**Digging into the past**

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**Dr. Gruhn and her team discover our history**

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Until about 10,000 years ago, the Calling Lake area was covered with a thick layer of glacial ice which had come from the northeast. When the ice melted, the lake was formed. The lake was larger than it is now, and the old beaches are high above its present shore.

Very soon after the ice withdrew, early Indians moved into the area and settled on the shore of the lake. The meager remains of their small temporary camps, consisting of scattered stone flakes and tools with charcoal from their fires, have been found buried in the old beach sands and silts at several localities on the east side of the lake. We have little direct evidence of the way of life of these early people; but we may presume that they depended on hunting, fishing, and gathering of wild plant foods for their livelihood; and travelled about the countryside throughout the year in small family groups, using lean-tos or tipis covered with bark or skins as shelter.

The tools and weapons of the early Indians show they had important relations with people farther to the north and northwest. The technological tradition of making blades and microblades, long narrow flakes of stone has been found at other early sites in the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, Alaska, and in northern Eurasia. This tradition continued for a long time in the Calling Lake area. Certain styles of projectile points, spear points or dart points, which occur in the Calling Lake sites are also found at prehistoric Indian campsites on the prairies indicating that the Calling Lake Indians had contacts with those to the south.

It is probable that the Calling Lake area was occupied continuously by Indian people from the time the glacial ice left until historic times; for the remains of their camps, stone flakes and fragments of their tools and weapons are abundant along the east side of the lake. However, scientific archeological excavations to date have been limited; and we do not as yet have a complete record of the Indian occupation of the area. With their migratory way of life, various groups of Indians have come and gone in the area throughout the centuries. The Indian people now living here are not the direct descendants of the earliest people. Historical records indicate that the Cree spread into this western part of their territory only several centuries ago.

**Excerpts from the Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Alberta,** by Dr. R. Gruhn

With a grant from the National Museum of Canada, Dr. Gruhn and Dr. Bryan of the University of Alberta conducted a survey and excavations located on the property of Mr. Kenneth Sutton. Two east-west trenches were established.

The topsoil zone consisted of a turf of thick grass roots in a matrix of black loam. Excavation procedure was to cut and peel this turf off in strips or blocks, then search it for artifacts. Stone flakes and artifacts were numerous in the topsoil zone.

An interesting stone technology was represented at the Sutton site. Of major significance was the presence of microblades, blades, and burins. Other small tools of uncertain function are represented in the collection of stone artifacts, in addition to projectile points, scrapers of various forms and sizes, knives, and heavy tools such as choppers and hammerstones.

The raw materials used were quartzite and chert. All of the larger tools and most of the small ones (microblades) were made of quartzite. Preliminary examination of the material indicates that primary flakes were struck from small chert pebbles by a bipolar technique, in which the pebbles were probably held on an anvil and struck with another stone.

The Sutton site has significantly demonstrated the existence of a sub-Arctic blade industry in northern Alberta. The variety of projectile points would suggest a considerable time range in occupation.