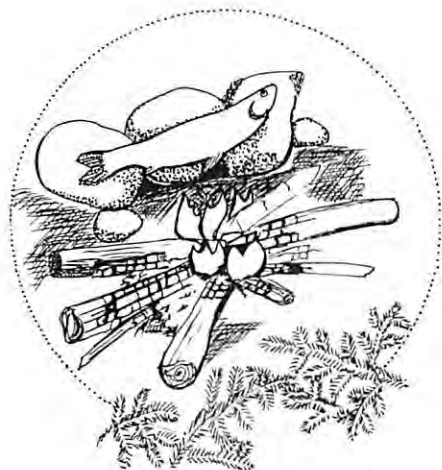


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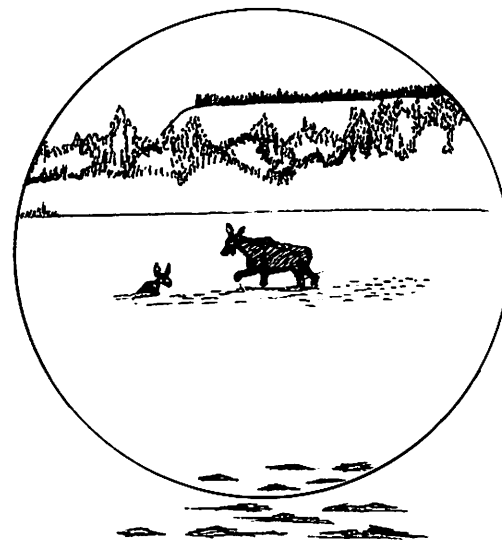
Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes: Long Ago People

ĒUTTHI MÄN & TACHÄN MÄN HUDĒ HUDÄN



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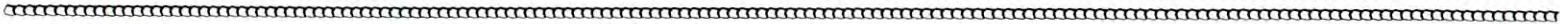
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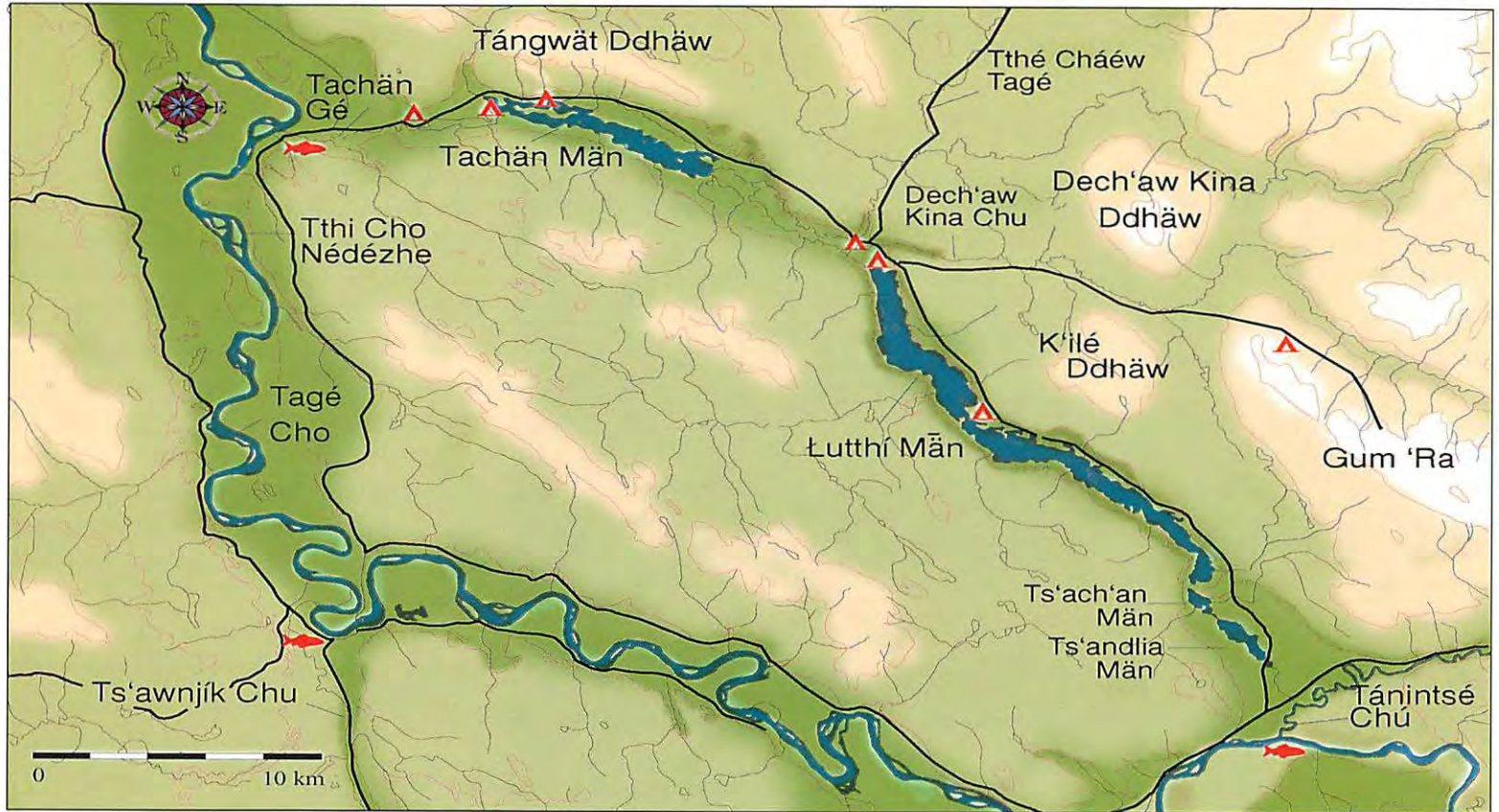
DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Elders of the Tsawnjik Dun/Little Salmon and Carmacks First Nation who have shared with us their knowledge of the country and their stories that have come down through many generations. We hope that this book will be a beginning to “writing down” the history of the Carmacks and Little Salmon people.



People at Little Salmon (left to right): Julia Billy, Annie Silverfox, Alice Andrew, _____, Harry Silverfox, Andrew, David Tom, Gus Scurvey, Roddy Blackjack, Albert James, Joseph.

FRENCHMAN AND TATCHUN LAKES COUNTRY



Winter fish camps ▲ Summer fish camps 🐟

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The primary goal of the 1992 archaeological investigations was to provide the Little Salmon and Carmacks First Nation students and community members with an introduction to the methods and objectives of archaeology.

Tatchun Hill

The project was also intended to further our knowledge of the history and prehistory of the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes area through excavation and survey of sites in the region, and through the documentation of the Elders' accounts of the past. The archaeological investigations were carried out under the supervision of D.W. Clark (ASC). Dawn Charlie was project co-ordinator and worked with the Little Salmon and Carmacks Elders to record their stories and accounts. Assembly and editorial work on this booklet was undertaken by R.M. Gotthardt (Yukon Heritage Branch).

We gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the following individuals in making the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes Archaeology Project a success: Little Salmon and Carmacks First Nations Elders: Mrs. May Roberts; Mrs. Sarah Charlie; Mrs. Agnes

Washpan; Mrs. Violet Johnny; Mr. Billy-Peter Johnny; and Mr. Wilfred Charlie.

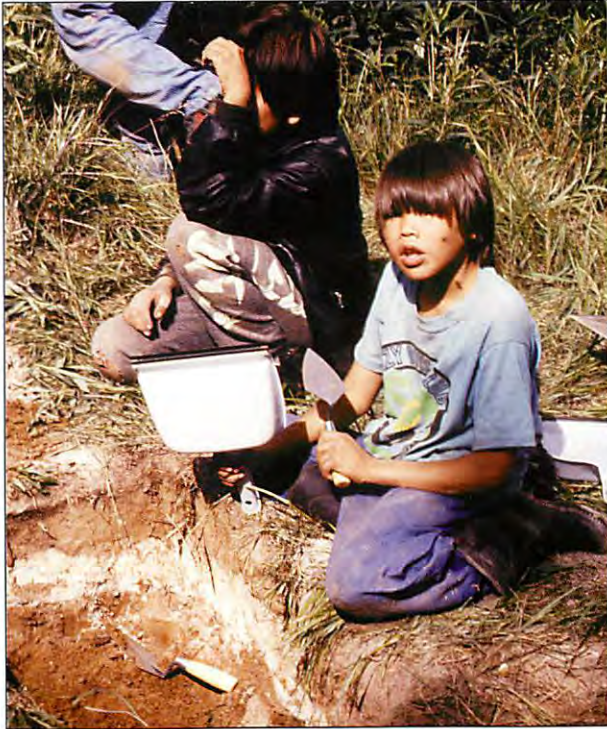
Student participants: Martina Johnathan; Jeffery Johnathan; Ragene LeBlanc; Veronica Skookum; Lenny Charlie (volunteer); and Cindy Charlie (volunteer).

We would like to thank as well for their assistance: Mrs. Viola Mullet, Band Manager, Little Salmon and Carmacks First Nation; Mrs. Delores Lindstrom; and Louise Profeit-LeBlanc (Yukon Heritage Branch). The assistance of Mr. John Ritter (Yukon Native Language Centre) is very much appreciated as well; any errors in the transcription of place names, however, are solely our responsibility. Illustrations for this booklet were drawn by Dawn Charlie.



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Introduction

The history of Frenchman and Tatchun lakes begins soon after the last Ice Age, about 10,000 to 11,000 years ago. Archaeologists are only now starting to piece together a history of the Yukon that belongs to this most ancient time –a time that goes back some five hundred generations.

The histories that are written by archaeologists are based on the things that the long ago people left behind them: their lost or broken stone tools; the stone chips scattered about when they made their tools; the traces of their camp over the country; and the bones left behind from the different animals that the people hunted.

Digging at Little Salmon

Most of the history written by archaeologists takes the form of describing the kinds of stone tools that people used in the past, and how their tools and technology changed over time down to the present day.

What follows is written in two parts. The first part describes the archaeology of Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes area based on the initial studies that have been carried out here. The second part tells of the traditional way of life of Frenchman and Tatchun peoples and some of the stories of their country that have come down through the many generations. In this way we hope to make a beginning to writing down the history of Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes.

The First People at Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes

When the massive ice sheets that covered southern Yukon began to melt away, the country opened up for the first time for people and animals to inhabit. The end of the Ice Age was a time of great change in the Yukon: rivers and lakes were swollen with meltwater and ran high above their present levels; forests were just starting to grow up; and the last of the large Ice Age animals, the mammoth, the horse and the giant bison, were dying out.

The first people to come into the newly deglaciated lands brought with them a tool kit that included small tear-drop shaped points, large round-based spear points, and knives, scrapers and other tools, often made on long stone flakes or blades. The camps of the first people remain to be discovered in the Frenchman and Tatchun





Lakes area. Because this was a time of great upheaval in the country, with flooding and thawing of the ground after the ice sheets melted, many of these old camps may have been destroyed or may lie deeply buried under silt. Archaeologists call the stone tool technology of the first peoples “Northern Cordilleran” after the mountains in northern Yukon where these types of tools were first found.

The Microblade People

The “Microblade people” came after the Northern Cordilleran people, at least by 7,000 to 8,000 years ago. The Microblade people are given this name to show that they made use of a new and very different way of making stone tools.

Microblades and microblade cores from the Kelly Creek site, upper left is a stone arrow point.

Microblades are tiny, narrow stone blades with two parallel, straight, sharp edges. In size, most microblades are less than 1 cm wide and about 4-6 cm long. They were made by carefully preparing a piece of stone (called a microblade core) by chipping and flaking, to achieve a 'wedge' shape. From this prepared core, hundreds of microblades could be struck off the end. Microblades were used much like our disposable razor blades today. They were set singly or in a row in a grooved piece of antler or bone to make the cutting or piercing edge of the tool. When the microblades became dull, they were removed, like razor blades, and new ones were put in their place in the tool.



Working at the Kelly Creek site, with Dawn Charlie and Mrs. Violet Johnny.



Wilfred Charlie leads the archaeology survey crew on Gum 'Ra.

The appearance of Microblade people is thought by many archaeologists to represent the migration at the end of the Ice Age of a new group of people from Siberia into Alaska and Yukon. The stone tools recovered in some of the early sites suggest that the Northern Cordilleran people and the Microblade people shared their knowledge and techniques for making stone tools. In these sites, both kinds of toolkits turn up together.

The main site of the Microblade people in the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes area is located near the mouth of Kelly Creek (Tthe Cháéw Tagé). In fact, this site has more microblades and cores than any other known site in Yukon. Looking at how the microblades and cores were found in two clusters at the site, it appears that this was a workshop, where two or three people sat down together to make tools.

Close by, various scrapers were found as well, suggesting other people were working antler or wood. A specialized kind of scraper that Microblade people used is called a "burin." These stone tools had a long squared edge that was for shaving or whittling; some burins were used on a corner of the squared edge for grooving.

No traces of old camp fires were found at the Kelly Creek site, which suggests that people's main camp was located in another place, probably nearby. The Kelly Creek site appears to have been a workshop and may also have been a lookout site where hunters scanned the valleys of Frenchman and Tatchun Lake for game and for signal fires. Other campsites of the Microblade people have been found at Tatchun Lake, near the campground.

People of the Notched Spear Points

At about 5,000 years ago, a new way of making stone tools became widespread in Yukon. Some archaeologists suggest that this change in how tools were made indicates the arrival of a new people in the country. Others suggest that this tool kit was developed out of the Northern Cordilleran tool kit. In a number of sites in Alaska and Yukon, though, it appears that the descendants of the Microblade people adopted the new technology and added it to their own.



Tatchun Lake narrows



Stone arrow point found at a site on Frenchman Lake.

The most distinctive tool of this period is the notched spear point. Unlike the microblade spears, this tool was shaped entirely out of stone with two notches made on either side of the point at the base to allow for the point to be lashed to a spear shaft. Other types of spear points were made in this time as well, including lance points and stemmed points. The tool kit of this time also contained an abundance of different kinds of stone scrapers; including the large moose skin scrapers, stone knives, axes (adzes), hand drills, and stone net sinkers. Archaeologists give the name “Northern Archaic tradition” to this technology; in southern Yukon, it is called “Tayé Lake Phase”.

The tools used by the Notched Spear Point people suggest that by about 5,000 years ago, people had developed a way of life based on hunting and fishing that has continued almost unchanged down to historic times. The old camp

sites of the Notched Spear Point people are numerous, and are almost always located where Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes people have traditionally made their camps.

After the White River Ash Fall

At about 700 A.D. (1,250 years ago), there occurred a catastrophic volcanic eruption in the Wrangell Mountains in Alaska which blanketed much of southern and central Yukon with volcanic ash. In the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes valley, this ash is still visible as a white layer near the ground surface, just under the sod. The effect that this ash had on the land, and on the people and animals can only be guessed at, at present. Some researchers suggest that the thin ash layer may have killed off the plants, fish and animals and caused people to abandon the country for a time.

Looking at the archaeological record, however, there seems to have been little change in how people made their living, or the tools that they used before and after the ash fall. And after the ash fall, people continued to use the same camp sites as well.

Some new elements were added to people's tool kits, however. Copper began to be used for making tools and ornaments. Copper nuggets were traded to the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes people by the White River people, who were closest to source of copper in the streams near the headwaters of the White River. Another new invention was the bow and arrow. Judging from the size of the stone points that they made, Microblade and Notched Point people used only spears.

The site of an ancient camp on the south side of the island in Frenchman Lake. The cut bank here shows the White River ash under the moss.





One of the most typical features of sites which came after the ash fall are concentrations of burned and fire-cracked rock. Some of the rock seems to represent a new way of cooking food. This was the technique of stone boiling, in which stones were heated in the fire and then placed in birch bark baskets full of water to bring the water to a boil, to boil the meat or fish and make a broth. Some of the burned stone may also be the remains of ovens dug into the ground, or left behind from a sweat bath.

Hill at the north end of Frenchman Lake. This is the resting place of Tatchun Charlie and Jim Crow's wife. There is an archaeological site here as well, at the location of the traditional fishing village.

One of the camps of this period is located on the hill at the end of Frenchman Lake near one of the traditional winter fishing villages of the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes people. The site had earlier been used by Notched Spear Point people, whose discarded tools and old camp fire remains are found below the White River ash layer. Excavation at the site turned up several small pieces of native sheet copper, pounded from nuggets; a small cobble used as a grinding stone; a notched stone that was probably a net weight; two types of whetstones; a small stone scraper; and a piece of a large stone moose skin scraper, together with the remains of an old camp fire or hearth with burned and cracked rocks. An iron arrow point was found at the site as well, but this



Little Salmon and Carmacks First Nations students carrying out archaeological testing at Little Salmon Village.



artefact may have been dropped here sometime in the past 150 to 200 years, when trade for European goods was underway in the Gulf of Alaska through the Chilkat traders.

The Last 200 Years

About 200 years ago, European goods and tools began to be traded into the Yukon, first through the Coast Indian traders, and then directly through the Hudson's Bay Company and independent traders. Copper pots, iron tools, beads and guns begin to appear in the old camp sites that date to this time. By about 100 years ago, white people themselves arrived to live in the Yukon, bringing with them many changes in the people's way of life.

Spear points dating to the time after the White River ash fall. Left to right: lanceolate point, side-notched point, trade spear point made of iron.

In this time of change, there occurred one of the few wars in the history of the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes people. The war took place in the early Nineteenth Century at the mouth of Tatchun Creek and was initiated as a result of a Chilkat trader's disrespectful treatment of Tatchun people. All the Coast Indians traders were killed in that war, except for one young boy who went back to his people on the Coast. Kwánáták, who was the Tatchun chief, then ordered his people to build a fort on the hill at the mouth of Tatchun Creek to prepare for the return of a Coast Chilkat raiding party. The fort was said to have had double walls and slits all around through which muskets and arrows could be shot. Tatchun Elders say that when the Chilkat returned and saw the fort, they negotiated peace with the Tatchun people.



The site of the traditional fish camp at the mouth of Tatchun Creek.



"Cutting Fish"

Because the events of this time are still very much in the living memory of the Elders, it is to their stories and recollections that we now turn - to continue our history of Frenchman and Tatchun lakes.

Traditional Life in Frenchman & Tatchun Lakes Valleys

For thousands of years the Frenchman and Tatchun Valley has been home to First Nations people. Frenchman Lake (*Łutthi Mān*) Tatchun Lake (*Tachān Mān*) and the surrounding creeks abounded with whitefish, grayling, ling cod, trout, jackfish and salmon. Many game animals and birds could also be found along the shores of these large lakes and in the nearby hills, making this a very good place for people to make a living, hunting, fishing and trapping.

In the old days, Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes people travelled through their country with

the seasons. When the salmon were running in the summer, people moved to the Yukon River where they gaffed fish and set fish traps. The main fish camps were at the mouth of the Nordenskiöld River (*Tsawnjik Chū*) at the mouth of Tatchun Creek (*Tachān Gē*) and a short distance above the mouth of the Little Salmon River (*Tānintśe Chū*). Some Little Salmon people called Tatchun Lake "*Tazāna Mān*" which means "when you look from far away, you see a little shiny part". This is probably because when you follow the trail from Frenchman Lake to Tatchun Lake, the first sight of Tatchun Lake over the rise is just a little shiny part of the lake.

After salmon fishing, people went to the mountains to hunt for moose, caribou, gophers, groundhogs, and ptarmigan, and to make dry meat which they put in their caches. From mid-September until winter dog salmon were caught, dried and cached for both people and dogs for the winter. And all during summer and fall, people would use whatever extra time they had in collecting soapberries, blueberries, cranberries and raspberries. Some of these berries would be put in birch bark baskets sewn up with split roots and put in holes dug in the ground to keep for future use. Later, when the snow came, the cached meat and fish would be brought down to camp with toboggans. The old style toboggans, which were pulled by hand, were made of caribou leg skins sewn together.



Frenchman Lake valley seen from the top of Gum 'Ra.



In the winter, people moved to their fishing villages on Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes. All through winter people fished for schooling whitefish in the narrows of the lakes and at the lake outlets, trapped beaver, and hunted caribou, and moose in the nearby hills: *Tāngwat Ddhāw* (Moose Skin Scraper Mountain), *Detch'aw Kina Ddhāw* (Porcupine Den Mountain), *Kilē Ddhāw*, (Ends of Birch Broken Off Mountain) and *Gum 'Ra'*. When game was scarce, people had to keep moving all the time in search of food. Sometimes they travelled as far north as the Macmillan River, east to the Glenlyon Mountains and west as far as the Dawson Range. Some terrible stories have been told about people driven to desperation during these times of great hunger.

The north end of Frenchman Lake. People have camped at this site for thousands of years.

Spring was usually a flurry of activity with ducks returning, moose calving, and fish spawning in the creeks. The more abundant food was a welcome change to the dried food that people had been living on most of the winter. As spring turned to summer, so the circle of life continued for both the Indian people and the animals on whom they depended.





In the old days, before the White people came, the land provided Frenchman and Tatchun people with all their needs, from food to clothing. Things that could not be obtained locally were traded into the country through highly developed trade networks that extended hundreds of miles and even down to the coast. With the Coast Indians, Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes people traded furs, moose and caribou skins, sinew and birch bark in exchange sea shells for decorating their clothing, dyes, and obsidian or volcanic glass for their tools. In some places, the old trading trails can still be seen today, worn deep into the ground.

Frenchman Lake

Frenchman & Tatchun Lakes Stories

Story telling was an important part of Northern Tutchone life. Many hours were spent telling the myths and histories that made up the life of one of the oldest cultures in this part of the world. Stories were an important way of teaching lessons, training children, entertaining, passing on traditions and rules for living, and passing along the history of their own people and that of their neighbours. This oral history predates anything written about the Yukon and so it is extremely important. Some of the stories tell of events that took place thousands of years ago.



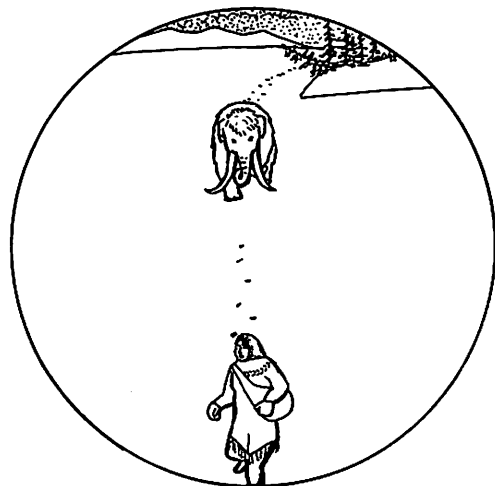
*Mrs. Sarah Charlie (L), Mrs. May Roberts (R)
at Frenchman Lake.*



The following stories are transcribed from interviews with Little Salmon and Carmacks First Nation Elders. These are just a few of the stories of things that happened in the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes Valley.

Big Animal

This story takes place on Frenchman Lake in the winter time. A family lived about halfway down Frenchman Lake. The husband of the daughter had gone down to the north end of the lake to visit his family there. The man's wife and her young twin brothers saw something coming away down on the ice. Thinking that it was their brother-in-law they ran down the trail to meet him. Their sister, the man's wife, walked behind. As the shape got closer they realized that it wasn't a man but a very big animal.



It was too late for the two boys. The animal killed and ate them. Their sister saw what happened and hid under the snow until the animal passed by. Then she got up and ran around to their trail in the bush until she caught up to her older brother and father who were running rabbit snares. She told them what happened and they ran back to their home.

In those days they had houses made of brush and moss piled all around poles that they set up in the ground. The door was from the top of the house. Water was poured down the sides of the house to make a coating of ice all around to keep the house warm inside.

The father cut a large pole and sharpened the end. He then hid away in the bushes. The big animal came up the trail from the lake to the house where the man's son was waiting on top of the ice house. The son clubbed the animal from the top of roof over and over again. The big animal

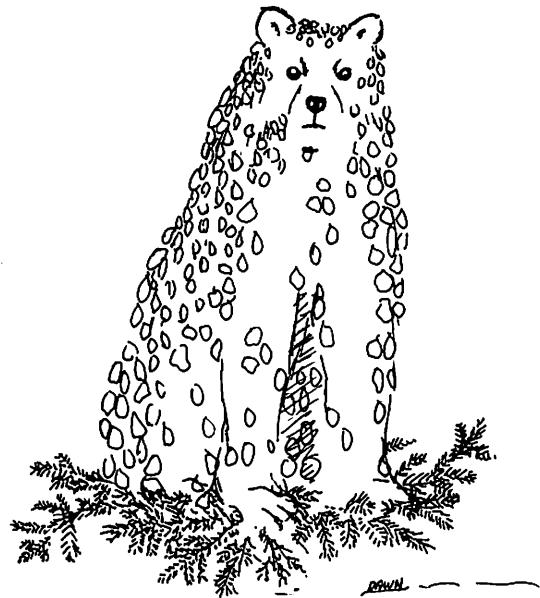
couldn't climb up to get that man because the sides of the house were slippery from the ice. All the time he was doing this, his father jumped out from the bushes and speared the big animal in the soft place behind his front legs and killed him. They cut the big animal open right there and took out the bones of the people that the big animal had eaten. They took the people's bones and made a good fire to burn them. In the old days, when people died, their bodies had to be cremated so that their spirits could be born again.

Maybe the big animal was a woolly mammoth. That's how people talk about it, but nobody knows why it started eating people. People say you can still see the bones of this animal in Frenchman Lake.

The Bear that Walked Around in Winter

It was winter time and a group of men went hunting leaving their wives and children in camp. The camp was not right beside the lake but back a bit in the bush. All the ladies went together to get ice for water. They brought back lots of ice the one time. The husbands got lots of wood before they went out hunting. People were scared for many different things in those days so when their husbands went hunting the ladies and the children stayed in camp and didn't go anywhere.

The husbands were returning from the hunt one day when they saw something by the shore close to their camp. They saw a big black thing right there by the water trail. Something lay there, something big and black. There used to be no black thing there. The first man wondered what was that. He waited for the next dog team to catch



up to him and asked "What is that? Have you seen that before?" They waited for the rest of the teams to catch up. "I love my kids. I don't want my kids to get killed," they said. They all saw it. They waited there together then one said "Okay, let's go to it." As they got closer the black thing got up. It was a bear, a big grizzly bear. The bear had ice all over him. He had gone in the water and had ice all over. He had broken brush like people, and set it too. He was sitting on the brush right beside where the trail came down to the ice. The men came closer and then all started to shoot. The dogs started to go after the bear but they stopped the dogs and killed the bear.

The women in camp didn't know what was going on. They heard the shooting and stayed inside their homes with the kids. They kept quiet and still - scared. They heard the men coming back and thought "Maybe war!" The men can

into camp quietly not knowing what to expect. They asked "Anybody alive?" The women ran out. "Yes, what happened?" they said. The husbands said "Good, so nobody got killed." They told the women to go down to the lake. They went and saw the bear laying there dead. He had set brush and had been lying beside their trail waiting for them. He had ice, like little bells all over his body. It was a good thing the ladies and children had not gone down to the ice for water.

Seeing the First White Man

This is the story that was told by *Shratthégān* Billy to his grandchildren of the first time he saw a White Man. *Shratthégān* was the grandson of *Takuwat*, who was chief of the Little Salmon people in the late Nineteenth Century.

People were staying at Little Salmon Village when the first Whiteman they ever saw in person came into their camp. There were a bunch of little boys who were there at that time and *Shratthégān* Billy was one.

Someone hollered, "Hey! Come you guys and see what we see! It's Whiteman come, come on!" So all the kids ran to see this strange sight.



An archaeologist on survey in the Frenchman and Tatchun Lakes country. The photo is of Dr. Donald Clark on the ride up Gum 'Ra.



“We run there,” *Shratthégān* Billy said, “We see Whiteman standing up! They look so funny! The funny people they saw had really short hair long, long necks, and the strangest looking clothes they had ever seen. Their pants were big and wide on top and skin tight from the knee down (bitches). *Shratthégān* Billy and the other children turned around and ran way back in the bushes, and laughed and laughed.

The first time people saw a Whiteman did indeed cause quite a stir in the village of *Tānintsé Chū Hūchanu*.

(L) Lenny Charlie scraping hair from a hide at Frenchman Lake.
(R) Veronica Skookum making sinew at Frenchman Lake.

