

THE JENYO QUARRY

A CHALCEDONY QUARRY SITE ON THE NECHAKO PLATEAU

by Nicole Jackman-Craig

In 1986 George Labrash, a natural history buff and long-term resident of the Vanderhoof area, made a remarkable find while on a hunting trip. He discovered a rocky hillside covered in white and pink chalcedony bedrock outcrops, deep depressions excavated into the slope, and scatters of chalcedony flakes and cores in upturned tree throws. Mr. Labrash recognized the area as an archaeological site. Ten years later he recorded his discovery, naming it the Jenyo Quarry Site. The phrase "jen yo" means bull moose in the Carrier language (Gracie John and Mary John Jr. 1999). The Archaeology Branch subsequently designated the site FISb 6. Later that same season Arne Carlson and his field crew mapped and recorded the site in detail.

The Jenyo Quarry is situated on a large natural deposit of white and pink chalcedony overlooking a wetland to the west and a small creek to the south. Features at the site include 32 cultural depressions measuring from 1.0 m to 6.5 m in diameter. The majority of depressions were dug into the rocky slope, and consequently interpreted as quarrying holes excavated to retrieve cobbles of chalcedony for stone tool manufacture. Several of the depressions at the site were identified as cache pits based on their size, shape, and location in softer, deeper soils than the quarry holes. The single largest cultural depression situated at the top of the hillside was tentatively interpreted as a house pit pending further archaeological investigation.

Large amounts of both cultural material and natural deposits of chalcedony are visible projecting through the moss and duff layer, as well as in tree throws at FISb 6. Lithic material identified at the locale includes thousands of unmodified flakes, retouched flakes, core remnants, and non-flake debitage fashioned from white, pink, and grey chalcedony. Unfortunately no



Antler gaming piece identified at the Jenyo Quarry site.

diagnostic artifacts were identified at the site during archaeological investigations. A cache of cores and flaking detritus was recorded at the east end of the site, perhaps representing a work station where the initial reduction of nodules into useable and transportable pieces took place (Carlson 1997).

Recently, a resident of nearby Stony Creek brought forward an antler artifact found at the site. The artifact was identified by a Saik'uz elder as a gaming piece used in a traditional pastime. The context of the antler artifact is unknown, however the piece may be relatively young based on its condition.

The bedrock outcrop of chalcedony at the Jenyo Quarry is covered by a thin layer of glacial till, with surrounding tills varying in depth. Isolated pieces of unmodified chalcedony were identified as far away as 1 km from the quarry site in glacial till and along roadways. It appears that the chalcedony deposit was covered by glacial ice, and subsequently nodules of the material were broken up and incorporated into the till of the surrounding landscape.

A second lithic raw material resource procurement site FISb 55 was identified by the author in 1999 in response to forestry developments. FISb 55 is a small site located approximately 1 km north of the Jenyo Quarry, along the margin of a small lake. The finds from this site consist of lithic debitage and a chipped stone tool, as well as many large unmodified nodules of white and pinkish chalcedony present under the moss layer and visible in tree throws. Two hundred and eighty-five

flakes of white and pink chalcedony were identified in shovel tests and tree throws at the site. A pink chalcedony biface and a single basalt flake were also present in a shovel test. Although no features were identified, a large pre-1846 CMT site of cambium stripped pine is located immediately west of FISb 55.

FISb 55 probably served as an area for procuring lithic material for tool manufacture. The relatively large deposit of chalcedony at FISb 55 likely originated from the deposit at the Jenyo Quarry site area. The chalcedony deposits at FISb 55 are thinner than those at the quarry site (FISb 6), and probably resulted from the movement of glacial ice north over the landscape and across the outcrop at the Jenyo Quarry. The area would have also been an excellent location for hunting because the site is situated on the margin of a small lake with a large, marshy buffer along the shoreline.

The Carrier people of the area have long known of the significance of the Jenyo Quarry site. Elders from Saik'uz recall stories of their parents and grandparents collecting stone material in this area. Furthermore, Jenness (1943) makes reference to a legend concerning white stone used for making tools that may relate to the site.

White and pink chalcedony is a commonly identified lithic raw material at archaeological sites in the central Vanderhoof Forest District (Carlson 1995; Carlson et al. 2000; Craig et al. 2000). The Jenyo Quarry appears to be a major quarrying and tool manufacture site, and remains the only archaeological quarry site recorded in north-central BC. The Jenyo Quarry must have been of paramount importance to the Carrier people of the area in pre-contact times, and it remains a culturally and spiritually significant site to the present day.

References Cited

Carlson, Arne K. 1995 *Archaeological Sites of the Nechako Canyon, Cheslatta Falls and Vicinity, Central Interior British Columbia*. TRACES Archaeological Research and Consulting Ltd. Report prepared for the BC Ministry of Forests, Vanderhoof District. Archaeological Permit 1994-097. Report on file with the Culture Department Library, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, Victoria, BC.

——— 1997 1996 Archaeological Inventory Surveys of Several Localities in the Vanderhoof Forest District. Report prepared for the BC Ministry of Forests, Vanderhoof District. Archaeological Permit 1996-175. Report on file with the Culture Department Library, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, Victoria, BC.

Carlson, A.K., L. Carlson, and N. Jackman

2000 Archaeological Inventories, Impact Assessments and Reconnaissance Surveys of Woodlots in the Vanderhoof Forest District. Report prepared for the BC Ministry of Forests, Vanderhoof District. Archaeological Permit 1997-159. Report on file with the Culture Department Library, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, Victoria, BC.

Craig, F., N. Jackman, and A. K. Carlson 2000 Archaeological Impact Assessments of Proposed SBFEP Logging Operations in the Vanderhoof Forest District. Report prepared for the BC Ministry of Forests, Vanderhoof District. Archaeological Permits 1997-116 and 1998-200. Report on file with the Culture Department Library, Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, Victoria, BC.

Jenness, D. 1943 *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River: Their Social and Religious Life*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133, Anthropology Paper 25:469-586. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

John, Gracie, and Mary John Jr. 1999 Saik'uz Whut'enne Bilingual Classroom Dictionary. Yinka Dene Language Institute, Vanderhoof, BC.

Nicole Jackman-Craig is currently a senior archaeologist for TRACES Archaeological Research and Consulting Ltd. She has a BA from Memorial University of NFLD and an MA from Simon Fraser University. Nicole has done fieldwork in the American Southwest, Belize, and has worked in the central interior of BC since 1997.



Tree throw showing subsurface deposits of unmodified chalcidony.



Cores and unmodified chalcidony nodules visible on the site surface around a single CMT.



Chalcidony nodules identified on the ground surface at the site.