

## The Little John Site (KdVo-6), a Late-Glacial Multi-Component (Nenana–Denali Complex) Site in the Far Southwest of Yukon Territory, Canada

*Norman Alexander Easton, Glen R. MacKay, Peter Schnurr, Patricia Bernice Young, and Christopher Baker*

Located just off the Alaska Highway, approximately 2 km due east of the International Boundary, the Little John site occupies a knoll overlooking Mirror Creek, the easternmost tributary of the Tanana River basin. Unglaciaded during the Wisconsin (Rampton 1971), this site contains evidence of occupation from the recent past back to the late Glacial. In this paper we focus on the Nenana and Denali-complex (Hoffecker et al. 1993; Powers and Hoffecker 1989; West 1996) components of the site (see also Easton and MacKay 2008).

The Nenana assemblage contains four teardrop-shaped Chindadn points, large bifaces, a variety of scraper forms, and blades (Figure 1). Recovered from the basal loess layer in the shallow deposits (ca. 30–40 cm) of the western area of the site, this component underlies a microblade-bearing horizon assigned to the Denali complex, consisting of abundant microblades, several core tablets, irregular core fragments, scrapers, and burins. This area of the site is undated owing to a lack of organic material, but the stratigraphic relationship of these assemblages indicates that they represent distinct techno-complexes.

The eastern portion of the site contains a paleosol complex capped by 40–60 cm of loess and 30–40 cm of brunisol strata. These paleosols contain a diverse

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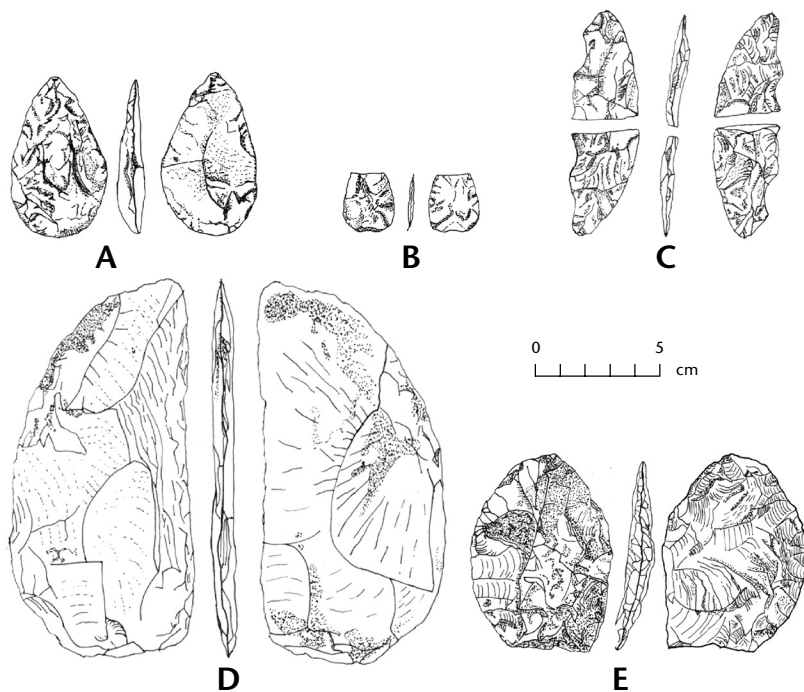
Norman Alexander Easton, Arts and Sciences Division, Yukon College, P.O. Box 2799, Whitehorse, YT, Canada, Y1A 5K4; e-mail: northeaston@gmail.com

Glen R. MacKay, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, P.O. Box 1320, Yellowknife, NT, Canada, X1A 2L9; e-mail: Glen\_MacKay@gov.nt.ca

Peter Schnurr, Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska-Anchorage, Apt. 2, 1201 Cordova St., Anchorage AK; e-mail: peterschnurr@yahoo.com

Patricia Bernice Young, Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, P.O. Box 757720, Fairbanks AK 99775; e-mail: pyoungak@gmail.com

Christopher Baker, 3636 Pinewood Ave, Apt 107, Lexington Court Apartments, Prince George, BC, Canada, V2N 4J4; e-mail: u0axy@unb.ca



**Figure 1.** Selected artifacts from the Little John site. **A, B, D, E**, Nenana complex; **C**, Denali complex; **A, B**, Chindadn points; **C**, foliate biface; **D, E**, large bifaces.

assemblage of culturally modified fauna; AMS assays on three samples yielded dates of  $8890 \pm 50$  (Beta 182798),  $9530 \pm 40$  (Beta 217279) and  $9550 \pm 50$  RCYBP (Beta 218235). Two biconvex bifacial knives, characteristic of Denali assemblages in interior Alaska (West 1967), a proximal microblade fragment, flakes, and two chisel-like bone tools were found directly associated with the dated fauna. Since the context is consistent with the stratigraphic relationship of the Nenana and Denali components in the undated deposit of the site, we suggest that the Nenana assemblage predates the fauna and associated Denali-type artifacts in the paleosol complex and thus dates to at least 10,000 RCYBP; this date is in general accordance with similar Nenana complex components in interior Alaska (Bever 2006; Hoffecker et al. 1993; Holmes 2001).

Identified fauna from the paleosol complex include caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), possibly moose (*Alces alces*), elk or wapiti (*Cervus elaphus*), hare (*Lepus* sp.), swan (*Cygni* sp.) and other unidentified birds, rodents, and canines (Hutchinson et al. 2007). This diverse faunal assemblage indicates a broad-spectrum subsistence strategy, similar to other late-Glacial/early-Holocene sites in the Tanana Valley (Holmes 2001; Yesner and Pearson 2002). Pollen from a core sample from a lake called *Yihkah Männi*' (ca. 5 km from the site) indicates that the transition from herb tundra to shrub tundra occurred ca. 11,000 RCYBP, 500–1000 years later than in the Tanana Valley (MacIntosh

1997). Occupation of the Little John site may correspond with this transition (Bigelow and Powers 2001; Hoffecker and Elias 2007). A successive eastward movement of Nenana and Denali culture bearers adapted to the subsistence opportunities offered by the shrub tundra environment of the Tanana Valley may explain the appearance of these complexes in southwest Yukon.

The Little John site extends the range of the Nenana and Denali complexes to the far southeast edge of Beringia during the terminal Pleistocene.

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