

## **Searching For North America's Oldest Shipwreck, From a Low Earth Orbit .**

By: Elisabeth Servello      *draft #1*

Scott McWilliam



It is flattering to see so many leaders in the diving community hyperlink their way through my series of articles on finding North America's oldest shipwreck. It is the kind of reading some enjoy while others, understandably, have other interests. Interest in this case is what it is all about. If there is enough interest we will rewrite the prehistory of North America.

In most underwater archaeology studies, groups, often avocational archaeologists have effective teams who pool resources, educational, occupational talent and materials to continue to discover, in the least, new shipwreck sites. This is a different kind of project that requires a different kind of approach, a different kind of archaeology.

It is difficult to understate the value of this study. Collectively, we learned a tremendous amount about man's social and technological evolution during the Bronze Age, much of this comes to us through the study of underwater archaeology, the work of Dr. George Bass and many others. This work is also the foundation of the modern discipline of underwater archaeology.

In that part of the world, copper, tin, and also lead were mined. Copper and tin are heated to a liquid state and mixed together to make bronze. Copper mines are not located right beside tin mines to make life easy. Maritime trade routes developed between various mainland and Island locations and several different civilizations, city states etc., to link these resources which were shipped in ingot form. This

maritime travel and trade produced the shipwrecks we continue to study today in the Mediterranean Sea.

In the same way, geology, *“where the copper”* is, in this case, produced a maritime culture. If you want to go to Isle Royale you need a boat or a plane. The Old Copper Culture had a very robust active period that lasted for over a thousand years and then became less popular. Interestingly, this period never really ended. Copper mining was popular when the mining was easier, but, when the first French missionaries reached the eastern end of Lake Superior the Indigenous people were still using copper knives and projectile points and engaged in mining activities. This study is an opportunity to contribute to a giant step forward in our understanding of North American prehistory. If successful, we will have a new understanding of the copper age.

While I am a true believer in this project, there are some unfortunate truths to the undertaking that encourage me to write. There is a little numbers problem I hate to mention. If you add all the Pukaskwa Pit sites to the Pictograph sites, to the mine sites, to the river mouth terrestrial seasonally encampment sites you have around 1,600 sites, most of which have never been looked at by divers. If I get in shape, and recover from my shoulder replacement surgery, I will have this all wrapped up, published, a Juno Award winning film and still be able to retire when I am 136.

~or~

I can throw caution to the wind and reduce myself to seeking the kindness of strangers. ..

Over the years, I have become remarkably humble and well adjusted, this project has merit and I am not that proud. I need your help.

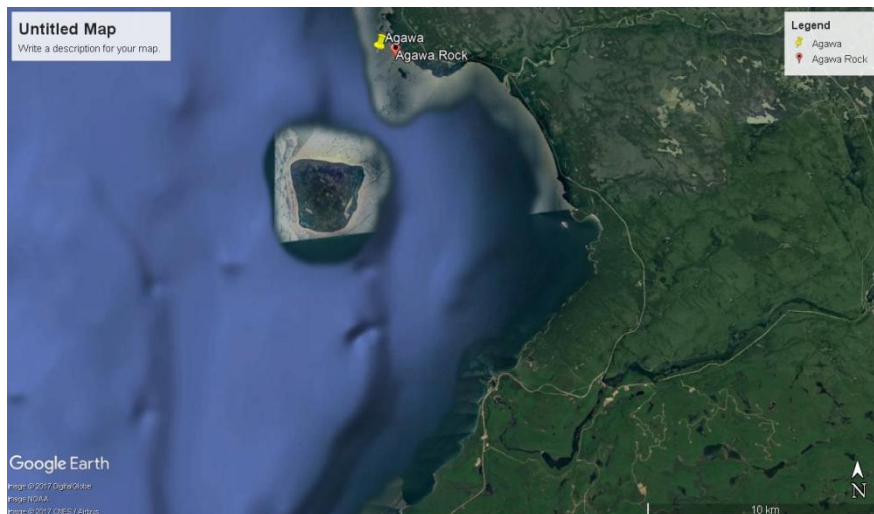


### **Finding North America's Oldest Shipwrecks From a Low Earth Orbit.**

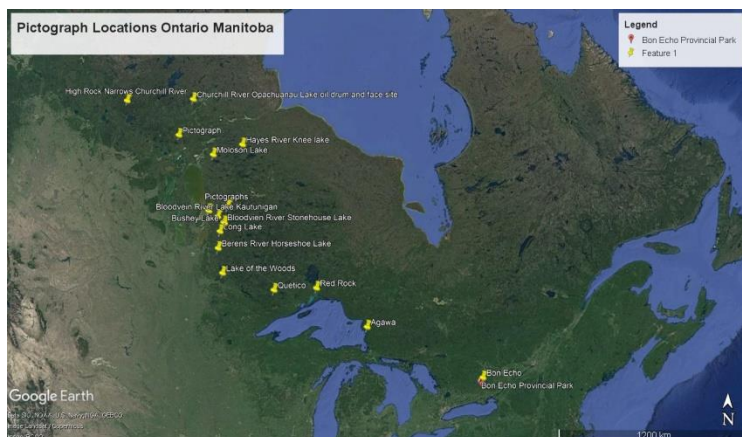
This is one of those projects that can be done small with small results or done large with large results. Let's go big.

There is a reason for that satellite image of the Great Lakes. The study area includes areas governed by The United States of America and Canada, the Provinces of Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and the territory of Nunavut; the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York. With that much government bureaucracy to deal with the only safe place to begin research from is outer space.

I use Google Earth Pro it is a free download. In this series of papers I have outlined the criteria employed to identify high probability prehistoric shipwreck sites. Find high maritime traffic areas, such as prehistoric ports, harbours, pictograph sites, Pukaskwa pit sites and Prehistoric copper mines. Then look for sites overlapping criteria.



This image of Agawa illustrates the point. We have the pictograph site, the mouth of the Agawa River, the mouth of the Montreal River and a natural harbour sheltered by an island in Agawa Bay. This is a good place to continue to research and eventually send a team in to recon as a possible site for archaeological study.



There are a great many aspects to research that are beyond the scope of this discussion. Continuing with pictographs as an example of a subject that requires further study. On my map I show four or five pictograph sites in Ontario. **Indian Rock Paintings of the Great Lakes**; by Selwyn Dewdney and Kenneth Kid, 1962 is still the foremost studies of Great Lakes region pictographs. This is now available online for free. They found 104 sites and the best results come from the best research. We need a team to divide up the work and plot all pictograph sites and amalgamate existing data bases.

If I felt so inclined, I could go through the existing data myself and cherry pick a few choice sites, recon the sites and survey the sites with the hope of having finding my ancient shipwreck and (in the least) sending my hopes, dreams, a 500 mg sample and six hundred bucks off to a lab for a radio carbon date that will support this narrative of the past.

If I went that way I would have to live with the truth that I only did half the job. It is not about who finds the site, although I suspect their names will be remembered. It is about the study of the growth and development of a prehistoric trade network over the area ten times the size of the United Kingdom. It is the study of a civilization that lasted for over a thousand years, longer than the Roman Empire.

Clearly, there is much to be discussed. This is a two tier study. The upper tier consist of leaders in the diving community who find this type of study interesting and are willing to participate in research. The lower tier, where I am, is mainly involved in data analysis, research proposals, report writing, licences etc., To date, others with interest in this line of study, in this group, include, two other archaeologist, a geophysicists and a parks management specialist with an interest in submerged sites. The good news is they all have PhD's. We are continuing to grow this pool of expertise.

This project is good for the sport of SCUBA diving as such, we need to solicit the support of; diving training agencies, dive clubs and organizations to grow the project. Some of the most important data deals with local diving conditions so the project has to be exported of divers local to the area of study as well as those willing to travel.

Many hands make light work. If you think about the amount of time you spend on the internet if you are interested in this project why not do an hours research a week? As you might suspect I am a true believer in this project and will press on the best I can.

If I do have to go t alone, you can always read my final report, when I retire, at 136. . .