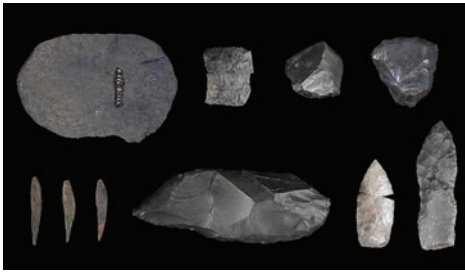
# Tatl'á Män



The history and archaeology of an ancient fishing village

ISBN 978-1-55362-918-4

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Hard copies are available from the Government of Yukon Archaeology Program
or by e-mailing heritage.resources@yukon.ca.

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Front cover: Left: The mouth of Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek) at the outlet of the lake. Right, top: David Grennan and Martina Jonathan excavating at the old village site at Tatl'á Män in 1991; right, centre: artifacts recovered from Tatl'á Män village; right, bottom: Dan Van Bibber, Frederick Johnny, Eugene Alfred (back), Cindy McGinty and Buffy the dog at the archaeological site at the old village, 1990. Top, right: Copper point, probably between 150 and 1,000 years old, found at the old village site.

Back cover: David Grennan shovel testing in 1990 at the old village site to locate traces of the ancient occupations; Eugene Alfred is in the distance. A thick layer of White River ash,1,200 years old, can be seen at the base of the overturned square of sod.

Please note: The spelling of Northern Tutchone place names can vary according to source, use and context.

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Elders of the Selkirk First Nation who have shared with us their knowledge and their stories to bring the past to life.

Maasi cho

*Dragnet fishing. Eugene Alfred, 1992. Eugene, now a renowned artist, was one of the participants in the 1991 excavations at Tatl'á Män. This is one of a series of sketches that he made at that time.*

**Acknowledgements**

This is a revised edition of the *Tatlá Män* booklet published in 1992. Archaeological and oral history research on Tatl'á Män and Daghwáta Män were carried out as joint projects of the Selkirk First Nation and the Government of Yukon Archaeology Program. The 1990 and 1991 project at Tatl'á Män owed its success to the efforts of a number of individuals: Lois Joe, Project Manager for SFN; Louise Profeit-LeBlanc and Greg Hare, Yukon Heritage Branch; and the Selkirk First Nation elders who accompanied the project into the field: Stanley Jonathan and Kitty Jonathan in 1990, and Dan Van Bibber in 1991. Linda Jonathan and Laura Joe were camp cooks in 1991. Special thanks go to the student participants: Eugene Alfred, David Grennan, Jerlene Joe, Frederick Johnny, Martina Jonathan and Cindy McGinty. The research at Tatl'á Män in 2000 was led by Christian Thomas as part of his master's research at the University of Alberta, assisted by Selkirk First Nation elder Pat Van Bibber Sr. and Selkirk First Nation students Janelle Hager, Candice Menzi, Wade Gagnon, Fabian McGinty and Douglas Silverfox. Valerie Silas was camp cook for the project. Lizzie Hall transcribed many of the oral history interviews. Selkirk First Nation elders who shared with us their knowledge of Tatl'á Män were: Jessie Alfred, Stanley Jonathan, Kitty Jonathan, Tommy McGinty, Danny Joe, Johnny Alfred, Margaret Simon, Rachel Tom Tom and Jessie Suze.

Archaeological survey and oral history research at Daghwáta Män in 2004 came about as a result of the hard work of Emma Alfred, Heritage Officer for the Selkirk First Nation. The project coordinator was Leigh Isaac; Carlene Silas carried out the community research and elder interviews, with the assistance of Emma Alfred. Christian Thomas (Thomas Heritage Consulting) was the project archaeologist, assisted by Victoria Castillo (University of Alberta). SFN field assistants were: Justin Harper, Curtis Joe and Jessica Alfred. Elders who contributed their knowledge on the history of Daghwáta Män were: Johnny Simon, George Joe, Rachel Tom Tom, Kathy Sam, Irene Blackjack and Alyce Mitander.

*Douglas Silverfox and Pat Van Bibber Sr. at Łútsäw Män.*

*Martina Jonathan screening at the 1991 Tatl'á Män village excavation.*

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*Martina Jonathan and archaeologist Ruth Gotthardt setting up a theodolite in front of Tommy McGinty's old cabin to begin mapping the old village site, 1991.*

*Dan Van Bibber and Eugene Alfred building a footbridge over Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek), 1991.*

## Introduction

For much of their history the Tutchone people of this area have relied on good fish lakes for their survival during the lean months of winter. Tutchone elders named Hutshi Lake, Adzänna Män (Aishihik Lake), Män Tthú' (Drury Lake) and Tatl'á Män as the most important fish lakes in their traditional territories. All are productive lakes with good narrows where, in the old days, people set nets for schooling whitefish in January and February when food was most scarce.

The impressive productivity of the fishery at Tatl'á Män is first recorded in 1848 in the Hudson's Bay Company Fort Selkirk journals. During the height of early mining activity in Dawson and Mayo, between 1900 and 1916, the commercial fishery at Tatl'á Män produced 6,000 to 23,000 kilograms of fish annually.

In the accounts of Selkirk First Nation elders, the bay at the end of the lake is described as "boiling with fish," where a couple of people dragging a net could take 500 fish. Due in large part to the wealth of fish stocks, the people based around Tatl'á Män, and the smaller nearby lakes, Daghwáta Män and Łútsäw Män, were the largest and most powerful group among the Tutchone in the mid-19th century.

What is now called the Tutchone language is divided into Northern Tutchone and Southern Tutchone. The indigenous place names in this booklet are Northern Tutchone, except Hutshi Lake, which has a Southern Tutchone name.

*Above, right: Winter fishing at Tatl'á Män.*
Photo: Selkirk First Nation: *Keeping Our Traditions at the Fish Camps.*

The first part of the Northern Tutchone name of the lake, *Tatl'á,* refers to the bay at the western end of the lake where the whitefish spawn; the second part of the name, *Män*, means "lake." One of the main villages of the Northern Tutchone was once located here. Chilkat Tlingit from the Klukwan area came here to trade with Selkirk people. It was at this village that one of the battles between Selkirk people and Coastal Indigenous people occurred and is remembered in the oral traditions of the Selkirk Elders.

*Jerlene Joe and Cindy McGinty screening soils from the excavation at the old village, 1991.*

The following pages introduce the history of Tatl'á Män. Much of the information comes from Selkirk First Nation elders who have told the stories of the lake over the years. The Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Selkirk journals, written between 1848 and 1852, also provide a glimpse of the dynamic period of the Coastal Tlingit trade with Yukon people.

The history of Tatl'á Män, however, goes back thousands of years to the time when glaciers had retreated from the land and the last of the Ice Age animals — the mammoth and the Yukon horse — had become extinct. The information on the very ancient history of Tatl'á Män comes from work carried out with Selkirk First Nation elders and students in 1990, 1991 and 2000. The histories that are written by archaeologists, however, are only fragments that tell of how people made a living, the kinds of tools that they made, and old routes of travel and trade. Knowledge of the people themselves can only be imagined through the stories of the elders that have come down from the past.

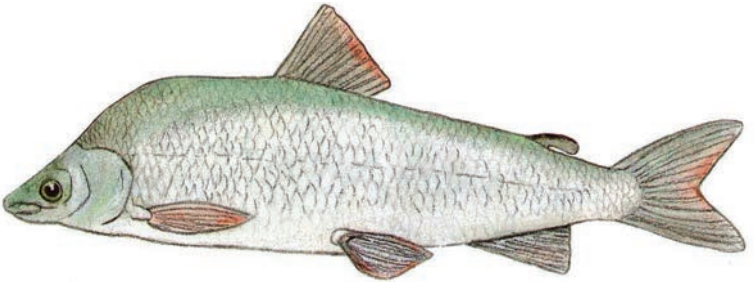
*20th-century artifacts recovered from recent encampments around Tatl'á Män. Top, l–r: Modified can lid, snare wire, copper pot hinge, wire meat-hanging hook; centre, l–r: square file and whetstone; bottom: tablespoon.*

## Tatl'á Män in the early 20th century

Selkirk elders recall that the people living with their families at Tatl'á Män in the first half of the 20th century included Leda and Peter Johnson, Anna Johnson's mother, David Silas, Old Suzé, Billy and Jessie Isaac, Annie and Jimmy Silverfox, Jessie and Johnny Alfred, Old Isaac and his wife Eliza, Old Simon and Julia Simon, John Ellis, Rachel Dawson, Charlie Johnson, Peter Joe and Ben Joe, Edward and Margaret Simon (Margaret was the granddaughter of Selkirk Chief Thlingit Thling), Anna and Dick Johnson, and Little Sam and Annie Jack.

The elders tell of many families coming to fish at the lake, including people from Fort Selkirk, Carmacks and even as far away as Champagne. People from Tatchun used to come through Tatl'á Män every year in the springtime, hunting muskrats and fishing.

The main traditional camps for Selkirk people on Tatl'á Män were the village at the end of the small lake, the narrows, Tatl'a Män Tatl'a' (Ta'rá Point or Tezrā Point), and the end of the big lake, where the creek flows in from Tetę Män. See Map 1.



*Right, above, l–r: David Grennan, Eugene Alfred, Frederick Johnny, Laura Joe, Cindy McGinty, Jerlene Joe, Dan Van Bibber and Linda Jonathan at the mouth of Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek), 1991.*

*Right: Round whitefish (shaankay).* Source: Yukon Environment


**Map 1. General area and traditional trails, Tatl'á Män**

## The camp at the end of the big lake

People call the part of Tatl'á Män east of the narrows the "big lake." Where Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek) flows into the lake from Tetę Män was a winter fishing site, where people would fish for trout through the ice with hooks.

Jessie Alfred tells of how her grandfather, Old Isaac, made hooks for them out of willow. The hooks were strong and they would put four together to fish for trout. This was also a hunting camp where people cached their meat. Billy Isaac built a cabin here in the 1930s, but it's gone now.

The trail to Ess Hill and Tetę Män goes from here. People would go out to hunt on Ess Hill for sheep. The trail goes on from here to Łútth'i Män (Frenchman Lake) and Téchán' Män (Tatchun Lake). A trail also goes from this end of the lake to Tthi Zhát Yeninlin Tagéá (Needlerock Creek). An old canvas canoe was found cached near the start of the Needlerock Creek trail during the 1990 archaeological survey on the lake.

*Below, left: A frame for an old canvas canoe was found cached near the start of the Needlerock Creek trail, 1990.*
*Below, right: View west from the area of the camp at the end of the big lake.*

## Tatl'a Män Tatl'a' (Ta'rá Point)

Tatl'a Män Tatl'a', also known as Ta'rá Point or Tezrā Point, lies a little over six kilometres east of the old village, on the north side of Tatl'á Män. Behind this camp is a very steep rock hill where people used to hunt caribou and sheep in the fall time.

Off the point, there were always lots of ducks, swans and geese. Edward Simon used to set net there off the point. Little Sam had a cabin near where the trapping cabin is now. His daughter, Kitty, and her husband, Stanley Jonathan, took it over later. Only a few logs from this cabin can be seen there now. On the opposite side of the point, there is an old brush camp.

There is almost always a strong wind blowing at Tatl'á Män, on the big lake. Johnny Alfred recalled that one time, the wind was so strong it blew two men into the water. When the wind was too much, some people went to Daghwáta Män, where they had another village, and where it wasn't so windy.

*Above: View from the end of the village site, on the south side. The steep rock hill behind Ta'rá Point can be seen in the background.*
*Right: Overnight brush lean-to located at Łútsäw Män, on the trail from Minto to Daghwáta Män.*

SIDEBAR: People staying at Daghwáta Män

Rachel Tom Tom recalled when she was a kid, before everyone moved to Pelly Crossing, the main families staying at Daghwáta Män were Old Simon (Pelly Simon, Sa'ma'n) and Julia Simon (Tut'ja) and their son Edward Simon and his wife Margaret, and John and Jessie Alfred. Julia Simon was Jessie Alfred's mother's sister. Jessie's mum stayed with them too.

Johnny Alfred used to go by dog team to Tatl'á Män to fish, about 12 km away. Other people stayed sometimes at Daghwáta Män, but also went to Tatl'á Män to fish, including Old Isaac (Isaac Isaac) and his wife Eliza (Lizzie) and their family, Bill Isaac and family, Peter and Leta Johnson, Dick and Anna (Braun) Johnson, Freddie and Flora Harper, Jimmy Silverfox, Mrs. Tommy Joe (Little Grandma), Victoria Edwards and her first husband, Danny Johnny, Ben Jimmy, and Fat John. Little (Wee) Sam and Rachel Dawson stayed at Daghwáta Män occasionally, but were from elsewhere.

The east side of the lake outlet on Tawät Tagé was the site of Johnny Alfred's cabin, which was used by the family until the 1950s. The outline of the cabin can still be seen. A large number of tent camps were located here as well and their remains can be seen extending about one kilometre along the edge of the lake terrace. Three cabins were built on the west side of the lake outlet, belonging to Old Simon, Peter Johnson, Tom and Maggie Isaac, and Dick Johnson. Only one cabin remains standing here.

The old cemetery on Daghwáta Män is on the east side of the lake outlet, east of Johnny Alfred's cabin. Twelve graves can be seen there now. Only a few people who are buried here are known: Lena Suze and her mother Sarah, and Kitty Jonathan's baby brother, Chappy.

*Above: Maggie Ander (Old Maggie), May Charlie, Peter Johnson, Stanley Johnson, Betty Silverfox, Mary Isaac, Annie Silverfox, Magdalene McGinty, Jessie Alfred and children at Pelly Crossing, 1942.* Yukon Archives, Jessie Alfred collection, 78/38 #2

People fished and trapped around Daghwáta Män from November to January. Around February, trapping came to an end because the animals would be shedding their winter hair. In March, traps were set at the east end of Daghwáta Män for muskrat and beaver. People skinned animals and dried furs during the month of May, and then they would go down to Fort Selkirk to sell the furs.

Together with Tatl'á Män and Łutsäw M̄än, Daghwáta Män was one of Selkirk people's most important fish lakes for whitefish spawning in the fall, and winter fishing. Whitefish, including broad whitefish (tezrā or ta'rá), jackfish, sucker, lake trout and lingcod are all found in Daghwáta Män. No grayling are there, because the water is too fast. Nets were set on both sides of the lake in the past.

*Right, above: Justin Harper and Curtis Joe excavating at the Daghwáta Män village, 2004.*
*Right, below: Remains of cabin at Daghwáta Män.*

SIDEBAR: How people made a living at Daghwáta Män

## The narrows at Tatl'á Män

The narrows at Tatl'á Män are a little over three kilometres from the old village. This was a traditional winter fishing site, where people would set nets below the ice for whitefish. When people camped here, they stayed mostly on the north side of the narrows. Usually, they camped at the village and travelled up to the narrows every day to check their nets.

People had to approach the narrows before the big lake in silence, or they might awaken the winds that made the big lake unsafe for travel.

An old homemade dog sled, which was probably used to pack fish back to the village, was found at the narrows during the 1990 archaeological survey. Old camps were seen here too at that time. An old barrel stove and a small wooden toboggan mark the location of one of the camps.

*Above and right, below: Remains of old sled and old toboggan, both from the narrows at Tatl'á Män.*
*Right, above: View to the east of the narrows.*

## The old village

The traces of the old camps at the old village can be seen in the remains of brush camps, tent frames, caches, barrel stoves, axe-cut stumps, and old tin cans, On the north side of the village, the outlines of cabins and a barn, built by Billy Atkinson and Ira Van Bibber, can be seen among the poplars that now cover the site.

Billy Atkinson was a commercial fisherman, supplying whitefish to the miners in Dawson. Ira Van Bibber worked for Atkinson and later came to Tatl'á Män with his family. The Van Bibber cabin and Atkinson's cabin were destroyed in the 1919 forest fire, but the barn remained standing until about 1930. It was after 1930 that Edward Simon and his wife, Margaret, had a cabin here.

Rachel Tom Tom recalled that Billy Isaac had a cabin at Tatl'á Män too, which people used for travelling for fishing. Dan Van Bibber, one of Ira's sons, recalled that Tommy McGinty built a cabin on the south side of Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek) in three days in the 1960s, but stopped using it in the 1980s. By 1990 the cabin was falling down.

*Above: View over area of excavation at the old village site.*
*Right: Tommy McGinty's old cabin at Tatl'a Man village, being used as a base for the archaeology project in 1990.*

Little Salmon/Carmacks elders Lily Washpan and Rosie Tom recalled that George Fairclough had a trading post at Tatl'á Män for a time, which suggests that a large number of people were based at Tatl'á Män trapping over the winter, probably in the 1920s when the fur prices were high.

Two old fence graves, burned by the fire that came through this end of the lake in 1919, are on top of a high ridge along the lakeshore, just east of the village. This is where Little Sam's baby and George Simon are buried. Old Isaac's brother is said to be buried here as well. A second graveyard is on a little ridge by the creek, behind the village. This has now all grown over with poplar too. The people who died in a war between Chilkat Tlingit and Tatl'á Män people are said to be buried here.

On the little island in front of the village, there is a high cache that was built by Jimmy Silverfox about 1960. Jessie Suzé explained that this island was always used by people for caching their fish.

*Right: Alex, JJ and Dan Van Bibber in front of a rack of furs, Mica Creek, circa 1938.*
Yukon Archives, Van Bibber family fonds, 79/2 #48

*Above: Greg Hare at Jimmy Silverfox's meat cache on an island at the west end of the lake.*

## How people made a living at Tatl'á Män

People fished at Tatl'á Män through fall, winter and spring. The best time was from the end of October to about Christmas time, when tezrā are running at the end of the lake and in Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek). These are broad whitefish, which have a big body and a small head. They are so fat that you don't have to put grease in the pan to fry them; they just fry in their own grease. Other kinds of fish were lake whitefish (łyok degay); round whitefish (shaankay); trout (mbyaat), grayling (t'a), ling cod (telyók) and jackfish (tátli). When tezrā were running, the shallow water at the end of the lake almost boiled with fish, that's how many there were.

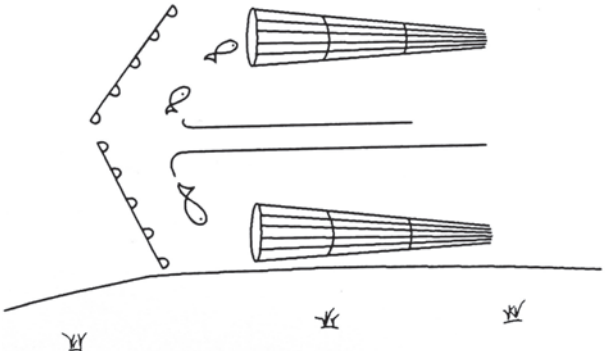
People would take them with drag nets, by just walking through the water. Rachel Tom Tom tells of fishing with her husband this way and catching about 500 tezrā with one pull. Three hours later, they caught about the same amount again. Stanley Jonathan described people using a kind of fish rake, made of two spruce trees tied together. You could just sweep the fish out of the water, but you'd have to be pretty strong to do this.

The end of the lake is the only place where the water does not freeze in the winter; all there is is a little snow on top. Jessie Alfred told a story about the cannibals a long time ago, who were trying to cross the end of the lake here. When they got out into the water, they turned into rocks right there. Those rocks are still in the lake — maybe that's why it doesn't freeze.

*Above: Dode and Linch Van Bibber pulling a net, Tatl'á Män, circa 1942.* Yukon Archives, Van Bibber family fonds, 79/2 #141

*Left: Broad whitefish (tezrā, or ta'rá).* Source: Yukon Environment

People set fish traps along Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek) for broad whitefish (tezrā), too. Tezrā used to migrate to the Ts'e Chín' Tagé (Pelly River) through Daghwáta Tagéá and Daghwáta Män. The fish traps were long basket traps, up to three metres long, made of straight willow or spruce saplings. Two or three baskets would be set in a shallow place in the creek with a fence on the sides to guide the fish into the traps. Little Sam was the last one to set a trap in the creek.



Before the traders brought gill nets, people used willow bark nets or nets made from sinew. Because it was a lot of work to make these nets, they were shorter than the store-bought ones, many of which were 1.2 or 1.5 metres. The old-time nets were coloured red with alder bark.

In fall time, people travelled from Tatl'á Män to K'ambi Ddhaw (Ptarmigan Mountain) to hunt sheep, caribou and moose. Lots of gopher were on the mountain too. This is where people made dry meat. In winter they trapped and fished all around the lake, with nets through the ice for whitefish, or with hooks, for trout. Sometimes they used a lure, carved like a fish, and speared fish through ice holes.

*Above: Illustration of fish traps.*
*Right: Dan Van Bibber and Eugene Alfred at the mouth of Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek) in the location where fish traps and weir were traditionally set.*

In springtime, people trapped beaver and muskrat. According to elder Dan Van Bibber, Carmacks people also came in late winter to hunt beaver and muskrat. People used to take the furs to the Hudson's Bay Company (HBCo) store at Fort Selkirk (the HBCo returned to Fort Selkirk in 1938). It was about a three-day walk to Fort Selkirk. Nets were set for greyling and whitefish when they started to run in the creeks in the spring. The mouth of Daghwát Tagéá (Mica Creek) on Ts'e Chín' Tagé (Pelly River) was another important grayling and tezrā fishing site.

In summertime, people went to the Yukon or the Pelly river for salmon fishing. In early fall, they went to Minto for dog salmon by the trail along Legha Män. Jessie Alfred remembers picking berries all along the trail from Tatl'á Män to Minto.

People went to Łútsäw Män when food was scarce — they said you could always get jackfish in that lake. In the old days, Łútsäw Män saved many people from starving. Mostly people came in February when jackfish are spawning in the creek between Łútsäw Män and Tthi Ndu Män (Rock Island Lake). The creek is shallow and only about 1.2 or 1.5 metres wide. A person could just stand in the middle of the creek and gaff fish.

Good moose habitat could be found north of Tthi Ndu Män. In the past the Roberts/Joe family had a cabin on Łútsäw Män. Danny Joe inherited that cabin. Dan Van Bibber had a trapline around the lake at one time.

*Above, right: Fishing spot at Łútsäw Män.*

SIDEBAR: Setting a net under the ice

"Setting a net through the ice involves a considerable amount of trouble […] when the ice has attained a thickness of several feet. A pole about 20 feet long, and attached to a rope, is conveyed to the locality where the net is required to be set, and several holes are cut through the ice at the same distance apart as the length of the pole […].

The pole with a long rope attached to it is then inserted through the first hole, and pushed under the ice in the direction of the second hole. The man then walks to the second hole, and as the holes are the same distance apart as the length of the pole, he will there find the end of the pole, which he works along under the ice in the direction of the third hole. This process is repeated from hole to hole, so that the pole is gradually worked along under the ice until it eventually arrives at the last hole, and it is then drawn out of the water and the rope secured. A man at the first hole then attaches one end of the net to his end of the rope, care being taken that the net does not become entangled when being inserted through the ice, while at the same time the man at the last hole, by pulling the other end of the rope, gradually draws the net under the ice towards him.

...In the morning, when the net is being raised, the end holes are cleared with an axe of the ice which has formed in them during the night, and the ends of the rope, which have been attached to two poles partly inserted through the holes, are then secured. One end of the net is then pulled up and drawn through the hole in the ice, while the fish are extracted and thrown on the snow, where they quickly freeze solid. When all the fish have been extracted the net is re-inserted through the ice, while the man at the further hole pulls at the rope and draws the net under the ice towards him, and it is then reset as before."

Source: Tollemache 1912: 172–174

*Above: Dean Gill and Colton Blackjack next to an ice-fishing hole, Tatl'á Män.*
Photo: Selkirk First Nation: *Keeping Our Traditions at the Fish Camps*

## Tatl'á Män people in the 19th century

The largest group of Tutchone in the Tatl'á Män area have sometimes been called the *Tuhin Tatinnat*. Their territories were the lower section of the Khro Chu Gé'(Macmillan River), the middle section of the Ts'e Chín' Tagé (Pelly River) between Rose Mountain and the mouth of the Macmillan River, and Tatl'á Män. These names were recorded by Chief Factor (trader) Robert Campbell when the Hudson's Bay Company first came to Fort Selkirk in 1848. Several versions of the Tutchone name appear in Campbell's journals, including *Tichnitah Tinna*, *Tuhinitatatenna*, and *Tuhin Tatinnat*. Tinne/dena in the Mackenzie dialects means "people." It is possible these names were coined by Campbell's coureurs des bois, who were Métis from the Mackenzie region.

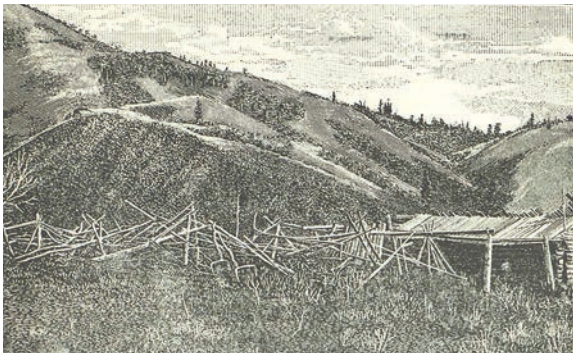
Most of the *Tuhin Tatinnat* had their main winter camp near the narrows on Tatl'á Män. This group was estimated to be about 10 or 12 families, or about 50 people. Smaller groups of one or two families stayed in the winter at Daghwáta Män, Łútsäw Män, Legha Män and at the north end of Tetę Män (Tadru Lake), and possibly also at Tu Nátsat Tagéá (Big Creek). Altogether, the *Tuhin Tatinnat* numbered about 200 people.

In the summer, the main fish camp was at Minto, where they met the Chilkat Tlingit who came from the coast to trade. Robert Campbell reported that *Tunaetah Hun Etha* or *Tembetah* was leader at Tatl'á Män, and that Thlingit thling and Hanan, who Campbell named as the Selkirk chiefs, also stayed there at times.

*Group of Tutchone people,1894, probably photographed at Fort Selkirk; fish-drying racks in background.*
Source: *Glimpses of Alaska, Klondike & Goldfields* by Veazie Wilson, 1895.

## Trade with the Chilkat Tlingit

The longstanding trade between the Tlingit people on the coast and the people of the Yukon interior intensified when Russian and American traders arrived in the Gulf of Alaska in the late 18th century, followed by American and British (Hudson's Bay Company, or HBCo) trading ships in the mid-19th century. The international fur trade created an unprecedented demand for high-quality furs from the Yukon to supply markets in China, Russia, Britain and America.



At the time when Robert Campbell was trading at Fort Selkirk for the HBCo, Tlingit trading parties numbering some 20 to 30 men came twice yearly to trade with Selkirk and Tatl'á Män people.

Kohklux, a chief of the Ka-gwan-ton Wolf Clan in Klukwan, was one of the principal Chilkat Tlingit traders at this time. His 1869 map of trade routes to the Yukon showed two meeting places in Selkirk First Nation territory: Kitl'ah-gon (just downstream of Minto) and Sistes-tean, downstream of Fort Selkirk. According to Selkirk First Nation elder Tommy McGinty, Eh Zú' Huts'lat (Trouble Hill) near Minto was also a meeting place. If the Chilkat came in winter or spring, they would meet people at Tatl'á Män (shown as Tatl-heen on Kohklux's map).

Meetings were arranged the previous year, but locations could change depending on circumstances. If the meeting was missed, the Chilkat would light a signal fire and the Tutchone would signal back; the Chilkat would then travel to the location of the Tutchone.

*Above, right: Illustration of Kitl'ah-gon, 1883.* Source: Frederick Schwatka, *Report of a Military Reconnaissance in Alaska*

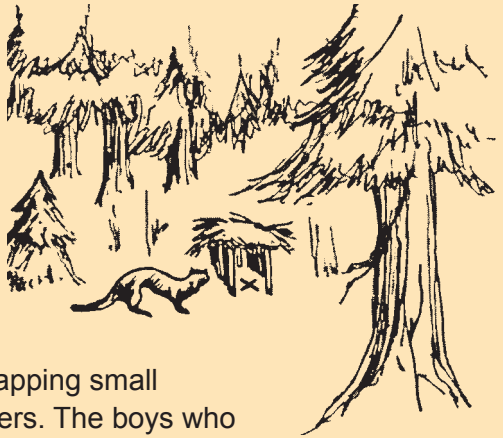
The Tlingit did not always behave well with their trading partners. Two wars are recalled by Selkirk First Nation elders between Tatl'á Män people and Tlingit traders – one at Tatl'á Män and the second at Eh Zú' Huts'lat (Trouble Hill).

The pillage of Fort Selkirk in 1852 was carried out by the Chilkat Tlingit under their chief Chartrich (also called Shotridge, who took the name *Kohklux* later in his life). His trading partner among the Selkirk people was Thlingit Thling (łinígit tlén – "big man" in the Tlingit language). The Tlingit action was in response to the Hudson's Bay Company's interference with their very profitable trade with Selkirk people.

Trade with the Chilkat Tlingit continued until about the 1880s, when gold seekers began to make their way into the Yukon in large numbers and American traders began to arrive on the Tagé Cho (Yukon River). An independent trading post was established by Arthur Harper at Fort Selkirk in 1889, one of a series of posts there over the years.

*Right, above: The ruins of Fort Selkirk, August 17, 1887.*
Photographed by George Mercer Dawson. LAC, PA 52757

*Right, below: Eh Zú' Huts'lat (Trouble Hill).*



SIDEBAR: The winter camp

Tutchone elders described the traditional winter camp to anthropologist Dominique Legros as follows. People gather at the winter village at Tatl'á Män late in the fall to capture spawning whitefish. If it is not too cold and the caches are full, men will then head out to trap marten. If they kill a moose, they will butcher it at the kill site. Their wives bring the meat back to camp the next day. As the days get shorter, nets are set under the ice at the narrows for schooling whitefish.

If the men are out hunting or trapping, the women will check the nets. Fish and meat can be frozen, so women have time for trapping small game, collecting firewood and sewing. Young girls help their mothers. The boys who are too young for hunting are responsible for collecting snow for water for their camp. When food is scarce, adolescent boys are sent with dog sleds to their family's cache that had been filled with dried meat and fish in the summer and fall. In February or March, when almost all the caches are empty, the men at the camp will start to think of all the mineral licks they know and prepare to hunt moose. Women may go for several days to a lake where ling cod are spawning, taking their infants with them.

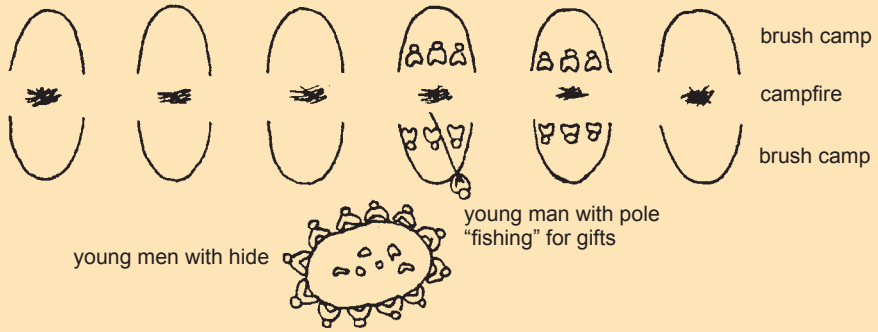
The winter season ends about mid-April. At this time the large winter fish camp splits up. One group remains at the village near the lake narrows, hunting beaver, muskrat and migrating waterfowl. The others go out to hunt and to snare moose, bear and ground squirrel, and to fish at the spawning grounds of grayling, sucker and pike. Spring is the time when people harvest tree bark, sap and pitch and, when the ground is soft again, dig up bear root. People may gather from time to time for a funeral ceremony or meet for trade with the Chilkat or for exchange with neighbouring groups, but usually they stay in small groups until the end of June, when it is time to gather for the salmon run (Source: Legros 1981: 830–833).

*Above: Illustration of steel trap for capturing marten.* Source: Legros 2007

SIDEBAR: Winter solstice festival

Tutchone elders described the winter solstice festival to anthropologist Dominique Legros as follows. People gather for the festival when the days are shortest. On the day of the festival, children, adult men and women sit inside their brush camps. The brush camps are built with two camps facing each other with a fire in between. There may be as many as 10 or 12 brush camps.

A dozen young men, the best hunters, go behind a brush camp with a tanned moosehide stretched between them. One of the young men reaches over the top with a long pole that has a line with a big wooden hook attached. The people inside the brush camp can't see him.




Each person in the brush camp is invited by name to attach gifts. The gifts are then raised up on the pole and put into the hide. The young men bounce the gifts in the hide while singing *tsužan'da'a'dži guuk' guuk'* (the sun rises again, the little birds return). When the young men have finished with one brush camp, they place themselves behind the brush camp opposite and so continue until all the brush camps are visited.

The gifts are of two types: moccasins or clothes that the young men have asked for; and choice pieces of meat. When the young hunters have visited the entire village, they put down the moosehide, heavy with gifts, and each takes the gifts that are intended for him. The meat is cooked and a feast is made, with everyone in the village joining in.

*Sketch of solstice festival. Source: Legros 1981: 835*

## The Hudson's Bay Company fishery at Tatl'á Män

In the middle of the19th century, very soon after arriving in the territory of Selkirk people, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBCo) men established a whitefish fishery on Tatl'á Män. The HBCo used the fishery from 1848 until the company's post at Fort Selkirk was pillaged and abandoned, in 1852.

Access to the important whitefish resources at Tatl'á Män was possible only with the permission of the leader of the Tatl'á Män group and the Selkirk chiefs. These powerful dän cho anticipated that the newcomers might bring profitable trade opportunities and allow Selkirk and Tatl'á Män people to bypass the exploitative trading monopoly of the Chilkat traders.

A glimpse of the productivity of Tatl'á Män comes from the HBCo's Fort Selkirk journals. The first mention of fishing at the lake is in Robert Campbell's journal entry for October 31, 1848 and reports 5,300 fish taken with only a few nets *(see sidebar, next pages)*. It is access to the important whitefish fishery at Tatl'á Män that enabled the men at Fort Selkirk to survive the harsh winter of 1848–49, when Campbell reports that a number of Tutchone people were starving around the fort and throughout the country.

*Left: Back of a lead seal, with stamped name ALSAGER PACKER LONDON, found by archaeologists at the site of Fort Selkirk.* Source: Castillo 2012

*Above, right: Glass trade beads found by archaeologists at Fort Selkirk.*

**Excerpts from Robert Campbell's *Journal of Occurrences at the Forks of the Lewes [Yukon] and Pelly Rivers*, *May 1848 to September 1852***

Source: Johnson and Legros 2000

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1848 | Tuesday 31 October | Peter arrived from … Tatlamain and, if I understand the Tally sent by him, he has 5300 fish secured, excellent from so few nets. There are a great number of Indians at that Lake. |
| 1849 | Friday 7 September | Charleson & Donald arranged to be off tomorrow to establish Tatlamain fishery, to be accompanied by Cauturier & Peter. |
| | Thursday 20 September | Cauturier & Peter arrived this morning from Tatlamain & I am truly glad to observe that Charleson had 500 fish already staged ere they left, say taken in 4 days time. |
| | Monday 1 October | Marcel & Cauturier came up with 74 fish & a keg of salted roe and I am glad to learn the 350 fish are staged at their Camp ... |
| | Monday 29 October | The men all busy day & night arranging themselves & agrets [Middle English: in all, all told] for voyaging. They are to start for Tatlamain [Lake] tomorrow from whence, should they not meet Mr. Stewart, three men with three sleys [sleighs] loaded with fish are to proceed in head of him accompanied by Peter to open the road for them. |
| | Friday 23 November | At dusk Donald & Brough arrived from Tatlamain with a sley of 5 dogs & only 190 fish. |
| | Monday 17 December | Marcette & Cauturier arrived with Fish from Tatlamain. |

SIDEBAR: Journal of Occurrences

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1850 | Saturday 27 January | Charleston with 3 of our sleighs arrived from Tatlamain with fish. |
| | Wednesday 6 February | Our men arrived from Tatlamain with Fish. |
| | Friday 3 May | Three Chilcats [Chilkat Tlingit] arrived this afternoon from Tatlamain quarter. |
| | Saturday 4 May | The Chilcats went off early on their return for Lynn Canal... |
| | Monday 27 May | The Chief [probably Thlingit Thling] has proceeded towards Tatlamain. |
| | Thursday 22 November | Marcette arrived this evening from Tatlamain & reports all well & prospering. Upwards of 200 [fish] staged from 2 nets & prospects are good. |
| | Thursday 29 November | Tembetah [Tatl'á Män dän cho] & son in law arrived this morning & Peter with the Briseur de Cache & son in the afternoon from Tatlamain with 84 fish. |
| | Monday 2 December | Men & Indians preparing to start tomorrow in different directions, some to Tatlamain and others to [Reid Lakes]. |
| | Tuesday 10 December | Forcier and Brough arrived from Tatlamain this morning, the former with a half a load fish. |
| 1851 | Friday 24 January | The men at the same duty. Forcier arrived with 200 fish from Tatlamain. Donald & Charleson accompanied him home, the fishery having failed of late. [They] left about 600 in cache there. |
| | Saturday 28 June | Polson... arrived from Tatlamain with fish say, (106)... |
| 1852 | Friday 25 June | 4 Tatlamain Indians came with fish. |


*Artifacts from Tatl'á Män. Top, left to right: Chi tho (hide scraper), splitting wedge, copper arrow point, two copper bipoints. Bottom: edge of a grinding stone.*

## Long-ago people at Tatl'á Män

As we trace the history of people further back in time we begin to rely more and more on the evidence that has been preserved in the archaeological record. These are the broken and discarded tools and implements that people once used, the bones from the animals that were trapped for their fur or hunted for sustenance, and the traces buried in the ground of old camps and campfires. As we go further back into the past, objects made from bone, antler and wood are found only rarely in archaeological sites due to the acidic soils of the northern forests. Archaeologists studying the Yukon's ancient past must rely mainly on the evidence from stone tools to try to understand people's activities and cultural changes over time.

In the objects and remains uncovered in the archaeological excavations at Tatl'á Män village, the period 200 to 1,200 years ago reflects people living a way of life very much like what has been described by Selkirk elders as their traditional way of life. The beginning of this period, however, is separated from older occupations by a thick layer of volcanic ash that dates to about 1,200 years ago. Archaeologists have found that this ash layer marks the appearance of certain technologies and material culture very different from what came before.

*David Grennan and Martina Jonathan excavating in 1991 at the old village site on Tatl'á Män.*

## Volcanic eruption

About 1,200 years ago (846–848 AD) an immense volcanic eruption occurred at Mount Churchill, near the headwaters of the White River in Alaska. It blanketed most of the southern Yukon with volcanic ash. The way in which the ash now lies on the ground suggests that the eruption took place during the winter.

Fortunately, as a result of this timing, the effects of the ashfall on the lives of people, and on plants and animals, were less severe than they might have been. Much of the ash was probably cleaned out of the lakes and rivers fairly quickly through spring runoff, and removed from slopes to lower-lying areas as the snows melted. The western end of Tatl'á Män appears to have been one such low spot. The ash here is very thick — even after being compressed over more than a millennium, the ash layer is on average 20 cm thick in most places.


It is difficult to imagine the effects of the White River eruption on the people, plants and animals, and fish of the southern and central Yukon, but it was very likely a catastrophe in hard-hit regions. Environmental studies suggest that it may have taken as long as 100 years for the worst-affected areas of land to recover from this event.

*Above: Volcanic eruption in Alaska, March 1986.* Photo: United States Geological Survey
*Left: The white layer of volcanic ash is clearly visible at Tatlá Män village.*

## Effects of the eruption

Some speculate that the people severely affected by the White River eruption sought refuge outside the southern and central Yukon. A provocative research question surrounding the impacts of this eruption is whether it triggered the migrations that saw Na-Dene-speaking people spread throughout parts of British Columbia (BC), the Pacific Northwest and the southwest United States. In the American Southwest, the Navaho and Apache speakers of today are the descendants of the groups who left the subarctic north in the early centuries after the eruption.

These population movements may have helped spread ideas and technologies. One major innovation that appeared at Tatl'á Män about 1,200 years ago was the bow and arrow, which replaced the atlatl throwing spear that people had hunted with for thousands of years. Some archaeologists suggest that maritime hunters from east of the Bering Sea, who spread along the coast of Alaska and throughout the Canadian Arctic, were the source of bow-and-arrow technology.


*Right, above: Eugene Alfred and Martina Jonathan excavating at the old village at Tatlá Män in 1991. A thick layer of White River ash is visible in the excavation trench.*

*Right, below: Selection of arrowheads from the Selkirk First Nation Traditional Territory.*

## Stone, copper and bone/antler tools, 200–1,200 years ago

*This copper point, probably between 150 and 1,000 years old, was found at the old village site.*

About 1,200 years ago people in the Yukon first began to make use of copper in the production of tools, weapons and ornaments. The people of Fort Selkirk and Tatl'á Män most likely obtained their copper nuggets through trade from the source of the copper, Kletsan Creek, near the headwaters of the White River. In the second half of the 19th century, this copper source was owned by the Upper Tanana Copper Chief, who had married a high-ranking woman from Fort Selkirk. In those days, relatives of the Copper Chief regularly travelled to Kletsan Creek for copper following the trail along Tu Nátsat Tagéá (Big Creek) and across the Nisling River to the White River. Copper arrow points have been found during excavations at both Fort Selkirk and at Tatl'á Män village. According to Selkirk First Nation elder Tommy McGinty, arrow points made from copper were used only in war.

Another major change in the material culture in the last 1,200 years was the greater use of bone and antler for tools. Barbed spear and arrow points of antler and bone were common, as were a variety of bone tools, such as fleshers and awls for working hides. Small stone wedges, used for splitting long bones, are also very common.

A new technique for cooking appears in this time period: using heated stones to heat water to boil food. Burned and fire-cracked rocks are found in nearly all campsites of the past millennium. Stone boiling was also how people made bone grease, boiling bone that had been broken up. Also typical of sites of this time are campfires with large amounts of burned bone fragments, which were discarded into campfires after making bone grease.



*Above: An ancient hearth containing fire-cracked rock and burned animal bone, excavated in 2000.*
*Right: Stone wedges for splitting wood, 200 to 1,200 years old.*


SIDEBAR: Excavations at the old village

Preliminary archaeological excavations were carried out at Tatl'á Män village in 1991 and again in 2000 to explore the history of this important place in the more distant past. The excavations revealed that people have lived at the old village at the end of the lake for more than 4,000 years.

The animal bones recovered in the excavations suggest a way of life that has remained largely unchanged over this time period, with people relying on fish and on large and small mammals to survive. Despite the very thick layer of volcanic ash that blanketed the village site about 1,200 years ago, people appear to have returned to the village soon after the eruption. The excavations revealed that campfires were in nearly the same locations after the ash fall as they had been before.

Animal bones and artefacts recovered in the excavations at the old village indicate that unlike in the preceding millennia, people were relying more on cached fish and meat for their survival during the winter months. This suggests that in the period 200 to 1,200 years ago, people spent more time trapping in the winter, reflecting the greater economic importance of trade and the involvement of Tatl'á Män people in increasingly extensive regional trade networks.

*Top, l–r: Wade Gagnon and Pat Van Bibber Sr. at a site at Tatl'á Män, 2000.*
*Above: Hide-working tools excavated from Tatl'á Män; top row: fine cutting tools; bottom row: Hide scrapers known as chi tho.*

## How people made a living, 200 to 1,200 years ago


Looking at where the sites of the last 1,200 years are located on Tatl'á Män (see Map 2), it is clear that people made their living in much the same way as their descendants traditionally did. Fourteen campsites have been discovered that date after the White River ash fall, all in locations that were also used in the past 200 years.

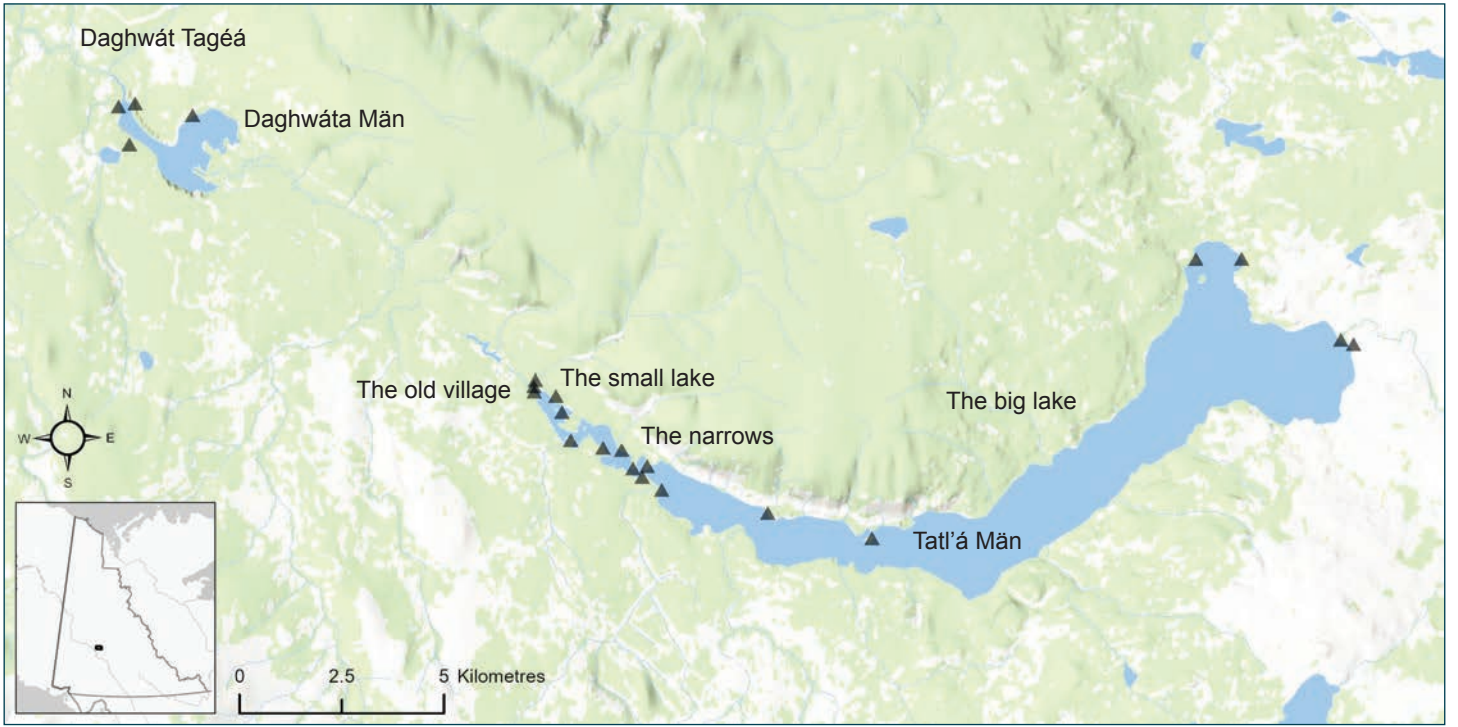
The largest camps of this period are the village and on the narrows of Tatl'á Män. Other sites are smaller camps, probably used for fishing, and beaver and muskrat hunting, or were camps made while people were travelling along the trails. The presence of copper, obsidian and other prized types of stone in the camps of this time period indicate that local and long-distance networks of trade and exchange known from historic times extended well into the past.

*Above, right: Stone scrapers, 200 to 1,200 years old.*
*Below: Incised wooden hook used in setting snares for gopher, found on K'ambi Ddhaw (Ptarmigan Mountain).*

In 2004 an archaeological survey on Daghwáta Män discovered four localities which were used by people in the time before the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company and the gold rush stampeders in the Yukon. Two sites appear to be hunting lookouts used within the past 1,200 years; a third small site was a short-term campsite on the trail to Tatl'á Män. Like Tatl'á Män, a large village site was located at the end of the lake, on both sides of the outlet.

Preliminary excavations at the old village on Daghwáta Män have revealed a history spanning more than 6,000 years, with people returning to the lake in winter to fish, trap and hunt. The tools recovered in the oldest occupation layers include a graver (an incising tool), spokeshave (a hand tool for for working wood) and various end scrapers. They give a glimpse of people incising antler and smoothing spear shafts to manufacture and maintain their hunting implements.


*Right, above: Victoria Castillo during the survey on Daghwáta Män, 2004.*
*Right, below: Artifacts recovered from Daghwáta Män — top, left to right: base of a spear head, end of blade scraper, scraper; bottom: bifacially worked stone knife.*




**Map 2. Campsites: 200 to 1,200 years ago**

**▲ = archaeological site**

In the archaeological survey of Łútsäw Män in 2001, 18 sites were found. The sites span many thousands of years, from the time of the earliest people down to historic times. With one exception the sites are small, short-term camps which mirror traditional use patterns, where people came to Łútsäw Män for the jackfish spawn in February and from time to time for winter fishing and hunting.

One site, located on a low round hill on the east side of Tthi Ndu Män, appears to have been more intensively used. The distinctive tools and technology found at the site indicate occupations dating between 6,000 and 8,000 years ago. A stemmed stone spear point suggests that later people also made use of this location.

A large vein of white quartz outcrops in the area of the site, which was likely why this location was of interest to the people of long ago. Although quartz is difficult to work, the abundance of quartz fragments found on the surface and in all the test pits indicates that people were willing to expend a great deal of effort to produce tools from this attractive rock.

*Left: Large vein of white quartz that was quarried by people staying at Łútsäw Män.*

**SIDEBAR: Long-ago people at Łútsäw Män**

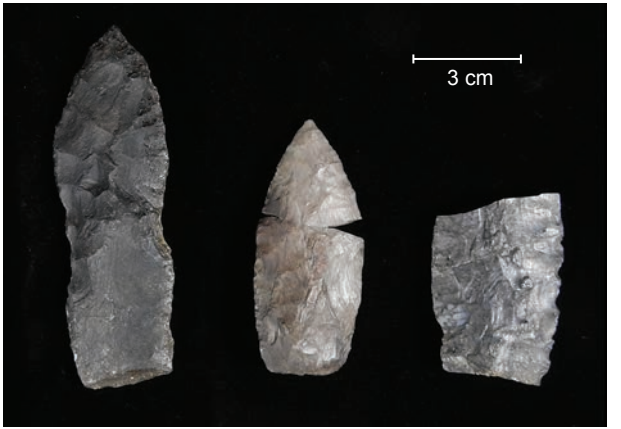

*Stone end scrapers likely used as adze bits for working wood, dating between 1,200 and 6,000 years ago.*

## The spread of forests

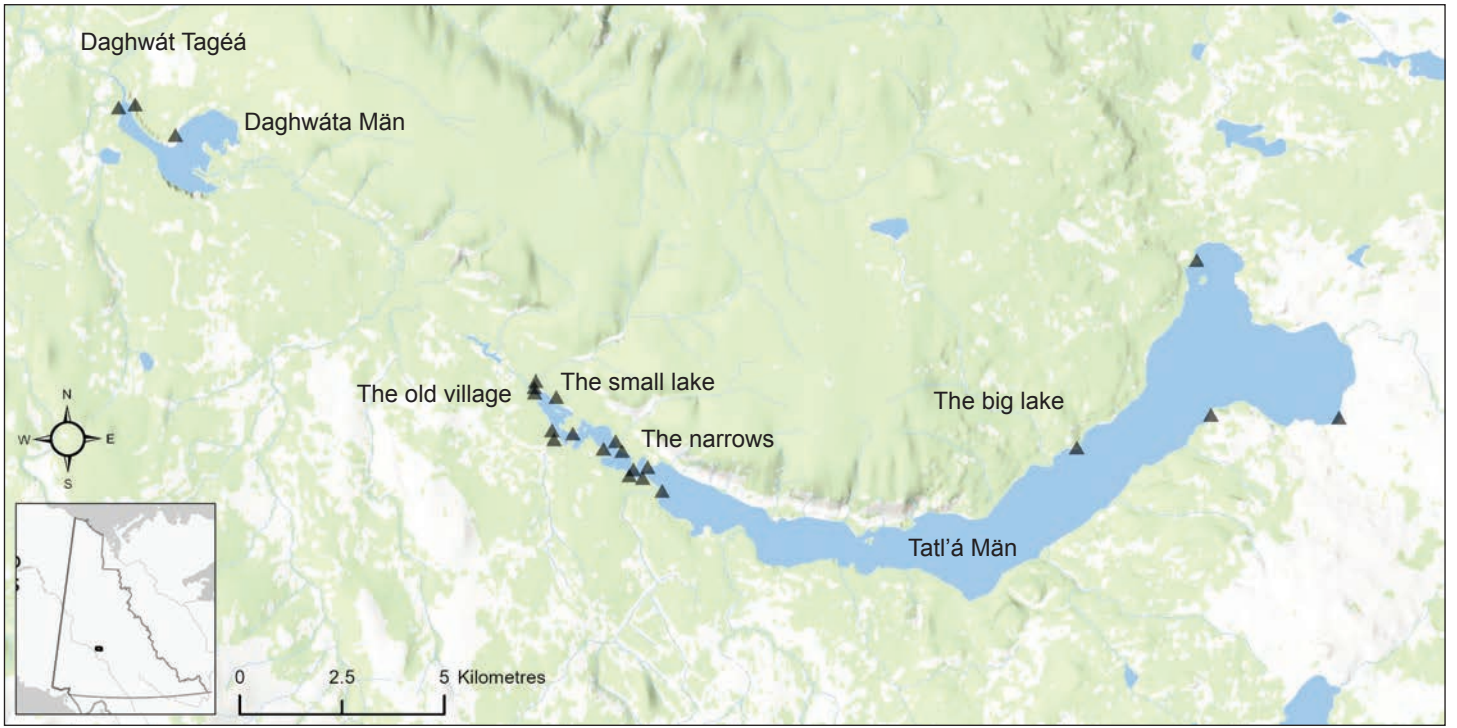
The period between 1,200 and 6,000 years ago was marked by the full development of the modern boreal forest throughout the Yukon. This time period was somewhat warmer than the present, and forests were more open and possibly more widespread. Water levels in the lakes and rivers had stabilized to current levels.

Although caribou were the main big-game subsistence species, reliance on moose gradually increased as remnant steppe bison populations slowly declined to the point of extinction.

Sites of this time period are the most numerous (see Map 3). Of the 29 sites that have been found on Tatl'á Män so far, 20 were occupied by people in the period from 1,200 to 6,000 years ago. At a number of the sites, there is evidence to suggest that people returned to camp at these locations over many generations.



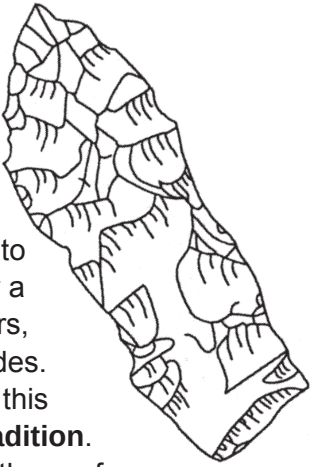

*Right, above: Throwing dart points recovered from below the White River ash at the old village.*
*Right, below: Fabian McGinty screening dirt at an archaeological site, Tatl'á Män, 2000.*




**Map 3. Campsites: 1,200 to 6,000 years ago**

**▲ = archaeological site**

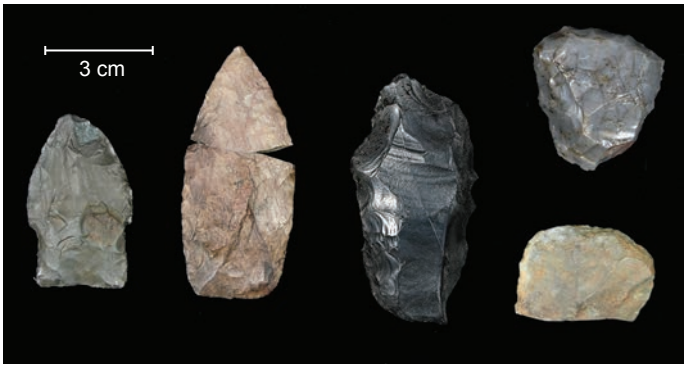
## Stone tools, 1,200 to 6,000 years ago

In the period 1,200 to 6,000 years ago people hunted with throwing darts tipped by chipped stone spear points, rather than with bow and arrow. Many spear points were notched or stemmed at the base, where they were tied onto a spear or dart shaft. The tool kit is dominated by a wide variety of shapes and sizes of stone scrapers, likely used for working wood, bone, antler and hides. Archaeologists label the stone tool technology of this period of Yukon history the **Northern Archaic tradition**.

The tools of this time period are distinct from those of earlier and later times. Some archaeologists have suggested that tool styles are associated with different cultural groups coming into the Yukon from the northern plains and bringing with them new ideas about how to make stone tools. Other archaeologists propose that changes in the environment and how people made a living affected how they made their tools and weapons. Contemporary scientific studies show that ancient populations were fairly stable through time, and that most change we see is due to technological innovations or seasonal subsistence strategies.

*Above: Five end scrapers, all dating to 1,200 to 6,000 years ago, from Tatl'á Män.*
*Above right: Illustration of unfinished stone spear point found at the site of the old village on Tatl'á Män.*




## How people made a living, 1,200 to 6,000 years ago

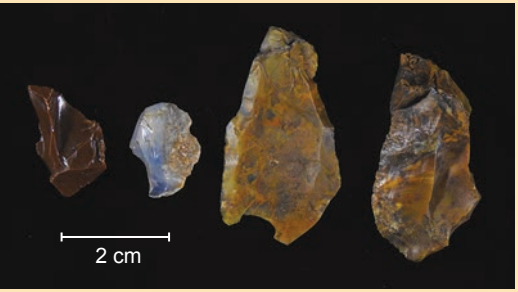
Hunting the more scattered and solitary animals in the northern forests relies on profound familiarity with the movement and habits of game animals and the development of "automatic" technologies in place of active pursuit of game. Snares, deadfalls and other traps were probably perfected as the forests spread across the region. And more and more, lake and river fishing became important in the yearly round.

The way of life of the Northern Archaic tradition people has continued over 6,000 years down to historic times. We see this very clearly at Tatl'á Män. Almost all the sites from this time period were found at the small end of the lake. It is this end of the lake that was traditionally the most important for winter fishing. And the largest camps of the Northern Archaic tradition are exactly those places which were for Selkirk people the main campsites: the old village at the end of the lake, and the narrows of Tatl'á Män.

*Left, above: Dart points, knives and scrapers from Tatl'á Män region.*
*Left: Jerlene Joe and Frederick Johnny at the old village site, 1991.*

SIDEBAR: Trade networks in the past

The presence of a large number of exotic types of stone in the ancient campsites indicate Tatl'á Män people were participating in far-flung networks of trade and exchange from the earliest times. The most desirable and frequently traded stone in the past was obsidian, a natural volcanic glass that is usually black in colour. Obsidian was highly prized for making stone tools because of its appearance and also because it is easy to work and produce extremely sharp edges. The closest source of obsidian to Tatl'á Män is Hoodoo Mountain in the southwest Yukon. Other major sources include Mount Edziza (upper Stikine River area, northern BC), Wiki Peak (in the Nutzotin Mountains, in the eastern portion of the Alaska Range in Alaska) and Batza Tena (located in the middle Koyukuk River drainage in northern interior Alaska). See Map 4.




Obsidian from all these major sources was used by Tatl'á Män people, revealing direct and indirect trade with ancestors of Kaska, Tahltan, Southern Tutchone, Han and Gwich'in people. These trade networks persisted over many thousands of years into early historic times.

Various beautifully coloured chalcedonies and agates from the Carmacks area are also found in sites at Tatl'á Män, particularly a red and gold coloured agate (jasper) found on Murray Creek. The presence of these stones in many sites at Tatl'á Män is evidence that the close relationship that the Tatl'á Män people traditionally had with Little Salmon and Carmacks people goes very far back in time, to the very first people.

A much rarer stone is clinker, a light grey or white vitreous rock that is found in the Tertiary Hills in the Mackenzie Mountains in the Northwest Territories. The recovery of clinker in the excavations of the village site on Tatl'á Män and at a campsite on Daghwáta Män reflects longstanding trade connections with the Shuhtagot'ine Dene/Fort Norman people. In the past they came over the mountains to exchange goods such as clinker for salmon.

*Above: Agates and chalcedonies from the Carmacks area.*


**Map 4. Sources of materials**

● Obsidian ■ Agates and chalcedonies ♦ Clinker ◘ Copper

*Photo, bottom, right: Base of an arrowhead recovered from the old village site. The obsidian was quarried from Mt. Edziza.*

*Microblades formed the cutting edges of early tools;*
*see page 46.*

1 cm

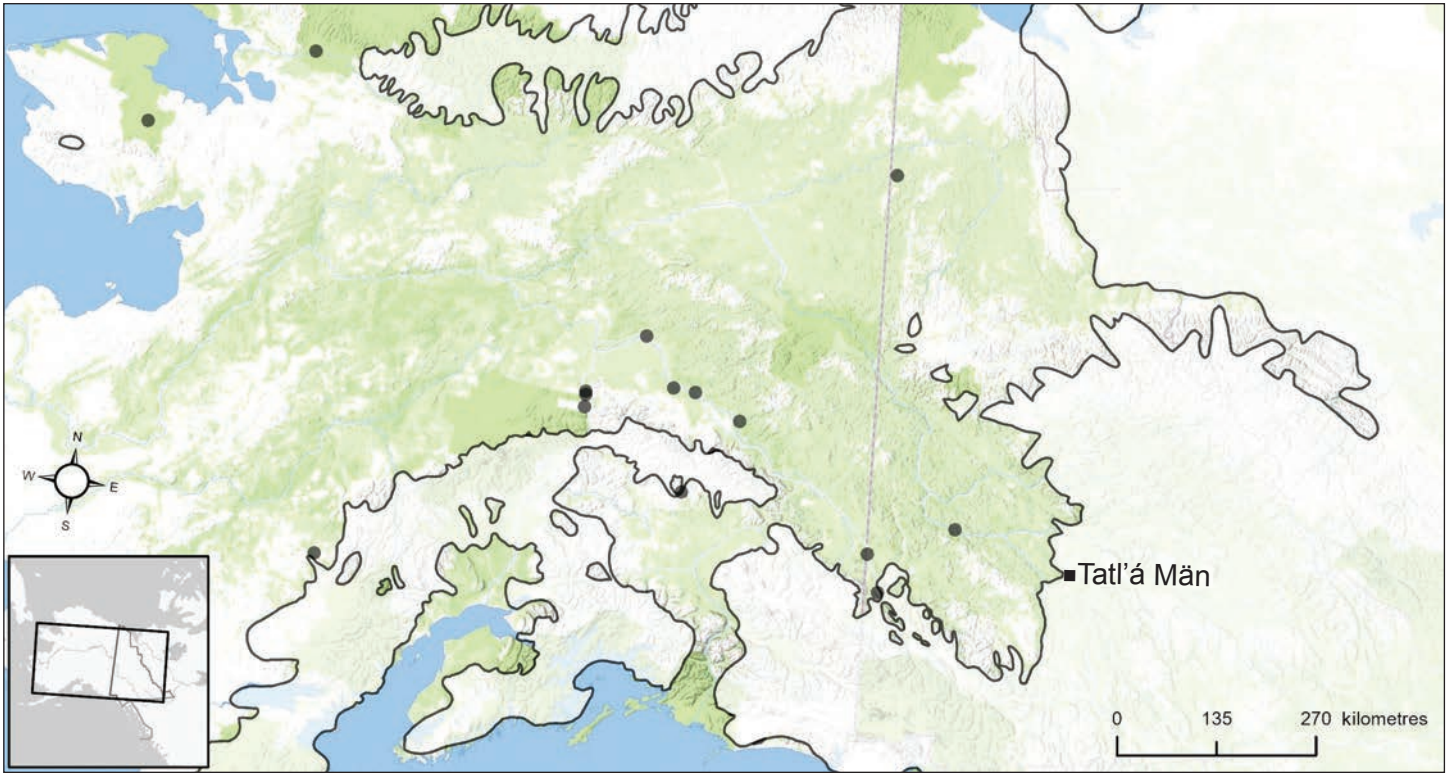
## The First People at Tatl'á Män

At the end of the last ice age, 14,000 years ago, Tatl'á Män lay under the western edge of a massive glacier that covered all of southern Yukon (see Map 5). To the west of Tatl'á Män, the land was not glaciated, but the climate was very cold and dry and the area was sparsely populated. This country was a vast treeless steppe tundra where small, scattered herds of mammoth, horse, bison, elk and caribou roamed.

Though we don't know when the first people came to Tatl'á Män, it would have been after the massive glaciers melted and the outwash rivers dried up, around 9,000 years ago. When people first came to Tatl'á Män, the lake waters were higher than at present, and the forest had only just begun to spread into the region. At that time, caribou and bison were probably the main game animals that people hunted.

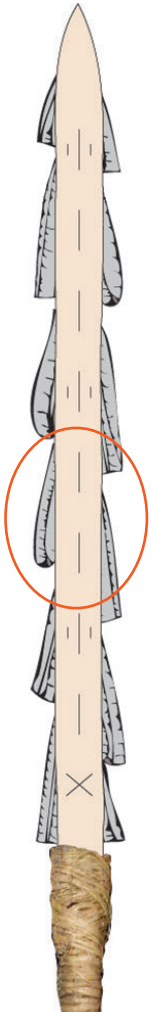
The remains of small campsites have been discovered on the north shore of Tatl'á Män, and at the western outlet of Daghwáta Män. These may be the camps of the first people to live in the Daghwáta Tagéá drainage. These sites were visited only briefly by archaeologists, so not a great deal is known about them, but the few stone tools found there resemble those used by many people in Alaska and the Yukon between 6,000 and 13,000 years ago. Archaeologists have given the name *Little Arm phase* or *Denali complex* to the particular stone tools that were made in this period: small stone microblades that were inset into bone or antler spearheads (see page 46), and stone burins used for carving wood and bone objects.

*Right: Frederick Johnny at the 1991 excavation at the old village site at Tatl'á Män; Tommy McGinty's old cabin is in the background.*




**Map 5. Glacial limits, 20,000 years ago**

- **Significant ice-age sites**



## Stone tools of the First People

Perhaps the most distinctive among the Denali complex stone tools, between about 6,000 and 13,000 years old, was the **microblade**. These are small stone blades, similar to razor blades. The microblades were set in a groove along the edge of a wood or antler knife or spear point to form the cutting edge of the tool. When the blades broke or became dull, they were removed and replaced with new blades.


Another characteristic stone tool of the Denali complex was the **burin**. This tool, which was probably set in a handle of wood or antler, was used along a sharp edge for scraping or whittling wood, antler and bone. Stone gravers are also common in tool kits of this time period, used for incising or grooving wood or bone/antler.

*Left: Microblades (circled in red) inserted in an antler spear point.*
*Above: Two burins (centre and right) from the oldest camps on Tatl'á Män; the tool on the left has been used for scraping, much like a burin. The identifiers written on these tools are Borden numbers. Every archaeological site in Canada has a unique Borden number.*

## How the First People made a living

Looking at where the two earliest sites on Tatl'á Män are located (Map 6), it appears as if hunting was the main activity there. One site is located on a spit of land at the narrowest point of the big lake. This is also a very shallow section of the lake. Perhaps the site was a location for intercepting caribou herds crossing the big lake.

Although archaeologists did not find evidence of Denali complex people occupying the main fishing sites on Tatl'á Män, they know that fishing was an important part of the economy. Excavations at the village site at Daghwáta Män in 2004 revealed that Denali complex people returned to Daghwáta Män to fish over many seasons. Due to higher lake levels at Tatl'á Män before 6,000 years ago, it is likely that Denali Complex people had their fish camps at locations that have yet to be found by archaeologists.

*Above, right: View of the point of land where the first people of Tatl'á Män lived.*


**Map 6. Campsites of the First People: more than 6,000 years ago**

**▲ = archaeological site**

## Tatl'á Män today

The Selkirk First Nation Final Agreement, signed in 1997, provides for the creation of a special management area for Tatl'á Män to ensure that the important fish resources of the lake are conserved; that Selkirk people are fully involved in the management of the fish resources; that the importance of Tatl'á Män to Selkirk People is recognized; and that Selkirk people's use of the lake is protected. The Ta'tla Mun Special Management Area Management Plan was completed and signed by Selkirk First Nation and the Government of Yukon in 2013.

Also a provision of the Selkirk First Nation Final Agreement was the creation of an area that ensures the conservation of both fish and wildlife in the Łútsäw Män area; recognizes the importance of the Łútsäw Män area to Selkirk people; and protects the use of the area by Selkirk people. The Lhutsaw Wetland Habitat Protection Area Management Plan was also completed and signed by Selkirk First Nation and the Government of Yukon in 2013.

*Clara Silverfox cutting fish on the ice.*
Source: Betty Baptiste, Selkirk First Nation

Under the Selkirk First Nation Final Agreement the entirety of Daghwáta Män is protected as First Nation Land. Selkirk people continue to rely on Tatl'á Män, Łútsäw Män and Daghwáta Män for their fall and winter fishery. Much of Selkirk people's history is on these lakes: their ancestors have been fishing and hunting at the lakes since the end of the last Ice Age.

*Left: Johnson Edwards at Tatl'á Män village with excavation gear coming in for the 1991 archaeology project.*

At Tatl'á Män, not only Selkirk people came here, but people from all around — from Little Salmon, Champagne and Tatchun too. Chilkat Tlingit came to the lake to trade in the 19th century. The whitefish fisheries at Tatl'á Män also sustained newcomers to the Yukon: the men from the first Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Selkirk and later, the stampeders looking for gold in the Klondike.

Selkirk First Nation now holds annual culture camps on the lake in the winter to teach the younger generation how to set nets under the ice and the history of the lake. It is through the young people that the stories and traditional knowledge of Tatl'á Män are preserved.

*Above, centre: Fort Selkirk. As set out in the Selkirk First Nation Final Agreement, Fort Selkirk is now a Yukon Historic Site. It is co-owned and co-managed by the Selkirk First Nation and the Government of Yukon.*

*Right: David Grennan with a pike.*

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