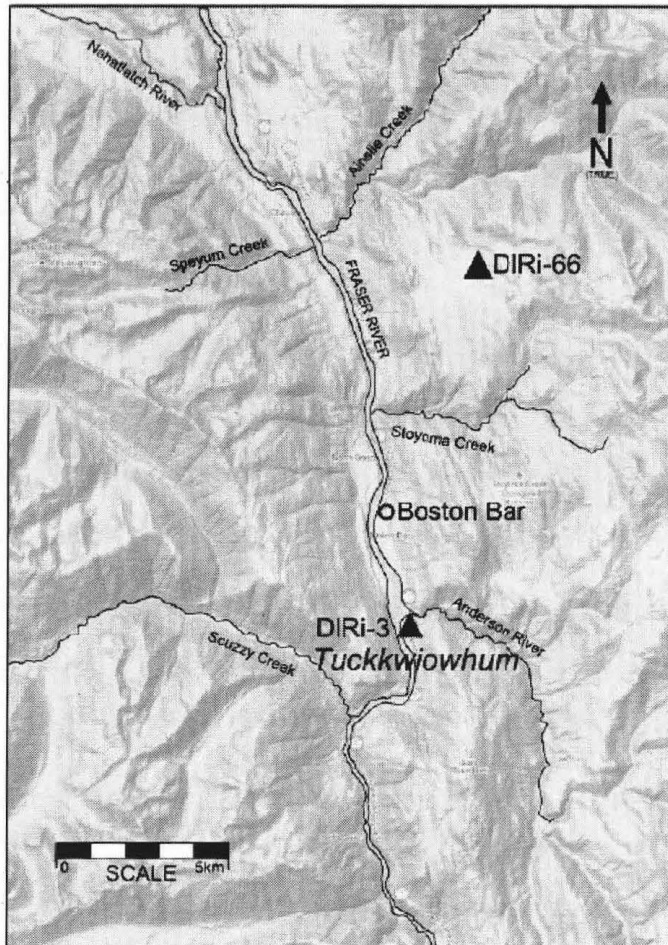


When the world washed away: colonial history in the Fraser Canyon

Kwantlen Polytechnic University Applied Archaeology Field School 2011

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Introduction

During the summer of 2009, Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) began a field school based in the Fraser Canyon, near Boston Bar, with a research focus on early colonial history within Nlaka'pamux territory. This period of history is critical because events of the 1850s and 60s in the Fraser Canyon shifted power in the southwestern Interior of B.C. away from Indigenous peoples to colonial authorities. Major processes and events active during this time include the Gold Rush and War of 1858, establishment of reserves and denial of Aboriginal land rights, and intrusion of the cash economy into Indigenous communities (Harris 1997; Lutz 1992). Despite the severe negative consequences of these factors, Nlaka'pamux people

continued to be productive, kept many of their cultural institutions, and fought against outsider authority.

This research has been particularly relevant to the Boston Bar First Nation, which is a member of the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council. Boston Bar has controlled a significant portion of the research agenda for this field school, and directed KPU to excavate at the villages of *Kopchitchin* and *Kalulaa'Ex* in 2009. Artifacts from these villages were excavated, analyzed, and returned to Boston Bar for curation in their proposed museum and cultural centre at the Tuckkwiowhum Heritage Village.

This research agenda continued in summer 2011 with excavations at the Nlaka'pamux townsite of *Tuckkwiowhum*

(DIRi-3), and continuation of survey and tree ring dating at the Ainslie Creek culturally modified tree (CMT) site DIRi-66 (Figure 1), under HCA Permit 2011-0084. Two post-contact circular pithouse dwellings at *Tuckkwiowhum* were excavated, which led to the recovery and analysis of an extensive collection of artifacts from the middle to late 1800s. At the Ainslie Creek site, 198 CMTs, primarily western redcedar barkstrips, were recorded in 2011. Of these, 151 were successfully dated using increment core techniques. There are now 299 individual dates from CMTs at this site, the largest sample of CMT dates from the Fraser Canyon. *Tuckkwiowhum* artifacts were returned to Boston Bar on Oct 21, 2011.

Ainslie Creek (DIRi-66)

Ainslie Creek drains a watershed on the west slope of the Cascades overlooking the Fraser Canyon. This watershed contains numerous CMT sites, of which DIRi-66 is the largest. CMTs within DIRi-66 consist primarily of tapered and rectangular western redcedar barkstrips. The site is located only eleven kilometres north of *Tuckkwiowhum* on the same side of the Fraser River, and was likely an important source of cedar bark for the inhabitants of that town. Other smaller settlements in the area that may have accessed the site include *Kopchitchin*, *Kimu's*, *Sinya'Kl*, *Spa'im*, *Tzaumak*, and *Npikti'm* (Teit 1900). Tree ring dates from CMTs can be used as a proxy to indirectly examine demographic and economic history of nearby communities (Pegg 2000; Pegg et al. 2009).

Tuckkwiowhum (DIRi-3)

Tuckkwiowhum is located at the confluence of Anderson Creek at the Fraser River, at the junction of three major trails that existed far back into the past. One

Figure 1 (above). Location of the study areas, 2011 field season.

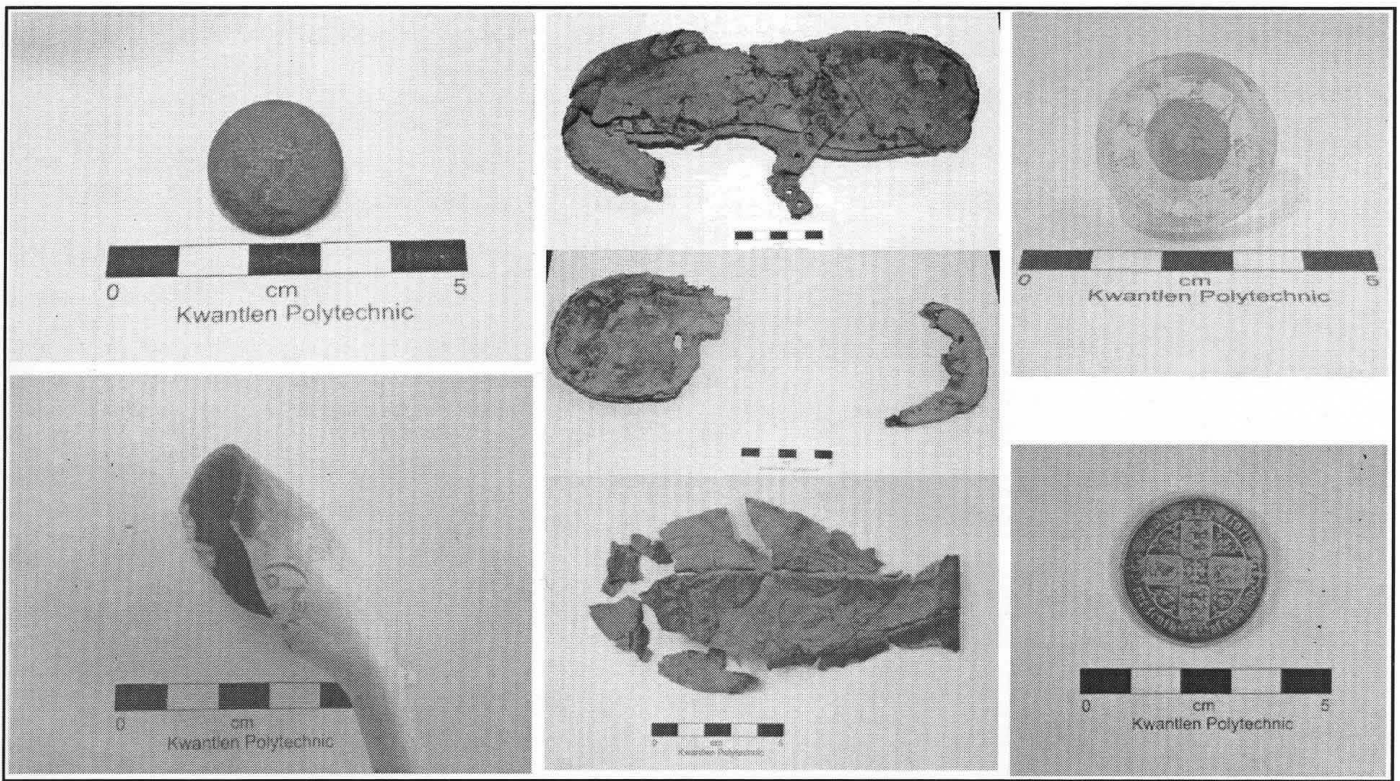


Figure 2. Artifacts from *Tuckkwiowhum*. Clockwise from top left: US Military button dating to the Fraser Canyon War of 1858; women's and men's shoes dating from the 1850s to 60s; glass stopper from Lea and Perrins Worcestershire bottle; British florin (1/10 pound) from 1853; gunpowder flask, mid-1800s; Ford Stepney (East London) clay pipe. Photos by Kimberley McMartin.

of these trails headed north to the next major townsite, *Klickumcheen* (Lytton), another travelled east over the Cascades to the Nicola Valley, and the third was a very difficult trail which travelled south to *Spo'zem* (Spuzzum). *Tuckkwiowhum* was the largest Nlaka'pamux town south of *Klickumcheen* in the 1800s, with a population of 840 people in 1830 (Harris 1997). The town may have been the site of a battle in the Fraser Canyon War that took place in August 1858 (Akrigg and Akrigg 1997:24; O'Donaghey pers. comm. May 2011).

In 1859, Judge Begbie travelled past the town, noting that a restaurant was present (Begbie 1859). The site was accessed by the Cariboo Wagon Road in 1863; the last and most difficult section of construction, supervised by J.W. Trutch, was between Chapman's and Boston Bar (Howay 1910). A church was present at the site by 1878, when it was visited by the Indian Reserve Commission in June of that year (Rocha 2001:45).

Professional archaeological site visits first took place during inventory for the CN Rail Twin Tracking project in the mid-1980s; archaeologists at this time recorded only a small surface and subsurface lithic scatter. In 2010, the Boston Bar First

Nation notified KPU that several housepits were also present, immediately adjacent to the CN Rail right-of-way, and requested that these structures be investigated.

Methods

CMT inventory at DIRi-66 was conducted between June 13 and 24, 2011 by teams of 4 or 5 students traversing a 100 x 100 m grid. Each identified CMT was recorded (Archaeology Branch 2001), GPS'd, and marked with a plastic number tag. Tree ring samples were collected from each live CMT using an increment borer, in accordance with methods outlined by Barrett and Arno (1988) and Jozsa (1988). Core

samples were placed in a cut and labelled drinking straw, then glued to cardboard trays at the end of the field day. Analysis and dating of core samples was accomplished using 10-200x digital and optical microscopes. Each core was sanded to enhance visibility. Overall, survey at DIRi-66 took 2 weeks.

Excavation and shovel testing at *Tuckkwiowhum* took place between June 14 and July 15, 2011. In total, nine 1 m² excavation units were completed within two circular housepits, identified as CDs (cultural depressions) 4 and 5. Excavated sediments were screened through 6-mm (1/4") mesh. Excavation proceeded by

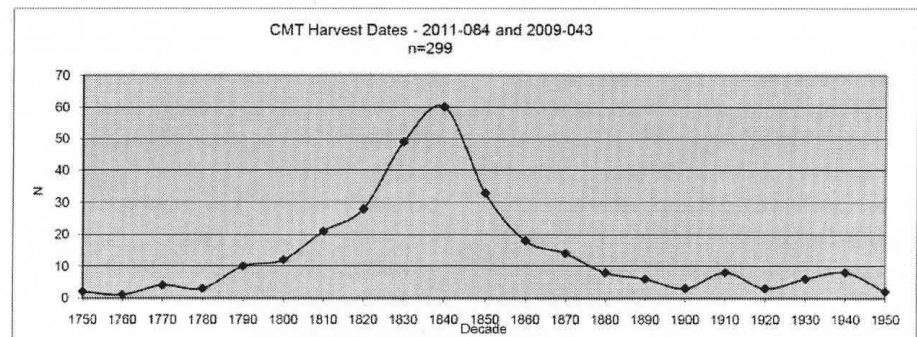


Figure 3. CMT dates for DIRi-66, 2011 and 2009 field seasons combined.



Figure 4. Photograph of 1895 potlatch in North Bend (*Kopchitchin*). Image D-01497 courtesy of Royal B.C. Museum, B.C. Archives.

natural layers and arbitrary levels, with the deepest excavations reaching 1.2 m below surface. A total of 54 shovel tests were completed at the site. Analysis and cataloguing of artifacts was conducted using methods from Horn (2008), Jones and Sullivan (1989), Van der Flier-Keller and McMillan (1987), Sutton and Arkush (2007), and the BLM /SHA Historic Glass Bottle page (<http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm>).

Results

At DIRi-66, the total number of CMTs recorded in the 2011 season was 198, of which 151 were successfully dated. The majority of the scars at this site are tapered bark strips, although rectangular bark strips, girdled trees, kindling removal and cambium removal scars are also present. Almost all CMTs are western redcedar. To date, including both the 2009 and 2011 field seasons, 483 CMTs have been recorded and 299 dates have been compiled, ranging from 1752 to 1972 (Figure 3). The median date is 1843, while the mean is 1848. Shovel tests ($n=11$) at DIRi-66 were negative.

The distribution of dates shows a peak of cedar harvest in the 1840s, with

a rapid decline in harvest rates starting in the decade of the 1850s. It is important to understand that the distribution in dates prior to the 1840s is probably more the result of the age profile of the cedar stand than actual rates of harvest (Eldridge 1997). The mean pith date for the trees at the site (the date closest to germination) is 1790; it is expected that cedars would not be stripped until they were at least 30 years old.

At *Tuckkwiowhum* (DIRi-3), cultural materials recovered from 45 shovel tests showed a low-density subsurface scatter of primarily pre-contact lithic materials extending to approximately 70 cm below the surface. Historic air photo analysis showed the site was heavily disturbed in the 1970s by the construction of the current campground. Excavations were completed in two large housepits, CDs 4 and 5, which are situated in an undisturbed area.

A total of nine 1 m² excavation units were completed. Within CD 4, 4.5 m³ was excavated, with an artifact density of 316 artifacts/m³; CD 5 excavations also totalled 4.5 m³, with an artifact density of 525 artifacts/m³. Both post- and pre-contact artifacts were common in both

housepits. The stratigraphy of both CDs is consistent with circular housepits. Features identified included burned and unburned structural wood, central hearths or pits, and postholes.

Among the many pre-contact lithic artifacts were several diagnostic projectile points, including two denticulated Lochnore bifaces dating from 5000 to 3500 BP (Rousseau 2008; Rousseau pers. comm. 2011). An obsidian projectile point tip, possibly dating to the Shuswap Horizon (3500 to 2400 BP), was also identified (Rousseau 2008). This artifact was sourced via SFU's XRF equipment to Mt. Garibaldi, near Squamish (Reimer pers. comm. 2011). All lithic diagnostics were identified in roof collapse layers, and likely represent earlier deposits reworked during the post-contact occupation.

A large post-contact artifact collection was also recovered. These artifacts included a clay pipe with Ford Stepney maker's mark; this was an East London supplier of pipes to the Hudson's Bay Company between 1805 and 1865 (Oswald, as cited by Wilson et al. 2007:107) (Figure 3). Distribution of post-contact artifacts was not equal between the two houses; much higher artifact densities, and



Figure 5. Photograph of 1895 potlatch in North Bend (*Kopchitchin*). Image D-01496 courtesy of Royal B.C. Museum, B.C. Archives.

total numbers of artifacts, were present in CD 5.

Other diagnostic post-contact artifacts include a mule shoe which post dates 1848 (the date that HBC mule brigades began accessing the Indigenous trail over Lake Mountain), a brass US Military general service button dating to the Fraser Canyon War of 1858, a brass powder flask dating to between 1800 and 1868, a women's shoe manufactured between 1850 and the late 1860s, and several delicate oil lanterns which are unlikely to have appeared at the site prior to the construction of the Cariboo Wagon Road in 1863 (Figure 2). Taken together with other post-contact diagnostic materials such as nails, tin cans, and container glass, it appears the houses at *Tuckkwiowhum* were last used between the 1860s or 1870s.

Discussion

Archaeologists in B.C. have underutilized the potential of historic period archaeology, especially with regards to critical events such as the Fraser Canyon War of 1858. The impacts of this war on Nlaka'pamux economic systems are clearly apparent in dates from CMTs at DIRi-66, which show a steep decline in ce-

dar harvest in the 1850s (Figure 3). When 30,000 miners, many of them US military personnel, entered Nlaka'pamux territory in early 1858, conflict was inevitable. Captain Snyder, head of one of the miner's militia companies in that conflict, records a battle on August 14 which may have taken place at *Tuckkwiowhum* (Marshall 2000). Many Nlaka'pamux communities were burned by miner's militias during 1858, possibly including the Boston Bar settlement of *Kopchitchin*, across the river from *Tuckkwiowhum* (Pegg and Ling 2011).

A button from a military uniform was recovered from one of the *Tuckkwiowhum* housepits in 2011 (Figure 2), with a similar button present across the river at *Kopchitchin* in a burned mat lodge (Pegg et al. 2009; Pegg and Ling 2011). These buttons provide a direct link between the events of 1858 and the communities which were most affected by them, the Nlaka'pamux villages immediately up and downstream of the canyon at Hell's Gate (Marshall 2000).

Decline in cedar harvest continues from the 1850s to a low point in the first decade of the 1900s. Aside from the Canyon War, serious negative impacts on the Nlaka'pamux economy during this period

include a smallpox epidemic in 1862, the intrusion of the cash economy, establishment of the reserve system and the federal Indian Act, banning of cultural institutions such as the potlatch, and curtailment of Indigenous fishing, land, water, and timber rights (Boyd 1994; Harris 1997; LaForet and York 1998; Lutz 1992). Despite these impacts, cedar harvest at DIRi-66 continued at a reduced rate.

Many of the artifacts identified at *Tuckkwiowhum* have important implications for our understanding of Indigenous history of the late 1800s. A hand-forged mule shoe and a foot bone (tarsal) probably belonging to a mule were identified in the larger housepit at *Tuckkwiowhum*, evidence of Nlaka'pamux participation in the mule packtrain system. This system was used by Indigenous people to earn cash in the new market economy (LaForet and York 1998; Lutz 1992). Mules would have appeared at *Tuckkwiowhum* beginning in 1848 after the HBC re-engineered the existing trail over Lake Mountain for mule brigades (Hou 2009). Horses were present in the southern Interior by the early 1700s, much earlier than mules (Thomson 1994:98).

With the appearance of HBC mule

packtrains, expensive imported goods also became available at *Tuckkwiowhum*. These goods appeared later in larger volumes on the Cariboo Wagon Road, completed through the site in 1863 (Howay 1910). Imported goods included shoes, oil lanterns, imported foodstuffs, and clay pipes, all of which was paid for by cash (Figure 2). These items show that although Nlaka'pamux people were suffering the negative effects of colonialism, they were not without the means to purchase luxury goods, and the inhabitants of the houses at *Tuckkwiowhum*, at least, were doing quite well.

In 1895, a potlatch was held at *Kopchitchin*, just across the river from *Tuckkwiowhum* (Figures 4 and 5), and would have been attended by many of *Tuckkwiowhum's* residents. Potlatches were social and ceremonial events where Nlaka'pamux people would give away large volumes of gifts which they paid for by wage labour, often over many years. The potlatch was banned throughout B.C. in 1884 because the Federal Government wanted Indigenous peoples to accumulate and save wealth rather than give it away (Lutz 1992). This ban was a direct attack on Nlaka'pamux economic and land tenure systems, and was resisted intensely throughout the province, as it was at *Kopchitchin* in 1895.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University will continue its colonial period research agenda in the Fraser Canyon in the 2013 field season.

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Grant Coffey is a student at KPU, and is focusing his studies in anthropology. He is in his third year, and is also certified as a journeyman automotive technician.

Andrea Froese is an Anthropology major at KPU with an interest in archaeology. She attended her first field school over

the summer and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Andrew Haugo is a 4th year student at KPU, and is completing a BA in Anthropology. After graduation, Andrew plans to pursue a Masters degree and a career in archaeology.

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