

Introduction

“Changing Times” is the third special issue on archaeology published by *BC Studies*. It follows issues No. 6-7, 1970, *Archaeology in British Columbia — New Discoveries*, edited by Roy Carlson, and No. 48, 1980-81, *Fragments of the Past: British Columbia Archaeology in the 1970s*, edited by myself. Both previous special issues contained articles summarizing current research and issues in British Columbian archaeology, and this volume continues that general theme.

In the Introduction to *Fragments of the Past* in 1981, I outlined what were seen as some significant trends occurring in British Columbian archaeology through the 1970s. For instance, I noted that both the numbers of archaeologists working in the province and the amounts of money spent on archaeological research had expanded tremendously over that period. That growth was also accompanied by the passage of effective provincial heritage legislation and the establishment of the provincial “Heritage Conservation Branch,” including a “Provincial Archaeologist’s Office.” Those developments resulted in a great increase in the numbers and scale of “cultural resource management” (CRM) projects, or archaeological field-work designed to assess the impacts of proposed developments on heritage resources. That period also saw a significant growth in archaeology faculty, staff, and facilities in local universities, colleges, and museums.

However, socio-political and economic influences on archaeological work in British Columbia have changed over the last ten to fifteen years, and the large-scale development plans of the 1970s and early 1980s (e.g., Hat Creek, “Site C,” Vallican, etc.), which injected substantial sums of money into CRM projects conducted by the universities, no longer occur (e.g., Pokotylo and Beirne 1978, Beirne and Pokotylo 1979, Spurling 1980, Mohs 1982). In fact, conducting CRM projects of any scale is no longer a common function for most university-based archaeologists, who seem unable to compete effectively for such contracts with private consulting firms.

Currently there are at least five entrepreneurial archaeological consultancy firms based in the province, economically sustained by CRM contracts offered by government and industry. As a result, at least in terms of numbers of crew-members employed, sites investigated, and dollars spent, a significant proportion of all archaeological field-work in British Columbia is conducted by such "heritage consultants" for CRM purposes. Two of the papers in this volume were contributed by executives of private "archaeological corporations" (Stryd and Eldridge, of "ARCAS," and Rousseau of "Rousseau and Muir Heritage Resource Consulting"), indicating that such work can still result in significant contributions to knowledge, even if legal and economic factors were its primary motivation.

For the university archaeologists who do not contend for major CRM contracts, there have also been several significant research projects conducted in British Columbia over the last ten to fifteen years, funded by national or provincial granting agencies. Those included Carlson's excavations at Pender Island in the mid to late 1980s (Carlson, this volume) and Hayden's investigation of the Keatly Creek pithouse village site north of Lillooet (Hayden and Ryder 1991; Hayden, this volume). The 1980s also saw a renewal of archaeology on the northern coast of British Columbia, with the beginning of Gary Coupland's research programme along the lower Skeena River (e.g., Coupland 1988 and this volume), and also witnessed increasing archaeological attention to the northern interior of British Columbia, which had been largely ignored up to that time. That work included survey and excavations conducted around Mt. Edziza in the Stikine River drainage (Fladmark 1984, 1985) and investigations at Charlie Lake Cave in the Peace River district in 1983.

Charlie Lake Cave yielded British Columbia's first excavated Paleoindian assemblage, including a single fluted point, a large "boat-shaped" quartzite core-tool, and a single small stone bead (which may be the oldest stone bead from North America), associated with a large series of radiocarbon dates averaging about 10,500 years in age (e.g., Driver n.d., 1988; Fladmark n.d., Fladmark, Driver and Alexander 1988). Excavation at this deeply stratified site was continued in 1990 and 1991 by Jon Driver, resulting in more information about its repeated human re-occupations over the last 10,500 years. Interestingly, as mentioned in Driver's article in this volume, bone preservation at Charlie Lake Cave was excellent, resulting in a unique zooarchaeological record spanning the entire Holocene (Driver 1988).

During the 1980s, the age of the earliest archaeological finds in the southern interior of British Columbia was also pushed back with the dis-

covery of the skeleton of a young man in the eroding gully of Gore Creek in the South Thompson River Valley, which was directly radiocarbon dated at 8250 ± 115 BP (Cybulski et al. 1981). Carbon isotope analysis of the bones of that so-called "Gore Creek burial" (he had undoubtedly been the victim of an accidental drowning and not deliberately buried in that location) indicated that he had consumed far less marine protein (i.e., ocean-run salmon) than did the historic native residents of this region (Chisholm and Nelson 1983). Besides its direct significance in reconstructing early Plateau subsistence patterns (and possibly the history of the salmon resource), the "delta carbon-13 analysis" of the Gore Creek "burial" was also a local expression of an important new general trend in archaeology. That is the increasing application of sophisticated analytical techniques derived from modern physics and chemistry to further our understanding of prehistoric diet and behaviour.

One of the leaders in that trend has been Dr. Erle Nelson of the Department of Archaeology at Simon Fraser University, who has become a specialist in the carbon isotopic analysis of protein (e.g., Nelson 1991). Nelson has also been at the forefront in the development of a new method of radiocarbon dating known as "accelerator mass spectrometry" (AMS dating), in which *very* small carbon samples can be made to yield useful radiocarbon determinations (Nelson et al. 1987). Among other developments, the resulting "revolution" in radiocarbon technology has allowed, for the first time, the non-destructive direct dating of organic artifacts. Important local applications of this technique have included the dating of a famous prehistoric art object from the Southern Northwest Coast known as the "Skagit atlatl," firmly placing it within the Marpole Phase of local prehistory (Fladmark et al. 1987).

I think that in total the articles in this volume provide a representative cross-section of major developmental trends in British Columbian archaeology over the last ten years, as well as offering a sample of some of the new information about the prehistory of this province discovered over that period. I would like to thank all the authors for their valuable contributions to this work. Of course, any single volume can only represent an incomplete sample of such themes, and even while this work has been in preparation, there have been significant "newer discoveries" which will have to await reporting in future "special issues."

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