



# ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER

Issue No 9: April & May 2014

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

### *Stone Tool Tour of Central Alberta*

by Tim Rast, Elfshot

For ten days in March I had the opportunity to work with students, professionals, and avocational archaeologists in a series of flintknapping workshops, demonstrations, and talks held in central Alberta and Saskatchewan. We packed five days of workshops, two flintknapping demonstrations and two public talks into the trip, so there was absolutely no time to get bored.

I'm originally from southern Alberta (I grew up on a farm near Vulcan) and although I didn't make it back to Vulcan on this trip, it was still good to be home. I learned to flintknap at the University of Calgary as an undergraduate in the mid-1990s and I moved to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador in 1996 for the graduate program at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I stayed on the east coast and continued to work as an archaeologist and create artifact reproductions for museums, universities, and the public through a small business called Elfshot. I brought a few of my reproductions based on artifacts from the Arctic and northeastern North America along for the tour and rolled them out at each of the stops.

The first workshop was a two day event held over the weekend of March 15-16 in Edmonton in the University of Alberta's Anthropology Department. I am very grateful to have been invited to participate in this event for the second year in a row, and I'm especially grateful for the hard work of Strathcona volunteers, Kurtis Blaikie, Peter Kirchmeir, Sean Lynch and more who kept everything running smoothly.



*Strathcona workshop participants making flaked stone tools on day 1 of the workshop.*

We had a good turnout on Saturday and even more people participated on Sunday. On the first day we covered the basics of flintknapping, including hard hammer percussion, soft hammer percussion, and pressure flaking. On Sunday people used what they had learned the day before and knapped and hafted their own stone drills and then used them to make chipped and ground slate ulus. I picked up two types of slate at Lowe's when I got into Edmonton on Friday and one variety was reasonably soft. However, the one that most people wound up using was extremely tough. The end products were very sharp, durable ulus, but it was grueling work to get them all done by the end of the day. Slate of this toughness is on the edge of the capability of an obsidian or dacite drill bit, which is good to know. It was possible to drill the holes, but the volcanic glass drill bits became worn and polished very quickly and needed frequent re-sharpening.

The next day, I darted out to Provost to facilitate a Monday night workshop organized by the Bodo



*Strathcona workshop participants working hard to make ulus on day 2 of the workshop.*

Archaeological Society, especially thanks to the hard work of Christie Grekul and Courtney Lakevold. More often than not, the workshops that I lead take place in classrooms, but in Provost we used the community museum. I loved the setting. We pushed aside the tables and chairs and threw down a tarp amongst the antiques, local memorabilia, and display cases and spent the evening knapping stone tools the way people in the area would have done thousands of years earlier. We could draw on the local artifacts for inspiration and there were a lot of little corner-notched and side-notched points produced that night that were only a couple hundred years too late to take down a bison.



*Flintknapping workshop in the Provost Museum.*

On Tuesday, I was back in Edmonton for a demonstration and chat with archaeology and anthropology students at Grant MacEwan University. Franca Boag organized the session and while I knapped a biface and chipped a small arrowhead we talked about experimental archaeology and how much of the pre-contact archaeological record is lost to us. Often, only the stone tools and debitage remain. It's a cruel twist of fate that the one line of evidence that archaeologists can confidently rely on being preserved is the result of an obsolete and all but forgotten craft.

On Wednesday, the Red Deer centre hosted a talk called "Recreating the Arctic: The Story of an arrow, harpoon, and drum". I spoke about a driftwood arrow, based on 4500 year old artifacts from northern Ellesmere Island, a toggling harpoon, based on a 2900 year old tamarack shaft found in a bog in Newfoundland, and a tiny shaman's drum from the north end of Baffin Island that likely dates to more than 1000 years ago. It was a small, but enthusiastic turnout and they indulged me with lots of questions and interesting conversations around the three reproductions spanning the 3500 year long Palaeoeskimo time period in the Eastern Arctic. My thanks go to Larry Steinbrenner for organizing the evening.

That was it. The time flew by and as quickly as it began, the Alberta leg of the trip was over. I drove through a blizzard to the Edmonton Airport on Thursday to catch a plane to Saskatoon to do it all over again – workshop, demonstration, and talk at the University of Saskatchewan.



*The finished product: obsidian projectile points.*



*The finished product: a slate ulu.*

The Strathcona, Bodo, and Red Deer centres of the Archaeological Society of Alberta, along with Grant MacEwan University and the University of Alberta sponsored and organized the Alberta leg of the tour. The tour continued in Saskatchewan with assistance from the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society, Saskatoon Archaeological Society, Saskatchewan Association of Professional Archaeologists, and the University of Saskatchewan. In addition to being the principal organizer for the Edmonton workshop, Kurtis Blaikie deserves special recognition for drumming up interest and coordinating with the local organizers in Alberta as well as the organizers in Saskatchewan to ensure that the events went off without a hitch. I am very grateful to the Archaeological Society of Alberta for bringing me home for such a rewarding experience.

*Photos by Tim Rast. Visit Tim's online blog:  
<http://elfshotgallery.blogspot.ca>*

## ***Stones and Bones Weekend***

by Jim McMurchy, ASA Lethbridge Centre

Despite the cold and snowy weekend of March 1 and 2, 2014, the Archaeological Society of Alberta Lethbridge Centre hosted a successful weekend event at the Gem of the West Museum, Coaldale. The event drew approximately 200 visitors on Saturday and nearly 100 visitors on Sunday.

Lethbridge Centre has hosted this event or similar events for over twenty five years on a more or less bi-annual basis in a variety of locations with the last three weekends being held in Coaldale. This year's event drew people from Three Hills, Vauxhall, Taber, Brocket, Standoff as well as locals from Coaldale, Lethbridge and other areas.

A wide variety of stone tools and projectile points were brought in to have examined and explained by our professionals, Jack Brink and Bob Dawe, archaeologists from the Royal Alberta Museum. Besides artefacts collected in the area, there were

some projectile points that had been collected in Ontario and BC brought in for identification. Historic artefacts brought in included a variety of beaded rawhide gloves from the early 1900s as well as a carved wooden doll.

In addition to the two archaeologists, we also had Chris Jass, Curator of Quaternary Palaeontology with the Royal Alberta Museum, in attendance. Chris brought with him casts of skulls from extinct mammals and teeth from a mammoth and mastodon for display. He provided his expertise in identifying bones, fossils and other materials brought in to the event by our visitors.

Sheila Macdonald, a member and MA candidate at the University of Lethbridge, put on a display of pottery making over the two days which proved quite popular with the visitors. She made replicas of pots similar to those made by the First Nation



*Specialists from the Royal Alberta Museum inspect a variety of artifacts and fossils brought in by the public.*

people prior to the coming of European traders. On Saturday, Terry Quinn put on a demonstration of flint knapping which also proved very popular. Other displays of archaeological material were provided by the University of Lethbridge and several Lethbridge Centre members.

Visitors to the event also were given the opportunity to tour the museum and see the wide variety of other museum exhibits during the day including the impressive First Nations Gallery.



*Sheila Macdonald demonstrates pottery making.*



*Jack Brink inspects artifacts.*

Lethbridge Centre would like to thank Sheila and Terry as well as their members who volunteered their time and efforts to make this event the success that it was. Thank you is also extended to the Gem of the West Museum for providing the venue.

*Photos by John Easton.*

*Please direct comments or questions to:  
Jim McMurphy: [jnemoc@telus.net](mailto:jnemoc@telus.net)*

## Heritage Awards 2014 Alberta Historical Resources Foundation

The Alberta Historical Resources Foundation is now accepting nominations for **Heritage Awards 2014**. Heritage Awards are presented to recognize and celebrate the significant contributions of individuals, organizations, corporations, and municipalities to the protection, preservation and promotion of Alberta's heritage.

Awards will be presented in the following categories:

**Heritage Conservation Award**, for projects that demonstrate excellence in the conservation of a historic place or excellence in the conservation and interpretation of palaeontological and archaeological resources.

**Heritage Awareness Award**, for research, publications or public engagement projects that have deepened our understanding of Alberta's heritage and promoted greater awareness of our province's remarkable past.

**Municipal Heritage Preservation Award**, recognizes a municipal government for exemplary commitment to heritage conservation through the identification, protection and promotion of their historic places.

**Outstanding Achievement Award**, recognizes an individual's exemplary long-term leadership and contribution to the preservation and presentation of Alberta's history.

**Deadline for nominations is  
July 15, 2014.**

Submit nominations to:  
Heritage Awards  
Alberta Historical Resources Foundation  
8820-112 Street  
Edmonton AB T6G 2P8

Guidelines and nomination forms are available at [www.culture.alberta.ca/ahrf](http://www.culture.alberta.ca/ahrf).

If you have any questions, contact  
Program Coordinator at 780-431-2305.

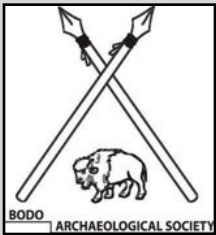


**Alberta**  
Government

## ***39th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Society of Alberta***

hosted by the Bodo Archaeological Society in Bodo, Alberta

**May 9 to 11, 2014**



Visit the website for more details of the event & to download the registration package

[www.bodoarchaeology.com](http://www.bodoarchaeology.com)

### ***2014 Calgary Centre Lithics Workshop***

by Devin Hill, ASA Calgary Centre

The 2014 Lithics Workshop was held on March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, and was a sold out event. There were a lot of new faces this year, as well as some familiar friends. Emotions followed the usual progression; enthusiasm turned into frustration and blame, then into a twinkle of realization, which finally merged into a warm, fuzzy feeling of transcendental oneness with every flintknapper who ever lived. A few seasoned experts dedicated much of their time to speeding up the learning process for those just getting a feel for things. Looking around the room, one could truly get a sense of humanity's early attempts at tool making. Some of us were mastering earlier time periods than others, which created a fascinating cross-section of technological development and some truly impressive debitage scatters.



*Flintknapping in progress.*



*Jason Roe instructing the flintknapping class.*

A sincere thank-you goes out to Jason Roe for being such a dedicated advocate of his craft and instructing out course, to Mike Turney, Tamsin McRobbie, and Pete Truch for working so hard to organize this event and for lending a helping hand throughout the day, and to the band of jaunty knappers, especially Terry Quinn and Rick Rowell, who were always ready to provide assistance and instruction wherever a stone could be heard suffering.

*Photos by Michael Turney.*