
Geoarchaeological investigations of the lakebed
of Georgian Bay, Laurentide Great Lakes

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A collaborative regional lakebed archaeological-geological investigation is being conducted at Fathom Five National Marine Park Georgian Bay. Archaeologists have recognized the potential for the existence of Paleoindian habitation sites in the marine park area during lake level lowstands 9600–7200 BP following deglaciation. Habitation of the Sheguiandah site on Manitoulin Island, immediately to the north of the marine park during this time interval, coupled with the then exposed escarpment being the only possible regional migratory route for caribou is motivating the archaeological investigation.

New high-resolution multibeam technology has been employed to map the crest of the submerged Niagara Escarpment that would have been subaerially exposed during the early Holocene. Four drainage channels with associated shorelines, spillways and beaches have been discovered and mapped. Drowned beaches indicate lake levels were at least 50 m below present day elevations. Radiocarbon dated *in situ* tree stumps confirm water levels were low during this time interval. Scuba diving and remotely operated vehicle operations are now focusing archaeological activities along these submerged relict waterways. Quartzite fragments located on a beach at –53 m and a series of caves adjacent to a drainage channel are currently under investigation by archaeologists. Chippewa First Nation oral history supports the recently discovered geological features. Stories describing the spillways and travel across the escarpment crest are common knowledge among elders.