

All better off appreciating what each contributes

BY PAUL PUGH

TODAY'S Thunder Bay is the product of many generations' interactions in working and living together.

These interactions involved long-established peoples and cultures with peoples and cultures from distant lands.

We can be sure that each has its own unique contribution, and we are all better off when we appreciate what each contributes.

For most of my adult life, I was employed as a welder, first at the Port Arthur Shipyards, then at Can-Car/Bombardier.

Recently, on viewing a photograph of beautiful 3,500-year-old copper tools and ornaments (dart and lance heads, knives, chisels, awls, punches, bracelets, pendants) from the Thunder Bay-Nipigon region, I was reminded of how ancient the art of metal working is in our region.

Copper for these objects was obtained from regional sites, from Isle Royal to Nipigon, a re-



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Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee produces this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

mind also of how ancient mining is in our region. The production of high-quality metal objects required a high degree of skill, which must have come from years of practice, and no doubt passed down from one generation to another. Mining skills were probably acquired in a similar fashion.

The existence of individuals with metal working and mining expertise could only happen in a society where other individuals, with other skill sets, assisted those with metal working and mining skills, with the provision of food, clothing, shelter and transportation.

In this type of society, each person contributed with her/his skills to the general welfare.

During a period of unemployment from the shipyard, I worked at Old Fort William, in the role of cooper's apprentice.

During my stay at the Fort, I came to appreciate the skill sets brought to our area by French, Metis and Scottish people engaged in the fur trade.

While learning a little of the cooper's skills, I was also able to observe something of the blacksmith, tinsmith, carpenter, and other trades.

These, combined with First Nation canoes, snowshoes, trapping and other skill sets, comprised a vibrant society for a time.

My years in the workplace and as a union activist allowed me to learn something of the varied cultural backgrounds that make up Thunder Bay: Italian, Ukrainian, Finnish, Croatian, and many others.

Each has contributed to the making of our community.

Recently, the historic Fort William First Nation-Thunder Bay Declaration of Commitment opens another page, with more possibilities for our neighbouring communities.

Interestingly, one of the first economic joint projects is centered on mining, an activity we have literally thousands of years' experience in.

This project, and others to follow, will be strengthened to the extent that we increasingly appreciate and respect our rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Paul Pugh is a Thunder Bay city councillor and member of the city's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee.

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