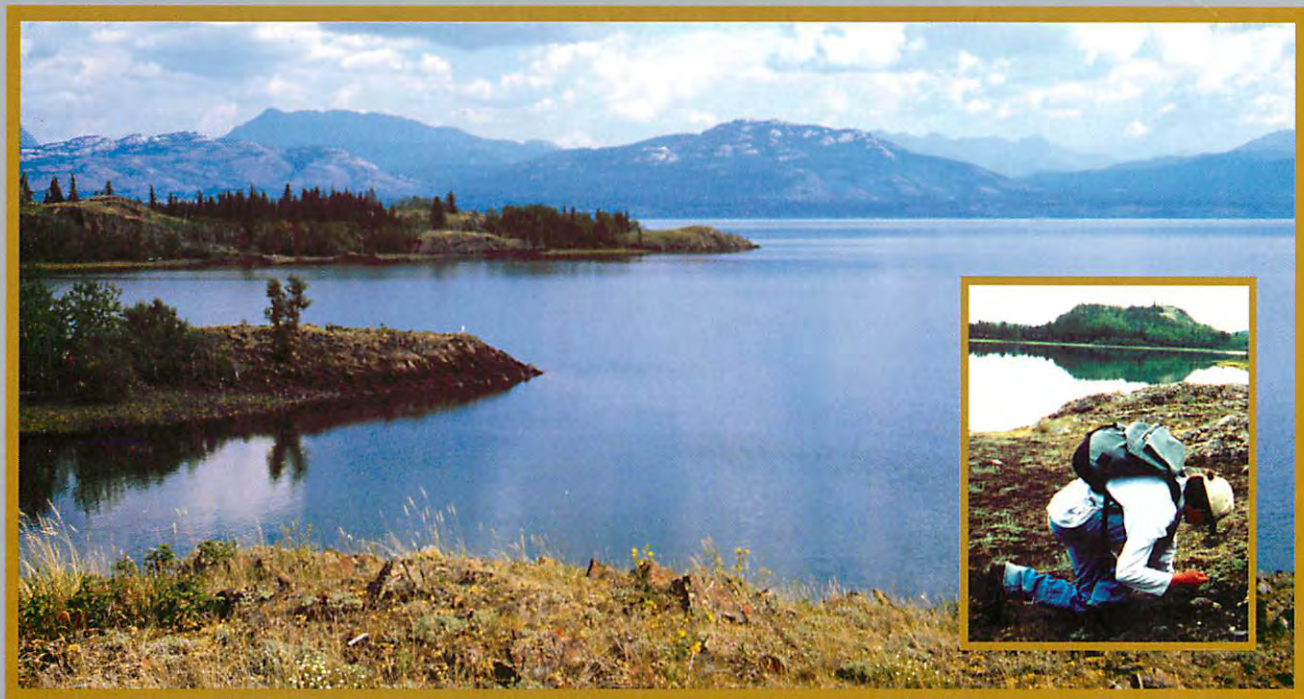


Ta'an Kwäch'än
People of the Lake



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*Cover photo: View of Lake Laberge from the
north end of Jackfish Bay*

*Inset photo: Archaeological survey at the mouth
of Deep Creek.*

Ta'an Kwäch'än People of the Lake



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Acknowledgments

The 1995 Lake Laberge Archaeology Project was a joint project of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* First Nation Council and the Yukon Heritage Branch. The principal objective of the project was to begin to document the archaeology and early history in the Lake Laberge (*Taa' an Mān*) area, which has been for *Ta'an Kwäch'än* the heart of their traditional territories. The information on traditional sites in the *Taa' an Mān* area was provided to us by Mrs. Irene Adamson, and by Ms. Doreen Grady and Ruth Massie, based on their work with *Ta'an Kwäch'än* elders. Additional information on traditional land use was obtained from a report compiled by Linda Johnson for *Ta'an Kwäch'än* on *Ta'an Kwäch'än* Cultural History (1989).

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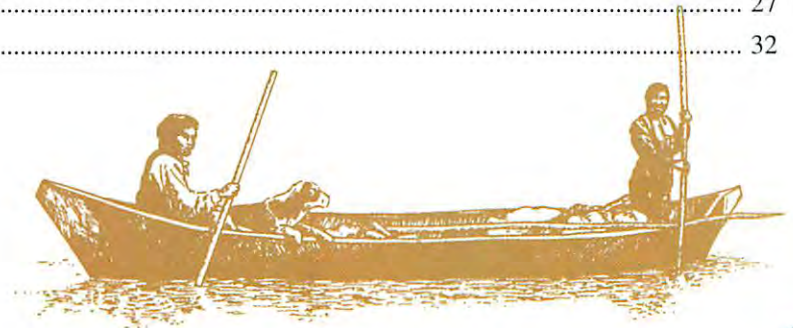
Mr. John Ritter of the Yukon Native Language Centre provided the correct transcriptions for the Southern Tutchone place names. Any errors are the responsibility of the writer.

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This book is dedicated to *Ta'an Kwäch'än* Elders.



Introduction

The information in the following pages represents a small part of the history of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än*, “people of the flat lake place”, and a glimpse of their traditional way of life and use of resources.

The ancient villages and camps of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* Council are centred around Lake Laberge, lower Takhini River and Fox Lake areas. A number of these sites were the focus of a recent investigation by archaeologists and *Ta'an Kwäch'än* students to explore the very early history of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än*. This is a history long before the Gold Rush, a history preserved now only in the accounts of the Elders and in the traces of hunting and fishing camps left behind by their ancestors.

Many of the places that we will visit in the following pages are familiar and near. What may be new to many of us, however, is the realization that in this familiar landscape is contained also traces of a history which extend back in time many thousands of years to the end of the Ice Age.



The Lake Laberge archaeology project crew, with Mrs. Irene Adamson and visitors, at the old fish camp on Kwätän'ay Män. Mrs. Adamson used to have a fish camp at this location.

Ta'an Kwäch'än Traditional Lands.....

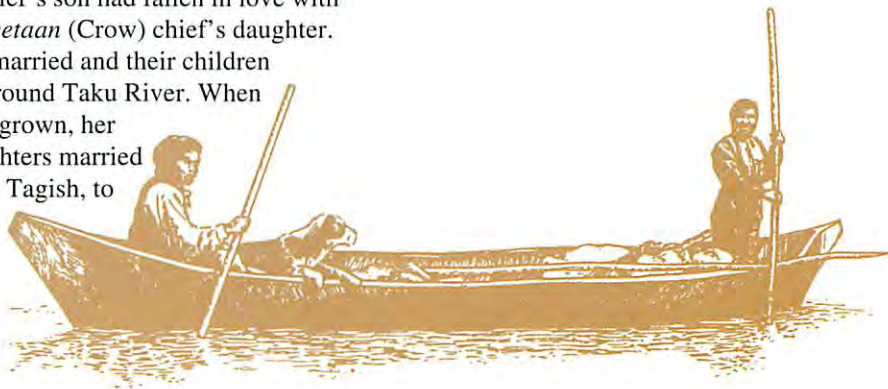
Ta'an Kwäch'än take their name from *Taa'an Män* or Lake Laberge, which lies in the heart of their traditional territories. *Ta'an Kwäch'än* ancestral lands extended north to Hootalinqua, at the confluence of the Yukon and Teslin Rivers; south to M'Clintock Valley and Marsh Lake; west to White Bank village at the confluence of the Takhini and Little Rivers; and east to Winter Crossing on the Teslin River. Their northeast territory extended to Livingstone Creek and the area below the confluence of the Big Salmon and South Big Salmon Rivers.

Ta'an Kwäch'än lands were shared with their neighbours, with whom they had family connections as well, including the Tagish Kwän, Big Salmon people, Champagne and Hutshi people. It is with the Tagish Kwän that the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* have the closest connections.

Ta'an Kwäch'än families today trace their ancestry back to *Lande*, who was from Tagish, and *Mundessa* (Old Man Chief) from Hutshi, and their son, *Kashxóot* (Chief Jim Boss), also called *Hundealth* or *Kishwoot*.

Tagish Elder Angela Sidney in her family history told of the Angoon chief whose family sailed up the Chilkat River and stayed with Chilkat people one summer. When they started back, they found that the Chilkat chief's son had fallen in love with the *Deisheetaan* (Crow) chief's daughter. They got married and their children grew up around Taku River. When they were grown, her three daughters married (inland) to Tagish, to Teslin, and to Telegraph Creek.

"One married to Dak'laweidi (Wolf), here in Tagish; one married to Yanyeidi, in Teslin; one married to Telegraph Creek: they call themselves Kaach.adi instead of Deisheetaan at Telegraph Creek, so we've got relatives there too. Some people say there is a fourth daughter married into Pelly Banks, near Ross River: they use our Deisheetaan names up there so they must be related to us somehow. That's how we came to this country."



Ta'an Kwäch'an Study Area



Ta'an Kwäch'än Traditional Way of Life

Before the Gold Rush, *Ta'an Kwäch'än*, like most Yukon First Nations, had a way of life that was based on fishing, hunting, and trapping. Families moved seasonally to harvest the various resources.

Spring was the time to harvest greyling and burbot and small game such as grouse and gophers. Moose and caribou were sometimes taken as well. In the summer, chinook and chum salmon were fished along the Yukon River and its tributaries, and in Lake Laberge. During the fall, sheep, caribou and moose were hunted in the mountains east and west of Lake Laberge. In the late fall, people went to the lakes for the whitefish spawn. During the winter people trapped for fur bearing animals to meet their shelter and clothing needs. Burbot (called lingcod) was fished through the ice in winter. Small mammals such as rabbits, beaver, porcupine, gophers and

groundhog were harvested in early spring, throughout the summer and into early fall, as were geese, ducks, swans, and grouse.

The main *Ta'an Kwäch'än* salmon fish camps were located at the confluence of Little River and the Takhini River, at the foot of the Whitehorse Rapids (*Kwänlì*) on the Yukon River, at Hootalinqua, and at the mouth of the M'Clintock River (*Gyú' Chùà*). The camp on the Takhini River, called *Lùr Däyèl*, was their principal salmon fishing camp and one of the traditional trade rendezvous with Tlingit from the coast. Hootalinqua was a meeting and trading place as well, where salmon could be taken throughout the summer months. Shallow Bay (*Män Tl'ät*) at the mouth of Horse Creek, was the main *Ta'an Kwäch'än* whitefish fishing camp.

The old foot trails that radiate out in all directions from *Tàa'an Män* give us a true sense of the lake as the heart of *Ta'an Kwäch'än* territories. The old trails along Laurier Creek and Thomas Creek lead east to caribou and sheep hunting territories in the Big Salmon Mountains, and fishing localities at Mason's Landing and Boswell Creek, along the Teslin River. The trail crosses the Teslin River at Winter Crossing and continues on to the Livingstone Creek Trail, which in turn goes on to the northeast all the way to Ross River.

To the west, a trail goes from fish camps on *Kwätän'ay Chù* (Fox Creek) to the traditional camp at the south end of *Kwätän'ay Män* (Fox Lake) and on to Braeburn and Carmacks.



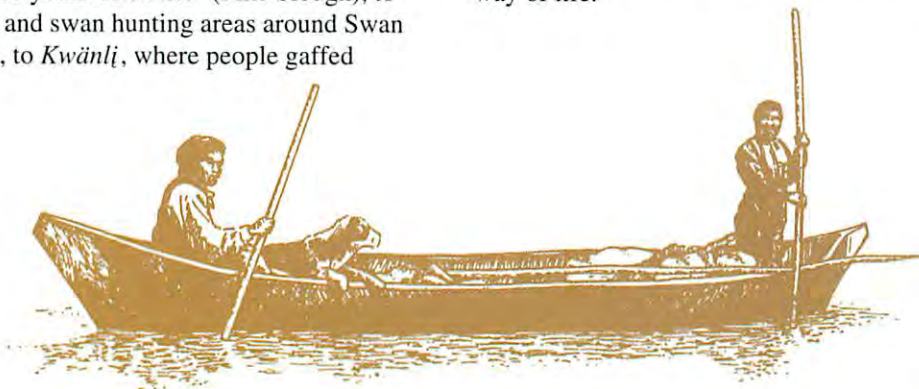
From Shallow Bay - *Män Tl'at*, an old trail goes south and west to the Takhini River—*Nakū Chù*, to hunting and fishing territories at the Takhini Hot Springs, and *Lür Däyèl*, at the mouth of Little River. North from *Lür Däyèl* a trail goes to *Kuäsu Māna*, 52 Mile Lake, which was an old camp and important fishing site, and eventually on to Braeburn and Carmacks (*Tsawnjik Chù*). To the south lies Golden Horn Mountain (*Simà*) where sheep and gopher were hunted. West from *Lür Däyèl* the trail leads to the hunting territories in the Ibex Pass, called in Southern Tutchone *Käkwäts'āneghru* - “chasing animals into snares”. Eventually, the trail along the Takhini River leads west to Kusawa Lake and from there down to the coast, to Klukwan.

The trail north of *Tāa' an Mān* along the Thirty Mile River leads to greyling, whitefish and jackfish fishing sites and beaver hunting sites, and on to the salmon fishing site at Hootalinqua at the end of the Thirty Mile. The name of the creek below Frank Creek, *Lu Nāthāna Chù*, refers to the fat fish in this creek. At Frank Creek is the start of a second trail to Braeburn.

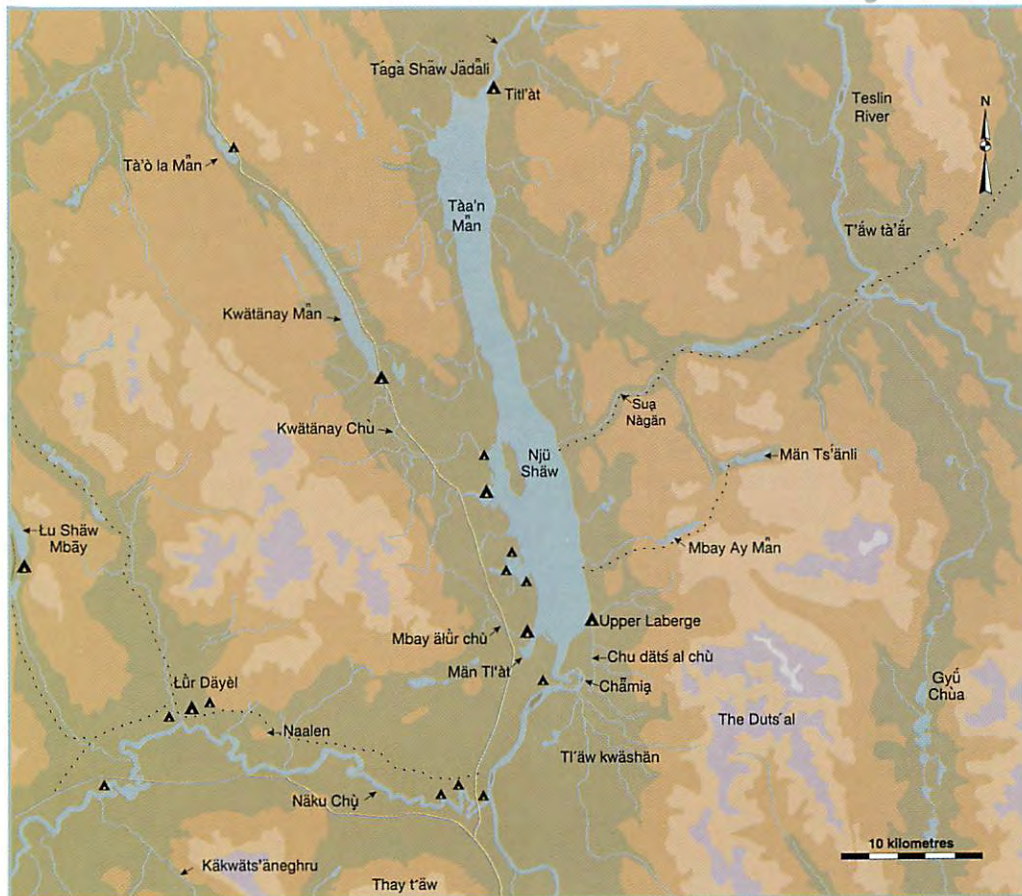
From Upper Laberge, a trail goes to the south along the Yukon River to *Chemā*, “where you set fish net” (Pike Slough), to duck and swan hunting areas around Swan Lake, to *Kwānli*, where people gaffed

salmon below the rapids, and on the important salmon trap site at the mouth of *Gyú Chù*a and to the village at Marsh Lake - *Täkwädadhà Mān*.

The following takes a closer look at some of the traditional camps of the *Ta'an Kwäch'an* from the perspective of both the oral history concerning these sites, and from the archaeological record: the material remains such as stone tools, that have been left behind to tell the story of a long ago way of life.



Places in Ta'an Kwäch'än History



Ta'an Kwäch'an Place Names

Jackfish Bay	<i>Chätiqay</i>	
Little Fox Lake	<i>Tà'ò la Mān</i>	something floating there (islands?)
Lower Laberge	<i>Titl'at</i>	lower end of the lake
Thirty Mile River	<i>Tàgà Shāw Jādāí</i>	big river flows out (in bend?)
Long Lake	<i>Mān Ts'ānū</i>	lake, long
Lake Laberge	<i>Tāa' an Mān</i>	flat, lake place
Richthofen Island	<i>Njū Shāw</i>	big island
Winter Crossing	<i>T'āw Tā'ār</i>	greyling move upstream
Tommy (Thomas) Lake	<i>Mbay Ay Mān</i>	sheep den lake
M'Clintock River	<i>Gyú Chūa</i>	king salmon river
Black Lake	<i>Ta jenā tlūra Mān</i>	dark, black lake
Pike Slough	<i>Chemia</i>	fish trap place
Shallow Bay	<i>Mān Tl'at</i>	bay at head of lake
Upper Laberge (Police Post)	<i>Chu dā shay</i>	mouth of river
Swan Lake	<i>Tl'aw Kwāshen</i>	where big grass grows
Ibex	<i>Kakwāts'āneghru</i>	chasing animals into snares
Haeckel Hill	<i>Thay T'āw</i>	eagle nest
Little River Village	<i>Èur dāyèl</i>	dust starts to blow around
52 Mile Lake	<i>Kuāsū Māna</i>	ling cod lake
Lookout Mountain	<i>Naalen Dhāl</i>	flow of water at mountain
Sam McGee Mountain	<i>The Duts'al Dhāl</i>	grey rock mountain
Grizzly Creek (Laberge Creek) ...	<i>The Duts'al Chū</i>	grey rock water
Takhini River	<i>Nakhū Chū</i>	crossing with raft
Laurier Creek	<i>Sūa Nāgān</i>	bird? killed
Braeburn Lake	<i>Kür si Mān</i>	spider lake



Kwätän'ay Män - Fox Lake.....

The south end of Fox Lake has been a *Ta'an Kwäch'än* fish camp for over a thousand years. Many generations have come here in the spring to take greyling in nearby *Kwätän'ay Chù* (Fox Creek) and in the late fall, for the whitefish spawn. The traces of the ancient camps can be seen in the stone tools and chips which lie exposed on the ground where foot and truck traffic has worn away the soil. Archaeological testing over this large site has revealed in addition the remains of old camp fires, burned bone and flakes and chips buried in the ground at various depths.

The types of stone tools recovered at the site and their depth in the ground begin to tell a story of the past at *Kwätän'ay Män*. A broken basalt spear point is of a style popular within the past several thousand years (in the stone tool traditions archaeologists call the Northern Archaic tradition and the Late Prehistoric period). One can imagine the spear was once used in

moose hunting on the lake shores, or possibly for hunting sheep on nearby Pilot Mountain. A variety of stone scrapers reflect routine activities at the camp in the distant past. A fragment of a large tabular scraper once was used for hide scraping. A thick obsidian scraper, heavily damaged on its scraping edge, may have been used as an adze bit, for hewing wood. A stone scraper with a thinner edge may have been hafted into wood or bone handle and used as a flesher, or possibly for whittling or shaving wood, antler or bone. A second thin scraper has a notch on one of its edges. This dual purpose tool might well have been used to shave down and then smooth birch wood for arrow shafts.

The small collection of stone artefacts, and chips and flakes found at *Kwätän'ay Män* provide us as well with indications of the ancient trade networks between the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* and their neighbours. A red agate flake in the collection shows that

the traditional trade with the Carmacks people (*Tsawnjik Huchän*) has been in place for over a thousand years. Red agate comes from Miller's Ridge, located just west of the village of Carmacks. Trade to the southwest, with the Champagne and Aishihik people is represented by the presence of obsidian, or volcanic glass, which was obtained from outcrops in the St. Elias Mountains.





Left: Students begin testing and surface collecting at the old fish camp on Kwätän'ay Män.

*Above: A sample of artefacts recovered from the fish camp site at Kwätän'ay Män.
Top Row: End scrapers and end scraper fragments. Bottom Row (l-r): fragment of a hide scraper, end scraper/notch tool; obsidian end scraper/adze bit; base of a lanceolate spear point.*

Left: Students testing and surface collecting along the road to the old fish camp at Kwätän'ay Mân.

Opposite page: The east shore of Taá àn Mân. An example of the thin soils over limestone bedrock.



Tàa'an M̄an - Ancient Camps on Jackfish Bay and Deep Creek



All along Tàa' an M̄an, where the creeks come into the lake, were Ta'an Kwäch'än fall and spring fish camps, and camps where swans, ducks and geese were hunted on their annual migrations. The archaeological sites that have been identified at the mouth of Deep Creek, in the present campground, and at Jackfish Bay show that this way of life extends far into the past.

The geological history of Lake Laberge, however, presents special problems for archaeologists trying to interpret the past. During the last Ice Age massive glaciers moved north through the Laberge valley scouring away soils in their path, in many localities down to bedrock. Even today, the land is only slowly recovering from the effects of glaciation, and along the lakeshore, soils may be absent or very thin. The stone tools and chips and flakes that represent the ancient camps of ancestors of the Ta'an Kwäch'än, some

perhaps thousands of years old, can be found today on the bedrock surface, essentially where they were left by the people who once lived at these sites. Over hundreds or even thousands of years, after many revisits to these camp sites, the stone tools and debris from different time periods have become mixed together. Sorting out the history and activities at a particular camp becomes quite difficult as a result.

Around Jackfish Bay are several small archaeological sites which were probably short term camps used by people for fishing. Jackfish Bay is also a place where seagull eggs can be collected in late spring, on the island in the bay. Traces of the camps are preserved in flakes and chips found on the ground surface. Most of the flakes seem to be related to resharpening or reworking stone tools, made for the most part on local black and grey cherts. A single mother of pearl button was found together with stone flakes at one of the sites at the north end of

the bay. Mother of pearl buttons were popular items of trade brought into the country by the Chilkat traders over one hundred years ago. The site on the high ridge at the south end of Jackfish Bay produced a large number of flakes (380), which suggests this was perhaps the favourite camp and lookout site in the bay. The time period of this site cannot be determined, however, because of its surface context.

The bedrock knolls just north of the mouth of Deep Creek on *Taa'an Mān* have very likely been used as lookout sites as well, associated with the traditional *Ta'an Kwäch'än* greyling fishing camp at the creek mouth. Like the Jackfish Bay site, large numbers of flakes and chips were recovered here on, or just under the ground surface, which relate principally to stone tool resharpening and reworking. While local black and grey

cherts are the dominant type of stone in this assemblage, a few exotic materials were also found, including obsidian and a grey volcanic tuff, which indicate again trading activities by the former residents of the camp. It is interesting to note that the only source of volcanic tuff known at present is in the Mackenzie Basin, in the Northwest Territories. The very large number of flakes and chips at the Deep Creek site (approximately 855) is evidence of a long history of people returning to this site every spring for the greyling spawn.

Deep Creek was used by *Ta'an Kwäch'än* families up until the 1960s. The last people to have their fish camp here were Irene Smith, Elijah Smith, and their families.





View east of the location of two small sites at the north end of Jackfish Bay.



A collection of flakes and chips collected from the lookout site at the south end of Jackfish Bay.



Män Tl'át - Shallow Bay.....

Män Tl'át, at the mouth of Mbay ałür chù (Horse Creek) was one of the main whitefish fishing camps of Ta'an Kwäch'än. Many families would gather here in October and November for the whitefish spawn. People used to make conical basket traps from willow poles, about 10 to 15 feet in length, which were set in the shallow water at the mouth of the creek. A weir was then constructed from willow to block off part of the bay below the creek mouth. People would go into the water to drive the fish into the traps. Some families would come to the mouth of Mbay ałür chù in the spring as well for the greyling spawn. Before the Gold Rush, Män Tl'át was also the site of a trade rendezvous between Ta'an Kwäch'än and Coast Chilkat. Mrs. Irene Adamson recalled her grandmother, Maggie Broeren, told her that people from Hutshi and Carmacks used to come to Män Tl'át in the fall, to join Ta'an families for the whitefish spawn.



Tappan Adney, a New York journalist, visited the village on his way to the Klondike in 1897. He entered Lake Laberge one night in mid-October, and his first sight of the camp was of fires burning on the west shore, near the mouth Horse Creek.

Approaching the camp, the boat encountered fish weirs, which blocked passage into the bay. Ta'an Kwäch'än, accustomed to the trade with Coast Tlingit, came to meet the Adney's boat prepared to trade mountain sheep, ground squirrel and fox skins.



Three archaeological sites have been identified at *Män TI'ät*, on the north side of the bay, including two small lookout sites on the rock hills to the north of the mouth of *Mbay alür chù*, and a large ancient campsite upstream, on land that is now part of a

private farm. Small scatters of flakes and chips were found on the ground surface at the lookout sites, probably left behind by people sharpening or reworking their stone knives, or spear and arrow points while they kept watch for game, or perhaps for Coast

Far left: On Män TI'ät, at Helen's fish camp. The shallow, reedy shoreline is typical of Shallow Bay. View northeast to Tàa' an Män. View south from the second Mbay alür chù lookout site to Män TI'ät.



Chilkat traders coming for trade. All of the flakes are local grey and black cherts, and quartzites. Because there are no soils at the lookout sites, and because no distinctive tools were found here, the age of these sites cannot be determined, but is probably within the past 4,000 years. It is also likely that these lookouts were being used by hunters whose base camp was located in the valley below, beside Horse Creek.

As we saw with the Fox Lake site, it is the number of different types of tools in the *Mbay ałür chù* valley site which tells us this was once a base camp. Tools recovered from a ploughed field include the base of a large spear point, a broken stemmed point, a portion of a biface knife, three end scrapers, and a small edge fragment of a hide scraper. The styles of tools suggest a considerable age for the site, probably 3,000 to 5,000 years. The red agate from Miller's Ridge source area near Carmacks shows up once again in these collections, as does obsidian

from sources in the St. Elias Range, providing further evidence of developed trade networks in the early history of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än*. Also present is shale and various grey and black cherts which occur locally. The main sources are in the Coast Mountains to the southwest.

Mbay ałür chù ("Sheep Lick Creek")

was renamed Horse Creek when, years ago, some horses fell into the creek when they were hauling freight. Chief Jim Boss, who was the son of *Mundessa* and *Lande*, built a roadhouse near the traditional village at Horse Creek to service the sternwheeler traffic on Lake Laberge during the Gold



Chief Jim Boss's roadhouse near Shallow Bay.

Rush. The village site became one of the first reserves established for Yukon Indian people soon after the Gold Rush, as a direct result of efforts by Chief Boss to protect his peoples' rights in the land.

Nakhū Chù - Along the Takhini River

Nakhū Chù has been for Ta'an Kwäch'än an important fishing and hunting area, and a main route of travel to the west, to Ibx Valley and Kusawa Lake and beyond. Along the river, sites such as the Takhini Hot Springs and the old village at 31 Mile Post, near the mouth of Little River, were the main camping sites. The Takhini Hot Springs was a site used for healing by Chief Jim Boss, who was the Ta'an Kwäch'än chief up to the time of his death in 1950. A source of red ochre, used for paint in the old days, is reported near the Hot Springs.



View west along a high terrace of Nakhū Chù. Traces of ancient camp sites were found along this terrace.

Between the mouth of the Takhini River and Little River, traces of ancient camps have been found at several locations along the old foot trails that follow the high terraces on the north side of the river. Most of these appear to be short term camps made by people travelling on the trail, and hunting or fishing along the way. The sites are all small scatterings of broken, discarded stone tools, or flakes and chips from sharpening or making stone tools. The remains of old camp fires are also seen in the form of burned and fire cracked rock and burned bone fragments.

In the summer months people travelled on *Nakhū Chū* by water as well, using rafts, dugout canoes and mooseskin boats. At one place on the river, a dugout canoe, probably last used in the early part of this century, was found cached in dense bush. This was one of the old style of canoes made by hollowing out a cottonwood tree. The canoe measured about four and a half metres in



Dug-out canoe on Nākhū Chū.

length and just under a metre in width, and was about half a metre high at the bow. Patches of red ochre paint could still be seen in places on the bow and sides of the canoe. Later repairs to the canoe were made at the stern and on the thwarts were pieces of

metal sheet (probably flattened out tin cans) and canvas were nailed over damaged areas. The canoe was cached upside down on two logs. The homemade paddles (one which had the end broken off) were cached underneath the canoe.

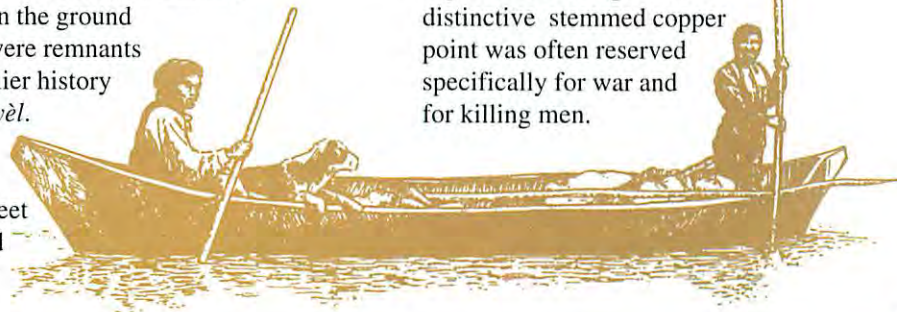
In the last century, Chilkat traders from Klukwan came to the old village on their annual trading expeditions, after crossing the Chilkat Pass and rafting down Kusawa Lake. The trail to the village is shown on the old map made by Klukwan Chief Koh-Klux in 1852. The village was given a Tlingit name, *Yel Da' K'ú* (Crow House ?), sometime in the mid-Nineteenth Century because the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* Crow chief at that time, perhaps *Mundessa* himself, had finally succeeded in buying a piece of beaten copper from the Chilkat traders. Based on what we know of these large "coppers", it is likely that the Crow Chief was a very wealthy man. Young men were sent to the top of *Naalen* or Lookout Mountain to keep watch and light signal fires when the Chilkat traders arrived. Elders said that the smoke from these fires could be seen from *Tàkwädàdhà Män* (Marsh Lake), Champagne and *Tàa' an Män*.

Today at the *Lür dáyèl* village site, Johnny Ned's old cabin is still standing; nearby, is George Ned's cabin, which has fallen down. A third cabin is located a few hundred metres to the east and on the south side of the road. The outlines of several more cabins can also be seen over the area of the village, together with some of household objects that people discarded or left behind when the Takhini Fire swept through here in 1958. On the edge of the bank, south of the cabins, is the grave site of Mrs. Mary Ned.

Scattered among the historic objects, on the ground surface, were remnants of the earlier history of *Lür dáyèl*.

A piece of native copper sheet was found near a

broken end scraper. A short distance away, a quartzite hide scraper turned up with a large obsidian scraper near an old camp fire. A quantity of burned bone fragments was in the camp fire, left behind from making bone grease. About 20 m to the north, the base of a spear point was discovered just beside the road. The obsidian and copper pieces give us our first material evidence of the old trade between the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* and the Coast Chilkat at *Lür dáyèl*. Copper had very special significance for people in the old days and had the power to kill supernatural beings. The distinctive stemmed copper point was often reserved specifically for war and for killing men.





Above: Remains of George Ned's cabin at Lür dāyèl.



Top right: Cabin remains at Lür dāyèl, on the west side of the village.



Bottom right: Artefacts from ancient occupations of Lür dāyèl. L-R: Obsidian side scraper, base of a lanceolate point, small end scraper, (upper right) fragment of native copper sheet.



Top left: Large hide scraper found with obsidian scraper in an old campfire at Lùr dāyèl.

Bottom left: Two large hide scrapers found associated with the historic occupation at Lùr dāyèl. The scraper on the left was found beside Johnny Ned's cabin.

Top right: Coins found at Lùr dāyèl. The oldest dates to 1915.

Bottom right: A small sample of historic artefacts from Lùr dāyèl, including spoons, medicine and perfume bottles and a pocket watch.





The old *Ta'an Kwäch'an* village site on *Nakhù Chù* was at 31 Mile Post on the old Dawson Trail, where people used to set their traps for salmon in the mouth of Little River. *Mundessa* had his cabin at the village, which is called in the Southern Tutchone language, *Lùr dáyèl* (white dirt bank).



Left: Lùr dáyèl village site at Little River. General view north over the western portion of the village, including the area that produced pre-contact artefacts.

Above: Lùr dáyèl Johnny Ned's old cabin on the east side of the village.



One of the boulder caches at the foot of a lookout hill near Lür dāyèl.



Two old style meat caches were found a short distance to the northeast of the village, near the base of a small lookout hill. These were dug into the ground on the hillside, where it is dry, and then piled up with boulders. In the old days, people would store their meat from the fall hunt in this kind of ground cache for the long winter ahead.

The last stop on our journey along *Nakhū Chū* is an ancient hunting camp in a broad meadow opposite the mouth of the Ibex River (*Kakwäts'äneghru*). Two of the tools recovered from the site, a finely made lanceolate point and a transverse burin, provide indications that the occupations here between about 5,000 and 8,000 years old. The burin tool was used much like a stone scraper long ago, for shaving and whittling bone and antler. Bone fragments found scattered around the site area include the remains of caribou and a larger animal,



which has yet to be identified. A very thick, carved and incised bone fragment appears likely to be from a bison rib. According to elder Johnny C. Smith, “*Many years ago there was no moose in this country but there was an animal, a large one called a buffalo,*

lots of them.” Extensive grassy meadows are perhaps one of the most common landscapes on the Takhini River. A way of life that included bison hunting is undoubtedly part of *Ta’an Kwäch’än* history in the Takhini Valley.



Above left and centre: Two views of the stone burin from the ancient hunting camp opposite the mouth of Kakwäts'äneghru.



Large lanceolate spear point and incised bison rib from the ancient hunting camp opposite the mouth of Kakwäts'äneghru.



Trading Party on Lake Laberge in 1895. (Veazie Wilson Collection, Yukon Archives)

The archaeological record has shown us that the traditional way of life of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* can be traced back thousands of years into the past. This way of life, however, underwent considerable change about a century ago, with the discovery of gold in the Klondike.

The *Ta'an Kwäch'än* homeland lay directly in the path of the Klondike Gold Rush stampede. The stories told by Ta'aan elders provide a uniquely personal history of this event and the changes that occurred with the arrival of new people and new challenges for making a living.

Ta'an Kwäch'än today trace their family connections through *Mundessa*, who was chief at Lake Laberge at the outset of the Gold Rush, his wife, *Lande*, and their descendants. *Mundessa* was related to Hutshi people; *Lande* was from the Tagish people. Their son *Kashxóot* (Wolf Clan) is better known as Chief Jim Boss. Jim Boss married Kathleen Kitty and they had one

son, Fred. His second wife was Maude, and they had four children: Alice, David, Lena and Ned. His third wife was Annie, and their children were Agnes and Sam.

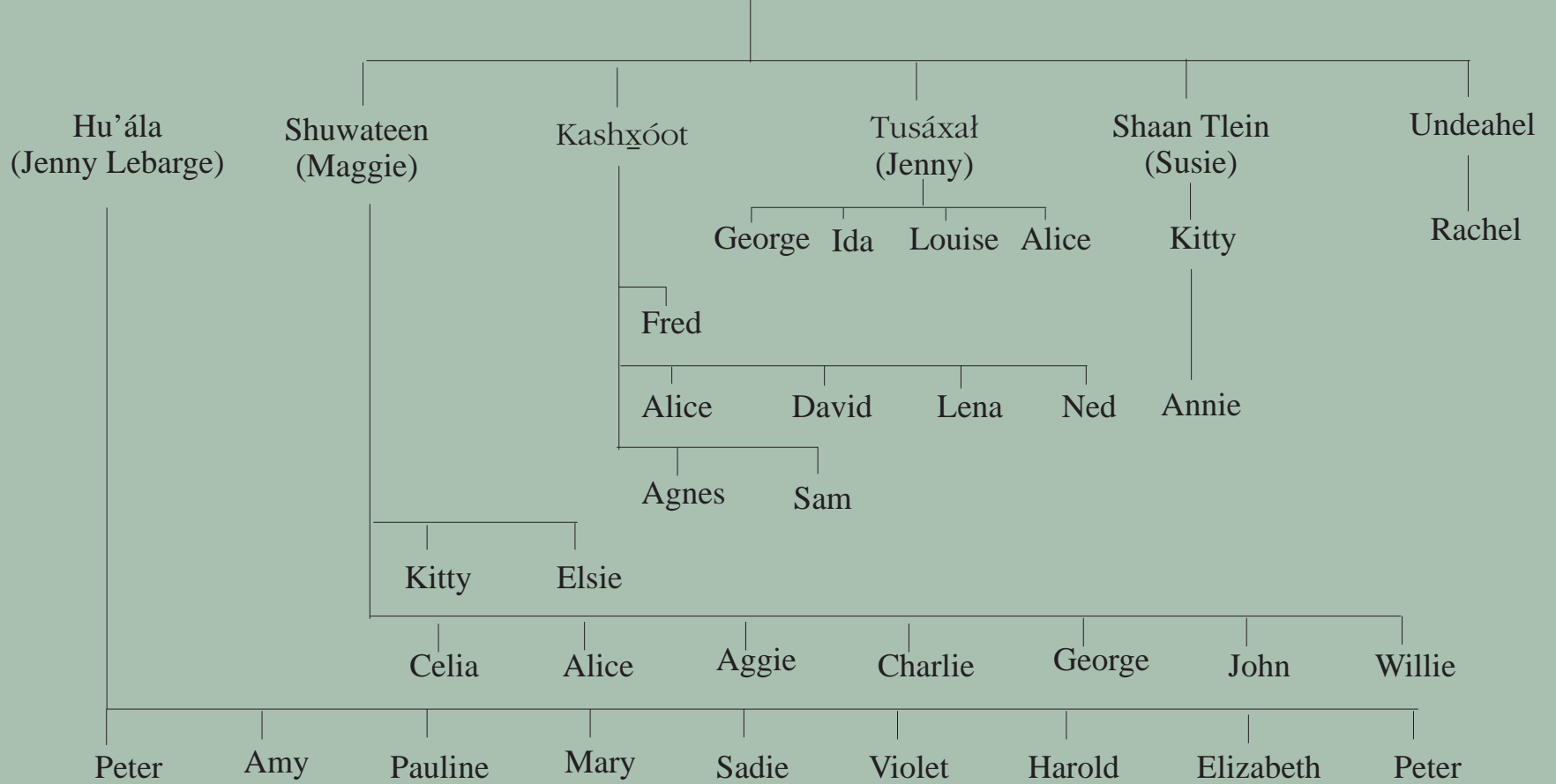
The daughters of *Mundessa* and *Lande* were Maggie Boss (*Shuwateen*), Jenny Boss (*Tusáxal*), and Susie Boss (*Shaan Tlein*); their second son was *Undeahel*. From their families are counted many of those who presently make up *Ta'an Kwäch'än*. The children of Maggie Boss and her first husband, Dawson Jim, were Kitty and Elsie. Maggie Boss and her second husband, "Dutch" Henry Broeren, had seven children: Celia, Alice, Aggie, Charlie, George, John and Willie. Jenny Boss married Dawson Jim; their children were George, Ida and Louise. Susie Boss married Sam Walker and had a daughter, Kitty.

Chief Jim Boss was the first Yukon Indian leader who undertook to protect the territories of his people from the onslaught of the newcomers. His petition to the Canadian government in 1900 resulted in the establishment of one of the first Indian Reserves at the traditional village site near Horse Creek, known locally as Russian Town and Jim Boss Town. In 1902, Chief Boss employed a Whitehorse lawyer, T.W. Jackson, to write to the Canadian government seeking compensation for the hardships to his people had suffered as a result of the influx of strangers into their country.



Ta'an Kwäch'an Families

(from Hutshi) *Mundessa* = *Lande* (from Tagish)



Chief Boss requested of Jackson: “*Tell the king very hard that we want something for our Indians because they take our land and our game*”. During the early decades of the 20th century, Jim Boss was one of the most influential and outspoken leaders of the Yukon Indian people.

Ta’an Kwäch’än experience with Tlingit traders contributed to their ability to take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities of the Gold Rush period. Chief Boss established, with the help of his brother-in-law, “Dutch” Henry Broeren, one of the first road houses for the sternwheeler traffic on Lake Laberge near the site of Russian Town, later also called Jim Boss Town or Upper Laberge. In addition to his road house, Chief Boss was engaged in wood cutting and commercial fishing to supply the growing town of Whitehorse. Other *Ta’an* people also earned cash income by cutting wood for the stern wheelers, by commercial fishing, and by

sale of furs and traditional winter clothing and snowshoes. Some *Ta’an Kwäch’än* even went themselves to the goldfields. After the height of the gold rush, a number of men obtained employment as pilots and deckhands on the sternwheelers, including Frank Slim, Fred Boss and George Dawson.

The history of *Ta’an Kwäch’än* since the Gold Rush is an integral part of the history of the Lake Laberge and Whitehorse areas. The Gold Rush communities at Whitehorse, Upper Laberge, Lower Laberge, and 31 Mile were established on traditional *Ta’an Kwäch’än* villages or campsites and continued to be home to *Ta’an* people.

The settlement of Upper Laberge, at the site of the traditional *Ta’an* camp at Joe Creek, on the east side of Lake Laberge was home to Maggie Boss and her husband, “Dutch” Henry Broeren. From here the family fished commercially and trapped. Amy Laberge, who was the daughter of

Laberge Billy and Jenny Laberge, and her husband William Cletheroe were among the first to mine in the Livingstone Creek, along with “Dutch” Henry Broeren; other *Ta’an* families also joined in mining operations from time to time. At that time, Amy’s parents had their base camp at Winter Crossing on the Teslin River, a short distance from Livingstone.



Kitty, who was the daughter of Susie (*Shaan Tlein*), lived with her husband, Angus McLeod, at Lower Laberge for many years. Angus, who hailed from Scotland, was at that time working as a deckhand on the boats, and running mail to Livingstone by dog team in the winter.

The traditional *Ta'an Kwäch'än* village, *Lür däyèl*, became a stop on the old Whitehorse to Dawson Road, and is now known as 31 Mile. In the 1920s Angus and Kitty McLeod, together with other *Tàa'an* people, operated a fox and mink ranch at this site. *Lür däyèl* was home to *Mundessa* until his death in 1925. His properties at the village were then assumed by his son, Jim Boss.

Whitehorse itself, and particularly the area around the Whitehorse Rapids, remained a traditional salmon fishing site for many years, until the construction of the dams below Marsh Lake and at Whitehorse. In the 1920s and 1930s, this



The Lake Laberge archaeology crew on survey on Nakhü Chù on a good day (Front: Chantal Genier, Scott Sawyer, Joella Hogan. Back: Greg Hare, Colin Adamson, and visitor, Brian Walker.)



The Lake Laberge archaeology crew on survey on Kwätän'ay Män on a bad day. (Front: Scott Sawyer, Colin Adamson. Middle: Thalia Hare, Chantal Genier. Back: Greg Hare and Joella Hogan.)

was the base camp of Old Tom Smith, Laberge Billy and Jenny Laberge, and Whitehorse Billy.

The construction of the Alaska Highway and the end of the sternwheeler traffic on the Yukon River and Lake Laberge in the 1950s profoundly changed how *Ta'an Kwäch'än* people made their living on the land. Gradually, the communities Upper Laberge, Lower Laberge and 31 Mile Post, and the wood camps along the Thirty Mile River were abandoned and people began to move to settlements along the highway, at the traditional village at Horse Creek and to Whitehorse.

The history of *Ta'an Kwäch'än* is, however, still very much in the landscape and the determination of *Ta'an* people to keep their traditions and the knowledge of their past alive remains strong.

Afterword

The archaeological investigations that are described here represent only a small step in writing down the early history of *Ta'an Kwäch'än*. People have lived in this country since the retreat of the glaciers exposed the land, about 10,000 years ago. Only now are the old sites being revisited and only now are we starting to interpret the very ancient history based on the discarded stone tools and camp remains left behind by the ancestors of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* over thousands of years. Much more work is needed in documenting traditional sites and history from the knowledge of the *Ta'an Kwäch'än* elders. Further archaeological studies will assist also in exploring this history into the distant past, to the time of the last Ice Age.

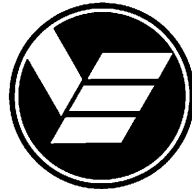


Naalen Dhäl: Lookout Mountain

Ta'an Kwäch'än Council Vision Statement

Our vision for the Citizens and grandchildren of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council is for the preservation, balance and harmony of our homelands. We will honour, respect, protect and care for our environment, people, economy and traditional culture as practiced by our Elders. We encourage our citizens to participate in the well being of our Nation by building a unified, healthy and self-reliant community. The Ta'an Kwäch'än Council will recognize all its Citizens as equals and will respect the free expression of their views. The leadership will be responsible and accountable to its citizens and govern in an open and co-operative manner. Our vision is to build a diverse economy which will provide security, stability and wealth to sustain our self-governing nation.

YUKON
ENERGY





*Ta'an Kwäch'än
First Nation*