humanoid figure at site HcMt-6 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.18: Completing the tracing of the sideways horned figure at site HcMt-6 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.3 The Stackhouse Bay Site (HdMt-1)

4.2.3.1 Site Location and Access

HdMt-1 is located in Stackhouse Bay approximately 31 km north by northwest of the village of Southend (Figure 4.1). The panel is located at the north end of Stackhouse Bay within the narrows that leads north towards Southesk Lake. At this location, which must be reached by boat, the panel is directly adjacent to the surface waters of the lake and has been created on a vertical rock face that rises skyward from under the water.

4.3.2.2 Geographic Coordinates

NAD27: 13V 604939E 6275402N

NAD83: 13V 604890E 6275632N

LAT/LONG (NAD27): 56° 36' 47.01"N 103° 17' 24.70"W

4.3.3.3 Landscape

The landscape within the immediate area of HdMt-1 is characterized by sheer rock walls typically associated with lake narrow settings in the Precambrian Shield

region. The narrows, which run roughly north and south from the northern end of Stackhouse Bay form a constricted water passage only 90m across. They are bordered on both the west and east by areas of lowland and rolling hills. The painted panel has been placed on the east side of the narrows on a cliff face that rises upwards from beneath the surface of the water to a height of approximately 7m. Natural fracture planes within the rock faces have been widened and shifted over the millennia, creating a step-like sequence of elevated benches upon which vegetation and trees have taken hold. As no true ground surface to the shoreline exists at this area, the panel can only be accessed via water-craft or during winter on the ice (Figures 4.19-4.20).

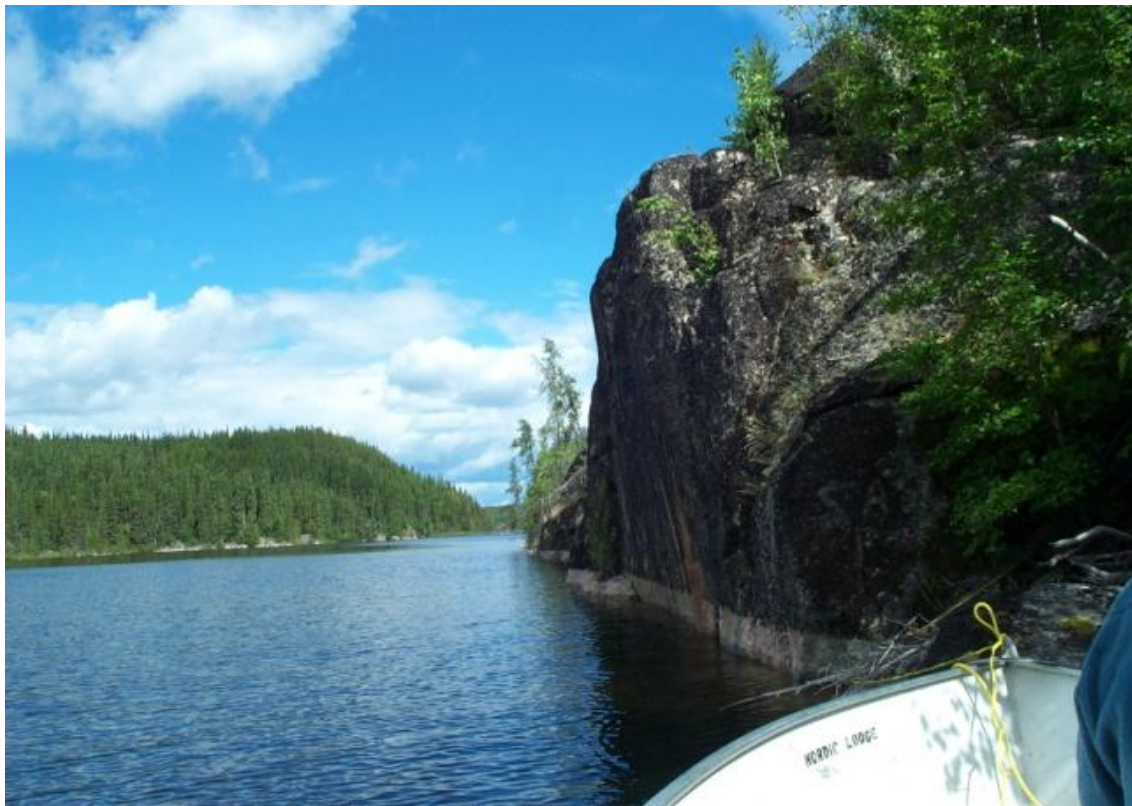


Figure 4.19: View north of the sheer cliff wall at site HdMt-1 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.3.4 Panel Context

Positioned in direct association to the lake water surface, this panel is remarkably visible from a distance. Adding to its level of visibility, the rock face that holds this panel is an off-white color and thus provides a good contrasting backdrop. Owing to the raised lake water levels resulting from the construction of the Whitesand Dam, the panel is now partially inundated. The lake levels at the time of this survey were at a point that the panel was bisected by the water. At historic, pre-Whitesand Dam lake levels, this panel

would have been at least 1.5m above the surface of the water. Waters in this narrows are remarkably calm owing to their distant proximity from the waves of the main body of Stackhouse Bay. This calmness sets the precedent for viewing those experiential phenomena discussed in chapter three of this thesis as it had been related to me by Elder Larry Clarke, who noted that this area's water is usually mirror-like in appearance (Figure 4.20).



Figure 4.20: Reflective calm waters at Site HdMt-1 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.3.5 Geo-spatial Context

Orientation

The rock wall that this panel has been placed upon faces almost directly west. Magnetic north compass readings show the specific orientation as having an azimuth bearing of 280° and a north compass bearing of 80° west of north.

Face Tilt Angle

The rock face that this panel is placed upon extends upwards from beneath the water surface at an obtuse angle that shows a consistent lean forward. Calculated with a protractor, the outward tilt angle was measured at 85°. This angle of overhang, although slight, has definitely contributed to the overall preservation of this panel.

Context to Water

This panel has a context showing a direct relation to that of the lake water surface. As already stated, at the time of this survey the paintings were in direct contact with the waters of the bay. This water level effectively bisected the panel causing the lower portions of the panel to be completely submerged (Figure 4.21). As photographed by Meyer in 1993 (Figure 4.22), there is a rock ledge approximately 1.5 meters beneath the paintings that may have provided a dry, level surface from which an artist was able to work. The setting of this site is such that access can be obtained only through the use of watercraft or by crossing over the ice during winter. Given this panel's placement within a narrows that connects small inland lakes and tributaries to Reindeer Lake, it is likely that this location was on a well-used travel route.



Figure 4.21: Site HdMt-1(Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.22: Site HdMt-1 (photograph courtesy of David Meyer, 1993).

4.2.3.6 Panel Properties

Elemental Exposure

The placement of this panel within the landscape shows a number of factors that limit its exposure to the elements. The fact that the rock wall it is placed on faces almost directly west means that it only receives minimal exposure to sunlight. Additionally, the expansive cliff walls that enclose much of the narrows provide a measure of shade and reduce exposure to the sun's radiation even further. Placement within this narrow passage also serves to limit the amount of damage that can be incurred by the strong winds known to the region. The slight overhang of the cliff face affords some protection from falling overhead debris, acidic bird droppings and precipitation. It also contributes to the overall sheltering of the panel from sunlight.

Condition and Preservation

By and large, this panel demonstrates a good level of preservation. Although there is evidence of some pigment fading, the panel shows minimal degradation due in large part to the factors noted above. Even those painted motifs that were submerged at the time of our visit showed very little sign of being damaged by inundation. Associated recently placed lichen carving-type graffiti aside, there appears to be no sign of intentional defacement of this panel. The black lichen adhering to the rock face has been repeatedly removed to expose the paintings but impacts from such maintenance activities appear insubstantial. Ambiguity of painted elements arises out of red ochre smudging and from the superimposition of paintings (Figure 4.23).



Figure 4.23: Site HdMt-1 (photograph courtesy of David Meyer, 1993).

4.2.3.7 Painting Properties

Spanning a distance of approximately one-and-a-half meters, this panel has two distinct parts. The first of these, represented by a single motif, can be described as generally resembling a triangular tent shape. Composed of a series of at least six

connected projections emanating from a central anchor point downwards, these lines can be seen as representing tent poles. Placed atop the nexus of “poles” is a short vertical line with an attached box shape that resembles a flag (Figures 4.24 and 4.25). The second part of this panel is more complex in that it is comprised of several individual related characters. Within this concentration are representations of animals, mythical beings, anthropomorphs, human figures and manned watercraft. Adding to the complexity of this grouping are pigment smudges that overlay the entire grouping as well as elements that have been superimposed over top one another (Figure 4.26). The presence of several motifs that show a relation to ceremonialism, alongside pigment smudging that has been proven to signify spiritual significance makes the case for this panel being largely ceremonial in subject.



Figure 4.24: Flagged tent-like motif at site HdMt-1 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.25: Site HdMt-1 (photograph courtesy of David Meyer, 1993).



Figure 4.26: Site HdMt-1 (photograph courtesy of SaskPower, 1993).

4.2.4 The Creswell Bay Site (HdMt-2)

4.2.4.1 Notes on Collected Data

HdMt-2 had been rigorously recorded by Meyer in 1995. During the 1995 trip, he documented much of the pertinent empirical data, captured several digital images and completed a detailed tracing of the panel. Out of time considerations, and avoiding redundant data, much of our visit to this panel in 2006 consisted of photographic documentation complemented with notes on basic observations and brief sketch mapping.

4.2.4.2 Site Location and Access

HdMt-2 is located at the north end of Creswell Bay, also on the west side of Reindeer Lake (Figure 4.1). This bay lies directly between Stackhouse and Numabin bays and is similarly oriented with a north/south axis. The overland distance between sites HdMt-1 and HdMt-2 is just 4.25 kilometres. The Creswell Bay site has a geographical context very similar to that of HdMt-1. Positioned upon a high, sheer, rock cliff that comprises the eastern shore of this bay, this panel requires either the use of watercraft or over-ice travel to be accessed (Figure 4.27).



Figure 4.27: View southeast of site HdMt-2 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.4.3 Geographic Coordinates

NAD27: 13V 609160E 6275614N

NAD83: 13V 609129E 6275826N

LAT/LONG (NAD27): 56° 36' 50.40"N 103° 13' 16.93"W

4.2.4.4 Landscape

The landscape in the immediate vicinity of this site is characterized by elevated rocky uplands that comprises the eastern shoreline. In contrast to Stackhouse Bay to the west, this bay remains consistently narrow throughout. Spanning just over 200m in width from shore to shore at the northern end of this bay, the landscape is dominated by the sheer cliff face on the eastern side (Figure 4.28).

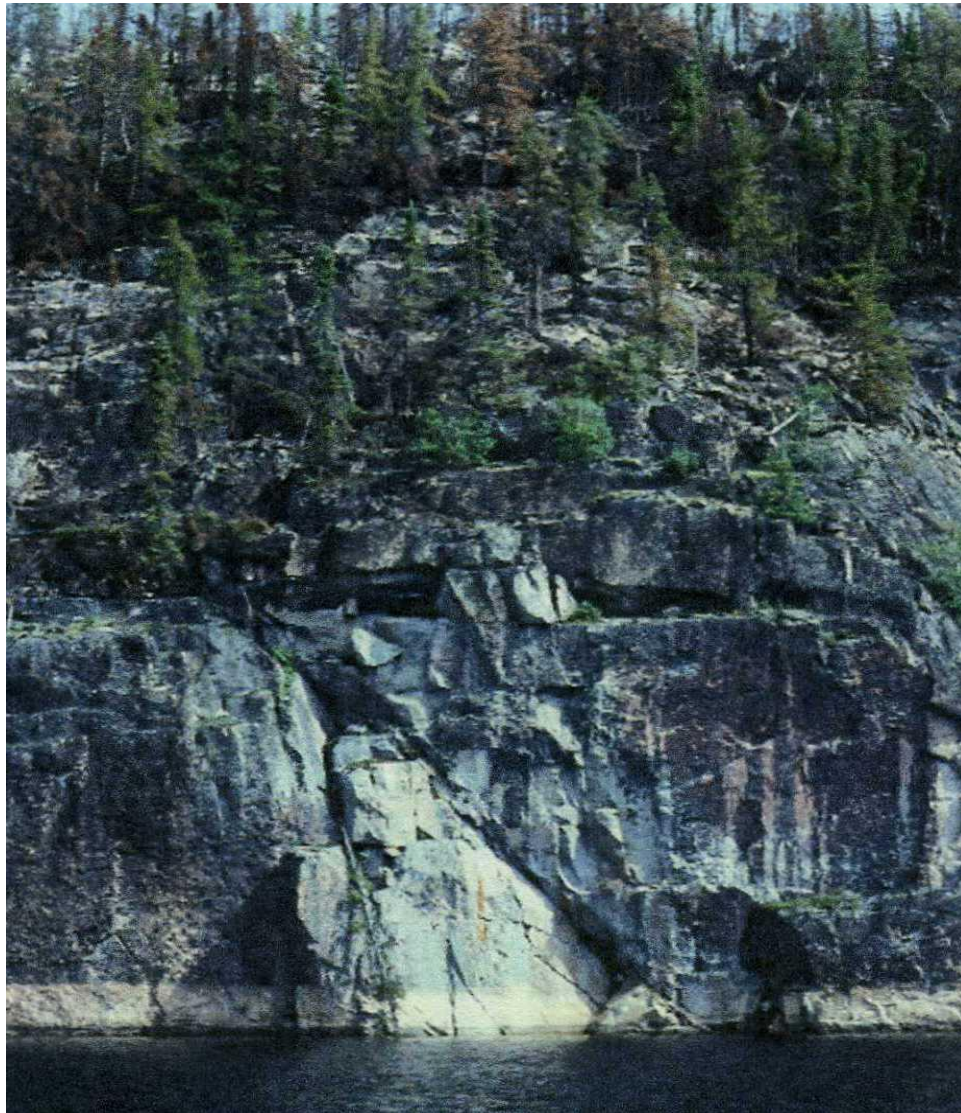


Figure 4.28: Site HdMt-2 (Photograph courtesy of David Meyer, 1995).

Rising to an ultimate elevation of 382m above sea-level, this cliff face measures over 35m in height from the surface waters of the bay. The higher elevation, vertical drop of the rock face, and consistency of this angle create a landscape quite different from that surrounding the other panels in this region (Figure 4.29). Due to the elevated nature of the cliff face that this panel is located on, those geological characteristics seen at the other sites are not readily visible within immediate proximity of the panel or adjacent water surface. Rather, such elements are found on the higher reaches above the cliff face where fractures are more prevalent and taper off, forming treed plateaus. Due to the physical geological properties of the rock forming this cliff face, lateral running fracture planes are less prevalent at the water's edge, thereby removing the step-like vegetated benches seen at some other sites. The few fractures that do occur, however, show a steep slanting trend that produces surfaces unsuitable for larger vegetation. It is noteworthy that one of these larger slanting fractures is immediately adjacent to the panel, extending from beneath the water surface and rising upwards to well above the panel. Frequently, rock art panels in the Shield Region are intentionally placed near such openings into the rock and, in some cases, the fractures are actually incorporated into the painting itself.



Figure 4.29: Site HdMt-2 landscape (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.4.5 Panel Context

This panel has been placed in direct association with the lake surface. Much the same contextually as the panel at Stackhouse Bay, the paintings at HdMt-2 were partially submerged in 2006, with the water surface bisecting the width of the panel. The lichen-free, off-white coloured area providing the backdrop to the panel allows for high visibility of the red images. While many panels found along waterways in the Shield region have shown evidence of human intervention in the way of scraping away encroaching lichen, unique physical properties have made such activities at this site unnecessary for the most part. Due in part to the fairly recent introduction of new rock as a result of exfoliation, coupled with the resulting angle of orientation that serves to both limit sunlight and provide a hospitable trough from which ground water seepage accumulates and drains, the normal build-up of black lichen are not present.

4.2.4.6 Geo-spatial Context

Orientation

The cliff face that this panel is situated upon is oriented in a west by south-west direction. Magnetic north azimuth bearing show a reading of 275° and a north compass bearing of 85° west of north.

Face Tilt Angle

Although much of the surrounding cliff face exhibits a predominant forward tilt, the portion of the face occupied by this panel shows a slight reversal of angle so that it tilts inward. This contrasting angle of tilt is undoubtedly the result of the cliff face exfoliation event noted above.

Context to Water

This panel is directly associated with the water of this bay. The rock face that the panel resides upon extends from beneath the water surface upwards to a significant height. Gaining access to this panel requires either the use of watercraft or visitation during the winter on the ice. As no visible ledge was apparent beneath the surface of the water directly under the panel, it is very likely that this painting was done while standing within a canoe or other type of watercraft. At historic lake water levels, this painting would have been at least 1.5m above the lake's surface. At the time of our 2006 visit, the water level was such that half of the panel was inundated. Dr. Meyer noted in 1995 that

the measured height distance between the water surface and that of the “bear” motif’s back feet was 115 cm. By stark contrast, increased water levels during our visit in 2006 placed the water surface 1.5-2 cm above the back feet of the bear motif.

4.2.4.7 Panel Properties

Elemental Exposure

Many of the same parameters regarding elemental exposure exist at this panel as those found at HdMt-1. Westward orientation reduces exposure to sunlight, the height of the cliffs overhead provides a measure of shelter from falling debris, and the slight inward inclination of the face may also possibly help protect the panel from wind borne damage. Many of these panels were created by a person standing on a canoe or ledge just above the water surface, placing the resulting panel at approximately 1.5m above the lake surface. Unfortunately, the increase in water levels of upwards of 2m places these panels in a position that increases their chance of being negatively impacted from repeated inundation and ice scouring.

Condition and Preservation

Although this panel undergoes frequent periods of partial inundation, it has fared quite well. Lack of public knowledge of the site has aided in its preservation and thus it shows no effects of human, post-production modifications. All of the red ochre figures and motifs are still apparent and exhibit very few effects of negative impacts. Although some pigment fading has occurred, the contrast between the colour of the underlying rock face and that of the painted images themselves serves to enhance their overall visibility. At least some of the level of preservation is owed to the by-products borne out of the fairly recent exposure of new rock. Mineral rich seepage emanating out of fractures in the rock from above are evidenced by areas of film-like staining that cover several portions of this rock face. Such patina building washes may have aided in holding this painting in a level of stasis. Kept free of encroaching lichen by similar water outwash processes, the only significant elements obscuring the panel are small, but noticeable chalky white lines demarcating water/ice levels.

4.2.4.8 Painting Properties

Spanning an area of just under 1m in width, the painted elements are oriented in a horizontal and linear fashion. Composed of a sequence of elements, this panel portrays

(not in this order) an implement-wielding human figure, a four-legged animal, two sets of four vertically extended dots, two stacked amorphous smudges and two short horizontal lines, placed one over the other (Figure 4.30). Previous investigations of this site revealed a community interpretation of the humanoid and animal motifs as representative of a man hunting a bear (Figure 4.31, 4.32). Intentional lateral sequencing of tally marks interspersed between the remaining characters adjacent to the bear and man may represent a record of events relating to the time of the depicted hunt. The lack of any painted elements known to be associated with spiritual subjects alongside the intentional, systematic sequencing of the remaining generic/utilitarian motifs suggests that this panel is a depiction of recorded events (e.g. a bear hunting trip), or possibly a form of utilitarian hunting magic.



Figure 4.30: Complete panel at site HdMt-2 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.31: Humanoid and bear at site HdMt-2 (Blomquist July 2006).

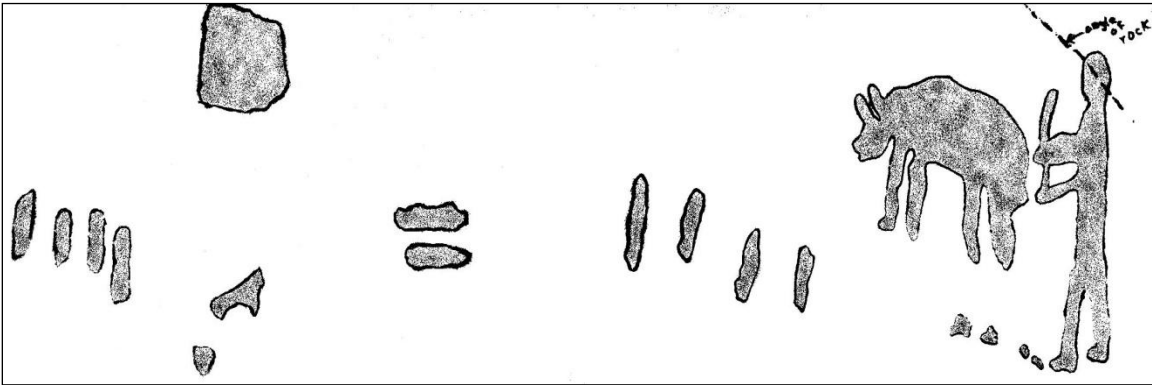


Figure 4.32: Reproduction of tracing from site HdMt-2 (Tracing by David Meyer, 1995).

4.2.5 The Numabin Bay Site (HdMs-3)

4.2.5.1 Notes on Site Recording

HdMs-3 had been rigorously recorded by Dr. Meyer and companions in 1995. During the 1995 trip, he documented much of the pertinent empirical data, captured several digital images and completed a detailed tracing of the main portions of the panel. Out of time considerations, and to avoid redundant data, much of our visit to this panel in 2006 consisted of photographic documentation complemented with notes on basic observations and brief sketch mapping. However, approximately 2m to the right (southward) of the main painted motifs, there is an additional set of paintings badly faded and in a generally poor state of preservation (Meyer 1996:6). It was decided that since this set was not traced during the 1995 trip it was prudent to do so for the sake of preservation.

4.2.5.2 Site Location and Access

HdMs-3 is located in Numabin Bay approximately 32 km north of the village of Southend (Figure 4.1). This is one of the largest bays on Reindeer Lake and it stretches approximately 45 km from the village of Southend to its northern terminus. Numabin Bay is home to five separate rock art sites. HdMs-3 represents the third of these five sites moving from south to north and is located approximately two-thirds of the way up the distance of the bay on an island near the western side of the bay. As identified by Elder Clarke, this island is known as “High Point Island.” The paintings are located on the island’s western side and are situated upon a vertically sheer rock outcropping that faces a southwesterly direction. At this location there are two separate groupings of painted images which have been designated as “north group” and “south group.” Consistent with all of the other rock art sites in the area, these two sets of paintings are in direct context to the surface of the lake. The location of the site on an island means that access can only be gained via watercraft or by winter ice.

The rock face that bears the paintings extends upwards from beneath the surface of the water and reached a height of approximately 2.5m above the 2006 water level. At the time of this visit, the water level was such that the main painted portions of the panels were essentially halved by the water-line. This 2006 water level was in marked contrast from the levels noted during David Meyer’s 1995 trip to the site when the water was

approximately 130 cm lower. This low water level fortunately enabled the group to observe and stand on a rock ledge that is situated directly beneath the panel (Figure 4.33). This ledge undoubtedly served as a platform from which the artist(s) completed the paintings.



Figure 4.33: Rock ledge exposed at low water, site HdMs-3 (courtesy of D. Meyer 1995).

4.2.5.3 Geographic Coordinates

NAD27: 13V 614199E 6275477N

NAD83: 13V 614150E 6275695N

LAT/LONG (NAD27): 56° 36' 41.64"N 103° 08' 21.74"W

4.2.5.4 Landscape

Comprised of rocky upland shorelines, exposed bedrock islands and interspersed low-lying muskegs, the landscape within the vicinity of HdMs-3 is typical of pre-Cambrian shield lake environments (Figure 4.34). As one of the larger north/south-oriented bays to be found on Reindeer Lake, the mean width of this bay from east to west is approximately 3 km. In contrast to the eastern mainland shoreline which is characterized by numerous in-flow channels, clusters of small obstructing islands, and irregularly shaped inlets and twisting bays, the western shoreline of this bay tends to be

straighter and more consistent in shape and form. This landscape consistency makes the western shoreline the most logical course to take when travelling through this bay.

The island upon which this rock art site is located is situated close to the western shoreline. The island itself is long and narrow and is approximately 2 km in length from north to south. Elevated, sheer, bedrock cliff faces characterize the northern half of the island where the maximum height at its pinnacle reaches 45 m above the lake level. This northern elevation is in contrast to the island's southern half which is generally low-lying with minimal cliff face exposure. Vegetation is for the most part restricted to the raised plateaus that are above and set-back from the exposed cliff faces along the shoreline and consists mainly of hardy softwood species like jackpine and other conifers.

Midway along the long (north/south) axis, the island bows outward towards the west creating a narrow channel between the island and the mainland. This narrows extends northward for roughly 500m and has an average width 100m. At historic water levels, this channel would have undoubtedly been even narrower. Following the most logical route along the western shoreline of the bay, travelers would be effectively funneled through this narrow passage, thus allowing the rock art panel that is situated at the northern end of the narrows to be easily viewed.



Figure 4.34: View southeast of shoreline at site HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.5.5 Panel Context

This rock art has been created in an area that allows for it to be openly observed and viewed by anyone who may pass by. Appropriately placed at one of two entry-way locations to this narrows, it is likely that at one time this location was very well known to the peoples who inhabited and travelled the area frequently. The fact that there are two distinct sets of images that are physically separated by a small fissure in the cliff face, with one well defined and the other faded and less obvious, would indicate that there were at least two separate occasions on which pictographs were created at this location. The obvious and well-defined north set likely represents a more recent event while the southern set, faded almost to the point of being unrecognizable, would suggest an earlier occurrence. These two temporally distinct sets of paintings provide subtle verification of how long this narrows has been used as a travel route.

These two sets of paintings have been placed in direct association with the water surface. Positioned within a narrows, where calm waters are more frequently encountered, this is an ideal location for their creation, viewing and for perhaps witnessing their dynamic visual effects upon the water surface. The off-white colour of the rock surface provides an effective backdrop upon which the paintings could be executed and observed. Kept free of encroaching, black lichen growth either through natural means or by human intervention, the contrast between the bright red colour of the hematite pigment and that of the neutral tone of the rock face ensured that these images could be seen easily by passers-by. Placement on a cliff face that angles slightly inward as it extends downward, and that is also oriented in a westerly direction, means that for much of the day these images are in the shadow. Not until the mid- to late-afternoon are these paintings illuminated by the sun's rays. Effectively cut in half, the top portions of this panel have been partially obscured by encroaching black lichen; the bottom portions, residing just below the high water line, have been kept clean by inundation and the effects of ice scouring.

4.2.5.6 Geo-spatial Context

Orientation

The cliff face that these paintings have been placed on faces the western shoreline of Numabin Bay in a general west-by-southwest direction. Magnetic north compass

readings show the specific orientation as having an azimuth bearing of 300° and a north compass bearing of 60° east of north.

Face Tilt Angle

The rock face that these two sets of paintings have been placed on exhibits a near right angle. This angle measured 88 - 89° on a sliding protractor. This almost perfect right angle has played a significant role in the preservation of the paintings by offering shelter from sunlight, providing a surface that is inhospitable to snow and ice buildup, and forming an incline amenable to efficient water runoff.

Context to Water

This panel is directly associated with the waters of Numabin Bay. At the 2006 water levels, the distance from the lake surface to the high water mark where the black lichen has not been scraped was 30 cm. At historic lake water levels, the submerged rock ledge that exists approximately 1.5m below the paintings would almost always have been exposed and dry, thus providing for a convenient platform from which artists and visitors alike could interact with the panel (Figure 4.33). The presence of this platform makes it unlikely that these images were painted by someone in a canoe. These images have been placed in an area that ensures acknowledgement from passing visitors travelling the bay. It was undoubtedly the intention of the artist to use this waterway as a tool through which the painted message could be thoroughly impressed upon any observers. Placed in such a location, the sets of images at this site could be regarded in the same way as modern highway route signs or roadside billboard advertisements whereby placement within strategic locations guarantees recognition. If the message conveyed through the painted imagery is felt to be so important that it demands acknowledgement from all who pass, then placement within an open, public and well-known traveling route such as this narrows is the logical choice.

4.2.5.7 Panel Properties

Elemental Exposure

The general westward orientation of this panel effectively allows for a reduction in the amount of time that these paintings are affected by direct sunlight exposure. The height of the cliffs that the paintings have been created on, alongside the general elevation afforded by the topography of this island, has played a role in protecting the

paintings from continued exposure to damaging ultra-violet radiation. The location is sheltered for the first part of the day, while the west-by-south-west orientation permits direct illumination of the panel in the afternoon. It is noteworthy that the two sets of paintings can be observed fairly easily while shaded but that during the afternoon the faded set of images all but disappears.

Water-borne vulnerabilities are primarily seen in the form of contact erosion. Modern water levels are such that portions of this panel are almost continually submerged. Indeed, at time of visit, the panel itself was effectively bisected. The panel is situated at the mouth of a constriction of the natural waterway where any water movement resulting from fluctuating lake levels is swifter and stronger, thereby increasing the amount of damage that could be incurred by any passing floating debris; this also is the case for ice movement.

The effects of wind exposure are at once both beneficial and damaging. The fact that the cliff that the panel resides on forms one side of a narrows that has a north-south axis means that the passageway would be host to wind forces similar to those encountered in a wind tunnel. While this wind force may increase the chance of mechanical weathering of the panel through the bombardment of wind-borne particles, it would also serve to produce continuous wave action, thus not allowing the ever encroaching black lichen to take hold for very long.

The near-vertical angle of the rock face has also played a small role in limiting exposure to potentially damaging forces. The very slight outward lean of the cliff face provides a small measure of protection from the sun. This near-right angle also allows for effective water drainage, reducing the amount of time overall that run-off is in contact with the painted surfaces. Moreover, this sharp angle does not allow for either snow or ice to build up and contribute to mechanical weathering (i.e. frost fracturing).

Condition and Preservation

Increased exposure to human activity as well as potentially harmful environmental conditions has affected this rock art site surprisingly very little. As has been noted, the two sets of pictographs, however, shows a difference in state of preservation. The north set is immediately recognizable as a rock art site from some distance off (Figure 4.35), while the south set remains almost invisible until you are

directly before it and actively searching for the images. The north set's painted characters are brighter, more defined, and exhibit a very apparent purposeful pigment application.



Figure 4.35: Visible north set of pictographs at site HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).

It was necessary in 2006 to record the south set of pictographs in detail as they are so faded and obscured that they are hardly recognizable (Figures 4.36-4.37). Indeed, even with close-up examination through tracing, it was difficult to make out definitive shapes to each individual character. A step back from the wall, the individual faded elements become hard to distinguish, while from only slightly further away, those elements quickly resemble nothing more than amorphous, ambiguous smudges of faded pigment. Given the increased contact with those damaging elements that result from fairly recent human activities, it is likely that this south set of faded pictographs will be lost entirely within this century. The dissimilar states of preservation between the two sets of pictographs arise not only because of their differing ages of antiquity, but also because the applied pigments are different chemically. The color and texture of the pigments lend insight as to their chemical properties. The faded south set exhibit a pigment that is of a lighter hue than that of the north set. Where the north set is a characteristic deep red colour with orange undertones, the south set exhibits a tone that is more closely akin to pink or vermillion in color. This may speak to the chemical or mineral properties of the hematite

used in the artwork (perhaps a different FeO₂ source altogether) or it could also reflect a difference in paint preparation, heat treatment, amount of binding agent, lack of binding agent, type of binding agent, or even method of application. While the north set remains clear, vibrant and strong, the south set will likely continue to degrade at a more rapid rate.



Figure 4.36: Faded south set images, HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.37: South set images being traced, HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.5.8 Painting Properties

Two sets of paintings exist at this location spanning a total horizontal distance of approximately 3.6m. Both sets of paintings have been created using red-ochre pigment, the color of which differs slightly between the two sets. Referred to as the “north set” or the “south set,” a distance of 198 cm separates these two groupings. The south set is so poorly preserved that only two very ambiguous painted elements are visible. Although we examined and recorded both sets of paintings in detail, only the southern set was traced in 2006 (Figure 4.38) since, as noted previously, David Meyer completed detailed tracings of the north set in 1995. This was fortunate as the water levels during the 2006 visit were such that half of the images composing the set were submerged. This submersion made recording some aspects of the artwork difficult, thus many of the observations on empirical data discussed here have been supplemented and quantified using the information gathered in the course of the 1995 research trip.

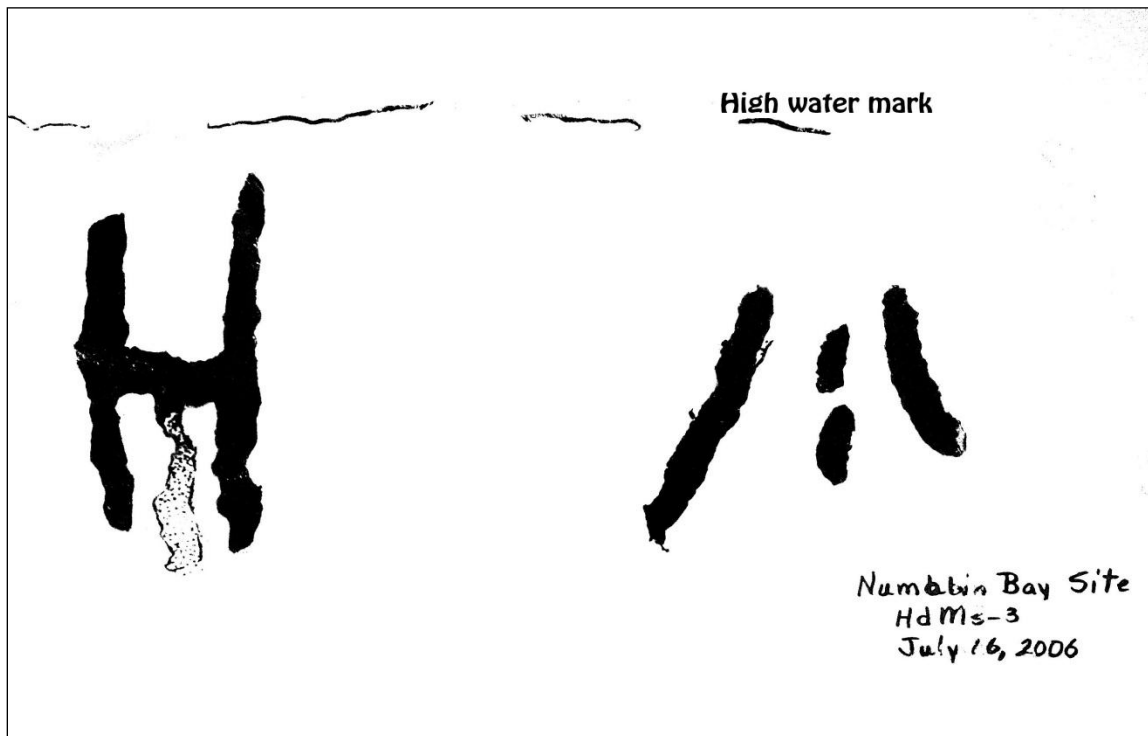


Figure 4.38: Reproduction of south set tracing, HdMs-3.

The north set, the larger and more complex of the two sets of artwork, is characterized by a mixture of related and recognizable elements (Meyer 1996:6-11). This set of images has been arranged in two separate clusters of related characters (Figure

4.39). Beginning with the cluster of images furthest north and moving southwards (or to the right), the first element is a slightly faded depiction of a large bird undoubtedly representing the legendary character Thunderbird (Figure 4.40). The head of the Thunderbird is partially obscured, but prominent “feathered” wings and the torso of the character are still quite discernable. There is a slight break between the upper and lower portions of the Thunderbird’s torso resulting from faded pigment. The lower portion of the torso reveals both of Thunderbird’s legs with two toes or perhaps talons and a single slanted line projecting down and outwards from either side of the legs that may represent tail feathers. Directly beneath this image of thunderbird there is a design resembling a single individual within a canoe (completely submerged in 2006).

To the immediate right of both the thunderbird and canoe elements is a large solid, rectangular shape with a slightly rounded loop attached to its topside. Surrounding this shape on both sides and the bottom are a series of single short painted strokes which are thought to represent fringes. Observed in its entirety, the object resembles a fringed



Figure 4.39: Site HdMs-3 north set (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.40: Digitally enhanced - “Thunderbird” depiction within the north set at site HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).

medicine bag (Figure 4.41 and 4.42). To the fringed bag’s immediate right is a faded and indecipherable element represented as a slanted, oblong “smudge” approximately eight cm in length. Forty-nine cm above and to the right of the looped, fringed bag is another ambiguous smudge with slight projections which at one time may have represented legs of a quadruped. The second cluster of the north set, approximately 60 cm to the right is composed of five separate interrelated elements (Figure 4.43).



Figure 4.41: Digitally enhanced - Fringed medicine bag from first cluster of the north set at site HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.42: Digitally enhanced - Fringed bag during low water at HdMs-3 (courtesy of D. Meyer 1995).



Figure 4.43: Combined elements of the second cluster from the north set, HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).

Furthest to the left, a very faded image with a shape resembling an inverted “V,” likely comprised the bottom portion or legs of a stick figure that has faded into obscurity. Moving further to the right is an image that is rectangular in shape with projections from each of the four corners and with short round knobs at either end of the long axis. Painted so that the long axis is slightly askew, the projections extending from the top two corners are longer than those on the bottom and are curvilinear in form. At first glance, this element resembles a two-headed turtle; however, this character is likely a representation of either a thunderbird or some other type of anthropomorphic being. To the right of this character is a depiction of two beings in direct relationship to each other. One is a humanoid in an “arms-raised” pose and linked via a single painted stroke that connects one of the three fingers of the upraised hand directly to one of the legs of a quadruped poised immediately above. The lower portion of the humanoid figure was submerged during the 2006 visit, but the legs and tail/phallus were still observable. Approximately six cm to the right of the humanoid is a depiction of an elongated, torpedo-shaped, four-legged animal. Stretched out along the vertical axis, the image resembles an upended log shape with four downward slanting projections (two per side) on either side and a slightly

flattened bottom tail extension. Although seemingly very simple in design, this motif is a remarkably accurate depiction of an otter and is recognizable as such. Ten centimeters above this otter painting is a depiction of another quadruped shown in profile which has unfortunately been partially obscured by encroaching lichens and their chemical weathering agents.

The smaller and more endangered set of artwork, the south set, has a relatively simple design arrangement. Consisting of just two painted elements, the south set is represented by a trianguloid, tent pole-like motif and what resembles a three-legged letter “H” (Meyer 1996:6). Moving from north to south or left to right, the “H”-like motif is 198 cm from the edge of the closest element of the north set (otter). This three-legged “H” image was positioned just above the water line during the 2006 visit (approximately 10 cm). The width of this shape measured approximately 10 cm, with a vertical height of 19-20 cm. The third “leg” of the “H” was extended from a mid-point beneath the horizontal bar connecting the sides of the “H” and extended downwards slightly further than either of the two sides. Situated 15 cm to the right is the last element of the south set and of the entire panel. Badly faded, all that is recognizable of this character is a generally triangular shape consisting of three slanting lines, two outer on either side slanting in towards a common nexus and a third, midway between the two outer lines and extending upwards towards the apex.

With the ambiguous faded images aside, those motifs that are still recognizable as all relate to a common theme of ceremonialism (Meyer 1996:10-11). Three separate elements point to a central theme of medicine: the fringed medicine bag, the otter, also commonly depicted as referencing otter-skin medicine bags, and the humanoid poised in the arms-raised (receiving medicine) stance. Further ceremonial imagery can also be seen in the presence of both anthropomorphic entities and depictions of the legendary spirit “Thunderbird.”

4.2.6 The Long Tree Site (HdMs-2)

4.2.6.1 Notes on Collected Data

The Long Tree Site had been previously recorded by Meyer (1996: 11-12) during the 1995 trip. At that time, HdMs-2 was examined and recorded in detail through field observation notes, measurements and sketch maps. Visual record of the site was

completed through multiple photographs. Out of time considerations, tracing was not carried out during the 1995 trip and therefore it was prudent that I complete tracings during the 2006 trip.

4.2.6.2 Site Location and Access

HdMs-2 is also located in Numabin Bay, and is approximately 34 km north of the village of Southend (Figure 4.1). This panel is located along the western mainland shoreline and is just over 2 km north by northeast of HdMs-3. Located on a huge boulder that sits directly on the edge of the shoreline in a terrain that is fairly flat, it can be seen from a remarkable distance. Facing the southwest is a group of vertically-aligned pictographs. This site is easily accessed during the ice-free months via watercraft and by over-ice travel during winter. This uncharacteristic backdrop for rock art sites in the region, being flat and topographically consistent, would also allow for overland access to the site.

4.2.6.3 Geographic Coordinates

NAD27: 13V 615008E 6277325N

NAD83: 13V 614954E 6277548N

LAT/LONG (NAD27): 56° 37' 40.67"N 103° 07' 31.36"W

4.2.6.4 Landscape

The shoreline within the immediate vicinity of the panel is characterized by a level, wooded topography. This low-lying terrain provides the contrast which allows this boulder and its accompanying panel to be seen from a considerable distance (Figure 4.44). This site's position along a known and well-used canoe travel route, coupled with its high visibility, would suggest that it may have been a travel marker or waypoint of sorts. In contrast to the other rock art settings of the area, this site occupies a location that is free of rugged, imposing cliffs. The boulder itself is a bright off-white colour and this property, when coupled with its immense dimensions, allows for a marked contrast with the deep green backdrop of the densely wooded shoreline in behind the boulder. It is this contrast that draws one's eyes to the location from an impressive distance. The surrounding environment is typical boreal forest with old growth Jackpine, spruce, and a mixture of other bushes and shrubbery.



Figure 4.44: Site HdMs-2 from a distance, view northwest (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.6.5 Panel Context

This rock art has been created within an environment that effectively announces its presence to any passersby. Its abnormally high visibility almost commands visitors to acknowledge its presence. Akin to the contextual properties of HdMs-3, this panel's location has been appropriately chosen for its ability to be openly observed on this well-used travelling corridor. The contrast of colour and tone produced by the dark green of the wooded backdrop, the bright neutral tone of the rock and the definition exhibited by the rich red colour of the red ochre pigment come together to create a beacon of sorts (Figure 4.45). Placement upon this noticeable feature within the landscape was undoubtedly intentional and again may have been utilized as a type of road-sign. Of interesting note, and pointed out to me by David Meyer is that large glacial erratics such as this are known in other similar contexts to be inhabited by the Spirit of the Stone and are therefore spiritually significant in their own right (Personal Communication, April, 2011). The boulder's face is oriented towards the south and this allows for optimal illumination from the sun throughout the day regardless of the season.



Figure 4.45: High visibility of boulder at site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.6.6 Geo-spatial Context

Orientation

The face of this boulder is oriented south-by-southeast and is positioned with a line of sight view of the open waters of Numabin Bay. Magnetic north compass readings place the specific orientation as having an azimuth bearing of 335° and a compass bearing of 25° west of north.

Face Tilt Angle

The face of this boulder has a slight backward tilt so that the plane is directed towards the sky. Measured with a protractor this slope has an inclination showing an obtuse angle reading 94° . The southward orientation of the boulder's face along with this slight tilt skywards has undoubtedly assisted in keeping the painted surface free of the encroaching black lichen.

Context to Water

This panel is in direct association with the surface of the lake. Facing the southwest, in 2006 the lower portions of this boulder were submerged within the lake-water. The boulder's location within a slight inland (westward) curve of the shoreline places it in an area that is more hospitable for witnessing calm waters. Even when

approaching this location when the waters are not perfectly calm, the reflection of this white boulder face and that of the painted panel is remarkable. To view this feature's reflections, effectively doubled during calm waters, would be to observe those traits of spectacular visual phenomenon alluded to in Chapter Three of this thesis.

However, before the advent of the Whitesand Dam, the boulder was well above the lake level (Meyer 1996:12). This placement would then have allowed the artist to create the images while standing on dry ground and, similarly, any observer wishing to interact with the panel could do so without having to remain within watercraft.

4.2.6.7 Panel Properties

Elemental Exposure

This rock art site, perhaps more so than any of the other sites on Reindeer Lake, has been placed in a setting that permits continuous exposure to the elements. While this allows the panel to be easily noticed, these same properties also expose the panel to many possibly damaging elemental effects. As a solitary natural feature exposed on all sides, there are very few things within the immediate vicinity that offer any type of shelter. The flat rocky shoreline immediately to the boulder's rear, while populated with low-lying scrub brush and small deciduous trees, offers very little in the way of shade or shelter that their coniferous counterparts situated further back would afford. Open exposure also allows the boulder to be at the constant mercy of winds and wind borne debris. The obtuse angle of tilt, coupled with a generally southward orientation, means that for much of the day and within any season the pictographs are in direct sunlight and therefore potentially more at risk of fading. This angle of tilt also allows the panel to have more direct contact with rain and snow and possibly permits ice build up.

Condition and Preservation

Given all of the environmental parameters that allow this panel to be overly exposed, the pictographs are surprisingly well-preserved. The hue of the red ochre pigment is still quite vibrant when viewed from a distance. However, upon close-up inspection a definite fading or blurriness was observed. The unique mineralogical composition of this boulder may also have played a role in the paintings' preservation by its regular lamination by leeching silicate minerals washing over the images. The angle of tilt of the boulder's face, oriented almost directly to the sun, has kept the ever

encroaching black lichen with its visual obscuring properties and damaging chemical secretions (St. Clair and Seaward 2004:4) at bay . This boulder face is upwards of 95% free of black lichen, which is due in part to this unique orientation. In the way of human modification, it would seem that the lower portion of the painted images has been the victim of a gunshot. This intentional damage fortunately has been isolated to a very small area and has thus not rendered the element as indecipherable.

4.2.6.8 Painting Properties

This panel is composed of a single set of images arranged in a vertically-stacked downward series and two small, solitary outliers several cm to the main concentration's left (Figure 4.46). The two outliers to the left of the main series were photographed in detail, measured and closely inspected. However, because they are faded to the point of absolute obscurity, they were not included within the tracings although their context to the main concentration was noted.



Figure 4.46: Complete panel at site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).

The main concentration consists of six small interrelated images stacked one-atop-of-the-other (Figure 4.47). This unique vertical arrangement is interesting and likely represents a sequential structure in which the characters are to be “read” in a certain formulaic fashion, either top to bottom or conversely, from the bottom up. Such a series likely points to a sequence of events and is akin to a storyline or timeline. Given the often ambiguous, metaphorical and idiogrammatic nature of Shield rock paintings, it is possible that this particular sequence has numerous meanings depending on which direction they are “read.”

The main concentration covers a small area of the lower portion of the boulder face. It is 75 cm from the top of the uppermost figure down to the bottom of the lowermost figure. The lowermost and widest of the images is 26 cm wide. At the time of the 2006 trip the distance from the bottom of the lowermost image to the water’s surface was 33 cm.



Figure 4.47: Main concentration of elements at site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).

The uppermost character is a “stick-man”-like feature where a definite head, torso, two legs and two extended, arm-like appendages to either side (Figure 4.48). While

resembling a common humanoid form for pictographs of the Shield design, the longer and slightly downward-arching appendages would suggest that these are more likely wings than arms. The fading and blurriness of the image has obscured the possible presence of fringes which usually adorn the wings of depicted birds. Comparative evidence from other Shield pictograph sites, however, suggests that it is likely a Thunderbird as they are frequently shown as the topmost figures in similar panels (Rajnovich 1994:110).



Figure 4.48: Topmost figure at site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).

Directly beneath the top figure is a second image that also has features resembling the common depictions of birds. The third character is represented as a four legged animal and is too obscure to describe any further. Directly beneath this four legged animal character is another larger and equally ambiguous depiction of a quadruped (Figures 4.49-4.51). Next in the series is larger, somewhat crescent shaped smudge that has an upward convex lenticular shape. Immediately beneath this arched smudge is the last of the figures and though partially obscured by blurriness, a depiction of a canoe with at least two occupants can be identified (Figures 4.52-4.53).



Figure 4.49: Quadruped, site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.50: Quadruped, site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.51: Quadruped, site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.52: Arched smudge and manned canoe figures, site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.53: Arched smudge and manned canoe figures with scale, site HdMs-2 (Blomquist July 2006).

Given the presence of a Thunderbird, quadrupeds (possibly game animals) and people within a canoe, it is likely that this panel is connected with hunting activities. The images may relate a story of a legendary hunt, record an actual event related to a memorable hunting experience or very possibly be a form of hunting magic.

4.2.7 The Fox Island Site (HdMs-1)

4.2.7.1 Notes on Collected Data

The Fox Island site had been previously recorded by Dr. David Meyer (1995:79-80) in the summer of 1994 while on a trip to locate and record the elusive Canoe Channel pictograph observed by P.G. Downes (1988:66-67) in the 1930s. While on this trip Dr. Meyer was made aware of the Fox Island (HdMs-1) rock art site by local informants. At this time, initial activities were focused primarily on locating and viewing the pictographs. Notes on observations were made and photographs were taken. The

Government of Saskatchewan's heritage site recording form Saskatchewan Archaeological Resource Record was filed in 1995, documenting the location and site specifics. Dr. Meyer (1996:14-15) returned in the summer of 1995 to HdMs-1, and more detailed notes, measurements and photographs were recorded. Out of time considerations it was decided that the Fox Island pictographs would not be recorded using tracing. In 2006, myself, David Meyer and Elder Clarke once again visited this pictograph site to record the site in detail and to add tracings to the collection of data.

4.2.7.2 Site Location and Access

HdMs-1 is located approximately 37 km north by northeast of the village of Southend and is towards the north end of Numabin Bay (Figure 4.1). This panel is situated on a south facing cliff upon a small island, just northeast of a larger island known as Fox Island. Characterized by intermittent rocky lowland shorelines and towering vertical cliffs, this panel must have been created while working from a canoe as no rock ledge was observed immediately beneath the panel. This site is easily accessed via watercraft during open water seasons and over-ice travel during the winter months.

4.2.7.3 Geographic Coordinates

NAD27: 13V 618467E 6279858N

NAD83: 13V 618418E 6280079N

LAT/LONG (NAD27): 56° 38' 59.45"N 103° 04' 04.33"W

4.2.7.4 Landscape

This site is located on an island along a towering vertical shoreline cliff. This small island is approximately 300m in diameter. The island has a landscape that is typical of boreal forest settings and exhibits a shoreline characterized by intermittent cliffs between stretches of rocky lowland. The central, upland portion of the island supports a dense stand of old growth coniferous trees. The imposing cliff wall that the pictographs have been created upon can be seen from quite a distance and is accentuated by its bright, off-white colour (Figure 4.54). The sheltered waters afforded between this island and that of Fox Island proper would have made this an ideal corridor through which travelers would be able to pass safely. Passing alongside the shelter of these impressive cliffs would ensure that anyone could observe the artwork presented there.



Figure 4.54: South facing cliffs at site HdMs-1 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.7.5 Panel Context

This panel is situated on a rock cliff face on the south side of a small island. The cliff that the panel has been placed upon is quite sheer. Extending upwards from beneath the water's surface, this cliff reaches a vertical height in excess of 6 m. The top of the cliff flattens out and becomes a wooded plateau (Figure 4.55). Placed immediately above the surface waters of the lake, this panel is in direct context with the lake and consists of three separate but related concentrations of pictographs; two lower sets and one that is elevated.



Figure 4.55: Site HdMs-1 Landscape, view north (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.7.6 Geo-spatial Context

Orientation

The cliff face that this panel has been situated upon is oriented roughly south by southeast. Magnetic north compass readings place the specific orientation with an azimuth bearing of 332° and a north compass bearing of 28° west of north.

Face Tilt Angle

The cliff face that this panel adorns shows an obtuse angle of tilt that becomes more pronounced as height increases. Although a consistent obtuse angle of tilt was observed in regards to the entire cliff, it should be noted that due to a rambling array of natural fault and fracture lines within the rock, some portions of the face exhibit an inconsistency of plane. Measured with a protractor, this obtuse angle has a recorded tilt reading of 100°.

Context to Water

As has been noted, these paintings would have been produced by the use of a canoe or other watercraft. At the time of the 2006 trip, the uppermost painted figure measured approximately 2.5m above the lake surface. This fact becomes even more impressive when one considers what the height of the uppermost image must have been at lake levels prior to the Whitesand Dam's 1939 inception. If the average lake level is now approximately 2m higher than the historic level, this would place the topmost image at a height of over 4m above the lake level at the time it was painted.

4.2.7.7 Panel Properties

Elemental Exposure

The rather inconsistent physical characteristics of this rock face have created an overall surface with variable rates of exposure and shelter from the elements. All three of the pictographic elements are readily exposed to the most damaging of natural elements, but still show a clarity of form overall. All three of these concentrations are located along the cliff above the high water mark and would also likely be unaffected by direct contact with ice during the winter. Issuing forth from several fissures in the rock was mineral-rich run-off water. This mineral rich wash has likely played a role in preserving these images by coating the surface with a transparent lamination, thus acting effectively as a protective sealant or varnish of sorts. The generally southward direction of the face,

coupled with a slight backward tilt of the cliff, means that this panel receives a fair amount of direct sunlight. However, the differing angles of the surface planes have allowed the encroaching black lichen to establish itself over much of the cliff-face.

Condition and Preservation

Given the variable rates of exposure and shelter presented by this panel's context, it is not surprising that each of the three pictographic elements shows a differing rate of preservation. The lower two sets of images have suffered more degradation than the third and uppermost set. The lower right image is by far the most faded of the three and shows a pigment color that is different from the other two. It is unclear whether this difference in tone, hue and color has arisen due to longer exposure in comparison to the other two sets, or if it is a result of applying pigment that is of a different quality and/or from a different source. Either of these two scenarios is possible and would further suggest that there is a difference in antiquity between this set and the remaining two. It is also very clear that human intervention has played a role in these images' exposure as the black lichen which covers the majority of this cliff face has been removed over the ages several times. To that effect, one of the elements of the upper set remains partially covered by this lichen.

Closer examination of the partially obscured upper image shows that the lichen has been established over the painting for quite some time which has resulted in severe, irreversible chemical damage to the underlying pigment (Figure 4.56). The uppermost set of images, which have also been kept clear of lichen, are by far the most clearly defined of all three sets. The red ochre pigment is of such a rich dark crimson hue that the contrast afforded by the off-white background of the cliff face, makes these images appear to almost "jump out" at the observer. The texture of this rich pigment also shows a measured rate of application. The pigment itself is almost "thick" in appearance, as if the brush strokes were applied several times. It also lacks that property of most single application red ochre painting in which the red paint is almost "transparent" and reveals the natural texture and colors of the rock. This richness in texture, hue and application may also suggest that these images were at one time as faded as the lower image but in fact have undergone at least a single, if not a series, of "touch-ups." And, indeed, this may have been part of the ceremonial function of this particular panel, where re-painting

was part of a ritual in which the act pays tribute. If these images have indeed undergone sequential touch-ups, it may also speak to the panel's age of creation.



Figure 4.56: Lichen damaged painting at site HdMs-1 (Blomquist July 2006).

4.2.7.8 Painting Properties

As already noted, this panel has three distinct sets of images, the first and topmost of which is situated quite far up the cliff face. 142 cm beneath this upper set, is the second set which consists of a single thematic motif. In 2006 this second set was 63 cm above the lake level. The third set is situated to the left or westward of the second set, at a distance of approximately 1.4 m. It was 67 cm above the 2006 lake level (Figure 4.57).



Figure 4.57: Complete panel at site HdMs-1 with demarcated groups (Blomquist July 2006).

Beginning with the first and uppermost set, this concentration consists of a mixture of elements that include a single geometric shape, several vertically-oriented lines and one badly obscured and weathered indecipherable shape. All have been painted in an application of thick dark, rich crimson-coloured pigment (Figure 4.58). The topmost element can be described as having a shape resembling a downward pointing triangle with small, upward pointing, horn-like projections emanating from either top corner of the triangle. On the interior of this triangle and extending upwards from the bottom apex of the downward point is a single line that lengthens upwards for about one-third of the shape's overall height. Eighteen cm to the right of this triangular image is a single painted line which is vertically oriented and 25 cm long.

Approximately 15 cm immediately beneath the triangular element, is a series of four vertically oriented lines, separated equidistantly separated and measuring 20 cm in

width and 15 cm in height. Twenty cm to the left of this series of lines is an element consisting of a smattering of disjointed smudges with a diameter area of approximately 15 cm that is obscured to a very large degree.



Figure 4.58: Topmost elements at site HdMs-1 (Blomquist July 2006).

The second set, positioned beneath the first, consists simply of an arrangement of four horizontally aligned oval marks painted in a pigment that has faded to a red hue with strong undertones of a rusty orange color (Figure 4.59). Spanning a width of 15 cm and set equidistant from one another, these vertically lengthened ovals each consistently measures 5 cm in height and 3 cm in width. Our guide and consulting Elder, Larry Clarke, remarked upon this set as being the fingerprints of a *Mēmēkwēsīw*, as the “little people” who inhabit this region are known to have only four fingers on each hand.



Figure 4.59: Four oval shaped marks at site HdMs-1 (Blomquist July 2006).

The third set, 1.4m to the left of the second, consists of two almost-identical elements. Painted in a vibrant red-coloured pigment are images that resemble trees. Each of the two elements are composed of two closely paired, laterally arranged lines, set 6 cm apart and with a measured vertical length of 46 cm from top to bottom. The outer edges of both sets of paired lines are embellished with a multitude of downward slanting short projections or fringes. Devoid of these fringes on the interior of these paired lines, the motifs resemble spruce trees (Figures 4.60-4.61).



Figure 4.60: Fringed parallel line motifs at site HdMs-1, (reproduction of tracing – Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 4.61: The author tracing the fringed “tree” motifs at site HdMs-1(July 2006).

4.3 Concluding Remarks

The emphasis in this chapter has been on recording quantifiable, empirical information regarding geo-spatial context and metric measurements. The site descriptions contain all of the pertinent scientific data but also reflect my focus on what the images themselves portray. Like a puzzle, all of the pieces of data collected add to the overall understanding of the site and thus should be considered with equal weight. However, it is the message that is to be found in the meticulous examination of the painted images themselves that sets the tone for understanding the overall meaning. Interpretations of the panels and their motifs are further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: PANEL INTERPRETATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This thesis has focused on the landscape setting of the Shield Tradition rock art images found at Reindeer Lake, the methodologies used to locate and record the sites in 2006, and has provided detailed descriptions of the sites and images themselves. This chapter will consider the meaning, function and themes of the images depicted in the panels discussed in Chapter 4.

5.2 Interpreting Rock Art

As previously noted archaeologists have long contemplated the meaning and function of rock art images and have offered a variety of explanations. In truth, the only true interpretation of a panel resides with the original author or artist, but contextual clues and ethnographic accounts can be used to make fairly accurate thematic inferences.

One of the most problematic areas in researching rock art stems from using a scientific approach. Science relies on empirical, unbiased and objective evidence to provide quantifiable explanations relating to subjects of study. Pictographs exist as an art form and are, therefore, inherently subjective. Pictographic imagery used throughout the Pre-Cambrian Shield is permeated with metaphorical meaning (Rajnovich 1994:19-21). Some regional expressions of Shield rock art exhibit a level of ambiguity that makes it difficult to identify a formalized, consistent pattern of usage for many of the icons. Moreover, it is possible that some images had personal meaning only to the artist and consequently will forever remain indecipherable (Papworth 1958). A scientific approach and scientific data can therefore give clues or provide foundations for inferences, but it is necessary to evaluate rock art images subjectively in order to provide a well-rounded analysis. As with other forms of art, each observer interprets the image in his or her own way and there are, therefore, as many 'accurate' interpretations as there are observers. I believe that the rock art panels at Reindeer Lake were created with this issue of perspective in mind.

In order to offer interpretations of the Reindeer Lake pictographs, I will proceed with a site by site analysis of the panels. I will consider each individual image, its context within the panel, and the panel as a whole. I will interpret the meaning and function of the individual images and the panels based on comparisons with the panels along the

Churchill River specifically as well as to sites beyond in the Pre-Cambrian Shield. I will also compare the images with culturally recognized mythical beings from northern Algonquian sacred stories, accepted community interpretations, other authors' research findings, and literal "translations" whereby figures clearly represent real world items.

5.3 Function and Meaning of Rock Art

Past researchers have speculated on the reason why this rock art has been created. Some posit that the reasons are culturally mandated and distinct and therefore rock art cannot be compared on a culture to culture basis. While there is some truth to that notion, all rock art images are similar in that they were created to be seen. Whether or not the image has been placed in a public area where many observers can interact with it, or whether it was created in a more private location that allows for a more personal viewing, the images were all created to be viewed. Consequently, we can make some general inferences as to the reason for the creation of a rock art image.

In researching the rock art that composes the Shield Rock Art Tradition, archaeologists and anthropologists have identified a number of key reasons for the creation of these panels. One of the earliest suggestions, posited by numerous authors, for the existence of rock art in the shield is that it is a mechanism of sympathetic hunting magic whereby the act of drawing an animal casts a "spell" on it which will permit an easier capture (Dewdney 1963). Other possibilities include: (1) a way to acquire resources including those that relate to subsistence and medicine; (2) depictions of Manitous as seen in dreams or visions; (3) creations of shamans; (4) the work of *Mēmēkwēsīwak*; (5) depictions that foretell or foresee future events; (6) travel markers; (7) records of significant activities or historic events; (8) lessons or instructions.

Although I agree with the categories listed above, I also recognize that many of them overlap. It is difficult to clearly assign any of these meanings to the images at the Reindeer Lake sites as there are too many instances where depicted elements could fall into more than one category. Elements that could be assigned to all of the above were observed in the Reindeer Lake images. In general; however, all seven of the sites that were investigated for this thesis research are united by an underlying theme of spirituality. Sometimes this theme is represented throughout an entire panel, and

sometimes only through the depiction of a single element such as Thunderbird within a group of predominantly, uncharacteristically non-spiritual motifs.

5.4 Investigating the Motifs and Underlying Panel Themes

5.4.1 The Thunderbird Bay Site (HcMt-4)

The Thunderbird Bay Site is one of the most complex panels on Reindeer Lake. This depiction of a ceremonially significant event is composed of several interrelated key elements that provide clues to interpreting the artist's meaning.

Enclosure motifs in Shield rock art vary from region to region but what is consistent is that they surround a centrally located element or character on at least three sides. Closed shapes lacking an interior figure are not considered as enclosures, but rather described as geometric shapes or designs. Enclosures can be depicted in a variety of ways, the most common of which is the line-drawn or stick figure style. Enclosures have been drawn in both a geometrically angular fashion, such as at HcMt-4, and in a curvilinear manner. Often the edges of such enclosures are embellished with fringes or projections. A fine example of this can be observed in the Churchill River rock art site GjNk-1 on face VII (Jones 1981:22). Enclosures have been used to represent a number of things across the Precambrian Shield including shaking tents, medicine lodges, sweat lodges, the womb, platforms, planes of the cosmos and the interior of cliff faces, rocks and the earth below (Jones 1981; Lipsett 1990; Rajnovich 1989; Rajnovich 1994). I believe that it is these last two, planes of cosmos and subsurface interiors that are represented at HcMt-4.

Tally marks have consistently been shown to denote a counting system. Drawn in a series or in a sequential order, they have been known to “count out” numbers of things such as days, nights, visits, degrees of rank and events. In the Thunderbird Bay panel (Figure 5.1). It is likely the tally marks denote a number of days allotted in total to the event depicted.

Openings or portals, such as those between the enclosures in the panel of HcMt-4, have been used to denote an obvious separation (Figure 5.2). The inclusion of both tracks and zigzag power lines leading downwards would suggest a journey of a spiritual nature (Figure 5.2). Tracks and dots are commonly used to represent or signify “journeys both real and metaphorical” (Rajnovich 1994:140).



Figure 5.1: Tracing of the tally marks at site HcMt-4 (Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 5.2: Tracing of the “opening” element at site HcMt-4(Blomquist July 2006).

Depictions of lattice structures can be found in rock art sites throughout the shield (Rajnovich 1994:32) but they occur more commonly within the Shield's southern portions. Here they have been proposed to signify the *Midewewin* or grand medicine society of the Ojibway (Rajnovich 1994). Within the Churchill River drainage, depictions of lattices are fewer, but, examples do exist. One such lattice image can be seen within Face XXI of the panel at the Hickson-Maribelli Channel site (Steinbring et al 1978:27). The lattice motifs in the panel at HcMt-4 (Figure 5.3) are also related to medicine, and may denote rank or degree achieved as a medicine practitioner. Within the context of HcMt-4, I believe that the lattice motif simply signifies that a large degree of medicine power was needed or expended throughout the course of the depicted event.



Figure 5.3: Tracing of the lattice structure at site HcMt-4 (Blomquist July 2006).

The humanoid figure depicted in the left enclosure has been embellished with an extra projection extending from the lower portion of the torso. This could represent a phallus (indicative of physical and spirit medicine potency), a third leg or even a tail. Considering the context of this individual, and the fact that figure is shown in the “arms raised” pose, the character is likely an anthropomorph. This shaman has been or is in the process of transforming into a combination of either man and animal, or man and spirit being, upon receiving “good” medicine power from above. The second or right side enclosure with its seated, stout figure in profile represents a *mēmēkwēsīw* within his home inside the rock. Clues found within sacred northern Algonquian stories provide additional support for this explanation whereby the “little-people” are frequently described in these stories as stout individuals who live behind walls of rock (Jones 1974:197).

Both the finger-streaks and the red ochre smudging (wash) provide a textured embellishment to show the dream or vision like quality of the panel and also denote the significant amount of spirit medicine power connected to the event. Power lines, zigzag in shape, can be seen in two separate contexts within this panel and depict the conveyance of spirit medicine power and communication between the shaman and the spirit world. The amorphous smudge to the right side of this panel may represent either an actual animal or perhaps that of a spirit totem animal. The two small closely placed projections extending from its top side may be the ears of this rotund animal, while the large roundness of body characterizing this “animal,” coupled with the short rounded ears may represent a bear.

The last key element to this panel is the vertically oriented linear character with a curving projection marking the top side (Figure 5.4). This could depict a horned serpent. Horned serpents are often used to signify medicine as they are known through the sacred stories to deliver such resources. Alternatively, the linear figure may represent a shaman pole. These shaman poles were real-world objects that were composed of a wooden carved bird set atop of a long pole. Practicing members of the *Midewewin* medicine society erected these poles outside of their dwellings to signify that they were “open for business.” A similarly-depicted shaman pole was recorded by Selwyn Dewdney (1965:9, 18) in northern Manitoba at the Tramping Lake site. Regardless of whether this figure is a shaman’s pole or a horned serpent, the underlying message is that it signifies “medicine.”



Figure 5.4: Tracing of the “horned” linear figure at site HcMt-4 (Blomquist July 2006).

The combination of each of the painted elements suggests that an event of spiritual significance has taken place and further denotes a theme of functions that overlap in significance. Properties of this panel indicate that it is related to shamanism, shows acquisition of resources from the spirit world, shows a record of events, is related to the *Mēmēkwēsiwak*, and that it likely took place through a vision or dream state. My overall impression is that this panel is a depiction of a shaman of considerable medicine power journeying to the spirit world where he has received medicines and/or instruction from the *Mēmēkwēsiwak* and possibly additional Manitous. Through this journey he has become a notable practitioner of the powerful bear totem medicine.

5.4.2 The Reindeer Lake Creek Mouth Site (HcMt-6)

This site represents one of the smallest of the panels in the study and is perhaps the most ambiguous as well. The underlying theme is one of a ceremonial nature and likely represents an example of “dream imagery.” Composed of just four individual elements, its simplistic nature ironically serves to make the panel even more difficult to understand. Four components comprise this panel and of these four, only two provide insight upon which further inferences can be deduced.

I will begin with the most complex of the figures - the horned humanoid drawn sideways (Figure 5.5). An element of spirituality is evident in its depicted characteristics. The arms-up/down posture is directly related to the reception of either good or bad medicine. The spiritual meaning of this common motif in the Shield Rock Art Tradition has been verified through ethnographic accounts and also has the same meaning when depicted in *Midewewin* birch bark medicine scrolls (Rajnovich 1994).

A further indicator of spirit power stems from the presence of “horns” that adorn this figure. Horns as indicators of strong medicine power possibly originate from sign language; an individual would place two fingers spread apart in a ‘V’ shape above their head and then move their hand upwards in a spiral movement to convey the notion of superior knowledge (Mallery 1880; Rajnovich 1994). As to the somewhat peculiar sideways orientation of this figure, Dewdney observed a figure with the same characteristics at a site on Molson Lake in Manitoba and argued that the orientation or posture likely indicates dreaming (Dewdney 1965).



Figure 5.5: Horned humanoid at HcMt-6 (Blomquist July 2006).

The combination of ceremonial elements and depictions that represent “dreamed” real world items (i.e. four legged frog-like animal) would suggest that this panel is wholly related to dream-state visions. This imagery may be an example of dream-induced foretelling and therefore prophetic in nature.

5.4.3 The Stackhouse Bay Site (HdMt-1)

The elements that are represented in the panel at this site exhibit a mixture of ceremonial and non-ceremonial motifs. The images on the right are clustered together within a small area and exhibit superimpositions of both figures and red ochre washing. The conical tent-like image has been set apart from the main cluster and, therefore, is one of the more easily observed elements. Remarkably similar in definition to a depiction of a European idea of a flag, this image occurs elsewhere within Shield rock art sites and has been identified from birch bark Midewewin scrolls as a symbol of very powerful medicine (Copway 1850 in Rajnovich 1994:131).

The clear image of two (and possibly three) quadrupedal animals (likely bears) in direct association with a depiction of watercraft (likely a canoe) loaded with three passengers may indicate an event related to hunting or may also be a reference to Bear Medicine (Figure 5.6). If these characters are indeed in reference to Bear Medicine, it imbues this panel within a higher level of ceremonialism because for the Cree peoples, the bear represents the most powerful of the animal Manitous, and in terms of spirit power (with the *Great Spirit* as the highest power being), *Bear* is second only to *Thunderbird* (Waugh, 1936:59). A lower figure with its arms raised and spread wide and with fingers of the hands splayed out is receiving spiritual assistance or medicine power. A second humanoid motif, likewise depicted in the receptive pose, has been placed in front of the manned canoe and that of the bears. However, this figure is somewhat different from the first humanoid figure. It has been drawn in a squatting posture with legs bent and is smaller and stockier. This smaller humanoid also appears to be adorned with a pipe that extends from the head region outwards from the right side. Both humanoid figures have at least three (possibly four) fingers per hand (Figure 5.7).

This panel has several elements that are related to spirit medicine power and likely references an event where spirit help was secured in harvesting game animals. The tent-like figure is curious in that it has been set apart from the main focus of the panel and

has slight stylistic differences in both design and concept; it is therefore possible that this conical figure relates to a separate painting episode.



Figure 5.6: Bears and canoe painting at site HdMt-1(Blomquist July 2006).



Figure 5.7: Squatting humanoid and pipe at site HdMt-1(Blomquist July 2006).

There are also several possible references to the *Mēmēkwēsīwak* in the panel. The canoe has three individuals seated in it. Based on similarly depicted motifs at sites elsewhere in the Shield, this design signifies *Mēmēkwēsīwak*, who are most often encountered in sets of three (Dewdney 1965; Rajnovich 1994). The more stout of the humanoids, who is squatting and smoking a pipe, may also be a reference to one of the little people. Finally, both humanoids are shown with less than five fingers on each hand. This could be the product of a hasty drawing method, but it could also be intentional. As I remarked in earlier chapters, local lore states the little people of this region have only four fingers on each hand.

5.4.4 The Creswell Bay Site (HdMt-2)

The panel at HdMt-2 is simplistic in both composition and style of depiction. Displaying few characters arranged within an ordered sequence, the panel conveys the feeling of an orderly and concise narrative and is likely a memorial of a personally significant and historical event. The depicted images seem to be a visual recording of hunting activities. The panel is composed of a tool or weapon-wielding humanoid following a four legged animal (likely a bear), some associated tally marks and one amorphous solid smudge (Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.8: Complete panel at site HdMt-2(Blomquist July 2006).

The region's residents have provided their own (and likely the most accurate) interpretations of this panel. Elder Clarke related that the community believes the panel is a story of a bear hunt, a perspective he also shares. I agree with this community

perspective, but would further add that the series of five tally mark slashes indicates that the hunt, or tracking of the animal, required five days from start to completion.

5.4.5 The Numabin Bay Site (HdMs-3)

Although recorded as two separate sets of images, a north set and a south set, I will interpret only the more clearly defined north set as the south set is too obscured to provide any discernible subject matter. The combination of elements depicted in the north panel is related to medicine (Figure 5.9).



Figure 5.9: The north set of images at site HdMs-3 (Blomquist July 2006).

The panel characterizing the Numabin Bay site exhibits an overall theme of medicine. Medicine as seen in this instance is related to both the physical curative and that of ceremonial, spirit medicine. The medicine images here are curious in that there are depictions of what could be considered a more regionalized Cree context (fringed bag) alongside imagery that is more akin to Ojibway (*Midewewin*) symbolism (otter skin bag). Further adding to this subtle cultural division is the fact that the two groupings of images (where one has predominantly Cree properties and the other more Ojibway properties) have been set apart from each other.

This division can be seen in Figure 5.9. The images of a fringed medicine bag and the spirit being Thunderbird are to the left side of the panel and are more characteristically Cree in context and theme; the images of a possible turtle, an otter-skin, which is commonly understood to represent an otter-skin medicine bag of the *Midè* (Johnston 1976), and a humanoid receiving medicine from above on the right side of the panel show characteristics of Ojibway lore and symbolism.

With this division in mind, the left or Cree grouping may represent the powerful medicine associated with Thunderbird, or the practitioner's acquisition of Thunderbird as a totem spirit animal. The right grouping also references a medicine theme but has elements which could be seen as relating to Ojibway cosmology, the turtle (*Mackinauk*) is seen as the liaison between the worlds of spirit and that of humans and acted as a messenger relaying messages, teachings and medicines back and forth between the two realms (Johnston 1976:171). Turtle iconography also is associated with medicine as a sect of one of the original five totem animals representing the structure of Midewewin society. The depiction of an otter skin could also reference a *Midè* context as otter-skin medicine bags (made from a whole, intact and cured otter skin) are associated with initiates of the Midewewin of the first degree (Johnston 1976). The context of this otter skin medicine bag placed in direct association to that of the humanoid receiving "medicine" from above could further be a reference to the Ojibway tale of *Odaemin*; the legend describes the origins of the *Midewewin* and begins with *Negik* (Otter) giving medicine to humans.

5.4.6 The Long Tree Site (HdMs-2)

This panel is located along a well-known canoe travel route, can be seen from a remarkable distance, and shows an ordered sequence of narrated themes. Given these conditions, it is likely that this panel performs a dual function. The first function is as a marker. Given the panel's context in the landscape, it is likely that it served as a way-marker. The second function is narrative. The panel's thematic subject matter is composed of both ceremonially significant figures (i.e. Thunderbird) and those of a more common, utilitarian nature (i.e. animals and manned canoe). This indicates that the panel likely also served to record some important narrative. The event displayed in this panel may be a reference to a hunting foray via canoe in which game animals were obtained with the help of spirit beings. The one curious figure of the sequence is the arch-like, convex crescent shape that is immediately above the manned canoe. Dewdney (1965) has noted that similarly-shaped Shield rock art figures may represent either "sky" or "day."

5.4.7 The Fox Island Site (HdMs-1)

This panel is quite simplistic. Only a few figures are depicted, making this set amongst the most ambiguous of those examined in this study. The panel is composed of

three separate areas of grouped paintings (Figure 4.57). While having some ceremonial properties this panel is also the most idiosyncratic of the sites investigated.

The four individually spaced and horizontally aligned tally marks within area two of the panel are interesting. Referencing these four oblong dots as tally marks may not be entirely accurate. The series of vertically-oriented line slashes within area one of this panel would actually seem to be more representative of this counting system and thus more likely, the four dots represent the four-fingered fingerprints of the *Mēmēkwēsiwak* (personal communication, Larry Clarke, Aug. 2006); it is possible that these ‘fingerprints’ function as a personalized signature in the same way that a handprint might. It should further be noted that the number four is of sacred importance to Cree cosmology in that “There are four main spirit helpers, four directions, four seasons, -four stages of life, childhood young adult and old age (Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre – Heritage website).”

The pair of parallel fringed line motifs set within area three of the panel most likely represents trees, but could symbolize some other metaphorical concept. Similar short, “fringe” type lines are commonly seen extending outwards from painted elements associated with strong medicine power (shamans, spirit beings, megis shells etc. [Rajnovich 1994:52-3; 94-5]) in pictographs elsewhere in the shield and are considered “power lines.” The last key element to be regarded is that of the triangular, partially bisected shape that comprises the topmost of the motifs in the panel within area one. Speaking to a possible *Midewewin* origin, the triangular shape has been used in the birch bark medicine scrolls to denote the heart as the symbol of life (Rajnovich 1994:126). The triangular motif may be a regional adaptation of this icon. This motley combination of trees, *Mēmēkwēsiwak* fingerprints, tally marks and a possible life symbol would suggest that the panel has ceremonial significance, but deciphering any further message from this panel is not probable. It could be that the meaning of the panel was too personal to the artist to be fruitfully interpreted by outside observers.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

Utilizing a formulaic approach in the analysis of these seven rock art sites has proven to be an effective method for discerning possible meanings and interpretations. This method allows for the detailed examination of each individual element that together

comprises a panel. Regarding them first as independent elements and what they may possibly mean and then deciphering what those separate images combined as a whole could mean, shows the importance of context. In the same way that an artifact without archaeological context can only provide limited information on a particular site, these panels similarly are more than the sum of their individual parts. This breakdown and reconstruction method of panel analysis ensures that all of the contributing properties that give panels meaning are evaluated in turn.

CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSING REMARKS

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has outlined the importance of rock art as a form of an archaeological site, discussed the socio-cultural significance of the creation and continual acknowledgement of rock art images, and investigated the possibilities as to their cultural function. It has also detailed a comprehensive method for recording panels, reported on specific details of those rock art sites visited and recorded at Reindeer Lake in 2006, and investigated possible interpretations for each of the seven panels. This last chapter will summarize my findings and offer conclusions based on the collective research discussions. I will also briefly discuss how my research contributes to the body of knowledge on Churchill River rock art, how the Reindeer Lake rock art contributes to our understanding of the archaeology of the region overall, and will comment on possibilities for future rock art studies in the Reindeer Lake area and the Churchill River region in general.

6.2 Area of Research

My research focused entirely upon one isolated region of the Churchill River drainage system, Reindeer Lake. This area is of interest for a number of reasons. First, throughout this drainage system, distinct subsets or groupings of rock art panels can be identified. Second, Reindeer Lake is a major passageway between the northern barren-lands and the southern boreal forest and, therefore, exists as a nexus or crossroads of cultures. And thirdly, it represents a major transitional area of culture overlap.

The Precambrian Shield region is ecologically and physiographically diverse, allowing the various cultural groups who occupied the region to adapt and grow as unique societies for thousands of years. The rock art that occurs here is among the most culturally distinct of the rock art traditions of North America. It also occurs at a relatively high number of sites. What makes rock art of the Shield Tradition distinctive as a cultural phenomenon is the stylistic consistency that spans a large geographic expanse.

6.3 Fieldwork and Thesis Research

This thesis has presented a detailed study of the rock art found in the Reindeer Lake region of northern Saskatchewan. The objectives of this study were as follows:

- To compile data regarding the study region's rock art sites.
- To record these sites in order to preserve the information.
- To place this region's specific rock art into the broader context of the Shield Rock Art Tradition.
- To provide interpretations for the sites where possible.
- To make this information available for the use of future researchers.

Beyond these objectives, the primary focus of this thesis has been on what can be learned from the detailed examination of the locations of these pictographs as complete archaeological sites. I have also emphasized the importance of properly recording these rock art sites using a variety of methods. These recording methods allowed me to conduct a detailed analysis of the Reindeer Lake rock art panels that considered multiple parameters. My analysis revealed that the pictographs on Reindeer Lake are both compositionally and stylistically consistent with the mode of depiction that characterizes the Shield Rock Art Tradition, and fit well into the regionally distinct typology of Churchill River style.

6.4 Research Summary

It is important to extract numerous forms of empirical data through documenting the physical aspects of a rock art panel including visual observations, physical properties and metric measurements. Four elements that characterize rock art sites were the focus of my recording efforts; they are location and geo-spatial context, landscape, panel context, and rock art motifs and themes. It is through evaluating these objective datasets that scientific inferences can be made. At first glance, many of these observations may seem basic or irrelevant. However, due to the progressive nature of archaeological science such notations are critical for analysis and re-analysis in future studies. It is therefore partially for the benefit of future researchers that such empirical methods were employed.

The evolution of methods used in rock art recording have resulted in the adoption of many varied and creative techniques by rock art researchers. Some of these methods have been phased out due to the risks they posed to the preservation of the pictographs, while others have been replaced by systems that achieve the same results more efficiently. The methodological foundation for this project is several traditional methods

of recording pictographs combined with the application of new technology (i.e. digital photography).

The method I employed to provide possible interpretations of the Reindeer Lake pictographs consisted of a site by site analysis of the panels based on a “tear-down” approach. This method follows an almost mathematically formulaic approach, whereby each figure was first identified as to its contributing qualifiers and considered with the other figures in order to provide an inclusive outcome overall. Through this system, I concluded that context is the most important aspect to consider when attempting translations of pictographic meaning. This is because, firstly, individual figures have inherent, singular meanings when viewed as stand-alone motifs. Secondly, combining these individual figures into one grouping changes the thematic meaning of the images as they relate to one another. And, finally, the addition of spatial context modifies thematic meaning even further.

6.5 Contextualizing Reindeer Lake Pictographs within Shield Tradition Rock Art

6.5.1 Shield Tradition Rock Art

Shield Tradition pictograph panels are spread out over a large geographic expanse, and it is due to this wide range of distribution that distinctive regional variations in imagery depiction arose. Early archaeologists studying Shield rock art realized that, although Shield images were compositionally similar, the panels exhibited slight differences from one region to another. In the early 1960s, Selwyn Dewdney drew attention to the degree of variation seen from one pictograph site to the next. His early classification system was built upon elements he lists as form, content, and style (Dewdney and Kidd, 1967:18). The questions he posed as to the reason why these variations existed acknowledged that rock art researchers needed to widen their focus in the Shield from a unified empirical focus to include more emphasis on cultural context.

In 1968, Jack Steinbring noticed further inconsistencies while studying pictographs in Manitoba. Most of the pictograph sites found southeast of Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba had been assigned to the work of Ojibway artists (Jones, 1981:73). Steinbring examined panels along the Bloodvein River and found elements that deviated thematically from “standard” Ojibway subject matter. He therefore posited that more

work needed to be done that explored assigning archaeological identification to other extant cultural groups such as Assiniboine and Cree (Steinbring and Elias, 1968:501).

As Keyser and Klassen (2001:13) have pointed out, differences in the rock art from a particular geographic area can present a confusing array when examined from a regional context. They further contend that the amount of variation seen within a single site or group of related sites is sometimes equal to the amount of variation that exists within a region as a whole. In order to mitigate some of this confusion, the authors devised a classificatory system that uses organizational units based on shared traits and implemented the descriptive terms ‘style’ and ‘tradition.’ Keyser and Klassen (2001) provide their own explanation of what common elements need to be considered for assigning ‘style’ and ‘tradition.’ These include, “(1) characteristic subject matter; (2) the forms used to illustrate these subjects; (3) the compositional relationships typically noted between them; and to a lesser extent, (4) the technique used to produce the designs; and (5) the specific landscape setting in which they are found” (Keyser and Klassen, 2001:13).

Although Keyser and Klassen’s framework was devised to describe Plains Tradition Rock Art, their formula is easily applied to recognizing style and tradition patterns within the study of Shield rock art sites. Following a classificatory approach similar to theirs, I identified elements of pictograph panels common to all of the Reindeer Lake sites. Examples of such common characteristics that place a painted panel firmly within the Shield Rock Art Tradition are placement in direct association with water, almost entirely upon vertical walls; use of red ochre pigment (of various hues) almost exclusively; application of images in strokes of finger-width (allowing for some certainty that application method was “finger-painting”); and consistency in both the presence and the depiction of ceremonial and secular themes (Dewdney and Kidd 1967; Jones 1981; Rajnovich 1994; Steinbring 1998; Steinbring and Elias 1968).

6.5.2 Contextualizing Reindeer Lake Rock Art within the Churchill River Style

Evaluating the Reindeer Lake panels on the basis of the above traits reveals that the Reindeer Lake pictographs fit within the context of the Shield Rock Art Tradition. There are several examples of imagery within these panels, however, that would also allude to a distinctive regional variation. For instance, there are painted panel elements

within the Reindeer Lake sites that are only seen in pictographs from northern Saskatchewan and nowhere else in the Shield such as fringed medicine bags, while certain motifs common to the southern portions of the Shield are also almost completely absent from the Reindeer Lake panels. Tim Jones (1981) has argued that this deviation seen in the northern Saskatchewan rock art sites from more southerly common subjective motifs, and the lack of common elements that are seen elsewhere in the Shield is indicative of a regional sub-type of Shield Tradition Rock Art known as Churchill River pictograph style.

Jones has noted that there are two main modes of depiction prevalent among the Churchill River sites including stick or outlined figures and solid or silhouetted figures. The “stick” mode of depiction consists of what amounts to a line drawing, where the outline of a shape’s outer dimensions are portrayed through the use of drawn borders or edges with the spaces in the interior of the image left unfilled. The “silhouette” mode of depiction consists of imagery whose figures are completely filled in with color creating the effect of a singular, solid polygon (Jones 1981:50). Both modes of depiction are used in the Reindeer Lake pictographs although the silhouette mode seems to be the more predominant of the two. Some panels, like the ones found at the Stackhouse Bay site (Figures 5.6 and 5.7) and the Fox Island site (Figures 4.59 and 4.61), have imagery that was created using both modes. Tim Jones (1981:50) has noted this same phenomenon for the Churchill River sites.

The consistency with which common elements of the Shield Rock Art tradition images are depicted across the Shield region is quite remarkable. These common elements include humans or humanoid figures, animals, mythical beings, icons of medicine power, and tally marks (in either round dot form or as line slashes). These images are found in the Reindeer Lake panels as well and the frequency with which they appear mirrors the predominance of the motifs in rock art sites across the Shield region.

Humanoid figures are one of the most frequently recurring elements in the Reindeer Lake panels. All of the sites except for the Fox Island Site have at least one depiction of a humanoid. Similarly, all of the Reindeer Lake panels exhibit at least one occurrence of an animal being, except, again, for the Fox Island site. Assuming that the local community explanation that the *memekwesiwak* in the region only have four fingers

is correct, then every site on Reindeer Lake has imagery related to mythical beings. Depictions of *memekwesiwak* or symbols associated with them make up the most numerous of the mythical beings in Reindeer Lake panels. Depictions of anthropomorphs occur at four of the seven sites and images of Thunderbird exist at three sites. Tally marks also occur at three of the seven visited rock art sites on Reindeer Lake.

Medicine symbols are present in the Reindeer Lake panels and take a variety of forms, including depictions of mythical beings or animals associated with the bringing of medicine (i.e. Thunderbird, snake, Memekwesiwak, turtles, bears, etc.); humanoids painted with the “arms-raised” pose (in reception of good medicine power from the spirits and Manitous above) or with power traits such as horns or power line emanations; sacred objects like the pipe, lattice symbols, and medicine bags; symbols commonly thought to be indicative of practicing *Midewewin*; and simple red-ochre washes or smudges either by themselves, or placed within, on or overlaying panels to denote the sacred nature of a location.

The Reindeer Lake panels, therefore, share a substantial number of elements which firmly place them within the Shield Rock Art tradition and the Churchill River style of depiction. There are also elements of the Reindeer Lake panels, however, that are rare, distinctively regional, or entirely unique. An interesting characteristic of the rock art found on Reindeer Lake is the presence of canoe images. Canoe images within Shield rock paintings are not a particularly compelling subject of depiction due to their abundant presence in panels throughout most of the Shield region. Indeed, next to depictions of humanoids, canoes are one of the most consistently recurring motifs within the Shield Rock Art Tradition (Steinbring 1995:52). What is striking about their presence within the Reindeer Lake region, however, is that canoe images are a relatively rare occurrence in the rock art panels of northern Saskatchewan. Tim Jones (1981:58) has reported that only a single occurrence of this type of motif has been found in any of the panels that are located along the Churchill River. He further notes that a second instance of canoe imagery exists in a panel on Kipahigan Lake, Saskatchewan, adjacent to the Churchill River proper. Since Jones’s monograph *The Aboriginal Rock Paintings of the Churchill River* was published in 1981, only a small handful more canoe images in pictographs from northern Saskatchewan have come to light (discussed in succeeding paragraphs).

Jack Steinbring (1995) has formulated some general hypotheses as to why canoes are so abundant within the Shield Rock Art tradition and why they are found in specific regions. His 1995 count of canoe motifs within Shield rock art sites totalled 98 occurrences within 52 different panels; only one of these was located in Saskatchewan, at the Hickson-Mirrabeli lake sites (Steinbring 1995:57). In his 1995 publication, Steinbring posits that the co-occurrence of canoe imagery within panels associated primarily with the Ojibway may provide evidence that all panels that have canoe imagery can be attributed exclusively to the work of Ojibway peoples. He also states that the paucity of any canoe pictographs within areas primarily identified with Cree peoples (i.e. northern Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba) provides further supporting evidence to this hypothesis.

Of the nine total rock art sites found on Reindeer Lake, three panels have depictions of canoes. Instances of single “occupied” canoes can be seen at the Stackhouse Bay site (Figure 5.6), and at the Long Tree Site (Figure 4.52). Two more depictions of canoes within the same panel were noted and sketched by P.G. Downes in his field notes from 1936 at the Canoe Channel site. The two canoe images described above by Tim Jones, the four separate instances from Reindeer Lake, and a fairly recent recording of a canoe pictograph from the Clearwater River #3 site located along the Clearwater River within northwestern Saskatchewan (Meyer 2010) brings the number of canoe depictions in Cree territory in northern Saskatchewan to 7. Although still a smaller number, these seven occurrences of canoe imagery demonstrate that examples of canoe pictography are not entirely absent from the region.

Another unique occurrence found among the Reindeer Lake Rock Art panels is the depiction of a fringed medicine bag or pouch at the Numabin Bay Site (Figure 4.41). As previously noted, much of the depicted subject matter of the Shield Rock Art tradition is related to ceremonialism. Ceremonial subject matter is commonly represented by depictions of imagery showing the interaction between humans and the spirit world and can be seen in the presence of anthropomorphic characters, supernatural entities of legend (i.e. Thunderbird, *Mishipizeu*, *Memekwesiwak*) and symbols related to medicine power (i.e. powerlines, lattice structures, horned beings). Less commonly seen are depictions of real world ceremonial items such as ceremonial structures (ie. shaking tent frames, sweat

lodges, raised scaffolding, medicine lodges), and sacred paraphernalia (i.e. smoking pipes, feathers and medicine bags).

The Reindeer Lake rock art panels show the use of both the more common depictions of ceremonial subject matter and that of the less common, detailed, literal, ceremonial depictions explained in the previous paragraph. These depictions of ceremonial objects and paraphernalia warrant more detailed observations because they, unlike their commonly depicted supernatural entity counterparts, are more rare, unique and are further subject to regional and cultural variations. Medicine bags are depicted in panels across the Shield region and are portrayed using similar conventions throughout. To Aboriginal peoples inhabiting the Shield region (and beyond), medicine bags are among the most valuable of possessions and are regarded with appropriate respect. They are objects of functional, personal adornment and comprise one of the sacred accessories used by healers, medicine-people and shamans. They also provide a safe-keeping place for ceremonially significant paraphernalia, objects of spirit power, and herbs and plants representing physical curatives. Traditional medicine bags are made from the sewn skins of whole animals such as otter, mink, muskrat, birds and snakes (Rajnovich 1994:123).

The most common way in which medicine bags have been depicted in the Shield Rock Art Tradition is through the image of the whole animal skin being drawn in a way that exhibits its dried and stretched nature. This depiction of the cured animal skin is frequently accomplished by drawing the animal form in a thin, narrow, stretched out manner and orienting the image vertically with head up, tail down, and four legs drooping downwards on either side. The most commonly occurring medicine bag types in the Shield rock art sites are otter-skin medicine bags. Otter-skin bags are frequently shown in association with a practitioner of the *Midewewin* of the Ojibway, and are painted in a panel by themselves as a stand-alone icon, or in a direct contextual relationship with a human (Rajnovich 1994:123).

A second way in which medicine bags have been depicted in Shield tradition Rock Art, and one that is devoid of obvious Ojibway designation, is through the facsimile reproduction of a sewn bag. An example of one of these medicine bags not represented in the common Ojibway style can be seen in the panel at Numabin Bay (Figure 4.41). The medicine bag shown in Figure 4.41 is depicted as an oblong, slightly quadrangular solid

polygon with a rounded, arcing hoop-like handle and fringed embellishments. It has been identified ethnographically as representing a medicine bag remarkably similar to the ones carried by the Cree (Jones 1974:155). The context of this fringed medicine bag is interesting to note as an otter-skin type medicine bag is also depicted in the same panel (Figure 5.9). The only two other sites in northern Saskatchewan that have similarly depicted medicine bag images are the Rattler Creek Site on the shore of the Churchill River and a site at Buchanan Lake Saskatchewan (Jones 1981:60). As the “fringed” style of medicine bag portrayal has only been found within northern Saskatchewan and nowhere else throughout the Shield, this mode of depiction further places the Reindeer Lake sites within the distinct regional type of Churchill River style.

6.6 Research Outcomes and Relevance

This thesis and its associated fieldwork has contributed to the study of Shield rock art in both a regionally specific context and one that could be applied to the Shield Tradition overall. I have constructed a rigorous recording process that investigates rock art on several different levels and considers every single site element, applied that system in a field setting, and analyzed the resulting data in this thesis. I have thus provided a structured and proven framework that other researchers may wish to apply to their own work.

I have also employed a structured and formulaic approach to interpreting Churchill River pictographs that shows how critical it is to examine context when attempting to deduce meaning from these rock art panels. The interpretive analysis I have provided of the seven Reindeer Lake rock art panels demonstrates the strengths of employing this approach to interpreting rock art and highlights areas where caution needs to be observed.

Both this written thesis and the documented fieldwork I conducted have contributed significant amounts of comprehensive data on the rock art of Reindeer Lake to the relatively small number of studies that have been previously conducted. Detailed site descriptions and a multitude of quantifiable measurements along with recorded visual media (i.e. high resolution digital photographs) will enable accurate site reconstruction. These data are therefore a good starting point for other researchers who wish to study these sites further without necessitating a field trip.

My research has also revealed a number of interesting and previously undocumented observations about the Reindeer Lake rock art. The first is the high number of occurring elements that may have a *Midewewin* origin. Although medicine imagery overlaps between what could be considered predominantly Cree or that of Ojibway, it would seem that the concentration of rock art sites in this region is host to a marked increase of those images that show distinct *Midè* properties. The second is the local community belief that *Mēmēkwēsīwak* have only four fingers. Other rock art sites within the Shield have shown humanoids with only four fingers, including examples in Manitoba at the Muskrat Portage site (GeKu-1) and at the Deer Lake-Cochrane River site (Steinbring, Wheeler and Hanks 1978:68). However, at this time, the direct correlation between four fingered humanoids and that of the *Mēmēkwēsīwak* has not been addressed for these and other similar examples. This information, therefore, may provide contextual clues for re-evaluating other rock art sites within the Shield.

Thirdly, and most importantly, this research and the recording of the rock art panels in the field have preserved both visual images and other data about the rock art sites. As many of these sites are in danger of being damaged, vandalized or even totally obliterated through both natural means and human causes, the data collected for this thesis is an important contribution to the study of Churchill River rock art. It will serve as means of preserving these sites for both the use of future researchers and for the local Aboriginal population.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Work and Closing Remarks

Due to limited resources, a small number of Reindeer Lake rock art sites were not included in my research. These known sites and potential sites require further investigation. The Lawrence Bay site (HeMr-1) was excluded from this study based on its more northern location on Reindeer Lake. This panel's location and description was recorded by David Meyer in 1994. During the 1994 work, field notes and photographs were taken and a Saskatchewan Archaeological Resource Record was completed. Since that time, however, further detailed work has not been completed beyond the regular visits undertaken by SaskPower as part of their ongoing site monitoring program (personal communication, Kit Kroszer July 2006). I suggest that any future work on this site and the Reindeer Lake rock art sites in general should employ the methods I used

during the 2006 fieldwork so that a consistent form of data recording is the result. All of the known sites on Reindeer Lake, including those I recorded in 2006, should continue to be monitored periodically to check for concerns of preservation and damage. This should be done when the water is low in order to see the entire panel context.

Dr. Meyer and I attempted to locate the elusive and now-submerged Canoe Channel pictograph site noted by P.G. Downes in the 1930s via a search of the shorelines in the immediate vicinity of the location provided by Downes. Our attempts were unsuccessful. Future researchers should continue the search for this site and should do so during low-water periods. This panel could be more easily located with the use of submersible (underwater) cameras or even scuba diving gear. Other rock art site locations made aware to me through personal communication are:

- *Mēmēkwēsīwak* Island (now submerged), located approximately five kilometres south of the community of Southend on the Reindeer River (personal communication, Elder Larry Clarke, Aug. 2006).
- The eastern shoreline of Deep Bay, which may have a rare depiction of a single painted large fish (personal communication, Tim Jones, July 2006)
- A site near Kinoosao, Manitoba where there is reportedly a cave-site with painted images and associated artifacts (personal communication, Floyd Olson, July 2006).

A total of nine separate rock art sites are known to be found within Reindeer Lake. Out of these nine sites, eight have been recorded using the Government of Saskatchewan SARR form, with the exception being the Canoe Channel site. Out of these eight provincially recognized sites, I conducted detailed recording of seven of these sites. All of the rock art sites on Reindeer Lake are of immense heritage value and should be regarded as sacred locations. The data and images contained in this thesis will serve to preserve information about these sites for anyone wishing to learn more about the Reindeer Lake rock art panels.

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