

# Doug Evans: Contributions to Northern Manitoba Archaeology

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## Introduction

In the fall of 2014, the Manitoba Archaeological Society (MAS) honoured a number of avocational archaeologists at its annual conference. On this occasion, I had the opportunity to present an overview of the contributions of former Flin Flonner Doug Evans to our knowledge and understanding of the province's northern heritage.

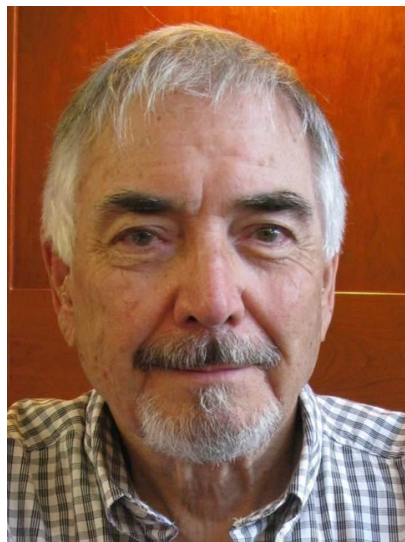


Figure 1: Doug Evans

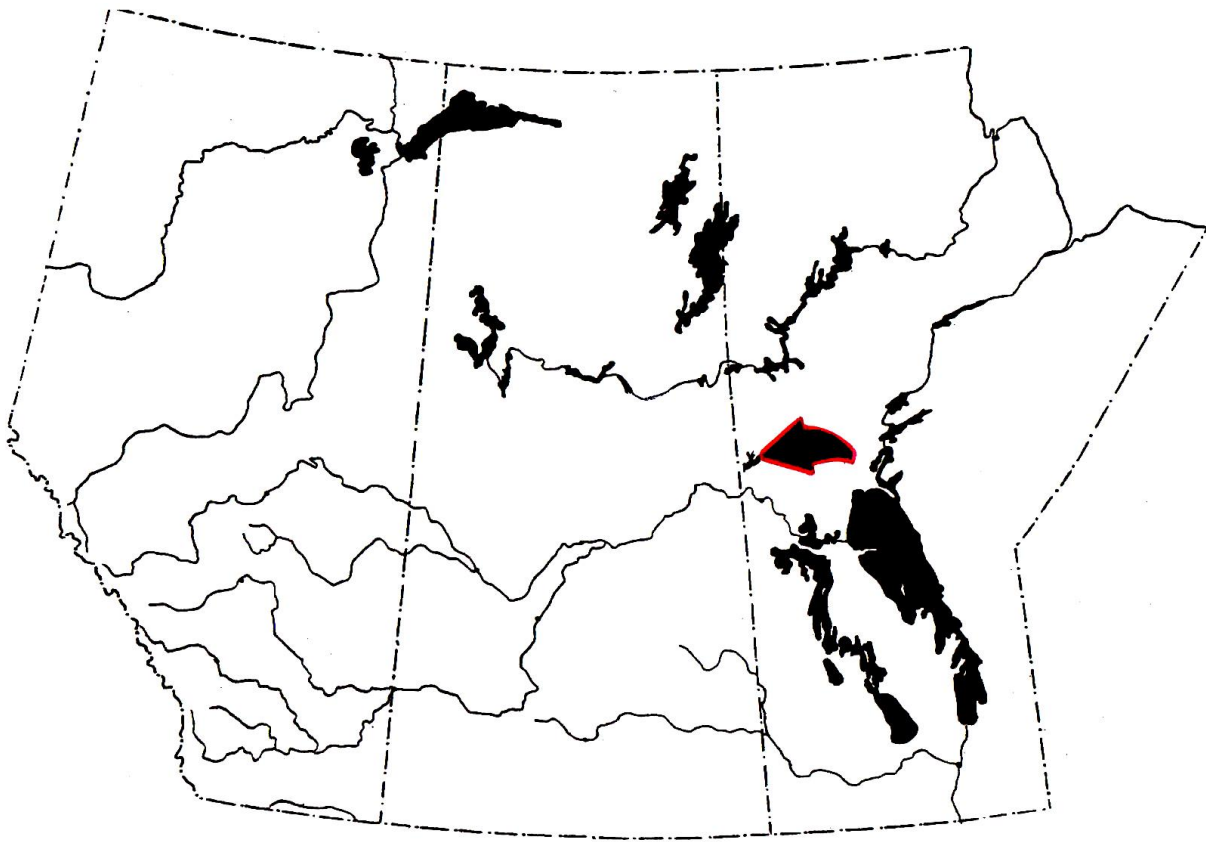
Doug is an avocational heritage aficionado and a long-time member of the MAS. He is also the founder of the Flin Flon Heritage Project that involves the collection and digitization of the history of the northern mining town. Northerners may recognize him as the author of his witty books about early days in the community, namely, *Tales from a Town with a Funny Name* and *A Child's Garden of Rocks*.

Few are aware of Doug's valuable work as an avocational archaeologist and ethnographer in the 1950s and 1960s. The proceeds of his efforts (artifacts and photographs) have been donated to The Manitoba Museum, and to the University of Winnipeg (oral history). The Manitoba Archaeological Society recognized Doug's efforts many years ago by naming a site in the Flin Flon/Lake Athapapuskow area and a particular type of projectile point after him. The present

article highlights some of Doug's contributions to our awareness of long- ago Indigenous peoples of the North.

## Background

In order to appreciate the significance of Doug's contribution to science, we have to first review the overall history of the Lake Athapapuskow area as it is presently perceived by archaeologists and historians.



**Figure 2: The Lake Athapapuskow locality where Doug made his findings.**

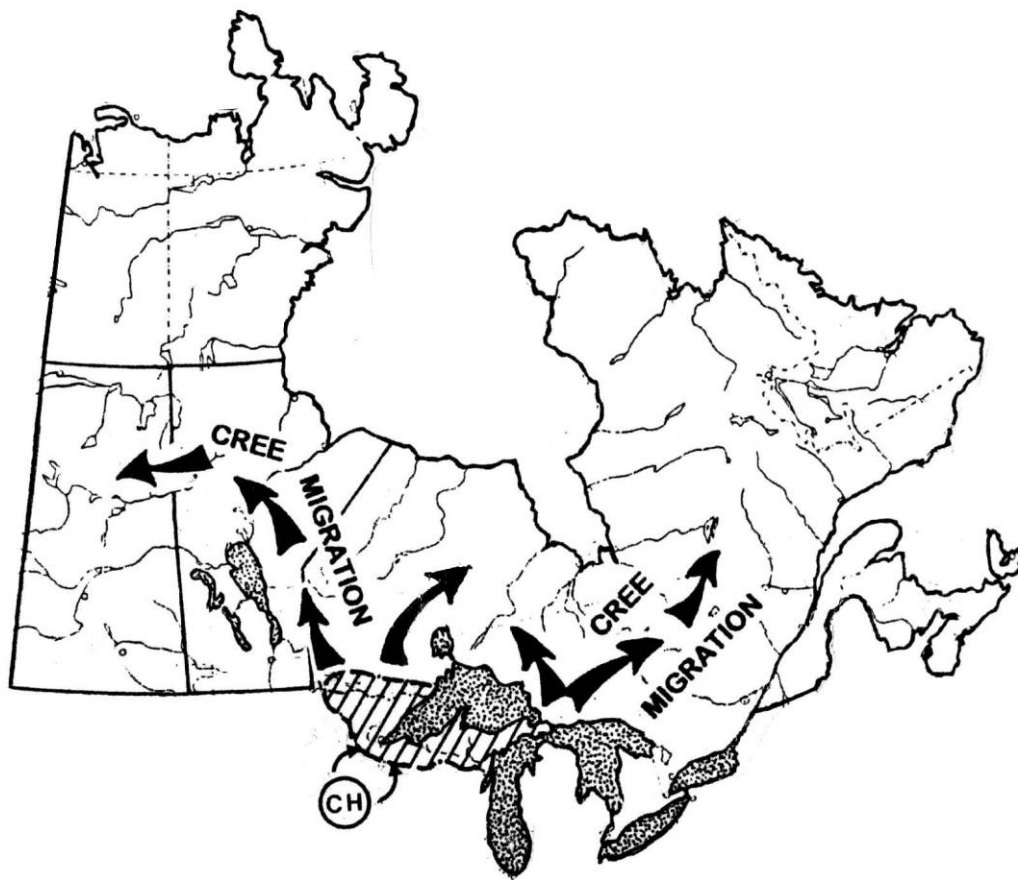
For many thousands of years, Manitoba's North was buried beneath a vast glacier that rendered the countryside uninhabitable. With a shift to a warmer climate, the ice progressively disappeared and was replaced by huge volumes of glacial meltwater that backed up against the diminishing ice front. This massive lake, like the glacier before it, prevented the countryside from being colonized by plants, animals, and people. By 8,000 years ago, the ever-diminishing ice sheet had finally disappeared altogether from the Flin Flon area. Finally, without this large dam to hold back the water from the melting ice, the great lake itself quickly drained and

disappeared altogether, and the once-flooded terrain sprang to life, inviting plants, animals, and people to gain a foothold in the North at long last.

The first people to enter the Shield country originated on the grasslands to the south. Their way of life belonged to the "Plano" cultural tradition ("Plano" means "plains" after the natural environment whence the Northerners' ancestors came). The culture of their descendants who pioneered living in the forested North has been named "Kamuchawie," after a lake that straddles the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border some 160 kilometres north of Flin Flon. Although there is no doubt evidence of the Kamutchiwie culture exists in the area, none was found either by Doug or by the several archaeological field parties that have visited the Lake Athapapuskow district.

With the passage of time, changes in the Kamuchawie culture gave rise to a widespread tradition known as the "Shield Archaic" – "Shield," because it was adapted to the expansive Laurentian Shield region of Canada, and "Archaic," from the Greek word "archaios," meaning "ancient" because it is very old. Some archaeologists think that the Shield Archaic people spoke a language called "Proto-Algonquian" that was ancestral to those spoken by the Crees and Ojibwas today.

Cree speech itself is believed to have originated some 2,500 years ago somewhere just to the northwest of Lake Michigan. A few centuries later it was being spoken within an area extending from the Boundary Waters area of the Ontario-Minnesota border eastward along the south shore and hinterlands of Lake Superior. From this original homeland it was carried northwards in several directions across the Canadian Shield. It spread to the northwestward around Lake Winnipeg, all the way to the Churchill River drainage west of Hudson Bay. It is likely to have become very widespread through a combination of (1) actual migration of Cree-speakers themselves, and (2) the adoption of the Cree language by indigenous Shield Archaic peoples of northern Ontario and Manitoba with whom the Crees came into contact during their expansion into new territory.



**Figure 3: Hypothesized Cree migrations out of the Cree homeland (CH), commencing ca 200 CE.**

Some archaeologists believe that we can actually trace the northward movement of the Crees and their cultural influence by noting the far-flung distribution of the distinctive pottery that they made. The earliest form of Aboriginal pottery found in Manitoba and northern Ontario is thought to have originated around 2,200 years ago (ca. 200 BCE) within the Cree homeland area adjacent to Lake Superior. It was the Crees who made this early pottery, since both the language and the pottery seem to have come into being in the same place (the Lake Superior region) and around the same time. The pottery became very widely distributed after that, and its earliest appearance north of Lake Winnipeg may mark the very first movements of Cree people and their language into the NorMan region.

But their pottery and their language weren't the only new things that the early Crees brought with them: they also possessed other customs that the local peoples were pleased to adopt, notably the bow and arrow. The Crees' influence would have been further enhanced by intermarriage between themselves and the northerners. The Cree influence seems to have been strong enough to encourage the adoption of the Cree language in place of the indigenous

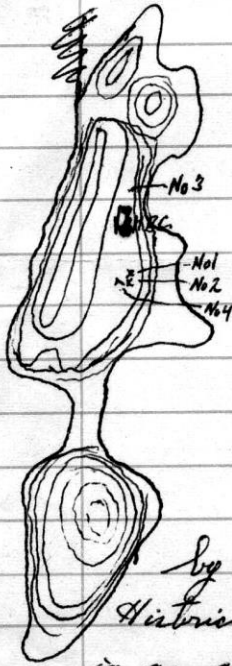
Proto-Algonquian speech. Linguists call this process “language-switching.” In the fullness of time the descendant populations became fluent, unilingual Cree-speakers, so that by 1,000 years ago (i.e., around 1000 CE) dialects of the Cree language were being spoken across most of the Canadian Shield. According to this line of thinking, then, Crees may have been living in northern Manitoba as early as 1,800 years ago, or since 200 CE. That equates with some 70 generations of continuous human history.

Doug’s interest in archaeology in the 1950s and 1960s was sparked and nurtured by Harry Moody, another local enthusiast who founded the Northern Gateway Museum at Denare Beach, Saskatchewan. Walter Hlady, a past President of the MAS, also provided support and guidance. Doug kept records of his findings and sent along the information and artifacts to the MAS for safekeeping.

Doug discovered three ancient Indigenous sites in the Lake Athapapuskow area just south of Flin Flon. These are the Hudson’s Bay Island site (pre-1956), the Evans site (1967), and the Bakers Narrows site (1967). At the time, boreal forest archaeology in Manitoba was in its infancy, and since then his findings have contributed significantly to our growing perception of lifeways that have been named “Shield Archaic” and “Terminal Woodland.” These cultural terms are used by archaeologists to indicate the time periods during which the ancient peoples lived at the sites.

**The Hudson’s Bay Island site:** A significant find was accidentally made in 1952 when Doug visited a small island in Lake Athapapuskow that had been burned over by a forest fire the year previous. As a result of the fire, numerous artifacts had been exposed on the surface. In addition to bow-and-arrow projectile points bow and arrow, cutting blades, and other stone tools, Doug found the remains of 19 pottery vessels of the same type. It is now widely accepted that some of the vessels were constructed using woven-fibre bags for support. Worthy of note is the fact that fingerprints are clearly visible on two of the pots!

Archaeologists have given a name to this type of pottery – “Clearwater Lake Punctate.” They call it that because a large site wherein this type of pottery was also found is located on Clearwater Lake near The Pas, and so the pottery is named after that. “Punctate” refers to the ring of small, shallow, circular



at the location marked as no 1 8" of the circumference of an indian pot about 10" in diam at the rim and about 2" of the side (to a point just at and just below the recurve were found.

at the site marked as no 2 and located 10' south and 25' east of no 1 about 100 pieces of pottery were found lying on the surface of the sand and intermixed with the top soil which has an average depth of 2". These pieces were located by Mr. Moody, of Beaver Lake, Mr. Metcalf of the Sask. Historical sites dept. and by Gail Lynn. ~~About 10' south~~ in an area approx 3' x 6' with the long axis E.W.

About 6' south of this place I located another deposit of pottery fragments and on this occasion removed about ~~one hundred~~ of seventy fragments of which three distinct rims were recognizable, one of which I assembled into two thirds of the circumference of a pot about 8" in diam, of the second pot about 3 1/2" of the rim of a pot about 4" in diam and badly smashed have been assembled, only a few fragments were found illustrating the third design. on a later trip to the same area about 100 additional pieces, some rim work, which matched the three aforementioned designs from site 2. unfortunately due to an accident during the cleaning process these became intermixed with 25 pieces from site 4 a place 15' west of site 2.

Mr. Hudson of moosehead found flint chips at site 3 at 6-8" depth

Figure 4: A page from Doug's Hudson's Bay Island site field notes.

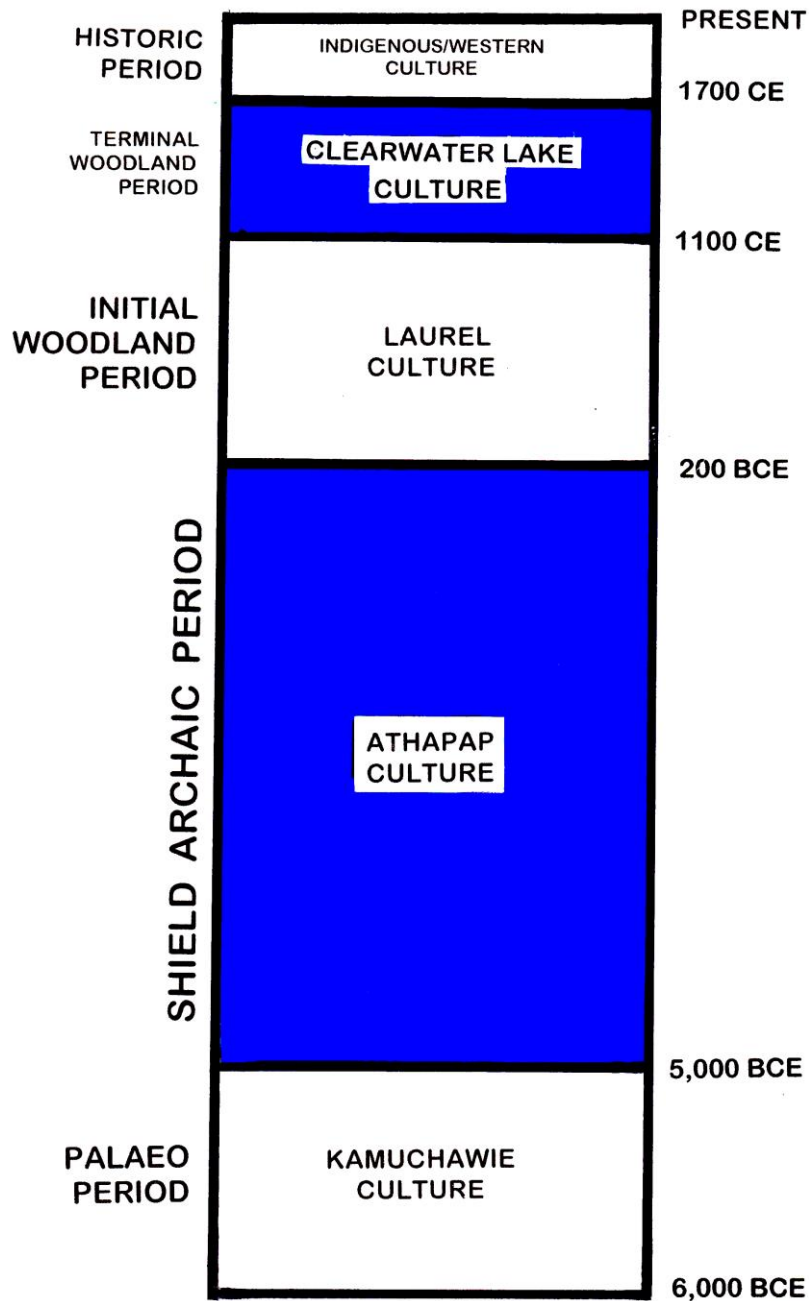
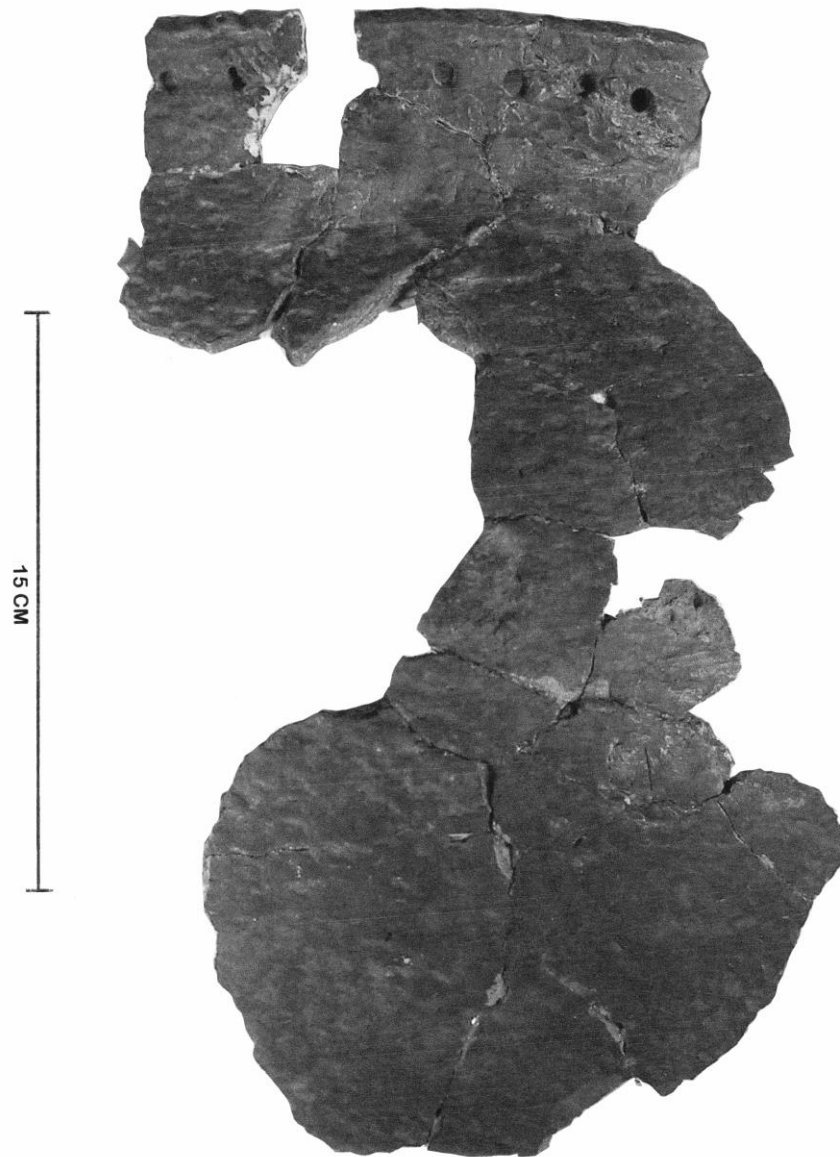


Figure 5: Time chart for the Lake Athapapuskow/Flin Flon region.

holes that typically encircle the rims of these pots. So that's why this type of pottery is called "Clearwater Lake Punctate." The term "Clearwater Lake" also applies to the total culture of which the pottery is an important part, and so we call that northern way of life the "Clearwater

Lake culture.” Evidence of it has been found throughout much of northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and on into Alberta.



**Figure 6: Reconstructions of a Clearwater Lake Punctate pot from the Hudson’s Bay Island site. Note the round indentations or punctuates encircling the rim. Courtesy of Brandon University.**

Since the tribal name of the people who possessed the Clearwater Lake culture is Cree, sites throughout the North that contain Clearwater Lake Punctate pottery are regarded as places where Cree people lived long ago. The Clearwater Lake culture has since been radiocarbon-



dated at various places across the North to between 1100 and 1700 CE and hence falls within the Terminal Woodland period.

Heritage consultant Dr Leigh Syms has remarked that the Hudson's Bay Island site collection is unique because at least eight different vessels could be partially reconstructed from the assemblage of potsherds (Kevin Brownlee, TMM, personal communication, 2014). Matching the broken rim and body sherds to rebuild the pots was a painstaking process and took Doug hundreds of hours.



**Figure 7: Doug's work bench in the basement of his house where he partially reconstructed several of the pots from the Hudson's Bay Island site.**

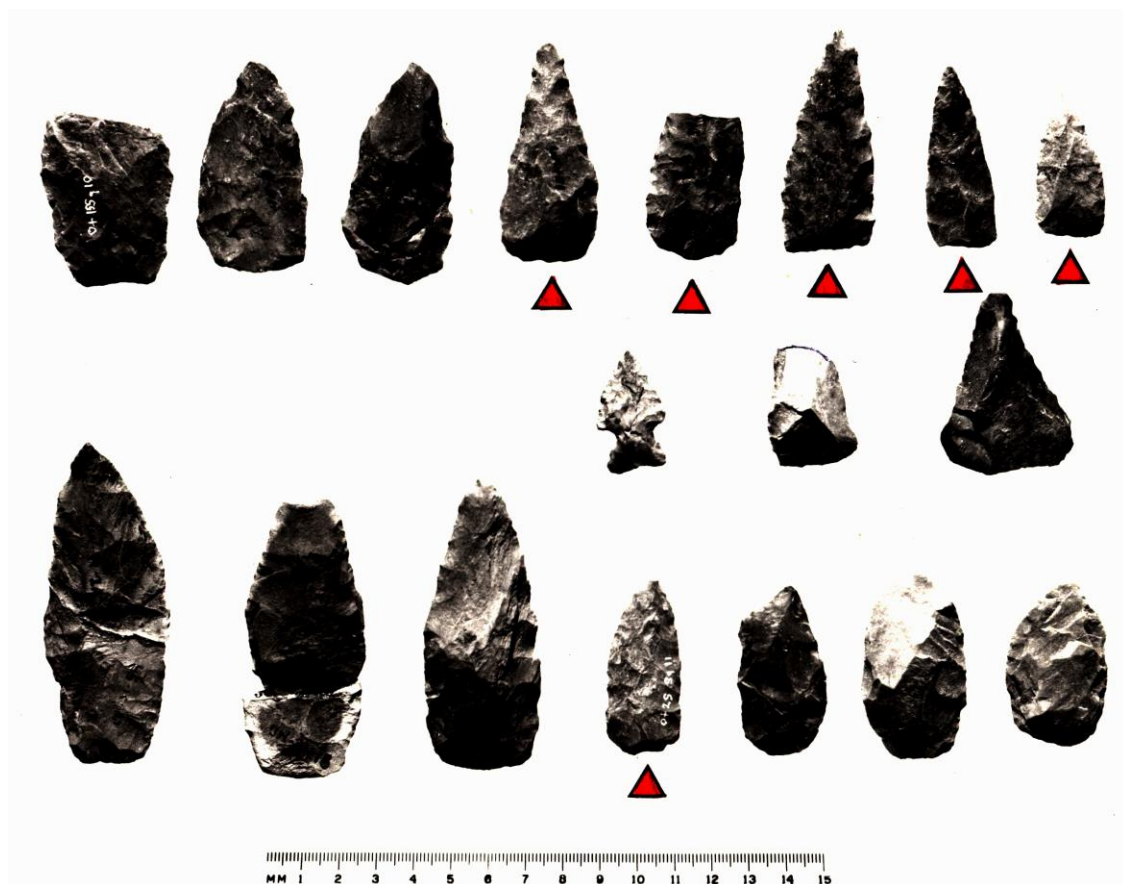
Doug's entire artefact collection was donated to TMM in 2010 and the pottery remains were subsequently transferred to Brandon University for specialized study. In addition to undergoing more reconstruction, additional information is being gathered thanks to the new research technologies available to archaeologists. The burned-on, carbonized food residue on the sherds assists with dating the pots and possibly identifying food that was consumed. In addition, plasticene impressions of the body and rim sherds are revealing details about the method of construction and outside surface-finish.

**The Evans site:** One of the earliest sites to be discovered in the North was named the Evans site by the MAS in honour of Doug. It was excavated by the MAS in 1966, 1967, and 1968, and in 1967 was visited by the Lake Agassiz Archaeological Survey crew from the University of Manitoba. It was a single-component deposit, and the projectile points, biface blades, scrapers, drills, and graters found within it are representative of the "Athapap culture" (5,000 to 200 BCE) of the Shield Archaic tradition. The occupants of this site did not make pottery for cooking

or food-storage as they did at the Hudson's Bay Island site, nor did they use bows and arrows for hunting.

The stone projectile points that were retrieved at the Evans site were named after their overall shape, that being "lanceolate." These "Evans Lanceolate" points taper from a rounded base to a pointed tip, and are believed to have been of a type that was used in conjunction with the atlatl or "spear-thrower" that predated the bow and arrow. The Evans Lanceolate, the "Athapap Lanceolate," and "Bakers Narrows Corner-notched" point types together comprise the diagnostic indicators of the Athapap culture.

Although the Evans site is located in what is now Cree country, the stone tools that Doug recovered from the Evans site are not believed to have been made by ancestral Crees. Rather, they are the handiwork of people who lived throughout the North before, and at the time of, the arrival of the first Crees in the region.

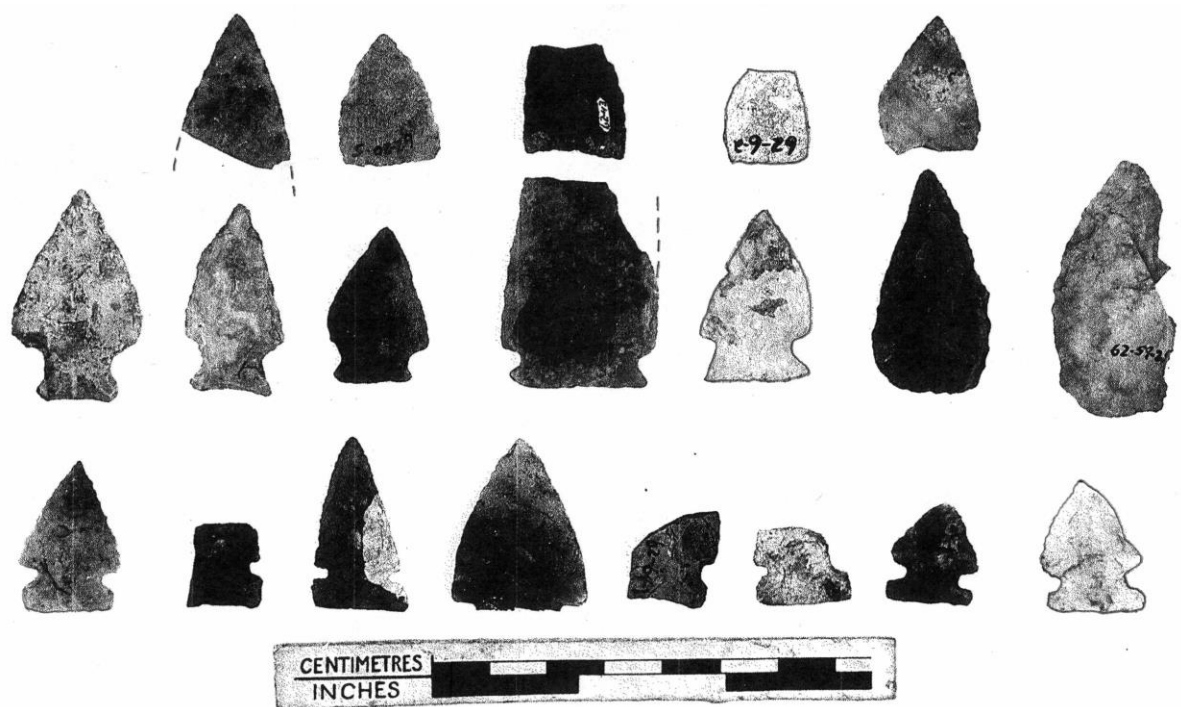


**Figure 8: Artefacts from the Evans site. The points indicated by the red arrows are of the Evans Lanceolate type named after Doug. Courtesy of the Manitoba Archaeological Society.**

**The Bakers Narrows site:** Doug discovered a second site in the late 1960s, this one in the Bakers Narrows area. This locus contained evidence of two different cultural periods; that is, it was multi-component. Its artefacts were dated to the earlier preceramic Athapap culture of the Shield Archaic tradition (5,000 –200 BCE) as discussed above, and to the Clearwater Lake culture of the Terminal Woodland tradition (1100 CE to 1700 CE). The people associated with the Clearwater Lake culture constructed clay vessels, used bows and arrows, and are identified as ancestral Cree.



**Figure 9: The Evans Lanceolate points were used in conjunction with atlatls or “spear throwers” that predated the use of the bow and arrow. Courtesy of The Manitoba Museum.**



**Figure 10: Projectile points from the Bakers Narrows site. Courtesy of the University of Manitoba Laboratory of Anthropology.**

Information on some of Doug's findings pertaining to the Evans site, Evans Lanceolate points, and the Shield Archaic tradition can be found in *Ten Thousand Years: Archaeology in Manitoba* that was published by the MAS in 1970 (pp. 29-45 and 97-102). In 1971, Walter Hlady also published some of Doug's artefacts in the *Manitoba Archaeological Newsletter*, Vol. 8, numbers 2 and 3, summer-autumn.

My thanks to Doug Evans and Leo Pettipas for their assistance in the preparation of this paper.