

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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At its inception, the original Projectile Point Reference Guide created by the London chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society (OAS) was designed to provide academics, cultural resource management (CRM) firms, and the wider public with an accessible resource for identifying stone spear and arrow heads, academically known as lithic projectile points. However, why do we identify these points in the first place, what are the mechanisms we use to give these points ages and names? and what do we learn from distinguishing the cultures that made them from one another?

## Typology and Ontario Archaeology

The primary tool for this is Typology, or the systematic classification of objects based upon shared attributes and characteristics. While typological systems are far from perfect, the study of stone tools has a long history with typologies, predating archaeology as a discipline entirely. When archaeologists use typologies, it is typically in conjunction with stratigraphic association, which assigns dates to objects based on their position within the layers of the earth, associating archaeological sites and artifacts with cultural groups and time periods. Once a typology has been established, the process of identifying a point in relation to a site can speed up relative dating by saving the time and resources required for methods like radiocarbon dating. In addition, “typing” a point allows researchers to quickly assign sites to cultural complexes, establishing an understanding of the cultural history of an area, and the distribution of that complex and their mobility.

Within North American archaeology, the relationship between projectile points and typologies goes so far that archaeology is often branded and defined by the ‘flint arrowhead’ to the point that one cannot think of archaeology in North America without projectile points. In Ontario, projectile points sit as one of the primary defining cultural materials that we have to study the past. While the reasons for this are many, their excellent preservation and variation in manufacture and design across time and space stand out. Projectile points can tell us so much about the people of the past, where they gathered their materials and how far they moved from those sources, how they developed and valued manufacturing techniques, and what they ate and hunted based on the design and use-wear of these tools. Alongside this, very few cultural materials can preserve as long as stone tools do, especially when we consider the deeper past.

## Updates to the Guide

With the background and intent of the original guide outlined, why update it? Have things changed so much? In short, yes. Things have changed immensely in the last 40 years, technologically and academically. This is not to take away from the authors of the original point guide in any way. To be abundantly clear, this project would not be possible without the incredible and foundational work of the archaeologists that came before us, and much of the information from the original guide is retained. We are incredibly grateful to have had the

opportunity to learn from their research and be a part of its preservation.

When the original guide was compiled in 1987, visual depictions of points were limited to line drawings and profile outlines. While both media are still invaluable, the dissemination of digital camera and high-quality colour printing technology allow us to provide even further detail when exhibiting projectile points. As a result, we have chosen to include high resolution images of exemplary points alongside the original line drawings for each point type. While some of the original entries were limited in their depictions of points, sometimes only showing an individual sketch, each entry has been updated with a sample photo of multiple points to give readers a better feel for the variation found within a single type. As technology has changed, so has our understanding of the past. In the intervening decades, updates in our understandings of point type distributions, associated dates, and methods of lithic analysis have changed significantly. While a comprehensive literature review and update would have been out of the scope of this project, we have updated the language where possible to create a more accessible and digestible resource for students and members of the public.

Among our additions to this point guide are a material reference section and a point anatomy primer. With samples of major Ontario chert formations found across the region, we have attempted to provide the best examples of materials that would have been commonly used to create the point types found in this guide. While this list is not exhaustive, and does not account for all exotic materials that have been found in Ontario, the material examples provided allow for a basic primer to local materials that have been used for millennia. The point primer was designed to introduce readers to projectile points and assist in identifying the key characteristics and features of a projectile point, whether for new students unfamiliar with projectile points and archaeology, or for more experienced field technicians needing a quick point of reference. This primer consists of an introduction to points, detailing basic anatomy and dimension measurements, as well as the general terminology used in describing point types. This terminology includes blade and base shapes, stem and notch types, cross section types, and distinguishing features like fluting.

Overall, our central goal with this updated reference guide has been to provide a visual and formatting update to the original guide. Providing new detailed photographs, reorganizing and reformatting each entry, and rewording when we deemed it necessary. Over the course of this project, we have attempted to the best of our ability to maintain consistency with our choices regarding the chosen typologies. As a result, the decision was made to focus primarily on Ontario based site documentation, point samples and literature. By extension, the inclusion, exclusion, or merging of various types that were present in previous iterations of the guide has been an ongoing process informed by our advising and consulting colleagues and professors, whose guidance we could not have done without.