

Pictographs in the Upper Similkameen Traditional Territory A Guided Tour

by Darius Kruger

The following article is the text of a presentation by Darius Kruger given to the BC Archaeology Forum in Hedley, hosted by the Upper Similkameen Indian Band in October.

My name is Darius Dean Thunder Elk Kruger. I am a member of the Penticton Indian Band. My father is Richard Dean Kruger, also a member of the Penticton Indian Band. My grandmother is Anne Allison and is also a Penticton Indian Band Member; originally, however, she was from the Lower Similkameen. I am 11 years old and in grade 6 at Skaha Lake Middle School in Penticton. I have been volunteering and attending programs of the Upper Similkameen Indian Band Archaeology Department since I was three years old. If you think that is young, my friend Willy has been doing this since he was one.

Photo: Darius and the Man Falling from the Burning Tree. Darius Dean Thunder Elk Kruger conducting a tour of pictographs at the Chuchawayha Rock Shelter in October, 2005 (Photo courtesy of Patricia Ormerod).

Some of my various experiences with Archaeology have been participating in the Archaeology Department Kiddies Field School in 2002, 2003, and 2004. During this field school we were taught about archaeology and legislation. I have learned that archaeology is not just about digging and getting dirty, and that preservation of archaeology sites is the most important part of archaeology. I have also learned that archaeology sites are protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act*, and that doing archaeology requires a permit from the Archaeology Branch, unless you are on reserve where we sometimes do archaeology without a permit, like when we did field school at Pinto Flats and on the Chuchwayha Hall field. I have also been allowed to work on various jobs with the Archaeology Department. Last year I helped with an Archaeology Impact Assessment at the Young Life Development in the Wolfe Valley. This was very exciting as there was a lot to see on the ground and everywhere we dug and looked, we found artifacts etc.

I have also helped with the campsites. This is not always archaeology but lots of times it includes cleaning the outhouses, picking up gross garbage and helping to collect the money from

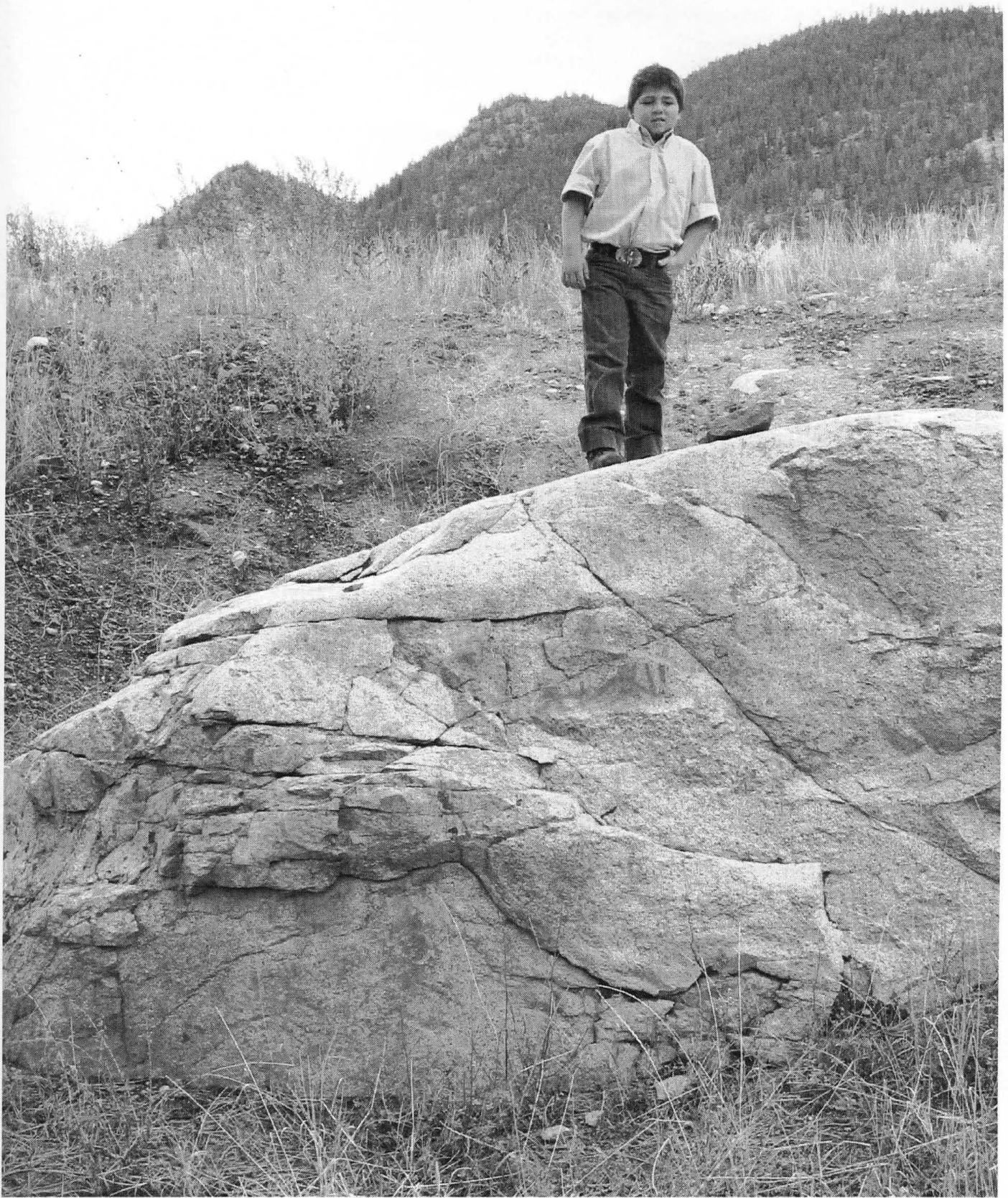
the campers. Sometimes when it is not so busy we go and look at the pictographs and count lithic scatters on the ground.

This year I was able to help the Archaeology Department undertake a very important excavation. Lucky for me it was spring break when this job had to be done, so I was able to spend the whole day out there. In August of 2004 there was a whole bunch of mudslides just out of Hedley. The Ministry of Highways was cleaning up the mud off the highway and they accidentally put about 20 or 30 dumptruck loads of mud on a pictograph site. This pictograph boulder had already been almost completely buried in the 1970s by the Ministry of Highways, and, well, they finished it off this time. Luckily the Archaeology Department saw this happening and stopped the dumping before it became a hundred dump truck loads. The material dumped on the site consisted of rock fragments with sharp, hard edges in a soft silty muddy matrix. There was also barbed wire, fence-posts and other nasty stuff mixed in with the debris. In the beginning of the excavation we did not know the precise location of the boulder, and two superficial damages were made to the upper surface of the boulder – but not on top of the pictographs.



Above: The Prisoner Painting at the Chuchawayha Rock Shelter.

Right: Darius Dean Thunder Elk Kruger and the pictograph he helped save. (Photos courtesy of Patricia Ormerod).



Once we found the top of the rock, we had the excavator stay about one metre away from the boulder, to avoid damage to the rock. We excavated all sides of the rock, including the sediments that were dumped in the 1970s. The sediments close to the boulder were carefully removed by hand, using shovels, brushes and trowels. There was some dried mud on the surface of the pictograph, and this was removed by hand and with a soft brush. Later, more detailed cleaning of the site's surface was undertaken with water and a soft cloth. Native grasses have been re-introduced to the site area to reduce site visibility from Highway 3, and to return the adjacent area to its former state. A berm was constructed between the level area north of the site and the site itself to prevent further dumping incidents.

My favourite place is the Chuchwayha Rock Shelter. I am hoping to be able to participate in excavations at this site, which has already been excavated and dated to be almost 4,000 years old. This site is very special to my people, and we are especially proud to be taking care of this special place. There are many stories about this place, and some stories about the images, such as: the man who fell from the burning tree, and the prisoner painting, which is said to represent an undocumented voyage of the Spanish into the Similkameen.

This year the Archaeology Department will be documenting more of the pictograph sites in detail. This will require lots of

photography and lots of editing in Photoshop – a computer program. I am hoping that I can spend some time over the Christmas holidays helping out on this project, but if the teachers stay on strike then maybe I can help sooner. If not this job, then there will be others. If you haven't already guessed, I want to be an Archaeologist when I get taller and when I finish going to University in like 2015. Then I should be well educated enough to have Brenda's [Gould] job and she can finally retire.

I want to thank everyone for coming to Hedley [for the BC Archaeology Forum] this weekend to help us celebrate Archaeology. Thanks to all the presenters who took time out of their busy schedules to update us on all the happenings in BC Archaeology. I have sure learned a lot from you all. Thanks for listening to me today.

To tour pictograph sites in the Upper Similkameen -- or the Mascot Mine, contact Brenda Gould, Archaeology Manager, Upper Similkameen Indian Band Archaeology Department in Hedley, BC. Their mailing address is: The Upper Similkameen Indian Band, Box 310, Keremeos, BC, V0X 1K0. Fax: (250) 292-8579. Brenda Gould's email is bgould@telus.net.

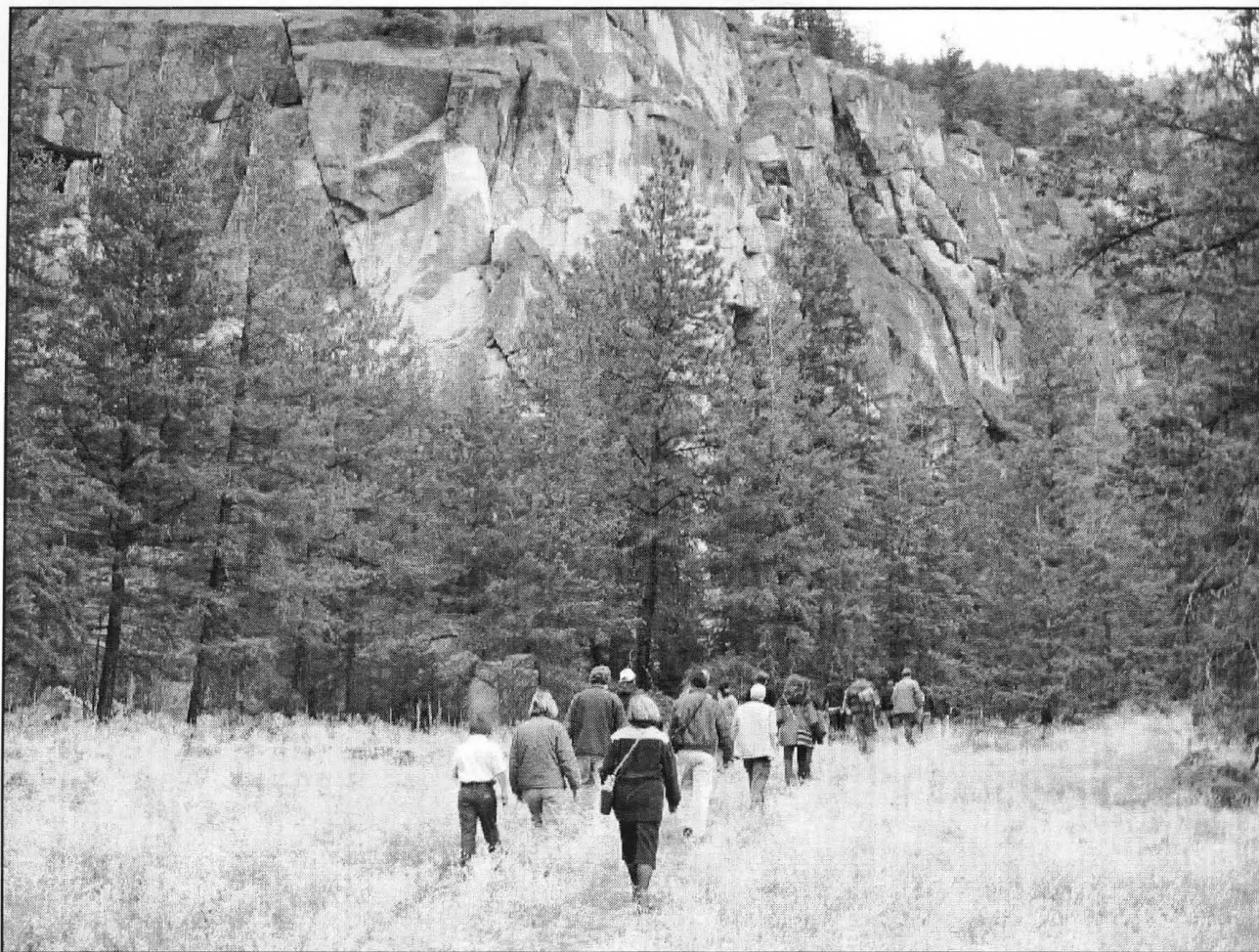


Photo: Archaeology Forum participants approaching the Chuchwayha Rock Shelter during the Petroglyph Tour hosted by Brenda Gould and Darius Kruger, October 2005 (Photo by Patricia Ormerod).