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**A**LTHOUGH the American Philosophical Society—University of New Mexico Mackenzie Valley Expedition of 1938 (Bliss, 1939, p. 365) was not primarily concerned with Eskimo archaeology, the members felt, while at the trading rendezvous Aklavik on the lower Mackenzie River, that the opportunity to run down to the Arctic coast was too obvious to be neglected. The archaeology of the Western Eskimo of the Mackenzie area has never been well studied; little, as a matter of fact, has been added since 1930 when Mathiasen wrote the introduction to his Western Eskimo report. This paper will add somewhat to a meager store of fact.

During the nine-day trip, we examined ten Eskimo graves and five house sites as well as several miles of eroded and washed shore areas between Shingle Point and Blow River, Yukon Territory (Figure 13; see also Report, Canadian Arctic Expedition, Vol. 9, map). Here, the physiographic contrast is sharp between the Mackenzie delta and the high gravel and clay shores. These, eroded from the highlands inland, rise 100 to 150 feet above the sea. Local rivers are deeply incised in the unconsolidated material. The mouth of Blow River lies about 3 miles southeast from Shingle Point, along Shoalwater Bay. Here the water is saline, while only a short way on, toward the delta, the water is fresh because of the enormous volume of the Mackenzie.

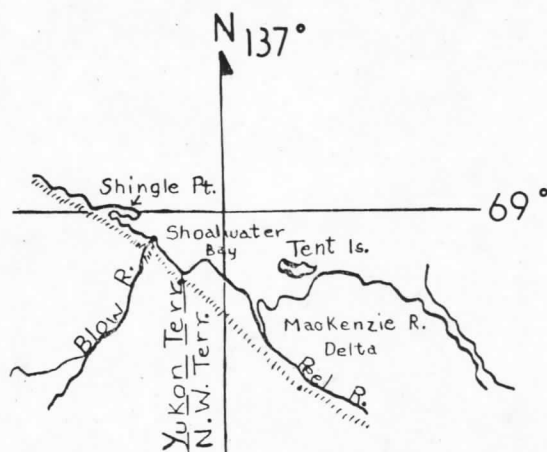


FIG. 13.

Blow River has incised itself deeply into the high shoreline, almost to base level, for at least a mile back from the sea and has carved out a section of the coast for several hundred yards on either side of its mouth and built a small delta. The flood plain runs inland up its wide canyon for about one mile. Here, clustered on the low delta around the mouth or mouths of the Blow, were a number of Eskimo houses. Most of these, built in the old vertical-log style instead of the more recent horizontal log-cabin method, were in ruins. There were, however, two or three later houses, and one or two of these seemed to have been occupied during the preceding winter. Driftwood from the Mackenzie, probably ultimately from the Liard system, provides building timber and fuel for these Eskimo.

On the high shore or headlands flanking Blow River on the northwest were most of the older graves. Here, too, was the recent graveyard, with its several interments more or less neatly mounded and with white paling fences in general disrepair. At this site we investigated eight graves and three houses. Figure 14 is a generalized sketch of the Blow River mouth and its environs.

### BURIALS—SHINGLE POINT

At Shingle Point (Stefánsson, 1914a, p. 23) we examined two graves. Most graves on the high seashore were marked by a pile of logs (Fig. 15). Typically, thirty or forty small, 4-to-8-inch logs or poles 10 to 15 feet long were piled over and lengthwise of the corpse. The dead had been simply laid on the frozen tundra and the driftwood piled over. Occasionally a slight depression appeared, as if a summer burial had been made and the thawed muskeg had been scraped away to a depth of 6 inches or less. Often the body was protected by a boxing of large-diameter head, foot, and side logs. Frost, the logs, and the proximity of the large Shingle Point village seem to have protected the burials from the depredations of carnivores. The skeletons (not studied) and artifacts found are now in the University of New Mexico collections.

Shingle Point 1, on a headland above the point, was a large male in middle age. The head was southeast, the body loosely semi-flexed on the back. A pipestem (Fig. 16, 5), loon bill (Fig. 16, 7), and clasp knife were found among the ribs.

Shingle Point 2 was the best of several infant or child burials found on the Shingle Point Spit. These seem not to have been treated as carefully as the older individuals in the log graves on the headlands. On the other hand, they were more deeply interred. The child (Shingle Point 2) lay semi-flexed, on its back, head north-north-west, face to the right (Fig. 18). An old packing box, with lid in place, was the coffin.

A few other burials, disintegrated or disturbed, were noted near the village on the bar or spit. No information could be gained from them.

#### BURIALS—BLOW RIVER

Blow River 1 had a number of artifacts (Fig. 19), mostly near the head and shoulders. There was no skull, unfortunately a normal situation, but the disturbed grave yielded the

remainder of a skeleton. Some of the missing skulls may have been among the number collected by Stefánsson and now in the American Museum of Natural History; or they may have been taken by a surveying party which preceded us. The body had been placed in the grave extended, head southeast. Several bark amulet (?) boxes were near the feet. A broken pole, with one shaped end, possibly a sail-pole or mast, lay nearby. Another part of the mast lay near grave 6. These pieces may have belonged to the umiak found near grave 3. Lying beside, to the south of the grave, was a broken short sled of the Mackenzie delta type (Fig. 20). The runners, cut from a plank, were 70 inches long. The height from the ground to the upturned point was 21 inches; the height or width of the runners, in the middle,  $8\frac{1}{4}$  inches; the thickness in the middle,  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inches. There were three cross-braces; one whole brace, probably a larger center one, was  $33\frac{1}{2}$  inches long. The sled was 31-38 inches wide. Eight holes, which showed no placement pattern, were still visible in the badly-rotted runners. Figure 17, 4 and 6, illustrate broken sections of the sled

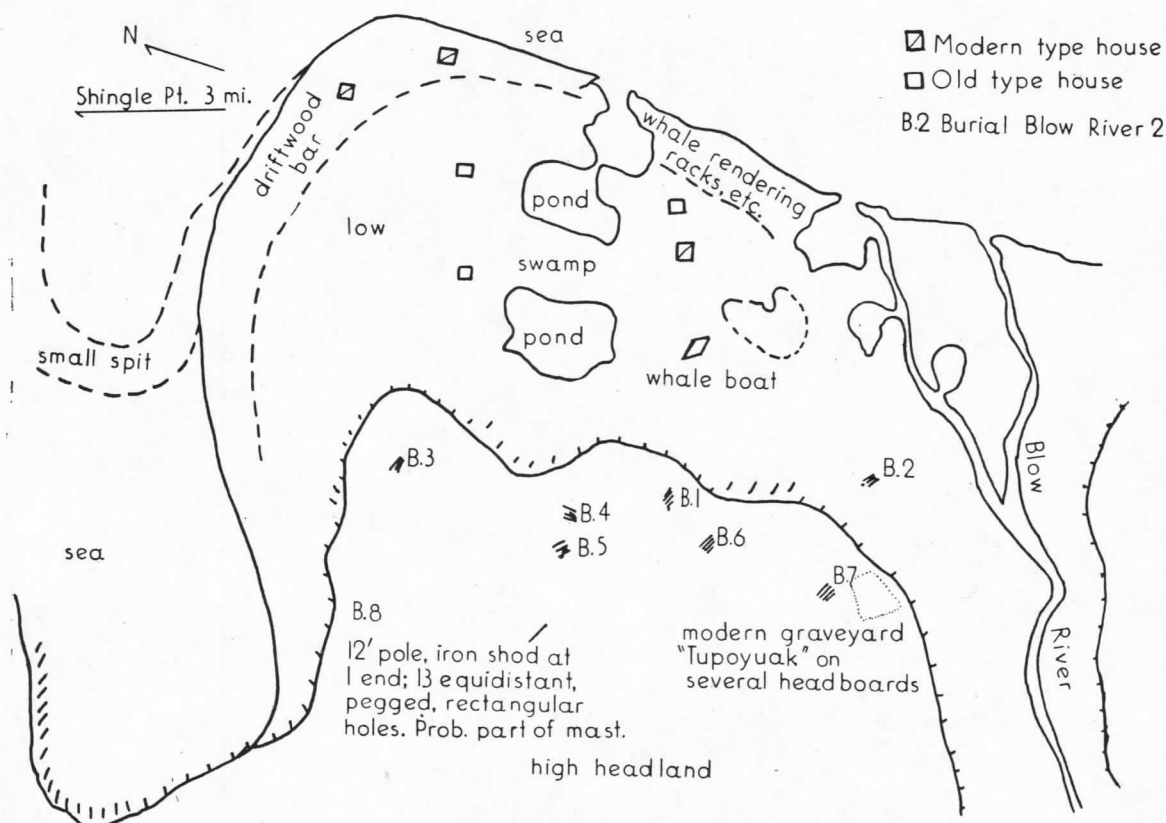


FIG. 14. Sketch map of Blow River site.



FIG. 15. Typical log-pile covered Shingle Point burial.

shoes: sawed strips of heavy, coarse-grained bone, probably whale mandible. The average thickness is about one-half inch. The shoes had been pegged to the runners with small wooden pegs, some pieces of which still remained in the holes. An iron knife blade in a hide sheath lay near the central part of the

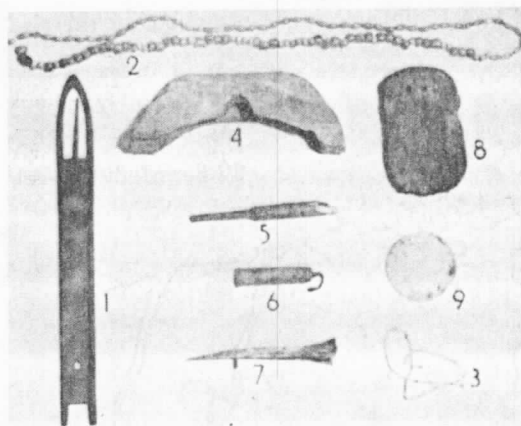


FIG. 16. 1, netting shuttle, non-Eskimo type, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " long, found near a ruined Blow River house of late type. It is of a hard, walnut-like wood, foreign to the north. 2, blue glass beads from grave Blow River 2, oval beads are turquoise and translucent. 3, yellow and white seed beads, same grave. 4, snow goggles of soft wood. 5, Shingle Point 1, fragment of wood pipstern, brass mouthpiece, typical (see Nelson, 1899, Pl. 88). 6, case of 45-70 brass cartridge, wood plug with leather tab, containing rusted needles. Cartridge shell dates from before 1900 (George Schafer, Needles, Arizona, personal communication). 7, Shingle Point 1, upper part of loon bill; probably part of a loon-skin dancing fillet (Nelson, 1899, p. 417). 8, bark container, from floor debris of BR-house 3. 9, burning glass.

grave. About 8 inches long, blade and handle tongue, it seems to have been an early type of trade knife (not illustrated).

Blow River 2 (Fig. 21) occupied the only log grave not on the high shore above the Blow River delta. Parts of the skull and other bones showed through cracks between the logs and were bleached by exposure. Many of the smaller bones were disintegrated; the skull and large bones, however, were well preserved. The head was to the northwest; the body on the back, extended. It had been wrapped in a medium-weight sailcloth or canvas.

Blow River 3 (Fig. 15) yielded little skeletal material; a child's skull cap was found with the adult bones. Orientation was southeast; the deposition, probably extended on the back. The artifacts lay in a compact group in the area of the upper body and to its right (Fig. 22), where they were mingled with the disturbed vertebrae, ribs, and right arm bones. This burial probably illustrates the sacrifice of a boat; fragments of an umiak which showed several non-umiak or canoe-like attributes lay nearby. It was made of light, strong wood, probably spruce drift. The over-all length was between 25 and 28 feet; the beam, something over 56 inches. The keel, 19 feet 2 inches, in length, was roughly triangular in cross section, 3 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches on a side. A curving triangular bow piece, 40 inches long and 3 inches on a side, was lashed to the keel with baleen (Fig. 23, B). A stern piece of similar nature and size but of different shape may be inferred. The flat bow and stern deckpieces of the regular

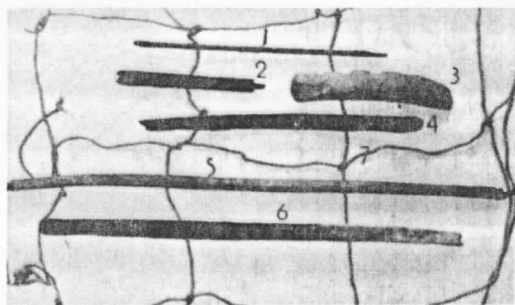


FIG. 17. (Photographed on 1-inch coordinate paper). 1, fragment, willow arrowshaft, Blow River 6. 2, end of large self-bow, probable length ca. 5 feet (grave 3). 5, child's bow (near a Blow River house) same type as 2, both spruce. 3, pick-axe, wedge or mattock of fossil ivory. 4, 6, bone sled shoes, fragmentary. 7, fragment of "whitefish" (Beluga) or seal net.

umiak were not present. The ribs were lashed along the keel about every 12 inches; three were still in place about 6 feet from the bow. They were fitted to the triangular keel and lashed with baleen (Fig. 23, B). These ribs were 1½ inches broad at the ends, 1 inch thick, and almost 2 feet long. There were strakes, probably only a single narrow one on each side, but the fragmentary condition of the pieces made impossible a coherent picture of their position in the body of the vessel. Only one thwart (Fig. 23, C) was identified; it is rather peculiar in shape. Another peculiarity in the structure was the presence of the double gunwale. The ribs were caught between these gunwales and tightly lashed there (Fig. 23, D). The gunwales themselves were lashed together for further stability about every 43 inches. All lashings were of baleen. A pointed spruce paddle (Fig. 29) found near the center of the grave area, may have been associated with the boat.

Blow River 4 was in poor condition. It had been disturbed and the rotted condition of the logs over the body bespoke great age. The head was to the south. Near the head was a single-barbed bone arrowpoint, and near the left arm were three blue glass trade beads of the type that, I believe, de Laguna (1947, p. 138) calls Cook beads.

Blow River 5 (Fig. 24) lay, following the usual custom, with the head to the southeast. The skull was missing, but the mandible was present. One pelvic bone lay near the man-

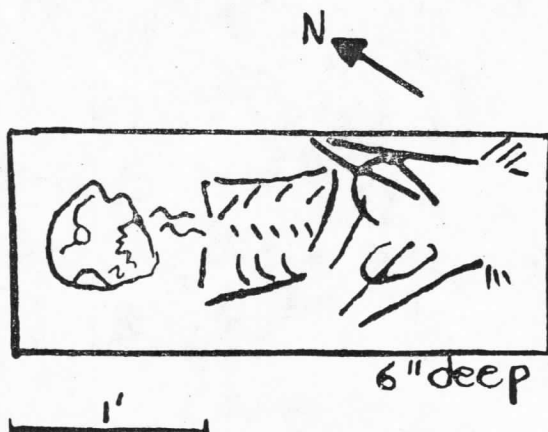


FIG. 18. Shingle Point burial 2.

dible, which was more or less in place. While obviously disturbed, the bones still lay in rough anatomical relation.

Blow River 6, extended, head south-southeast, was unusual in that it was lying prone. The other burials were all on the back. Again there was no skull, but the mandible was present. On the right shoulder and parallel with the body was a bundle of at least 6 bone-pointed arrowshafts. The points lay beneath and over the shoulder; two had iron heads inserted in the bone. There were a few "bam" (Balm of Gilead, *Populus balsamifera*) bark boxes and a large bark effigy (?) (Fig. 30, 15) at the left shoulder. Two marble labrets lay over the left side of the sacrum. A decayed

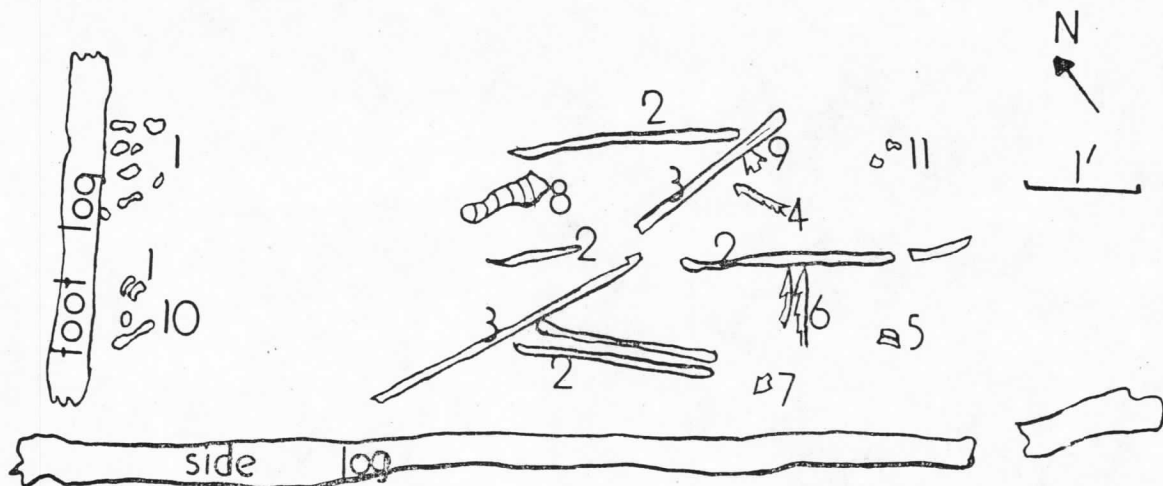


FIG. 19. Blow River grave 1 artifacts. 1, bark boxes; 2, broken arrowshaft; 3, broken self-bow; 4, arrowhead and barbed foreshaft; 5, ulu handle; 6, bone arrowheads; 7, arrowhead; 8, knife in hide sheath; 9, copper arrowhead; 10, bone awl; 11, labrets (beside head).

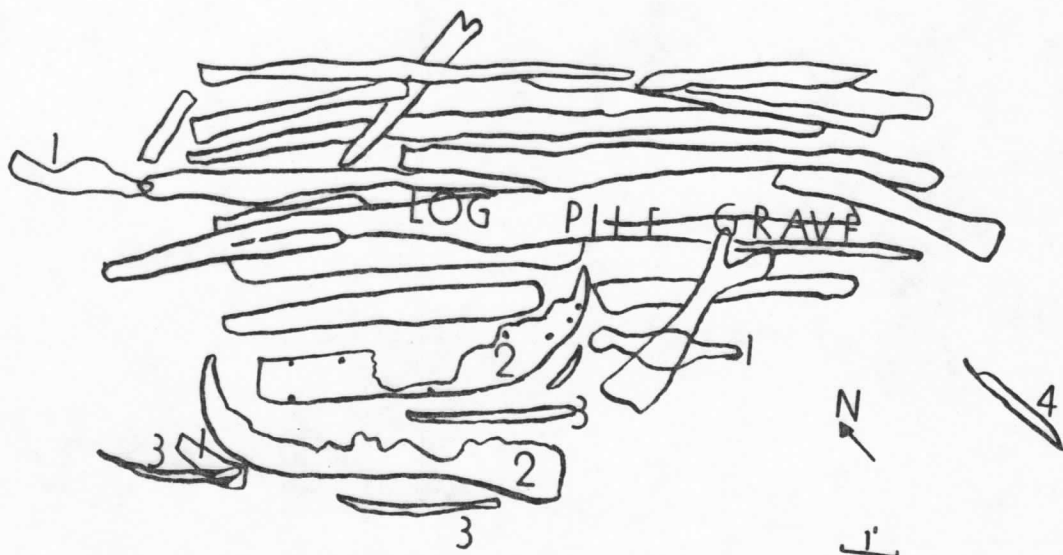


FIG. 20. Blow River grave 1. 1, sled cross braces; 2, runners; 3, bone sled shoes; 4, base of sail pole or mast.

and disturbed caribou hide bag or shroud covered most of the lower body and was bunched at the left side; no pattern was discernible. It had been made of strips sewed together with one-half inch running stitches using 3-strand braided sinew. This burial is not figured.

Blow River 7 (Fig. 25) was the most recent grave opened. It lay near, but not in, the previously mentioned modern graveyard. Its orientation was typically southeast, the deposition extended, supine, face to left. It appeared that the usual orientation was preserved in the modern graveyard. The grave goods found were modern: a 44-40 caliber Winchester of 1896 model, a No. 4 trap, a tablespoon, a four-gallon granite-ware pot, a claw hammer, and

a two-inch burning glass (Fig. 16, 9). This large male had been covered with skins, as had No. 6. He had been roughly but securely boxed in with head, foot, and side logs before the logs and poles were piled over the grave.

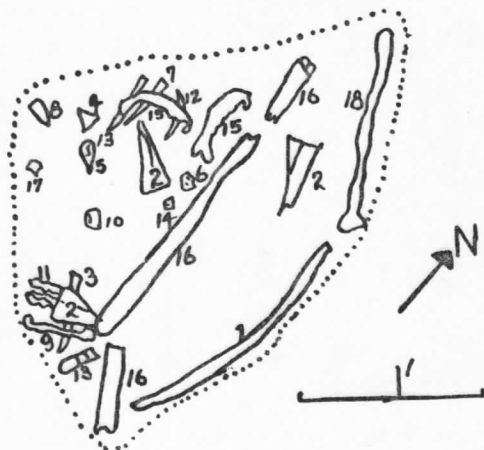


FIG. 22. Artifacts of Blow River burial 3. 1, large bone dagger; 2, cut down caribou (?) scapulae; 3, crooked knife (?) handle; 4, bird "bunt"; 5, large flint point; 6, chalcedony end scraper; 7, bone awl; 8, slate projectile point; 9, bone bag handle; 10, piece of nephrite; 11, four barbed bone arrowheads; 12, double-pointed bone awl; 13, worked antler; 14, perforated piece of bone; 15, half of dog mandible; 16, broken self-bow; 17, broken chalcedony point; 18, humerus (right) of Blow River burial 3.

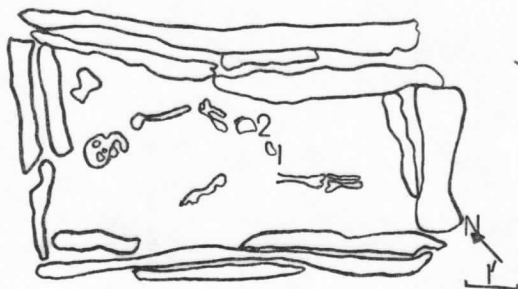


FIG. 21. Blow River burial 2. 1, ulu handle; 2, string of seed and blue trade beads. Also found: 45-70 cartridge needle case.