

PMIS 90347 FY08 Completion Report

Inventory Prehistoric Archeological Resources, Grand Portage National Monument, Minnesota

This project is focused on survey and identification of prehistoric archeological resources at Grand Portage National Monument. Prehistoric material had previously been located incidental to fur trade era archeological investigations at both ends of the portage. However, the monument has never had a focused examination of its potential prehistoric archeological sites. This project consists of systematic field survey of high probability areas such as relict beach lines and former river mouths and estuaries to identify prehistoric archaeological sites.

A full understanding of the use and significance of the Grand Portage necessitates an understanding of how this area was used by the earliest native peoples up to the fur trade period. Currently, the pre-European origins of the portage may only be described in vague and speculative terms. In fact, the pre-European origins of the portage may be very important for understanding prehistoric transportation and settlement patterns through the region.

A total of \$28,964 in CRPP-SAIP funds was obligated to this project in August 2006 via a CESU cooperative agreement (*J6150060004*) with the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The project required approximately 630 person-hours, of which 300 were devoted to field work, and 330 to research, write-up, lab analysis, GIS, and graphics.

The project commenced in September 2006 with field reconnaissance of approximately 200 acres of Monument lands. A team of three archeologists (two UW-LC and one NPS) and a consulting geomorphologist inspected the areas of six relict glacial shorelines, including three areas containing probable prehistoric archeological features.

In addition, literature research was conducted in an effort to analyze previous geomorphological and prehistoric archeological research in the Grand Portage-Thunder Bay region, as well as compile base cartography and extant geospatial data for developing a predictive model for high probability site occurrence.

Additional reconnaissance and meetings with tribal representatives were held in November 2006, and full survey commenced in the May of 2007. The field crew consisted of the Principal Investigator and a crew of four experienced technicians from UW-LC who were aided by the GRPO archaeologist. The spring survey systematically shovel tested six high priority areas that had been selected the previous fall, and effectively sampled representative areas of the portage. Over 260 shovel test holes were excavated, nearly all with negative results.

However, shovel testing at Thompson's Ridge, approximately halfway along the portage, recovered two distinct chipped stone artifacts demonstrating prehistoric use of this location. Previous surveys at Thompson's Ridge had recovered historic artifacts and verifying trade era use as a resting place along the portage. Coupled with earlier finds of prehistoric artifacts at both ends of the portage, the 2007 Thompson Ridge finds suggest prehistoric knowledge and use of Grand Portage. This discovery has been reported to the Minnesota Site database as the Thompson Ridge II site 21-CK-0348.

A presentation on this and other GRPO archaeological projects was presented to a meeting of ~100 tribal foresters at Grand Portage in January 2007, and also to ~75 Fort William Historical Park staff (Thunder Bay, Ontario) in May 2007. A poster presentation was made in March 2008 to ~40 participants at the Lake Superior Basin Archeological Workshop.

A technical report was completed in July 2008, and the project poster was added to the NPS CESU website in September 2008.

Reported by: David Cooper, Grand Portage National Monument, 218-475-0123

Crew



Shovel Test



