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SITE SURVEY AND EXCAVATION:  
SETON PORTAGE - SHALALTH  
A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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cariboo college

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE SURVEY AND EXCAVATION  
Seton Portage-Shalalth  
A PRELIMINARY REPORT  
by  
W. Derek Wales

Submitted to the Archaeological Sites  
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Social Science Department  
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#### ABSTRACT

During the early summer of 1974 Dr. A.H. Stryd was approached by the Seton Portage Indian Band to have archaeological work done in their area. Dr. Stryd was unable to oblige the request and suggested the project to the author, who accepted. Subsequently during July and August of 1974 the author conducted a Ruppe type 4 archaeological site survey in the Seton Portage-Shalalth area of B.C. Also, during the final three weeks of August salvage work was conducted at site EeRn 11. This report presents a preliminary account of both the site survey and salvage work.

#### AREA DESCRIPTION

The Seton Valley containing Seton and Anderson Lake lies in the Coast Mountain Sub-Area of B.C. Seton and Anderson Lake are separated by an undated slide deposit  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 miles long. The main aspect of the relief is its ruggedness. The Pacific Ranges of the Coast Mountains usually exceeding 8000' and often 9000' in elevation, are the dominant landform. The Seton Valley is an excellent example of a valley which has been heavily scoured and overdeepened by glacial ice. Other evidence of glaciation includes hanging tributary valleys, cirque basins, and scattered remnant glaciers still clinging to alpine ridges (The Quesnel-Lillooet Bulletin Area, Bulletin Area No. 5, 1973).

Seton Valley intersects the eastern Coast Ranges. The rain shadow effect produced by the mountains causes a decrease of annual rainfall as one travels from west to east. The change in precipitation is abrupt enough in the study area for the effects to be easily seen in the variety and distribution of plant species. The eastern end of Anderson Lake is densely forested. The climax species here is Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Undergrowth is heavy on the lower slopes near the shoreline and a variety of deciduous trees occur near the water courses. The north shore has been heavily



disturbed both by fire and clearing for hydro transmission lines. Vegetation is chiefly bunch grass in recently cleared areas. On areas of older burn overs ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) is the dominant species. Further up the slopes ponderosa pine gives way to Douglas fir and Engleman spruce.

Advancing eastward the ground cover changes dramatically in response to the hotter drier conditions of the Interior Plateau. Vegetation includes ponderosa pine, *Opuntia*, Sunflower *Rhus Glabra*, and *Artemisia Tridentifolia*.

A point of interest concerning the prehistoric vegetation zones was the annual burning of the upper level growth by the Indians to encourage more range for the propagation of deer (V. Adrian, pers. com.). Chief Adrian states that until recent time the meadow land was 1000' lower than present due to this forest control.

#### SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The only previous archaeological work done in the area was a brief site survey conducted in 1969 by T. Brown. Therefore the authors primary objectives were: 1) to compile a complete inventory of sites in the survey area and 2) to systematically surface collect diagnostic material in order to 'provide comparative data about the chronological placement and functional nature of (the) various sites' (Redman and Watson, 1970: 279). However this second objective proved impossible to fulfill due to the general lack of surface finds. The only diagnostic artifact found (1 kamloops side notched point from EeRn 59) was associated with gravel deposits beneath the BCR railway near the site and could be intrusive. One reason for this lack of surface material could be the heavy forest litter on most sites. Surface finds are also more readily obtained where a site has been disturbed. However even disturbed sites revealed little material and never diagnostic material.



### SURVEY STRATEGY

A Ruppel type 4 survey (Ruppel, 1966) was utilized to accomplish the objective of a 'complete' site inventory. The general plan was to designate a survey area roughly centered in the Seton Portage-Shalalth region. It was the authors purpose to survey the entire designated area with equal intensity. Therefore the size of the survey area depended upon:

- 1) the topography of the survey area
- 2) the capabilities of the surveyors
- 3) the available time

The arbitrarily selected eastern boundary was 565000m west, using the universal transverse mercator grid and the western boundary was 122° 20' 00'' west (ie: the boundary between EeRn and EeRm). The northern and southern limits were drawn at the 1500' elevation level (Fig. 1). The universal transverse mercator grid contained within these boundaries was then divided into 250m squares. All squares were then surveyed with consistent intensity. However that terrain which was too precipitous and therefore too dangerous for survey was omitted from the survey area.

### SURVEY TACTICS

This survey was totally pedestrian. The initial number of surveyors including myself was 7. On the basis of this number it was formulated that each 250m sq. would be surveyed by all workers. All surveyors would traverse directly across each 250m sq. The centre (ie: forth) surveyor would be responsible for appx. a 16m swath on either side of him while the remaining members would be responsible for appx. an 18m swath on either side. Without transect lines this pattern was difficult to maintain. However by relating our positions on maps with natural and cultural features and using a pocket altimeter to determine the elevation, adequate accuracy in survey was kept.



A source of weighed results may have occurred when the number of surveyors was increased to ten (including myself). To allow consistency in survey and to maintain organization of the survey party the survey pattern was not altered. Instead the survey party would now consist of 4 single surveyors and 3 teams of 2. Naturally the teams of 2 would have a wider visual field which may account for a bias in the survey results.

#### SURVEY TASKS

Each surveyor was responsible for observing a swath 16-18m wide on either side of him (see Tactics). Although all surveyors were given instructions in basic survey methods, time was not available to train the surveyors in field notebook or ASAB form recording. Therefore it was the authors responsibility to record all sites.

#### DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

A total of 61 sites were recorded during the 1974 survey. This brings the number of recorded sites in the surveyed area from 20 to 81. The lack of surface material is reflected in the fact that only 4 sites (7%) were recorded on the basis of surface finds. Cache pit sites accounted for 20% (14), housepit sites for 44% (27), burials for 3% (2), and historic sites for 3% (2), (Table 1). Twelve (20%) of the sites were classified merely as cultural depressions. These are sites the function of which is questionable. They may be the remains of sweat lodges, ovens, isolation huts, cache pits, or even housepits. However the assigning of a definite classification did not seem justifiable.

#### 1 HOUSEPIT SITES

The size of the housepit villages ranged from 1-17. On the basis of a hierarchical cluster analysis with which Dr. A.H. Stryd defined four sizes of housepit villages (A.H. Stryd, pers. com.) 22 (81%) of the villages fall into the 'small' category (1-4 housepits) while the remaining 5 (19%) fall into the 'medium-small' category (5-16 housepits). EeRn 59 which



has 17 housepits falls into none of the classifications and was included with the 'medium-small' as this category seems to most reasonably encompass it. No villages fell into the 'medium-large' (23-34) or 'large' (>75) categories.

The same hierarchical analysis was also used to define the division between large (>14m) and small (≤14m) housepits. All except 5 of the housepits fell into the 'small' category of housepit size.

All housepits were located in close proximity of the lakes. The highest elevation recorded for a housepit location was 1050'. However the average elevation was 800-850' with many sites situated just above lake level. In some instances it was discernable where housepits had been constructed on past beach levels of the lake, an excellent example being EeRm 13.

Although all evidence of past human activity was sought in the field cultural depressions (eg: housepits, cache pits) constitute the majority of recorded sites. This type of site may represent a bias on the part of the surveyors at the expense of less obvious features. However this possible bias was recognized in the field and a conscious effort was made to avoid it.

## II CACHE PIT SITES

The size of cache pit sites ranged from 1-17. Their diameters varied between 1-3½m. This type of site was found throughout the survey area and was not isolated to any one zone such as lake shore or stream gulleys.

## III CULTURAL DEPRESSIONS

These are depressions whose classification was questionable. Some have been given tentative labels such as sweat lodge or isolation hut. These labels are based on the geographical situation of the site (eg: near a stream bed, in a secluded area).

In classifying sites during survey it must be realized that these are functional categories often based on insufficient empirical data. These categories should be regarded as null-hypotheses until proper research has been executed to verify the classification. Therefore the classification of sites offered



in this report should not be considered permanent.

#### IV BURIALS

Two burials were recorded during survey. Both had been extremely disturbed. Few human remains were evident on the surface and both sites were reported by local informants. One human skull, mandible absent, was found on the lake shore beneath EeRm 7. However investigation did not reveal any burial feature. The skull had been impaled on a stick and could be intrusive into the site area.

#### V HISTORIC SITES

Both historic sites recorded are probably related to the 1856 'Gold Rush'. EeRn 71 is the remains of a dugout canoe while EeRn 70 is the sunken remains of a vessel reported to be the first 'white' boat on Anderson Lake for the transportation of miners (V. Adrian, pers. com).

#### CONCLUSION

This was an intensive (Ruppe type 4) as opposed to an extensive (Ruppe type 1) survey. A Ruppe type 4 survey was utilized to solve the primary objective of recording all sites in the survey area. Although this would be an overconfident statement to offer, the author is satisfied that this method of survey afforded the best probability of achieving the objective.

The results of the survey do not seem to reveal any significant concentration or cluster of sites. Suitable land for habitation of other site construction is scarce in this region and appears to be a major factor in site location. Generally housepits follow the pattern of being situated close to the lake and near a source of running water. Benches, the result of past beach levels, are often utilized for site placement. Beyond this no patterns are discernable.

### ABSTRACT

The following is a report on salvage excavation at site EeRn 11 during the final 3 weeks of August 1974.

### INTRODUCTION

EeRn 11 is situated on a rise 70' above the eastern end of Anderson Lake (Fig. 1). The site consists of a single housepit and 36 cultural depressions of undetermined function averaging 4m in diameter. The housepit measures 10m in diameter and contains 2 of the 36 cultural depressions. The single housepit containing the two depressions and four depressions surrounding the housepit were destined to be destroyed by house construction activities. Salvage excavations were conducted on this portion of EeRn 11 which was to be destroyed.

### OBJECTIVES

The objectives for excavation were:

- 1) To make statements concerning the total housepit pertaining to-i structure of the housepit  
ii activities within the housepit  
iii activity areas within the housepit  
iv age of the housepit
- 2) To determine if the cultural chronology as defined by A.H. Stryd at Lillooet (Stryd, 1973) applies to this region.
- 3) To determine the nature of the 36 cultural depressions that comprise the majority of features at EeRn 11.

### STRATEGY AND TACTICS

In order to make statements concerning the total housepit it is necessary to excavate either:

- 1) the total housepit, or
- 2) a representative sample



The plan was to stratify the housepit into:

- 1) housepit
- 2) cultural depressions

The housepit was then mapped and a grid system representing 1x1 metre units lain over the map. The number of units totalled 71. These units were then numbered and divided into two groups; the housepit units and the cultural depression units (Fig. 3). Twelve units were then selected from the housepit group of units, this number being a good representative sample on the basis of T.M. Blakes sampling study (Blake, 1974). After these units had been completed random units would continue to be selected until, ideally, the entire housepit had been excavated. However time permitted the excavation of only 15 random units (Fig. 3).

In order to determine the nature of the 36 depressions that comprise the majority of EeRn 11 the two depressions within the housepit were totally excavated. To determine if these depressions were representative of the other 36, one of the depressions surrounding the housepit was randomly choosen (Dep. 3) and a 1x1m test unit arbitrarily excavated. This was in order to provide comparative data. The number of excavated units totalled 29 (Fig. 3)

#### TASKS

Each unit was dug by a team of two. Every unit was excavated in 10cm arbitrary levels with trowels except for the final 2 days when 20cm levels were employed. Time was not available to instruct crew members in recording techniques although all were given instructions in excavation. The author was responsible for all data recording and lab work.

#### DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

A total of 106 artifacts, 17 identifiable animal remains, and 7 features were found from the 29 units excavated at EeRn 11.

DEPRESSION 5

This depression was distinguishable on the surface and was thought to be intrusive. However on investigation the depression proved to be a small pit dug into the housepit floor, the visible surface depression probably being the result of differential roof collapse. No material was found which would help determine the function of this pit although some form of storage area would seem feasible.

DEPRESSION 6

This was a large ( $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ m) depression intrusive into the southern portion of the housepit. It is presumed that this depression is contemporary and served the same function as the 36 depressions of similar size which comprise most of EeRn 11. The depression severs the two floors of the housepit and extends appx. 100cm into sterile. The depression has very steep walls and is generally a deep bowl shape. Due to the presense of wood fragments (presumably post remains) it is believed that the depression had a roof structure and served a habitation or large storage function (Fig. 2).

FLOOR

The housepit seems to have two floors as evidenced by 2 dark humus layers averaging 5-7cm thick on some but not all faces. The construction of depression 6 which was intrusive into the housepit has disturbed a great deal of the deposits in appx. half of the southern portion of the housepit (Fig. 2).

PIT FEATURE

A pit, not distinguishable on the surface, was found near the eastern wall/rim junction of the housepit. The pit is appx. 1m in diameter and is 120cm deep with near vertical walls. Little material was recovered from the pit to determine function.

POSTS

Numerous small fragments of wood were encountered during excavation which were probably related to the roof support structure. Generally the roof deposits were 30-40cm thick.



Two posts were recovered which showed the angle of stand (one post roughly in the centre of the housepit leaned  $35^{\circ}$  south while the other in the northern portion of the housepit leaned  $60^{\circ}$  north). All other post features were found in a horizontal position. All post remains were small (averaging 20-30cm long and 10cm in diameter) and were in a poor state of preservation.

#### BONE

A total of 556.8g of bone were recovered during excavation. Only 17 of these bones were identifiable although all are probably the remains of mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). All large bone had been cracked open, presumably for the extraction of marrow. In general the bone was found round the periphery of the housepit wall/rim junction.

#### BIRCH BARK

A total of 562.3g of birch bark rolls and sheets were recovered. The birch bark did not seem to be concentrated in any one area. This bark may have been used to wrap and store food or it may also be the by-product of basket making.

#### ARTIFACTS: Depression 3

Five artifacts and 1 carbon sample were recovered from the single test unit in depression 3.

##### Leather Fragments-EeRn 11: D3-21

1 leather fragment 72.7mm x 12.0mm. Five stitch holes are present, 3 at one extremity and 2 at the other.

##### Whistle or Bead-EeRn 11: D3-20

1 polished bone whistle or bead 47.8mm x 11.4mm. One end has been hollowed and a hole has been drilled through the middle (width) of the artifact.

##### Ground Nephrite-EeRn 11: D3-23

1 polished fragment of nephrite 54.8mm x 36.6mm with evidence of sawing on one side. The remaining 2 artifacts are retouched flakes.

ARTIFACTS: Depression 5

17 artifacts, 1 carbon sample, 1 wood sample, 1 dendro sample and 7 identifiable bone fragments were recovered from the 4 units in depression 5.

Awls-EeRn 11: 1-D5-(12&38)

1 ground metapodial awl 93.0mm long and 1 distal end bone awl fragment were found. Fifteen retouched flakes comprise the remaining artifacts.

ARTIFACTS: Depression 6

From the 9 units comprising depression 6, 36 artifacts, 2 carbon samples, 2 wood samples, 1 dendro sample, and 5 identifiable bone fragments were recovered.

Pentagonal Biface or Contracting Based Point - EeRn 11: 1-D6-34

1 small (34.0mm x 20.0mm) pentagonal biface or proximal end of a contracting point (identification difficult) (Table 2).

Side Notched Point-EeRn 11: 1-D6-85

1 concave based projectile point 23.0mm x 15.0mm with straight sides. The point has one notch on each lateral edge. All points are made of a vitreous basalt (Table 2).

Corner Notched Point-EeRn 11: 1-D6-46

1 straight based corner notched point 27.0mm x 14.6mm with straight sides (Table 2).

Distal Tip-EeRn 11: 1-D6-81

1 unclassifiable projectile point tip broken above the base between the notches (Table 2). The remaining 32 artifacts are retouched flakes.

ARTIFACTS: Housepit 1

48 artifacts, 1 carbon sample, 2 wood samples, and 5 identifiable mammal remains were recovered from the 15 units randomly excavated in housepit 1.



Copper-EeRn 11: 1-49

1 copper half loop was recovered during excavation. The loop is thin and irregular and thought to be made of native copper.

Side Notched Points-EeRn 11: 1-(87, 30, & 8)

3 side notched points were found during excavation. All are made of a vitreous basalt (Table 2).

Corner Notched Points-EeRn 11: 1-(64&48)

2 corner notched points were found. One, 23.0mm x 12.0mm has a rounded base with straight sides, the other 25.5mm x 22.6mm has a straight base with convex sides (Table 2).

Distal Tip-EeRn 11: 1-15

1 unclassifiable distal tip broken above and between the notches. The remaining 41 artifacts are comprised of 1 abrasive stone and 40 retouched flakes.

CONCLUSION

The excavations at EeRn 11 revealed little artifactual, featural, or faunal remains. However some basic preliminary statements concerning the housepit and cultural depressions can be offered.

Much of the housepit deposits were disturbed by the intrusion of depression 6. Depression 3 also disturbed the housepit deposits near the rim/wall as evidenced by the stratigraphy of the test unit. The housepit has at least two occupation floors. The time span between these two floors is at present indeterminable until the results of the C14 dating is received.

Generally the housepit was a 'pie-plate' shape with stepless walls. Few post remains were found in-situ and only 2 post angles are known. The roof deposits averaged 30-40cm thick. Within the housepit were one small pit in the northern floor/wall area and a large pit in the eastern floor/wall area. Both are presumed to serve a storage function.

The function of depression 6 remains difficult to determine due to the lack of recovered material. The presense of post fragments would indicate that the depression had a roof structure. It therefore seems to have served a habitation or storage purpose.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally gratitude is extended to Dr. A.H. Stryd for suggesting the project area. His encouragement and aid was invaluable.



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Table 1. Site Listing

| SITE NO. | CULTURAL<br>DEPRESSION<br>ETC. | CACHE<br>PIT | HOUSEPIT | BURIAL | SURFACE<br>FIND | HISTORIC |
|----------|--------------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|-----------------|----------|
| 17       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 18       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 19       |                                |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 20       |                                |              |          | X      |                 |          |
| 21       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 22       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 23       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 24       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 25       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 26       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 27       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 28       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 29       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 30       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 31       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 32       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 33       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 34       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 35       |                                |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 36       |                                |              | X        |        |                 | X        |
| 37       |                                |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 38       |                                |              |          |        |                 | X        |
| 39       |                                | X            |          |        |                 | X        |
| 40       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 41       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 42       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 43       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 44       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 45       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 46       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 47       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 48       |                                |              | X        |        |                 | X        |
| 49       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 50       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 51       | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 52       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 53       |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 54       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 55       |                                |              |          | X      |                 |          |
| 56       |                                |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 57       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 58       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 59       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 60       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 61       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 62       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 63       |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |



Table 1. Site Listing (con't)

| ITE NO. | CULTURAL<br>DEPRESSION<br>ETC. | CACHE<br>PIT | HOUSEPIT | BURIAL | SURFACE<br>FIND | HISTORIC |
|---------|--------------------------------|--------------|----------|--------|-----------------|----------|
| eRn 64  | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 65      | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 66      |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 67      | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 68      | X                              |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 69      |                                | X            |          |        |                 |          |
| 70      |                                |              |          |        |                 |          |
| 71      |                                |              |          |        |                 | X        |
| eRm 10  |                                |              |          |        |                 | X        |
| 11      |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 12      |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 13      |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 14      |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| 15      |                                |              | X        |        |                 |          |
| AL 61   | 12                             | 14           | 27       | 2      | 4               | 2        |
| 100     | 20                             | 23           | 44       | 3      | 7               | 3        |

Table 2. Projectile Point Metrics

| Artifact #<br>EeRn 11: | length<br>mm | width<br>mm | thickness<br>mm |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Side Notched Points    |              |             |                 |
| 1-87                   | -            | 14          | 4               |
| 1-8                    | 24.3         | -           | 4               |
| 1-D6-85                | 24.3         | 15          | 3               |
| 1-30                   | -            | 9           | 2.7             |
| Mean                   | 24.3         | 12.67       | 3.04            |
| Corner Notched Points  |              |             |                 |
| 1-64                   | 25.7         | 23          | 6               |
| 1-D6-46                | 27           | 19.5        | 3               |
| 1-48                   | 20.8         | 11.8        | 2.4             |
| Mean                   | 24.5         | 18.1        | 3.8             |
| Point Fragments        |              |             |                 |
| 1-D6-34                | -            | 20.2        | 6.1             |
| 1-15                   | -            | 11.4        | 2               |
| 1-D6-81                | -            | 8           | 2.5             |
| Mean                   | -            | 13.2        | 3.53            |



Fig. 1 Surveyed area site location map.

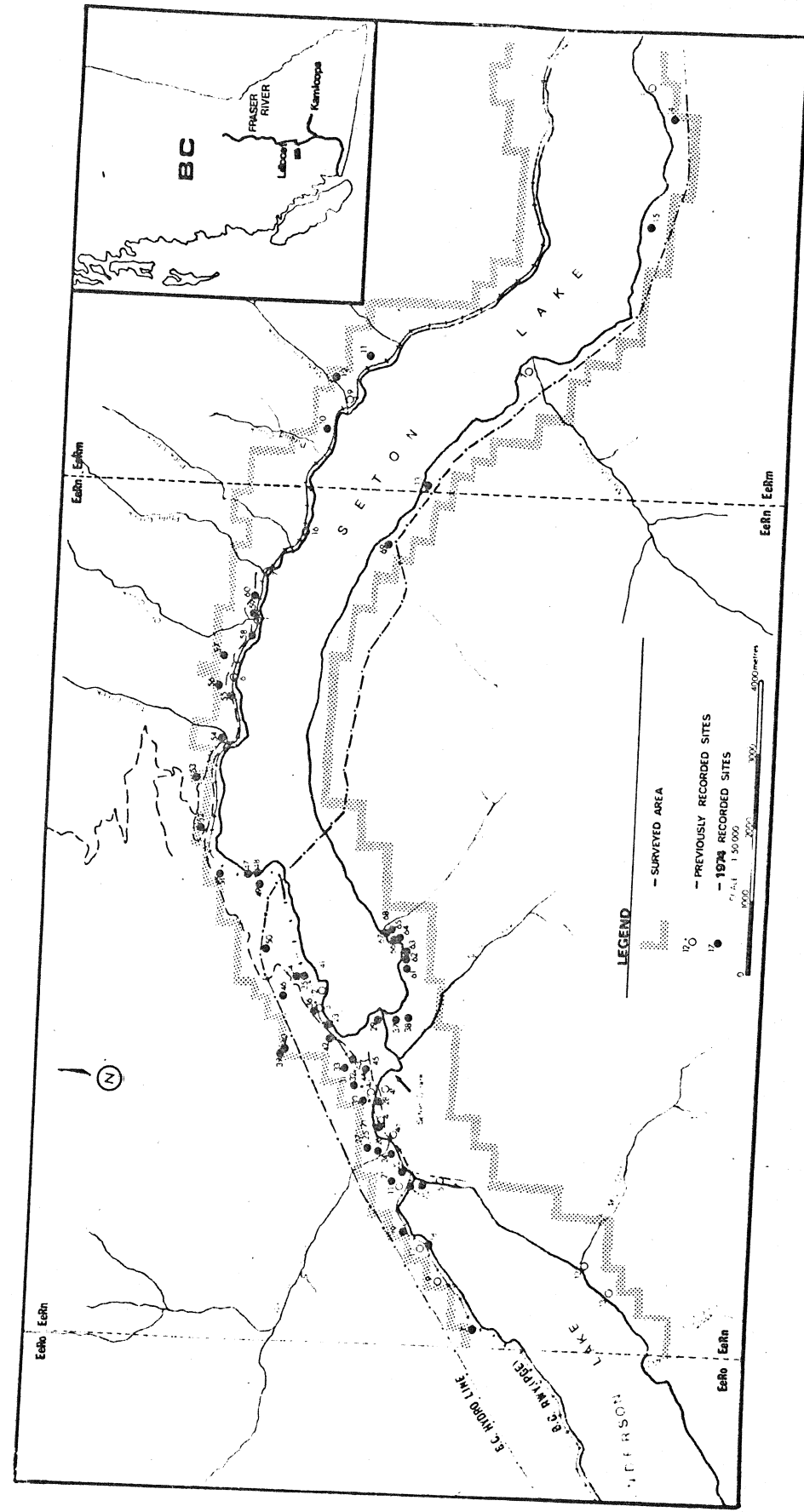




Fig. 2 Housepit 1, west and north profiles.

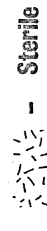
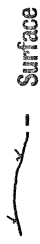
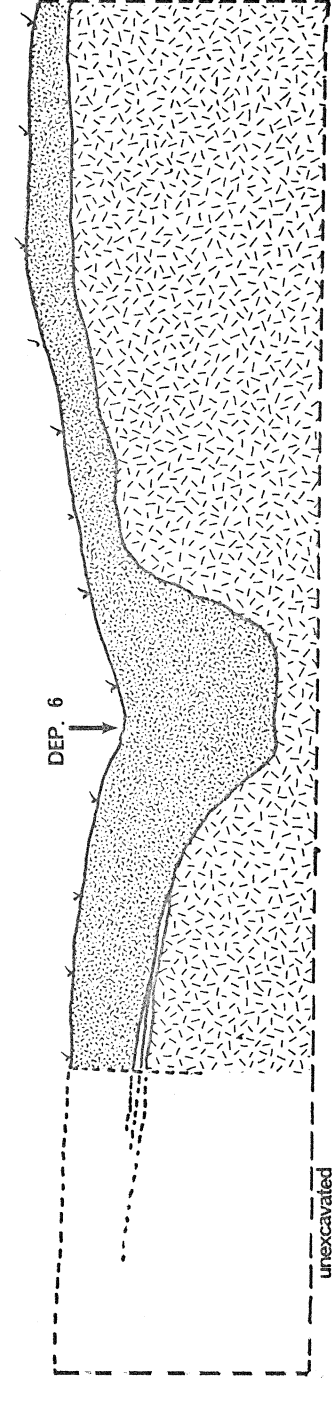
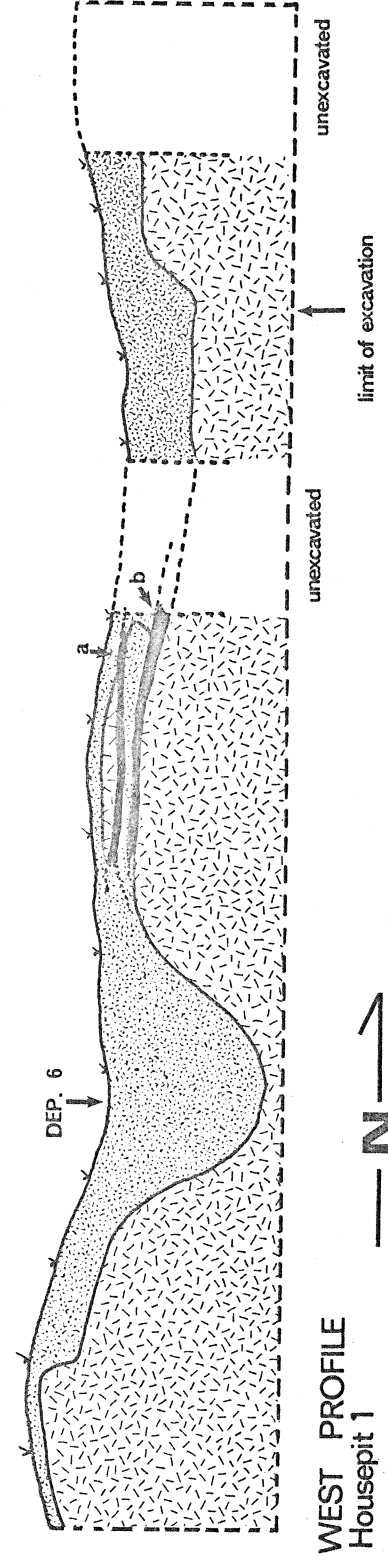


Fig. 3 Map of EeRn 11 showing excavated areas.



