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News

For Immediate Release

Attn: Events & Calendar Editors/Museums/Lectures

Archaeologist Will Dig Into Ancient Great Lakes Metalworking June 13 at Mitchell Museum Talk

EVANSTON, Ill., June 1, 2010 — Thomas C. Pleger, associate professor of anthropology and archaeology at the University of Wisconsin Baraboo-Sauk County, will give a presentation on the ancient Native metalworking peoples of the upper Great Lakes at 1 p.m. on Sunday, June 13, at the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian in Evanston.

In his talk, “The Old Copper Industry: The Origins of Prehistoric Metal Technology in Eastern North America,” Pleger will discuss archaeological research indicating that early western Great Lakes Indians were the first people in North America to develop metal fabrication techniques.

“Most people aren’t aware that there was an advanced metal-working technology in North America,” Pleger said in an interview about his talk. He said these cultures developed complex processes and extensive trade.

Pleger says pre-contact Indians living between 3,000 and 6,000 years ago taught themselves how to hot and cold hammer local copper to produce projectile points, wood working tools, harpoons, fishhooks, and jewelry. Metal items “were used for everyday subsistence activities and traded to cultures outside the region for exotic materials,” Pleger writes. Later items had symbolic rather than purely practical value.

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He will provide an overview of what archaeologists have learned about the daily life, social organization, and trade of these ancient peoples, known to scholars as the Old Copper Industry.

“We know a great deal more today than we did even 30 or 40 years ago,” he said.

Pleger earned a master’s and a doctorate in anthropology and archaeology from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. His doctoral and post-doctoral research has focused on the archaeology of the western Great Lakes.

Admission to the event is included with museum admission, which is \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for seniors, students, teachers (with valid school ID), and children. Maximum admission per family is \$10. Admission is free for Mitchell Museum members, tribal members, and active-duty members of the U.S. military and their immediate families. The independent, nonprofit museum is at 3001 Central St., Evanston. For information, phone (847) 475-1030. On the Net: <http://www.mitchellmuseum.org>.

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