

CHRISTMAS FLIGHTS TO VANCOUVER \$229



Yorkstudent digs history



Bruce Gates

The resemblance to a prospector is striking: a trim beard and thinning curly brown hair frame a visage tanned by being outdoors over long periods of time; incisive blue eyes scan and analyze the surroundings through wire-rimmed spectacles; the blue denim jeans, and corduroy jacket and leather workboots provide the ideal outfit for digging and probing the land in search of the elusive gold.

But there the resemblance ends, for Arthur Roberts is a registered Ontario archaeologist, and his golden treasure is Indian artifacts. Roberts has a theory about tribal movements in Ontario. he believes there were settlements here as long as 11,500 years ago.

If the 34 year old doctoral candidate's (cultural-historical geography) theory is correct, it could have some profound effects on Indian land claims. But that's not the only reason for interest in this theory, which has already shown some promise with the discovery, near Newcastle, Ontario, of a crystal quartz spearpoint that was dated at 10,500 years.

"It's important that people know about the origins of their area," Roberts says, as he points out on maps in his office, some of the 800odd sites being studied throughout southern Ontario. Among them are excavations in Burlington, Napanee, Port Hope, and Newcastle. In several instances, it is the first time these areas have been studied.

The work is time-consuming and, no doubt, frustrating at times, but slowly evidence is turned up and analyzed. Making the task even more difficult is the method of living used by the early peoples. Since they were generally nomadic, few permanent structures were built, and, as a result, accumulation of artifacts is more diffuse than would be the case on a permanent site.

But at a Port Hope site, on land owned by Eldorado Nuclear Ltd., Roberts and his crew have excavated traces of a village that dates back to 600 A.D. and at sites nearby there is evidence of settlements 3,000 to 4,000 years old.

Determining the age of these sites is not easy, and, judging by the stacks of computer analyses, the reports and the bags of artifacts that fill Roberts' office almost to overflowing, it's a task of monumental proportions.

"In order to study a problem you have to have a data base," Roberts says, matter-of-factly. "Usually you spend more time in the lab than you do in the field."

And how.

For the Carbon dating test he needs a sizable quantity of charcoal for analysis in the laboratory. Carbon dating is a process that measures the amount of radioactive Carbon 14 in a specimen. A living organism absorbs Carbon 14 daily, but when it dies the Carbon 14 absorption stops. That sets the organism's "time clock", Roberts explains. Dating is done by measuring the number of radioactive decays of Carbon 14 in a ratio with ordinary carbon, which is called Carbon 12.

As information is uncovered, it is filed with the federal and provincial governments as part of a general inventory program. And,

+ CDN DEPARTURE TAX

Pick Your Own Date! Any Round Trip Combination selected from the dates below

Toronto / Vancouver (Westbound) December 15 December 21 December 22 December 23

8 EXCALIBUR, October 4, 1979

Vancouver / Toronto (Eastbound) January 02 January 04 January 05

January 06

BOOK EARLY, SEATS ARE LIMITED

For booking information and cancellation conditions contact:

Canadian Universities Travel Service 44 St. George St. Toronto 979-2604 when all of the data is assembled, a better picture of Ontario's past will emerge.

At the same time, old misconceptions about Indian land will be dispelled. Explains Roberts: "If we didn't do this kind of work, we wouldn't know whether Indians have been here 500 years or longer."

This new knowledge may have a bearing on how claims are settled. When dealing with a particular Indian band, Roberts explains, the information gained by the work he and a group of about 20 assistants have been doing will be valuable in determining how long the band has been in a particular place. And even though there was no concept of land ownership among Indians in those times, descendants may have some claim to the territories of their tribes.

Beyond that, there is a certain amount of personal satisfaction in knowing something about previous occupants of this region, Roberts says. And he appears to have the general public's concurrence on that point.

"Among other things, most people I meet when I survey are really interested," he says. "There's no doubt that the general public is interested in knowing about previous peoples."

