

The Ida Bay Site: 47DR35

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Ida Bay Description

The Ida Bay site (47DR35) is located in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin on a 64-acre parcel owned by Crossroads at Big Creek. The roughly 6-hectare site sits just below an Algoma stage beach ridge above the bay of Sturgeon Bay. It was occupied during the Early, Middle and Late Woodland periods. Approximately 80 square meters have been excavated. Like many sites on the Door Peninsula, units are typically very shallow, with bedrock reached approximately 25-35 cm from ground surface. Features are small and ephemeral. There is little remarkable stratigraphy due to natural transforms such as bioturbation and cryoturbation. Yet the site has potential to provide insights into Woodland Period life. Radiocarbon dates have not yet been obtained, but ceramics include incised over cordmarked, North Bay, and Heins Creek varieties. Similarly, lithic materials include Middle Woodland North Bay as well as Late Woodland types. Although analyses are just beginning, faunal data suggest a heavy dependence upon deer, with some fish as well. Bone antler and copper tools have also been recovered. Lithic, ceramic, subsistence and radiocarbon dating are on-going.

Public Outreach at Ida Bay



Since 2015, archaeology at the site has been a teaching experience for adults, elementary, and secondary school students in northeastern Wisconsin. Hundreds of students have had the experience of excavations, hands-on primitive technology in practice (at flintknapping), indigenous resource hikes, and flintknapping demonstrations.



Ida Bay Test Units



Ida Bay Lithic Analysis

Ida Bay Mass Analysis

Lithic analysis of Ida Bay materials is currently on-going, but a preliminary description of the debitage assemblage (N=1726) shows:

- Raw materials are overwhelmingly Maquoketa and Silurian chert.
- Quartz, quartzite, and blue-grey cherts make up less than 1% of the assemblage.
- Raw material quality is high, with only 23% of flakes rated as poor quality.
- Debitage is generally small. Only 14% of flakes are larger than 25mm, and the mean weight of a flake is 0.72g.
- There is spatial variation in the densities of hand-held vs bipolar reduction flakes. Below on the left is debitage from Unit 04, on the right is Unit 05.

Bipolar Debitage and Cores



Free Hand Debitage

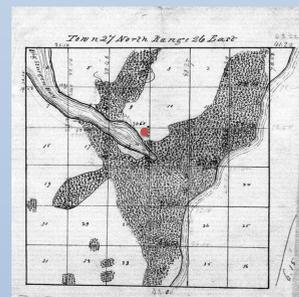


A Sample of bifaces recovered from Ida Bay.



The lithic assemblage is in the early stages of analysis. However, it appears that there are two separate occupations, one represented by North Bay type tools (above), and a later component represented by Madison triangular points.

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Copper awl



North Bay Ceramic Vessel