

Ulkatcho: an archæological outline

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An outline history of the Ulkatcho Carrier Indian Reserve (IR-1), located in the central Interior of British Columbia, is offered based on the results of four weeks of archæological excavations in the summer of 1970. Ulkatcho was chosen because of the ethnohistoric information available for documenting the village's history which permitted the site to serve as a reference point for a study of Carrier prehistory.

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Introduction

Approximately 280 air-miles north of Vancouver and 100 miles east of the Pacific Ocean in the central Interior plateau of British Columbia is the abandoned historic Carrier Indian village of Ulkatcho¹ (Fig. 1). At an elevation of 3,500 ft above mean sea-level it is in the bounded on the south by the Chilcotin and on

subalpine forest zone (Lyons, 1965, p. 6), a region of dense coniferous forests, rolling hills, and low mountains, numerous waterbodies with countless drainages, grassy meadows, and quaking bogs.

The Ulkatcho band was located on the southwestern margin of Carrier² Indian territory, the west by the Bella Coola. To the north and

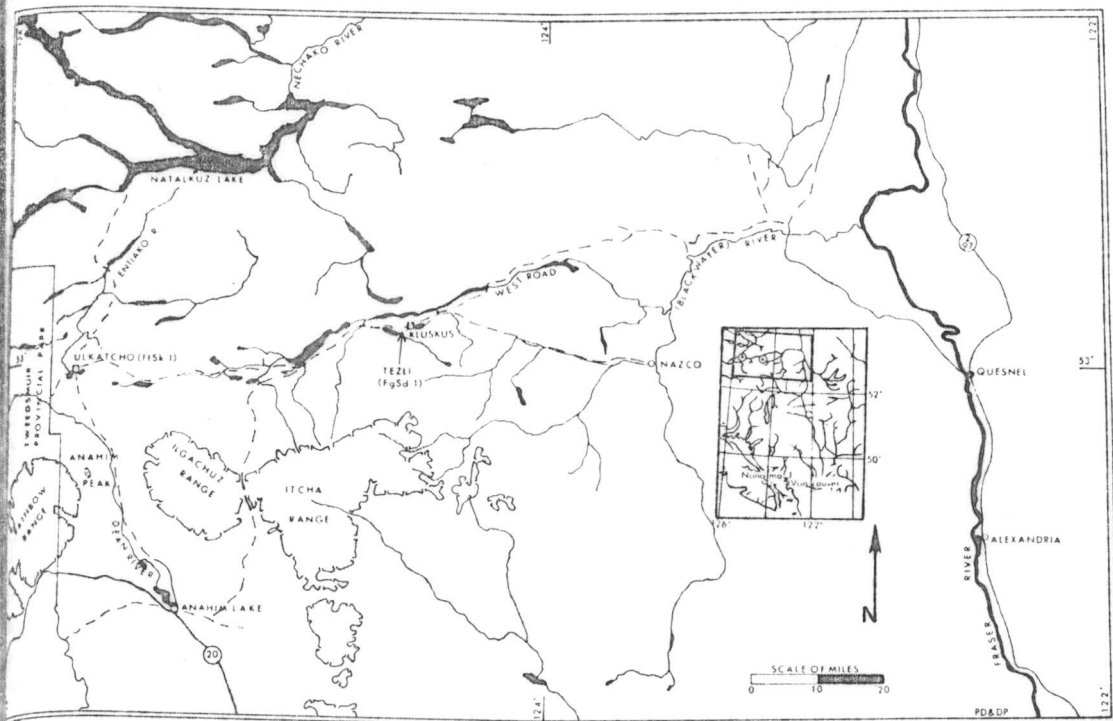


FIGURE 1. Map of Interior British Columbia. Ulkatcho (F/sk I) at centre left.

¹Variously spelled Ulgatcho, Algatcho, Alkatcho.

²See Jenness (1967, p. 361-68) and Morice (1893, 1971).

EUROPEAN ARTIFACTS

p. 53). One fragment was probably part of a larger container as indicated by the 1-mm perforations spaced at 4–5 mm intervals along the edge. Another specimen, found in the *South* trench pit, is a fragmented bark packet or “envelope” in which a few small fish and mammal bones were enclosed. This is roughly analogous to the birchbark container reported by Sanger (1970, p. 22).

The only shell recovered was a small fragment of dentalium. According to Goldman (1953, p. 42), dentalia were procured from the Bella Coola and used by the Carrier nobility as decorative ornaments. For this reason it would be unusual to have dentalia occur in any large number.

Lastly, two pieces of cut wood, one a modern stake, and two small coiled strips of leather trimming remnants were uncovered.

Artifacts of European origin represent a sizeable portion of the total artifact inventory at Ulkatcho and supply a primary means of dating the site. They were scattered throughout the excavated areas and appeared in all levels, but were concentrated between 4–10 cm below surface (Fig. 10, Table V).

Modified European Artifacts

Artifacts of native manufacture using European material were a beaver spear, two copper projectile points, a copper ring, a possible nose ornament, two reworked nails, cut metal fragments, a painted clay pipe bowl, retouched glass, and part of a horseshoe (Fig. 12).

The beaver spear is termed a *datsEn* (the harpoon with detachable bone barb) by Goldman (1953, p. 67). Made from a flat file and



FIGURE 12. Historic artifacts. Metal buttons, painted pipe bowl, pipe base, tobacco plug “emblem,” copper ring point, and pendant, faceted blue bead, nose ornament(?), copper bead spacer, copper point, and beaver spear.

TABLE V
Selected artifacts, excluding trash midden

	side-notched points	stemmed points	scrapers	knives	microblades	transverse-burin/drill	bone tools	reworked metal	buttons	beads	glass	pottery	metal	pipes	nails	Total
1	2		1	1			1			1	2	2	1		2	13
2	1									1	4	2	2			10
3											1		1		1	3
4	2		1		1	1	3	1	1	4	3	1	10	1	6	35
5	2		1					2		4	5	8	5		5	32
6			4		1					1	7	4	4	1	8	30
7			1		2			1		1	4		1			10
8			2		1					4	5	1	4	2	2	21
9	1	2	1						2	5	4	2	4		4	25
10		1	2							2	3	1	6	2	1	18
11	1		1						1	1	2	1		1	1	9
12			1										1		1	3
13			1							1			4		3	9
14				1			1				3					5
15							1			1						2
16																0
17											1					1
18							1				1					2
19																0
20																0
Total	9	3	16	2	5	1	7	4	4	26	45	22	43	7	34	228

measuring 11.25 by 1.6 cm the distal half is ground to form a point. Two barbs are present on one edge. Its function, according to informants, was to spear beaver. If hafted in the same manner as those of the Shuswap, "the butt-end was fitted into a foreshaft of birch or poplar wood, which consisted of two half cylinders lashed together. The point of the shaft was inserted in a hollow of the foreshaft made by the ends of the groove in which the spearhead was enclosed" (Teit, 1909, p. 523).

Of the two copper points, one is tanged and the other side-notched. Both are 16 mm wide, the tanged point measuring 45 mm long and the side-notched 26 mm. Each has been edge ground. The side-notched point may have had its notches cut with a hacksaw as inferred by the narrow (30°) inside angle.

Five copper beads with diameters of approximately 5 mm and lengths of 3-5 cm were recorded. They probably served as spacers between seed beads.

What is called a nose ornament may well be another rolled copper bead, but this 2.5-cm conical roll with tufted fibres protruding from the wider end may be the lateral portion of a nose ornament; a complete specimen of "which it was the privilege of the women of rank to wear. . . . Two pairs of dentalium shells, the small end of the one inserted in the large end of the other, were kept springing out . . . from the septum by means of a sinew thread running from end to end of the shells and through the perforated nasal partition. The extremities of 'the ornament' were adorned by a small tuft of the red down of the wood-pecker (*Ceophleus pileatus*)" (Morice, 1893, p. 168-9).

Two wire nails were ground at the tip, bent, and had the heads removed. They may have served as fish hooks.

One clay-pipe fragment was much blackened by smoking, and had a ring of red paint applied to the outside lip area.

Four pieces of the over 100 glass fragments recovered were retouched. Three appear to have been intentionally retouched and the fourth unintentionally so. Of the former, two are unifacial and one is bifacial.

The last item, a horseshoe, is irregular enough in outline and in its nail holes to suggest that the shoe was not mass-produced; however, it need not be of Indian manufacture.

Unmodified European Artifacts

Nineteen clay-pipe fragments, some with manufacturers' marks on their heel or spur (Hume, 1970, p. 304), were manufactured by the John Ford Company between 1823 and 1909. A few bowls lack evidence of caking or burn, which suggests they were either not smoked or only slightly so.

The 100-plus glass fragments recovered are from bottle and sheet glass. They date from about 1840 to pre-World War I and, as mentioned, four were retouched.

An English gunflint of the grey prismatic type (Hume, 1970, p. 221, Fig. 71) and made for use with a small British pistol may have been accidentally snapped. It was found 14 cm below the surface.

The 27 fragments of "Gaudy Dutch" ceramic ware thought to represent a small dish and cup would date post 1865.

For most of the 92 beads present little can be said in regard to chronology since they are of the seed variety. Fortunately, the faceted blue beads present are known to have been available on the Northwest Coast between approximately 1830 and 1890.

The 54 nails recovered were of the machine cut and wire varieties; none was wrought (Nelson, 1963, p. 25-27). The machine-cut nails are of the variety that date from 1830 to the present. Wire nails are of the "common" form.

Miscellaneous trade items consisted of cloth remnants, a rivet (?), suspender buckle, thimble, snapped frying-pan handle, can fragments, metal "emblems" used to embellish tobacco plugs, a brass brace fragment with a tapered drill-hole, and cartridge shells (25-35 calibre by D.C. Co., and a 38-55 calibre by W.R.A. Co.) plus other nondescript items.

Artifact Summary

As mentioned, pithouses were lacking at Ulkatcho. However, they are present at Qualcho Lake, 10 miles to the northwest and at Eliguk Lake to the east. In and by itself this argues for a late occupation date, but considered in conjunction with the dates of the European artifacts and the contemporaneity of the lithic artifacts, the inference that Ulkatcho was unimportant prior to the fur-trade period is strongly supported.

There are though, some prehistoric artifacts included with the collection. The core and microblades, for example, are usually understood to represent an early time period (Borden, 1969; Sanger, 1970). Sanger's excavations in the southern Plateau suggest that microblades "may not have been manufactured during the last 1,500 years . . ." (1970, p. 109). At Ulkatcho the core and microblades are from the upper 10 cm of the site, whereas European artifacts are found as much as 18 cm below the surface. The average maximum depth below surface for all artifacts is 14 cm. Thus, the presence of a core and microblades in the upper 10 cm is probably the result of mixing, but there is the other possibility that microblades were used in the central Interior Plateau later than the southern Plateau. A simi-