# PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE MATAWAASIS (GhGk - 1) SITE, WHAPMAGOOSTUI

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## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

In September 1991, a brief archaeological survey was carried out near the communities of Whapmagoostui and Kuujjuarapik on the southeastern coast of Hudson Bay. The project was organized jointly by the Cree and Inuit communities. The first portion of the project involved the excavations at an early (pre-Dorset) Inuit site (the GhGk-4 site) located to the north of the village. This report describes the second portion of this project, an archaeological evaluation of the Matawaasis (GhGk-1) site.

The Matawaasis site is located on the south shore of the river just to the west of the creek for which it is named. It is a part of a number of zones of historic occupation in the broader area between Matawaasis and Sasapimakwaananistikw, a larger river flowing into the Bay to the west of here. In Cree oral tradition, this is the area where people camped in the summer while engaged in the hunting beluga whales.

The goal of this project was to provide a more complete evaluation of the archaeological potential the site through the mapping of features visible on the surface of the ground and through archaeological testing of a range of these features. In this manner, we hoped to be able to assess the interest of the site for future archaeological research or educational projects involving the community of Whapmagoostui.

Approximately 370 structures were mapped at the site. These include 271 miichiwaahp (teepee) rings, 13 shaapuhtuwaan (elongated lodge) outlines, nine wiiyaaukihiikin (canoe building beds), 58 hearth deposits and miscellaneous features such as five concentrations of stones and deposits of red ochre or whale fat. Most of these features were visible on the ground surface. The overall size of the site is almost 16 ha.

A sample of 42 1 X 1 m squares was excavated in a variety of features including 26 tests within miichiwaahps, 12 within shaapuhtuwaans, two near wiiyaaukihiikins and two near fire-

places where no tent ring could be detected. Due to time constraints, only features in the western half of the site were tested.

The far western portion of the site (which has been called the Askupakutiwaasich section, after the nearby stream) was the only area where systematic testing including areas between visible surface structures was done. 113 35 X 35 cm tests were excavated in this area, of which 13 were positive.

The archaeological tests produced a sample of stone, metal, bone, ceramic and glass artifacts. The stone artifacts include flakes, shattered pieces and battered cobbles and chunks. Also included are several probable locally made gunflint, stones used for making fire (perhaps with metal strikers), a single arrow point made of a brown coloured chert or flint and steatite chunks probably used in the manufacture of smoking pipes.

The metal artifacts include pieces from brass trade kettles and trade guns, a few wrought iron nails, barrel strapping, a knife blade, and lead shot of various sizes and lead scraps. The small ceramic sample consists of a few sherd of glazed European ceramics and a small sherd of native pottery, probably from a smoking pipe. A few fragmentary kaolin (European) smoking pipe stems were also found.

Glass beads were found in many of the 1 X 1 m tests. While the sample is dominated by small, circular white and blue beads, several other types of beads were recovered.

The bone artifact sample consists of a portion of a multi-barbed projectile point. A scallop shell (apparently used as a spoon) is also included.

Some animal bones were recovered from hearth structures. These consist of thoroughly combusted fragments. The large numbers of beluga bones observed all across the site were not collected.

In general, the artifacts point to an 18th - 19th century use of the site with the 19th century being dominant. There are hints that the western half of the site is older than the eastern. It should be noted that the shaapuhtuwaan type dwellings are associated primarily with the western half of the site. Whapmagoostui Iyiyuu elders state that they gave up this form of dwelling at the end of the last century as a result of pressure by missionaries traditional religious ceremonies. The oldest area of the site could well be the Askupakutiwaasich section at the far western margin and especially, the heavily wooded portion of thiq section of the site.
In general, it is suggested that there may have been a gradual west - east shift in the use of the site over time, perhaps related to a gradual removal of trees in the most intensively occupied zones.

Another area, geographically separate from and about 240 m to the west of the Matawaasis site was examined. Cultural features have been recorded here under the name Shaapuhtuwaan site (GhGk-96). Surface features and several positive tests point to the presence here of a shaapuhtuwaan of about 25 m in length. The absence of European artifacts from the tests and the location of this feature in a heavily wooded area suggests that this lodge is as least as old as the oldest features at the Matawaasis site.

At this time, the archaeological finds mirror closely what is known from stories told by Cree elders and from documentary sources. Elders tell of the use of the area before the arrival of Europeans for the hunting of beluga for subsistence purposes and to provide fat for survival inland during the winter. They tell of groups gathering and camping at Matawaasis in shaapuhtuwaan-type lodges. One of the earliest documentary accounts of Great Whale River indicates that at least by 1744, Iyiyuu gathered at the mouth of the river in the summer to hunt beluga and lived in large dwellings. While the archaeological finds at the Matawaasis and Shaapuhtuwaan sites are not unexpected, they are no less important for this fact. Matawaasis is one of the largest archaeological sites known thus far from the Quebec subarctic. It relates to a period, that of the 18th and 19th centuries, which is almost unknown archaeologically. It contains a variety of different types of structures and lodges. The Shaapuhtuwaan site, which may somewhat earlier than the Matawaasis site can be compared with a very long shaapuhtuwaan

dating to the 17th century, which was excavated in the Caniapiscau area. These sites (and other unexamined sites in the Matawaasis - Sasapimakwaananistikw area) contain important evidence on the origins and development of beluga hunting at the river mouth and to the changing nature of Iyiyuu - European contacts during an important historical era.

**Recommendations**

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Matawaasis site (and other nearby sites) as a historical resource for the people of Whapmagoostui. In a very real sense, they are the original community of Whapmagoostui, where people gathered for whale hunting and socializing at the mouth of the river, long before the Hudson Bay Company contemplated the establishment of a trading post here. The heritage and educational value of these sites is all the more important because of the existence of stories relating to the whaling days and to the use of these places. Here, elders can tell stories of how Whapmagoostui ancestors lived and actually show people the places they lived. The easy accessibility of the site and fact that so much is still visible on the ground surface makes this a truly exceptional site, where people can step back in time, consider their origins, meditate on stories like that of Upischiuni and contemplate the magical beauty of Mantunikw to the north.

The following recommendations are made:

<u>Further research</u>

1. The community should approach elders in view of recording more thoroughly oral traditions relating to these sites and to the historic beluga hunting days.

2. Elders should be asked to come to the site to help in the identification of features and to participate more fully in the interpretation of the site.

3. Further archaeological survey work should be carried out o the west of the Matawaasis site, in the vicinity of the Shaapuhtuwaan site and as far as Sasapimakwaananistikw to the west. Attention should be accorded both to forested areas, where archaeological features are harder to detect, and to the large clearings where many features are visible on the surface. An attempt should be made to map historical resources for the whole zone from Matawaasis to Sasapimakwaananistikw.

4. Archaeological tests should be carried out in structures in the eastern half of the Matawaasis site.

5. At a later date, intensive excavations could be carried out of a selected number of structures at the Matawaasis and Shaapuhtuwaan sites in order to obtain a larger sample of artifacts, which would in turn, assist in developing a clearer and richer interpretation of the chronology of activities associated with Iyiyuu occupation in this area.

Recognition and protection

6. Consideration should be given by the Whapmagoostui council of some official recognition of the Matawaasis site and efforts should be made to ensure the protection of the site from disturbance.

Educational and community activities

7. Consideration should be given to the possibility of carrying out educational field trips for students and the holding of other activities (such as traditional 'pow-wows') at this location where the abundant manifestations of the past can be used to teach and promote a respect for the past.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to many members of the Whapmagoostui Cree First Nation Council for their support on this project including Robbie Dick (chief at the time the fieldwork was carried out), Elizabeth Dick, David Masty, Robbie Niquanicappo, Joan Niquanicappo, William Kawapit Jr., Abraham Kawapit, Charlotte Pepabano and Anne Kawapit. A special thanks to Elizabeth Masty for her hospitality. Robert Fleming of the Kuujjuarapik Municipal office supported this project and assisted with the administration.

My warmest thanks to the members of the crew from both Whapmagoostui and Kuujjuarapik. The story Upischiuni story, told by the late Noah Mamianscum, was collected and translated by Emily Masty. My thanks to her for permission to include it in this report.

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## INTRODUCTION

*There was a time before the whiteman was interested in whales in this region when the Iyiyuu hunted whales for food. The Iyiyuu hunted the whales differently from the whiteman. Whaling in those days was done with a spear. To the spear was attached a long cord made of caribou skin. This device was called iyuntuwi. The cord was kept carefully coiled at the bottom of the canoe until the hunter speared the whale. To escape, the whale, now attached to the spear by way of the long cord, would dive to the depths of the bay. Careful that the cord not snag - it had been made long enough to reach the bottom of the bay - the Iyiyuu hung onto it as it unwound. Soon surfacing, the whale tugged the canoe along with him while the Iyiyuu pulled on the cord to get closer to the whale.*

*In my time, the whale was shot in the head and then caught with a spear to which a blown-up seal skin had been attached.*

*In this story Upischiuni is out whaling; he has just thrown his spear. As usual two men are in the canoe, one to spear, the other to steer. Upischiuni spears the whale and ducks under one of the bars traversing the width of the canoe to wind and secure the cord. Because birch bark canoes were much deeper than the canoes of today I do not know why he did not do this part of the operation before the spearing.*

*Having coiled the cord, Upischiuni proceeded with it to the bow of the boat. By then the canoe was being pulled along by the whale. Other canoes had caught up with his so that the men could hang onto his canoe as it was being dragged along. The men noticed that for some reason the cord was taut, as if it went straight down. And, it was in the front of the canoe as the canoe was being pulled along. The whale, too, was behaving strangely for it never came up for air.*

*"What is going on," the others wondered.*

*By now they had been pulled well out into Manitounouk Sound, about mid-way between the shore and Mintunikw, the first island.*

*"Something is wrong," they said.*

*Still Upischiuni clutched onto the cord.*

*Later, his partner, the man steering the canoe, said, "The whale Upischiuni speared looked very strange. It seemed to have hair, long flowing hair."*

*"Let go of the cord," the others urged Upischiuni. "It doesn't seem as if that was a whale you speared."*

*Beg as they might, Upischiuni would not be deterred; he absolutely refused to let go of the cord. Now close to Mintunikw, the others encouraged Upischiuni's partner to switch canoes. When he had done so, they let go of Upischiuni's canoe. He was alone now. His partner gone, the stern of the canoe lifted right out of the water.*

*While Upischiuni headed straight for the island, the others returned to the campsite. They told the people in their group about their experience on the water, about the strange looking whale Upischiuni would not let go of. Days passed and then someone suggested they build a kuhsaapihchikan or shaking tent (meaning conjuring lodge) to find out what had happened to Upischiuni.*

*As soon as it was ready Upischiuni could be heard inside the tent.*

*"Is that you, Upischiuni?" he was asked.*

*"Yes it is," he replied. "I am at the place where you last saw me (meaning the island). There are a lot of us here; there are also many people living at the last falls."*

*"Don't do it, Upischiuni," they pleaded. "Come back to your children."*

*"But I cannot return," he responded. "I am now married to another, and I like it here. I will stay here until I die, and that will only be when the world, itself, comes to an end."*

Noah Mamianskum

This story, told in slightly different versions by Iyiyuu elders as far south as Eastmain on the James Bay coast, relates to an activity that has an important place in Cree history: the summer hunting of beluga in the estuary of the rivers flowing into southeastern Hudson Bay. Beluga harvesting is documented in the historic recorded, going back as early as 1744 and Whapmagoostui Iyiyuu elders say that they hunted white whales well before the arrival of the Europeans. In the last half of the 18th century, and especially in the 19th century, the hunt became tied to the international trade in whale oil carried out by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Cree beluga harvesting activities were focused at two places, the mouth of the Little Whale River and that of the Great Whale river, the latter being the location referred to in the story of Upischiuni. The subject of this report is the site known as Matawaasis (GhGk-1), which Cree oral tradition holds as the most important locus of Cree habitation during the summer beluga hunting activities at the mouth of the Great Whale River (Figure 1). The Matawaasis (GhGk-1) site is part of a larger complex that stretches from the creek known as Matawaasis ('small river confluence') to Sasapimakwaananistikw (the 'oil rendering river') to the west (Figure 1).

In the summer of 1990, the Whapmagoostui Band Corporation and the Municipality of Kuujjuarapik were jointly involved in an salvage archaeology project relating to the GhGk-4 site, located in a boulder field located in Cree Category 1a lands to the north of the village. Part of the site had been disturbed by local construction activities and the remainder was in danger of being destroyed should these activities start up again. The excavations involved both Cree and Inuit workers. Archaeological supervision was ensured by archaeologists hired by Avataq

Cultural Institute and by the Cree Regional Authority.

The 1990 project generated considerable interest within both the Cree and Inuit communities. With this in mind, it was decided that the 1991 project should be broadened to include a component relating to Cree heritage resources. A four week field project involving a joint Cree-Inuit team was proposed. The initial two weeks were to be spent completing the salvage excavations at the GhGk-4 site and the second two weeks conducting an archaeological evaluation of Matawaasis (GhGk-1) site which is described in the present report.

The archaeological work at the site took place between September 4 and September 13, 1991. The crew consisted of James Kawapit and Gilbert Dick from Whapmagoostui, Isaac Fleming, Harry Fleming and Redfern Weetaluktuk from Kuujjuarapik with myself as project director and Francis Marcoux as archaeological assistant.

Funding was received from the Federal Office for Archaeological Resources Management for this joint Cree-Inuit archaeology project. The project involved collaboration between the two communities of Kuujjuarapik and Whapmagoostui. The grant was administered by the Council of the Whapmagoostui Cree First Nation and archaeological expertise was provided by Avataq Cultural Institute and the Cree Regional Authority.

The report is organized as follows. The archaeological activities at the Matawaasis (GhGk-1) site and their results are presented in the next major section. This is followed by a description of the Shaapuhtuwaan site (GhGk-96) located about 240 to the west of Matawaasis. There follows a short discussion which includes historic information relating to beluga hunting at the mouth of the Great Whale River.

## Previous archaeological research

The Matawaasis site was first examined archaeologically by Elmer Harp in the 1960s. Working with small-scale aerial photographs, Harp detected a concentration circular structures at this location. Following an on-the-ground examination, the presence of about 30 sod-covered, tent rings about 3.5 - 4.5 m in diameter, each with a raised, central area, was confirmed. Harp also mentions three, rectangular, semi-subterranean, depressions. Test pits in tent ring features produced 18 chert flakes and fragments of trade goods (1967: 3). Harp attributed the tent rings to a historic Indian (contact period to 1900) occupation of the site.

In 1988, the site was reexamined by Laforte and Denton (1990, cf. Lessard 1990). An examination of 1:8,000 scale, false colour and black and white photographs indicated the presence of about 70 circular features. On-the-ground inspection indicated that these were, in fact, tent rings and that a larger number of tent rings were visible on the ground than in the aerial photographs.

Interviews with Cree elders from Whapmagoostui pointed to the importance of the whole portion of the south shore "between the two rivers" (Matawaasis and Sasapimakwaananistikw) as the place where people traditionally camped during the summer beluga hunt. Apart from the circular tent rings, Cree elders from Whapmagoostui indicated that "shaapuhtuwaan" (traditional elongated lodges) would be found at the site.

## Objectives

The choice of GhGk-1 for the second component of the joint Cree-Inuit archaeology project was based on the potential historic interest of this large site and on its proximity to the village.

As indicated above, the archival and oral history data indicated that Crees had historically gathered to hunt whales at the mouth of the river and that the south shore of the river was traditionally a major summer camping area.

The overall goal of this project was to provide a more complete evaluation of the archaeological potential of the Matawaasis (GhGk-1) site through the mapping of features visible on the surface of the ground and through archaeological testing of a range of these features. In this fashion, it would be possible to assess the interest of the site for future archaeological research or educational projects involving the community of Whapmagoostui.

In scientific terms, it was hoped that an evaluation of this site would provide additional information on the nature and time depth of historic Cree occupation of the coastal zone and the rôle that beluga hunting played in this occupation. Archaeologically, there is almost no information on these subjects and, in general, the historic period has received very little attention by archaeologists working within the Cree territories.

More broadly, the goal of both components of the Cree-Inuit archaeology project was to encourage an understanding by Crees and Inuit of the rich historical traditions of both groups and to promote the respect of archaeological heritage resources. Both components were organized to emphasize training of Cree and Inuit in a range of archaeological activities and procedures.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The Matawaasis site is located on a sandy plain at a height of approximately 20 - 25 m above sea level (Figure 2). The plain was created by the deposition of sediments as a delta at the mouth of the Great Whale river during a relatively recent phase of the Tyrell sea, when the level of the sea was higher in relation to the land. The plain is marked by the presence of several raised beach lines running roughly parallel to the present shoreline and by large zones of aeolian deflation and parabolic dunes.

In this zone, the deltaic plain is all but devoid of trees. The surface vegetation consists of sedge grasses and cladonia lichens in association with fireweed and other plants such as crowberry and cranberry. In areas of where greater moisture is retained there are patches of sphagnum moss. Clumps of dwarf birch dot the plain from place to place.

The site occupies about 15.8 ha within the treeless portion of the plain, right at the mouth of the river (Figure 3). It is spread over a distance of about 700 m along a southwest-northeast axis and has a breadth of about 300 m. The central area of the site undulates over a vertical distance of several meters in a series of linear troughs and ridges representing raised beach crests tending southwest-northeast.

The site is bounded at its northeastern end by a large zone of aeolian deflation. Several smaller areas of deflation occur in the central and south-central portions. The southeastern margin would appear to be defined by distance from the bay: cultural features peter out at a distance about 250 m from the bank leading down to the bay and were not found further than about 300 m away. Cultural features appear to peter out amongst the trees to the north of the site where the ground slopes down and become more hummocky. The site is least well defined at its southwestern end, where some cultural features continue into the woods almost to the edge of this segment of the plain, overlooking a low, marshy area and gully cut by a small stream (Askupakutiwaasich) flowing to the north.

## Surface structures and features

As already noted, a large number of culture features are visible on the ground surface at the Matawaasis (GhGk-1) site. A important part of the work undertaken in the course of this projet related to finding, describing and mapping these features.

Over 370 features were observed at the site[1]. The data-base of includes 362 features distributed as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Surface structures at the Matawaasis.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| lodge structures | | |
| miichiwaahp (tent ring) | 271 | |
| shaapuhtuwaan and probable shaapuhtuwaan outline | 13 | |
| saakaaukumikw outline | 1 | |
| indefinite (presence of hearth deposit observed) | 58 | |
| Total | | 343 |
| wiiyaaukihiikin (canoe building platforms) | | 9 |
| concentration of stones | | 5 |
| miscellaneous feature | | 5 |
| **Total** | | **362** |

[1] This figure includes a number of structures (N=17) which were mapped, but for which there is no corresponding description. The latter consist of unflagged miichiwaahps and isolated hearths noted during the mapping. The figure of 370 is a minimum based on the possibility that the 9 structures which cannot be located on the plan correspond with an equal number of the unflagged structures and that 8 additional, or new, structures were mapped.

## Methods

The identification and marking of as many surface cultural features as possible was the first task of the fieldwork. This involved a systematic walking of the site area and marking with flagging of features that were visible on the ground. A trowel was used to probe under the moss in the centre of dwelling structures to verify the presence of a hearth or hearths. Areas where the presence of a habitation seemed likely, but where a tent ring was not clearly visible, were probed with a trowel to detect the presence of a hearth.

The presence of Gilbert Dick and James Kawapit on the team made the finding of cultural features relatively easy. Their keen and experienced eyes were able to detect a large number of habitation areas that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. In many cases, I was unable to make out a habitation structure that James or Gilbert had observed and in almost every case, when probed with a trowel in the appropriate place, a hearth deposit was revealed.

Marked features were numbered, measured and described.

The presence of materials observed in trowel probes, such as burned grease deposits, red ochre, fire-cracked rocks or calcined bones within a hearth deposit, etc. was noted.

## The site plan

Figure 4 shows the location of the various surface features mapped at the site. The same plan is presented in a larger format in an appendix of this report. The measurements for the plan were made using a Wild T1 theodolite and stadia rod. Features were shot in from three stations (A, B and C) located across the plain. Both horizonal locations and elevations relative to Sta A (arbitrarily set at 10.0 m) were calculated for each feature.

Some features on the peripheries of the site could not be shot in from one of the three stations because trees blocked the line of sight. These were mapped in relation to mapped

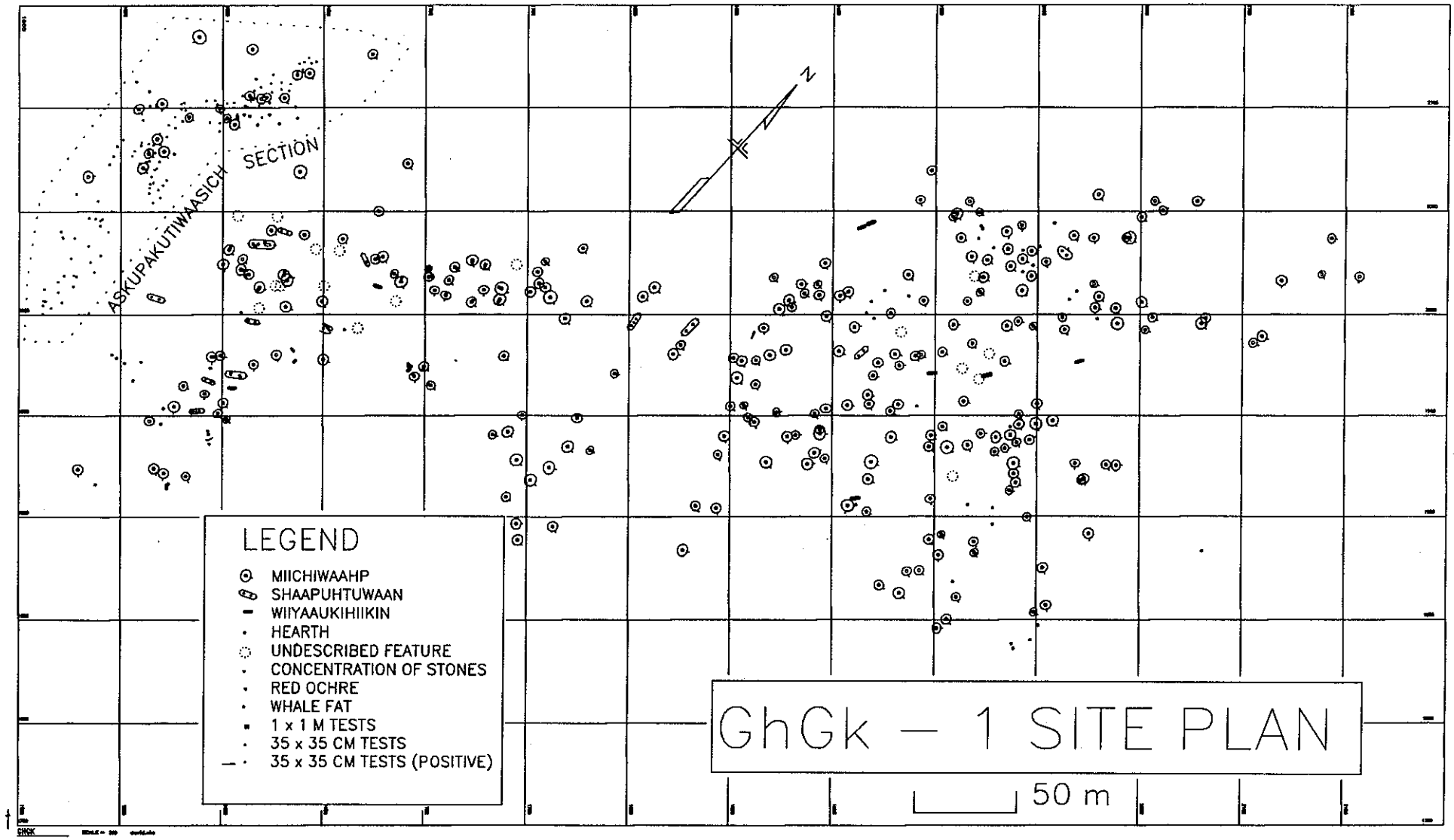


**Figure 4.** Plan of the Matawaasis (GhGk-1) Site.

features using a compass and tape.

A few problems relating to the mapping should be noted. In general, we were unequipped to handle the large number of features that had to be mapped within a very short time period. The mapping was affected by communication problems over the relatively long distances we were shooting: the work would have benefitted greatly from CB radio communications and more advanced survey equipment.

One problem noted when the site plan was prepared is the presence of several overlapping tent rings in cases where no overlap was described in the notes. Either this relates to an omission in the notes, or, more likely, a problem of insufficient precision of the stadia measurements over long distances.

A few errors were made during the numbering of the structures, with a small number of numbers being repeated. While most of these errors were corrected, a small number of inconsistencies remain. A few numbered and described features were not shot in during the mapping phase. This is either because they were missed or because the flagging tape was not secured well enough to withstand the near gale force winds that almost blew our camp across the plain one night prior to the shooting in the structures. Likewise, some unflagged structures were noted during the mapping. Some of these may represent structures whose flagging had blown away while others are new structures that had not been observed initially. While these new structures were mapped in, there is unfortunately no corresponding description for them.

Miichiwaahp (teepee) rings

This category refers to the earthen outlines, or tent "rings", of conical lodges (teepees) called iiyiyu miichiwaahps or simply miichiwaahps. The earthen rings result from the levelling and removal of earth from the floor of the dwelling. Typically, earth is removed from the entire floor surface except in the area of the hearth and the entrance. This earth is placed around the

perimeter of the dwelling floor to form a tent ring of about 10-15 cm in height. The miichiwaahp poles are placed on the outer slope of the tent ring. Within the lodge, the tent ring functions as a "pillow" and a slightly raised area for storage of personal effects and other goods.

**Table 2.** Dimensions of Miichiwaahps at Matawaasis.

| | Dim. 1 | Dim. 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Minimum | 2.8 | 2.3 |
| Maximum | 6.2 | 7.0 |
| Mean | 4.47 | 4.96 |
| Standard deviation | .68 | .63 |

The front edge of the rings curves in on both sides toward the door giving them an almost kidney shape. The fact that the space between the hearth and the door has not been levelled or lowered gives this zone the look of a "ramp" leading in towards the hearth.

Three measurements of the miichiwaahp rings were taken: 1) the distance from the front to the dwelling to the rear (dimension 1), 2) the distance from side to side perpendicular to the first measurement (dimension 2) and 3) the orientation of the door in relation to magnetic north. Distance measurements were carried out from a point about half way down the outer slope of the earthen ridge.

A summary statistics of the two size measurements are provided in Table 2 and in Figure 5.

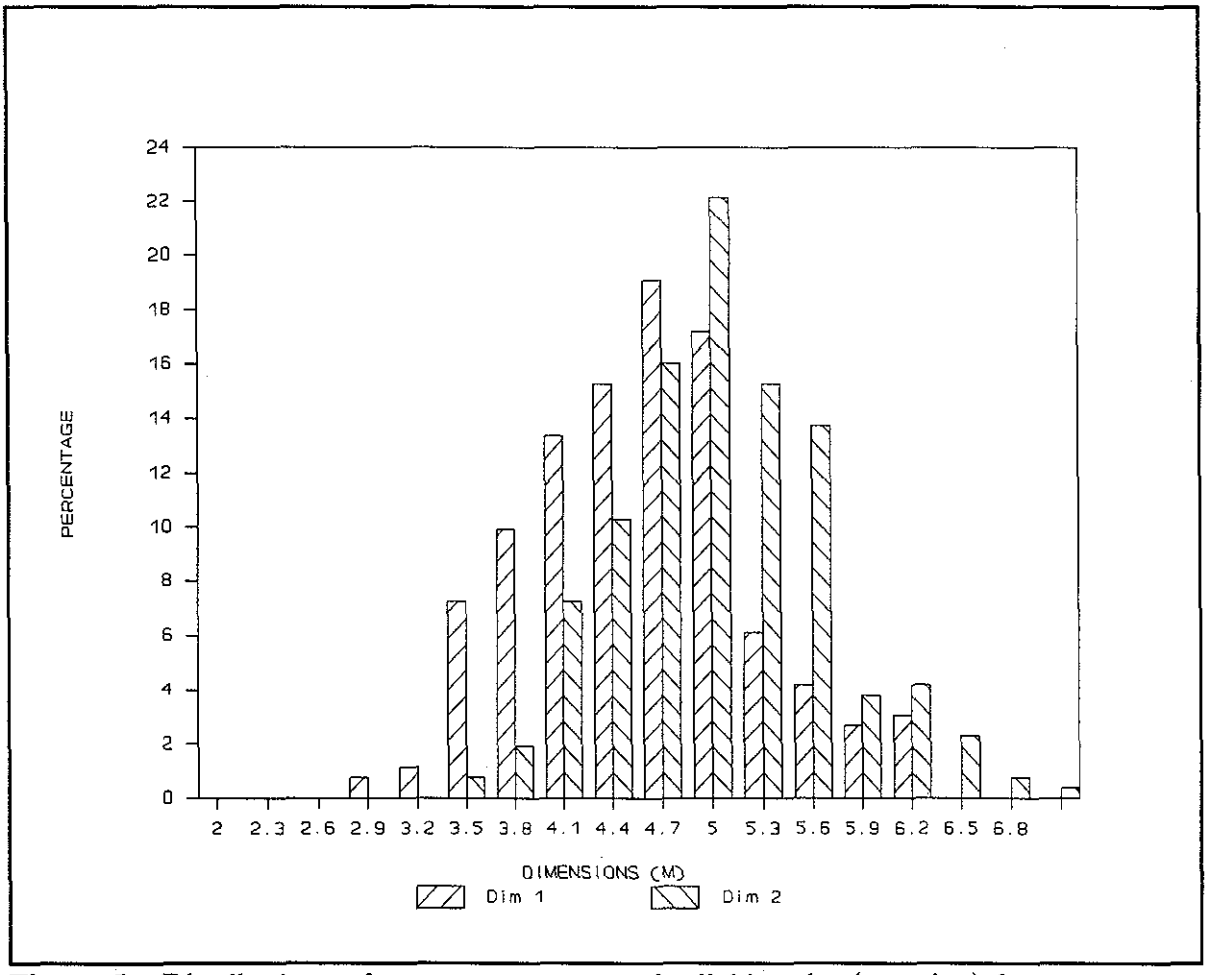


**Figure 5.** Distributions of two measurements of miichiwaahp (tent ring) features.

In almost all cases, the longest dimension is that running perpendicular to the door. Figure 5 shows the distribution of values associated with the two measurements.

The orientation of the miichiwaahp doors varies about the southeast (135°) in a very regular fashion. This is shown in Figure 6.

Trowel probes in most of the central areas if the tent rings showed the presence of a dark brown sand deposit, usually containing calcined bones and often fire-cracked rocks. In most cases, hearths were clearly visible as a raised area within the lodge. In many cases, a black substance presumed to be burned whale oil was noted in these probes. Deposits of red ochre coloured pigment were present near many of the hearths.

The location of miichiwaahps is indicated in Figure 4. They are located across the entire site.

In the eastern half of the site, many of the miichiwaahps have been covered with sand from the very large zone of aeolian deflation located nearby. An overlying, wind-blown sand layer was noted on at least thirty structures in this area. This deposit attains a thickness of 30-35 cm in some cases. Our team was surprised to note that despite a substantial overlying sand layer the miichiwaahp ring was usually clearly visible.

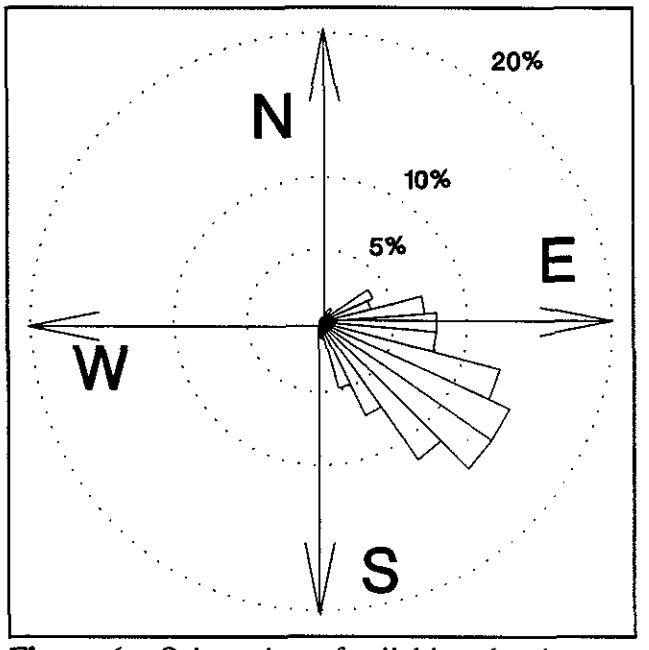

**Figure 6.** Orientation of miichiwaahp doors.

Shaapuhtuwaans

Shaapuhtuwaans are elongated lodges with a door at each end. They may have two or several hearths located along the long axis of the dwelling. At Matawaasis, ten definite and three probable shaapuhtuwaans were recorded. These vary in length from 6.9 to 13.3 m and usually have two or three hearths. The longest shaapuhtuwaan appears to have four hearth areas (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Dimensions of shaapuhtuwaans at Matawaasis.

| Structure | Length | Width | Hearths |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | 6.9 | 5.3 | 1 |
| 26 | 13.3 | 4.4 | 4 |
| 36 | 7.3 | 4.4 | 2 |
| 44 | 8.5 | 5.0 | 2 |

Table 3 (continued)

| Structure | Length | Width | Hearths |
|---|---|---|---|
| 46 | 8.4 | 5.3 | 2 |
| 51 | 9.6 | 4.0 | 2 |
| 55 | 9.0 | 4.8 | 3 |
| 109 | 9.5 | 5.3 | 2 |
| 297 | 9.9 | 4.8 | 3 |
| 298 | 11.0 | 5.6 | 2 |

As shown in Figure 6 the orientation of the shaapuhtuwaans is roughly east-west or northeast - southwest[2]. The shaapuhtuwaans have the same door ramps as the miichiwaahp features.

The three likely shaapuhtuwaans (80, 24, 285) were features in which two hearths which were probably within a single dwelling or a linear dwelling wall were recorded.

The locations of the shaapuhtuwaans and probable shaapuhtuwaans are indicated on Figure 8.

Probable saakaaukumikw and indefinite lodges

A possible saakaaukumikw-type dwelling (#174) was also recorded (Figure 9). The dwelling has two hearths but only a single door. The example recorded here differs from those

[2] These data represent compass readings, corrected for magnetic declination, taken during description of the structures. In several cases, there is considerable divergence between this orientation and that shown on the site plan Figure 4. Each end of shaapuhtuwaans were shot in during the preparation of this plan. Because of the divergences are not consistent it is impossible to correct them without further field data. In general, we consider the compass data as likely to be the more reliable. Both set of data are presented to facilitate future verification.

described by Séguin (1985: 300) in that the door is located along one side of the dwelling rather that at an end.

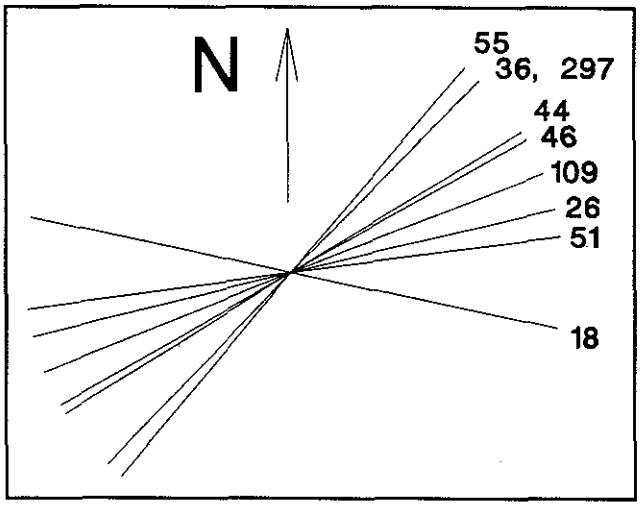

**Figure 7.** Orientation of shaapuhtuwaans (number = number of stucture).

Close to 60 (N=58) additional hearths, containing the typical deposit of calcined bones and dark brown sand were noted in probing with a trowel in probable hearth areas (Figure 9). While the spatial association or alignment of some of these suggest the presence of shaapuhtuwaan-type lodges, the majority were likely hearths within miichiwaahps, where the edge of the dwelling cannot be detected, either because there was only a faint ring to begin with or because the ring has become effaced over time and is no longer visible. While some of these cases may represent exterior hearths rather than hearths within lodges archaeological evidence from adgacent areas of the Quebec subarctic suggests that most hearth containing this typical deposit were located within lodges.

Wiiyaukihiikin

A prominent type of feature at the site are the canoe building platforms or beds known as wiiyaaukihiikin (or 'waayaaukihiikin', Cree lexicon). These are flattened and elongated sand platforms used to maintain the bottom profile from end to end during assembly of the canoe (Taylor 1980). The pronounced curvature of wiiyaaukihiikin from Matawaasis indicate that the canoes made here were the extreme rocker, "crooked canoes", whose use is usually associated with the most northern Cree bands and Naskapi. Measurements of the length and orientation of the wiiyaaukihiikin were made. The length measurements represent the distance between the two mounds at each end of the building bed and likely correspond quite closely with the length

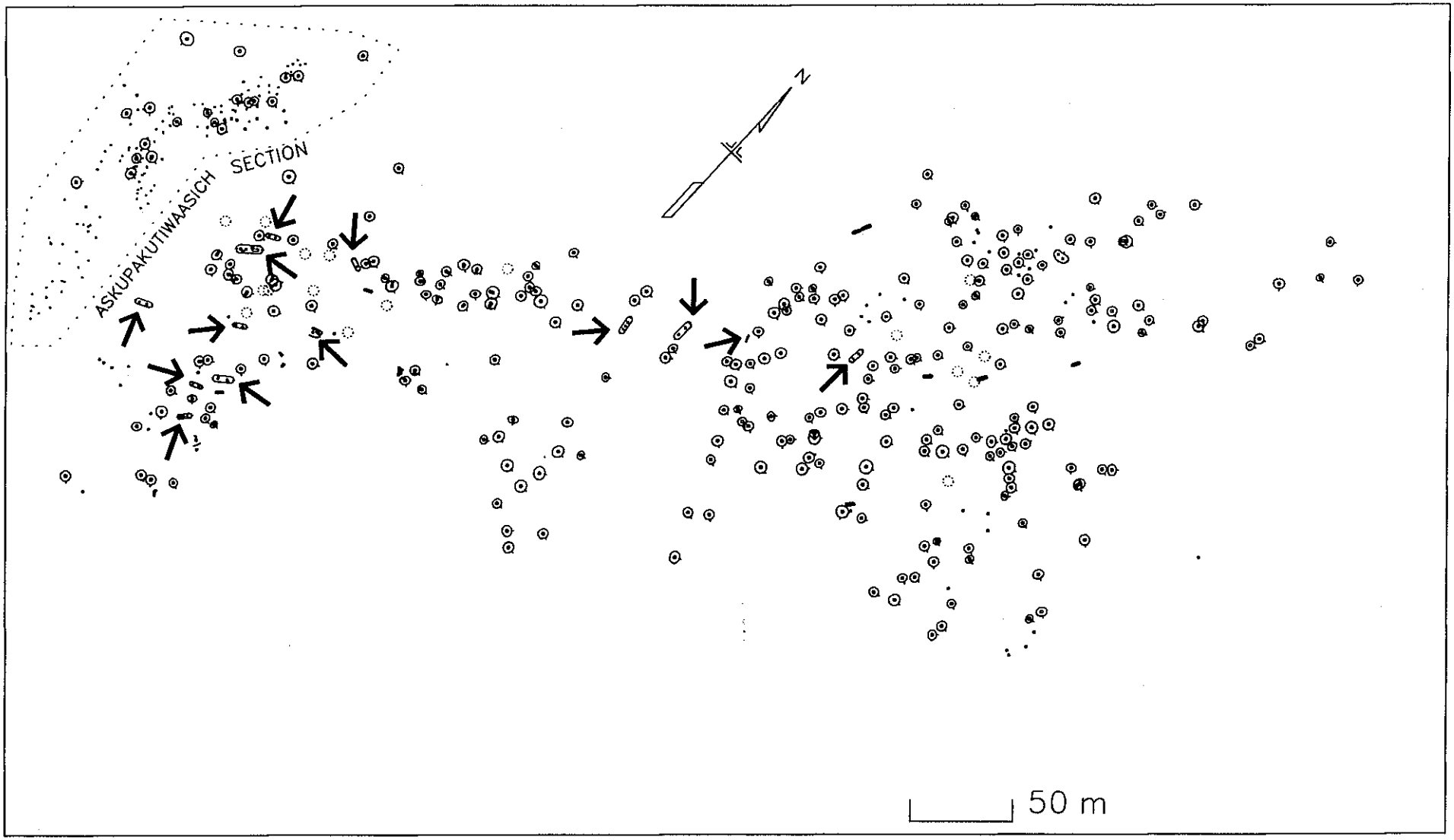


**Figure 8.** Location of shaapuhtuwaans.

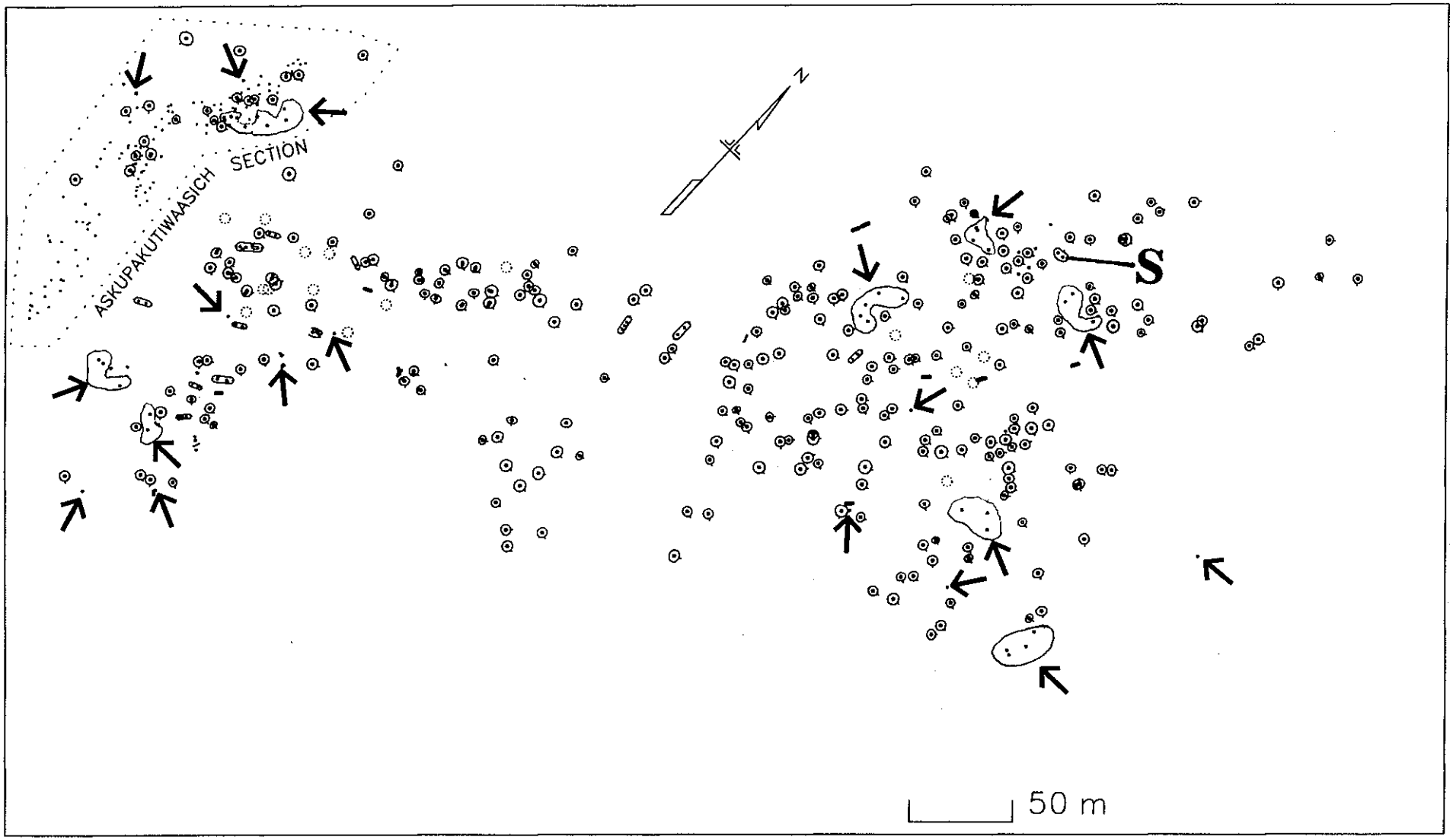


**Figure 9.** Location of probable saakaukumikw (S) and isolated hearth features (arrows).

of the finished canoes (see Plates 25 and 26). The nine canoe building beds at Matawaasis vary from 4.0 to 5.0 m in length (mean = 4.6 m).

Around the margins of the wiiyaaukihiikin are holes in the sand. These average about 50 cm in depth and are frequently located to the sides of the platform adjacent to the two raised ends. These holes were not systematically counted or mapped. It is my impression that there are usually three or four of these holes associated with each structure.

As shown in Figure 10 the wiiyaaukihiikin are located in the main section of the site; thus far, none were noted in the Askupakutiwaasich section of the site, either in the clearing or in the adjacent wooded area.

Other features

A small number of other features, notably, concentrations of stones (N=5) and patches of burned grease of red ochre (N=5), which cannot be directly associated with a dwelling, compete the inventory of features observed at the site.

**Testing of surface structures**

A sample of 42 1 X 1 m squares was excavated in miichiwaahps (N=26), shaapuhtuwaans (N=12) and near wiiyaaukihiikins (N=2) or fire-places where no tent ring could be detected (N=2). As shown in Figure 11, the testing of site features was concentrated in the western half of the site. This focus was due to time constraints. Artifacts were found in most of the 1 m squares. These will be described later in this report.

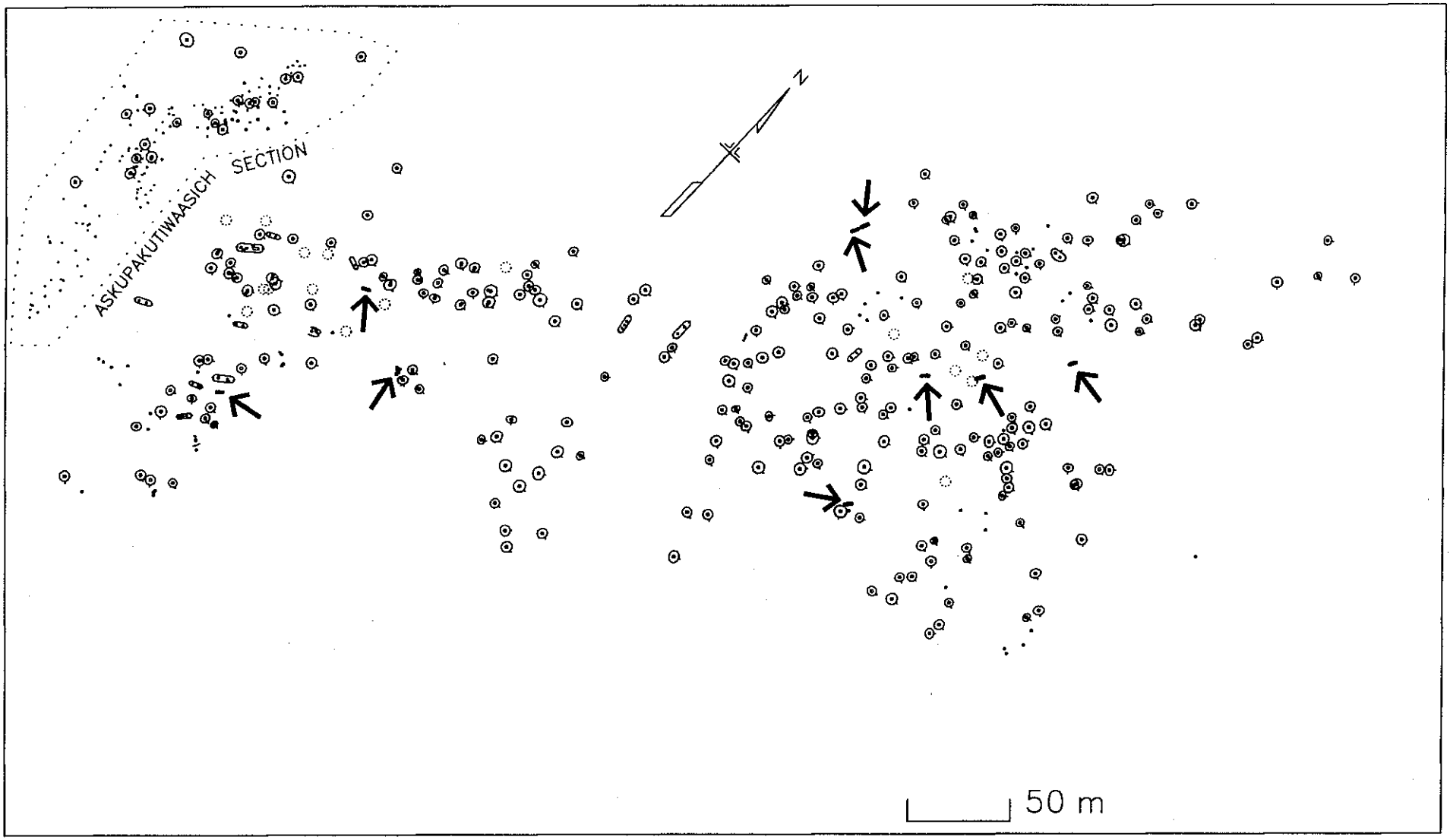


**Figure 10.** Location of wiiyaaukihiikin (canoe building bed) features.

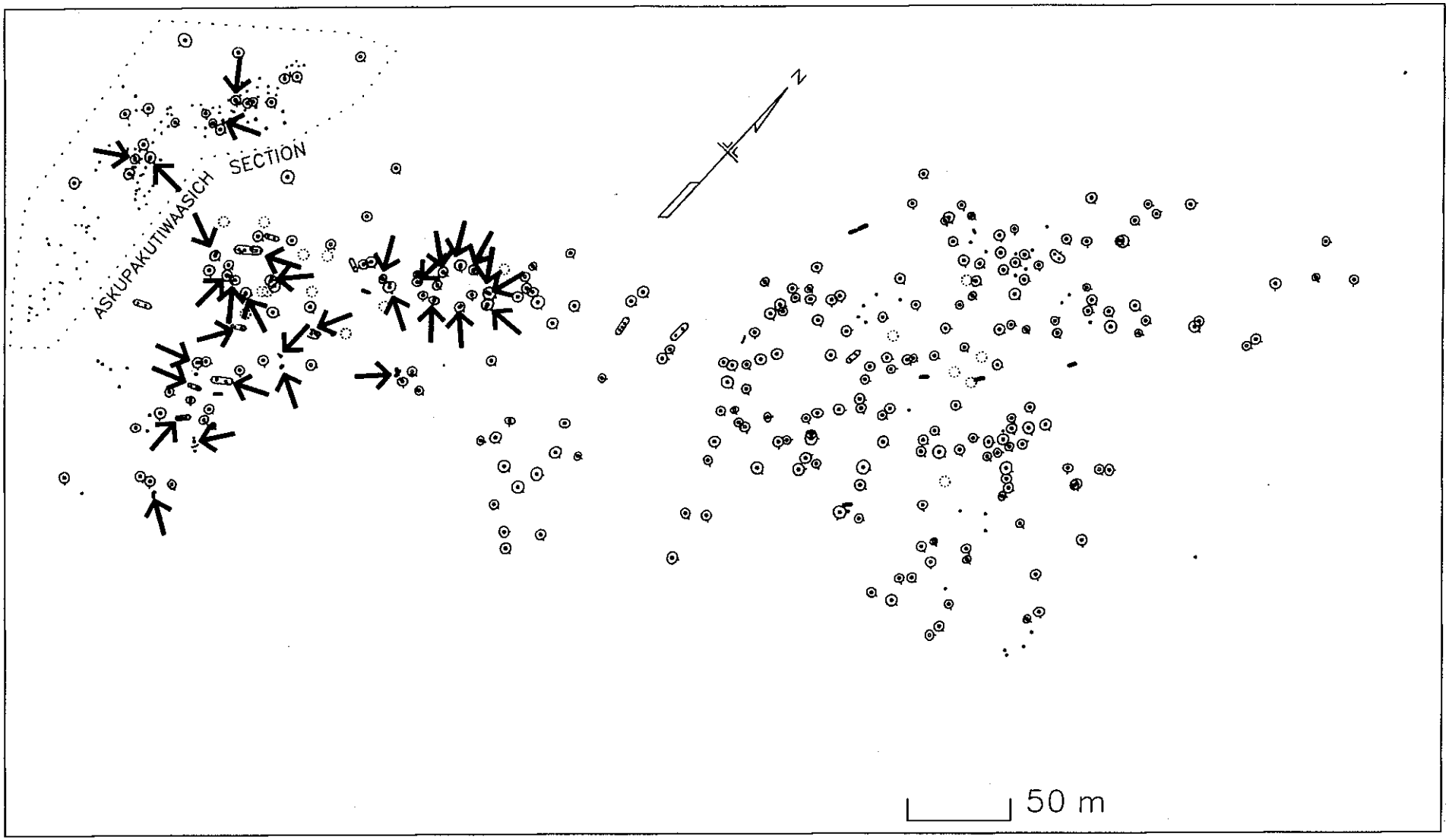


**Figure 11.** Location of features tested using 1 X 1 m squares.

## Methods

The test sample was chosen informally to provide representation from within each of the types of features present at the site. Likewise, a variety of locations within features (near hearth vs. away from hearth, near door vs. away form door, close to tent ring vs. close to hearth, rear vs. font of dwelling, etc.) were informally selected. The 1 $m^2$ tests were excavated by trowel, by natural stratigraphic units. No screening was done. Tools and features were plotted in on recording sheets. One wall of each 1 m square was drawn in profile.

## Soil profiles

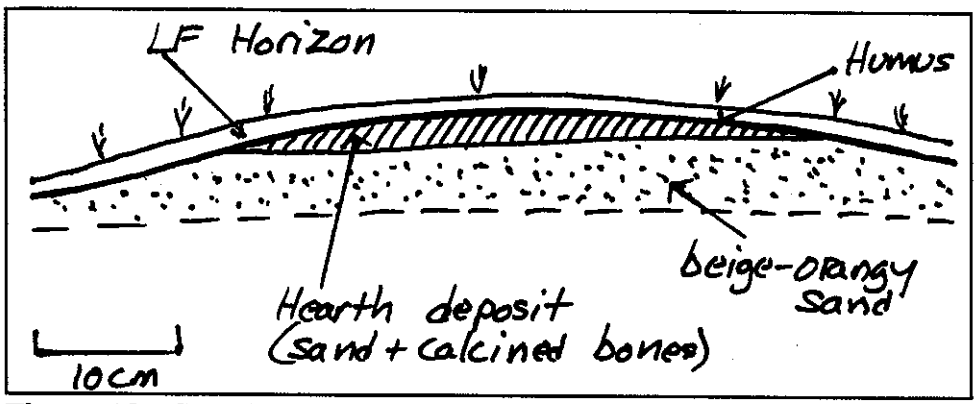


**Figure 12.** Sample stratigraphic profile from 1 X 1 m squares.

Typical soil profiles from the 1 m squares consist of the following layers from top to bottom: 1) Surface vegetation (a thin layer of cladonia lichens or sphagnum mosses with other plants such as fireweed) and LF layer (dead and decaying vegetal matter). This layer is 2 cm to 3 cm in thickness. 2) Humus (H horizon). Where present, this layer is extremely thin (0 - 1 cm) and usually mixed with sand. It should be noted the most of the tests took place on the floor of habitations where any humus would have been completely removed during the preparation of the lodge floor. In any case, the humus in the natural soil profile is very extremely thin. Most of the artifacts found lie within this layer or at the interface between it and the overlying LF layer. 3) A beige-orangy sand that is normally devoid of artifacts is at the base of the profile. In most case, this layer was excavated to a depth of 5 cm. It should be noted that the natural soil profile at the site shows almost no podzolization,

reflecting the relative recent age the sand plain and the relatively short existence of a forest cover.

Many of the tests located in the vicinity of hearths cut through a small proportion of the hearth deposit (Figure 12). Hearth deposits consist of a brown sand, usually containing calcined bone fragments and flecks of charcoal overlying the basal sand. Typically, there is no humus layer at the interface between the hearth deposit and the underlying sand. Infrequently, the edge of a heat reddened zone of the sand horizon was noted. It should be noted that such reddened zones tend to be located under the centre of hearths; only the margins of hearths features were touched upon during the testing at GhGk-1. At the margin of several hearth deposits, black plaques of conglomerated sand were noted and samples were taken. This material is thought to be burnt whale grease mixed with sand. Laboratory tests must be undertaken to verify this hypothesis.

Red ochre deposits were also found in several of the 1 m squares, usually adjacent to the hearth. These deposits are located at the interface between the LF and H.

**Systematic testing in the Askupakutiwaasich section of the site**

One area, at the farthest western edge of the site, while containing a smaller number of visible surface structures than other areas of the site, showed other signs of occupation in the form of occasional fire-cracked rocks; trowel probes pointed to the presence of hearth deposits. This zone was the only portion of the site that was tested systematically, including spaces between surface structures (Figure 13). This section of the site was named after the stream that borders it to the west.

The Askupakutiwaasich section of the site is mainly located within a linear clearing within the trees that stretches over a distance of about 140 m and is about 30-40 m wide. This area was the focus of systematic testing at intervals of 5 - 10 m. The test pits were approximately 35 cm X 35 cm. The testing extended outside of the clearing and into the

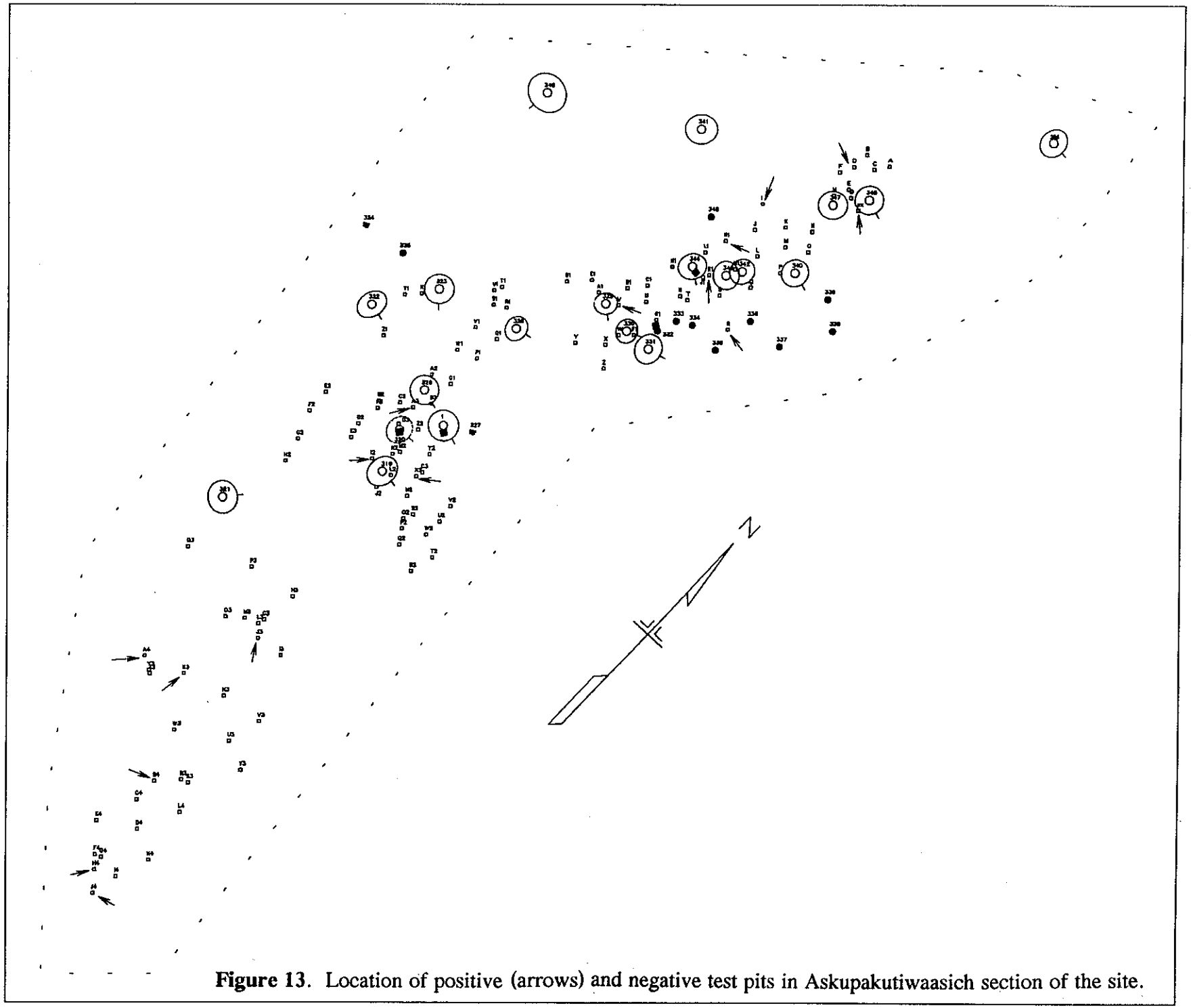

**Figure 13**. Location of positive (arrows) and negative test pits in Askupakutiwaasich section of the site.

adjacent woods to the west and southwest, as cultural features and some positive test pits continued into this area.

Out of 116 test pits, 13 produced artifactual material. In four other test, evidence of occupation in the form of fire-cracked rock or whale bone was noted. Figure 13 shows the location of the test pits and indicates those which were positive.

**Artifacts**

General categories of artifacts recovered from the site (1 m square tests associated with surface structures, surface finds or probes in surface structures and 35 cm X 35 cm tests) are listed in Table 5, below. The following short notes present a brief, preliminary description of the material in each of these categories.

Stone

The types of stone associated with the sample are as in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Lithic raw materials from Matawaasis.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| quartzite | 429 | 61.82% |
| metabasalt | 165 | 23.78% |
| chert | 35 | 5.04% |
| quartz | 14 | 2.02% |
| steatite | 13 | 1.87% |
| chert or flint | 2 | 0.29% |
| flint | 1 | 0.14% |
| unidentified | 35 | 5.04% |
| Total | 694 | 100.00% |

| Table 5. General categories of artifacts from Matawaasis. | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| STRUC # | stone | metal | ceramics | beads | glass | kaolin | bone | bark | shell |
| 001 (1m²) | 4 | 3 | | | | | | | |
| 002 (1m²) | 192 | 3 | | 2 | | | | | |
| 003 (1m²) | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 004 (1m²) | 8 | 2 | | | | 1 | | | |
| 005 (1m²) | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | |
| 006 (1m²) | 1 | 1 | 11 | | | | 1 | | |
| 007 (1m²) | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | |
| 008 (1m²) | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | |
| 010 (1m²) | 1 | 11 | | | | | | | |
| 013 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 014 (1m²) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 015 (1m²) | 2 | 15 | | 4 | 1 | | | | |
| 022 (s) | 2 | | | | | 1 | | | |
| 026 (1m²) | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
| 027 (1m²) | 6 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 029 (1m²) | 3 | | | | | | | | |
| 031 (1m²) | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 036 (1m²) | 1 | 4 | | 2 | | | | | |
| 038 (1m²) | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | |

| Table 5. General categories of artifacts from Matawaasis. | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 042 (1m²) | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 044 (1m²) | 2 | 3 | | 12 | | | | | |
| 048 (1m²) | 128 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | |
| 049 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 051 (p / s) | 2 | | | | | | | | |
| 060 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 062 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 077 (s) | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 078 (1m²) | 1 | 4 | | | | | | | |
| 083 (1m²) | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| 084 (1m²) | 11 | 140 | | 9 | | | | | |
| 085 (1m²) | 290 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 085 (s) | 8 | | | | | | | | |
| 087 (s) | 5 | | | | | | | | |
| 093 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 098 (s) | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 134 (p / s) | | 2 | | | | | | | 1 |
| 139 (p / s) | | | | | | 1 | | | |
| 182 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 184 (s) | | | 1 | | | | | | |

| Table 5. General categories of artifacts from Matawaasis. | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 202 (s) | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| 221 (p / s) | | 4 | | | | | | | |
| 241 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 320 ($1m^2$) | 3 | 1 | | 36 | | | | | |
| 328 (s) | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 332 ($1m^2$) | 2 | 3 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 346 ($1m^2$) | | 3 | | | | | | | |
| 348 (t) | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| 35 cm X 35 cm tests | 7 | 1 | | 2 | 1 | | | | |
| TOTAL | 694 | 221 | 14 | 69 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

NOTES: $1m^2$ - 1 X 1 m test unit; (s) - surface find; (p) - probe; (t) - 35 X 35 cm test in surface structure

Most of the quartzite sample consists of a coarse beige coloured material. The chert includes beige, grey and greenish colour varieties some of which are mottled or banded. A brownish translucent chert can be considered in the general category of Hudson Bay lowland chert. More work is required to adequately distinguish between some cherts in the latter category and blond European flint.

The quartz includes a few flakes of quartz crystal, found on the surface in a blowout along with a fragments of steatite.

Lithic debris is present in most structures tested. The sample is dominated by shattered pieces and flakes, battered chunks and split cobbles. Four items that are interpreted as locally made gun flints are included as is a fragmentary grey flint gun flint. The lithic sample stands in clear contrast to those typical of pre-contact sites where bifacial tools were manufactured and maintained. While further analysis is required, it would appear that at least a portion of the assemblage can be related to fire-making using quartz and chert strike-a-lite stones and to the production of gun flints of local cherts, quartzite and quartz. The presence of small flakes of chert and flint may relate to the retouch of gunflints. The presence of battered and worked pieces and, in some cases, quantities of coarse quartzite or metabasalt flakes, suggests other, as yet unidentified, uses.

The single stone projectile point in the sample is a small, flake point of Hudson Bay lowland chert or, possibly, flint. This kind of point is similar to 17th century points from Caniapiscau, in central of Quebec-Labrador. A flake point of similar raw material was found on an undated (possibly historic) portion of a site at Eastmain, on the central James Bay coast (Denton 1989). The structure in which this point was found contained no European / Euro-Canadian artifacts.

The small fragments of worked steatite that occur in several of the structures, some showing file marks, are hypothesized as relating to the

manufacture of pipes, though this remains to be verified.

Metal

The second largest category is that of the metal artifacts.

Copper alloy artifacts consist of the following: a ramrod guide from a 19th century trade gun, seven folded pieces of sheet brass from kettles two percussion caps and a kettle lug portion with fasteners and a portion of the rim.

Iron artifacts consist of two large, wrought nails, two probable gun parts, sections of barrel strapping, an auger bit, a highly corroded knife blade and miscellaneous scraps and fragments.

Lead artifacts consist of 24 pellets of bird shot, six 'musket' balls, 'knobs' from gang moulding of shot and numerous scraps from the moulding of lead shot. Most of the latter are concentrated in a single structure.

Ceramics

A small sherd of native pottery was found in association with a miichiwaahp (structure #38). The size and curvature of this sherd suggests that it was part of a pipe.

The non-native ceramics consist of 11 small sherds of creamware, one sherd of a possible bowl with a dark blue transfer print decoration, and a single sherd of a white glazed plate or saucer.

## Beads

Glass beads are present in many of the structures tested. The sample of 69 beads is dominated by small, circular oyster white and blue beads but contains six white and two multi-layer tubular beads (type IIIa3; redwood exterior, tsl. apple green interior), four multi-layer circular beads (type IVa6 op. redwood exterior, tsl. apple green core), a medium size, circular, navy blue bead (type IIa55) and two small, decorated white beads, one with green and the other with green and gold stripes. While most of these beads would appear to relate to the 19th century or late 18th century, some may reflect occupations earlier in the 18th century.

## Glass

Excluding the beads, the glass sample consists of a sherd of sheet glass and one sherd of dark green, bottle glass and a sherd from a thin walled, glass or bottle.

## Kaolin

The kaolin pipe sample consists of three stem fragments, all with small bore diameters, suggesting a 19th century date.

## Bone

The sample of bone artifacts includes two objects of which one was made by local native artisans and the other was likely obtained from traders. The native artifact is a portion of a multi-barbed bone projectile point. This is specimen is 37 mm in length and has two relatively deep and narrow barbs on one side. The second bone artifact is a fragmentary, four-holed button.

Shell

One complete scallop shell was recovered as well as several fragments. The complete shell is presented as an 'artifact' on the basis of information from Cree elders, who point out that the presence of scallop shells relates not to the consumption of this animal but to the use of its shells as spoons.

**Faunal remains**

The most prominent faunal remains on the site are the beluga bones found in the vicinity of most of the habitations and present in several larger deposits, barely hidden by the thin surface vegetation. Vertebrae and ribs were noted most frequently. Time and logistic constraints prohibited and attempt to record in situ or to collect this material.

All faunal remains from within the 1 X 1 m tests were collected. These include both unburned bone (primarily beluga) and fragmentary, calcined bones from the small portions of hearth deposits excavated. The faunal remains also include a scallop shell and scallop shells fragments recovered from two structures.

A identification of the faunal material is presently being conducted by the Ostéotèque de Montréal inc..

**Samples**

Numerous samples were collected as a result of testing at Matawaasis. These include samples of red ochre in the following forms: chunks of hematite, deposits of red ochre coloured pigment and stained sand. These should be chemically analyzed. One question could be answered in this manner is whether or not some of the pigment might be vermilion obtained from traders or whether it was all produced from local hematite sources.

Several samples of a hardened, black substance found on the edge of some hearths and in other locations were taken. This substance, which often contains sand is thought to be burned whale grease. Again, analyses should be done to confirm this.

Several samples of rock associated with the surface structures as well as numerous clay concretions complete the list. The latter include many interesting rounded forms that were apparently brought by the inhabitants to their dwellings as it is unlikely that they would be found naturally on the sand plain. The elders should be questioned on the significance of these objects.

**Chronology**

The small size of the sample and the lack of analysis preclude much precision with respect to the chronology of the site occupation. The following notes are presented as a general, preliminary indication.

A number of objects clearly point to the use of the site in the 19th century. These include the brass ramrod guide from a trade gun, the lug portion of a brass kettle, the percussion caps, the transfer print pottery and pipe stems with small diameter bore holes. A number of objects may indicate a pre-19th century use of the site. These include some of the beads (particularly the tubular beads, the red-green, multi-layer beads and the large blue bead), the stone projectile point and the native ceramic pipe fragment.

The assemblage from Matawaasis can be usefully compared with that from the Askwaapsuaanuuts site, which likely dates to the mid-18th century and is located in the James Bay coastal zone some 280 km to the south. There are numerous similarities in the lithic assemblage, particularly with respect to the native gun flints and strike-a-lite stones. The bangles and tinkling cones made from sheet brass from kettles, characteristic of Askwaapsuaanuuts are as yet absent from Matawaasis.

In general, the assemblage points to an 18th - 19th century use of the site with the 19th century being dominant. There are hints that the western half of the site is older than the eastern. Although the eastern half of the site was not tested, the occasional surface find suggests that at least some of the structures there date to the latter part of the 19th century and perhaps, into the early 20th century.

It should be noted that the shaapuhtuwaan type dwellings are associated primarily with the western half of the site. Whapmagoostui Iyiyuu elders state that they gave up this form of dwelling as a result of pressure by missionaries to abandon drumming, dancing and other traditional religious ceremonies that were a integral part of communal life in the shaapuhtuwaans. These pressures began in the last quarter of the 19th century and must have become intense in the last decade of the century with the building a chapel and then a church at Great Whale and the regularizing of annual missionary visits.

The oldest area of the site could well be the Askupakutiwaasich section at the far western margin of the site. As already noted, the structures within the clearing here are poorly defined; there are several habitation areas that are only barely visible or not at all visible on the ground surface. Most of the older beads in the sample are located in this zone (associated with the $1m^2$ test in structure 320). Beyond the clearing to the west, in the wooded portion of the Askupakutiwaasich section, no European materials were found in the several positive tests. The sample from this area consists of a few chert flakes, quartz flakes and calcined bone associated with two hearths. Two tests in this zone produced a profusion of red ochre and one indicated the probable presence of burned whale oil. The argument that this section of the site is older reposes as well on its location in a heavily forested area; in contrast to other areas of the site it seems likely that the forest has had time to grown up again in this area since the occupations.

The picture suggested by these data is of a gradual shift in the centre of occupation across the site from the wooded portion of the Askupakutiwaasich section, to the clearing of the Askupakutiwaasich section, to the western half of the broader site, and finally, to the eastern side of the site. This shift may have taken place over a period of about 150 years, from the

mid-18th century until the beginning of the 20th century. Admittedly, the data are very incomplete, and this suggestion remains somewhat speculative. One suggestion is that this shift from west to east (if in fact it turns out to be real) is related the proximity of trees. In this scenario, the occupation of the deltaic plain would have shifted gradually as the forest was cleared in the immediate vicinity of the areas of older occupation. It should be cautioned that this general tenancy does not mean that the older occupations were strictly confined to the Askupakutiwaasich space. That this is not the case is suggested by the presence of the projectile point and the probable pipe fragment in surface structures in the western half of the site (not in the Askupakutiwaasich section). Neither of these two structures produced European materials in the $1m^2$ test units.

The problems dating the earliest occupation of the site are mirrored at the more recent end of the occupation period. I would argue that the vast majority of the surface structures at Matawaasis date to the pre-20th century period. This argument would be easier to make had we been able to test an adequate sample of structures in the eastern half of the site. As it is, the argument is based on the lack of obvious 20th century artifacts in the probes carried out in the hearths, even in the eastern section of the site. However, archaeological evidence also indicates that the occupation of the site did not stop completely in the late 19th century. Indeed, there is one miichiwaahp ring in the eastern half of the site which is very recent, dating to the last 10 years.

## THE SHAAPUHTUWAAN SITE (GhGk- 96)

As already mentioned, Matawaasis is part of larger complex of sites stretching to Sasapimakwaananistikw to the west. These sites, including one containing a large number of surface structures, have yet to be mapped or tested, with one exception, the Shaapuhtuwaan site (GhGk-96).

For convenience, three separate features or areas of interest noted within this general area have been included within this site. These are: Area A- a group of features that we interpret as a very long shaapuhtuwaan, Area B- a zone where a few quartz flakes were noted on the ground surface in a clearing and Area C- where a probable wiiyaaukihiikin was noted (see Figure 2). Area B was simply noted in passing; due to time constraints the few quartz crystal flakes were not collected. Likewise, only the location of the probable wiiyaaukihiikin was recorded. Thus, while noting the existence of these two areas of interest, the description here focuses on Area A.

### Location

This site, located about 240 m to the west of the Askupakutiwaasich section of Matawaasis, in a lower, wooded area, was noted in the course of walks along a nearby trail. The location of the site is indicated in Figure 2. Area A is located in a small area of open woodland through which passes a trail running towards the water. This section of the site is about 200 m from the shore. To both sides of the site (west and east) the forest become denser. 40 m to the southwest is a swampy zone, from which a very small, intermittent stream flows. Area A is within about 10 m of the edge of the slope leading down to the swamp and is oriented parallel with the edge of the slope.

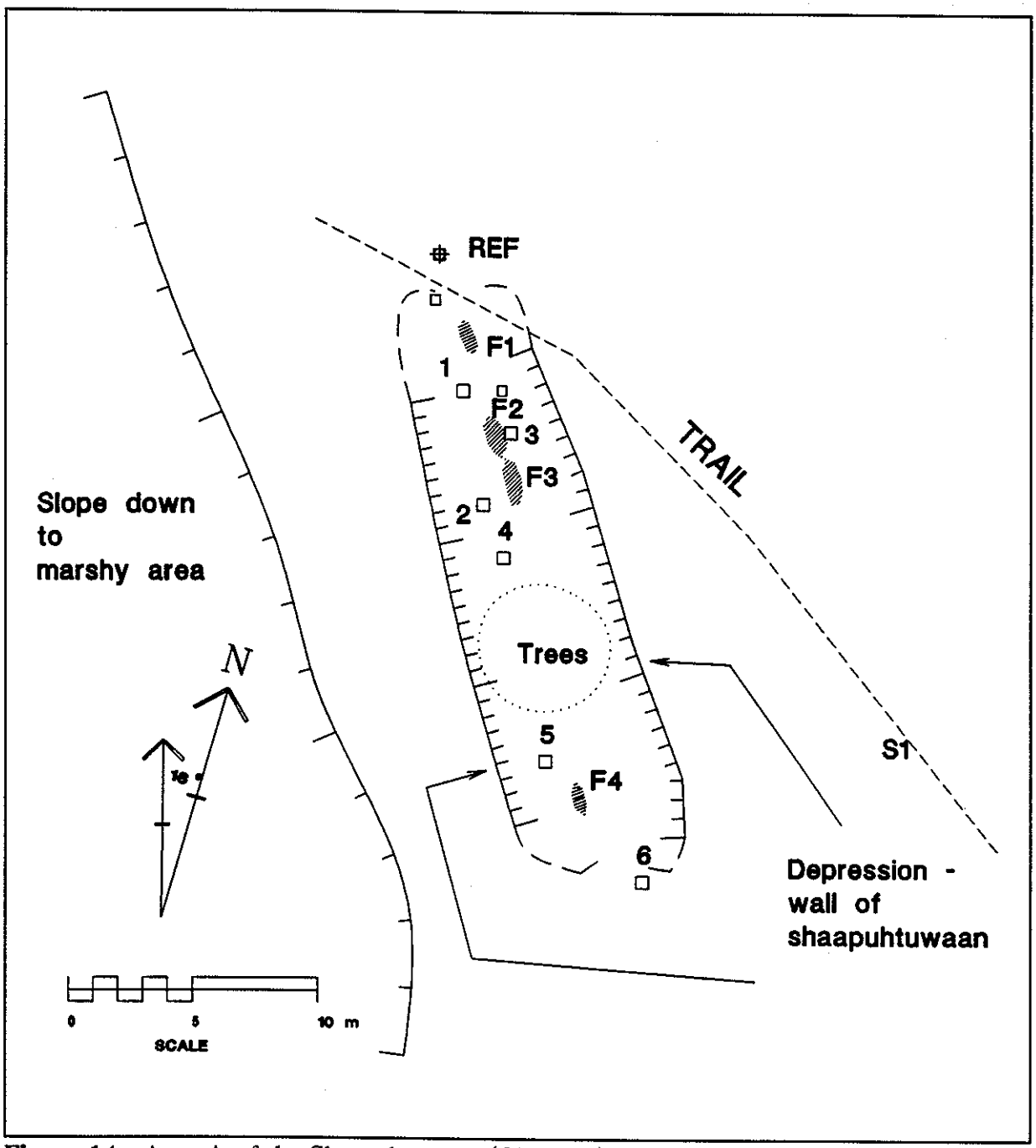


**Figure 14.** Area A of the Shaapuhtuwaan (GhGk-96) site.

**Site description**

Area A was noted in the course of walks along the trail. Pieces of hematite and several quartz flakes were seen on the surface of this trail (Figure 14, S1). An examination of this

location lead to the discovery of flattened, linear zone bordered by low ridges in the soil. Probing with the point of a trowel revealed the presence of hearth deposits along the long axis of this flattened zone.

Eight 30 X 30 cm tests were carried dug within the area of the lodge. Of these, six were positive. The location of the hearths was determined by further probing with a trowel and noting the presence of brown sand / calcined bone deposits. Four separate hearth locations were noted in this manner. These are situated at the northern half of the lodge and at the southern end. There is a distance of about 11 m where no hearths were noted. It should be noted that this zone was not examined in detail due to the presence of a stand of trees here and the difficulty of carrying out the trowel probes here.

The soil profile in the tests shows an LF (Cladonia lichens and decaying vegetal matter) horizon of 3-5 cm in thickness. Below this is an H (black humus) horizon of about 1 cm in thickness. This is underlain by a lightly podzolized Ae horizon. The artifactual materials are found within, or at the base of this humus layer. In some tests (e.g. Test 2), red ochre is present in a layer at the base of the thin humus (Figure 15).

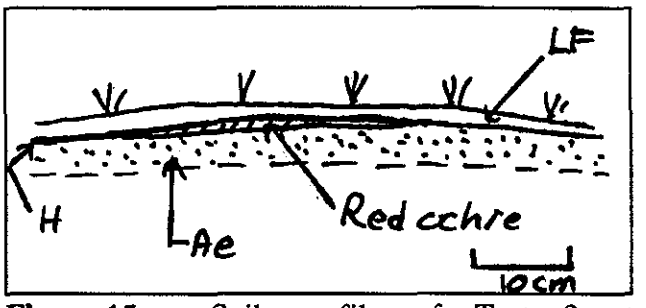

**Figure 15.** Soil profile of Test 2 at Shaapuhtuwaan (GhGk-96) site.

If our interpretation of the linear ridges and the presence of hearth deposits is correct, we are dealing with a shaapuhtuwaan of just over 25 m in length and between 4 and 5 m in width and having <u>at least</u> 4 hearths. In fact, this interpretation should be treated as an hypothesis that can only be confirmed by a full excavation. Other interpretations (such as two overlapping shaapuhtuwaans) can not be wholly rejected at this stage, especially given the lack of information from the large area between fireplaces 3 and 4. As is suggested in Figure 14, the edges of the shaapuhtuwaan are fairly well defined by a low ridge on either site. The ends, however, are not well defined. The orientation of the lodge is north-northwest - south-southeast.

Apart from the calcined bones noted in the probes around the fireplace areas, a few calcined bones stained with ochre were collected from Test 6. This could perhaps be another hearth, though such an interpretation fits poorly with how we perceived the outline of the dwelling, with its southern end in the vicinity of Test 6. On the other hand, these bones more likely reflect a convenient disposal or refuse area near the door of the structure.

**Artifacts**

The small artifact assemblage from this site consists of seven quartz flakes and four pieces of quartz block shatter. In addition, nuggets of red ochre were recovered both from the trail and from test pits. No European artifacts were found.

**Comment**

The lack of European artifacts in the few tests conducted and the location in a densely forested area strongly suggests that this structure is older than most of those associated with GhGk-1 (with the possible exception of the wooded area of the Askupakutiwaasich section of the site. This suggests that the site dates to the first half of the 18th century or earlier.

If this is, as it appears, a shaapuhtuwaan of about 25 m in length, it can be compared with the GaEj-1 site in the far inland Caniapiscau, where a 32 long shaapuhtuwaan was excavated (Denton et al. 1982). The latter dates to the 17th century and is by far the longest habitation structure known archaeologically from subarctic and hemiarctic Quebec.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the short field project serve more to tantalize than to answer questions relating to the chronology and evolution of Iyiyuu use of the river mouth area. At this preliminary stage, at least, they mirror what we know from oral tradition and from the documentary record. Iyiyuu elders, state that the Matawaasis area and the larger zone known as Sasapimakwaananistikw was the major camping place of Crees who came to fish, hunt beluga and to socialize at the mouth of the river. The meat was prepared at the site and oil was rendered and taken inland in containers made from beluga stomachs, to be used during the winter. Peopled camped on the south side of the river because firewood and boughs for flooring were more readily available than on the north side. One Iyiyuu elder noted that there were about 20 families living at this location every summer in shaapuhtuwaan with two or three hearths. Crees tended to camp far from the river, as it was critical to avoid scaring the whales from entering the estuary, and to have a better view over a wide area surrounding the river mouth from the raised plain.

That this practice of summer gathering to hunt beluga began well before the arrival of the Europeans, is clearly stated in Iyiyuu oral tradition, and is hinted at by the fact that records from the earliest significant European presence in the southeastern Hudson Bay suggest an established practice. At least by the mid-18th century, Iyiyuu were hunting beluga at the mouth of the Great and Little Whale Rivers. During the 1744 voyage Thomas Mitchell noted at Great Whale: "in 3 Tents 157 Indians and All Live Chiefly on what white whail they Kill in this River" (B.59/a/9:7, cited in Francis and Morantz 1983: 68). While Mitchell's account is not specific on this point, it would appear likely that the camp he observed was located in the general Matawaasis - Sasapimakwaananistikw area.

The whale hunt as carried out in the mid-18th century was described by Potts, recalling the story of Upischiuini:

...it is Impossible to kill Whale Unless there is a great no. of Indians in Cannoes to stop ye mouth of the River when ye fish is to come into it then Robinson Crouseo with some of the Most Expert Indians Strikes the Whales wch when Struck Darts Out of ye River; with great swiftness they are then Joyned by those Indians that stops ye River's mouth; and ye fish Drags them Out to Sea Sometimes two or three miles before ye fish is dead and sometimes Over setts their Cannoes. (B.182/a/4:3 in Francis and Morantz,1983:72)

The following account from 1786 also suggests the cooperative nature of the hunt and the use of large communal dwellings at this time:

I counted 27 men in one tent where they were assembled (after greasing and painting themselves) to welcome us on shore, besides many young lads in the other tents. The women, of which there are a great number) were employed in drying the flesh of the whales and rendering the blubber into oil (A.11/45:55; cited in Francis and Morantz 1983: 116).

While the last two observations were made at Little Whale River, they could apply equally to Great Whale. The account suggests that large houses (like that at the Shaapuhtuwaan Site and the shaapuhtuwaans at Matawaasis) were used for assembling and preparing the hunters. Such dwellings were important for carrying out feasts and other ceremonies which likely played a rôle in assuring both the spiritual and social conditions necessary for a successful hunt.

The history and the evolution of the commercial whale hunt in southeastern Hudson Bay has been described by several authors who have drawn on HBC archival records (Francis and Morantz 1983, Reeves and Mitchell 1987). In brief, 18th century attempts by the HBC to develop a trade in whale oil in this area were characterized by a series of false starts and were largely unsuccessful.

During first quarter of the 19th century, there was some regularization of the trade. With the exception of 1813 - 1816, when a trading post was present on the north shore of the Great

Whale river, this trade was carried out by visits of a sloop which sailed north from Fort George most summers to collect whale oil. Many of those involved in the whale hunt traded furs at Eastmain post or Fort George, to the south, depending on which of these posts was in operation. From 1837 to the mid-1850s, the white whale hunt included a contingent of people who traded at Fort George after break-up, spent several weeks fishing, hunting and socializing on the coast near Fort George before travelling north to Great Whale River for the beluga hunt in mid-July.

The 1850s saw a renewed thrust by the HBC to develop the whale oil trade using more intensive techniques (Francis and Morantz 1983: 144-50). The new hunt involved the use of a barrier net to block the river and is remembered vividly in oral tradition. The raising of the net took place at night. When the beluga were heard by Iyiyuu stationed at a point several kilometres up-stream from the mouth, a bark torch was used to signal Iyiyuu at the river mouth to raise the net. The next day the whale were driven to places where they could be shot in large numbers. Cree were paid by the HBC to carrying the various tasks involved in the hunt, and in the butchering and rendering of the oil at the newly built oil house on the north side of the river. This intensive fishery, which resulted in the taking of several hundred whales per summer, lasted at Great Whale for slightly over a decade (from 1856 until 1869) when the beluga grew "shy", refusing to enter the estuary, and the fishery was given a "rest".

With the collapse of the beluga fishery at the end of the 1860s the Great Whale post was closed, to be opened again only in 1878. From this date through to the early 20th century, the post journals suggest that beluga hunting for the HBC continued, but on a modest scale, with individuals or small numbers of hunters, Cree and Inuit, participating. Indians continued to hunt beluga for their own winter oil requirements.

Based on the historic information from oral and documentary sources, we can suggest that the Matawaasis and Shaapuhtuwaan sites (and other locations in the general Sasapimakwaananistikw area) were the major places Crees lived when they came to the mouth of the river during the months of July and August to hunt beluga, initially for subsistence then later for trade in oil to the Company or as hired workers. While beluga was the most important

resource drawing people to the river estuary, it was not the only one: there was also a productive summer fishery. In general, this was a prime occasion to socialize and to relax as suggested by the Cree stories of the games played during this period. A certain amount of trading of furs also took place, both during the short periods when a trading post was present on the north shore of the river and during the annual visits of the sloop. It is also possible that Great Whale was the site of occasional trading between Cree and Inuit prior to the latter developing regular contacts with the HBC (Trudel 1990) and between Crees frequenting the posts of Eastmain or Fort George and those with less regular contact with traders.

While providing much useful information, the HBC post journals are of little more specific help in interpreting the sites described here. From time to time, references to the south side of the river are made. In the 1860s, most such references are to Indians camped in that area. A few people (Jane Quaton, who did cooking and fishing for the post, and her mother, a woman referred to as "the Widow") stayed here during the winter. While it is tempting suggest that they stayed at Matawaasis, the accounts are not precise enough to say this with any certainty. The HBC records do indicate that during the period of intensive commercial hunting in the 1850s and 60s the hunters sometimes camped on the north side of the river, presumably to better coordinate hunting activities. In one entry from 1862 it is noted:

> July 26 - Today the anchors were laid down for our Barrier Net + also the Chain ... All the Indians have now camped upon this side of the River (B.372/a/5: 20).

Later in the century, the references to the south side of the river reflect the use of this area for fox trapping and intensive firewood collection by post employees.

Many questions relating to Matawaasis, the Shaapuhtuwaan site and the summer beluga hunt remain. The origins of the adaptive pattern in which the summer hunting of white whales played an important part are still obscure. Does the summer use of beluga stretch well back to into the pre-contact period or is this pattern associated with the early contact period? Further

archaeological work at Matawaasis and other sites in the Great and Little Whale estuaries may help to answer this question.

As noted in this report, the dating of the abandonment of Matawaasis as the favoured summer camping place is also not clear. It can be proposed that the shift to the north shore of the river began with the construction of the permanent trading post in 1878 and the development of the mission there in the 1890s. However, it seems clear that a few people continued to camp in the Matawaasis area into the 20th century.

One elder stated that the 'Great Whale people' stayed on the north side of the river and the 'Chisasibi people'[3] stayed on the south side (Laforte and Denton 1990). What is not clear is whether this pattern relates mainly to the later 19th century, when the permanent post and mission were in place, or whether it describes the situation at an earlier period as well. On the north side of the river, there were traditionally two main campsites: one group, known as the chiksinach, lived near the base of the hills to the east of the present village; the other group, known as the musach, lived on the flat plain, where there were no trees, located near the trading post.

The fact that elders stress the historic importance of Matawaasis and its rôle in the whale hunt hints that the south side of the river was more significant for all groups involved and that a tendency for 'Chisasibi' and 'Great Whale' people to camp on opposite sides of the river may relate only to the late 19th / early 20th century period. However, this is far from clear. What is clear is that a much more detailed consultation with Whapmagoostui elders on these points,

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[3] As already mentioned, the HBC records talk of the intensive involvement of the people trading at Fort George in 19th century beluga hunt. Prior to the establishment of a permanent post at Great Whale River most of the hunters within the present Whapmagoostui territories would have traded at Fort George in the early summer. This suggests that many of the 'Chisasibi people' referred to as participating in the beluga hunt may have had their traditional territories within the Great Whale drainage basin, well to the north of the La Grande River.

and in general, on the beluga hunt and the use of the Matawaasis - Sasapimakwaananistikw areas, is required.

In conclusion, the short field project carried out in 1991 points the remarkable potential of Matawaasis and neighbouring sites. By Quebec subarctic standards, Matawaasis is extremely large. It relates to a period of occupation, the 18th and 19th centuries, which has remained almost completely unknown archaeologically, despite large projects in inland areas associated with hydro-electric development. It can be suggested that the most significant coastal sites for understanding period will be places like Askwaapsuwaanuuts and Matawaasis, where people gathered to exploit coastal resources like geese, fish and beluga, rather than the coastal trading post sites, in which the native presence has shown to be all but invisible. Coupled with fresh work inland, which will hopefully address the methodological problems which make occupations of this period difficult to recognize, sites like Matawaasis will ultimately allow a better understanding of Iyiyuu responses in a rapidly changing period of European and Euro-Canadian contacts.

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**PLATES**

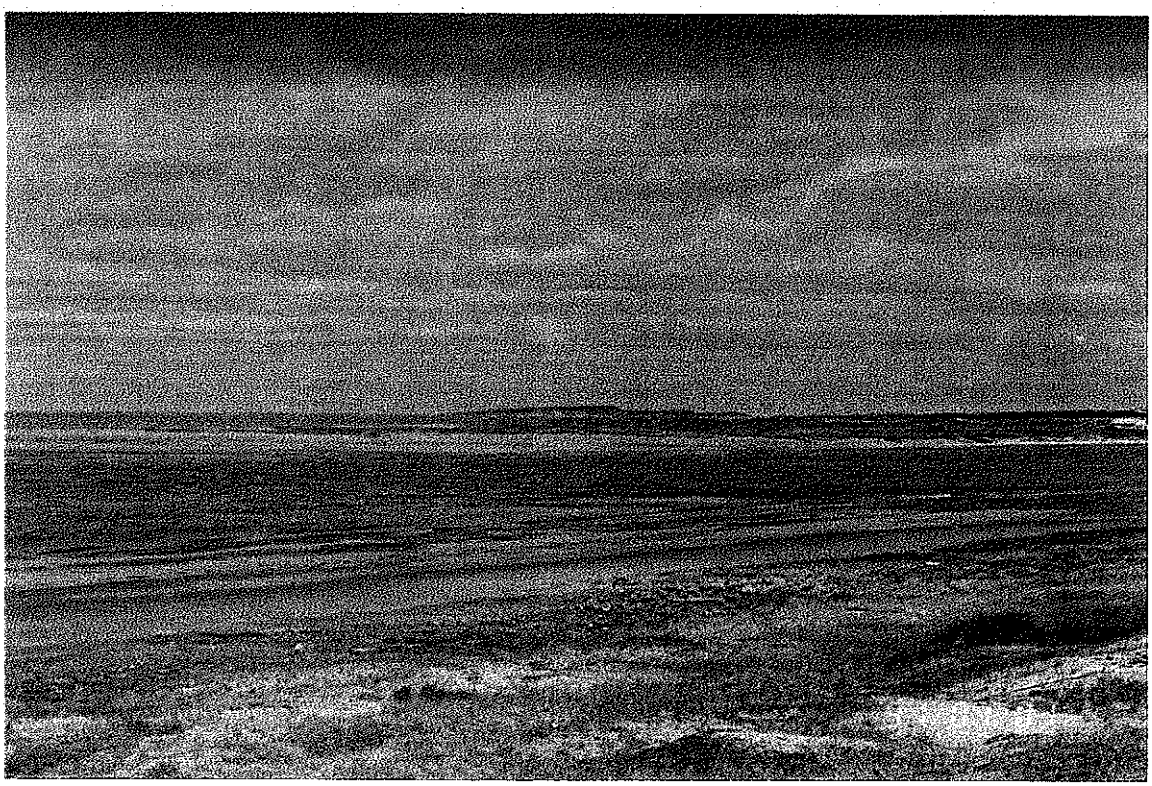

**Plate 1**. View of river mouth opposite the site. Facing north (91-01-01-28).

**Plate 2**. View along the shore to the west of the site. Facing west (91-01-01-30).

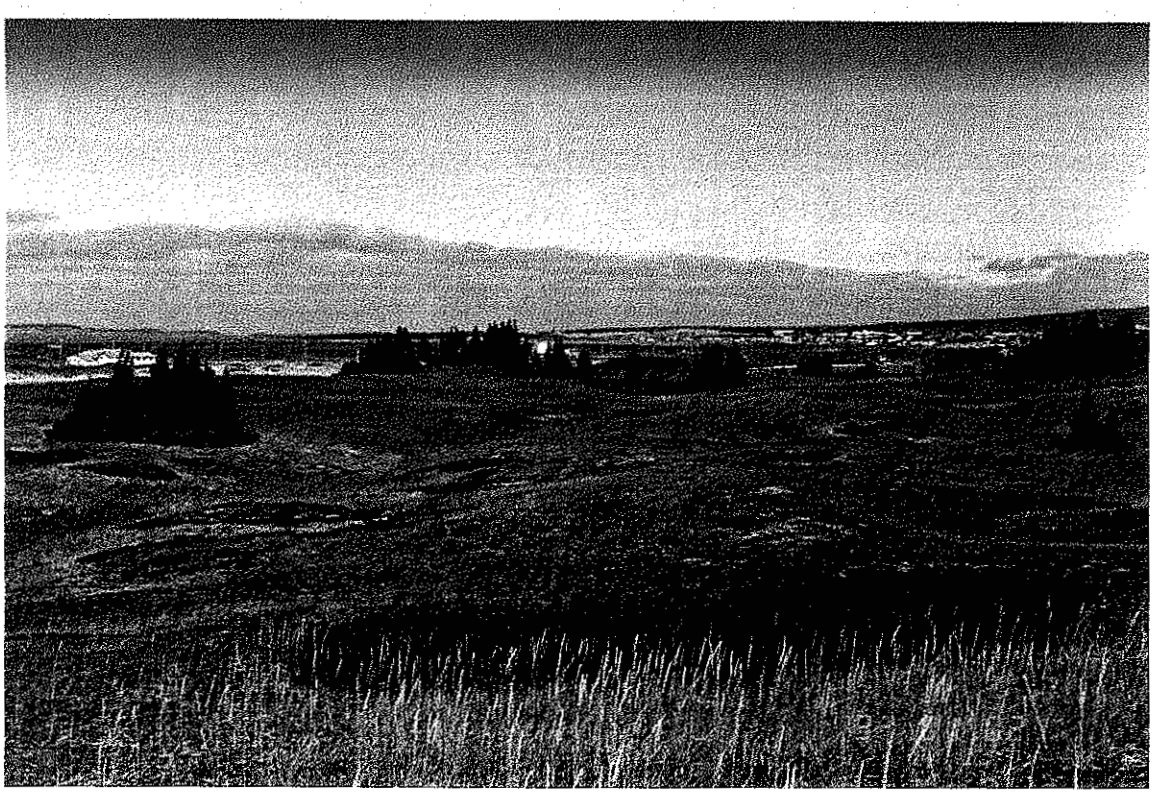

**Plate 3**. View over the grassy plain with Mantunikw and Whapmagoostui in the background. Facing east-northeast (91-01-02-00).

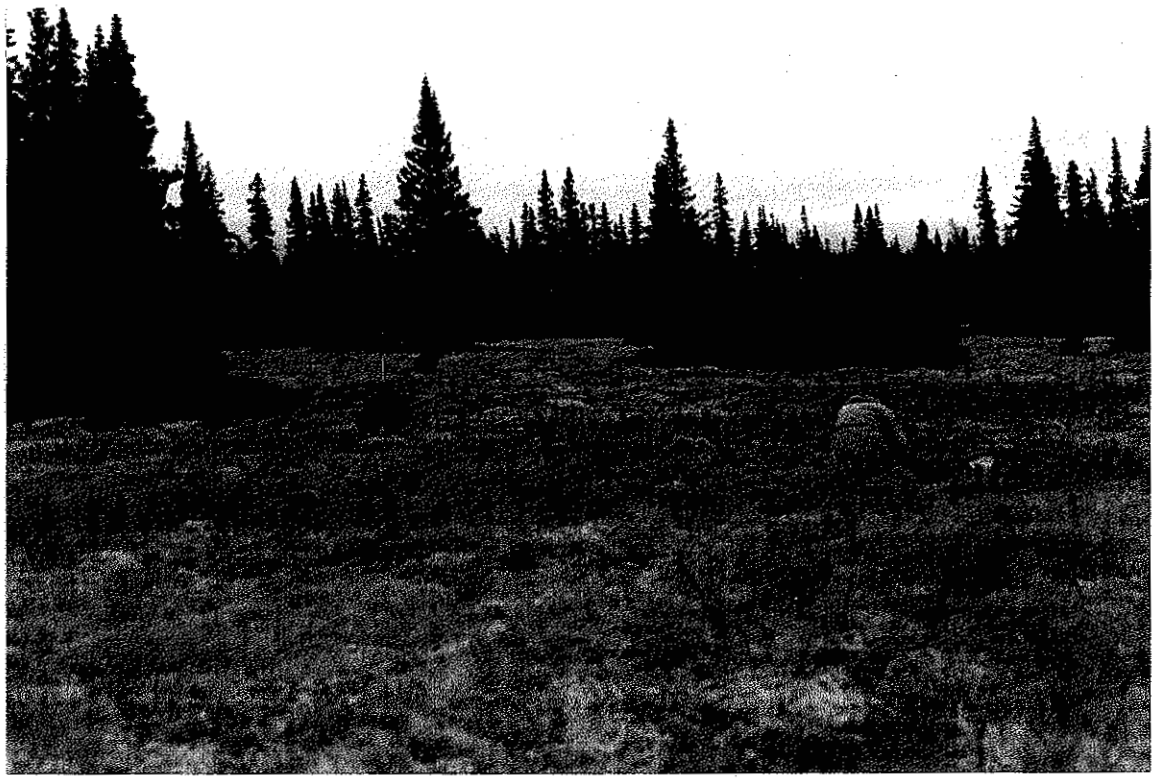

**Plate 4**. General view of Crew testing in several structures across the site (91-01-01-25).

**Plate 5**. Miichiwaahp, structure 146. Facing north-west. Arrow marks hearth (91-01-02-18).

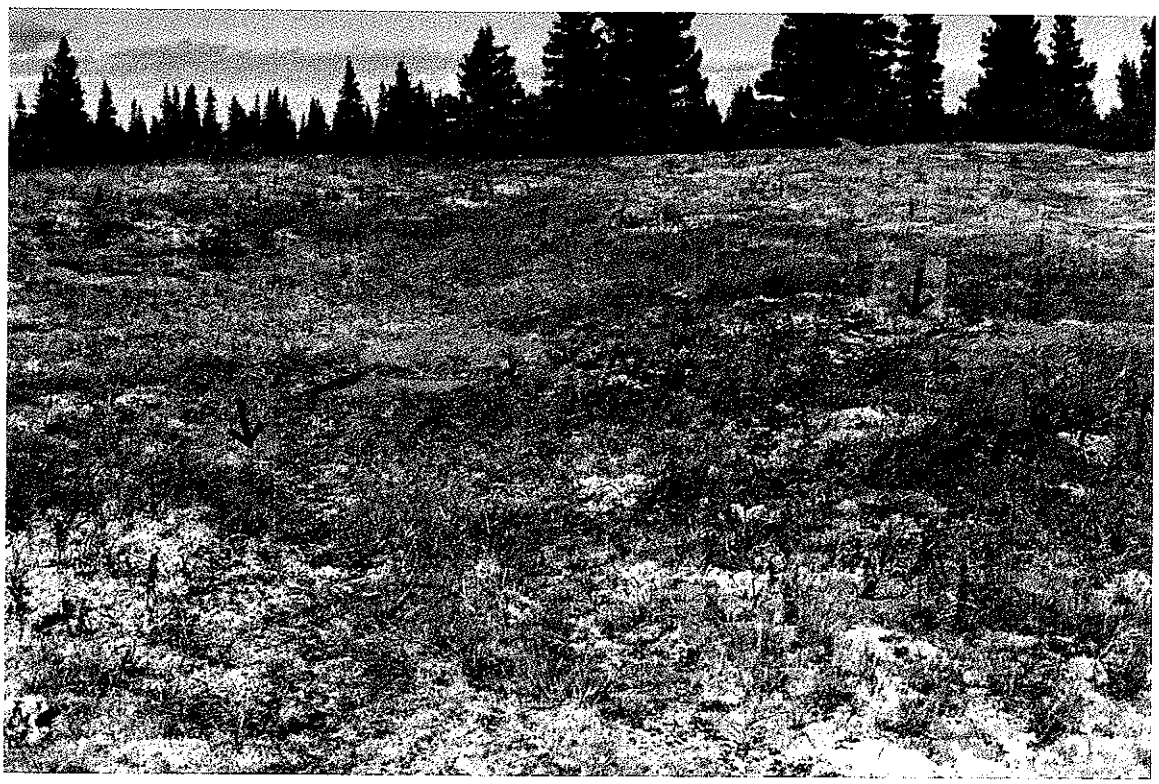

**Plate 6**. Shaapuhtuwaan, structure 44 showing location of tests. Facing north. Arrows mark ends of structure (91-01-02-08).

**Plate 7**. In foreground, shaapuhtuwaan - structure 288. Facing toward dune at the edge of the site. Facing north-east. Arrows mark ends of structure (91-01-02-13).

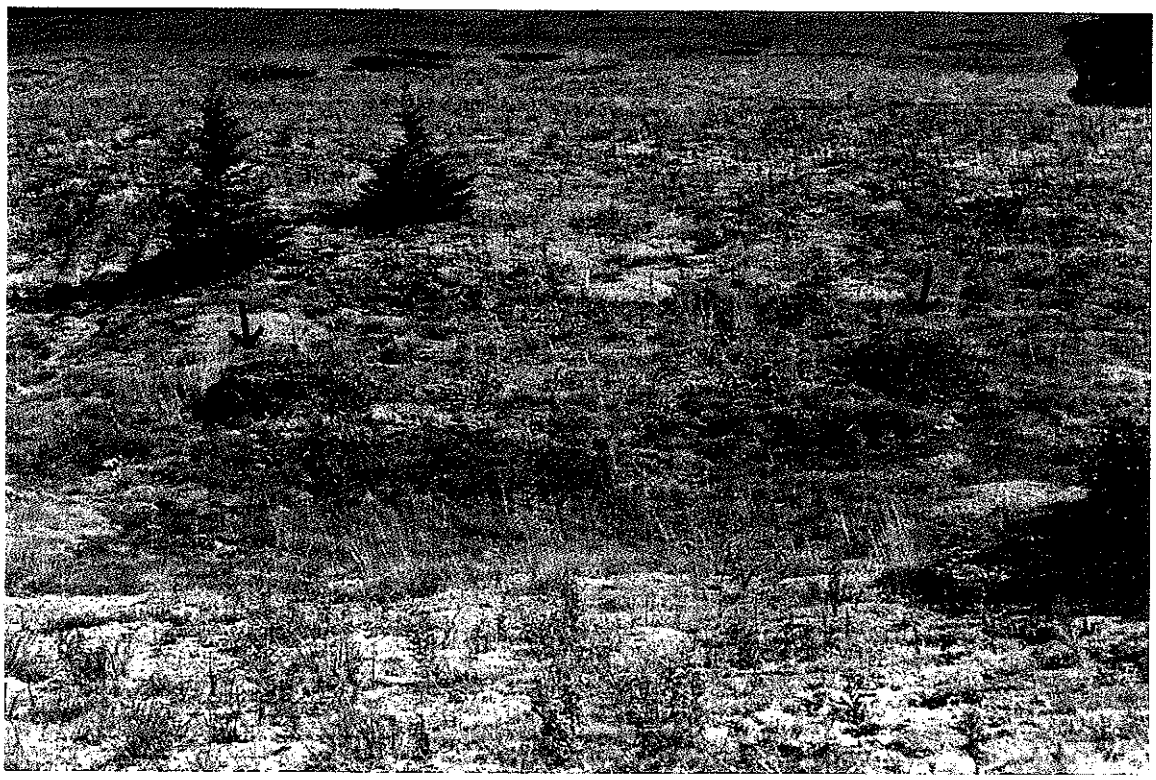

**Plate 8**. Wiiyaaukihiikin. View of canoe building platform showing raised ends (arrows). Note that the structure is located in a linear 'trough' running through the site. Facing south (91-01-02-06).

**Plate 9**. Hearth feature in 1 X 1 m test in Structure 1. Facing east (91-01-01-06).

**Plate 10**. View of edge of hearth in test in Structure 7. Facing southwest (91-01-01-17).

**Plate 11**. South wall of test in Structure 83 (wiiyaaukihiikin) showing buried humus layer. Facing south (91-01-01-22).

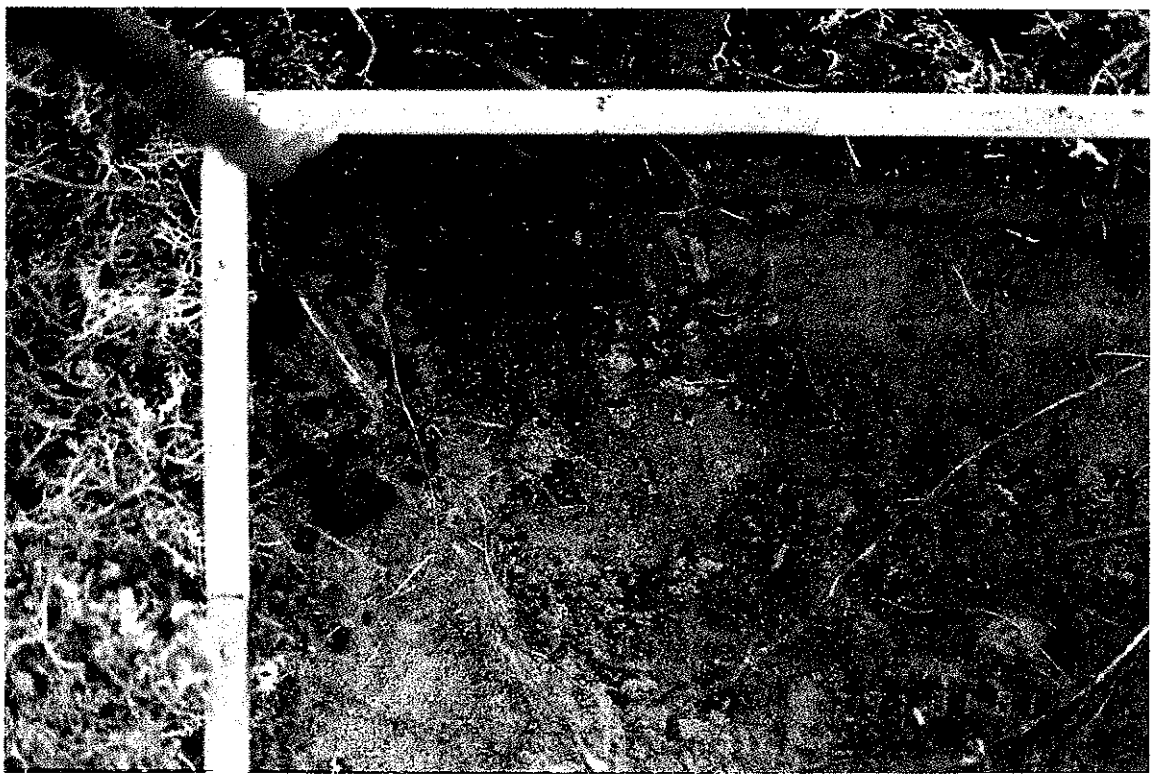

**Plate 12**. Northeastern corner of test in Stucture 1. Shows patch of hardened black material located on edge of hearth. This material is believed to be whale fat (91-01-01-09).

**Plate 13**. Whale bones associated with structure 330 (91-01-02-23).

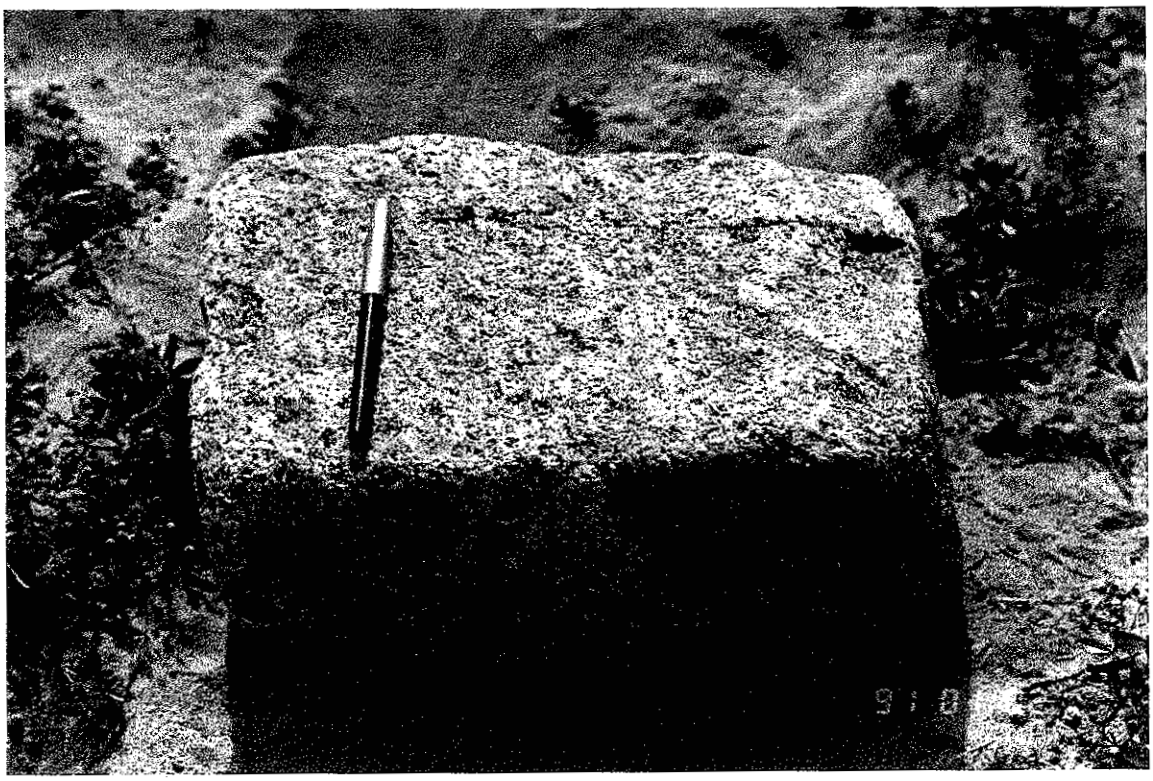

**Plate 14**. Anvil with squared sides probably for crushing bones (91-01-02-33).

**Plate 15**. Probable bone crushing kit. Includes both anvil (right) and pounder (left), both exhibit wear. Associated with structure 42 (91-01-02-31).

**Plate 16**. Core of quartzite with wear marks (91-01-02-29).

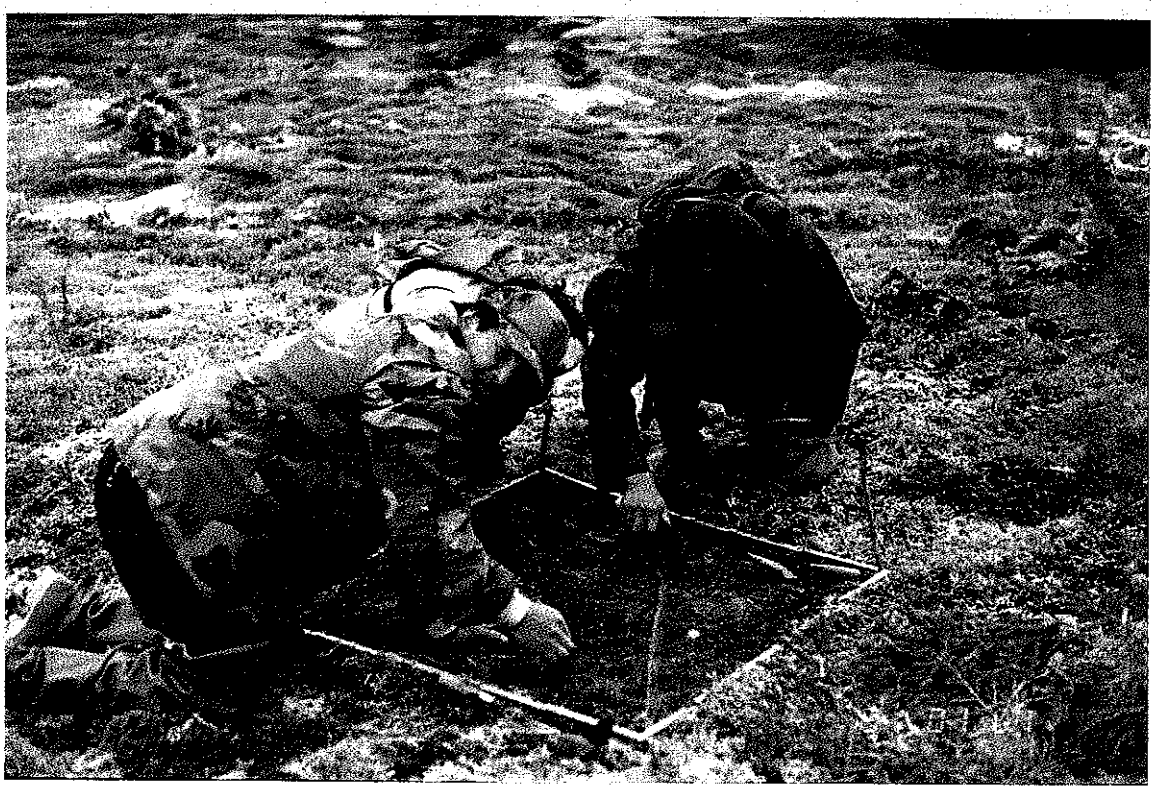

**Plate 17**. Crew excavating test in structure 1. Note large tree in the west of miichiwaahp. Facing north (91-01-01-04).

**Plate 18**. Crew relaxing at camp (91-01-01-11).

**Plate 19**. Isaac Fleming excavating test (91-01-01-18).

**Plate 20**. Gilbert Dick and Redfern Weetaluktuk working in test in Structure 1. Facing north-east (91-01-01-03).

**Plate 21**. Archaeological crew (91-01-03-14).

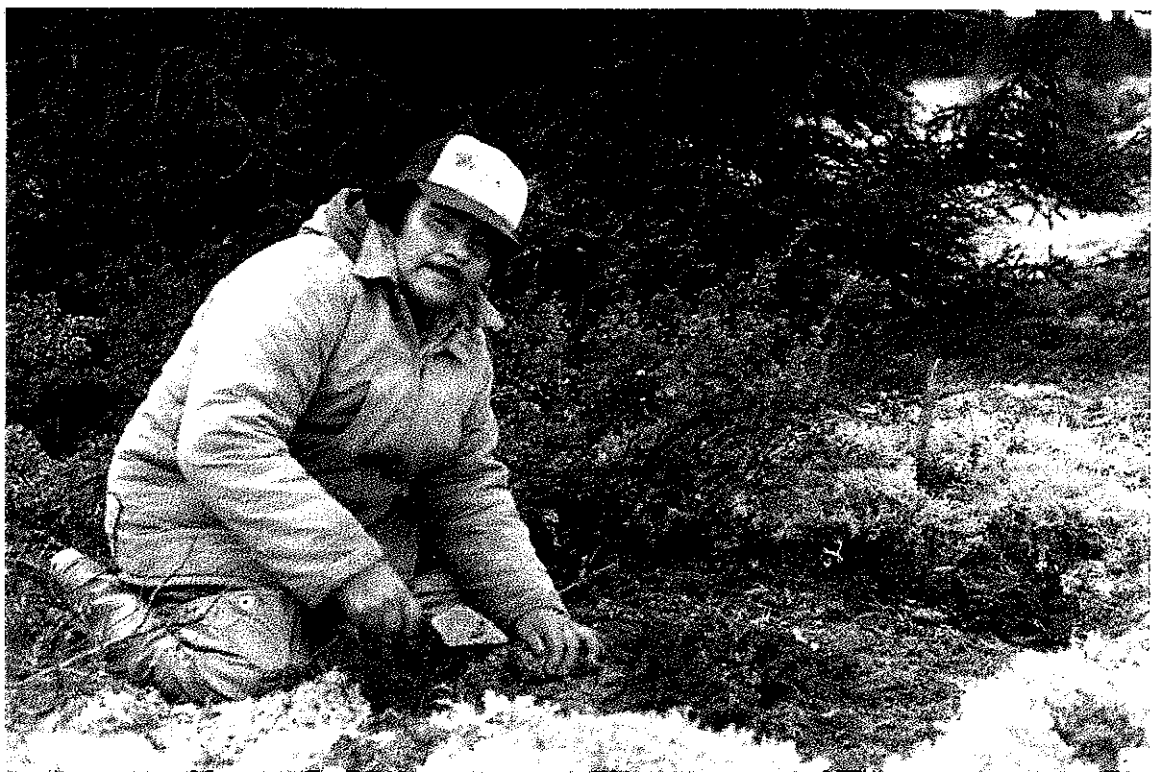

**Plate 22**. James Kawapit excavating test (91-01-01-19).

**Plate 23**. General view of Area A at Shaapuhtuwaan site. The outline of the structure does not show up due to surface vegetation. Facing south (91-01-03-04).

**Plate 24**. View of possible canoe building platform (wiiyaaukihiikin). Area C. Facing west (91-01-03-11).

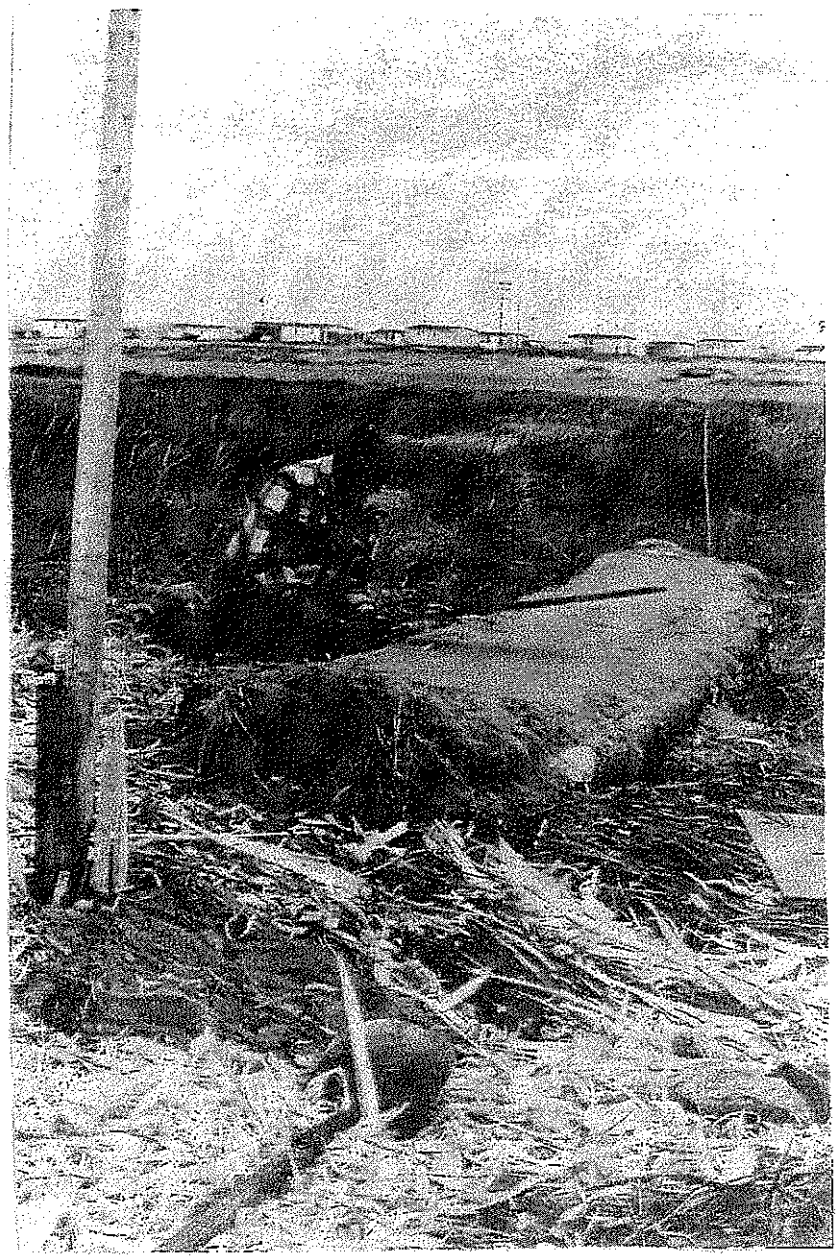

**Plate 25**. Matthew George preparing wiiyaaukihiikin (canoe building platform). From Taylor (1980: 65).