Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project Research Summary
Cultural Landscape: macro scale or ancient past

Pimachiowin Aki, the land that gives life, is a fusion of an evolving natural landscape and a core of cultural values that have coalesced to produce a way of life that continues to identify the resident Anishinaabeg.

Pimachiowin Aki contains a complex mix of natural features and ecological characteristics that are not to be found elsewhere. Historically, the remoteness and inaccessibility of Pimachiowin Aki have been to the advantage of this relatively intact ecosystem; large provincial parks on both sides of the Ontario/Manitoba border provide further protection from modern natural resource extraction and large-scale development.

This "accident" of geography and history, while preserving the natural landscape has also had the effect of upholding a way of life rooted in the ancient past. Isolation from mainstream Canada has, until recently, sustained an autonomous economy in which traditional subsistence activities were supplemented with commercial fishing and trapping. Remoteness also acted as a filter for social change; and while contact with the larger Canadian population continues to affect some aspects of life, the Anishinaabeg of Pimachiowin Aki are among the last people on earth to retain core cultural values, traditions and relationships with the land.

The objective of macro scale research is to convey a sense of antiquity and character of Anishinaabeg occupation derived from existing archaeological record. A brief description of the complex late Pleistocene history, namely the Wisconsinan, and the in-migration of humans into North America is followed by a closer look at the ancient roots of the Anishinaabeg of Pimachiowin Aki. A descriptive history of what is known of the changing lives of the people of Pimachiowin Aki over time is presented from an archaeological perspective.

What becomes clear is that the history of the Anishinaabeg of Pimachiowin Aki is one of movement and mobility, ingenuity and survival, compromise and adaptation. The strength of the Anishinaabeg character is built on these age-old attributes, which are illustrated in the dynamic culture that today distinguishes the Anishinaabeg of Pimachiowin from all others.

Late Pleistocene migration of human populations, bearing biological affinities to north China/Mongolia and Siberian indigenous populations, into the Americas is considered by many people to be one of the greatest achievements of humankind (Wright 1995: 24).

To Native Americans there is no debate – they did not migrate, they are indigenous. This sense of timelessness is especially prevalent today in the culture, language, worldview and art forms of today's Anishinaabeg inhabitants of Pimachiowin Aki. The Anishinaabeg of Pimachiowin Aki arose from countless generations of ancestors who have tended to the needs of "Turtle Island", the vast North American continent, since the ancient past.