THE HERITAGE RESOURCES OF THE SLOCAN VALLEY:

AN INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

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of high visibility were surveyed to state that lithic scatters, in particular, are rare in the area. On the other hand, the frequency and numbers of housepits, and the size of some features was a surprise to the investigators. Several sites, in particular DiQj 18, DjQj 1, DkQi 1, 18 and 19 had large numbers of features with as many as 32 large cultural depressions, identified as housepits located within them. Some of these features are very large, with 12 m. diameters being common, and a few features ranging up to 17 m. diameter. Other features unique in the Kootenays include the identification of square pithouse or matlodge depressions, pithouses with side entrance trenches, and Margeritifera shell middens. These features, their number and size, are reminiscent of the large villages of the mid-Fraser (Stryd 1971, Stryd and Lawhead 1978), the Chilcotin Plateau (Matson et al 1980), or the South Thompson River (Eldridge 1974, Mohs 1978). They do not appear compatible with Turnbull's hypothesis of the Lakes territory being a marginal area of meager resources and an extremely low population density, although Turnbull did locate 7 sites with more than 10 pithouses per site (Turnbull 1977:141). Turnbull explains the larger number of features at some sites by stating that the actual number of simultaneously occupied houses is less than the total number of houses per cluster, with "some houses occupied continuously, some re-occupied and rebuilt, and some used sparingly." The number of sites with under seven houses in the cluster suggests that the smaller size may be the probable village size. The large clusters could represent favoured areas occupied

over a longer period of time (Turnbull 1977:143). Turnbull is, of course, correct in this; however, the very large number of features at some sites suggests that many more than seven features were being simultaneously occupied. It does not seem to make much sense to excavate an entirely new pithouse hole if an old one is nearby which can be reused. It may have been easier to construct an entirely new pit and structure rather than reuse an old pit only partially collapsed, so that some new pits would have had to be excavated at a favourite location. If, for instance, DkQi 17 was occupied all at once, Naroll's (1962) formula of 10 sq.m. per person as an estimate of the population size in a habitation results in 166 people if the floor area of the pit is calculated by the formula πr^2. Even if only half the houses at this site were occupied simultaneously, a population of 80 for just one winter village would seem high for a marginal area.

The concentration of all recorded sites into three clusters, near South Slocan, Vallican, and Lemon Creek suggests an interesting settlement pattern. It would appear that local resources and environmental factors operated over a long period of time to restrict the settlement of the valley to these three areas. The mouth of the Slocan is one natural place for settlement, and ethnographic records of a large weir here indicate that it was an excellent place to catch what salmon ascended this far up the Columbia system to spawn in the Slocan River. Its situation on the Kootenay River, with easier access to the Columbia system also would have encouraged major settlement. Likewise the area around Vallican also may have been a good fishing locale with several rapids in the vicinity.

Little Slocan grease trail

Other factors in the Vallican area favouring prehistoric semi-sedentary settlement could include the Little Slocan Valley, which may have furnished a transportation route through the Valhalla Mountains to the Arrow Lakes via passes from tributaries such as Koch Creek. The Little Slocan Valley also would have provided access to the hinterland of the Valhalla Mountains themselves. It is difficult to assess what resource benefits may have been present in the Lemon Creek area, where the largest concentration of presumed winter villages occurs. The area is near the outlet of Slocan Lake and so would have afforded easy access to the lake, but the resources of Slocan Lake seem rather meager compared to the salmon runs in the lower end of the valley. It is not known if the salmon runs came as far up as the outlet of the lake or if spawning beds were restricted to the lower reaches of the River. Addressing the economic problems of seemingly low resource availability with the highest density of winter village sites should be an important priority of any archaeological salvage project conducted in the future at any of these sites.

The complete survey of Slocan Lake resulted in the recording or re-recording of 21 prehistoric archaeological sites (Fig.5.1-2). Of these, the majority (13) are pictograph sites. Cultural depression sites are rare, with only two sites recorded that had features large enough to be considered pithouses, and these sites had only a few depressions this size. It would appear that Slocan Lake was unfavourable for large semi-permanent villages, although the probability of large sites at Valhalla, Rosebery, and New Denver, which all had native place or village names (Teit 1930), is high.

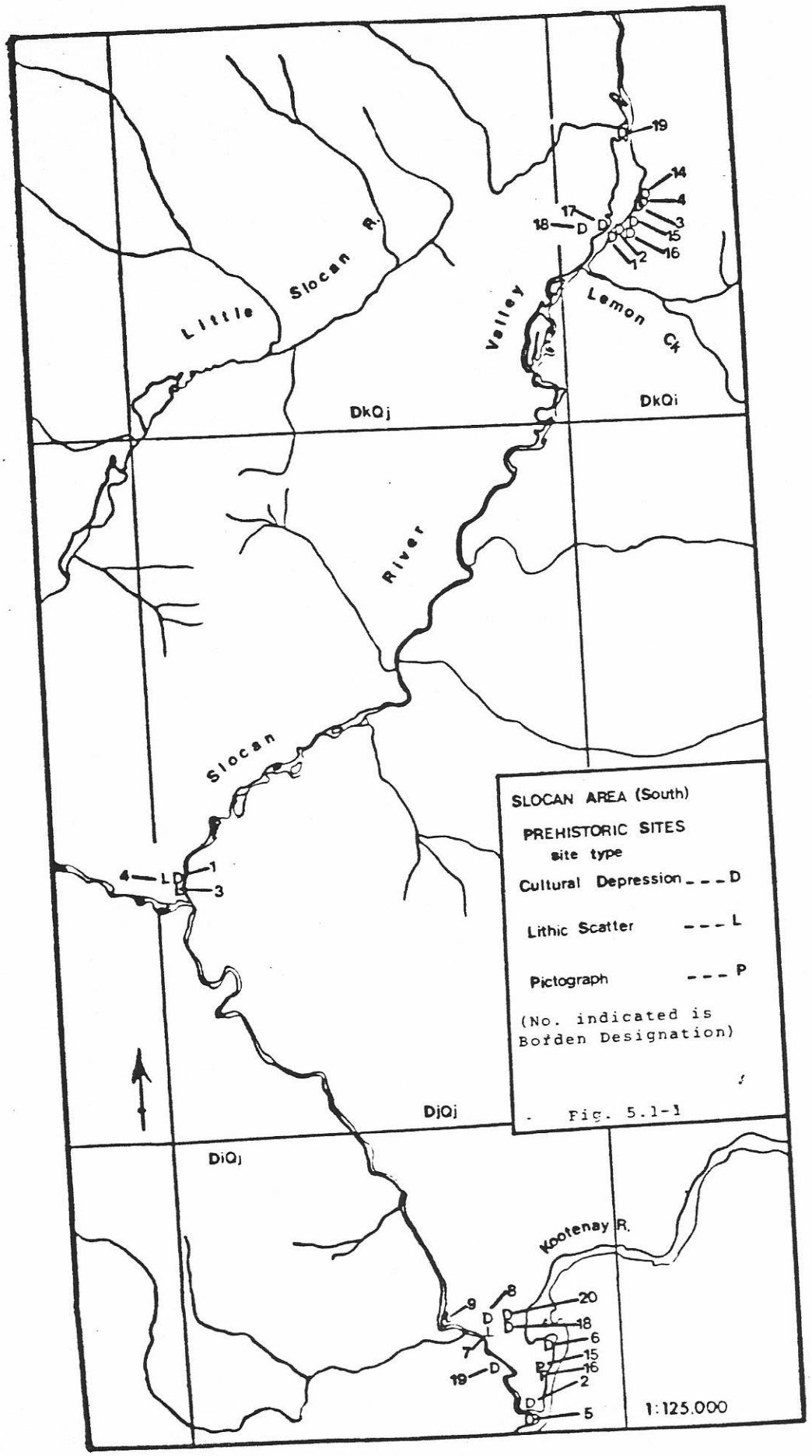
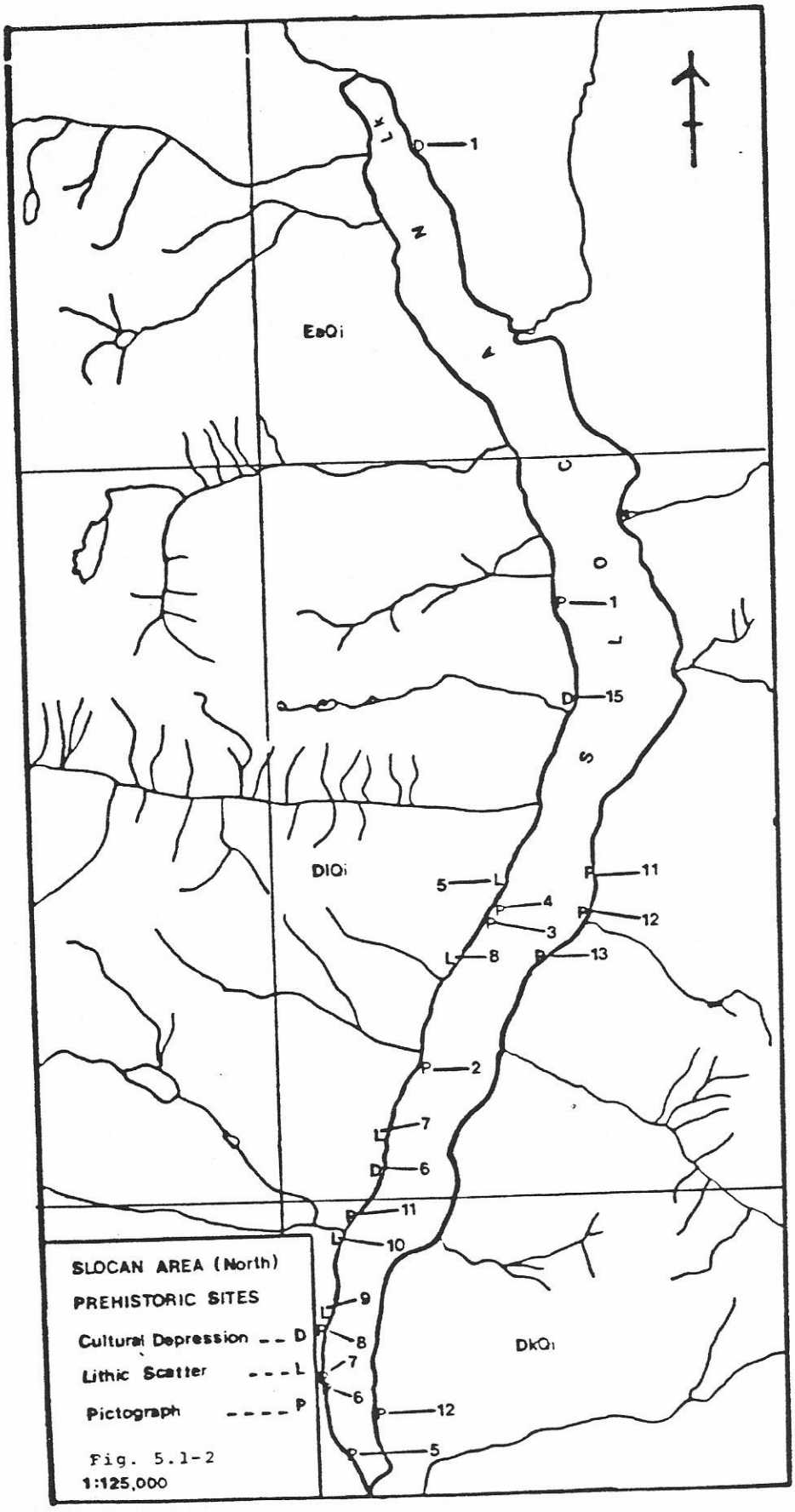

Little Slocan R.
Slocan Valley
Lemon Cr.
DkQj
DkQi
River
Slocan
DjQj
DiQj
Kootenay R.
SLOCAN AREA (South)
PREHISTORIC SITES
site type
Cultural Depression D
Lithic Scatter L
Pictograph P
(No. indicated is Borden Designation)
1:125.000

Fig. 5.1-1

KL
x2


EsOi
DlOi
DkOi
D 1
P 1
D 15
L 5
P 11
P 4
P 12
P 3
L 8
P 13
P 2
L 7
D 6
P 11
L 10
L 9
P 8
7
6
P 12
P 5
SLOCAN AREA (North)
PREHISTORIC SITES
Cultural Depression -- D
Lithic Scatter --- L
Pictograph ---- P
Fig. 5.1-2
1:125,000

KL
X 2

Modern development has erased surface evidence of prehistoric deposits in these three areas.

Pictograph sites are plentiful, and these rock art sites already play a part in the regions tourist economy (cf. University of Calgary and Slocan District Chamber of Commerce). All pictograph sites are readily accessible by boat, and at least one entrepreneur advertises water-borne tours of the larger sites. The rock art sites are also easily found by self-guided groups such as canoeists. In view of the local interest in these sites and the interest of both archaeological and art historian scholars, a stabilization and conservation programme should be instituted for these sites. This is necessary because the sites are being adversely affected by frost-induced rock spalling, lichen growth, and mineral staining, all of which can be dealt with with modern techniques. It is encouraging that no vandalism or defacement of any rock art sites was noted by the investigators, although they receive a large numbe of visitors to most sites. Vandalism to these sites was noted by French (1972), but the 1980 investigators could find no evidence of such vandalism, and it seems likely that past investigators have mistaken natural spalling for willful destruction in some cases.

Pictograph sites are generally associated with ritual behaviour in western North America. This ritual behaviour could take the form of hunting magic, guardian spirit or other visionary quests, other magic types, or the recording of actual historical events or natural phenomenon, trail maps, and the like. The most common ethnographic explanations for their existence in the

Interior Plateau area is the guardian spirit quest. This quest was loosely associated with puberty rites and entailed young males and often females, undergoing a rigorous physical and mental training course to prepare them for adult life. The later stages of training involved fasting and isolation for extended periods of time, during which a guardian spirit was sought. The guardian spirit was an individual spirit, often represented by an animal, and was normally kept for life in a mutually beneficial arrangement. The guardian spirit kept the person safe from harm and directed good luck their way while, in exchange, the person revered the spirit and did their best not to insult it in some way. Pictographs were often drawn at the time of the vision quest, and the elements drawn relate to aspects of the quest or the spirit itself. Pictograph sites are important to scholars because as an art form, they offer a direct insight into the thoughts of the artist themselves, a rare glimpse of past societies on a personal level. The study of stylistic element distribution across areas can provide data on cultural relationships. diffusion and similar problems.

Because of the large number of pictograph sites in the Slocan Lake area, it would seem that the lake was important from a spiritual perspective to the Lakes Salish. There appears to be a very high frequency of pictograph sites along its shores as compared to the Arrow Lakes or Kootenay Lake, or to the Kootenay or Columbia River, although sporadic archaeological survey coverage makes comparisons untestable. The higher frequency of pictograph sites than campsites (e.g., lithic scatters) makes it tempting to hypothesize that the lake was more important to prehistoric inhabitants from a religious perspective than it was from an economic one.

The high altitude terrain of the study area was minimally surveyed. No sites were found in the Slocan Mountains, although most survey was conducted on the steep part of the mountainsides where extensive mining activity has disturbed ground surfaces. Survey in the Valhalla mountains resulted in the recording of two sites. DkQj 1 was an isolated find consisting of a utilized chipped slate flake, found at an elevation where rock types were exclusively granitic. This was in the Mulvey Basin area, a high basin of very difficult access surrounded by awesome mountains and presently a climbing centre (Fig. 5.1-3). It features, however, a good selection of root crops, such as avalanche lily, and animal food in the form of a large ground squirrel population. Mountain goat was relatively plentiful. Apparently these resources outweighed the difficult access for at least some prehistoric people, and it is likely that areas of easier access and similar resources were exploited more frequently than the Mulvey Basin. DkQj 2 was also an isolated find consisting of a quartz crystal projectile point found on a ridge leading down from the Wolf's Ears, a peak on the south side of Mulvey Basin. This artifact was found by a climbing party, who pinpointed the location of the artifact on topographic maps. The artifact was subsequently lost, and so was not viewed by the 1980 survey crew. These two sites show conclusively that the high altitude areas of the Slocan Valley were used by prehistoric inhabitants, notwithstanding the difficult access to alpine areas of the valley floors. More survey would undoubtedly turn up more sites.

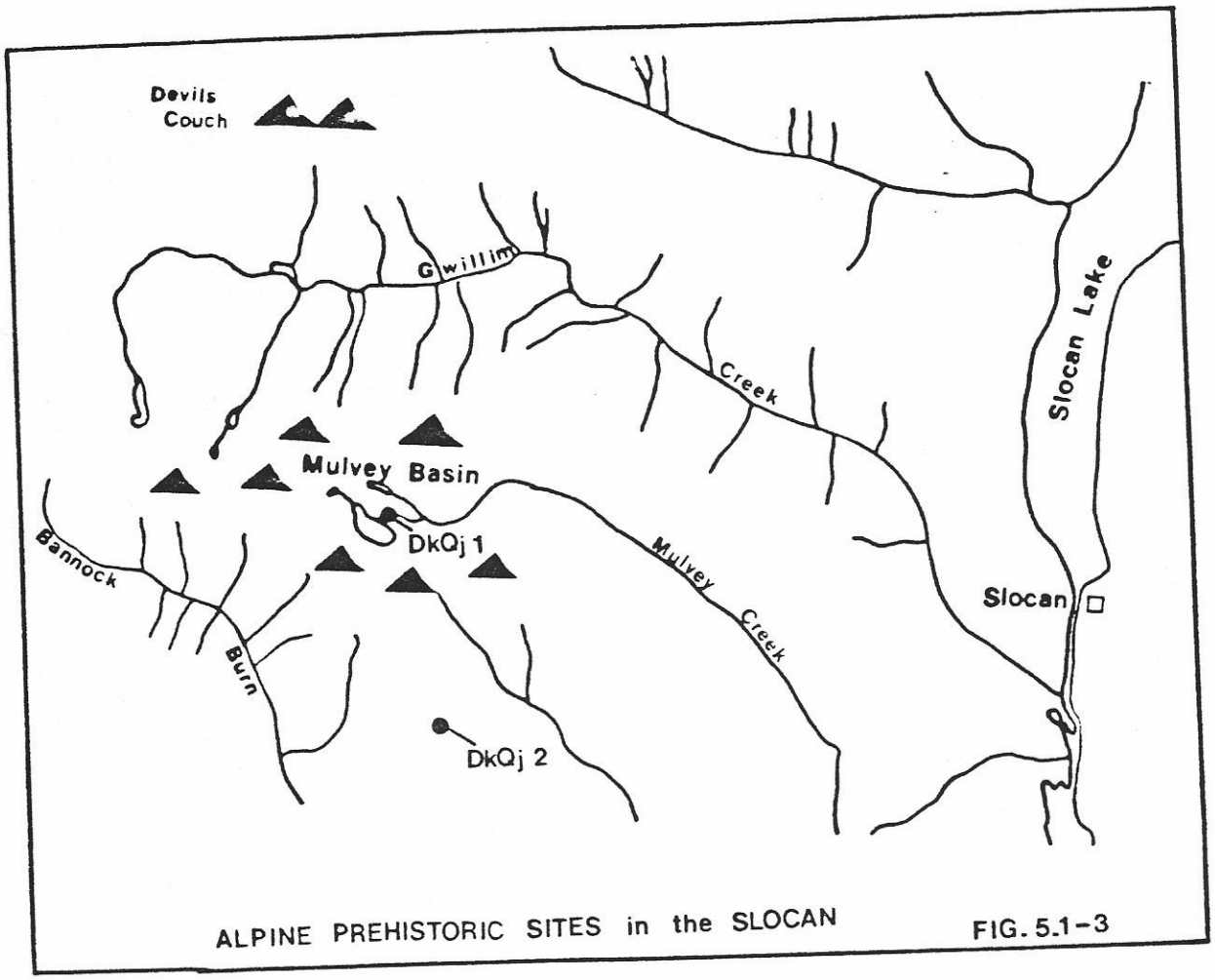


Figure 5 1-4
"Mulvey Basin area from Bannock Burn Rd."

goal of such a tourist attraction would be to break up the long drive through the valley and encourage tourists to spend an additional night in the area. The majority of tourists now transit the area in one day (University of Calgary 1979:16). There are considerable economic spinoffs to be enjoyed by the regional community, now chronically unemployed, from the establishment of a heritage park at the Vallican site. The option of such a development should be maintained by the purchase of lots not immediately affected by the bridge development.

DkQi 17, Broadman's Farm Site, should be designated as it is the largest intact site of the Lemon Creek area settlement cluster, containing pithouse features up to a 17 m. diameter, and several smaller features. This site is particularly reminiscent of housepit styles in the 'core' areas of the Interior Plateau such as the mid-Fraser and South Thompson river valleys because of the size and number of housepits, although other feature types are not plentiful. This site has not been disturbed to any serious extent, and while future conflicts do not appear likely at this stage, designation under the Act would prevent such conflicts from developing.

DkQi 12,6 and DlQi 2 and 3 should be designated under the Act to enhance the protection of these largest and most diverse pictograph sites. The Provincial Museum should be contacted