

Archaeological Investigations at the Salmon Beds

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Site Description

The Salmon Beds Site is situated on the west side of the Columbia River between 300 and 800 metres north of the outlet of Windermere Lake. At the outlet of Windermere Lake the river channel narrows to about 10 m for a distance of 200 to 300 m. The channel then widens out to form larger pools. The surface of the site gently undulates due to effects of river channeling, creek drainage and groundwater seepage. The site has been largely built up due to flooding and over bank deposition. Vegetation consists of sedges and grass in the higher portions of the site and bulrushes in wetter portions of the site. Further north of the site there are remnant root clumps of willow, but these do appear to be thriving due to increasing water levels.



Figure 2: View of the Columbia River September 1998 showing the water level near the upper surface of Site EdQa 121. The area excavated is on the strip of land between the river and the creek. Atholmer B.C. is in the background. (Parks Canada 9001T-113t).

From May through September the water level of the Columbia River flows over the surface of the site (Figure 2). It is only in the late fall and through the winter that the river level falls to its minimal level approximately 1 metre below the top of the site surface. At lowest water level, a gently sloping mud bank is exposed. This exposes numerous fire broken rock, bones and other cultural debris in the eroded surface (Figure 3). Eroded cultural materials extend northward along the Columbia River at least 500 m. At that point the banks become too water saturated to permit walking, however submerged materials continue for an undetermined distance.



Figure 3 View east of the eroded bank of Site EdQa 121 in the March 1999

The site probably extended southward along the river bank and onto the shore of Windermere Lake but that entire area has been greatly disturbed by the historic community of Athalmer B.C. and by more recent developments such as a highway bridge, modern commercial and beachside developments.

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