

The Scowlitz Site Online: Launch of the Scowlitz Artifact Assemblage Project

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**This article was written in consultation with Michael Blake, Doug Brown, and Dana Lepofsky as part of a collaborative team effort. Their comments strengthened and clarified the presentation made here.*

Figure 1. The Scowlitz site is located on the flat, treed terrace seen across the Harrison River. Clifford Hall sits in the foreground (Photo by Doug Brown).

The Scowlitz archaeological site (DhR1-15 and 16, also known as *Qithvil*), which lies near the junction of the Harrison and Fraser Rivers, holds an important part of the Scowlitz First Nation's community history. Scowlitz community members, who have always known about this place, have begun to share their knowledge with archaeologists over the past couple of decades. The site and surrounding area was the focus of intensive archaeological excavations and survey between 1992 and 1999. These activities were hosted by Scowlitz First Nation, in partnership with Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and Stó:lō Nation archaeologists. This article describes the importance of the Scowlitz site and the archaeology of the region to the Scowlitz First Nation and broader Stó:lō community. It also describes a project that seeks to bring the artifacts from the

Scowlitz site back together for use by the community. The main goal of the 'Scowlitz Artifact Assemblage Project' is to re-unite the Scowlitz artifact collections on the Reciprocal Research Network (the 'RRN,' described below) which serves to link the artifacts—currently held at SFU, UBC, and the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre (SRRMC)—to the community through a single website. Our project team includes Chief Andy Phillips, Betty Charlie, and Clifford Hall (Scowlitz First Nation), Dana Lepofsky and John Welch (Department of Archaeology, SFU), Natasha Lyons (Ursus Heritage Consulting), Kate Hennessy (School of Interactive Arts and Technology, SFU), Michael Blake (UBC Anthropology Department), Doug Brown (Brown & Oakes Archaeology), and Dave Schaepe (SRRMC).

Excavations at the Scowlitz site were initiated in 1992

by Stó:lō Grand Chief Clarence Pennier, who viewed the village remains and burial mounds as a record of the longstanding relationship between Scowlitz First Nation and the wider landscape. Chief Pennier had Gordon Mohs and Sonny McHalse contact Michael Blake at UBC and, together with the Scowlitz First Nation, they planned the first collaborative archaeological field school at the site. More UBC field schools followed in 1993 and 1995; then, in 1997, Dana Lepofsky joined the project, bringing SFU field schools to the site and greatly expanding the scope of the project. The goals of these excavations were to learn more about the lives of the Scowlitz ancestors. Six seasons of fieldwork unearthed the remains of cedar plank houses that showed that people started living on this river terrace about 3000 years ago, and that their houses and households grew larger through time. Ancient plant remains showed that people stored large amounts of salal and elderberries for the winter and ate a broad range of other plant foods. A wide array of projectile points and abundant slate knives indicate a focus on hunting and fish processing. The site is also important because of the large collection of perishable materials, including basketry, that have been recovered along the shorelines. About 1500 years ago, people stopped living full-time at the site and started to use it as a cemetery, and later, a seasonal fish camp. The ancient village, earthen burial mounds and other cemetery markers, as well as the stories passed down over the generations, marked the ownership of this site and surrounding territory by the ancestors of the Scowlitz people and, more broadly, the Stó:lō community.

Sharing the Story of Scowlitz History and Heritage

Our project team has been actively discussing the ways that the information learned from the Scowlitz excavations can be used by the community today. Scowlitz Chief Andy Phillips cites a number of broad goals for his community related to this project: conserving and protecting Scowlitz heritage, including the land and resource base; creating a shared place where the artifacts, sites, photographs, and other heritage resources can be listed, described, pictured, and shared; and connecting youth with their history in a real

cultural context.

Clifford Hall, a long-time participant in the archaeology at *Qithyil*, says that the history of Scowlitz lands—and the artifacts that help tell the story—need to be retold and shared so that the non-native history of the area does not become the naturalized version of events. Community members tell stories of outsiders disrespecting their cultural past through the desecration of burial mounds and other built features on the landscape. The archaeology, Clifford says, should be used to bring people together, not drive them apart. The knowledge derived from the excavations should be used to work against historical wrongs and towards common understandings. Having the collections accessible is key to this goal. Clifford notes: “This stuff doesn’t just belong to Scowlitz,

Valley. I would give my collection to them. The artifacts belong to all Stó:lō and to all people who look at them, for them to learn from. They ought to be shown not kept away.”

Bringing the Artifacts and Knowledge Back Together

The Reciprocal Research Network (RRN) was developed by the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the Stó:lō Nation, and Stó:lō Tribal Council, in association with the Stó:lō Research & Resource Management Centre, the Musqueam Indian Band, and the U’Mista Cultural Society in Alert Bay. It is a web-based tool that now links seventeen museums in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. It provides access to over 247,000 objects—



Figure 2. Betty Charlie and Clifford Hall share their artifact collection, 2011 (Photo by Doug Brown).

it belongs to Stó:lō... We should be unified [in our approach to Stó:lō history]. We used to share everything and trade with one another... We should work together.” Betty Charlie, who has also spent many years working on the excavation projects, adds: “I’ve been thinking a lot about the artifacts we collect, that they belong to the person who made them. They belong to the original maker, not the finder. You can feel them when you pick that artifact up. I’m hoping one of these years Stó:lō will put together a museum in the Fraser

many from Coast Salish and other Northwest Coast peoples. Local knowledge and histories can be added to the RRN. This tool provides a way of connecting communities and creates an outlet for the sharing of knowledge. The website is also designed to support collaborative research, with project members participating from a distance.

We are using the RRN to bring together and provide access to the Scowlitz collection, as a whole, for the Scowlitz community, other Stó:lō, and a wide-

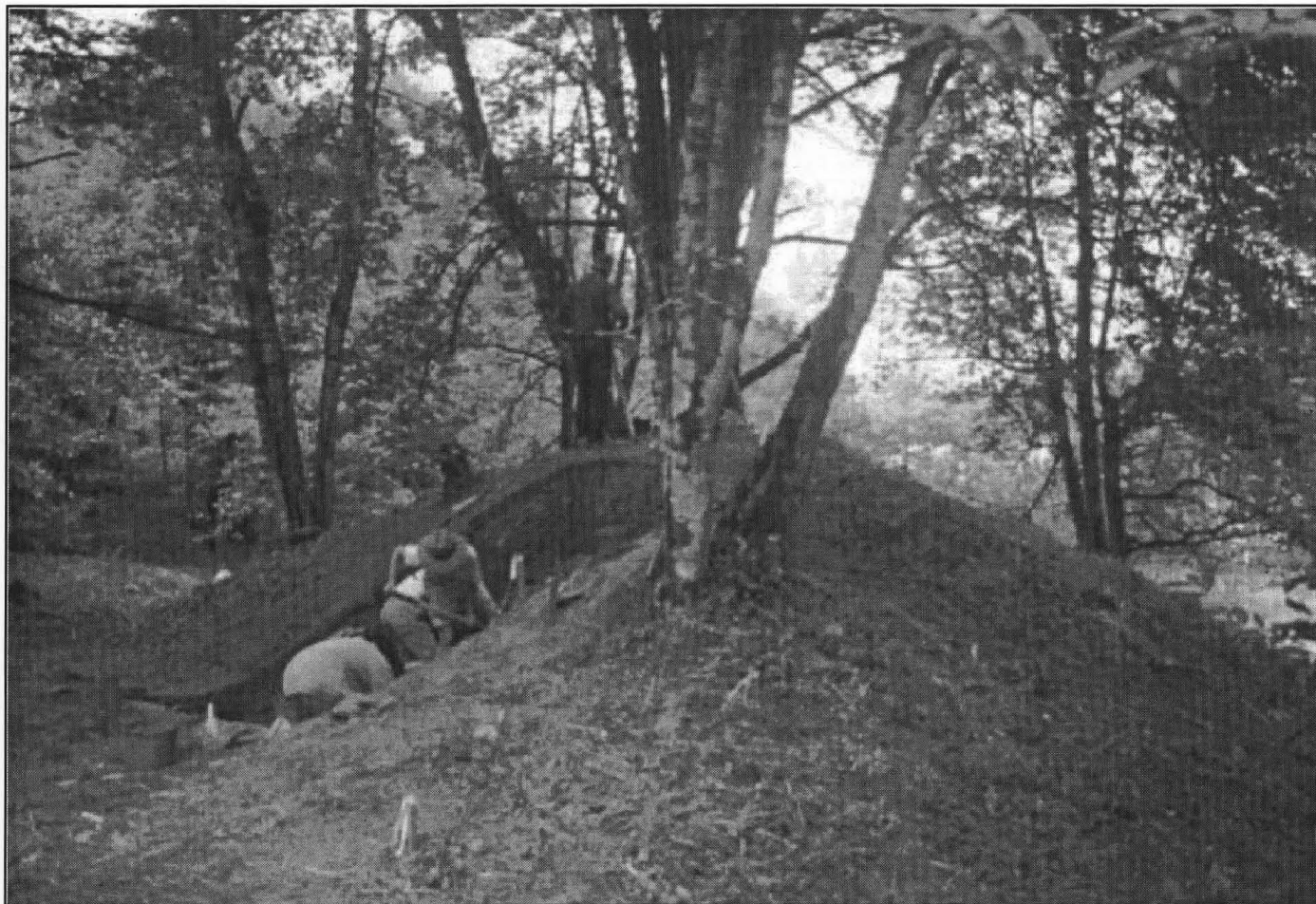


Figure 3. Excavations at Mound 1, the largest burial mound at the Scowlitz site, 1992 (Photo by Michael Blake).

spread group of community-based and academic researchers. Histories of the Scowlitz artifact collection can be added in the form of photographs, maps, and audio or video interviews. We are developing and carrying out this project in a 'project space' created within the RRN, one of over 900 projects established by over 1000 RRN members. Visit the RRN website: <http://www.rrncommunity.org>.

This project is aimed at addressing community needs. Community members emphasize the importance of making Scowlitz history accessible, particularly to their youth. Chief Andy Phillips, for instance, is interested in re-introducing "our traditional teachings, customs, and practices within the home, rather than from outside, including having Elders teach the customary protocols." Betty Charlie also recognizes the importance of Scowlitz youth knowing their history. She says: "I think this project is good for the younger generations at Scowlitz, and can help them understand where they came from. I think it might help them lead better lives

if they know where they came from; it will help them know where they're going. My grandkids always ask about [the archaeology]. One of my grandsons is a teenager and he was looking at the pictures from across the river [where the site is located], and he said he'd like to be an archaeologist and work there, study artifacts and find out what they were used for. He was so interested in knowing how they date artifacts and bone. He's really got it in his mind, and I think he could do it. We need to provide opportunities like that to our young people. I told him that many of the archaeology students started out here and now they have their own companies."

Project Activities & Community Involvement

Our project team has initiated a series of activities that will make Scowlitz artifact collections more accessible to the Scowlitz and archaeological communities. Our team is working on a master artifact catalogue for the site and on digitizing records of the excavations (artifact

information, site photos, site records, fieldnotes, etc.). This summer, we will begin interviewing Scowlitz Elders and interested community members about their knowledge and memories of the site, the archaeological excavations that were conducted there, and the broader history and heritage of Scowlitz First Nation. We will be photographing the personal artifacts of Scowlitz community members who would like to share their collections. All of these records and photographs will eventually be available on the Reciprocal Research Network. We are also interested in learning more about the history of research at Scowlitz based on the experiences of field school students and volunteers who were such an integral part of the excavations and recent history of this important site. For more information on the project, or for anyone interested in contributing their memories, experiences, or knowledge of working at the Scowlitz site, please contact Natasha Lyons at natasha@ursus-heritage.ca. We would love to hear from you!

Natasha Lyons began her archaeology career by spending some of the best summers of her life at Scowlitz. She has a PhD from the University of Calgary in community-based practice, and owns a small heritage consulting firm with her partner, Ian Cameron, whom she also met at Scowlitz: <http://www.ursusheritage.ca>.

Andy Phillips is Chief of the Scowlitz First Nation and Executive Director for the Stó:lō Tribal Council.

Dave Schaepe is Director / Senior Archaeologist of the Stó:lō Research & Resource Management Centre. He has worked with the Stó:lō for 14 years and been involved in numerous community-university collaborations, including acting as a Steering Committee-member in the development of the Reciprocal Research Network. For more information: <http://www.srmcentre.com>.

Betty Charlie and Clifford Hall are Scowlitz community members with a longstanding interest in the history and heritage of the Stó:lō. They have been a part of all the excavations at Scowlitz since 1992, helping to guide and instruct the many students and researchers who have worked at the site.

Kate Hennessy is an Assistant Professor specializing in Media at Simon Fraser University's School of Interactive Arts and Technology. She researches how digital technologies can be used by communities to access their heritage in museum collections. Her website is: <http://hennessy.iat.sfu.ca>.

John Welch is an Associate Professor, cross-appointed to the Departments of Archaeology and Resource and Environmental Management at Simon Fraser University. He has worked with the White Mountain Apache Tribe of Arizona for the past two decades, and is involved in many community-based heritage projects in B.C.

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THE ENIGMA OF THE RUBY CREEK STONE FIGURE

Grant Keddie

The Ruby Creek Bowl is a carved stone, seated human figurine bowl with unique facial features. It has been assumed to be part of the early stone bowl complex of Southwestern B.C., as defined by Duff (1956). My observations and experiments indicate that this figure was carved with metal files and a chisel-like tool. However, the latter information does not necessarily establish that the bowl dates to the postcontact period.

This artifact, DiRj-Y:3 (old cat. No. 2996), was in the Royal B.C. Museum (acc. No. 1917-25) as part of the collection of "Rev. Charles C. Croucher. From the Yale District." The original typed catalogue has its location as "Yale," but under remarks it says: "Al Smith says Ruby Creek." It is not known who Al Smith was or under what authority he claimed the bowl was from Ruby Creek. Other artifacts in this collection are from Hope; North



Figure 1. Ruby Creek Bowl, front view.