

Stó:lō Culture - Ideas of Prehistory and
Changing Cultural Relationships to
the Land and Environment

Comparative Civilization 12
Social Studies 10
Science & Technology 11

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December, 1995

PART I

Careful Definitions - Prehistory, Culture, Tradition and Race

The study of the long-term changes in culture is one of the specific tasks of many anthropologists and archaeologists. The kind of knowledge gained through this kind of study helps us know who we are and where we have come from. It informs us about the important relation that people have to the environment and how cultures operate within it. This kind of study is also very revealing about how we know what we know.

Because the task of understanding changes in a culture's relationship to the land and environment requires a specialized vocabulary. Anthropologists and archaeologists use words that may be common in conversation in very particular ways. In this curriculum, the ideas of "prehistory," "culture," "tradition," and "race" must be carefully defined. These words and ideas are commonly used, but in the context of a discussion on the long-term history of a particular people, they have very specific meanings. Knowing these meanings will help address stereotypes that are commonly associated with these terms.

Because Aboriginal societies that lived on the Northwest Coast of North America did not have a system of writing, archaeological evidence and oral traditions are the main means by which knowledge about the long-term history of *Stó:lō* culture can be gained. The first written documents in this area were made by European explorers who visited the region in the 1770's. The term "prehistory" then, is used to describe the period of time before historical documents were written. It is important to understand the meaning of the word "prehistory," because it is often used to imply negative ideas about a time period that was "primitive," "savage," or "uncivilized." This is not the intended meaning of this term.

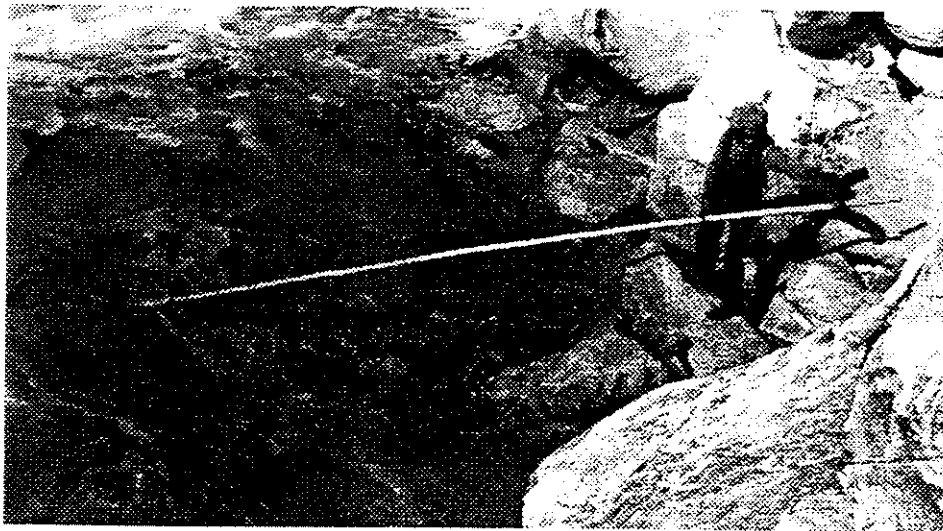
The term "culture" is often thought of in contemporary Canadian society in the context of operas, ballet, symphonies and Shakespeare. "Popular culture" is a term that has recently been used to describe such things as Muchmusic, body piercing, and recent books about urban life. "Native culture" is often thought of as the art, masks, and dances which are so visible in mainstream North American society. Anthropologists use the term culture to refer to an idea



Antler carving from the Glenrose Site. This knife handle is one of the earliest artistic representations known from Stó:lō territory and a unique example of ancient culture (Borden, in Carlson, 1976).

which encompasses all these things. "Culture" is the pattern of **learned human behaviour**, or the things that people do which they have learned through life. Language is culture, as are politics, art, religion, philosophy, and science. For archaeologists, "material culture" or the artifacts (portable objects of human manufacture like projectile points, beads, toasters, etc...) and features (non-portable objects of human manufacture like houses, rock paintings, fire pits, roads, etc...) are studied to understand this learned human behaviour. Archaeologists infer from the study of artifacts and features the larger patterns of human behaviour that make up "culture."

"Tradition" is a term that also has many common uses, but has specific implications for the study of human cultures. A tradition is a pattern of learned behaviour that is passed on through generations within a specific culture. In contemporary Canadian society, we commonly think of traditions like Easter egg hunts, having pot roast with gravy for dinner on Sundays, buying a diamond ring for wedding engagements and celebrations on July 1st for Canada Day. *Stó:lō* traditions include winter spirit dancing, indigenous art styles, stories and legends, and canoe races among many others. As in other cultures, some of these traditions are recent, while others stretch far back into the past. One of the main goals of the study of prehistory is to document the antiquity of Aboriginal cultural traditions, and to document how these traditions have changed over time.



Fishing Salmon in the Fraser Canyon - an important Stó:lō tradition (BCARS).

The idea of "race" is a concept that, like the ones above, has many negative stereotypes and misconceptions associated with it. The idea of "race" refers to a group of people who have common biological or genetic characteristics. Such groups in the past have commonly been divided up on the basis of the colour of their skin, but it is a well established fact that these are completely inadequate ways to view genetic history and variation. The variation that is observed between "races," is the result of millions of years of biological adaptation to different environments in the world. These are profoundly long periods of time, but do

not reflect "superiorities" or "hierarchies" of difference, only **relative** differences. Variation in "race" has no direct relationship to variation in culture or behaviour. One does not determine or even influence the other. In essence, race is a useful concept to document biological or genetic changes and similarities in groups of humans over time. "Race" is not a useful concept to understand differences in culture. It exists independently from culture.

Having carefully defined how these specific terms and ideas are used here, we should now turn to another particular problem - one of "epistemology" or the philosophy of how we know what we know. Most scientific knowledge is gained through hypothesis testing. The process basically works as follows: An observation is made of something in the real world. Based on the way the scientists understands the world, a model is created to try to explain that observation. In this model one or more specific hypothesis are given which can be tested to support or reject the model. Tests are designed which enable the scientist to independently assess the hypothesis - the more tests the better. These are conducted, usually through making more observations of the real world, and the hypothesis is either supported, revised or rejected. Although some tests may very strongly support the hypothesis (and in turn the model it is generated out of), the scientist can never discount the fact that someone, someday may be able to design another test which rejects that hypothesis, or design a different model which better explains whatever observation of the real world has been made. Thus, the knowledge the scientist gains is never absolute. It is continually being supported, revised or rejected as our understanding of how the world works changes.

Not all knowledge is generated through the use of the scientific method - either formally or informally. This method of reasoning developed in Europe during the enlightenment. People's understanding of how the world works can often be quite different. Before Einstein, physicists understood the world in terms of Newtonian laws. Looking across cultures and over time, there has been an immense diversity of human thought and understanding of the world. The one western science provides has a difficult time explaining many elements of shamanism, while Innuite oral traditions do not explain the motion of energy past very massive objects.

By opening our eyes to many different ways of understanding the world - and remembering how we know what we know - a greater, more rich sense of the world can be achieved. This is the ultimate goal of anthropology.

PART II

Origin Stories from *Stó:lō* Traditions and Western Science

Everybody has ideas of how they came to be in the world. Most cultures have explanations of their origins as human beings. *Stó:lō* oral narratives talk about how the "*Stó:lō* people have lived here since time immemorial." *Stó:lō* oral traditions tell different stories than those constructed by western science. However, these stories are not incompatible. They do not contradict each other because they are addressing somewhat different philosophical issues. They explain in many cases how people come to be fully human, how people come to be connected to the world they inhabit today. These traditions often involve **transformation**, and talk about a time when people, animals and supernatural beings had the ability to change into different things. The world came into order when *Xá:ls*, "the Transformer," changed people into animals, plants and stones, which became ancestors of contemporary *Stó:lō*. Such transformations establish and affirm the connections between the *Stó:lō* and the land they live in. The following are some accounts of *Xá:ls* that tell some of these transformations:

In the beginning, man appeared at different places, always on a river or the sea. How or why he appeared no one knows. The earth existed before him, and birds and animals. Afterwards *Xá:ls* came. Who he was, whence he came, and whither he went, no one knows. He changed people in many different places to rocks, why no one knows.¹

There was a time when the world was a lot different than it is now. Many things were with power; both people and animals and other beings. Many people could create things their own way. If a man wanted a deer, he could fix it or wish it; he didn't have to hunt for it. Others could see things before they happened and others were fitted with the powers of transformation. God didn't like this so he sent *Xá:ls* down to make things right. Some people were too smart and abused their power so God sent *Xá:ls* down to destroy those who were powerful.²

Xá:ls made rivers here and lakes there. He changes many human beings into animals and birds and generally gave the world its present form. He taught man how to fish, how to make bows and arrows, and other useful accomplishments, besides teaching how to make masks.³

The tribal traditions tell that Qals [*Xá:ls*], the deity, met the ancestors of all [the] tribes and transformed them into certain plants or animals which generally abound near the site of the winter village. For instance, Ma'le is well known for the great number of flags growing in the slough near the village, mountain-goats are found not far from *Pa'pk'um*, and so forth. In many cases the ancestor is said to have been transformed into a rock or remarkable shape or size, which is found not far from the village. Thus, *T'équlatca*, *Qa'latca*, and *Aultte'n* are still shown.⁴

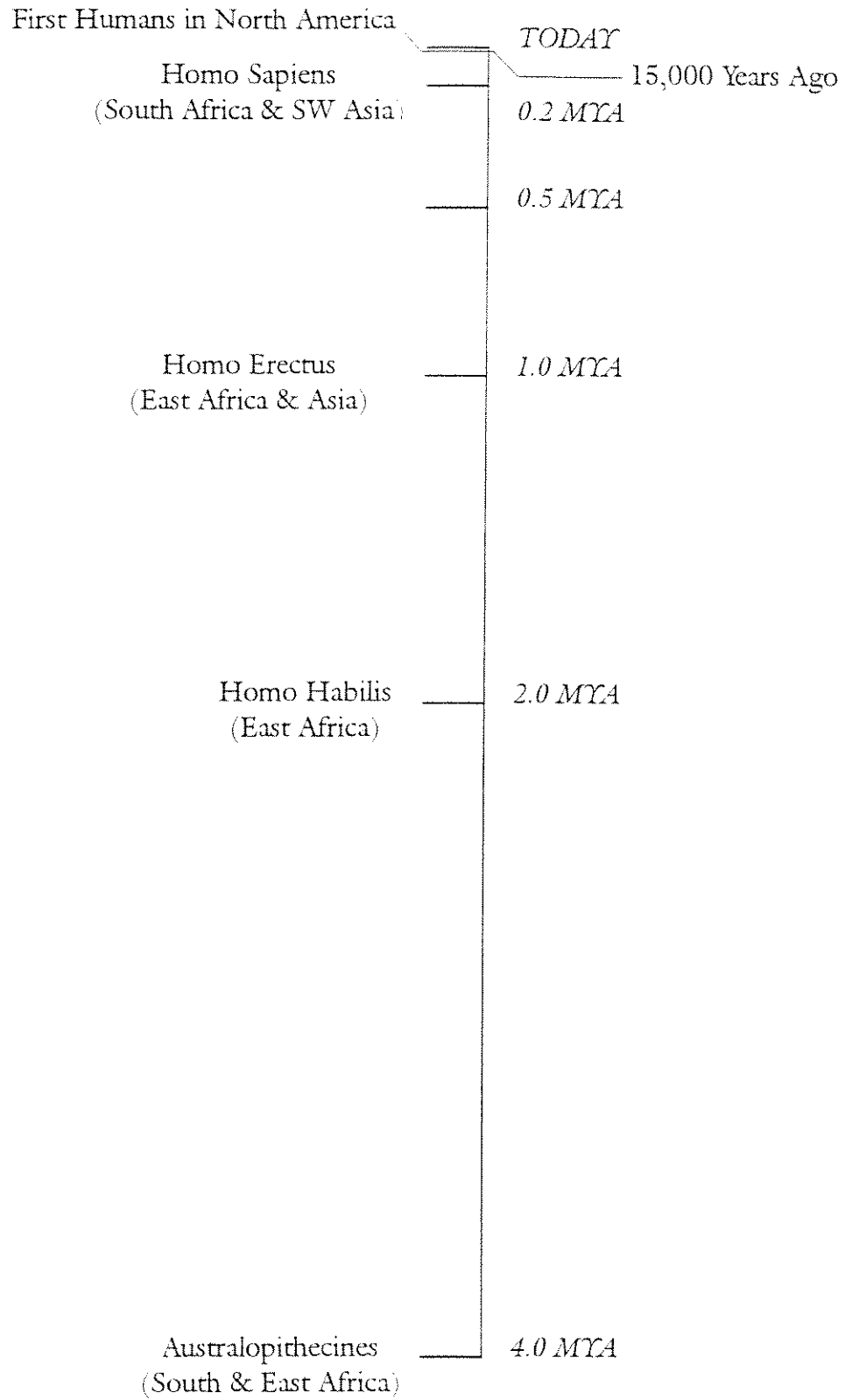


Transformer rock at Xá:ytem. At this site, Xá:ls threw three siya:m into a heap and transformed them to stone. The rock remains to this day (Photo courtesy G. Mohs).

These accounts are best explained by a *Stó:lō* who is familiar with these traditions. The stories by themselves, although inherently interesting, have much richer meanings than what can be gained by reading them alone. There is a rich cultural tradition which surrounds these stories like the weave of a blanket. These traditions shape how people are expected to behave, how they interact with one another, and how they understand how the world works.

It is highly recommended to invite a guest speaker into the class who can present these oral traditions in their proper, spoken form.

Western science has constructed the explanation of the evolution of our species from other, earlier primates over extremely long periods of time. Over these long periods of time (approximately 4 million years), small populations of the various hominid (or human-like) ancestors of our species adapted to different environments in Africa, and slowly spread throughout the African and Asian continents. The specifics of this story are continually being revised and updated as new fossil finds force scientists to revise their models of human origins. However, by 100,000 years ago *homo sapiens neanderthalensis* the direct ancestors of our species, came to live throughout Africa, Asia and Europe. Scientists believe that from this time on, human populations grew and spread throughout more diverse climates and landscapes, populating the African continent by 50,000 years ago and the North American continent by 15,000 years ago. By 8,000 years ago, human beings



Timescale of Human Biological Evolution
(Measured in Millions of Years Ago - MYA)

occupied every diverse climate from the deserts of Africa to the ice-fields of the Arctic, and to the jungles of South America. This story that science has constructed is no so much about "creation" as it is about explaining the incredible diversity of human existence. It provides an explanation to understand the fantastically long periods of time that human beings and our ancestors have been on the earth.

The first chapter of the archaeological story constructed here deals with the initial occupation of the American continents by humans. Archaeologists have provided explanations from the evidence available to them about (1) when people initially arrived in the New World; (2) where these people came from; and (3) how these people interacted with the ice-age environment to move through the American continents.

The Question of When

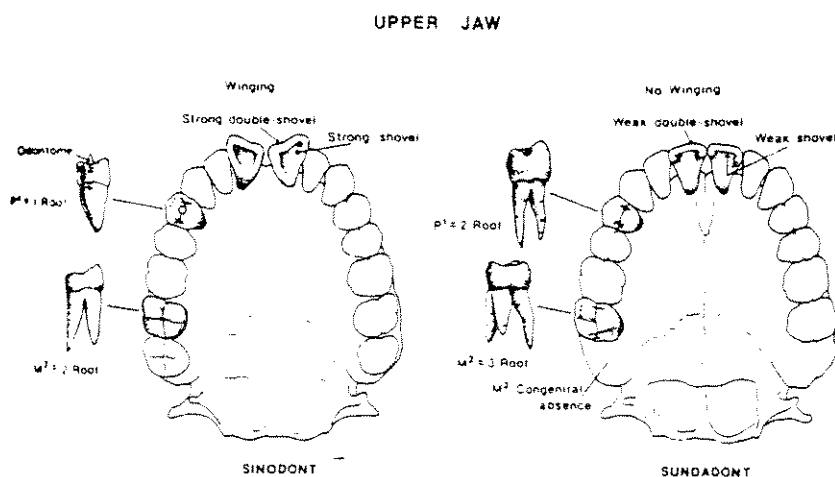
When asking questions about how long ago people first occupied the American continent we need to remember the incredibly long periods of time being discussed. There are a number of factors which provide logical limits to how long ago people could have occupied this area. First, no evidence has ever been uncovered to suggest that *homo sapiens sapiens* populations evolved independently in the New World. This means that there were no populations of early primate ancestors which adapted over millions of years into humans, like what occurred in Africa over the past 4 million years. This is, of course, not for any lack of searching for these kinds of remains. Archaeologists have been diligent in exploring for the earliest evidence of human occupation of all parts of the world. It is reasonable to assume that if there was any such evidence in existence, something would have been uncovered by this time. Ample evidence for evolution has been found in Africa, over many parts of Asia, but none in the Americas. Thus, the human populations in the New World must have evolved to *homo sapiens sapiens* first in Africa and Asia, before spreading to other parts of the world (the Americas and Australia in particular). Secondly, current evidence suggests that *homo sapiens* first appeared in the Old World sometime after 100,000 years ago, with modern *homo sapiens sapiens* populations (the species which all modern humans are members of) occurring first around 40,000 to 50,000 years ago. These factors outline the outer-most limits for the antiquity of human occupation of the New World.

To put some of these ages into perspective, it should be noted that human occupation of most of Europe occurred only within the past 40,000 years. Fitted clothing (which would allow people to survive the cold winters in northern Asia and Europe) is only found in the archaeological record 30,000 years ago. The latest Ice Age or "Pleistocene" occurred between 25,000 and 13,000 years ago. During this time, almost all of North America above the 48th parallel (somewhere around Seattle, Washington) was covered in about 1000 meters solid ice. However, between 25,000 and 13,000 years ago there was a large, ice-free plain commonly called the "Bering Land Bridge" (which was about the size of the province of Saskatchewan), that connected eastern Siberia and western Alaska across the Bering Strait. Given these basic limitations, people must have come into the New World after 25,000 years ago.

To date, no secure evidence has been found in either North or South America which would date human occupation back between 25,000 and 40,000 years. Every site that has been thought to have dated from this period has proved to be either younger than 14,000 years or remains controversial. There is, however, secure evidence of the earliest occupation of North America in the Yukon and Alaska around 11,500 years ago, and south of the maximum extent of the glacial ice sheets at a number of sites dating between 11,500 and 11,000 years ago. All of these lines of evidence suggest that the initial occupation of the New World occurred sometime towards the end of the last ice age, after 14,000 years ago.

The Question of From Where

It has long been supposed that Aboriginal people who live in North and South America have some biological links to people in east Asia. Physical anthropologists have examined the skeletal and genetic structure of populations from east Asia and the New World and have established clear biological links between these groups of people. One particularly convincing example is the genetically determined trait of the shape of teeth. People who



Some of Christy Turner's theories about the peopling of America are based on differences between the teeth of so-called Sinodonts (northern Asians and all native Americans) and Sundadonts (eastern Asians). Sinodonts display among other features strong incisor shoveling (scooping out on one or both surfaces of the tooth), single-rooted upper first premolars, and triple-rooted lower first molars.

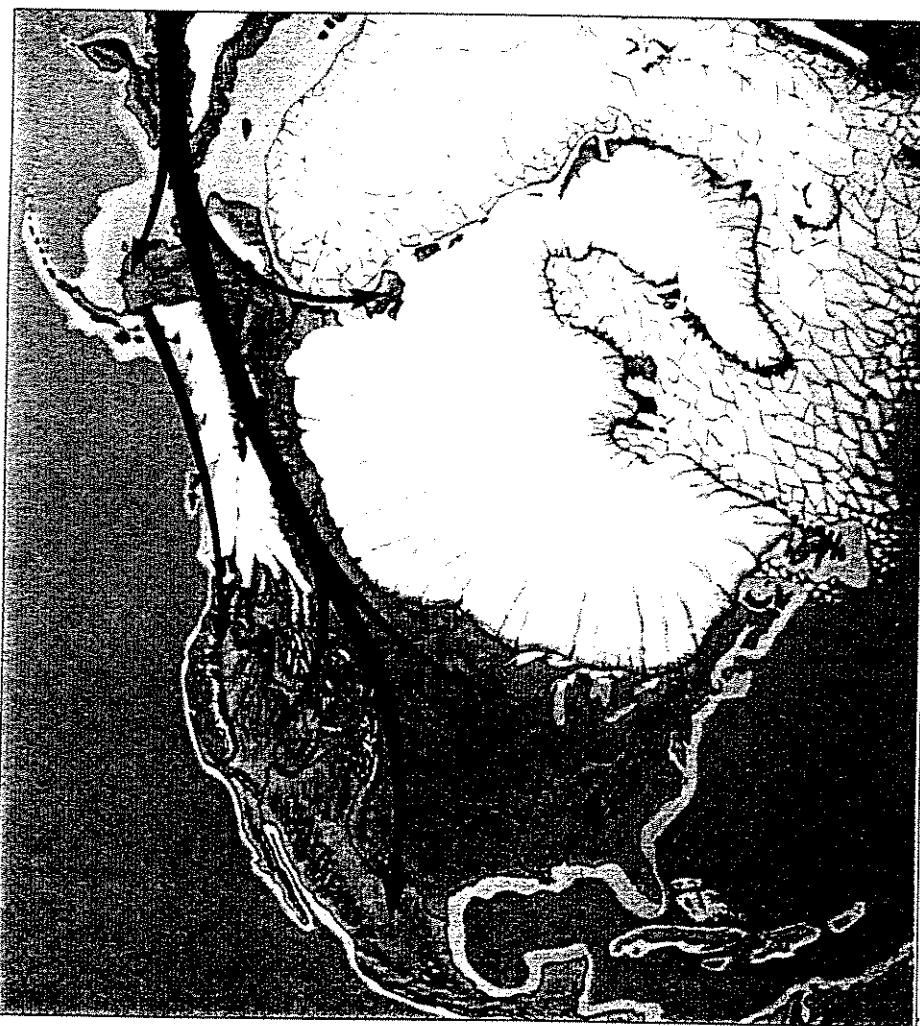
*Sinodont (northern Asian & native American) & Sundadont (eastern Asian) teeth.
Note the shape of the two front teeth. (Turner, 1986).*

are descended from east Asian populations have "shovel-shaped" front teeth or curved from side-to-side in the back, on the tongue-side. In contrast, populations descended from Europe and Africa have front teeth which are either straight or curved up-and-down on the back or tongue-side. The shape of the two front teeth of Aboriginal people is the same as

that of those from east Asia. This may seem like coincidence, but the shape of teeth is a trait that is genetically determined, much like gender or eye colour. As *homo sapiens* populations did not independently evolve in the New World, this dental evidence is one of many lines which firmly connects the genetic history of Aboriginal populations to east Asia.

The Question of Movements and Life in the Ice-Age

Given that initial human occupation of the New World likely occurred sometime towards the end of the last Ice Age (around 14,000 years ago), and that Aboriginal populations in North and South America show clear physical similarities to populations in east Asia, archaeologists have proposed that humans arrived in the New World via the "Bering Land Bridge," which existed between Siberia and Alaska between 25,000 and 13,000 years ago.



*Movement of people from Beringia into North America during last ice-age.
Note both coastal and "ice-free corridor" routes are mapped. (Reader's Digest Atlas of Canada, 1995).*

As the glaciers started melting around 14,000 years ago, small populations of people who lived in this vast northern plain travelled either by water-craft down the Pacific Coast of North America, or by land through a proposed "Ice-Free Corridor" which may have existed just to the east of the Rocky Mountains. The evidence for either of these movements into continental North America is vague, and much of the human occupation of the New World at this time remains a mystery.

These movements happened over incredibly long periods of time - hundreds and even thousands of years. They can not be thought of in terms of "migration" or "immigration," but follow the long established pattern of increasing human populations spreading into new areas so that their populations can be sustained. Such expansion of human occupation into new territory over these vast periods of time are very different processes than the colonial expansions of empires which have occurred throughout the globe in the past several hundred years. The processes of the former are largely adaptational in nature, whereas the latter are largely political. Such distinctions should be kept clear when discussing the peopling of the New World.

Having established the antiquity of human occupation of the New World, and having discussed issues of how and from where these human populations came, we can now discuss the varying adaptations of indigenous cultures, focusing on the local adaptations of *Stó:lō* culture in the lower Fraser River watershed. The basic tenant here is that although Aboriginal people have clear biological connections to east Asian populations, the evidence is overwhelming for the unique development of indigenous cultural traditions in the New World. Essentially, all linguistic and archaeological evidence shows that Aboriginal "culture" has developed independently and uniquely in the New World, since the original inhabitation 14,000 years ago.

PART III

Stó:lō Culture - Adaptations to Land and Environment

Anthropologists and Aboriginal people have asked a number of different questions about the prehistory of the people who live in the lower Fraser River area. Some of the major questions these people ask are:

- 1) How, from where, and when did the first humans arrive in the Lower Fraser River watershed?
- 2) How does the archaeological record reflect *Stó:lō* culture history?
- 3) What are the major trends of *Stó:lō* cultural continuity and cultural change?

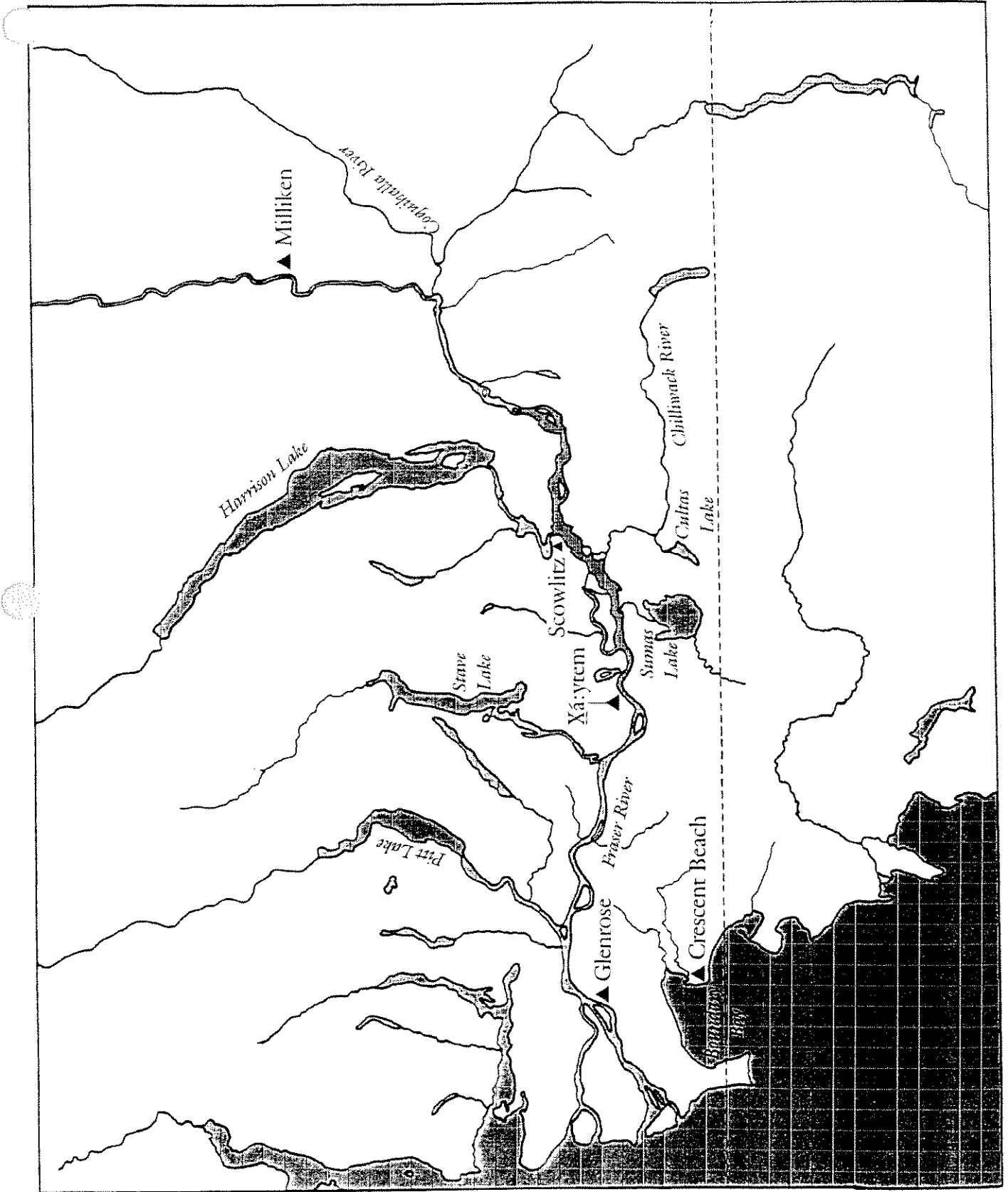
These issues will be discussed largely from the perspective of archaeological evidence of human culture as exhibited in different archaeological sites excavated in traditional *Stó:lō* territory. As this evidence covers a vast period of time, particular historical events are not discussed. Instead, models of cultural traditions and culture change are provided. What is presented is not the kind of story a historian or a traditional Aboriginal person would tell, but it is the anthropologist's story of **culture and traditions**. To use another metaphor, it is a picture of culture changing through time, painted with a very broad brush.

The following section of the curriculum outlines the major culture history of the *Stó:lō* from the earliest occupation of the Fraser River. A "culture history" is not like a regular history where historical events and people are discussed in a chronological fashion. A culture history documents the changing nature of culture and cultural traditions through time. Culture history constructs a very broad picture of cultures changing over long periods of time, in many cases discussing these changes in terms of thousands of years. The culture history of the *Stó:lō* can be constructed from material remains found at archaeological sites. This culture history, of course, is not the total and complete history of the *Stó:lō*. It is easy to see that by using material and archaeological remains to understand the history of cultures, only very broad and general patterns can be observed. Understanding these limitations and goals of "doing" culture history is important to keep in mind when reading about the long-term history of Aboriginal cultures.

On the basis of cultural evidence recovered from archaeological sites, this long time-span has been divided up into five "Periods:" Early Period, Charles Period, Locarno Beach Period, Marpole Period, and Late Period. Most of these periods got their names from the first archaeological site excavated which revealed material from that time. These are the names that archaeologists use as a convention when referring to certain particular periods of time. These periods represent times when cultural patterns were essentially similar throughout the region. There are differences within each of these periods, but the broad patterns allow for meaningful (albeit very general) interpretations of changes in culture over time.

Cultural "Period"	Summary of Major Cultural Trends and Changes
Early Period 11,500 - 5,500 years ago	First human occupation of Lower Fraser Region Mobile, egalitarian lifestyle Major land mammal hunting industry - large leaf-shaped points Woodworking industry - possibly watercraft and temporary shelter - pubble tools and antler wedges Utilization of salmon and shellfish
Charles Period 5,500 - 3,300 years ago	First semi-sedentary houses More intensive use of fish along-side land mammals Regional exchange networks - obsidian Elaborate artistic and ritual life - red ochre & antler carvings
Locarno Beach Period 3,300 - 2,500 years ago	Climate and sea-levels stablized in Lower Fraser Region Large semi-permanent villages - massive shell middens (few houses found yet) Highly efficient "ground stone knives" used in fishing Storage technology allow for larger populations and year-round settlements Continuing regional exchange networks Continuing elaborate artistic and ritual life - including basketry, cranial deformation & labrets
Marpole Period 2,500 - 1,000 years ago	Large semi-permanent villages - massive shell middens & plank houses Complex mortuary rituals indicating social status & ranking Continuing efficient use of fish, hunting and gathering technologies Continuing regional exchange networks Continuing elaborate artistic and ritual life - introduction of weaving
Late Period 1,000 - 200 years ago	Large semi-permanent villages - plank houses and pit houses Major change in mortuary practice - change in social status Minor developments in hunting and fishing technology - small pointed bone objects and small arrow points Continuing regional exchange networks Continuing elaborate artistic and ritual life - labrets cease to be used

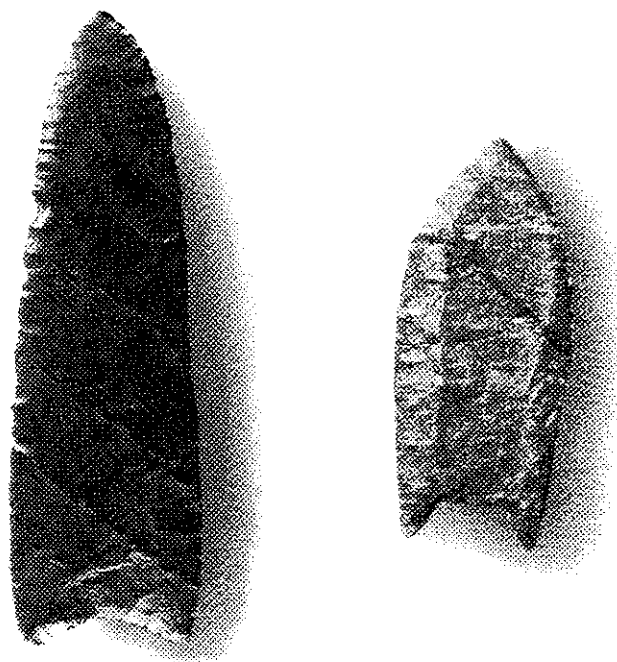
Stó:lō Culture History over Last 11,500 Years
 as Indicated by the Archaeological Record



Archaeological Sites Mentioned in Text

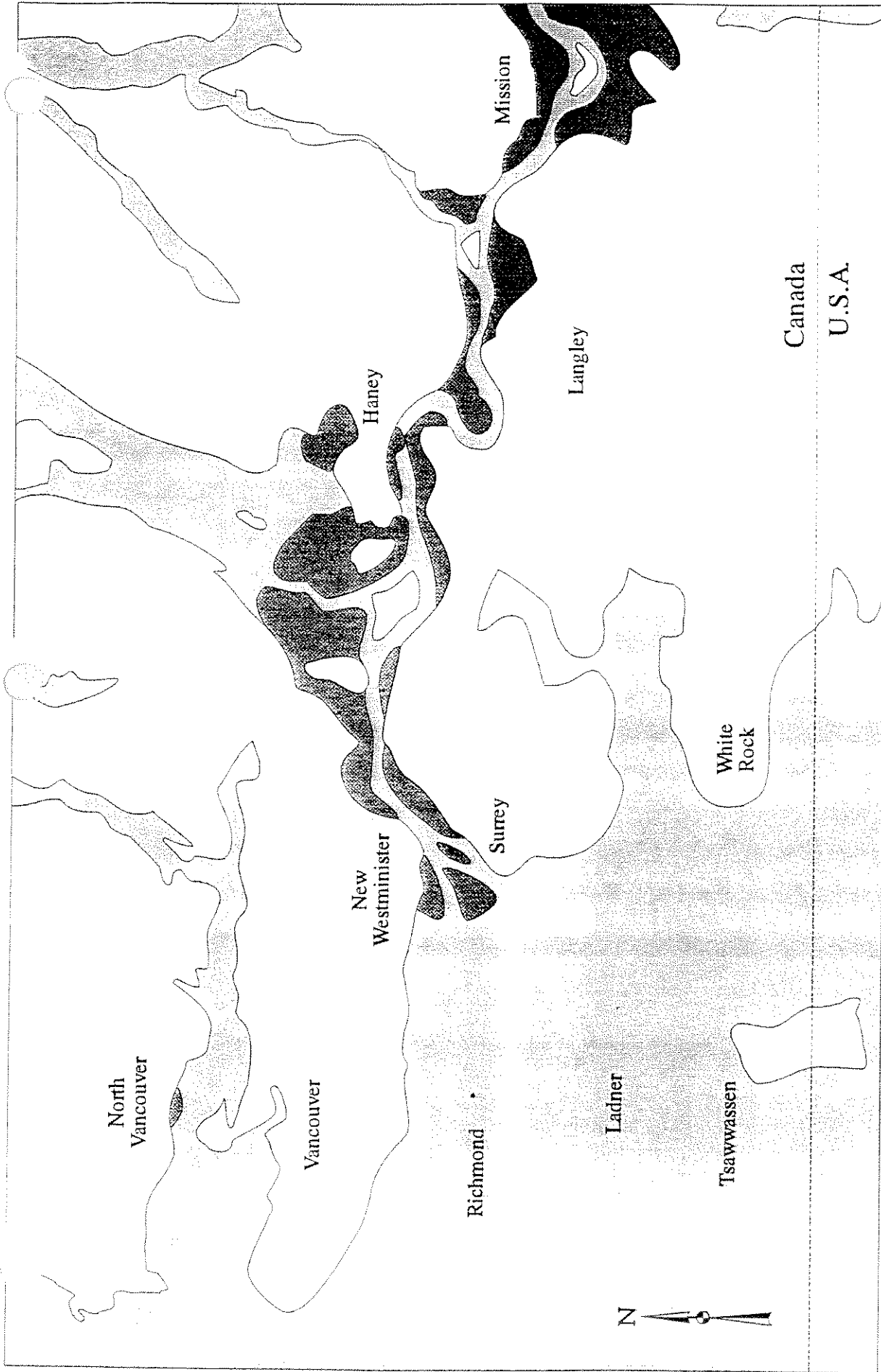
Culture History - The Early Period - 11,500 to 5,500 years ago

The earliest archaeological remains found at sites in North America occur around 11,500 years ago. The artifacts from these sites all appear to have a particular kind of projectile point associated with them - the "Clovis" and "Folsom" points. The shape and style of these points is unique to North America. This evidence indicates that although there are clear biological connections to Asia, Aboriginal cultures developed independently and uniquely in the New World. These Clovis and Folsom projectile points, in conjunction with other kinds of artifacts found, suggest that Aboriginal people living in North America immediately after the ice-age were primarily hunters and gatherers. Their primary economy was large land mammal (such as mammoths and bison) hunting. A general lack of other kinds of archaeological evidence (such as habitation sites or burials) makes it difficult to say much else about cultures at this time. Unfortunately, sea levels have risen a great deal since this time, and any sites from this pre-10,000 year old time period in Coastal areas are now covered by the ocean. By 10,000 years ago, most of the Fraser Delta west of Langley had not yet developed, and the Fraser River was much higher than it is today.



Clovis point (on left) and Folsom point (on right). These are among the first remains of an Aboriginal North American cultural tradition. Such points, used in mammoth hunting, are found only in the ice-age periods of sites in North America. (Hearst, 1994).

By 10,000 years ago, all of the glacial ice had retreated from southwest British Columbia. Most of the forested land on the Northwest Coast was re-established shortly after the glaciers melted. Anadromous fish (such as salmon) returned to more northern waters, and began to spawn in the newly formed rivers and streams. The earliest cultural remains that have been documented in the lower Fraser River watershed date to approximately 9,000 years ago. Artifacts such as sharp flakes and leaf-shaped knives provide one line of evidence for the Milliken site in the Fraser Canyon to be an important salmon fishing and processing location. A charred cherry pit was also found in the excavations at this site. Given that cherries ripen in the late summer, early fall, it is thought that the site was

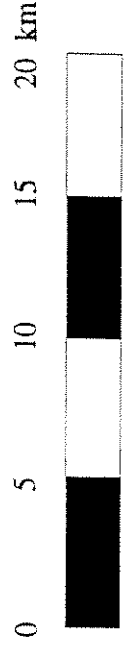


LEGEND

- Land
- Water
- Fluvial

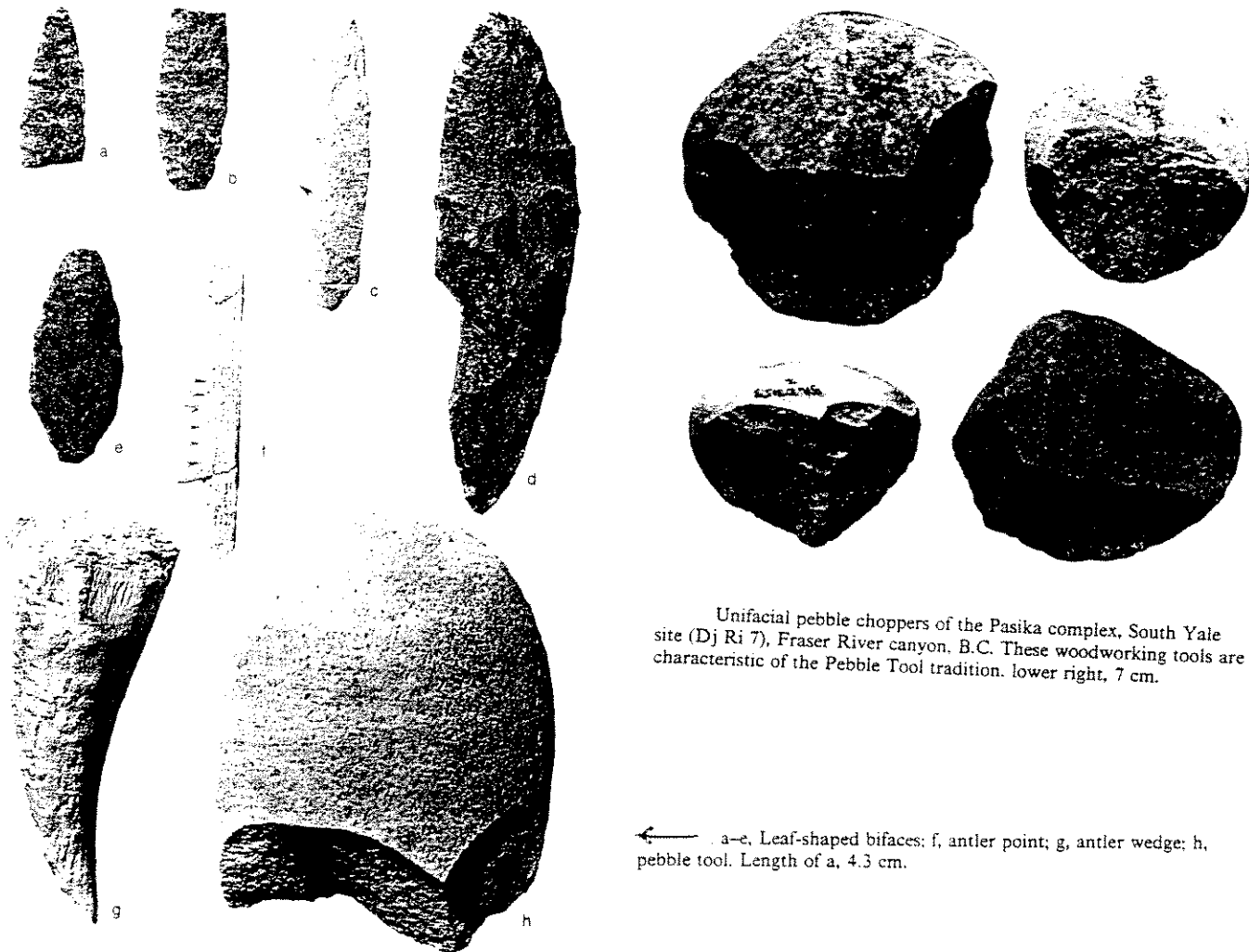
Evolution of the Fraser Delta: 10,000 Years Ago

(Adapted from Clague et al. 1983 - Sedimentary Environments and Postglacial History of the Fraser Delta and Lower Fraser Valley, B.C. *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences*. 20: 1314-1326)



Scale

seasonally occupied during the large salmon runs that came up the Fraser River. This very early use of salmon is important in challenging stereotypes about the earliest history of Aboriginal people in North America.



Unifacial pebble choppers of the Pasika complex, South Yale site (Dj Ri 7), Fraser River canyon, B.C. These woodworking tools are characteristic of the Pebble Tool tradition. lower right, 7 cm.

← a-e, Leaf-shaped bifaces; f, antler point; g, antler wedge; h, pebble tool. Length of a, 4.3 cm.

Typical Tools from the Early Period (10,000 - 5,500 BP) (UBC, Mus. of Anthro., Vancouver).

Other artifacts found at Milliken reflect a wider variety of activities that took place at the site. Large sharp "pebble tools" would have been used in the manufacture of wooden tools, which do not preserve in the acidic soils of the Northwest Coast. This attests to the importance of the forests of coastal British Columbia since the earliest times. Tools such as leaf-shaped points and sharp utilized flakes were likely used by men and women in hunting, fishing, and in the preparation of foods caught. Although the Milliken site provides some useful evidence of what life was like during the Early period of occupation of the Fraser River watershed, very little is actually known of cultures at this time. A slightly more clear picture can be painted when evidence from the Glenrose archaeological site into consideration.

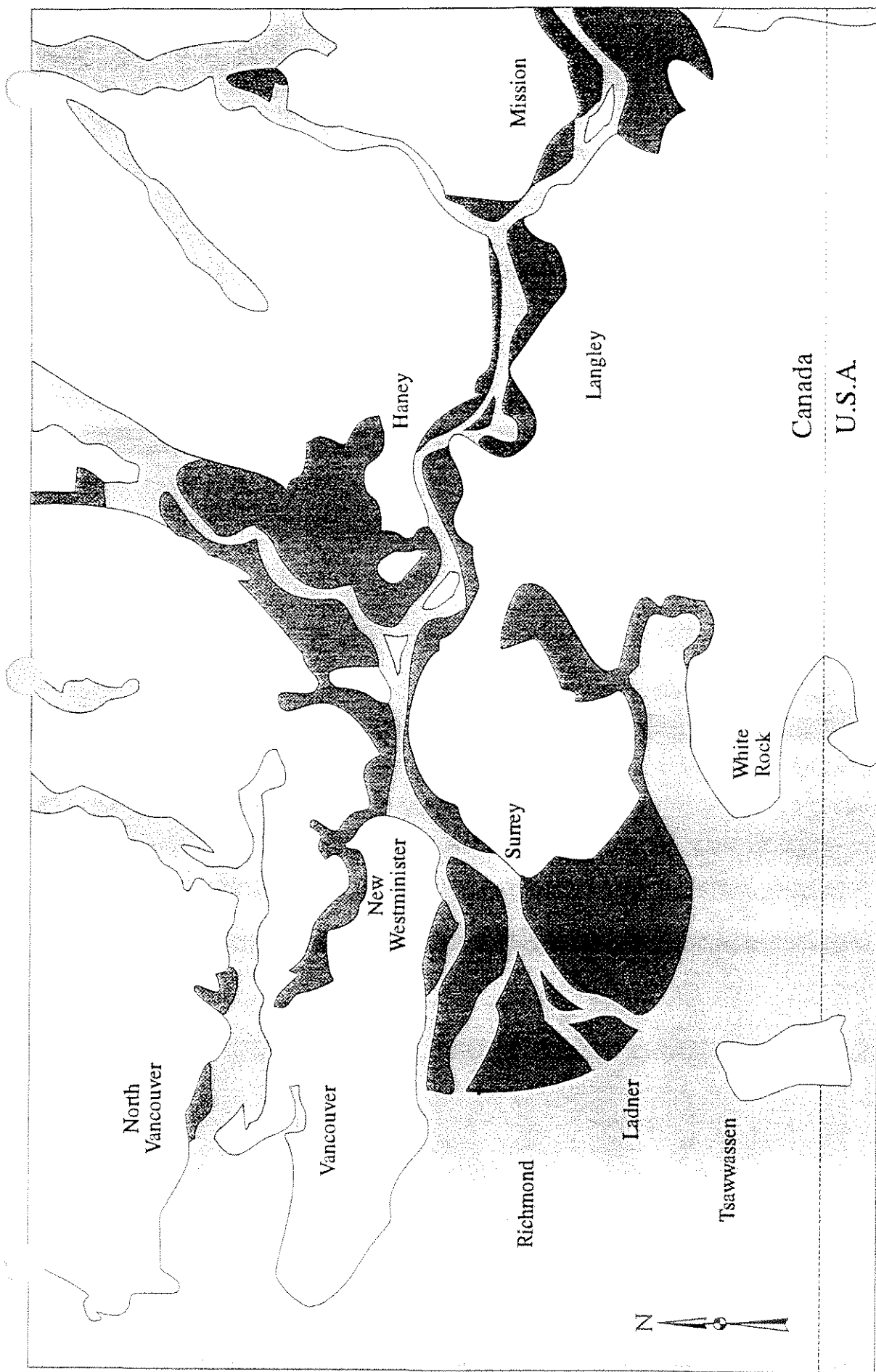
The Glenrose site, which is located under the Alex Fraser Bridge in Surrey, has provided further evidence of life-styles in the Early Period. An analysis of the site shows clear evidence of salmon use, as well as other fish like sticklebacks, eulachon and flatfish. Shellfish, like bay mussels, were another very important resource that was also found at Glenrose. Very much unique to the Early period, however, is the heavy reliance and use of deer and wapiti (elk). These land mammals were heavily used at that time and likely provided more food in the diet of people living in the Fraser Delta than did fish. This is particularly significant, as a major shift occurs in the next period (the Charles Period), where fish dominates the food resources taken. Similar stone tools were found at Glenrose and at Milliken, with the addition of bone and antler tools, which were preserved at this site.

Archaeological evidence from the Early Period suggests that the life-style of the ancestors of the *Stó:lō* was fairly different than that of their more recent descendants. Communities were likely groups of a few nuclear families who lived together throughout the year. People resided in different locations throughout the year likely in small, seasonally constructed structures. Watercraft had clearly been in use at this time for transportation and fishing. Their place of residence depended in a large part upon the kind of resources they were obtaining. Technologies for storage of foodstuffs did not appear to have been developed (here and in many other places in the world), and so resources were taken fresh throughout the year. Social relations within such a small-scale society were mainly egalitarian, with no great differences in status between individuals or families. The people who lived along the shores of the lower Fraser River at this time had developed unique cultural adaptations to the landscape - specifically the use of fish along-side land mammals - which made them distinct from other cultures in the New World and beyond.

Culture History - The Charles Period - 5,500 to 3,300 years ago

About 5,500 years ago, the culture of the people living in the lower Fraser River watershed underwent a number of important changes. Archaeological evidence indicates that during this era a major shift occurred in the basic subsistence routine of the people living on the Fraser River. Prior to this time, land mammals were the largest staples in the diet rather than fish. Around 5,500 years ago, people began to specialize in fish procurement and processing, making fish the most important part of the diet. This set a general cultural trend that persisted right through to contemporary times.

The abundance and wealth of these water-based resources would have allowed greater populations densities than during the previous age. There is correspondingly a general increase in the number of sites in the region during the Charles Period. Although this increase in density of sites may be a function of the actual number of sites discovered by archaeologists, it is also suggestive that populations densities had increased from small

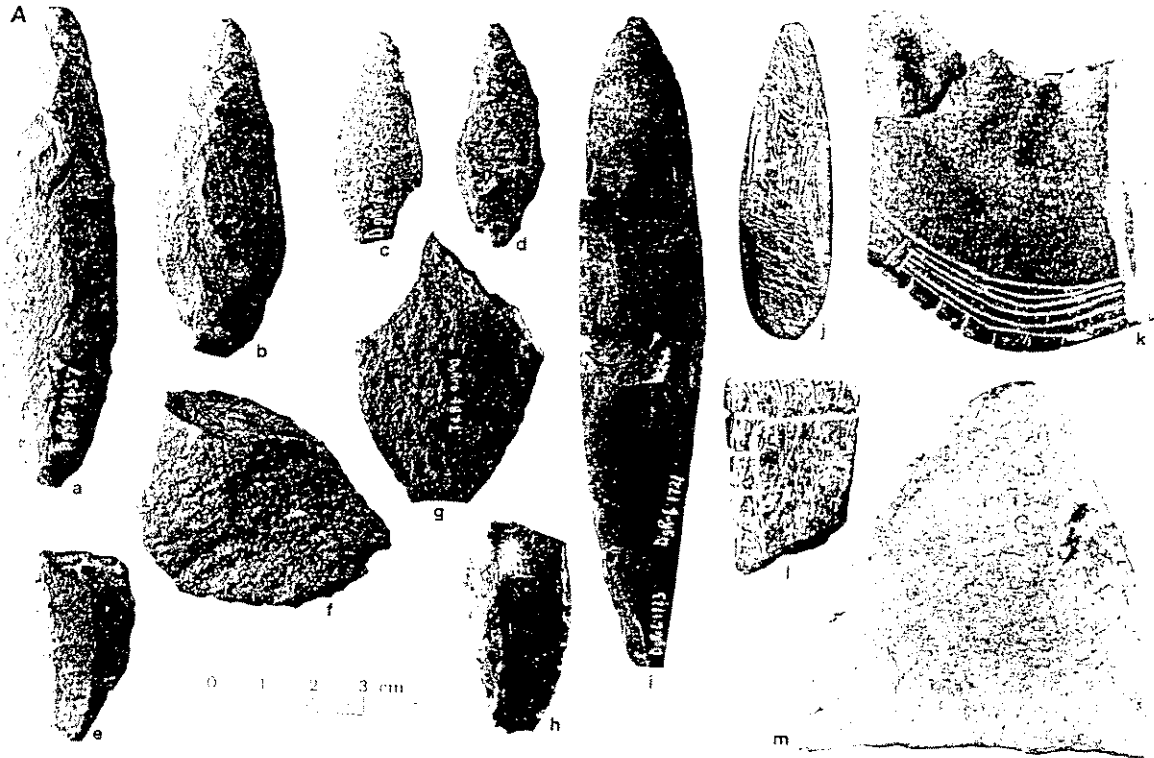


Evolution of the Fraser Delta: 5,000 Years Ago

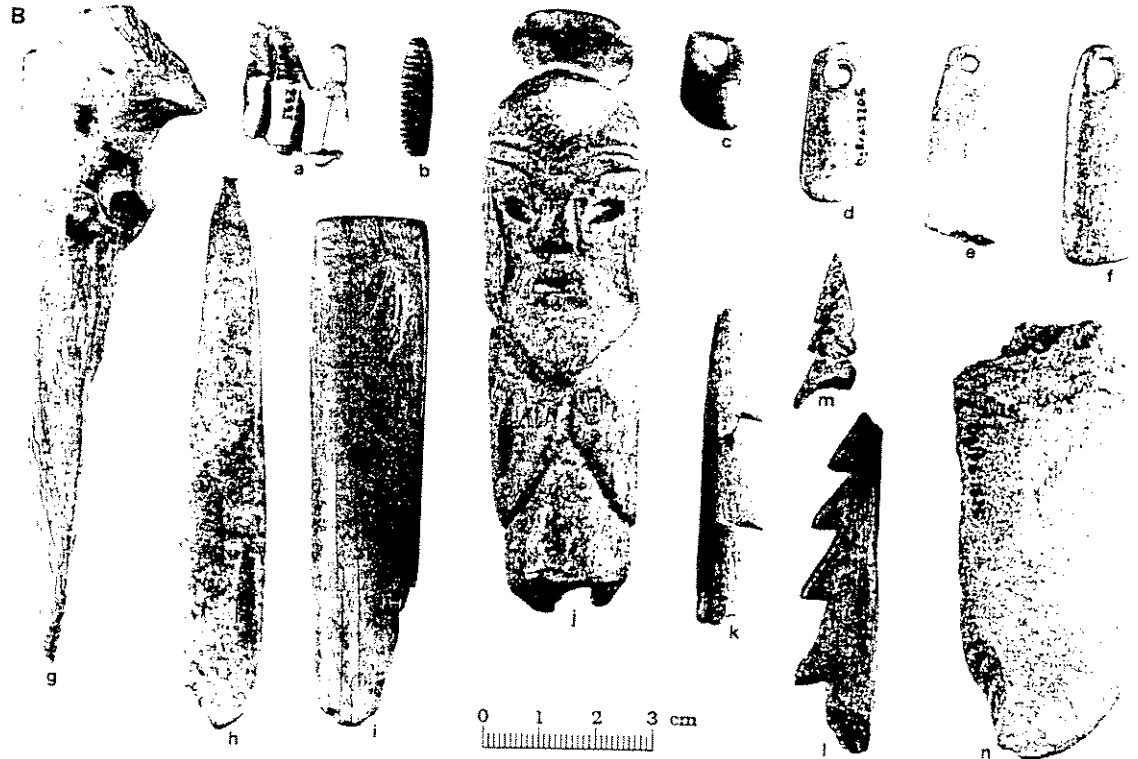
(Adapted from Clague et al. 1983 - Sedimentary Environments and Postglacial History of the Fraser Delta and Lower Fraser Valley, B.C. *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences* 20, 1711-1726)



Scale



(a, b) Leaf-shaped points; (c, d) contracting stem points; (e) straight-edged scraper; (f, g) unifacially retouched flake; (h) bifacially retouched flake; (i, j) ground stone points; (k, l) incised, decorated ground stone; (m) shaped abrasive stone.

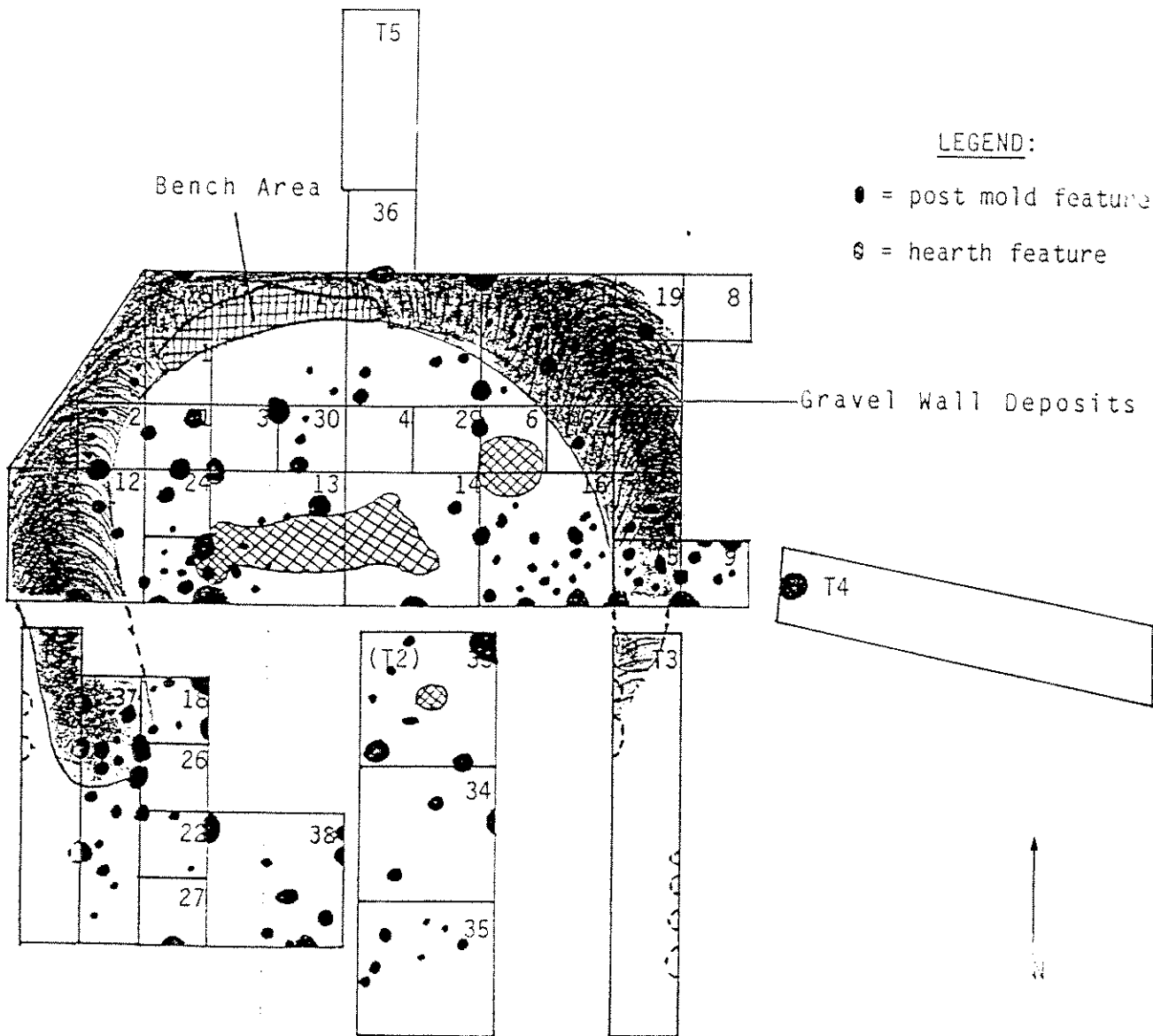


(a, c) Tooth pendants; (b) incised 'grub'; (d-f) bone pendants; (g) ulna awl; (h) mammal bone awl; (i) bone wedge/flesher; (j) anthropomorphic antler figure; (k, l) unilaterally barbed antler points; (m) bilaterally barbed harpoon fragment; (n) antler wedge.

Typical Artifacts from the Charles Period (5,500 - 3,300 BP) (Coupland and Matson, 1995)

nuclear families to larger communities. The Charles Period has also revealed evidence of regional trade and the earliest preserved examples of art.

The site of Xárytem (Hatzic Rock) near Mission, gives one of the best examples of the culture from this time period. At this site, at least two houses were found which date to



Each large square represents a 2 x 2 meter pit excavated by archaeologists. Not all the house was excavated. Post molds are stains in the earth left by decayed wood. A hearth is the term archaeologists use for a fire pit. The "gravel wall deposits" are naturally occurring compact gravel which has been dug out to form the semi-circular back-wall of the house.

Floor Plan of House Excavated at Xárytem - Dating to Charles Period (Gordon Mohs, 1991).

approximately 5,000 years old. One of these houses [see Figure] was excavated and described by archaeologists in 1991. The excavated house was 8 meters wide by at least 10 meters long. Its foundation was dug into a hill-slope, so the back of the house was about 1.5 meters deep. This tapered down to the front of the house which was level to the surrounding ground surface. Poles were placed into the ground along the sides of this house, creating frames for the walls onto which planks would have been fastened. It is impossible to tell what the roof may have been like, as none of it was preserved. This kind of dwelling may have housed between one and two families - up to approximately 12 people. It is not clear how many houses would have made up a community, but there were at least two. It is also not clear how much time each year would have been spent living in these dwellings.

Along-side the changes in food resources during the Charles Period, were changes in tool types. Flake and pebble tools continue to be important, but leaf-shaped, lanceolate and shouldered bifaces as well as some ground slate tool technology developed. In general, these changes in tool technology show an increasing sophistication and specialization in the kinds of activities people were involved in. Much of this technology is centred around woodworking, which had obvious importance in building houses. A greater variety of "tool kits" existed at this time, also suggesting that sites were occupied for different purposes. Residential sites were common on the Fraser River and resource procurement sites, which would have been used seasonally, were found in other locations such as the Fraser Canyon and on the coast.

The Charles Period also exhibits the first evidence of inter-regional trade. Archaeologists have recovered tools made from obsidian - a natural glass formed by quickly cooling lava from a volcano. Each volcano produces obsidian which has unique physical and visual qualities that can be traced back to the original source. Obsidian found in the Fraser River region comes primarily from southeastern Oregon. These wide regional trade networks continued in various forms throughout the following 5,000 years.

The ritual life of the ancestors of contemporary *Stó:lō* becomes apparent in the archaeological record during the Charles Period. The beaver-tooth knife haft shown in Figure (see Figure on page 1) is exquisite, and may have been associated with some kind of ritual use. Ochre, which continues to be used in the ceremonial life of the *Stó:lō* today, became common in archaeological sites during the Charles Period. This is also the first time that human burials, the result of mortuary ceremonies, are observed. The deceased were interred below-ground in a shallow pit, with their body flexed into the foetal position. Infants sometimes were buried in special areas distinct from older family members. Individuals were occasionally buried with special objects, such as a particular tool or ornament which may have marked their social status in life.

This period of *Stó:lō* culture history is an important one, as it marks the transition from a post-glacial hunting-gathering-fishing life-style to one of fishing-gathering-hunting. The next major innovation - food storage - permitted populations to expand further, and

allowed for several new cultural patterns to emerge.

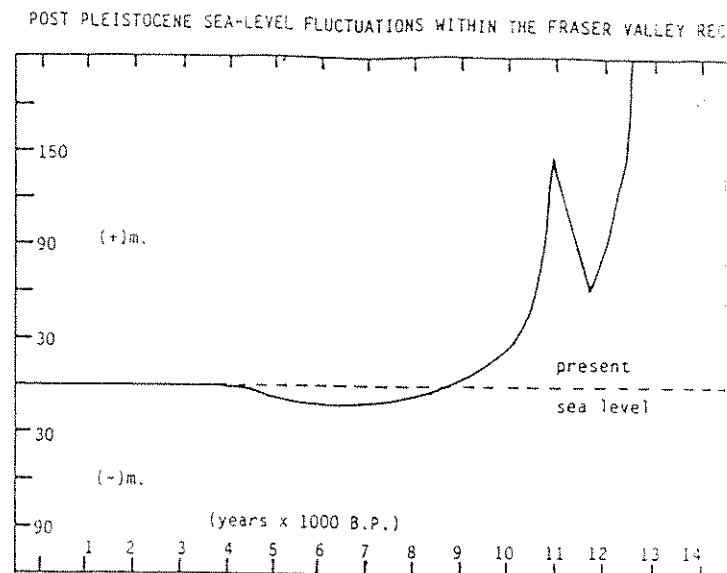
Culture History - The Locarno Beach Period - 3,500 to 2,500 years ago

Around 3,500 years ago, sea-levels stabilized at their current level (they had continually risen and fallen over the previous 10,500 years in response to the melted glacier ice), and temperatures were very much like those of today. By the beginning of the Locarno Beach Period - about 3,500 years ago - Aboriginal populations had increased to the point where new technologies had to be developed to further sustain their growing communities. It is during this time that highly efficient fish processing and storage technologies likely developed.

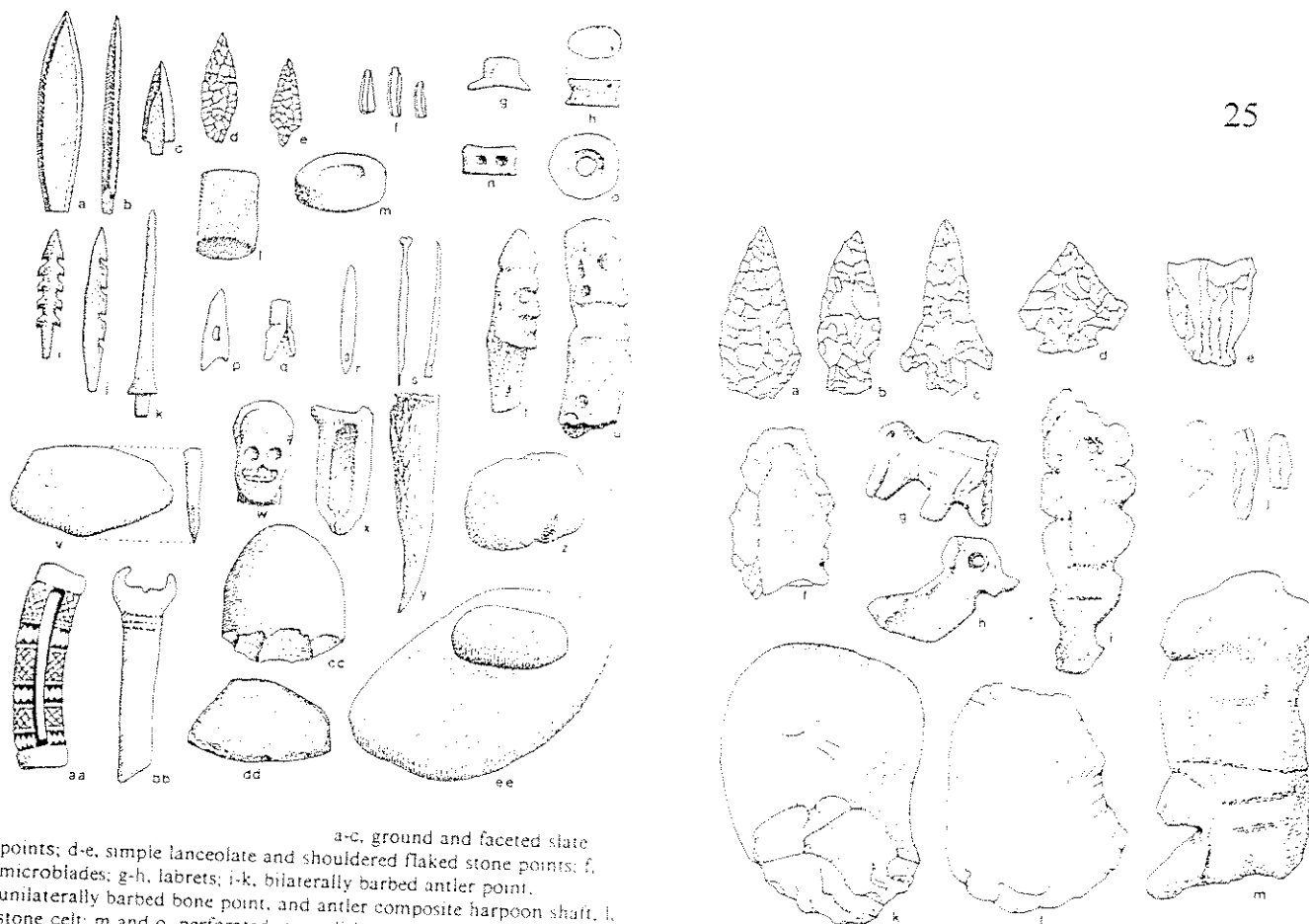
The Crescent Beach site, near the mouth of the Nicomekl River in White Rock, has provided interesting evidence for what life of the ancestors of contemporary *Stó:lō* may have been like in the Locarno Beach Period. This site is a large "shell midden," a refuse area formed by years of continual discarding of house-hold garbage at the village site. This garbage consisted of mainly clam shells, fish bones and stones used in cooking, although broken tools and human burials are also often found. The deposits at this site indicate continuing occupation dating back at least 4,000 years. Such a long period of occupation has made this site very large and deep. Many of the artifacts found date between 3,500 to 2,500 years old - the Locarno Beach period, and indicate the importance of fishing and fish processing at that time. Vast quantities of clam and mussel shell dominate the site and reveal how important these foods were to people living during this time.

Some important technological developments occurred during these years. Tools kits increasingly consisted of ground slate fish knives [see Figure]. This type of knife is far more efficient for the mass processing of fish than a chipped stone blade, largely because it is flat and therefore more effectively sharpened and re-used. Although this technology had existed for several hundred years prior to these times, it only became very commonly used during the Locarno Beach Period.

Along with the more intensive use of ground slate fish knives came the use of food preservation and storage technology. There is some evidence that food storage had been



Sea-level changes had completely stabilized by the beginning of the Locarno Beach Period. Prior to this, until around 9,000 years ago, the sea-levels were lower, exposing more land in the lower Fraser River region. (Duff, 1976).

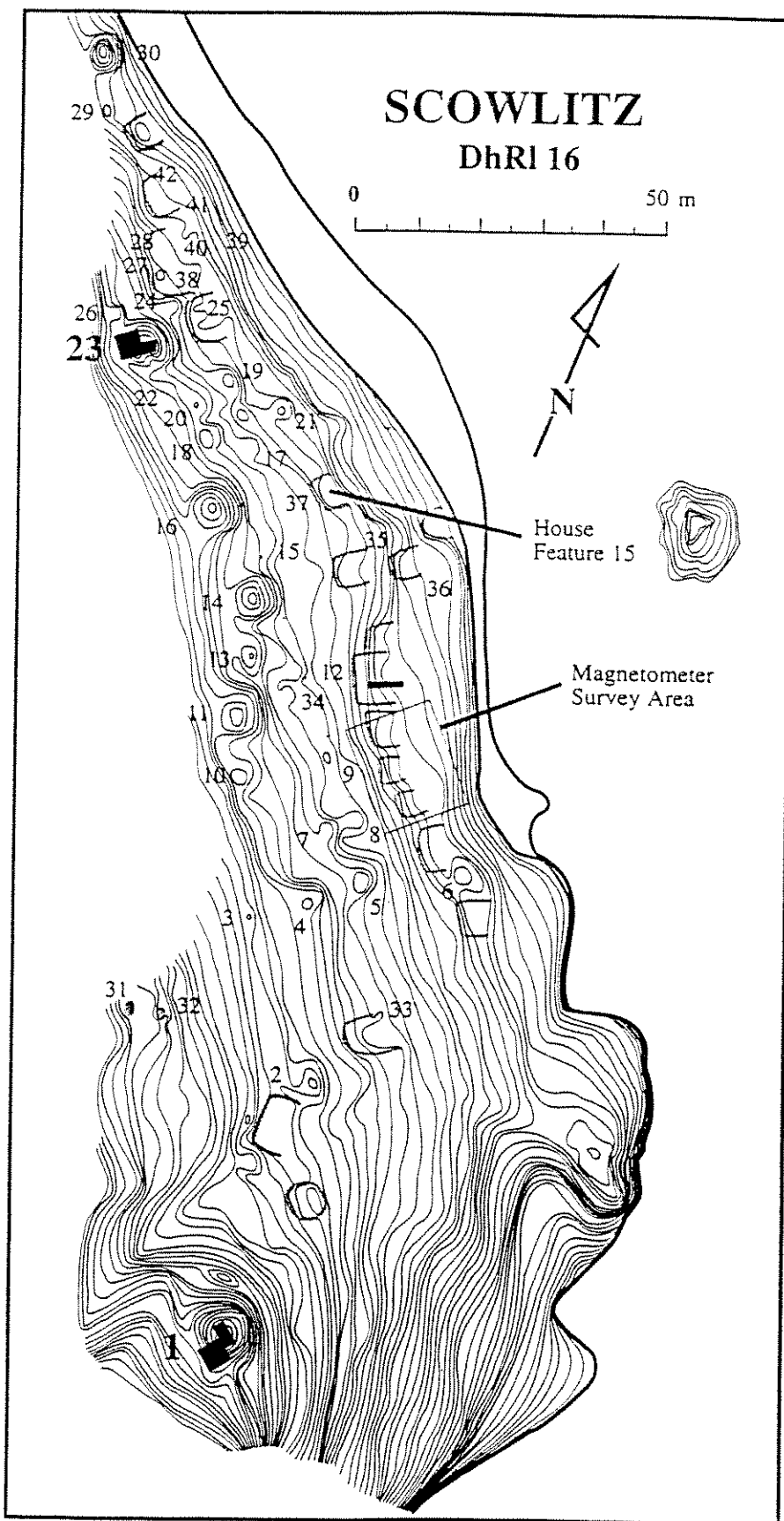


a-c, ground and faceted slate points; d-e, simple lanceolate and shouldered flaked stone points; f, microblades; g-h, labrets; i-k, bilaterally barbed antler point, unilaterally barbed bone point, and antler composite harpoon shaft; l, stone celt; m and o, perforated stone disks; n, polished stone pendant; p-q, one-piece toggling harpoon head and paired composite toggling valves; r, bird bone awl; s, eyed and notched needles of bone; t, carved anthropomorphic antler tine hook for throwing board; u, carved antler

figurine; v, ground slate knife; w, human skull effigy carved in the split distal end of a deer metapodial; x, bone wedge or chisel; y, antler wedge; z, grooved cobble sinker; aa, slotted antler section decorated with geometric motifs, incised, and carved in bas-relief; bb, bone knife with whale tail motif; cc, cobble chopper; dd, flaked slate or shale knife; ee, handstone and grinding slab. Artifacts not drawn to scale.

Typical Artifacts from Locarno Beach Period (3,200-2,400 BP) (Drawing by Don Mitchell, 1990).

used earlier (around 6,000 years ago) in the Upper Fraser Valley and Fraser Canyon, but it was not until the Locarno Beach period that storage technology became widely and intensively used. Finding evidence of storage technology in the archaeological record has given archaeologists a particular methodological challenge. Archaeologists have counted the number of different kinds of fish bones to see the presence of salmon storage. At the Crescent Beach site during Locarno Beach times, salmon vertebrae are found in great numbers, while salmon head bones are virtually absent. In earlier deposits, both head and back bones are found together. Given that the *Stó:lō* processing fish today cut the heads off the fish before they smoke or dry them, it is reasonable to assume that they may have done this in the past. Such must have been the case at Crescent Beach 3,500 years ago when headbones are virtually absent from the archaeological deposits.



Large Village at the Scowlitz site. Burial Mounds are numbered at the back of the site, and rectangular houses are numbered at the front. Note that the houses were occupied about 1,000 years before the mounds were built (Map by M. Blake, 1993).

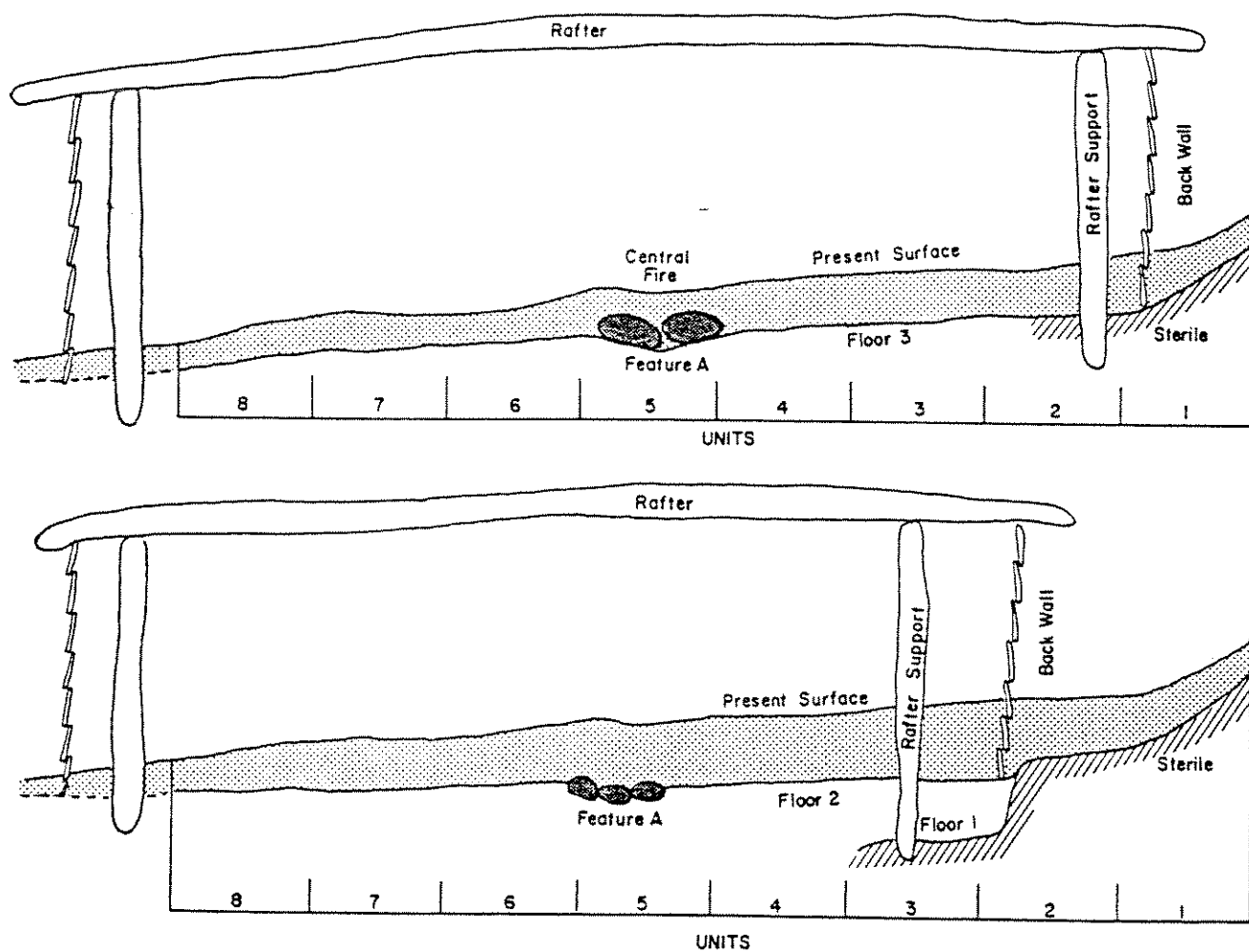
Culture History - Marpole Period - 2,500 to 1,000 BP

The Marpole Period represents the first period of time when virtually all the elements of historically known *Stó:lō* culture are visible in the archaeological record. The major cultural changes in Marpole times are largely social ones, rather than technological. Large, multi-family houses formed winter villages. Very elaborate art in stone, wood and bone are abundant. Mortuary ritual, the remains of which can be observed through the burial of the



*Beautiful and elaborate stone bowl carvings and other artistic expressions flourished during the Marpole Period.
(Burden, in Carlson 1976).*

dead, was in many cases elaborate and represent status differences between individuals. All of these things illuminate the nature of ancient *Stó:lō* society and culture.



Two possible reconstructions of the houses excavated at Scowlitz (side view). Archaeological evidence for ancient architecture is difficult to interpret, leaving many possibilities open. Note the "units" along the bottom are 1 meter wide. (Matson, 1995).

The Scowlitz site which overlooks the confluence of the Harrison and Fraser Rivers, provides an excellent example of the complex and rich culture of the Marpole period [see Figure map of site]. At this site, a row of house depressions flank the edge of a terrace, while a series of burial mounds and cairns were constructed along the back. A number of large pit-houses, burial mounds and archaeological remains are both found up- and down-river from the Scowlitz site deposits, indicating an intense occupation of the area for a long period of time.



a-d, chipped stone points; e-f, ground slate points; g, microblades; h, ground slate knife; i, ground stone chisel; j, ground stone celt; k-l, perforated stones; m, dentata; n, disk beads; o, labret; p, crescentic copper object; q, nipple-topped stone hand maul; r-u, unilaterally barbed antler harpoon head, unilaterally barbed antler harpoon head with proximal hole for line attachment, and unilaterally barbed antler points; v, antler wedge; w, antler adz haft; x, stone club; y, z, and bb, carved antler sculptures; aa, antler buckle or cord adjuster carved in the stylized form of a raptor; cc, long-shafted antler pin with the head of a long-beaked bird carved at the proximal end; dd, incised stone object. Artifacts not drawn to scale.

a-d, flaked stone points; e-f, key-shaped flaked stone drills; g, flaked stone end scraper; h, ground stone celt; i, large retouched stone flake; j, disk beads; k, tabular stone saw; l, ground slate knife; m, pebble chopper; n, spall tool. Length of a, 2.6 cm; b-j to same scale. k-n not drawn to scale.

Typical Artifacts from Marpole Period (2,500 - 1,000 BP) (Drawing by Don Mitchell, 1990)

The house-depressions at the Scowlitz site measure approximately 10m x 13m, and in some

ways similar to the houses at *Xá:ytem* (Hatzic Rock), in that they are sunk into the ground at the back of the sloping terrace and level with the ground at the front. The houses at Scowlitz, which have been dated to about 2500 years old (half the age of those at *Xá:ytem*), are clearly lined up in a row, forming a large village. The Marpole Period is the first time when evidence for large, multi-family, permanent villages can be seen in the archaeological record.

The burial mounds and cairns at the back of the terrace of the Scowlitz site are considerably younger than the houses - over 1200 years more recent - and suggest the elevated status of people who lived in the community at this time. Investigations on three of these burial mounds revealed a burial tradition which treated certain individuals with an enormous amount of wealth and respect. The largest burial mound, which measured 12 meters square at the base, and about 3 meters high, contained one adult male individual buried in a shallow pit at the centre of the mound. The architecture of the mound was complex, including a series of concentric stone "rings" at the base, a thin prepared clay floor, and a "cairn" or pile of massive boulders over the body at the centre of the mound. The individual was buried with over 7,000 dentalium shell beads, four copper disks, a copper ring, 4 abalone shell pendants, and was likely wrapped in a wool blanket. The elaborate burial that this individual was given clearly indicates the high level of status and respect he held when he was alive. Not all the *Stó:lō* received the same elaborate burials, others being in less elaborate mounds and cairns, or in unelaborate burial pits. Such differential treatment in death reflects differential status in life.

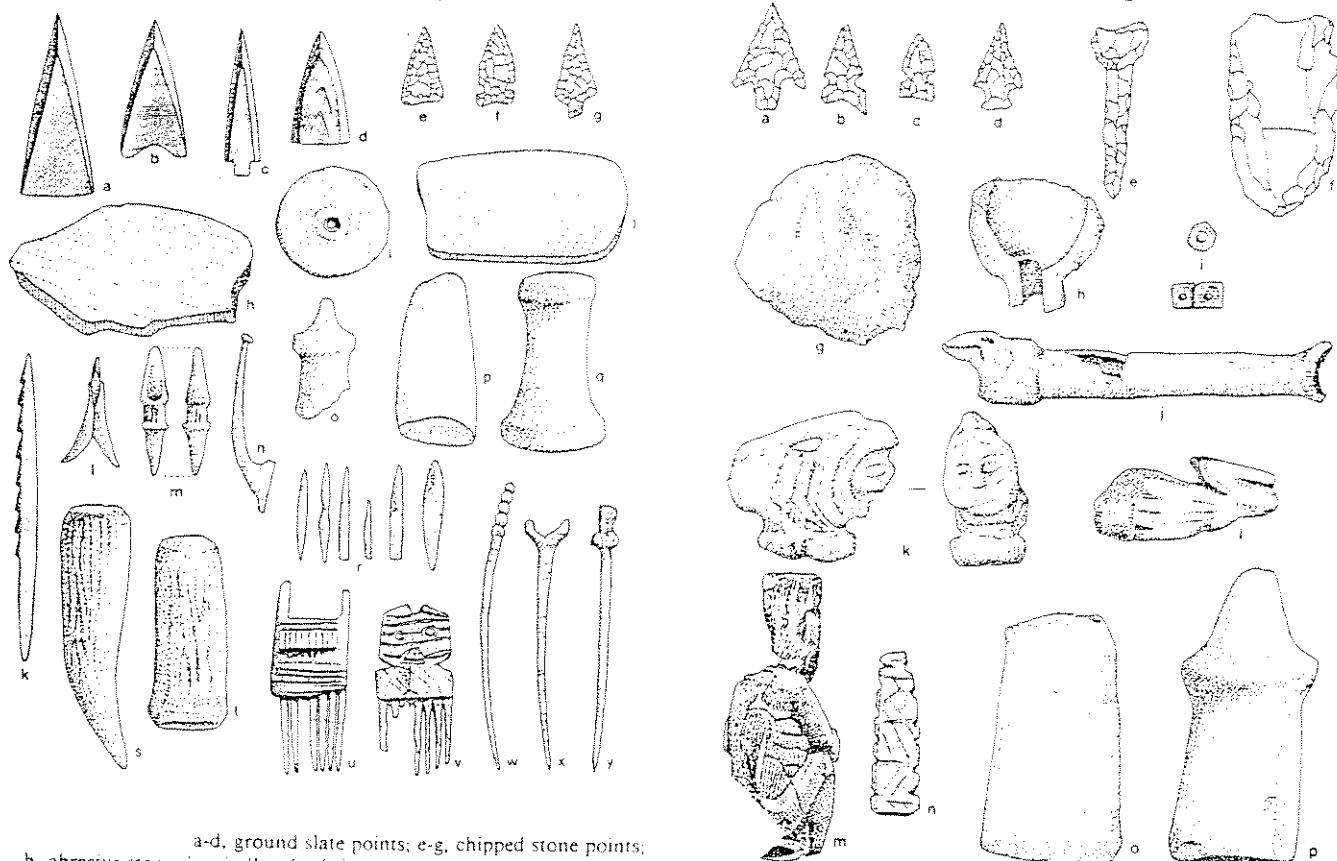
The art found from this period exhibits a continuity of tradition with present-day styles. The bone figures shown in the figure [see Figure] are found from the Charles, Locarno Beach, Marpole and Late periods, and exhibit a high degree of similarity in form, style and elaborateness. These pieces have been interpreted as exhibiting some connections with the spirit world. Many of these pieces are found on objects that would be publicly visible, particularly during rituals, and likely indicate the special status of the owner. However, it is difficult to interpret direct meaning from this art, as the artists who made the pieces and those people who originally used them are no longer alive to discuss these questions with. Contemporary *Stó:lō* still value the power and status associated with this art, and continue these artistic productions today.

A number of distinctive artifacts from this time have been identified, including ground slate knives and points, celts, labrets, hand mauls, perforated stones, large needles, unilaterally barbed antler harpoons, fixed unilaterally barbed antler points, and stone and antler sculpture. All of this technology indicates far fewer changes in food procurement and production techniques than during earlier periods. The heavy use of salmon and other fish as the staple of the diet continues through this period into modern times. The technologies are increasingly efficient and such devices as fish weirs and traps, which are preserved in "wet sites" (water-logged areas that preserve delicate wooden artifacts), show that the economy of the time required organized labour, and clear individual leadership. These patterns also are suggestive that the idea of ownership of resources and resource locations

had been well developed.

Culture History - The Late Period - 1,000 to 200 years ago

The Late Period, is the most recent era of prehistory, and the least well understood by archaeologists. Because archaeologists are often concerned with questions of "origins" and



a-d, ground slate points; e-g, chipped stone points; h, abrasive stone; i, spindle whorl; j, ground slate knife; k, unilaterally barbed bone point; l, composite toggling harpoon head with wedge-based arming point; m, dorsal and ventral views of composite toggling harpoon valve with lashing groove and stepped point bed; n, fishhook shank; o, bone points and bipoints; p, head of nipple-topped stone hand maul; q, ground stone ceit; r, complete flat-topped stone hand maul; s, antler wedge; t, antler haft for an adz; u-v, carved combs; w and y, hair or blanket pins; x, blanket pin. Artifacts not drawn to scale.

a-d, flaked stone points; e, flaked stone drill; f, burinated flake; g, cortex spall tool; h, flared stone pipe bowl fragment; i, stone disk bead and bead blanks; j, stone bird effigy mouthpiece for a tubular or straight pipe; k, anthropomorphic stone pipe; l, problematic carved steatite object; m, seated human effigy pipe of stone; n, decorated steatite pendant; o, ground stone ceit; p, nipple-topped stone hand maul fragment. Length of a, 5.9 cm; b-j, l-n, to same scale. Length of k, 4.5 cm, o-p to same scale.

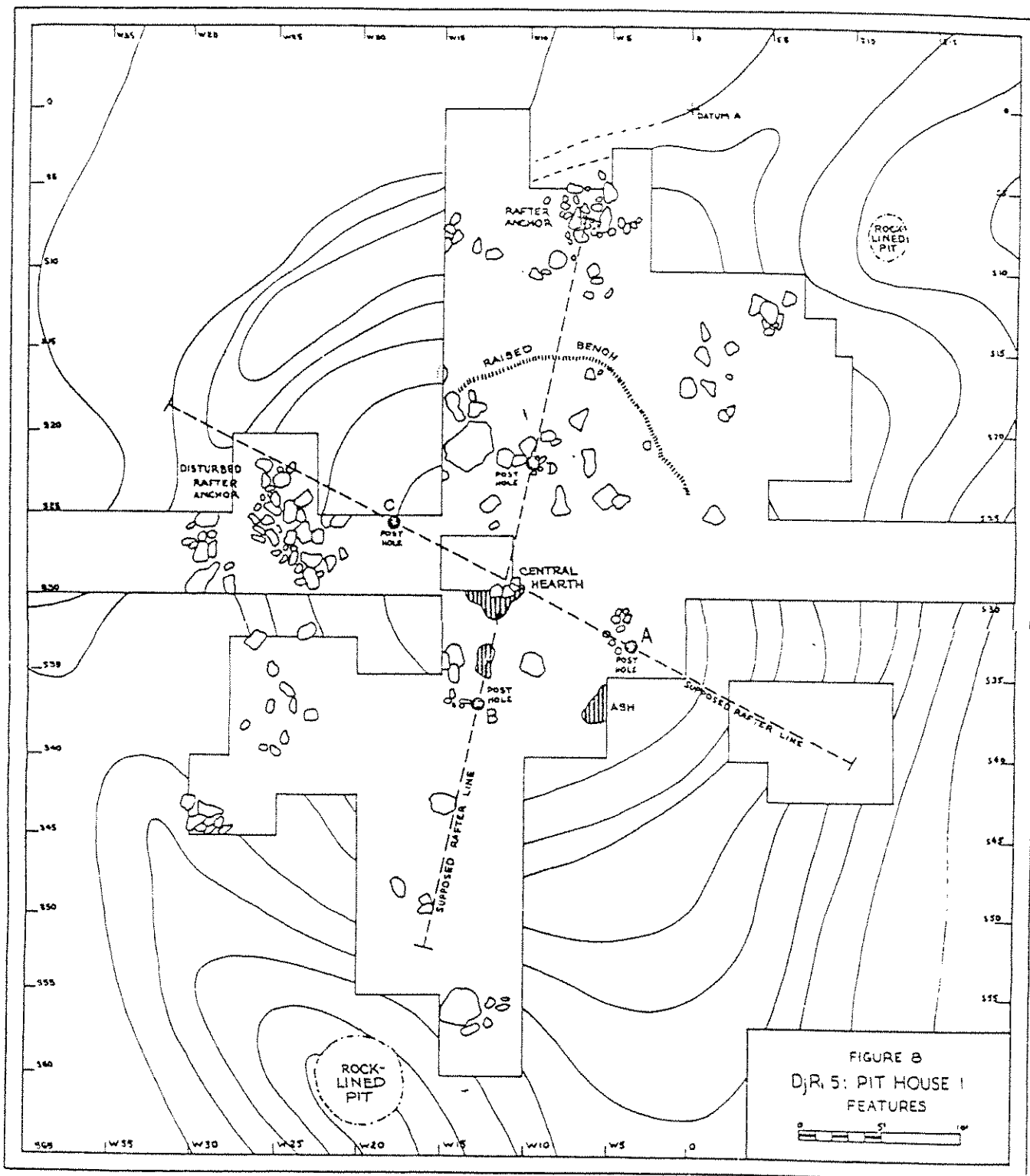
Typical Artifacts from Late Period (1,000 - 150 BP) (Drawing by Don Mitchell, 1990)

the "earliest" development of cultures, they tend to neglect more recent periods of history. Much of what archaeologists have constructed about this period, come from direct inferences from the ethnographic record - or the cultural information that ethnographers (cultural anthropologists) have recorded about society before the influence of non-Native people.

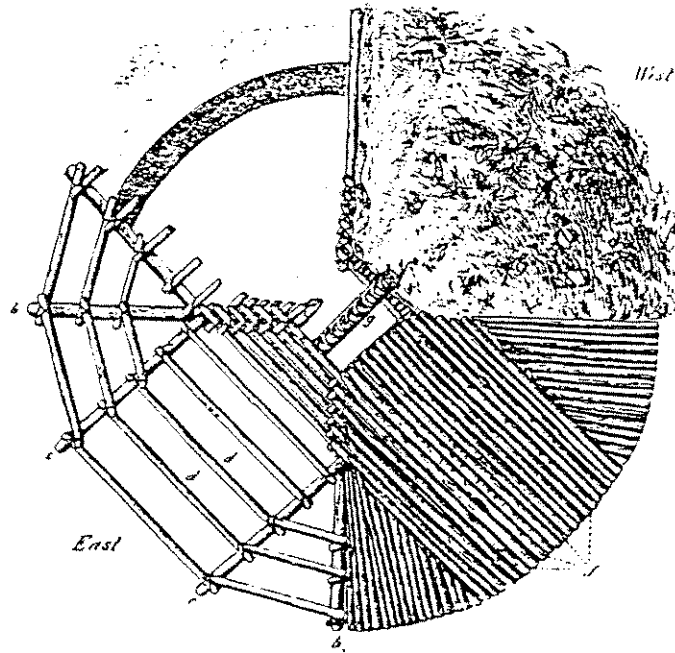
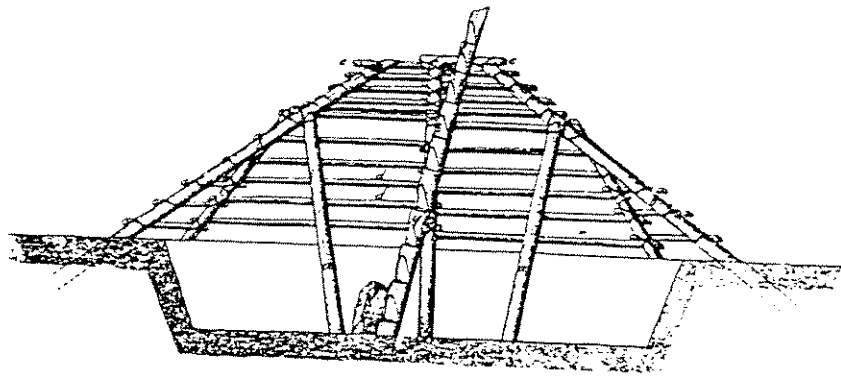
One particularly striking cultural change that occurred during this was the development of social class. Social classes frequently form in societies where social status differentiation becomes primarily inherited, rather than achieved. Although people have positions of ranked (or largely achieved) social status throughout the Marpole period, the transition of this earlier period to Late is marked by the development of inter-married family groups. These inter-married family groups formed social classes that had control over access to many of the best resource procurement locations which provided wealth. Wealth was converted to social status at public gatherings like the potlatch, where wealth accumulated by individuals was given away in order to validate status claims.

This transition of social organization from a rank-based to a class-based society is difficult to reconstruct from the archaeological record. It can not be inferred from the presence of artifacts alone. Such a model has been constructed by looking at changes in culture through a variety of evidence including presence and quantity of exchange goods, changes in burial rituals, subtle changes in residence patterns (including the construction of defensive fortifications in villages to defend against slave raids), and changes in artifact types over time. Production of food and wealth during this time was largely controlled by extended families, who had inter-married over a wide regional network. Such established inter-married families formed the tight-knit extended family networks that defined the social structure of the community today.

Fishing, collecting roots, berries and clams, and hunting for both land and sea mammals all continued to be important in *Stó:lō* culture - the salmon being paramount of these. The cooler winters of the Fraser Valley were often spent in pit-houses or *skemel* by some families, while during other seasons some families lived in large, multi-family long houses. Artistic and ritual traditions continued to develop - including the use of woolly domesticated dogs and mountain goats in weaving. These archaeological remains indicate that the ancestors of the *Stó:lō* who lived in the thousand year period prior to contact were culturally very similar to their decedents known in the past 200 years. However, in the past thousand years specific historical events, which are very difficult to reconstruct archaeologically, continued to shape and change individuals lives.



Plan of Pithouse Excavated at Esilao Site (near Milliken) from Late Period (Drawing by Don Mitchell, 1963).



Drawing of Pithouse from Historic Period similar to those found in Late Period (drawing by James Teit, 1989).

ENDNOTES:

1. Albert Wesley in Jenness, 1934/35.
2. Agnes Kelley to Gordon Mohs, 1985.
3. Mr. and Mrs. David Latess in Jenness, 1934/35.
4. Franz Boas, 1894, p. 454.

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