



# Preface

*Brian Hayden*



This is the final report of the Fraser River Investigations into Corporate Group Archaeology Project, a project that has lasted for 13 years. This has certainly been one of the great intellectual and collaborative undertakings of my lifetime. I trust that readers will recognize in the many contributions that make up this report, the remarkable interweaving of many divergent disciplines, lives, and perspectives into a united interpretation of the social and economic organization of a prehistoric community on the Northwest Plateau. This report is special for a number of reasons. Firstly, the nature of the archaeological remains at Keatley Creek are in my estimation, one of our most important national and world heritage treasures. The site is extraordinary in terms of its size for people following a hunter-gatherer way of life (with an estimated peak population of 1,200–1,500). The large houses are extraordinary for pithouses and the preservation of organic remains and stratigraphy is excellent.

Secondly, this report is special because it seeks one of the most elusive entities archaeologists have sought from the beginnings of their systematic exploration of the past: notably, the basic social and economic and political organization in specific prehistoric societies. How did this organization mold the lives of people on a day to day basis? This is the focus of the present volume. There have been many professional archaeologists who have said that such questions cannot be answered. There have been many others who adamantly maintain that such

questions can be answered. However, while both sides have reveled in pronouncements, few archaeologists have successfully demonstrated how even basic aspects of social or economic organization can be reconstructed from the remote past.

This volume demonstrates that with determination, collaboration, and a little luck, a fairly detailed reconstruction of past social and economic organization is certainly possible. This was the goal of the project from the beginning: to understand the social and organization of unusually large houses (residential corporate groups). The results have sometimes been surprising and intellectually exhilarating, as the following chapters document.

Third, as alluded to above, this report is remarkable for the unusual breadth of data and disciplines that have all contributed to making this report a landmark study in prehistoric archaeology. While I originally defined the basic problem orientation of the project, I have had the good fortune to have been aided from the outset by a remarkable team of collaborators, excavators, and analysts in specialized fields. I consider the substantial success of this project to be a tribute to all of them. Many of the authors of the following chapters helped plan the excavation and analytical strategies to be pursued from the outset of the project, and many were on the first field crew that tested the first housepits in a hesitant and

hopeful manner, unsure as to whether we would find any intact or recognizable living floor deposits upon which much of the fate of the project depended. Diana Alexander, Karla Kusmer, Dale Donovan, Dana Lepofsky, and Mike Rousseau were all members of that first field crew and planning committee. They helped modify our strategy as new realities confronted our initial idealistic models, and they continued their involvement in the project over the years in analyzing the overwhelming amounts of material recovered. I consider this final report on the work at Keatley Creek as one of the best examples of what collaborative, interdisciplinary archaeology can produce.

Fourth, this report is special because it substantially increases our depth of understanding in the study of complex hunter-gatherers. Complex hunter-gatherers have become very prominent in the theoretical domain of archaeology in the past two decades because they now appear to be the key to understanding most of the important cultural developments of the last 30,000 years of prehistory, including the emergence of prestige technologies, economic-based competition, private ownership, socioeconomic hierarchies, slavery, domestication of plants and animals, sedentism, and many tangentially related phenomena. This report also provides a major contribution to the systematic and detailed study of site formation processes which have rarely been documented in any thorough or systematic fashion.

Finally, this report is special because substantial parts of it have been built upon an in-depth understanding of the living descendants of the prehistoric Plateau peoples. We were privileged not only to read early ethnographic accounts of traditional Plateau lifeways as recorded by James Teit and others, but also to be able to work with a number of elders from the surrounding First Nations communities. From them we learned a great deal about traditional practices and especially how resources were used. This valuable information constituted a study of traditional resource use that was exceptional in its coverage and documentation of traditional lifeways. This study was published by the University of British Columbia Press under the title of: *A Complex Culture of the British Columbia Plateau* (Edited by B. Hayden). I certainly would like to extend my very deep gratitude to everyone in the native communities that aided us in this work, and especially to former Chief, Desmond Peters, Senior, of Pavilion.

The quest to recover past social and economic organizations on the Plateau has been long and arduous, and it has led to many unexpected ventures, both geographical and intellectual. I have been constantly surprised by new facts, new relationships, new perceptions, new conclusions, and new questions. However, the quest has never become dull or boring. If

anything, it has been too interesting and too captivating. At times, it has been difficult to hold all the threads together in order to make a coherent fabric of the past at Keatley Creek and to create coherent theoretical images of the past. However, the main themes have remained clear and resilient. The venture has been a wonderful growing experience, even if I have at times been exhausted by the endeavor.

I am confident that as a result of the excavations at Keatley Creek, the new conceptual, methodological, and theoretical approaches that I and the other analysts have developed will stimulate further advances in the exciting area of documenting and understanding past social and economic organization. However, many of the advances that we associate with this project have been fortuitous and serendipitous. I certainly did not foresee or plan for all of them. Many of the advances were developed by interested students and analysts who became intrigued by the project and developed their own innovative ways of looking at the data. Once again, I must acknowledge my very good fortune in having such interested, dedicated, and talented individuals involved in this project. It is above all, they who have made it successful.

## Organization of the Volumes

The report is organized into three volumes. Each volume has a separate thematic focus, these are: taphonomy, socioeconomic organization, and excavation documentation. This organization is somewhat different from traditional archaeological site report formats where all the information pertaining to a given type of material such as lithics or fauna is presented together in a single chapter or section. Given the complexity of the database at Keatley Creek and the complexity of the issues being addressed, it was thought that a traditional type of material-focused organization would make it difficult for readers to follow all of the related arguments, models, and issues related to the central themes of the research at Keatley Creek. We therefore chose to structure the organization of these volumes around the major research questions at the site, especially site formation processes and prehistoric socioeconomic organization. For those accustomed to the more traditional material-focused organization of site reports, this may at first seem somewhat awkward since some of the information on lithics, for example, is presented in all three volumes. However, after reading a few chapters, and especially with some judicious use of the table of contents and indexes of the volumes, readers should be able to orient themselves sufficiently to find any type of information that they are interested in. We also have included frequent chapter cross-references to direct readers to other relevant data or interpretations in the report.

## Volume I

Because questions of taphonomic biases, disturbance, mixing, and basic issues of accurate identification of the origins of sediments had to be dealt with prior to any consideration of artifactual patterning, the first volume dealt with general formation processes at the Keatley Creek site. Chapters included sediment analyses, microfabric analyses, faunal taphonomy, botanical taphonomy, lithic strategies and source identifications, and specific comparisons of rim to roof to floor formation processes. Background chapters on basic geological, environmental, climatic, typological, and dating issues were also included in this first volume.

## Volume II

This, the second volume, deals with evidence for social and economic organization at the Keatley Creek site. Overall differences between housepit assemblages are dealt with as well as differences in the internal organization of space and domestic groups. Prestige artifacts are analyzed, including the large assemblage of domesticated dogs from HP 7. In addition to botanical, faunal, chemical, and lithic patterning, this volume contains an ethnographic summary of accounts of pithouse life, an analysis of architecture and heating strategies, an overall synthesis of what the socioeconomic organization of the Keatley Creek community was probably like, and an evaluation of the results of the Fraser River Investigations into Corporate Group Archaeology project.

## Volume III

In order to present as full a picture of the data upon which the previous and the following interpretations are based, relatively detailed reports of all the test trenches and extended excavations are presented in the third volume. The third volume also contains a description of the lithic typology used by the project, an illustrated catalog of all the modified bone tools from the site, and a special analysis of unusual scapula tools at the site. The intention is for this volume to be used as a kind of reference book, similar to a dictionary. It should be consulted whenever any questions about excavation or stratigraphic details of a housepit arise from reading analyses or interpretations in the other volumes.

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