



Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project Research Summary

Material Culture

Throughout their history, the Anishinaabeg of the Pimachiowin Aki area have made the best possible use of the materials at hand to live a life full of warmth, comfort and beauty. The people who inhabit the proposed Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Site have taken what their environment offered and made ingenious use of it, building birch bark canoes, and waterproof homes out of sheets of sewn birch bark, bending thin birch frames and weaving elaborate babiche webs for snowshoes, producing moose and caribou clothing, wood and bone utensils, all of which enable them to live well in their watery part of the world.

Some of these objects are grammatically animate and this animacy raises interesting questions about the meaning of objects in people's lives. Playing sticks for gambling, *naabawaagan(ag)*, spoons, *emikwaan(ag)*, and snowshoes, *aagim(ag)* are grammatically animate as are many of the ceremonial artifacts which are treated as ritual brothers, *wiikaaniwan*, of those they assist in ceremonies.

Many of the older objects of this sort, including some still owned and treasured by family members, are now in nearby museums in Red Lake, Ontario and Winnipeg, Manitoba. These institutions and others in Canada and North America also have substantial collections of very beautiful ceremonial objects including drums, rattles, dance capes and other regalia which were being used until relatively recently.

Because of the work of several anthropologists, notably A. Irving Hallowell, Jack Steinbring and Selwyn Dewdney, there is a remarkable amount of material culture from these communities, which has excellent provenance and is well remembered and contributes to our understanding of the connection between these people and the Pimachiowin Aki region.

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