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**PHASE I, II, AND III ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT SITE
21ML81 FOR THE GARRISON KATHIO WEST MILLE LACS LAKE
SANITARY SEWER DISTRICT COLLECTION AND TRANSMISSION SYSTEM
IN MILLE LACS COUNTY, MINNESOTA.**

Volume I of III

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5. CULTURE HISTORY

By David Mather and James Lindbeck

5.1 Early Prehistoric Period

The first people we know of at Mille Lacs lived during the Early Prehistoric Period, as defined by Johnson (1984, 1988). This corresponds with the Paleoindian and Archaic periods, which far predate pottery, burial mounds, and other more visible aspects of Minnesota archaeology. Relatively little is known about these periods, although they account for close to three-quarters of the known human history of the state. Only the very end of this period is defined as a phase specific to the Mille Lacs Locality. The Petaga Phase corresponds to the Middle or Late Archaic tradition, and is the beginning of Johnson's (1984) Mille Lacs cultural chronology. Its defining characteristic is distinctive "Old Copper Culture" artifacts. Johnson recognized that older components (Paleoindian, Early Archaic and Middle Archaic) were also present at Mille Lacs, but they were not understood sufficiently to define as phases in their own right. New discoveries have been made since the development of Johnson's framework, particularly related to the Paleoindian tradition, but the temptation to define new phases at this time remains premature.

5.1.1 Paleoindian Period (11,200 to 7,500 B.C.)

The Paleoindian period was a time of rapid environmental change as the glaciers retreated from Minnesota (Wright 1974). Substantial changes in vegetation, wildlife, waterways, and the landscape occurred as a result of the ameliorating climate and Paleoindian lifeways reflect adaptations to these rapidly changing landscapes. The first Paleoindian peoples at Mille Lacs encountered a subarctic environment with no direct parallel in the modern world. The setting of the Mille Lacs area at that time can be approximated as tundra, with open, wind-swept vistas (McAndrews 2000; Pielou 1991). Lake Mille Lacs was newly formed from meltwater of the wasting Superior Lobe, the advance of which had created the natural dam of the Mille Lacs Moraine. A major difference in the local hydrology during the late glacial period was an outlet on the southern shore of Mille Lacs, in the vicinity of Murray Beach. That breach of the moraine connected with the northeastern arm of the Lake Onamia basin (Anderson 1998). It is not known what animals lived in the Mille Lacs area at that time, but it can be assumed that mammoths, giant bison, and other now-extinct megafauna were present in the general vicinity. Fish would have been present in the big lake and the Rum River soon after the establishment of open water (e.g. Pielou 1991) and it is likely that subsistence also included the gathering of wild plant resources, although it is not known to what extent Paleoindian people utilized these resources.

The lack of excavated and recorded Paleoindian sites in Minnesota makes it difficult to identify Paleoindian site types and assess their distribution across the landscape. No burials have been found at Mille Lacs dating to the Paleoindian period, and there is no direct data on subsistence. While it is believed that Paleoindians were highly mobile and traveled in small bands, the paucity of known sites hinders discussion of settlement patterns. The known sites do seem oriented toward the current bodies of water, but it should be remembered that these are the areas that have seen the majority of archaeological survey at Mille Lacs. These known sites should not be presumed to represent the actual settlement patterns of the Paleoindian period. It is not clear whether the Paleoindian population in Minnesota was small or whether a large number of sites have not been identified because they were destroyed or deeply buried. Research in other parts of the country, where Paleoindian sites are more common, suggests that the margins of lakes and swamps are good site locations, and these landscapes were prevalent in late-glacial and early Holocene periods of central Minnesota.

The Paleoindian period is divided into early (11,200 to 10,500 B.C.) and late (10,500 B.C. to