

A Vignette on Vinette : The Technology and Origins of Early Woodland, Vinette I pottery at the Dawson Creek Site, Ontario

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Vinette I is the type name given to the earliest pottery found on archaeological sites in Central and Atlantic Canada. It is considered a material indicator of human activity dating to the Early Woodland Period (900B.C.-400B.C), as well as participation in the Meadowood Interaction Sphere, co-occurring with a suite of highly distinctive material items that circulated over a wide geographic area. Vinette 1 vessels are 'sack-shaped', a moderate size and most often have cord-marked surfaces. They are characterized invariably as crudely made and friable; bodies are thick-walled, low-fired and coarse-textured. Macroscopic and low-magnification studies of compositional characteristics have interpreted the characteristic 'grit temper' as representing 'crushed rock' that was intentionally added by the potter. Feldspar, mica and quartz are mineral types consistently identified. It is thought that the mobile bands of this period made small quantities of pottery for their own use, as required to fulfill immediate cooking, storage and food processing needs. Patterns of geographic movement and exchange remain poorly understood, however, due to the paucity of direct physical evidence linking pots to geological resources on the landscape.

This paper presents the results of a pilot study of the technological and provenance characteristics of Vinette I pottery using thin-section petrography. The material analysed derives from Dawson Creek, a small, seasonally occupied, deer-hunting and nut-collecting camp situated on Rice Lake. The evidence and behavioural significance of the compositional variation observed is examined in light of current assumptions concerning manufacturing techniques and patterns of circulation and consumption.