1

Snare, Snake and Iroquois: An Upper Athabaska Ethnohistory

Abstract

Sporadic archaeology conducted in and around Jasper National Park has only served to hint at a complex and enigmatic cultural history for the upper Athabaska drainage. This essay principally seeks to identify two protohistoric Aboriginal groups, Snare and Snake, and how they interacted with one another and with other groups in the area through time. Boreal ecology, ethnoarchaeology and ethnohistory are used to explore and outline this and other aspects of the area cultural history. In doing so, inferences are made from descriptions about protohistoric and historic Aboriginal occupation in the area to provide an analogy for the prehistoric past. Given the archaeology, such an analogy may well be the most valid tool for postulating Aboriginal cultural history in the upper Athabaska.

2

Introduction

During 1970 and 1971, under the auspices of the Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary, I carried out the first archaeological resource inventory in Jasper National Park, Alberta, Canada, for the National Historic Sites Service (Elliott 1970-71). Prior to this the park had been an archaeological *terra incognito*. The investigations proved relatively difficult because the area is large, the terrain difficult to access, historical accounts fragmentary, time and money finite, and because organized archaeological research had never been done in the area. These factors effectively limited the research to the Athabaska River valley and northern portions of the park. During two summer field seasons, historic and prehistoric sites were inventoried and limited supplementary investigations were done outside the park adjacent to its north and east boundaries. Sites were primarily located by investigating locales disturbed by human and natural erosion; the onsite park administration was loath to allow any excavations at the time.

In 1971, I graduated from university shortly after writing the preliminary reports, and thus remain grateful that a more detailed analysis, interpretation and final report were ably and speedily completed by others (Anderson and Reeves 1975). Both reports also include information about earlier surface collections done in Jasper National Park by Gordon Bried, a long time Jasper resident with a personal interest in the history of the park.

Archaeological research has tended to uncover more questions than it has answered in the upper Athabaska drainage. Sites are sparse and interpretations are limited. While my 1970-71 investigations and the sporadic subsequent investigations by others hint at a complex and enigmatic history of human occupation in the area, large knowledge gaps remain. Boreal ecology, ethnoarchaeology and ethnohistory have therefore been used in this essay to better understand and interpret local Aboriginal history. Ethnoarchaeology and ethnohistory accounts also tell a sparse and scattered story, but at least offer an opportunity to make inferences from descriptions about the protohistoric and historic Aboriginal occupation in the area, and provide an analogy to assist interpreting the prehistoric past. Given the archaeology, such an analogy may well be the most valid tool for postulating Aboriginal cultural history in the upper Athabaska.

Several differing groups of people were recorded during the post-contact historic period in the upper Athabaska drainage: Snare, Snake, Shuswap, Sekani, Stoney/Assiniboin, Cree, Nipissing, Iroquois, “Canadians,” fur traders, and their mixed-blood descendants, the Métis. Historic accounts suggest the upper Athabaska drainage was a sort of Aboriginal and ecological no-man's land, sparsely occupied by small bands of nomadic people who sporadically or seasonally traveled and hunted in the area -- an area which seemed to have a modest array of game animals upon any given occasion, but which didn't regularly host large numbers of any particular species of game. This was very different from the parkland and prairies east of the Rocky Mountains, where almost endless numbers of some game species, such as bison and elk, provided a relatively stable food base for the more numerous Aboriginal people found there.

The purpose of this essay is to shed particular light on the Snare and Snake Indians, and how they interacted with one another and with the other groups through time in the upper Athabaska drainage. Due to its complexity, the information has been broadly organized and presented chronologically to aid readability and interpretation.

Ecological Setting

Human occupation and adaptation in and about the upper Athabaska drainage system are largely limited by topography and climate. Most of the study area is contained within Jasper National Park in the Rocky Mountains immediately north of Banff National Park, on the western border of Alberta, Canada (Figure 1). A perusal of the 1974 Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources contour map of Jasper National Park reveals an area composed of uplifted, folded and faulted mountains and U-shaped valleys sculpted by glacial and river action. High passes link some of the valleys. The continental divide and main and front mountain ranges trend through the area from northwest to southeast. The southwest slopes are gentle while the east slopes or scarps are sharp and precipitous.

Other than mountain ranges, a major topographical feature of the area is the upper Athabaska River valley inside or westerly of the front range. Another major feature is the fact all the rivers drain out of the area. To the north, the Smoky River drains north from its headwaters to join the

Peace River. The Smoky River headwaters lie immediately north and west of the upper valley of the Snake Indian River; the latter drains southeast to join the upper Athabaska River near the site of Jasper House; and the Athabaska then drains northeast out of the front range. Other, smaller rivers inside the front range form the headwaters of the upper Athabaska, Brazeau and Fraser Rivers. Going west over the Yellow Head Pass and the continental divide, the Fraser River drains west and north from its headwaters. In the south, the upper Brazeau River drains east from its headwaters and out of the front range to join the North Saskatchewan River.

Cordilleran and continental Pleistocene glaciation finally retreated from the main Athabaska valley outside the front range by 15,000 B.P., and the Athabaska (east of Jasper Townsite) and lower Snake Indian valleys inside the front range by 10000 B.P. (Anderson and Reeves 1975: 15). The final retreat was accompanied by post-glacial deposition of lateral and terminal moraines and river down-cutting through these deposits, forming what are essentially a remnant series of upper and lower till terraces running along the valley sides above an active valley-bottom river flood plain. The flood plain itself has remained geologically active within the Athabaska valley, and in my opinion, may have been initially characterized by stream-fed and ponded lakes, somewhat like today.

The climate became dryer and warmer from about 8000 to 5000 B.P. This resulted in a final glacial retreat from the upper side valleys, a gradual altitude increase of the upper subalpine coniferous tree line, increased forest colonization of higher alpine meadows and expansion of

grasslands in the valley bottom (ibid.: 14). The landscape then became relatively stable sometime after 5000 B.P. A final, minor period of somewhat cooler climate, increased snowfall, longer winters and some glacial rebuilding occurred from A.D. 1350 to A.D. 1850 (ibid.: 14). Stelfox (in Anderson and Reeves 1975: 14) suggests this "Little Ice Age" may have favored increases in boreal forest and tundra vegetation (presumably with a somewhat lower subalpine tree line) and an expansion of hardier species such as wood bison, caribou, moose and ptarmigan.

Excavation of a stratified archaeological site in the park by Caroline Hudecek-Cuffe (2009 personal communication) included a geoarchaeological analysis by Alberto Mussachio, her teaching assistant at the time. Mussachio determined the lowest paleosol at the Snake Indian River Site began forming on loess deposits about 8000 B.P., some 25 cm. above glacial till, after the climate warmed and a thick vegetation cover had developed. The lowest paleosol surface remained stable until about 4000 B.P. when the loess deposits increased and the uppermost paleosol began forming, the surface of which was stable by about 1700 B.P. This is reasonably consistent with Stringer (in Anderson and Reeves 1975: 15) who suggests that today strong winds, low elevation and a rain shadow effect combine to produce a low precipitation/ evaporation ratio on the valley floor and terraced side hills within the main upper Athabaska valley, which results in aridic, regosolic soils prone to erosion in some locales and aeolian deposition in others -- in effect, a fragile, semi-desert, savannah-style grassland unable to tolerate heavy grazing by ungulates. Generally, the main valley is characterized by long cold winters with periodic chinook winds, short summers, and short transitions during spring and fall. The climate

below Jasper town site is windier, warmer and dryer than further up the valley, or in upper side valleys to the north and south. Winter chinook winds often scour the snow from the main valley below Jasper as far down river as the mixed montane forest and meadows on the east slope foothills around Hinton.

Boag and Evans (1967: 200-201) expand on this somewhat by saying that the river terraces, or benches:

... that face south and west tend to be grasslands; those that face north and east are likely to be forested. This is because, in the areas facing south and west, water is lost at a greater rate through higher temperatures and increased evaporation, and thus trees are less easily established.

A wide variety of animal life frequents these areas of low herbaceous growth.... Large game animals, such as bighorn sheep, rely on grasses year around. The wapiti [elk]*, a large member of the deer family, makes heavy use of grassy slopes at lower altitudes only during winter. The mule deer comes to the open slopes in early spring to graze the new green shoots of early plants like the diminutive sedges. All these large animals follow the contour of the slope as they graze, their progression accentuating the natural slumping of the soil on the hillsides.*

The interpretations by Anderson and Reeves, Mussachio and Stringer should be considered within the broader context of the palynology discussed by Robert Vance (1986): outside the front

range in the foothills at Fairfax, Mary Gregg and Gregg Lakes, and inside the front range from a bog at Tonquin Pass. Evidence from Fairfax Lake indicates a coniferous forest cover began colonizing the east slope foothills after 11000 B.P. as glaciation receded, and this was essentially complete by 7500 B.P., with little arboreal change after 7500 B.P. (Schweger *et al* in Vance 1986: 253-256). Evidence from Gregg Lake indicates the vegetational development was similar to Fairfax Lake (Habgood in Vance 1986: 256). Lake sediments from Mary Gregg Lake indicate the lake has existed for some 6000 years without any major changes in vegetation during that time (Bombin in Vance 1986: 256). Outside the front range, vegetative colonization in the foothills began with spruce after 11000 B.P., then birch about 9000 B.P. and finally pine about 7500 B.P. However, inside the front range at Tonquin Pass (elevation 1935 m.), pine was initially the colonizer after 10000 B.P., while spruce increased incrementally from 8000 B.P. to 4300 B.P. as the upper tree line rose due to warmer and drier conditions (Kearney and Luckman in Vance 1986: 263-264). Thus, it seems clear that by 4000 B.P. the climate and vegetation cover were much like today.

With further regard to the climate, it is fair to say that winter was, and is, the other major limiting factor in the ecology of the upper Athabaska area. A deep snow cover makes the energy cost of obtaining food very high. Snow depth becomes the critical factor for wildlife in winter. The alpine zone, in particular, receives an extremely deep snow cover the closer one gets to the continental divide. In 1811 David Thompson wrote about Athabaska Pass:

9

January 10th…. as usual when the fire was made I set out to examine the country before us, and found we had now to descend the west side of the Mountains; I returned and found part of my men with a Pole of twenty feet in length boring the snow to find the bottom; I told them while we had good Snow Shoes it was no matter to us whether the Snow was ten or one hundred feet deep. (Thompson in Tyrell 1916: 447).

Without adequate winter range, most ungulates would be unable to survive in the area year round. Several ungulate species migrate up and down valley slopes seasonally, moving above the subalpine tree line in late spring to escape flies, utilizing new growth for grazing and browsing, and raising their calves, then moving below the tree line in late fall to escape the deep snow of alpine winters. A.N. Formazov, arguably the father of boreal ecology study, noted that:

In the mountainous regions with heavy snow in particular there is usually pronounced migration from the mountains (Formazov 1946: 70).

The importance of mountainous countries in the life of hoofed animals is very significant, if only because of the fact that they form such large barriers. No less important is also the circumstance that in mountainous countries there are always some enclosed basins, valleys, and defiles, which are distinguished by an insignificant amount of winter precipitation. Such areas are notable refuges for many species of chionophobes [i.e., snow haters] which survive the difficult winters here as if on an island surrounded by a wide snowy sea (ibid.: 77).

Some, but not all, ungulates in the Rocky Mountains can be classed as chionophobes. Mule deer live in open forests near grasslands and winter on the lowest, south facing slopes in locales with shallow snow, which are also arid in summer and grow shrubs that deer prefer for winter food (Edwards 1970: 88-89). Mule deer are chionophobes. Bighorn sheep winter on the grasses of southwest facing slopes and rimrock benches which are seldom deep in snow, and mule deer often accompany sheep on these benches and cliffs (Edwards 1970: 90). Hoefs (1980: 74) describes Dall sheep in Kluane National Park, Yukon Territory, undergoing distinct annual vertical migrations: in late spring moving uphill and onto alpine meadows; in fall moving back down to low elevations onto exposed, wind-blown ridges with warm southern exposures. Hoefs also indicates sheep prefer feeding where there is little or no snow, and avoid exposure to severe wind chills by moving to the lowest elevations during times of lowest temperatures. Bighorn sheep are chionophobes.

West of Jasper National Park, in Wells Gray Provincial Park, British Columbia, *mountain* caribou winter almost a mile higher than mule deer by "floating" on top of crusted snow several yards deep, using their big feet and the height of the snow cover to reach their main winter diet of lichens growing on old-growth trees near the upper tree line (Edwards 1970: 88-89). The deeper the snow the higher caribou can reach. In contrast, Hoefs (1980: 77-78) describes *mountain or woodland* caribou crossing into Kluane National Park in midsummer in search of high altitude snow patches for relief from heat and insects. Hoefs notes these particular caribou do not undertake extensive migrations, but move vertically in response to climatic conditions, primarily

snow depth and type, and are usually at the lowest elevations in midwinter utilizing open spruce forests. Recent DNA analyses by McDevitt and Mariani *et al (*2009) describe caribou in Canada's Rocky Mountains as being unique, having evolved from interbreeding between migratory barren-ground caribou and sedentary woodland caribou, likely due to migration and contact within an ice-free corridor at the end of the last glaciation.

Furthermore, spatial ecological data show evidence of pronounced migratory behavior within the study area, and suggest that the probability of being migratory may be higher in individual caribou carrying a Beringian-Eurasian haplotype which is mainly associated with the barren-ground subspecies. Overall, our analyses reveal an intriguing example of postglacial mixing of diverged lineages (McDevitt and Mariani *et al* 2009: abstract).

Upper Athabaska caribou herds are among those within the study area. In effect, some Rocky Mountain caribou may be migratory, and some not so migratory, creating various herds of caribou which occupy several winter ranges within the broader area of the upper Athabaska drainage. This writer suggests it may be the availability of large, open, old-growth spruce forests, wherever such habitat is located in the Rocky Mountains, which actually determines numbers and winter range preferences for mountain caribou. Overall, Caribou are chionophiles, i.e., snow lovers.

Mountain goats can also be classed as chionophiles. Formazov (1946: 88) suggests such *mountain hoofed animals* are relatively less dependent on snowiness, merely moving down several hundred meters in winter and concentrating on slopes with southern exposures. Hoefs (1980: 75, 77) indicates goats cope better than sheep with heavy snow, with no evident distinction between ranges used in summer and winter; goats are seen at similar altitudes year round.

Moose winter at higher, colder elevations than mule deer, in areas with snow no more than about a yard deep, preferring young burns with abundant shrubs where even in deep snow little energy is wasted in feeding (Edwards 1970: 89). Hoefs (1980: 77) indicates moose also undergo vertical migrations, but these are less predictable than those of sheep, and not all moose take part in them. Hoefs goes on to say most moose spend most of their their time in the subalpine shrub zone, but almost all moose move down into valleys in late winter, browsing on willow, poplar, alders and high bush cranberry, and can become very concentrated in these winter ranges. Moose are somewhat adapted to deep snow with their long legs and high-stepping gait, and can be classed as either chionophiles or chioneuphores, i.e., snow tolerators. Elk do well in rain shadow forests such as the east slopes of the Rockies (Edwards 1970: 89). Elk graze in summer and browse in winter, and are chioneuphores. Grazing through the snow cover by rooting or pawing, bison and horses are chioneuphores. Roe (1970: 192-194) implies bison sometimes move into treed areas for relief from wind chill and deep snow, rather than making deliberate migrations in any particular direction.

Another major factor determining prehistoric and historic game animal migration and winter range distribution has likely been fire and subsequent vegetative succession. Sir Alexander Mackenzie may have recorded the aftereffects of a fire along the Peace River sometime before 1793.

An Indian in some measure explained his age to me, by relating that he remembered the opposite hills and plains, now interspersed with groves of poplars, when they were covered with moss, and without any animal inhabitant but the rein-deer. By degrees, he said, the face of the country changed to its present appearance, when the elk came from the East, and was followed by the buffalo, the rein-deer then retired to the long range of high lands that, at a considerable distance, run parallel with this river. (Sir Alexander Mackenzie in Lamb 1970: 255-256).

Formazov describes carnivores also following migrating hoofed animals into their wintering places at lower elevations (1946: 89). In the northern Rocky Mountains such wintering places with minimal snow cover are typically found in the foothills outside the eastern front ranges, and in the lower reaches of valleys inside the front ranges; the prey are typically chionophobes and chioneuphores. Early Aboriginal hunters in the upper Athabaska area, like other predators, would have moved seasonally in concert with this migrating meat supply.

Regarding identification of specific winter ungulate ranges, past fauna remains were rarely preserved in the area, and with excavation restrictions, definition and distribution of early peoples' hunting activities within the landscape was therefore relatively difficult to assess. Even so, historic accounts by fur traders, explorers and Métis homesteaders (and observations and inquiries by myself) indicate there are five winter ranges in the area: Grande Cache-Victor Lakes in the Smoky River valley (Figure 2), the upper Snake Indian River-Willow Creek valley (Figure 3), the upper Athabaska River valley inside the front range and up river to the Astoria River (Figure 4), the upper Athabaska River valley in the foothills immediately outside the front range (Figure 4), and the upper Brazeau River valley (Figure 5).

Several historical descriptions may assist this discussion:

October 10, Monday. Dunvegan .... Here our principal food will be the Flesh of Buffaloe, Moose, Red Deer [elk] *and Bears* (Daniel Harmon on the Peace River, 1808, in Lamb 1957: 118). This is consistent with accounts by Sir Alexander Mackenzie who traveled through the same area in 1793.

January 1st. The Thermometer -22. Our hunters were fortunate in killing two young bulls [species unknown]*, and a Mountain Sheep....*
January 6th. We came to the last grass for the Horses in Marshes and along small Ponds, where a herd of Bisons had been lately feeding; and here we left the Horses poor and tired, and

notwithstanding the bitter cold, [they] *lived through the winter....* (David Thompson in the upper Athabaska valley at Cottonwood Creek and Prairie de la Vache, 1811, in Tyrell 1916: 444-445).

Many wandering families of the Carrier Tribe and the Ashiganés or Sock Indians [Shuswap?] *of New Caledonia ... now range the valleys of this region in quest of food. In winter they fair well: for then the moose, elk and reindeer are plentiful.* (Father De Smet describing the upper Athabaska area, 1846, in Chittenden and Richardson 1905: 535).

A little note of the game killed by our hunters during the twenty-six days of our abode at this place will perhaps afford you some interest; at least, it will make you acquainted with the animals of the country, and prove that the mountaineers of Athabaska are blessed with good appetites. Animals killed -- twelve moose deer, two reindeer, thirty large mountain sheep or bighorn, two porcupines, 210 hares, one beaver, two muskrats, twenty-four bustards, 115 ducks, twenty-one pheasants, one snipe, one eagle, one owl; add to this from thirty to fifty fine white-fish every day, and twenty trout, and then judge whether or not our people had reason to complain; yet we heard them constantly saying: 'How hard living is here? The country is miserably poor -- we are obliged to fast.' (Father De Smet writing about his Jasper House visit while camped at Athabaska Pass, May 6, 1846, in Chittenden and Richardson 1905: 537: letter footnoted as May 6, 1845, presumably an error).

16

In due time we arrived at Lac Brule…. We commenced our hunting along the foothills, and as hunting in the locality had been followed for years, we had good roads, or 'pitching trails' as they were called, for the reason that whole camps traveled them and pitched at accustomed intervals where feed for the horses was plentiful. Sometimes we made only a few miles, sometimes a fairly long move, remaining two or three weeks at each camp, until the vicinity was hunted out and the meat dried and cached.

At length we reached the head waters of the Smoky River, and after hunting this ground sufficient dry provisions were secured and we pitched back again over almost the same road. Our outfit consisted of four hunters and four meat-haulers with their respective families, my horse-keeper and his family, myself, a cook and an interpreter -- in all ten lodges -- with some hundred and fifty horses.

We killed more than seventy moose on the trip, besides many bighorn, caribou and mountain goats. (Henry Moberly after arriving at Jasper House, 1855, in Moberly and Cameron 1929: 52-53).

... with three other Iroquois and ten horses I went up the valley to a point where a small stream enters on the west side of Roche Jack, the first mountain on the left side of the Smoky [Athabaska?] *looking upstream. We followed the stream to the junction of four mountain spurs abounding with bighorn sheep, which were accustomed to seek the salt-licks below morning and evening.*

We returned to camp late, but one of the Iroquois had killed a fat ewe….

17

Next day we got seven more bighorn.... In the morning two more bighorn fell to our rifles, besides a goat, and we started our return to Jasper House.... Hundreds of sheep were continually in sight, and had we possessed such rifles as are in use today we should have killed enough to supply us with meat throughout the winter.

Three days after our arrival at the post the men I had sent after moose returned with a cow and her calf; thus we had the foundation for a fair stock of meat, and while I remained in charge of Jasper House we never subsequently knew a shortage.

With the two remaining Iroquois I hunted almost every day.... (Moberly, 1858, in Moberly and Cameron 1929: 95-97).

February 2nd - This afternoon I accompanied Moberly on one of his lynx-hunting expeditions up the valley of the Snake Indian River .... We left the river after ascending it for six miles and struck off to the south, skirting the base of the mountains on that side of the valley. A trail through this valley leads to Smoking River, a branch of Peace River, but is said to be very rugged. Ten or twelve miles up the river there are splendid waterfalls, and beyond that point the valley is at a very high level, and the woods that occupy are favorite haunts of large bands of cariboo or mountain reindeer. Smoking River is about two days journey to the N.W., and along its valley there are extensive prairies, of which the Iroquois hunters speak in high terms as the finest land in the country. They say that the winter there is very open, and the pasture is always good. They say in autumn wild fruit is plentiful, and in consequence it is a famous place for both black and grizzly bears.... Until a few years ago, these prairies supported large bands of buffalo and elk.

When we compare the description given by Sir Alexander McKenzie of the prairie country along the Peace River, with its vast herds of buffalo and elks, when he passed in 1793, with the present northern limit of the large herds of these animals at least three degrees of latitude further south, the change is very striking; and still more so if it is true, as the hunters say, that the disappearance of the large quantities of game has only taken place in the last 20 years. (Dr. James Hector, 1859, in Palliser 1863: 126).

I took the horses and returned to Jasper House, where I spent most of the summer, pitching about from the head waters of the McLeod to the upper stretches of the Smoky and making dried provisions.

We killed a great number of moose, caribou, bighorn and bear, not to mention Rocky Mountain marmot. The marmot is smaller than a badger and equal as food when roasted to the choicest suckling pig. they were very numerous in places, and on one day I bagged twenty-two. Porcupines, which are almost as great a delicacy as the marmot, were also plentiful. (Moberly, 1859, in Moberly and Cameron 1929: 108).

A major difference one notices between these valley winter ranges is the aridity and sparse grass and forage in the main Athabaska valley when compared to that found north and south. This seems to have limited game numbers in the main valley, or it may simply be a matter where the main valley became over grazed and over hunted by the 1850s. This may explain why Henry Moberly spent much of his hunting time in the upper Snake Indian and Smoky valleys.

Sheep are particularly well suited to the ecology of the upper Athabaska valley and remain in significant numbers. Bison apparently disappeared early in the Historic Period and horses were introduced about the same time. Moose numbers appear to have remained relatively constant throughout the area over time. Caribou are most often found in alpine zones and mature forests north and south of the main Athabaska valley. However, Edward Moberly once told me that caribou still sporadically ranged the higher slopes of the main valley at the time the park was created. Deer and elk are rarely mentioned as being hunted in the area during the Historic Period. Elk seem to have ranged further north in the Peace River drainage, and further south in the North Saskatchewan drainage. Since the formation of the park, the remnant upper Brazeau elk herd has been resurrected in large numbers and today are common throughout the area. The vegetation cover and succession regime have been altered by fire protection and old growth forests outside the front range have been logged for pulpwood. Recent declines in caribou numbers and distribution, in particular, seem to have resulted from the latter. Besides ungulate species, there were (and are) a full range of carnivores such as grizzly and black bear, wolves, coyotes, wolverine, cougar, lynx, martin, fisher, mink and ermine -- and various other game resources such as beaver, hare, porcupine, marmot, ground squirrel, grouse, waterfowl, char and whitefish.

20

Archaeological Summary

The primary objective of the 1970-71 inventory was prehistoric site location within Jasper National Park. I provided a preliminary, *pro forma* chronological framework to order the artifacts my crew and I recovered from the upper Athabaska drainage (Elliott 1970-71: 59-61). Anderson and Reeves (1975: 93-98) provided more details in an attempt to further define a cultural history for the area in their final report. Additional investigations have since been carried out at Patricia Lake near Jasper Townsite (Pickard 1986, James 1986), the upper Athabaska valley between Jasper Townsite and Hinton (Ball 1986), the Smoky River valley near Grande Cache (Brink and Dawe 1986), and on the Embarras Plateau in the foothills between the McLeod and Pembina Rivers (Meyer and Roe 2007). Occasional isolated artifacts have also been found (Jasper Booster 2005). And as noted previously, an array of artifacts, C14 dates and paleoecological evidence was excavated during 1996-98 from a vertically stratified site above the mouth of the Snake Indian River (Hudecek-Cuffe 2009 personal communication).

While Hudecek-Cuffe's C14 dates and stratigraphy don't support an Upper Athabaska chronology as far back in time as first outlined by myself; significantly, her data does offer an opportunity for greater chronological accuracy in the area. However, in this essay an examination of the Early Prehistoric Period and an earlier human presence in the area (e.g. Figure 7) will be left to other writers. This essay will discuss the Middle and Late Prehistoric and Historic Periods for the upper Athabaska drainage.

As such, I had initially proposed a Middle Prehistoric Period (7500 to 1800-1300 B.P.) ... *characterized by projectiles or projectile point systems presumably designed for use with the spear thrower (atlatl)* (Elliott 1970-71: 60). I proposed a Late Prehistoric Period (1800-1300 to 209 B.P.) ... *characterized by projectiles or projectile point systems presumably designed for use with the bow* (ibid.). I also proposed a Historic Period from 209-104 B.P. (A.D. 1800-1905) ... *characterized by White trade goods, often in association with Aboriginal stone tools* (ibid.). Today I'm of the opinion the Late Prehistoric Period ended and the Historic Period began at A.D. 1810, when David Thompson traveled through the upper Athabaska valley accompanied and guided by Iroquois voyageurs, and wrote the first historical account of the area. The Historic Period ended with the legislated formation of Jasper National Park in A.D. 1907.

Projectile point types have been used as type fossils by all the above noted investigators (including myself) to make inferences about time periods and cultural relationships for prehistoric artifact assemblages recovered from the Upper Athabaska drainage. It is fair to say these inferences were often derived from projectile point types already well established and familiar to investigators, particularly projectile point types from the Northern Plains.

Such attempts will remain futile for upper Athabaska archaeological interpretation, in my opinion, until further investigations can be carried out to firmly underpin such inferences. A similar caution was also made by Anderson & Reeves (1975: 93). My own recent review of

archaeological literature and described projectile points clearly indicates there are other projectile point types representative of other chronologies in other origin-areas than the Northern Plains, which similarly resemble projectile points recovered from the Upper Athabaska drainage.

For example, Richards and Rousseau (1987: 21-52) offer a different version of the Late Prehistoric Period on the Canadian Plateau. They propose three late prehistoric cultural horizons within the Plateau Pithouse Tradition, and as the terminology indicates, pithouse remains are a major characteristic of the cultural horizons. Projectile points are another. The Shuswap Horizon (3500-2400 B.P.) features a range of lanceolate and triangular projectile point types ... *remarkably similar to Oxbow and McKean-Duncan-Hanna types found on the Northern Plains* (ibid.: 22, 25-26, 30-31). The Plateau Horizon (2400-1200 B.P.) features various barbed point types with corner or basal notches ... *very similar in style to Pelican Lake corner-notched points found on the Northern Plains* (ibid.: 32, 34-35, 40). The Kamloops Horizon (1200-200 B.P.) features a range of small side notched, triangular and contracting stemmed point types that share similarities with the Columbia Plateau to the south, the Esilao and Stselax phases of the lower Fraser River and Fraser Delta to the west, the Prairie and Plains Side Notched points on the Northern Plains to the east, and the contracting stemmed point types with Athapaskan-affiliated Kavik and Klo-kut points found to the north from the Chilcotin region of British Columbia into the Yukon and Alaska (ibid.: 41, 43-45, 48-49). Many of these point forms apparently diffused westward at progressively later dates from the Northern Plains to the Canadian Plateau.

Aside from a lack of evidence for pit houses, but given the similarities to Northern Plains point types, in my opinion all of the Canadian Plateau cultural horizon projectile points described by Richards and Rousseau (1987) appear to be equally representative as type fossils/chronological markers for projectile points in the upper Athabaska drainage.

The Upper Lovett Campsite located outside the front range on the Embarras Plateau between the Pembina and McLeod Rivers (Meyer and Roe 2007: 33-34) exemplifies the problems with using projectile point types to make inferences about upper Athabaska cultural history. The site is one of many shallow, unstratified archaeological sites within the area. The site features a single hearth with burnt bone, fire broken rock and charcoal, and a horizontally distributed assemblage of projectile points, flaked bifaces, scrapers and other lithic detritus. The lithic materials used were mostly local quartzites, cherts and silicified siltstone. Projectile points recovered from the Upper Lovett site are inferred to be within the Northern Plains Middle Prehistoric Period. The investigators describe the small assortment of projectile points as *... closely resembling types first defined at Mummy Cave in Wyoming. Elsewhere, these types date from 7000 to 5000 years ago, suggesting that the Upper Lovett Campsite saw occupation from that period* (Meyer and Roe 2007: 33). No C14 dates were associated with the points. Conversely, the investigators describe a second occupation, based on C14 dates of 1580-1410 B.P. and 1530-1340 B.P., without any associated projectile points or other diagnostic tools (ibid.: 34).

Interestingly, an illustrated *Central Alberta Eastern Slopes Culture History* schematic referencing Taltheilei projectile points within the Athabaska drainage from 3000-200 B.P. is also offered within the article (ibid.: 31). To put the reference in perspective, Gordon (1996) describes four phases (earliest, early, middle, late) for the Taltheilei Tradition from 2600-200 B.P., all of which are centered in the subarctic tundra barrenlands and taiga forests of the western Canadian Shield, i.e., the Northwest Territories and northerly portions of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It is the Late Taltheilei Phase (1300-200 B.P.), featuring poorly made asymmetric point types with squared, stemmed, flared, or wide expanding bases, along with small corner and side notched Northern Plains point types (ibid.: 238-240), about which this essay is specifically concerned. Good descriptions of Late Taltheilei Phase projectile points and other artifacts can also be found in a discussion of the Late Prehistoric Period in the Mackenzie River valley by Morrison (1984).

After reviewing the article by Meyer and Roe, if the Upper Lovett Site C14 dates are not associated with the site projectile points, then in my opinion the points can be as easily assigned to the Shuswap Horizon of the Canadian Plateau as to the Middle Prehistoric Period of the Northern Plains. On further reflection, if the C14 dates are even indirectly associated with the site points, then an inference attributing the entire unstratified Upper Lovett site to the Late Taltheilei Phase and the Late Prehistoric Period becomes another possibility. The Mackenzie Valley and Shield taiga are no more distant from the Upper Athabaska drainage than the Canadian Plateau or the Northern Plains. The descriptions by Gordon (1996: 59), and that of the

Late Prehistoric Period and Late Taltheilei projectile points in the Mackenzie Valley (Morrison 1984: 198-201), suggest to me that several Late Taltheilei point types exhibit similarities to many of the points recovered from the Upper Lovett site, and to many recovered from the upper Athabaska valley (Figure 10).

A different sort of artifact assemblage was located in 1970 at Orchard Creek, east of the front range and outside the park boundary, in a disturbed prehistoric campsite on a north-side, south-facing terrace above the Athabaska River. The Orchard Creek Site contained Anahim Lake, British Columbia obsidian flakes, a stemmed projectile point of an unnamed style, and five broken chert micro blades -- the first microblades ever recovered in the Alberta Rocky Mountains (Anderson and Reeves 1975: 121-123). In my opinion, the Orchard Creek assemblage bears some similarities to the assemblage recovered from the Patricia Lake Site inside the front range near Jasper Townsite in 1983-85 (Pickard 1986). The Patricia Lake Site contained various unnamed stemmed, corner and side notched projectile points, various basalt artifacts, a chert microblade core, a chert microblade, obsidian flakes from Mt. Edziza, British Columbia, and other lithic detritus distributed horizontally in three discrete activity areas (ibid.: 102-128). Another flake and a corner-notched projectile point of Anahim Lake obsidian were also found nearby (James 1986: 93).

Although lacking empirical dating, the Patricia Lake Site has been inferred by Pickard to be within the Shuswap and Plateau Horizons (e.g. Rousseau 1987). I would add to this by

suggesting that the Orchard Creek Site might also be assigned to the Shuswap Horizon. However, in the absence of vertical stratigraphy and C14 dates, further reflection suggests the point types also offer the possibility of attributing both sites to the Late Taltheilei Phase.

Lithic materials used for prehistoric tools in the Upper Athabaska drainage were sourced from a variety of locations. In addition to the chert microblades and British Columbia obsidian flakes mentioned above, side notched points made from basalt and various other artifacts made from green argillite and light green siliceous siltstone, were also imported from British Columbia (Kootenays). Other artifacts made from banded black Banff Chert were quarried and imported from south of Banff National Park, and many others were made from local materials: quartzites and grainy black Nordegg Chert. Quartzites are common in Alberta. The Nordegg Chert was quarried at Shunda Creek east of Nordegg, in central Alberta (Anderson and Reeves 1975: 148-149). All the above materials were used in the main Athabaska valley. Other local lithic materials were also exploited prehistorically in the area: chert and siliceous siltstone from Cairn Pass, between Medicine Tent and Cairn Rivers, and chert from between Edna and Talbot Lakes (Pickard 1986: 126). Another material, a blue-grey to grey siliceous mudstone, was quarried at Glacier Pass situated on a trail route between the South Sulfur River (Smoky River headwaters) and Mowitch Creek (upper Snake Indian River valley). Artifact assemblages made from Glacier Pass Siliceous Mudstone were mainly located in the upper valleys on either side of Glacier Pass (ibid.: 116-117, 120, 148).

There were other unusual assemblages found in the upper Athabaska drainage. What appears to be a quartzite stone copy of an iron axe was collected and first described by Gordon Bried, along with a small number of lithic discard flakes, inside the front range from a beach where Beaver Lake discharges into Medicine Lake (Elliott 1970: 119, 210). The stone copy was shaped from a large, primary-decortication quartzite cobble flake and seemingly exhibits a flared, slightly ground cutting edge (Figures 8a and 8b). Iron was brought into the Rockies from the east by the fur trade in the 1700s, and may have been been coming into the northwestern interior of British Columbia from the coast over the past 500 years (Keddie, n.d.). Bried also collected an English trade (Brandon style) gun flint, a Late Prehistoric Period side notched point and flaked bifaces (Figure 9) from another site inside the front range on a low terrace on the southeast side of the Athabaska River beneath Morro Peak (Elliott, 1970: 140, 222). In essence, these few artifacts represent a brief archaeological expression of cultural interaction between late prehistoric and historic Aboriginal people in the upper Athabaska valley.

Anderson and Reeves (1975: 99-103) make a number of observations about prehistoric Aboriginal land and resource use in the upper Athabaska drainage. They indicate that the sites, artifact assemblages and distribution of lithic materials portray two spatially separate site patterns: one within the main Athabaska valley (Figure 4), and the other within upper Snake Indian River-Willow Creek-Glacier Pass (Figure 3). There seem to be two important site variables: (1) the distribution of suitable land forms (well-drained, open aspects, southern exposures, adjacent water and wood), and (2) areas maximizing seasonal ungulate carrying

capacity -- i.e., winter range locales with minimal snow cover. The two variables interplay to spatially structure prehistoric occupation within these two separate landscapes.

Anderson and Reeves also portray two discrete clusters of sites within the Athabaska valley itself: (1) inside the front range between the Miette-Athabaska River junction (Jasper Townsite) and the De Smet and Jacques Ranges (head of Jasper Lake), and (2) the valley outside or east of the front range. Downstream from the De Smet-Jacques Ranges, between Jasper and Brule Lakes, the flood plain is broad and the river unrestricted, characterized by seasonally exposed alluvial silts and sands, shifting channels, dunes, and frequent and violent winter sand storms. Most of the associated prehistoric sites in the latter locale appear very transient: isolated finds, lookouts and small lithic workshops, likely reflecting the environment found there.

The valley from Jasper Townsite to the head of Jasper Lake is characterized by Chinook winds and is relatively snow-free in winter, which, coupled with open meadows and wintering ungulates, provided the needed variables for winter campsites and hunting activities. This site pattern occurred both prehistorically and historically. Site frequencies decline markedly upstream from the Miette-Athabaska junction, an area characterized by lower ungulate carrying capacities and a more closed forest environment, although prehistoric people traveled through the Athabaska and Yellow Head Passes, as indicated by the easterly distribution of Canadian Plateau lithics and an isolated stone biface collected from Scott Flats on the upper Whirlpool River (ibid.: 100-101).

East of the front range, the campsites are larger, more numerous and yield more artifacts, suggesting larger populations and greater resource use. The prescribed site variables continue to be relevant, with sites situated on benches with southerly exposures on tributary streams at or above their junction with the Athabaska. This part of the valley still benefits from chinook winds without being subjected to the winter sand storms of the upper valley inside the front range (ibid.: 101).

In spring, early Aboriginal families likely traveled away from their winter camps in the main Athabaska valley hunting beaver and other smaller game, perhaps burning off meadows and then following ungulate game animals into the high country in late spring. Small family groups likely spent summer above the tree line picking berries and fishing, and individually hunting and snaring small and large game on summer ranges in headwater valleys and alpine meadows. In fall, operating drive fences and snaring migrating ungulates likely occurred, along with smoking and drying meat, then following ungulate herds below the tree line and settling into winter camps back in the main Athabaska valley in anticipation of winter. All five ungulate winter ranges in the area could have been hunted from the main Athabaska valley. Such a postulated seasonal round would be reasonably consistent with that of modern Beaver families living near Fort St. John, British Columbia (Brody 1981: 191-200), and Slavey families living near Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories, in the Mackenzie River valley (Tetso 1970).

Within the upper Snake Indian River-Willow Creek-Glacier Pass landscape, the greatest concentration of sites occur in the meadows of the upper Snake Indian valley between Willow and Deer Creeks, suggesting a locale which met all the prescribed variables for prehistoric site occupation and ungulate hunting. Given the differing styles of ungulate winter range utilization, the locale could have provided for most ungulates and year round occupation and use by Aboriginal people. Winter use would have been similar to that reflected by the extant historic Aboriginal sites (Anderson and Reeves 1975: 101-102). In 1971 I observed several examples of historic wood pole tipi frames, and log-built crib structures which were used sometimes as burials and sometimes as storage caches, in the Willow Creek locale and north of Glacier Pass (upper Sulphur River, Smoky River headwaters). The tipi sites feature one to three tipis and appear to have been hunting and trapping campsites. Such sites would have provided a base from which to exploit the adjacent meadows, slopes and creek valleys, seasonally if not year round.

The upper Snake Indian valley (Figure 3) has additional characteristics which would have made year round hunting and occupation feasible. It can be easily approached by two trail routes: one is southeast up the South Sulphur River through Glacier Pass and down Mowitch Creek to Deer Creek, and the second is southwest up the Wildhay River through the foothills to Rock Lake and then up Rock Creek. Access is more difficult via the lower Snake Indian valley and the Athabaska valley (ibid.: 102-103).

Glacier Pass is an alpine locale elevated above the tree line which would have been traveled during the snow-free summer and fall seasons. The locale was used by Aboriginal people during prehistory for quarrying siliceous mudstone nodules from glacial till and alluvial out wash deposits, and producing (by core reduction and percussion flaking) tools and transportable bifacial preforms for use or trade elsewhere (ibid.: 117). Glacier Pass quarrying sites were distributed as surface activity areas on or near a nunatak feature on the north side of the pass summit. Although predominant at the pass and other nearby locales, Anderson and Reeves' tabular lithic data (1975: Tables 6, 7) indicates the amount of Glacier Pass Siliceous Mudstone quickly decreases as the distance from the upper Snake Indian River-Willow Creek-Glacier Pass landscape increases, and that Glacier Pass Siliceous Mudstone was carried south into the upper Athabaska valley in very modest amounts. Additional data in Ball (1986: Table 10) and Pickard (1986: Table 8) appears to confirm this. In contrast, I suggest the same material may again predominate a dated middle prehistoric occupation within the site excavated by Hudecek-Cuff at the mouth of the Snake Indian River. The Glacier Pass quarry is unique, but despite seeming to be somewhat local in distribution, I believe more Glacier Pass Siliceous Mudstone may yet be found in other artifact assemblages elsewhere in the headwaters of the Smoky River, most of which remain to be investigated.

Anderson and Reeves (1975: 103) point out the Rock Creek-Wildhay River-foothills trail is a lower elevation route that could have been traveled year round. Upstream from Deer Creek and downstream from Willow Creek, the site frequency in the upper Snake Indian valley decreases

markedly. For example, no sites were located in the Blue Creek valley (Snake Indian River headwaters tributary) and, in fact, most of the upper half of the Blue Creek valley flood plain was under water in 1971. Also, no sites were found in the lower Snake Indian valley, except near the river's mouth in the Athabaska valley. So far, other than in the upper Snake Indian River-Willow Creek-Glacier Pass locales previously described, few sites have been found in the other valleys leading off from the upper Athabaska Valley inside the front range.

Archaeological investigations were conducted in 1974-75 and 1978-80 farther down river in the Smoky River valley (Brink and Dawe 1986), outside the front range near Grande Cache (Figure 2). The research included various site surveys and two excavations. The Grande Cache Lake Site is an unstratified site on a level bench at the northeast end of the lake. The site is comprised of three discrete activity areas with fire broken rock and a horizontally distributed artifact assemblage of projectile points, bifaces, unifaces, flaked cores, utilized flakes, a cut and grooved piece of steatite, other lithic detritus and small bone fragments (ibid.: 179-209). Several chert microblade fragments and an obsidian microblade were also recovered from the Grande Cache Lake locale (ibid.: 174-175, 239). The Smoky Site is an unstratified site on an undulating point of land above the north side of the Smoky River, opposite the confluence of the Muskeg and Smoky Rivers. The site is comprised of a diffuse and horizontally distributed assemblage of stone and bone artifacts categorized similarly to the Cache Lake Site. A ground-stone, grooved, lozenge-shaped, green serpentine artifact was also recovered from the Smoky Site (ibid.: 209-233). Both excavated sites were broadly C14 dated from the Middle to Late Prehistoric

Periods (ibid.: 182-184, 214-215). Artifact assemblages, including projectile points, appear similar to those recovered from the upper Athabaska valley. Interestingly, there are again only modest amounts of Glacier Pass Siliceous Mudstone in these assemblages (ibid.: Tables 16, 22). Most of the other lithic materials appear to be local. Like myself, the investigators suggest the Grande Cache-Victor Lakes locale provides suitable conditions for winter use by ungulate game animals and the Aboriginal people who hunted them.

The investigators also tentatively referenced Northern Plains point types to infer that the Grande Cache Lake and Smoky Sites were occupied during the Middle Prehistoric Period (ibid.: 240-242). In my opinion, inferences can be made for attributing most Cache Lake Site points (ibid.: 194-195) to either the Shuswap Horizon or the Northern Plains Middle Prehistoric Period (McKean-Duncan-Hanna). There were also four smaller point bases recovered from the Grande Cache Lake Site (ibid.: 195: Fig. 74 e-h) which might be inferred to be Late Prehistoric Period notched points attributed to the Late Taltheilei Phase. Again in my opinion, inferences can be made for attributing Smoky Site projectile points (ibid.: 224) to the Shuswap and Plateau Horizons, or the Northern Plains Middle Prehistoric Period (Mckean-Hanna-Pelican Lake).

Generally, Anderson and Reeves (1975: 103-104) say that sites outside the front range are larger than those inside. Sites and artifact assemblages outside the front range in the east slope foothills suggest larger group sizes and more residential activities such as hide processing, and macerating and boiling bones for marrow and grease. Inside the front range, the artifacts are those associated

with the relatively mobile activities of hunting and butchering, such as projectile points and bifacial knives and flakes. Camp size and artifacts suggest that small bands of one or two families were the norm inside. The Iroquois and Assiniboin, who had more complex social organizations elsewhere, quickly adopted this smaller group size following their arrival within the upper Athabaska drainage. This allowed for more flexible seasonal subsistence strategies within the environmental limitations of the inside valleys as the snow line and ungulates moved higher and lower seasonally. So far, the archaeological evidence seems to indicate that prehistoric hunting in the area was based on individual and small group efforts. So far, no evidence has been found for communal hunting.

Ball (1986) took exception with the interpretations outlined by Anderson and Reeves, and myself. I initially found no disagreement with Ball's viewpoint that:

W*hile it certainly is possible that projectile points and other traits could be indicative of movements of culture groups within an area over time, a demonstration of this would require more supporting data than simply the presence or absence of particular point styles* (ibid.: 145).

His discussion then expanded to hypothesizing a settlement and subsistence pattern characterized simply by a limited number of residential base camps supported by a larger number of ancillary sites. Based on his investigations, Ball thus concluded that cultural history within the Athabaska Valley has been relatively homogeneous and stable through time, lacking any evidence for

significant cultural change for some 9000 years (ibid.: 146-156). In my opinion, Ball's latter viewpoint is too simplistic, a perception perhaps colored by the small size of the bands of prehistoric and historic people who constantly needed to reorient their cultural choices and adaptations within the limited range of opportunities presented by an ecologically sparse, yet relatively stable environment. The foregoing ecological summary, along with the ethnoarchaeological and ethnohistoric information presented below, outlines a more probable and more complex picture, particularly during the Late Prehistoric and Historic Periods.

Overall, the foregoing discussions illustrate some of the potential pitfalls of using projectile points for archaeological interpretation. Projectile point type fossils from differing origin-areas often exhibit remarkable morphological similarities to one another -- as they do to those in the upper Athabaska drainage. Also, no evidence for pithouses has been found in the upper Athabaska drainage to date. Without defined pithouse features, sufficient numbers of C14 dates, further excavations, stratigraphy controls and statistical metric artifact analyses, inferring culture history in the upper Athabaska drainage simply on the basis of projectile point forms is premature and futile. In my opinion, upper Athabaska investigators would be well served in these circumstances by confining their projectile point descriptions to terms such as lanceolate, bi-pointed, stemmed, corner notched, side notched, triangular, asymmetric, *etcetera;* providing good photographic images and measurements for reference; and making relatively broad chronological inferences. However, I do agree with Anderson and Reeves (1975: 105) that Aboriginal people in these northern Rocky Mountains were closely dependent on the larger game

they hunted, and the suitability of the landscape to support their activities. Their use of the area, as reflected by the artifacts they left behind when carrying out these activities, was patterned in response to the particular biophysical resources in any one valley, or winter range. These prehistoric use patterns varied significantly, as portrayed in the observed differences between the upper Athabaska and Snake Indian valleys, and between those within the Athabaska valley itself.

Ethnoarchaeological Analogs

One can only wonder how far back in prehistoric time either Canadian Plateau, Northern Plains or subarctic western Canadian Shield cultural history extends in the upper Athabaska drainage? One also wonders how far back in time ancient groups of people knew about the Yellow Head and Athabaska Passes as routes for contact between the Canadian Plateau and the landscapes and people further east? Given the scarce food resources described in the ethnohistory which follows this section, one wonders if such contact would have featured cooperation and trade, or militancy and conflict?

Archaeology, folk lore and linguistics all seem to be possible avenues for investigating such questions. However, southern British Columbia basalt and argillite, Mt. Edziza and Anahim Lake obsidian, lanceolate, stemmed and notched points and microblades recovered from middle-to-late prehistoric sites situated east of the Yellow Head Pass, as thought provoking as they all may be, constitute very limited data for archaeologists to use -- as does the Shuswap chief Capot Blanc's

1846 statement to Paul Kane that his proper location had been *a long distance to the north-east* of Jasper House (Kane in Harper 1971: 87-88). As for linguistics and folk lore, Berezkin's broader study (2007: 12-13) of folk lore motifs shared between Central Algonquians of the Great Lakes, and Plateau and Athabaskan people west of the continental divide, concludes that the folk lore by itself lacks any intrinsic chronology and must await future comparative linguistic analysis; folk lore is not enough on which to postulate such contacts.

Ethnoarchaeology, like ethnohistory, offers promise for interpreting cultural history in the area. In 1968, Rob Bonnichsen, along with myself and Jim Bennett, examined a recently-abandoned Aboriginal campsite near Grande Cache, Alberta. We were camped nearby, and were fortunate to meet Millie Wanyande and her family, the previous occupants of the abandoned campsite. We soon realized this fortuitous meeting offered the elements for conducting an experiment in archaeology which was ultimately published by Bonnichsen (1973). To a minor degree the Bonnichsen study was flawed by the assumption at that time that Millie's family were Cree. Subsequent research has confirmed that the Wanyande family originated as Iroquois-Sekani-Métis (Nicks and Morgan 1985: 167). Similar to other local Iroquois-Métis families, the Wanyandes have resided in the area since the early Historic Period. Like their fur trade ancestors, they spoke Cree, some French and English.

Bonnichsen's study was concerned with the paucity of appropriate inferential analogs for prehistoric cultural interpretation, and with testing the validity of intuitive archaeological

inferential methodology. In essence, Millie's camp was established to facilitate weekly travel by adult male family members to and from their coal mine jobs during times of bad road conditions. The campsite was described in the study as an arrangement of ten defined activity areas (Bonnichsen 1973: 278-283, Fig. 1). Activity area artifact assemblages were inventoried (ibid.: 287-290), and an interpretive reconstruction was inferred. The reconstruction was then tested by way of subsequent discussions with Millie (ibid.: 283-286). In light of the limitations of upper Athabaska archaeological data, the conclusions from Bonnichsen's study should be a cautionary for all concerned:

A sequence of errors such as these [within the interpretive reconstruction] *reflect the fact that mistakes made at the identification level are frequently carried over into each succeedingly higher level of interpretation. For example, a misidentified artefact can influence the interpretation assigned to an activity area, which in turn may lead to an incorrect interpretation of the relations between activity areas. Hence, a single error may be compounded several times, affecting the overall accuracy of the proposed reconstruction.*

The present preliminary study serves to underline the fact that the intuitive analytic approach commonly used for the interpretation of prehistoric remains should be critically examined. As this approach lacks empirical referents, the basic prerequisite for comparative science, it is unlikely that any two investigators examining the same data will generate similar conclusions. (ibid.: 286-287).

An excellent study of Tahltan ethnoarchaeology by Albright (1984) is far more detailed and wide ranging than the Bonnichsen study. The Albright study has been structured as an ethnographic analog for prehistory in the Tahltan culture area, which is located on the Stikine Plateau and Stikine River drainage, in northern British Columbia. The study has much useful comparative information to offer; the difficulty is in doing it justice in this brief review. The phonology of Tahltan-Kaska-Tagish resembles that of Sekani and Beaver (Albright 1984: 9). Like Sekani described in the following ethnohistory, Tahltans are subarctic mountain-adapted Athapaskan people. Also like Sekani, Tahltans are well-adapted to harvesting a full range of economic resources within a boreal biosphere characterized by a diverse but moderate animal biomass, which exhibits great fluctuations in the cyclic and seasonal abundance of any given species in any given year. The potential for starvation never seems far removed from the Stikine Plateau.

The ecology of the Stikine Plateau is somewhat similar to the upper Athabaska drainage, and like the latter, winter ungulate ranges are important. Unlike Sekani in the upper Athabaska drainage, Tahltans are able to enhance the reliability of their food gathering activities from the predictive annual runs of salmon in the Stikine River, which are caught by a variety of methods and smoked and stored for later use. Tahltan supplement and regularly maintain their food base with a flexible system of techniques for exploiting diverse species, storing seasonally abundant food resources in caches, sharing food among kin, utilizing an established network of trading camps and relationships, and fallowing various hunting locales to conserve and restore game populations. Semi-sedentary summer salmon fishing camps and related fishing activities provide for a

somewhat different seasonal round compared to the upper Athabaska drainage. However, similar to both these subarctic montane areas, highly energy-efficient snaring techniques were used to capture a wide range of large and small game, including caribou in the spring and fall, as herds moved between alpine summer ranges and forested valley winter ranges. Additionally, Mt. Edziza obsidian is plentiful and locally available in the Tahltan culture area. Flaked stone tools continue to be used by Tahltan women for dressing hides. Tahltan elders indicate that Mt. Edziza obsidian was collected during late summer-early fall hunting trips in the alpine zone. (ibid.: 12-13, 43-65, 67-78, 84-98).

In terms of archaeological visibility, the greatest concentration of Tahltan lithic artifact remains come from women producing and using small flakes for butchering and processing fish, meat and hides near habitation structures in large camps. The energy cost of transporting materials and tool kits from one camp to another is limited by the use of caches. Smoke house foundations, hearths and cache pits can be readily identified. Much of Tahltan material culture was made from organic materials, so site visibility is not only dependent on campsite size and permanency (like salmon fishing camps), but on the accumulation of lithics from stone tool use over many years. Other economic activities and smaller sites, including kill sites, are relatively less visible. (ibid.: 99-103).

Both study formats offer methodology for making inferences about prehistory. While different in purpose, the conclusions in the Albright study are not inconsistent with those of the Bonnichsen study, and provide further insight for such endeavors.

Ethnoarchaeological approaches can provide an understanding of the dynamics of hunter-gatherer subsistence behavior and site formation processes. These factors are seen as essential for interpreting the significance of different prehistoric sites within the overall pattern of subsistence and settlement strategies. The availability of salmon in the Stikine Plateau area ... provided the Tahltan with a means of coping with periods of scarcity which other Athapaskan groups occupying Arctic drainages did not have.
A problem for future research would be to determine how early these subsistence patterns are valid.... This issue has not been resolved.... Research in the Tahltan area has indicated that the subsistence and settlement strategies utilized provided a means of coping with resource fluctuations. It is thus suggested that similar patterns of land use may have been operating in the [Tahltan] *area for several thousand years.* (ibid.: 106).

An Ethnohistory

The earliest white explorer to travel anywhere close to the upper Athabaska area, although not through it, was Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who explored up the Peace River and west to the Pacific Ocean for the North West Company in 1793. Mackenzie's party wintered at Fort Fork

near the junction of the Smoky and Peace Rivers in 1792, after which they traveled up the Peace River and through the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific and back in the following spring and summer. The party included ... *Mackenzie and McKay* [and] *six French-Canadians voyageurs ... and two indians who acted as guides and interpreters*, and they covered 2400 miles in 108 days, canoeing and backpacking, averaging 16 miles per day going west and 36 miles per day return. (Lamb 1970: 21-22).

Sir Alexander Mackenzie's party was the first such group to arrive in the northern Rocky Mountains. They were company engagés, whose Montreal origin and background were described by Mackenzie in his *General History of the Fur Trade from Canada to the North-West* (ibid.: 63-159):

All the winterers were hired by the year, and some times for three years; and of the clerks many were apprentices, who were generally engaged for five to seven years, they had only one hundred pounds, provision and clothing.... Those who acted in the twofold capacity of clerk and interpreter, or were so denominated, had no other expectation than the payment of wages to the amount of from one thousand to four thousand livres per annum, with clothing and provisions. The guides, who were a very useful set of men, acted also in the additional capacity of interpreters, and had a stated quantity of goods, considered as sufficient for their wants, their wages being from one to three thousand livres. The canoe men are of two descriptions, foremen

and steersmen, and middlemen. The two first were allowed annually one thousand two hundred, and the latter eight hundred, livres each.... The latter... are called North Men, or Winterers.... Leaving La Chine, they proceed to St. Ann's, within two miles of the Western extremity of the island of Montreal, It is from this spot that the Canadians consider they take their departure, as it possesses the last church on the island, which is dedicated to the tutelar saint of the voyagers. ... the Seignory belonging to the clergy, though nominally in possession of the two tribes of Iroquois and Algonquins, whose village [Oka] *is situated on a delightful point of land under the hills.... On the East is the station of the Algonquins, and on the West, one of the Iroquois, consisting in all of about five hundred warriors. Each party has its missionary, and divine worship is performed according to the rites of the Roman Catholic religion.... The country around them, though very capable of cultivation, presents only a few miserable patches of ground, sown by the women with maize and vegetables. During the winter season, they leave their habitations, and pious pastors, to follow the chase according to the custom of their forefathers. Such is, indeed, the state of all the villages near the cultivated parts of Canada.* (Mackenzie in Lamb 1970: 83-86).

Mackenzie in his *General History* and Stanley (1947: 430, in reviewing Marcel Giraud's 1945 book: *Le Métis Canadien: Son rôle dans L'histoire des provinces de L'Ouest*) both describe a state of affairs where the colonial government of New France, with the blessing of the Roman Catholic Church, heavily regulated and profited from the fur trade; and they suggest that young French Canadian and Métis men, looking for adventure and opportunity beyond their precarious

daily lives as colonists, were tacitly encouraged to accompany indigenous Indians on hunting and trading excursions and become ... *pedlars, Coureurs des Bois* [runners of the woods] ... *extremely useful to the merchants engaged in the fur trade, who gave them the necessary credit to proceed in their commercial undertakings* (Mackenzie in Lamb 1970: 65-66).

An incisive article by Dickason (1985) describes *mêtissage* (racial mixing) as an immediate result. Although initially embraced as an official policy in French Canada, the process subsequently fell into disfavor and was discouraged to one degree or another as time wore on. As such:

The trade, which remained the principal economic activity for the colony throughout the French regime, functioned best when certain formalities were observed. Not the least of these was intermarriage; Amerindian society, with its stress on kinship, much preferred such a relationship as a basis for its trading alliances (Dickason, 1985: 24).

... the children of mixed unions tended to identify with either the French or the Amerindians rather than consider themselves as a separate identity. This would have been particularly true for the men. The two areas where a biracial heritage as such would have given them an advantage, the fur trade and diplomatic relations with Amerindians, provided only limited opportunities in the East during the latter part of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries. Other occupational fields, particularly prestigious ones such as the missionary and military, demanded identification with the French. The alternative would have been to join allied

Amerindian guerrillas in their 'petite guerre' against the English, which would have meant identification as Amerindian. If they stayed within the colony in any other occupation, children of mixed unions would have been considered French (ibid.: 29-30).

In Acadia and Quebec, the tendency was for métis to identify with one side or the other.... (ibid.: 31).

The role of Métis in the fur trade changed after the French-Indian War, the battle on the Plains of Abraham, and ceding the colony to the British in 1763. Coureurs des Bois, enamored with their free life style and the sudden unregulated opportunity for personal profit, soon spread the trade far and wide. The North West Company partners then merely availed themselves of a seasoned, culturally integrated work force by using a system of short term contractual engagements to re-regulate the trade and successfully compete with the Hudson's Bay Company. In effect, the N.W. Co. enrolled under its flag all the Canadian and Métis free traders who had been trafficking with the Indians from various frontier posts, and Coureurs des Bois soon became redefined as *North Men or Winterers*. Overall, the *winterers,* or *voyagers* (voyageurs), mentioned by Mackenzie would have been a mélange of Iroquois, French Canadian, and Iroquois-Canadian Métis. Karamanski (1982: 5) says that a majority of *Iroquois* voyageurs came from Caughnawaga, a colonial Jesuit mission a few miles down river from Oka near Lachine. Some, or all, of these winterers who traveled with Mackenzie likely remained in the northern Rockies as free men after being discharged from their engagements by the North West Company, and helped to set the stage for the Historic Period in the upper Athabaska drainage.

As they traveled, Mackenzie's party encountered many different Aboriginal people, including the *Rocky Mountain Indians* at Fort Fork.

Thursday, January 10. Among the people who were now here [Fort Fork], *there were two Rocky Mountain Indians, who declared ... that their country has ever been in the vicinity of our present situation .... They represented themselves as the only real natives of that country then with me: and added, that the country, and that part of the river that intervenes between this place and the mountains, bear much the same appearance as that around us; that the former abounds with animals* .... (Mackenzie in Lamb 1970: 249-250).

The Beaver and Rocky Mountain Indians, who traded with us in this river, did not exceed an hundred and fifty men, capable of bearing arms; two thirds of whom call themselves Beaver Indians ....

Though the Beaver Indians made their peace with the Knisteneaux [Cree], *at Peace Point ... yet they did not share a state of amity from others of the same nation .... If it so happened that they* [Cree] *missed them* [Beaver], *they proceeded Westward til they were certain of wreaking their vengeance on those of the Rocky Mountain, who being without arms, became an easy prey to their blind and savage fury. All the European articles they* [Beaver] *possessed, previous to the year 1780, were obtained from the Knisteneaux and the Chepewyans, who brought them from Fort Churchill, and for which they were made to pay an extravagant price.*

When traders first appeared among these people, the Canadians were treated with the utmost hospitality and attention; but they have, by their subsequent conduct, taught the natives to withdraw that respect from them... (ibid.: 253-255).

The greater part of this band being Rocky Mountain Indians, I endeavored to obtain some intelligence of our intended route, but they all pleaded ignorance, and uniformly declared, that they knew nothing of the country beyond the first mountain ....
I inquired, with some anxiety, after an old man who had already given me an account of the country beyond the limits of his tribe, and was very much disappointed at being informed, that he had not been seen for upwards of a moon. This man had been at war on another large river beyond the Rocky Mountain, and described to me a fork of it between the mountains; the Southern branch of which he directed me to take .... (ibid.: 260-261).

Their [Rocky Mountain Indians] *arms consist of bows made of cedar, six feet in length, with a short iron spike at one end, and serve occasionally as a spear. Their arrows are well made, barbed, and pointed with iron, flint, stone, or bone; they are feathered, and from two to two feet and a half in length. They have two kinds of spears, but both are double edged, and of well polished iron; one of them is about twelve inches long, and two wide; the other about half the width, and two thirds of the length; the shafts of the first are about eight feet in length, and the latter six. They have also spears made of bone. Their knives consist of pieces of iron, shaped and handled by themselves. Their axes are something like our adze, and they use them in the same*

manner as we employ that instrument. They were indeed, furnished with iron in a manner that I could not have supposed, and plainly proved to me that their communication with those, who communicate with the inhabitants of the sea coast, cannot be very difficult, and from their ample provision of iron weapons, the means of procuring it must be of a more distant origin than I had first conjectured.

They had snares made of green skin, which they cut to the size of sturgeon twine, and twist a number of them together; and though when completed do not exceed the thickness of cod-line, their strength is sufficient to hold a moose-deer.... (ibid.: 290-291).

The Rocky Mountain Indians were likely Sekani Indians hunting and living in the Rocky Mountains, the Smoky River drainage and the Peace River foothills. The early traders called them Sekani, and the name stuck through time, but the name "Sekani" was likely taken from one of their band subdivisions. Morice (1906: 30) indicates the true name is *Tsé'kéhne, 'People-on-the-Rocks,' i.e., the Rocky Mountains.*

Jenness (1937) notes simply that the Sekani have no common name for themselves, only names for their separate bands, and that in modern times they still claim all the Peace River above the junction with the Smoky River as their territory (Jenness 1937: 5-6). Jenness then became more specific about Sekani band identity and location, using information provided by the N.W.Co. partner Simon Fraser to refer to ... '*Says-Thaw-Dennehs or Bawcanne' Indians, who dwelt, apparently, at the headwaters of Smoky River and on the tributaries of the Fraser on the other*

side of the mountains (ibid.: 6). Jenness was referring to the July 10th., 1806 entry in Simon Fraser's journal:

Thursday 10th July. This is a fine river and not unlike the Athabaska but not so large and the Indian we left at the height or point of land informed us that the upper end of it was the most ordinary residence of the Says-Thaw Dennahs (Bawcanne Indians) which corroborates what the Carriers tell us of these Indians, they being enemies .... All accounts agree that large animals as well as those of the fur kind are in great abundance particularly towards the upper end .... (Simon Fraser in Jenness 1937: 82).

Opinions vary about the *fine river.* Lamb (2007: 238) identified it as the Fraser River, which would place the *Says-Thaw Denneh* in the vicinity of Yellow Head Pass, i.e., at the *upper end* (headwaters) south and west of the continental divide and Smoky River headwaters. Conversely, Jenness (1937: 82: footnote 2) identified it as the McGregor River, a Fraser River tributary, the headwaters of which are west of the continental divide and Smoky River headwaters. *Says-Thaw Denneh* likely ranged the continental divide and all these headwater drainages. Jenness also noted that the Sekani and Beaver were probably one people comprised of many bands in late prehistory and named Fraser's *Says-Thaw Denneh,* in this mountain locale, as one of six such bands as the nineteenth century began (ibid.: 6-7) .

... A group at the headwaters of Smoky River, Fraser's Bawcanne or Says-Thaw-Denneh Indians. Of this group I can find no trace in the later literature. It may have been exterminated, it may be represented by some half-breeds now Living around Grande Prairie and Pouce Coupé, or it may have merged with the Beaver on Peace River, especially at Dunvegan. (Jenness 1937: 7).

In a partial corroboration, Anderson's 1867 map specifically describes the *Rivière à la Boucane or Smoky River falling into the Peace River....* Anderson's 1831-36 notes, which he kept to assist his mapmaking, describe his chief source of information about the river in 1835 as being René, an Iroquois bowman in Anderson's canoe, who had a great knowledge of the country. In effect, it is the name of a river where Aboriginal hunters went to kill their meat and preserve it by smoking it. The Sekani themselves acknowledged their historic familiarity with the headwaters of the Smoky River by telling Jenness one of their many war stories.

Two brothers were hunting groundhog one summer in the high mountains near the head of Smoky River. Two Cree, one of whom carried a gun, entered their camp while they were up the mountain, and only their wives remained behind. The Cree did not harm the women, intending to carry them away; but they ascended a short distance above the camp to intercept their husbands. Toward evening the two hunters appeared on the crest of a ridge above them. One Cree shouted 'I am going to shoot,' and fired his gun; but the bullet passed between the two men. The elder Sekani said to the younger, 'Let us throw rocks at them, or they will kill us.' The younger brother threw a rock, and missed. Then the elder brother, whose dream-guardian was the groundhog,

rubbed a large stone against his chest, breathed on it, and hurling with all his might, struck a Cree on the forehead. The other Cree, seeing his companion dead, fled; but the same hunter threw another stone in the same way, struck him in the nape of the neck, and killed him also. (Jenness 1937: 21).

The Sekani seem to be a true subarctic mountain hunting and gathering people, and Jenness describes their culture quite extensively. As such, their historic cultural adaptation to their environment, at least as reflected in their material cultural traits, was not dissimilar to that of their various neighbors, such as Shuswap, Iroquois, Carrier, and the Stoney/Assiniboin.

They fished extensively for trout and whitefish both in summer and winter, but relied for their food supply mainly on the wild animals in which their country abounded ....
To the east, beyond the Rocky Mountains on the prairie south of Peace River, roamed many herds of buffalo that the Sekani had hunted previous to the nineteenth century ....
There were many passes through the mountains that gave them access to their neighbors ....
The routes to the eastward led to the Beaver and Cree Indians, who were not only hostile, but as nearly as primitive as the Sekani themselves. Accessibility from this quarter was really a disadvantage to them, except that it brought the fur traders and, ultimately, relief from the attacks of their enemies. (ibid.: 2-3).

... the Sekani lived originally in conical lodges covered with spruce bark, for which in post-European times they often substituted moose-skins.

This was the typical winter dwelling, though it was used in summer also. At that season, however, the Sekani often contented themselves with crude windbreaks of the same shape, but covered in spruce bark, hides, or boughs to the height of only 4 or 5 feet, leaving the top quite open.

Quite as common, perhaps, as the conical summer wind-break was the simple lean-to ... covering them with spruce bark, boughs, or hides. (ibid.: 32-34).

... other Athapaskan tribes tipped their bows with stone points, and the Sekani did likewise until they obtained iron from the coast. McLeod Lake natives said that although they preferred cedar for their bows, it was so difficult to obtain that they generally used willow or balsam....

McLeod Lake natives say that bear hunters used a stone headed lance, whereas beaver hunters used a toggled spear with a triple-barbed head of bone, antler, or simply hard wood.

In fishing and hunting ... the Sekani relied less on their weapons than on deadfalls, snares, and nets .... But they procured most of their game, whether groundhogs or moose, with snares.

The bear and moose, of course, required much stronger snares than the rabbit or grouse, and the Sekani probably set their nooses in two or three different ways. By constructing long fences of brush, and setting snares at intervals of a few feet or yards, the Indians captured whole flocks of grouse, and whole herds of caribou, as explained by Morice: 'The Sékanais ... previously set in a continuous line 40 or 50 moose hide snares in suitable defiles or passes in the mountains frequented by the animals. Two or three of the most active hunters are then deputed to watch at

either end of the line, after which the hunters, who usually number fifteen or more, drive the band of deer or caribou to where the snares are set .... The deer immediately scamper away with the moveable sticks [drag logs], *to which the snares are attached, and which ... cause the caught animal to to stop suddenly with the result of being strangled to death in a short time.'*
The Sekani caught large numbers of groundhogs during the summer months, most of them with snares.
Toboggans came into use, apparently, only in modern times; previously the Sekani carried all their possessions on their backs during the winter months. They did, however, possess snowshoes .... For summer travelling the Sekani had canoes of spruce bark .... (ibid.: 37-42).

It is clear from the descriptions provided by Mackenzie and Jenness that the Sekani had access to an ample supply of iron from the Pacific coast well before 1793 -- likely through trade with their Carrier neighbors -- and yet some may have still used stone-tipped weapons as late as 1790. Interestingly, both accounts describe the Sekani preference for cedar wood for bows, and tipping the bows with iron or stone points to create a multi-use weapon system. The descriptions of Sekani dwellings, travel, hunting, fishing and snaring techniques, seem to show many similarities to those of their neighbors, except possibly for a greater reliance on communal drives and snares for hunting, rather than on projectile weapons such as bows and arrows. It may have been that cedar, willow, or balsam did not provide for very powerful bows. There is also no description of horse use during the historic period, unlike the Shuswap, Beaver, Iroquois and Stoney/ Assiniboin. And we find out the mobile Sekani lived in tipi-style lodges year round, and did not

use any semi-subterranean dwellings. Their society was mainly structured as independent, far-ranging, nomadic bands of people, who hunted, fished, trapped and gathered, and traveled on foot and with bark canoes and snowshoes, sometimes coming into contact with bands and families from other far-flung tribes, with which they were often in conflict.

In the meantime, another part of the story was taking place further south in Blackfoot country. Frank R. Secoy (1953) drew from a narrative told to David Thompson by an old Kalispell Indian near the Spokane River in 1811, to portray how the horse and the gun had a great effect on the historic balance of military power and tactics on the northwestern plains. (Note: Tyrell, 1916: 450-463 shows the 1809 date used by Secoy is an error).

The first important change resulting from this development was that the allied group of plains tribes, the Blackfoot, Atsina, Sarsi, Assiniboin and Plains Cree, instead of merely holding their own ... embarked on a powerful, successful offensive. The Blackfoot, because of their geographical position on the frontier, were the most active. In one generation, approximately the thirty years from 1770 to 1800, they advanced west and southwest from the Eagle Hills to the Rocky Mountains and the upper Missouri River, defeating and evicting the Kutenai and Flathead as well as the Snake [Shoshoni]*, none of whom had access to a source of guns*. (Secoy 1953: 51-52).

55

David Thompson (in Coues 1965: 703-705) first arrived on the upper Saskatchewan River at Rocky Mountain House in 1800: trading for the N.W. Co., traveling along the east slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and later leading expeditions into the Columbia River country. He was accompanied by several voyageurs, of which some were Iroquois, because he traveled south to a Piegan Indian camp on the Highwood river, south of present day Calgary, Alberta in the fall of 1800 to speak to the Peigans about bringing *"Seauteaux" and Iroquois* into their country. Thompson knew that a group of Nipissing Indians and Athabaska River freemen had traveled across the mountains to the Columbia using a pass on the upper Athabaska River before 1810; and on the advise of his Iroquois guide, Thomas, he decided to use the same route to bypass Peigan war parties in 1810-11 (Payne 2007: 7-8).

In spite of his years of experience in the northwest, David Thompson's venture over Athabaska Pass in January, 1811 seems a desperate leap of faith compared to the well-led, well-organized expedition by Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1793. The brutal traverse by Thompson over the pass in the dead of winter with sleds and dogs soon took its toll. The portage crew became fearful and sullen and some of the dogs were worked and beaten to death. After the party descended the nine miles from the pass down to the Columbia River, three men deserted and turned back, and a fourth man turned back ill. In that final thirty-six hour descent, ten winterers devoured fifty-six pounds of pemmican, one-fourth of their total expedition rations (Tyrell 1916: 446-449). Perhaps the deserters were disenchanted by the limitation of their rations as much as they were by the

traverse; they had been previously accustomed to eating eight pounds of pemmican per man per day.

In the following spring Thompson met up with three Nipissings and three Iroquois on the upper Columbia not far down river from Boat Encampment -- although soon after, these western migrant Nipissing seemed to quickly fade from history.

On the third day of May [1811] *we proceeded a short distance, and on the fourth met a Canoe with two Nepissing Indians (their country is near Montreal in Canada) and the next day the Grand* [Chief] *Nepissing and three Iroquois Indians, they are all on their way to the Valley of the Canoe River to trap Beaver, and hunt Moose Deer; three of these I engaged to assist in the Canoes and hunt for my Men... and engaged Charles a fine, steady Iroquois to accompany us as a Bowman.... The Grand Nepissing tells me that for these three years past he has killed, one year at the little Lake below us two hundred Beavers, at a place above five hundred Beavers, and at Canoe River five hundred Beavers, without any other labor than setting his steel traps with Castorum of Beaver....* (Thompson in Tyrell 1916: 457).

Regarding the Nipissings, the Geographic Board of Canada (1912: 349) described them as an Algonkian people who partly resettled from Lake Nipissing to the St. Lawrence River after 1671, residing at Trois-Rivières, and among the Catholic Iroquois at Oka. Payne (2007: 8) indicates that some of the Iroquois and Nipissing were subsequently encouraged to relocate in the

Northwest, where they settled along the east slopes of the Rocky Mountains and along the upper Peace, Smoky and Athabaska Rivers by the early 1800s.

As Thompson traveled the Columbia River country in 1811, it must surely have been Kootenays, as well as people such as the Kalispell and Peigans, who would have informed him how the preceding years of tribal warfare had affected the Snare Indians.

About the time Kootenays were in possession of this part of the country, the Snare Indians dwelt on the Kootenay or Columbia. But the former, being driven into the mountains by the different tribes who lived E. of them, with whom they were perpetually at war, in their turn waged war on their harmless neighbors on the W., the Snare Indians, and soon drove them off the land the Kootenays now inhabit. This is on the upper part of the Columbia, and on the Ram River.... The Snare Indians, it seems, retired northward to an uninhabited part of the Rocky Mountains, where they continue to wander, a most wretched and defenseless people, who never war on any of their neighbors. But so blood-thirsty is the nature of savages that Strong Wood Crees of the Saskatchewan and Swampy Ground Assiniboines frequently make long excursions in quest of them [Snare Indians], *during which they suffer very much with hunger, and often narrowly escape starving to death, as that part of the mountains which the Snare Indians inhabit seems destitute of animals. But when the latter are discovered, generally in small camps of two or three tents, they become an easy prey, as these helpless people have no fire-arms, the bow and arrow being their only weapon of defense. Having no intercourse with traders, they exist in a rude state*

of nature; fish is their principle food, though they contrive to Snare chance animals in the narrow confines of the mountains. Their numbers are few, and even these are obliged to disperse for the purpose of procuring food. (Thompson in Coues 1965: 703-707).

N.W. Co. officers and men were obviously familiar early on with the Snare Indians. In the fall of 1805 Daniel Harmon arrived at the South Branch Fort (Lamb 1957), located above the fork of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, where he penned a vacuous justification in his journal concerning his decision to accept a young Snare Indian girl from a French Canadian *engagé*.

October 10, Thursday. This Day a Canadians daughter (a girl about fourteen years of age) was offered to me, and after mature consideration concerning the step I ought to take I finally concluded it would best to accept of her, as it is customary for all the Gentlemen who come into this Country to remain any length of time to have a <u>fair</u> partner.... Her Mother is of the Tribe of the Snare Indians, whose Country lies about the Rocky Mountain. The Girl is said to be of a mild disposition and even tempered, which are qualities very necessary to make an agreeable Woman and an affectionate Partner. (Harmon in Lamb 1957: 98).

While Harmon and his men knew about the Snare, it was clear they were also equally aware of the Sekani. By 1810, Harmon and his men were at the Rocky Mountain Portage, west of present day Fort St. John, B.C. on the upper Peace River, where they were assisted by some Sekani Indians, whom he described in distressing detail.

They [Sekani] *have just returned from the other side of the Rocky Mountain, where they go to pass the summer months. During the winter season, they remain on this side of the Mountain, where they find buffaloes, moose and deer. On the other side, none of these animals, are to be found. ['The Sicannies are a quiet, inoffensive people, whose situation exposes them to peculiar difficulties and distresses. When they proceed to the west side of the mountain, the Natives of the region, who are Tâcullies and Atenâs, attack and kill many of them; and when they are on this side, the Beaver Indians and Crees, are continually making war on them. Being thus surrounded by enemies, against whom they are too feeble successfully to contend, they frequently suffer much from want of food; for when on the west side, they dare not, at all times, visit those places were fish are in plenty, and when on the east side, they are frequently afraid to visit those parts, where animals abound. They are compelled, therefore, oftentimes to subsist on the roots, which they find in the mountains, and which barely enable them to sustain life; and their emaciated bodies frequently bear witness, to the scantiness of their fare.']* (ibid.: 130-131).

Explorers, traders, and *engagés* of the North West Company were likely familiar with the Snaring and Sekani Indians because the Company came early into the upper Athabaska valley. Coues (1965: 640-642, 668, 759) briefly describes a little-known Rocky Mountain House (possibly the first Jasper House), built sometime before 1810 near the sources of the Athabaska on the shore of a lake; Wm. Henry's camp in 1810-1811; and Wm. Henry's House ('Old Fort') built by 1812 opposite the mouth of the Miette River. These various establishments, and

possibly others, played a logistical role in David Thompson's 1810-11 expedition over Athabaska Pass and down the Columbia River (Tyrell 1916: 438-450). As such, James McDougall, William Henry, David Thompson, Jasper Hawes, Francois Decoigne, Gabriel Franchère, Ross Cox, and various Canadians, Iroquois and company hunters had all been in, or traveled through, the upper Athabaska valley before the end of 1817.

By 1819, Colin Robertson and his clerk Ignace Gaisson of the H.B.Co. were working hard to reduce the N.W.Co.'s market share along the upper Peace River, the Smoky River, and in New Caledonia. The N.W.Co. had cornered a big piece of the region's fur trade by being there first and Robertson was keen to cut into their business. Gaisson and others did the leg work; Robertson gave the orders and wrote the reports.

Now for my own concerns in Peace River -- the Irroquois whom Mr. Clarke engaged last winter did not proceed farther than the sources of the Smoky River, where they collected a few beavers, but they have wintered in New Caledonia, and have given me much information respecting that country, which they represent as abounding in beaver, and where the natives are particularly anxious for our appearance. I have therefore resolved on establishing that district .... (Robertson in Rich and Fleming 1939: 109).

On February 9, 1819, John Clarke at St. Mary's reported to Governor Williams that Gaisson was 'preparing to leave this with a band of Iroquois who were formerly accustomed to trade with the

N.W.Co. but at present under certain arrangements with me, who are to cross the mountains to New Caledonia where they have been in the habit of hunting and there to cooperate with Mr. Gaisson in preparing the natives for a favorable reception, and return in the month of August with Mr. Gaisson, bringing with them whatever furs they may have procured ....' Instead of Gaisson, Jose Gaubin was sent with the free Iroquois on February 10, and on May 15 he returned from the Rocky Mountains by the Smoky River with a band of Iroquois who had sent five of their members across the mountains early in the spring 'to prepare the Natives of that country for a favorable reception' of the Hudson's Bay Company. (Rich and Fleming 1939: 213-214).

Gaisson was engaged for another year and given new instructions on December, 18, 1819 ... he left St. Mary's on December 23 with five men for the Grand Forks of the Smoky River. He wrote Robertson from Sheep River [Sheep Creek]*, Rocky Mountain, on March 29, 1820. .... Gaisson with his party (consisting among others of John Harper, Pierre Thisteronsenac, Pierre Hathawiton and Jacques Arrwaguiron), proceeded across the mountains towards New Caledonia about April 30, 1820. They took the North West Company completely by surprise. James McDougall wrote in the Fort St. James journal on June 10, 1820 'they* [Indians] *have a Report of there being at the Forks of Fraser's River one of the H.B.Co's Clerks and 3 men distributing out Goods and Tobacco Gratiz with promises of their coming in force ....'* (ibid.: 214).

Pierre Hathawiton has been identified by some (e.g. Karamanski 1982: 8: image caption; British Columbia Ministry of Environment Draft Report 2006: 51) as the Iroquois freeman *Tête Jaune*

(more often known as Pierre Bostonnais) for whom the Yellow Head Pass and Tête Jaune Cache are named.

After taking over the N.W.Co. in 1821, Sir George Simpson and the H.B.Co. began to consider how to make better use of the overland routes through the Athabaska Pass and the Yellowhead Pass to Columbia and New Caledonia. Moreover, following the merger it seemed that common knowledge or familiarity about the Snare Indians among fur traders declined, or at least, became less certain.

By 1824, Simpson was actively considering relocating the Jasper post to the Yellow Head Pass to better serve the Shuswap in New Caledonia, and to get the local Iroquois freemen to move further west into the mountains and away from the upper Athabaska and Smoky Rivers, where they were competing with indigenous Aboriginal people for fur and provisions. As such, Simpson was also motivated by *... what he suspected was a significant middleman trade with the Shuswaps operated by Jacco Findlay and the freemen of the Jasper Area* (Payne 2007, 16).

Undermining company trade wasn't the only irritation that Iroquois freemen caused Sir George Simpson. By 1825, after inspecting the Columbia region, he discharged various engagés as incompetent or untrustworthy, and conducted many of these back to Canada including:

... an Iroquois chief named Isaac. While crossing Athabaska Pass 'the Blackguard Iroquois' opened a keg of rum and soon had a good portion of the portage crew drunk. The Iroquois then, 'in a fit of drunken rage sent his Provisions down the Stream to lighten his burthen'. This was too much for Simpson who hurried back from the head of the column and assumed 'the disagreeable duty of Chastising him on the spot with the first Stick that came to hand, he will feel it for a few Days...' Simpson then grabbed a trade hatchet and dashed the remaining kegs of rum.
(Karamanski 1982: 10).

Michel Klyne was appointed the first H.B.Co. Postmaster at the original Jasper House in 1824 (HBC Archives, 2008), and during his tenure, Jasper House was instead relocated down river in 1827, to where the Snake Indian River empties into the Athabaska. Klyne recorded the Assiniboin as residing in the foothills between the Athabaska and the North Saskatchewan Rivers at that time, and Anderson and Reeves (1975: 43) indicate that during Klyne's tenure, Assiniboin regularly traveled from Kootenay Plains on the North Saskatchewan, via the Brazeau and Rocky Rivers, to trade at Jasper House. Arthur Ray's informative 1974 study of *Indians in the Fur Trade* specifically notes that:

According to the Edmonton District Report of 1823-24, thirty tents of Assiniboine, Cree, and Métis lived in the forests near Edmonton House. Farther to the northwest, a band of Strong Wood Assiniboine numbering some sixty tents were said to be located in the vicinity of the McLeod River, an upper tributary of the Athabaska River. These two groups appear to have been the last

of the once-more-numerous Woodland Assiniboine, or Northern Sinepoetts as they were formerly known. Presumably the ancestors of these two bands had been in the vanguard of the westward-moving Woodland Assiniboine in the early eighteenth century. (Ray 1974: 98).

In the spring of 1846, Father Pierre-Jean De Smet stopped at Jasper House for a while on his way to the New Caledonia and Columbia Districts. De Smet recorded various observations about the Aboriginal groups in the upper Athabaska drainage. He also recorded an eyewitness story about a massacre from its sole survivor, despite lacking an interpreter. Colin Fraser was the Postmaster at Jasper House.

Some years since, the valleys and high forests of Athabaska were exclusively appropriated to the chase by the Assiniboins of the Forest: the scarcity of game forced them to quit their land -- since their departure the animals have increased in an astonishing manner.... Many wandering families of the Carrier Tribe and the Ashiganés or Sock Indians [Shuswap?] *of New Caledonia, compelled by hunger, have quitted their country, traversed the east of the mountains, and now range the valleys of this region in quest of food. They nourish themselves with roots, and whatever they can catch; many of them have their teeth worn to the gums by the earth and sand they swallow with their nourishment. In winter they fair well: for then the moose, elk and reindeer are plentiful. The reindeer feed on a kind of white moss, and the paunch is considered delicious when the food is half digested.* (De Smet in Chittenden and Richardson 1905: 535).

65

On the banks of Lake Jasper, we met an old Iroquois called Louis Kwaragkwanté, or Walking Sun, accompanied by his family, thirty-six in number. He has been forty years absent from his country ... [and] *has dwelt for the last thirty-four years in the forests of Athabaska and on Peace River and subsisted by hunting and fishing*. (ibid.: 535-536).

In the neighborhood of the Miette River, we fell in with one of those poor families of Porteurs or 'Itoaten,' of New Caledonia ... they saw us from the summit of the mountain that overlooks the valley through which we were passing, and perceiving we were whites, hastened down to meet us. They appeared overjoyed to see us, particularly when they discovered that I was a Black-gown; they crowded around me and begged me to baptize them ... though I was able to grant this favor to only two of their smallest children; the others required instruction, but there was no interpreter. I exhorted them to return soon to their own country, where they would find a Black-gown (Father Nobili) who would instruct them.... The condition of these people seemed very wretched; they had no clothes but a few rags and some pieces of skins, and yet, not withstanding their extreme poverty, they laid at my feet the mountain sheep they had just killed.
The history of a poor young woman, one of their number, deserves to be recorded.... When she was about fifteen years of age, her mother, father and brothers, together with another family of her nation, were surprised in the wood by a party of Assiniboin warriors and massacred without mercy. At the time of this horrid scene, the young girl was in another part of the forest, with her two sisters, both younger than herself; they succeeded in concealing themselves, and thus escaped falling into the hands of the assassins. The hapless orphan wandered about the desert

for two years, without meeting any human being, without knife or hatchet, making her fire by means of two pieces of wood, subsisting on roots, wild fruits and porcupines. In the winter she sheltered herself in the abandoned den of a bear. The sisters left her at the end of the first year, since which they have never been heard of. At length, after three years, she was fortunately found by a good Canadian, who took her home, provided her with comfortable food and clothing, and six months after restored her to her tribe. (ibid.: 539-540).

Paul Kane's wanderings brought him to Jasper House on November 3rd, 1846. The Postmaster was still Colin Fraser. Kane (in Harper 1971) described the place and the people he observed there, and provided an account of another massacre which differed in details from the story De Smet recorded earlier in the year. Apparently, this latter story recounted a separate, different massacre. While a Shuswap band chief at Jasper House, Capot Blanc, never indicated to Kane when his band had been massacred, or by whom, it was apparently another first hand accounting.

Jasper's House consists of only three miserable log huts. The dwelling-house is composed of two rooms, of about fourteen or fifteen feet square each. One of them is used by all comers and goers: Indians, voyageurs, and traders, men, women, and children being huddled together indiscriminately; the other room being devoted to the exclusive occupation of Colin and his family, consisting of a Cree squaw, and nine interesting half-breed children. One of the other huts is used for storing provision in ... the other I should have thought a dog kennel .... This post is

only kept up for the purpose of supplying horses to parties crossing the mountains. I made a sketch of the establishment ....

The Indians about here do not number above fifteen or twenty; they are the Shoo-Schawp tribe, and their chief, of whom I made a sketch, is called 'Capot Blanc' by the voyageurs -- in their own language it is Assannitchay, but means the same. His proper location is a long distance to the north-east; but he had been treacherously entrapped, whilst traveling with thirty-seven of his people, by a hostile tribe, which met him and invited him to sit down and smoke the pipe of peace. They unsuspectingly laid down their arms, but before they had time to smoke, their treacherous hosts seized their arms and murdered them all except eleven, who managed to escape, and fled to Jasper's House, where they remained, never daring to return to their own country through the hostile tribe. Capot Blanc was a very simple, kind-hearted old man, with whom I became very friendly. (Kane in Harper 1971: 87-88).

Presumably, language differences weren't an issue for Paul Kane when he talked with Capot Blanc. Perhaps the local Iroquois-Métis at Jasper Place translated for him, just as they must have done for De Smet, and others. However, it is clear that Capot Blanc and his band had been well established in the area for a long time; his winter lodge was mapped in 1835 on the headwaters of the Cranberry River, south of Tête Jaune Cache, and his winter road ran down the valley of the Cranberry to Tête Jaune Cache (Anderson 1867: map). This would have been Capot Blanc's winter trapping and hunting camp. Anderson's map also describes the set of falls (Overlander

Falls), a short way upriver from Tête Jaune Cache, as the terminus of the the Fraser River salmon runs.

Paul Kane's 1846 sketch of Jasper's House depicts five Indian lodges clustered around the post buildings (in Harper 1971: 217); one can infer these were the lodges of Capot Blanc's Shuswap band. The next year Kane met up with Capot Blanc once more, this time at Boat Encampment on the Columbia River at the west end of the Athabaska Pass overland trail (Harper 1971:129). Today, I believe Paul Kane's sketch of Capot Blanc can be viewed on the internet (Figure 11, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution NAA INV 06158800). An internet search of the term *Iwa-toke* revealed the preceding sketch and reference. Harper (1971: 291) catalogued a Paul Kane sketch IV-251 as Capot Blanc, and described IV-251 as *formerly identified* as a Menominee from Lake Winnebago called *Iwa-toke or 'The Serpent'* (the latter is shown in Harper 1971:179). However, Harper never included the IV-251 sketch in his book to provide a conclusive reference.

While admitting that he never personally visited the isolated band of Shuswap Indians at Jasper House, James Teit (1909) named and described them as a band within the broader Shuswap tribe within his study for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition.

... Texqa'kallt or Texqakalltö'ê ('people of the upper reaches or top') or Xexka'llt ('those at the top'), those almost completely nomadic Indians who live nearly in the heart of the Rocky

Mountains, around the headwaters of the North Thompson River, the Yellow Head Pass, and Jasper House. I shall name them the Upper North Thompson band .... At the present day most of the Upper North Thompson band are mixed a great deal with Iroquois and Cree. I have not visited them, although I met some individuals of them, and I cannot say to what extent the Shuswap language is spoken among them. Those I met spoke Shuswap, but were also proficient in Cree, and understood a good deal of Canadian French. The most of these mixed people are now located in the vicinity of Jasper House, east of the Rocky Mountains; and although through long years of intermarriage (principally with Shuswap women) the Iroquois and Cree of that region must be largely Shuswap in blood, I cannot say definitely which language or which blood has ascendancy. I am of the opinion that the largest element of their blood is Shuswap, but that Cree is probably the language most spoken .... This band are often called 'Rocky Mountain Shuswap' by the whites .... (Teit 1909: 454-455).

This band was numerous at one time, but had, it seems, no main village, the people wintering in groups of a few families along Upper North Thompson River, north from above Little Fort, but with a centre at Pesskalla'lten. They were very nomadic, and a number of families lived most of the time beyond North Thompson River, at the head of Fraser River, and east through the Rocky Mountains to Jasper House. Of late years there seems to have been a concentration of the people around the latter place. A good many of this band wintered in lodges .... (ibid.: 460).

So far as tradition goes, the [Shuswap] *tribal boundaries have been nearly the same as at the present day .... A large part of the old hunting grounds in Caribou and north of the head of Fraser River are hardly ever used now, owing to the decrease in numbers of the tribe and to the change in manner of living*. (ibid.: 462).

Small-pox epidemics have been the prime cause of this decrease. This disease has visited portions of the tribe twice; and in 1862 and 1863 it was especially severe .... (ibid.: 463).

There was intimate intercourse between all the bands living on both sides of Fraser River, although those living in the extreme south did not have much dealings with those of the extreme north .... The Upper North Thompson bands came into contact with the small band of Iroquois and with the Cree .... The Iroquois band must have settled in this region in the early part of the last century; perhaps as early as 1816 or thereabouts ....
These Iroquois were sometimes visited by the North Thompson division, and were also met on hunting trips. Formerly, for many years they had a stationary village at Tête Jaune Cache .... Some of them were half Shuswap long ago, as in former days they occasionally abducted and maried girls from the Lake and Northern Fraser River people. Once many years ago they captured a girl from the Soda Creek band who happened to be picking berries alone. A party of men followed them to the head waters of the Fraser River, where at last they came to their camp while the fire was still smoking. The Iroquois had escaped, and left the girl tied to a tree and

choked to death with a handkerchief. Her basket was hanging from a limb of the same tree. (ibid.: 467-468).

All the [Shuswap] bands except the Lake Division and the Empire Valley band used underground houses in the winter-time. (ibid.: 471).

Hunting and snare of game was a very important occupation, and with some bands took precedence over all others. Trapping became of great importance after the advent of the fur companies; and some parties used to spend all fall, winter, and spring, hunting and trapping on distant grounds. On these expeditions they sometimes encountered members of the Kootenai, Stony, Beaver, and Sekanai tribes similarly engaged. The Carrier band who formerly inhabited Bear Lake ... and members of the Iroquois band and the Cree were met .... Bows and arrows were the principal weapons used in the chase and in war .... Arrow-heads were almost invariably of stone, and in later days of iron. Beaver-teeth, bone, and horn were occasionally used. The stone points were of two common types, -- leaf-shaped and notched. Arrowstone was obtained in many parts of the country, notably in the Arrow-stone Range, near the Bonaparte River. (ibid.: 518-519).

... the North Thompson bands were the most nomadic ... Fishing, however, was of great importance to every band .... The meat on which they lived was of importance in the following order: deer, elk, caribou, marmot, sheep, hare, beaver, grouse, bear, moose, duck, goose, crane,

squirrel, porcupine. Goat-meat was not eaten by most bands. Moose were found only in the extreme northeast hunting-grounds .... Elk became practically extinct about fifty years ago, and were scarce seventy years ago. At one time they formed the chief object of the chase with many bands .... Caribou ... are now only found in the north and east. The fish-supply consisted of salmon ... sturgeon, and trout and white-fish of several varieties ... almost every kind of fish was eaten .... Roots and berries formed an important part of the food-supply, and the latter were gathered in great quantities. (ibid.: 513-514).

On mountains culminating in small, round, open tops, bands of deer and sheep were encircled by a numerous band of hunters from below, and were gradually driven up to the top, where the surrounding hunters closed in and shot them. Deer-fences with snares were very common. In wooded districts, where trails followed by the deer in their fall migration crossed small creeks, spears called tcela'ks were used. These had very long sharp stone points. These spears were placed at the spot where the deer jumped across the creek, and were most effective at night-time .... Occasionally caribou were also killed in this way. (ibid.: 521).

Nearly all the Shuswap canoes were made of bark. Only a very few [dugout] *wooden canoes were used, and these mostly on the Fraser River; but even there most canoes were made of* [spruce and pine] *bark*.

Prior to the introduction of horses, goods were transported in canoes on rivers and lakes; but where no water-ways existed, everything was transported on the backs of men, women, children, and dogs.

As far as I can learn, dogs were never used for hauling sleds as among the neighboring Athapascan tribes. Horses seem to have been introduced about 1780 or earlier, and appear to have been fairly plentiful among the more southern bands in 1808.... The Shuswap obtained them from the Okanogon and Thompson.... The Shuswap say that horses were not plentiful until about 1840.... In severe winters, about 1847 or 1849, a great many of the horses died. About this time the use of horses for food was given up, and they soon multiplied and became quite plentiful early in the fifties. With the advent of these animals, travelling became easier.

Snow shoes were much used when travelling in the winter-time. (ibid.: 531-534).

Teit's study helps illustrate the historic *Xexka'llt* life style. They often lived in tipi-style lodges, and probably also in semi-subterranean pit houses in the winter. Dogs carried packs but were not used to pull sleds; horses were commonly used after 1840. *Xexka'llt* Shuswap were a far-ranging, nomadic band of people, who hunted, fished, trapped and gathered, used snowshoes and bark canoes, and came into contact with bands and families from other far-flung tribes. This may explain Capot Blanc's earlier assertion that [their] *proper location is a long distance to the north-east,* when describing the massacre of his band to Paul Kane. The *Xexka'llt* were very much a hunting and gathering society, and to an archaeological eye, some of Teit's descriptions of house

styles, hunting and snaring techniques, food preferences, and technology such as arrow and spear point styles and lithic sources, are of particular interest.

The onset of the fur trade in the early 1800s, a massacre and small pox in 1862-63, likely reduced *Xexka'llt* numbers and their far-ranging travels, and tended to concentrate them in the Jasper House vicinity in closer proximity to the Iroquois-Métis. Probably by 1810, or earlier, they first came into contact with Iroquois freemen. The Iroquois, by fair means or foul, soon began to intermarry with *Xexka'llt* Shuswap women. As time passed it was also likely Iroquois-Métis who introduced the *Xexka'llt* to the fur trade, and taught them to speak the *lingua franca* of the trade: French and Cree.

Regarding warfare, the Kootenay/Blackfeet conflict down south (e.g. Secoy 1953: 51-52) seemed to have had similar consequences for the Sekani as it had for the Snare Indians -- and given the time and place -- we should consider these particular Sekani to be Fraser's *Bawcanne or Says-Thaw Denneh* Indians. Teit relates the following war story told by an old Shuswap man of the North Thompson division.

In our grandfathers' time the North Thompson people had many wars with the Sekanai, who came down from the north, a very large band of them occupying the country around the head waters of the Fraser River from its source to the 'Big Bend,' where they hunted and fished. They made this place their headquarters for several years, and the Shuswap made no great efforts to

drive them out, for the fisheries there were of little value, and were never used, because the people had much better ones on the North Thompson River, where the fish were fatter and more plentiful. The country of the Upper Fraser River was part of the Shuswap hunting-grounds, and abounded in game and fur bearing animals. The Sekanai had not been there long, before they murdered a party of three or four men who were hunting near their main settlement. Soon after that, they appeared on the Upper North Thompson River and for several years annoyed the Shuswap by stealing from them and murdering several people. They would also send active young men far down the river as spies, and also to steal berries and gather arrowstone, which does not occur on the Upper Fraser River ....

About this time a Cree war-party found a camp of Sekanai near the head of Fraser River, and killed a number of people. Later the Shuswap, while fishing and hunting near the head of North Thompson River were repeatedly attacked by large [Sekani] *parties, who killed a number of people and drove the others down the river, taking possession of their fisheries.*

Then the North Thompson people sent a war party against them, killing several of them, and drove them across the divide to the head of the Fraser River, but were afraid to follow them further.

The following year a considerable number of Shuswap were fishing, as usual, at their famous salmon-fishery called Peskala'llen (Salmon-Place), on the Upper North Thompson River. Here they were attacked by a large party of Sekanai, who killed many of them and took some women away as slaves.

Now, the North Thompson people were thoroughly aroused, and asked the warlike people of the Fraser River Division and of Kamloops to come to their aid. Many warriors came from these places .... The warriors found the Sekanai at a spot near the head of the Fraser River. They surrounded them, and attacked them at night, and killed all except one man. They recovered the Shuswap women who had been made slaves ....

The [one] *Sekanai thought that the Shuswap had turned back, but they had followed the man's tracks, and thus were led to a large Sekanai camp some distance down the Fraser River, probably near the Big Bend. Here were encamped nearly half the whole Sekanai tribe. The rest were living away north, where the tribe lives at the present day. The Shuswap surrounded them, and at daybreak attacked them suddenly from four sides, killing nearly all of them. Five or six men escaped, and about twenty or thirty young women and a few young men were made prisoners .... After taking everything of value, they destroyed the lodges and all the property that they did not want. They tied the bodies of the children together in pairs and hung them over branches; others they impaled on the ends of the Sekanai spears, which they stuck up in the snow. Then they started for home, making the slaves carry loads of provisions,robes, and other booty. They did not take any of the enemy's weapons, for these were considered inferior to their own, especially the bows and arrows which were not nearly as well made, nor as powerful, as those of the Shuswap. The arrowheads were large, and their arrows could generally be seen flying through the air.*

When they arrived near Tcektcekwa'llk, on the east bank of the North Thompson River, they were feasted by the people amid much acclamation and dancing. The slaves were divided, and the

whole party scattered. Some men of the northern Fraser River bands took their slaves along with them; but the warriors from the southern Fraser River and from Kamloops gave their slaves to the North Thompson people, who had suffered so much from the Sekanai. These slave women were made the wives of the men on the North Thompson River; and, as they all had many children, there is some Sekanai blood there now, and the men of Sekanai descent are still known as such. The Sekanai never came into the Shuswap country again, and never took revenge for the heavy blow they had received, for since that time they have always been a small and insignificant tribe. This whole war may have lasted about ten years. The final attack ... took place about 1790. Sir Alexander Mackenzie mentions seeing, in 1793, a Sekanai woman and man, evidently slaves, among the Soda Creek Shuswap at that time. (Teit 1909: 546-548).

In 1855, and again in 1858, Henry John Moberly was appointed Clerk in charge of Jasper House. In his book *When Fur Was King* (Moberly and Cameron 1929) Moberly offered a wide variety of observations and opinions about his fur trade experiences at Jasper House. Moberly didn't talk about the Snare Indians, but he did talk about the Iroquois, Assiniboines and Shuswap, and about meeting the last Snake Indian during his service there.

Moberly related yet another, apparently different massacre story (than the one told by Capot Blanc in 1846), but very similar to the one recounted by De Smet. The Moberly version appears to be another first hand account by the one surviving Snake Indian woman, but it's origins appear to be found in the earlier De Smet version. As such, Moberly's story seems somewhat

embellished, but the reader is left with the definite impression that the De Smet and the Moberly versions are both the same story; that the story was common knowledge in the upper Athabaska valley in the mid-1800s; that the Snake indians, and the *Porteur* or *Itoaten*, may be one and the same; and that the woman interviewed by Moberly was the same woman interviewed by De Smet ten years earlier. Moberly's recollections follow below.

Having myself spent a summer at Jasper House I felt convinced that the Iroquois would return to that post if it were re-established .... I communicated with the Iroquois, advising them to 'pitch up,' hunting in different directions, and when short of ammunition or other supplies to come to Jasper House. I then took some forty-odd horses with an outfit and started for the post ....
The day after our arrival I sent five of the poorest horses in charge of two Iroquois to the valley of the upper Smoky River where feed was plentiful during the winter ....
As Christmas approached the different families of Iroquois began to arrive at the post, bringing their hunts of furs and provisions. From among them I engaged regular hunters, providing them with horses for carrying meat, and they 'pitched off' along the foothills north and south of the Athabaska .... (Moberly in Moberly and Cameron 1929: 94-98).

At Jasper I induced a young half-breed to join me and try his luck in British Columbia. We started in company across the pass to Tete Jaune Cache ....
At the Cache we found encamped a small band of Shuswaps, among them a woman, the last member of a petty tribe called the Snake Indians....

The Snake woman just mentioned had lived through one of the most remarkable experiences of which I have ever heard. Eighteen or nineteen years before her tribe had consisted of some twenty families, living entirely in the mountains and for decades at war with the Wood Assiniboines. The Snakes at the time of which I write were camped on the side of a mountain west of the post, and a band of Assiniboines at Lac Brule [east of Jasper House], *just below the entrance to the pass. The Assiniboines proposed a meeting at the head of the lake for the purpose of ratifying a peace, each band to come unarmed.*

The Snakes agreed, and the men of the band, leaving their guns, arrived and were placed in the inner circle round the council fire. The Assiniboines, however, concealed their guns under their blankets and at a prearranged signal drew them and shot down in cold blood every man of their ancient enemies. They then rushed to the Snake Camp and wiped out the rest of the band, with the exception of three young women whom they brought as prisoners to Fort Assiniboine ....

The women made their escape and followed the Athabaska River to its junction with the Baptiste. Two decided to follow the Athabaska, the third the Baptiste ....

The third, left only with the knife, traveled up the Baptiste some thirty miles and there made preparations for wintering ....

[A year later] *... an Iroquois hunter wandering far from his accustomed haunts came upon a series of strange tracks and traces.*

Next summer [second year later] *... this man decided to return to the spot and try to find out what animal had made the mystifying tracks ....*

Noticing him at length she made a frenzied effort to escape but was soon overtaken. She had become perfectly wild, and he had much difficulty bringing her to the camp. She remained with his family for two years. Then the officer in Jasper House kept her for another two years as a servant to his wife, at the end of which time she married a Shuswap. She was the only survivor of her tribe. (ibid.: 111-115)

In this story of the Snake Indian massacre which Moberly relates, the surviving woman sets the time of the event as *eighteen or nineteen years before*, which calculates to around the time Capot Blanc was camped for the winter at the head of Cranberry River. In retrospect, one can only wonder whether or not Capot Blanc was ever aware of this other massacre, as recounted first by De Smet and then by Moberly.

Doctor James Hector traveled to Jasper House from Fort Edmonton in the winter of 1858-59 to explore the upper Athabaska drainage, as part of Captain Palliser's Expedition (Palliser 1863). Hector spent several days with Henry James Moberly. Some of his information about the area was obtained from the local Iroquois and Moberly. For example, Hector also provided a brief story of the Snake Indian massacre, which was very similar to Moberly's account, and provided yet one more tidbit of local knowledge.

It [the massacre] *was held about three miles below the present site of Jasper House* .... (Hector in Palliser 1863: 126).

Hector also went hunting north of Jasper House with Moberly and some of the Iroquois hunters, and obtained information about indigenous people, hunting, game animals and Iroquois horticulture in the upper Snake Indian and Smoky River valleys.

February 2nd - This afternoon I accompanied Moberly on one of his lynx-hunting expeditions up the valley of the Snake Indian River.... Smoking River is about two days journey to the N.W., and along its valley there are extensive prairies, of which the Iroquois hunters speak in high terms as the finest land in the country. They say that the winter there is very open, and the pasture is always good. They say in autumn wild fruit is plentiful, and in consequence it is a famous place for both black and grizzly bears. The Iroquois have several times grown turnips, potatoes and barley there with great success, but only as an experiment. Until a few years ago, these prairies supported large bands of buffalo and elk.... The country along the Smoking River is occupied by the Beaver Indians and the Chickanees [Sekani], *which are two branch tribes of the Athabaska Indians*. (ibid.: 126).

And finally, Hector briefly mentions the Snare Indians, and while he divulged no source(s) for the information, it was proof positive that the local memory of them had not yet been completely erased by time.

On the west side of the [Athabaska] *river a tributary of good size joins it, called Snare River, after a tribe of Indians that one time lived there, dwelling in holes dug in the ground, and subsisting on animals which they captured with Snares of green hide, in which manner they used to kill the big-horn, small deer, and even moose*. (ibid.: 127).

By 1865, Viscount Milton and his sidekick Cheadle met the Rocky Mountain Shuswap in the upper Athabaska valley and west of Yellow Head Pass on their near-epic journey to the Pacific Ocean. It seemed that the ever-hungry Milton and Cheadle were as glad to meet the Shuswap as the Shuswap were to meet them.

... in the evening two Shushwap Indians made their appearance, and set to work to spear white-fish by torchlight. The few they obtained they gladly sold us for a little ammunition and tobacco .... They were clothed merely in a shirt and marmot robe, their legs and feet were naked, and their long black hair the only covering to their heads. These Shushwaps of the Rocky Mountains inhabit the country in the neighborhood of Jasper's House, and as far as Tete Jaune Cache on the western slope .... Separated from the main body of their tribe by 300 or 400 miles of almost impenetrable forest, they hold but little communication with them. Occasionally a Rocky Mountain Shushwap makes the long and difficult journey to Kamloops on the Thompson, to seek a wife. Of those we met, only one had ever seen this place. This was an old woman of Tête Jaune Cache, a native of Kamloops, who married a Shushwap of the mountains, and she never re-visited the home of her youth.

83

When first discovered by the pioneers of the Hudson's Bay Company, the only clothing used by this singular people was a small robe of the skin of the mountain marmot. They wandered barefoot among the sharp rocks, and amidst the snow and bitter cold of the fierce northern winter. When camping for the night they are in the habit of choosing the most open spot, instead of seeking the protection of the woods. In the middle of this, they make only a small fire, and lie in the snow, with their feet towards it, like the spokes of a wheel .... They live by hunting the bighorns, mountain goats, and marmots .... Like the chamois hunters of the Alps, some are found dashed to pieces at the foot of the almost inaccessible heights to which they follow their game .... The Shushwaps of Jasper House formerly numbered about thirty families, but are now reduced to as many individuals .... Whether they have religion or not, we could not ascertain; but they enclose the graves of their dead with scrupulous care, by light palings of wood .... They possess neither horses nor dogs, carrying all their property on their backs when moving from place to place, and when remaining in any one spot for any length of time, they erect rude slants of bark or matting for shelter, for they have neither tents nor houses. As game decreases the race will, doubtless, gradually die out still more rapidly, and they are already fast disappearing from this cause, and the accidents of the chase .... On the 3rd of July Mr. Macaulay [then H.B.Co. Clerk in charge] *arrived and set up his tent close to our lodge. His hunt had not been a very successful one, and as he had only a few days supply of bighorn mutton, would be compelled to set out again almost immediately. He was therefore quite unable to replenish our stock .... He informed us that a winter rarely passed now without a great scarcity of provisions at Jasper House, and their being driven to horse-flesh as a last resource*. (Milton and Cheadle, 1865: 240-242).

Interpretations and Conclusions.

One thing upon which all the historic accounts agree is that meat was in chronic short supply in the upper Athabaska drainage. Doctor Hector, in particular, commented about the reduced availability of game resources in 1858-59 compared to the great abundance described by Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1793. Modern investigators have also drawn the same conclusion (e.g. Payne 2007: 4, 21, 22). Archaeological sites are distributed sparsely in the area, also reflecting locally sparse food resources through time relative to the parkland and prairies further east, and the limited flat ground and scattered winter ranges available for people to occupy and exploit. As a biosphere, the area could effectively support only a few small hunting bands of people at any one time. This state of affairs appears to have become more precarious moving from the Late Prehistoric into the Historic Period -- beginning with white contact, the influx of Iroquois freemen with fire arms, the appearance of horses affecting local travel and hunting techniques, the additional need to support the traders' ongoing corporate interests, and finally ending with the creation of Jasper National Park in 1907. Even so, the seasonal round was likely similar for each and every group given the limitations of the area.

The vegetation cover, relatively stable through the Middle and Late Prehistoric, and Historic Periods, actually differed somewhat from the fire protected landscape of today. It was more open, with larger meadows for ungulates to graze upon. More to the point, there is some anecdotal

evidence that the vegetation cover was managed by Aboriginal people using fire to increase their hunting and travel opportunities in the landscape. The Iroquois-Métis certainly did so on a regular basis in the Historic Period (Edward Moberly in Murphy 2007: 142-146). And to further complicate the lives of earlier inhabitants, large sand storms driven by chinook winds often scoured portions of the upper Athabaska valley in winter. Other historic limiting factors appear to have been an initial shortage of women for the Iroquois freemen, and the need for knowledge about useable mountain passes to facilitate travel.

This is the world the Snare and Snake people faced through time, at least to one degree or another, as outlined by the area ecology, archaeology, ethnoarchaeology and ethnohistory. The crucial question for this study is just who were the Snare and the Snake?

The Snare Indians were almost certainly the *Xexka'llt,* i.e., *those at the top, the Rocky Mountain Shuswap,* displaced by Northwest Plains Indian-Kootenay Indian warfare in the late 1700s. By the late 1700s the *Xexka'llt* apparently relocated themselves "at the top," as far up the Fraser River as salmon were able to run, and in spite of the fish being thin and poor, the *Xexka'llt* fought and won a major war after they arrived to ensure possession of the area. Teit (1909: 582-583) indicates that the Shuswap view many different aspects of their territory as property, to be used in common by specific band nobles and crest groups (and their kin), and often rented out to commoners and others. Therefore, I have concluded that when displaced by the Kootenay, the Snare were unable to secure rights to any of the land and resources further south (which were

already owned). The Shuswap were (and are) a populous tribe and the better fishing territories down river on the Columbia and Fraser would already have been owned and occupied by other Shuswap bands, and the relocated Kootenay. This might explain why the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) were able to raise enough warriors from the down river bands to successfully exterminate almost half the *Says-Thaw Dennah* band of Sekani by 1790, rather than engaging as usual in local unorganized small-group skirmishes. Exterminating the *Says-Thaw Dennah* was likely viewed widely by the Shuswap tribe as being in their own best interest at the time.

It is reasonable, however, to conclude that the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) probably survived and persisted through the Historic Period in the upper Athabaska drainage and into modern times -- through small pox, war, massacres, the impact of the fur trade and the influx of the Iroquois. Their flexible hunting and gathering lifestyle, their kin relationships with the Iroquois and access to the fur trade and trade goods, and their traditional kin and trading relations with other Shuswap bands further down the Fraser River, would have helped them remain in the area until it became Jasper National Park. Late historic photographic images of the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) apparently exist. An A.D. 1910 photo (Figure 13, Glenbow Archives NA-3489-40), described in the catalogue remarks as *possibly Carrier First Nations people...Tete Jaune Cache, British Columbia,* is more likely an image of a Snare (*Xexka'llt*) family. Other ca. 1910 photos of a First Nations family and a family camp at Tête Jaune Cache British Columbia (Figures 14 and 15, The Exploration Place, Valley Museum and Archive 2003.25.20 and 2003.25.22) are likely more such images.

The Snake Indians don't appear to have been nearly as fortunate. The Snake were probably Sir Alexander Mackenzie's Rocky Mountain Indians, and more certainly Simon Fraser's *Says-Thaw Denneh (Bawcanne Indians)*, one of six Sekani/Beaver tribal divisions described by Jenness in 1937. They seem to have been a Sekani band that lived during the Late Prehistoric Period in the Smoky River drainage and the upper Snake Indian valley. "Snake" was an ancient derogatory term applied to enemies by the Plains Indians. Given the Stoney/Assiniboins' common cultural connection with the Plains Assiniboin, and the history of Aboriginal warfare farther south along the foothills in the late 1700s, I have concluded that the term may have also been applied to the *Says-Thaw Denneh* by the Stoney/Assiniboin. As such, the Snake (*Says-Thaw Denneh*) would have been massacred first by the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) along the upper Fraser River in 1790, and then a second time by the Assiniboin about 1835. Thus, the woman encountered by De Smet and Moberly would have been the last of her band, who interestingly, was discovered living with the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) as a refugee.

Ethnohistorically and archaeologically, there seems to be little that differentiates Snare (*Xexka'llt*) from Snake (*Says-Thaw Denneh*). To a fair degree, this is the result of limiting factors within the subarctic montane forest, valley and alpine zone environments in which they lived. Like other earlier occupants of the area, both Snare and Snake seem to have focused on hunting larger game such as sheep, caribou and moose. However, in saying that, one must be clear that all game animals would have been fair game. This reflected the constant need to acquire sufficient meat in what was a meat-scarce environment. Both groups ranged widely through the

area hunting and trapping, relying on snared game and organized communal hunts at least as often as individual hunting efforts, living in conical and lean-to bark shelters much of the time, traveling on foot, and also using bark canoes, snowshoes, and pack dogs. At times they came into conflict with each other, mainly over territory and meat. There is some documentation of this life style in the historical accounts, while the archaeological record as yet provides little specific information.

There were also some obvious ecological and cultural differences between the two groups. The Snare (*Xexka'llt*) were able to rely on annual salmon resources, as poor as the fish were, while the Snake (*Says-Thaw Denneh*) were denied such access. The Snake tipped both their arrows and bows with stone or iron points. However, the Snare had little use for the bows and arrows that they captured from the Snake in 1790; they felt the bows of the latter were less powerful with less velocity and the stone arrowheads of the latter were noticeably larger. The Snare may have wintered in semi-subterranean pit houses, while the Snake likely lived above ground in bark or skin lodges year around. By the mid-1800s some of the accounts (e.g. Kane in Harper 1971, Teit 1909) indicate that the Snare had also taken to living permanently above ground in conical lodges. Even so, reference to Snare Indians *dwelling in holes dug in the ground* at the Snaring River seems to come solely from Dr. Hector, and his basis for making such an observation is not clear. Perhaps Hector got his information from the Iroquois-Métis guide he engaged at Jasper House, one Louis Kwaragkwanté (a.k.a. Tekarra). Again, the historical documentation is sparse; the current archaeological record is even less forthcoming.

One of the more compelling needs for the various prehistoric and historic groups occupying the area was the need to know about useable mountain passes to facilitate travel, both within the Rocky Mountains and between the Canadian Plateau and the Northern Plains. For example, another perusal of the 1974 Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources contour map of Jasper National Park, and the marked trail routes, indicates that The Snake (*Says-Thaw Denneh*) would have had reasonable seasonal access from the Smoky River and South Sulphur River through Glacier Pass to the Upper Snake Indian valley, then south from the upper Snake Indian River-Blue Creek junction and west though Snake Indian Pass to Twintree Lake (Figures 3 and 6, a route the writer regretfully never had time to investigate), and back into the upper Smoky valley. I believe this would have provided fruitful ground for a productive seasonal round of summer and fall alpine hunting activities -- particularly for sheep, moose and caribou. From the upper Smoky valley, the Snake could have moved south over Robson Pass and down the Robson River valley to the Fraser River to fish for salmon below the Overlander Falls (Figure 6). The latter, shorter route ultimately brought them into conflict with the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) and partial extermination by 1790.

Certainly by the 1840s, the Iroquois-Métis freemen were not so firmly tied to company work and trade as when they first arrived in the area with the North West Company. For a variety of reasons they (and the Nipissings) undertook engagements with the North West Company and came west from their Montreal home lands in significant numbers at the beginning of the

nineteenth century seeking adventure and opportunity (Karamanski 1982: 5-7, Payne 2007: 8). The Iroquois quickly recognized the upper Athabaska and Smoky River valleys as a relatively empty niche -- a cultural and environmental no-man's land ripe for occupation. They would have been particularly attracted by the opportunities for fur, meat and arable soil in the Smoky River valley and stayed on as freemen after their engagements ceased. It is likely those freemen who gave the Smoky River its historic name of *Rivière à la Boucane* or *Bawcanne*, because it was an excellent place to trap, hunt and smoke meat. The subsequent intermittent occupation and marginal use of local company trading posts in the area must have soon encouraged the freemen to subsist solely on the land, getting by, settling in the area, and living a life style similar to the Snare and the Snake.

Like their indigenous neighbors in the upper Athabaska, Iroquois-Métis freemen were far travelers, ranging far and wide through the Rocky Mountains (Payne 2007:8) to avail themselves of scarce resources and opportunities as they were presented. Early in the Historic Period, upper Athabaska freemen began to pair up with local Shuswap and Sekani women (Teit 1909: 467-468, Murphy 2007: 127). The need for women as mates would have been viewed as a particular problem by the newly arrived freemen, since it would have been virtually impossible for them to carry on an hunting and gathering life style in the area without domestic partnerships. While Cree and French apparently prevailed as the *lingua franca* for local communication, and Iroquois as the cultural identity, Iroquois-Métis freemen in the area soon emerged as Iroquois-Shuswap-Sekani-French Canadian-Métis.

For example, Louis Kwaragkwanté was said to have been married to ... *Marie Katis La Sekanaise, also an Iroquois* (Murphy 2007: 127). It is obvious she was also a Sekani, and acknowledged as such. Louis and Marie Katis were Edward Moberly's great-grandparents and Edward was a direct descendant from the freemen. Ignace Waniante, a freeman from the Smoky River area with a Sekani wife, probably founded the Wanyande family; and Joachim Tonatanhan, married to a local native woman at Jasper, founded the Joachim family whose descendants are known by his first name (Nicks and Morgan, 1985: 167). My recollection from 1970 is that the Moberly family lives mainly at Entrance and Grande Cache, while the latter two families live mainly at Grande Cache.

As freeman trappers, Iroquois-Métis would have traded their fur wherever and with whoever offered the best price. In addition to trapping and trading, in the early part of the nineteenth century these freemen would have joined small indigenous extended family groups, i.e., their neighbours and kin folk, to hunt the alpine zone in spring, summer and fall, and then descend into various winter range locales in late fall to "pitch up" seasonal winter camps and pursue the hunting and trapping found there. However, this pattern changed somewhat by the 1840s. Nicks and Morgan (1985: 167-168) indicate the Grande Cache Iroquois-Métis began to gather in large groups each spring and summer in favourable locations where fish and berries were plentiful, or at missions. The Roman Catholic mission at Lac Ste. Anne, established in 1842 east of the

foothills toward Fort Edmonton, became a favored location for these summer ingatherings and remains so today.

The Iroquois-Métis freemen seem to have had the entrepreneurial flair, strong cultural identity, superior technology, and enough trade and kinship relationships to firmly establish themselves and flourish in this ecologically sparse and limiting environment. One skill that may have given them an unique ecological advantage was their enduring interest in horticulture, even in their new mountain home. In the St. Lawrence valley lowlands, Iroquois have a long tradition of horticulture which stretches back into prehistory. The ever inquisitive naturalist Hector (1863:126) remarked that *the Iroquois have several times grown turnips, potatoes and barley along the Smoky River, but only as an experiment*. Edward Moberly (in Murphy 2007: 132, 145) recalled that when he lived in the upper Athabaska valley as a boy, his family *always* raised wheat, barley and oats in a field -- in addition to selectively burning off meadows and treed locales each spring, netting whitefish in Talbot Lake and haying, grazing horses, trapping and hunting. It is fair to say that the limitations of the area soon led the Iroquois-Métis to adapt to the area, tending and nurturing their adopted environment as much as they exploited it, in contrast to their initial approach on arrival (e.g. Karamanski 1982: 7).

Thus, adaptive cultural traits, a strong self identity, fire arms and horses, kin relationships and trade with fur traders and indigenous Indian families, assisted the Iroquois-Métis in becoming the dominant Aboriginal group in the Upper Athabaska drainage in the Historic Period. A good

example of this enduring matrix are the descendant kin of the Kwaragkwanté, Finlay, Wanyande, Joachim and Moberly families, many of whom still live in the area. In a broader context, The data in Nicks and Morgan (1985: 166, 169-170: tables 1-2) indicate these endogamous Iroquois-Métis families are also closely related to Métis families further down river in the Smoky and Peace River valleys.

Iroquois-Métis occupation can be contrasted with the Cree, who apparently played a peripheral role in the upper Athabaska in the Historic Period, their language transferred only as a cultural trait, unlike their more central role elsewhere. Cree were not recorded very frequently in the area and I suspect those were sometimes references to Métis, or perhaps Shuswap. In effect, the area overall was not central to either fur trade company's interests. It was an overland route connecting other more lucrative fur trade districts, and was unlikely of interest to Cree middlemen, as the freemen had quickly usurped that role for themselves (Payne, 2007: 16). However, tribal Crees were active in the area as war parties, such as Teit's (1909) account of them attacking the Sekani between 1780-90 on the upper Fraser, and I suspect that they raided sporadically -- a seasonal, lethal predation on what they viewed as easy prey (Lamb 1970: 353).

The Stoney/Assiniboin also seem to have been historically peripheral in the upper Athabaska drainage, apparently arriving in late prehistory and hunting the area until it was cleaned out, and then relocating to the foothills south and east of the Rockies and the main Athabaska valley (Anderson 1867: map). They may have then been forced to remain intermittent players in

the area by the influx of Iroquois freemen. Even so, a systematic pattern of luring and massacring their more isolated, weaker neighbors, when it suited their perceived territorial imperatives, seems repetitive and premeditated, a sort of vindictive ethnic cleansing, perhaps stemming from the time when they perceived themselves as having *exclusive appropriation of the area* (De Smet in Chittenden and Richardson 1905: 535). And yet, for such a mainstream Aboriginal group within the fur trade, the archaeology, identity and ethnohistory of these particular Assiniboin remains elusive. After much effort in attempting to reconcile various historical accounts, Andersen (1970) finally tentatively identified them as *Wood Stoney*, e.g.

(1) The Stoney located roughly between the Athabaska and North Saskatchewan Rivers west of Edmonton ... may have followed a westward migration along the forested edge of the northern plains, (2) the area occupied by the immediate pre-1877 predecessors of the Alexis and Paul's band of Stoney was within reach and perhaps regularly exploited by largely pedestrian Stoney about 1795 or even earlier; (3) they may have entered this area prior to getting horses; (4) the Grand River Assiniboine first distinguished in 1775 may be the immediate predecessors of the Alexis and Paul's bands; (5) they may also be the Swampy Ground Stoney or Assiniboine. Assuming this unity of identity, I subsequently refer to them as Wood Stoney.... (Andersen 1970: 54).

Generally, Andersen's data and discussion suggest that the Wood Stoney migrated westward through the Aspen Parkland biome and up the Saskatchewan River drainage as far as the east

slope foothills after 1670 and before 1775, as part of a combined westward push from Lake Winnipeg by the Cree and Assiniboin, both equipped with firearms and looking to participate in the fur trade (Ewers in Andersen 1970: 50). It appears to have been a straight forward economic and ecological endeavor, as Bird (1961: 69) indicates ... *beaver abounded in the streams of the parkland*.... Thus, the information by Andersen and Bird seems consistent with Ray (1974: 28-29, 46-48, 94-95).

The degree of certainty about Snare and Snake Indians among fur traders decreased as the Historic Period moved forward. Warfare, disease, time, and the single-minded commercial nature of fur trade companies and the records they kept all contributed to this. However, the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) and Iroquois-Métis persisted in the area, probably due to kin and trading relationships with other Fraser River Shuswap bands and the Hudson's Bay Company, until the formation of Jasper National Park. By 1910, the Snare (*Xexka'llt*) had moved back down the Fraser at least as far as Tête Jaune Cache in British Columbia (Valemount and Area Museum 2009), and the Iroquois-Métis had moved further down the Athabaska and Smoky Rivers to Entrance and Grande Cache in Alberta (Murphy 2007: 128).

Beyond this, the other major historic event to affect Aboriginal people in the upper Athabaska was the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic. During the 1970-71 archaeological investigations, I was shown many small unmarked graveyards by the local people living around Entrance. Edward Moberly told me most were people (like his parents and relatives) who had died in the epidemic.

One wonders if the annual ingathering at Lac Ste. Anne provided an infection pathway for the epidemic. I had many conversations with Ed Moberly about his life and his hunting (Figure 12, left rear, Library and Archives of Canada PA-040743), and considered him a friend. He spent his life doggedly honoring and following his family's traditional life style as an Iroquois-Métis and gaining an international reputation for his unparalleled guiding and hunting skills. So I find it ironic, that having been denied ownership and residency of his traditional family home throughout his life, he had to die and be returned to Jasper for burial, to finally go home.

Not unexpectedly, the various massacre stories are perhaps the most vivid ethnohistoric events of the area to survive. Their telling is almost folk lore in itself. Other than the very specific oral history of the 1780-90 Shuswap-Sekani war, other massacre stories were all relayed to white recorders first hand by people who were victims of the events. These stories would have gained currency in the Historic Period because it was sometimes a dangerous time and a dangerous way of life, and such information would have been circulated for safety reasons among fur traders and travelers, as well as simply for titillation. There is no doubt such telling would have been colored by language translation issues and differing cultural perceptions; I have an impression it was the Iroquois-Métis who translated for the story tellers. Even so, I have provided an interpretation of the stories that I believe represents a reasonable reconciliation of the data.

In summation, The upper Athabaska drainage can now be more clearly seen as an area with severe ecological and economic constraints through time, often short of meat and the

opportunities needed to attract larger groups to remain and adapt effectively to the landscape, defined by limitations rather than opportunities. As such, there is no apparent explanation for why prehistoric people bothered to travel and occupy the area as persistently as they did, and this is a fundamental question which remains to be resolved. Yet various groups of people traveled major continental river drainage systems to these head waters, time after time, where they encountered one another in a place that can truly be considered a veritable "roof of the world." Due to the exigencies of the oncoming colonial fur trade, it is apparent that the upper Athabaska became a place of contact between a variety of small nomadic Aboriginal bands at least during the Late Prehistoric and Historic Periods, every-man's land and no-man's land, and a place where ethnohistoric studies arguably offer the most plausible inferences about these events.

In particular, Snare and Snake appear to have been situated in late prehistory as Shuswap and Sekani, basically where they were referenced by historic accounts. Wood Stoney and Cree appear to have been marginal players in the area. French and Cree speaking Iroquois-Métis occupied the area early in the Historic Period in strength, and stayed to dominate the period while never forgetting their Iroquois identity. While Métis by birth and kin, even today they remain certain of their Iroquois identity. Historic fur traders and explorers were familiar with their Aboriginal customers and engagés, had a working knowledge of their differing ethnic identities, had knowledge about what and when various events occurred in the area, and wrote about the local people and events they dealt with regularly. Archaeologists and historians wrote about what they collected and studied as they sifted through the material remnants of it all. As such, various and

wide ranging accounts have flowed from the perceived and differing cultural realities and agendas of everyone concerned. Yet I suggest this is a story that begged to be told, and I believe the best perception of it can still be discovered within the local day-to-day objects, activities, relationships and recollections of the people who lived in the area through time.

Having told part of this particular story, I would like to offer a few recommendations for future research. There is more of the story to discover and tell, and premises to be reviewed, refined or discarded. One of the ways to better understand the story will be to develop more precise ethnohistoric and archaeological techniques and data to track this complex cultural intersection back through time. So far much of the evidence, both archaeological and documentary, is so ephemeral as to almost defy analysis. Another key will be good mobility; researchers working in the area need to be able to travel far and wide like the Aboriginal people they are studying. Iroquois freemen abandoned the canoe for the horse after they settled in, and good mountain horses are the best way even today to efficiently navigate the topography of the upper Athabaska.

Further archaeological investigations are especially needed in locales like the head waters of the Smoky River and upper Brazeau River, the Cairn Pass trail route between the Brazeau and Rocky and Athabaska Rivers, and the Snake Indian Pass trail route between the Smoky and Snake Indian headwaters. In particular, there is a need to verify the ethnohistoric descriptions of communal hunting practices and facilities in Upper Athabaska alpine locales with physical data. As a starting point, the historic Yukon Kutchin offer an analog for topographically siting and

constructing communal caribou hunting fences in an upland setting (McFee 1981: 162-168). A more systematic investigation of local lithic sources is needed. More C14 dated site excavations would be desirable. A program of research is needed to establish how far back in time and in which locales people intentionally altered the vegetation cover with fire to facilitate hunting and other activities. Did the Iroquois bring this adaptive technique with them from the St. Lawrence valley, did they learn it locally from indigenous upper Athabaska people (and who), or did they invent it after they arrived? More research is needed to better define the time depth, distribution and activities of the historic Wood Stoney and Nipissing. Investigations are also needed to verify and examine any possible pit house sites at the Snaring River, and at Overlander Falls-Tête Jaune Cache (Valemount and Area Museum 2009). Other avenues that are rapidly fading with time are further oral history and ethnoarchaeology studies among Iroquois-Métis families at Grande Cache and Entrance, Alberta, and among Shuswap and Sekani families in central British Columbia.

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List of Figures

Figure 3. Snake Indian River-Willow Creek winter range locale. Also shows the Glacier Pass and Rock Creek-Wildhay River trail routes. Portion of Jasper National Park Map Sheet MCR217. Canada Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1974. Scale 1:250000.

Figure 4. Upper Athabaska River Valley winter range locales inside and outside the Rocky Mountain eastern front ranges. The two locales are divided by the park boundary depicted left-to-right across the upper portion of the image. Also shows the trail route between Southesk (Cairn) Pass and the upper Athabaska Valley. Portion of Jasper National Park Map Sheet MCR217. Canada Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1974. Scale 1:250000.

Figure 5. Upper Brazeau River Valley winter range locale. Also shows the trail route between the upper Brazeau Valley and Southesk (Cairn) Pass. Portion of Jasper National Park Map Sheet MCR217. Canada Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1974. Scale 1:250000.

Figure 6. Trail route between the Upper Smoky River Valley and the Overlander Falls on the Upper Fraser River. Portion of Jasper National Park Map Sheet MCR217. Canada Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1974. Scale 1:250000.

Figure 7. Early Prehistoric Period *Alberta*-style projectile point fragment found in the Upper Athabaska Valley. From: Elliott 1970-71: 221.

Figures 8a, 8b. Late Prehistoric-Historic Period. Two views (underside and cortex side) of possible stone copy of an iron trade axe found near Medicine Lake. From: Elliott 1970-71: 211.

Figure 9. Historic Period English-style gun flint (lower left). Found with Late Prehistoric Period projectile point and bifaces in the Upper Athabaska Valley. From: Elliott 1970-71: 223.

Figure 10. Prehistoric projectile points found in the Upper Athabaska Valley. From: Elliott 1970-71: 207.

Figure 11. Probable sketch of Shuswap band chief Capot Blanc by Paul Kane at Jasper House, ca. A.D. 1846. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution NAA INV 06158800.

Figure 12. Edward Moberly (left rear). Hunting Party, Jasper Park, ca. A.D. 1928. Library and Archives Canada PA-040743.

Figure 13. Probable Shuswap family (white person at rear). Tête Jaune Cache, British Columbia, ca. A.D. 1910. Glenbow Archives NA-3489-40.

Figure 14. Shuswap family with pack dog. Tête Jaune Cache, British Columbia, ca. 1910. The Exploration Place, Valley Museum and Archive 2003-25-20.

Figure 15. Shuswap family camp scene. Tête Jaune Cache, British Columbia, ca. 1910. The Exploration Place, Valley Museum and Archive 2003-25-22.