

## Hivernant Buffalo Hunting & Hide Working Slide Presentation -- 2014

### Intro. (5 min. approx.)

**Title Slide.** Good \_\_\_\_\_. My name is Jack Elliott and I worked on various archaeological research projects in the Cypress Hills from 1966 to 1972. 1966 was a prehistoric site survey on the Alberta side the Hills, 1967 and 1969 were cabin excavations at an historic Métis buffalo hide-hunter winter camp west of Elkwater Lake, and 1972 was the excavation of the historic Cypress Hills Massacre site near Ft. Walsh in Saskatchewan. Does everyone understand the terms *Hivernant*? The French term *Hivernant* loosely translates as “winter traveler,” i.e. nomadic Métis people who hunted, trapped and traded out on the plains year round, in all seasons.

Today, I’m gonna discuss Hivernant people as buffalo hunters, traders & hide workers in the Cypress Hills during historic times.

**Slide 1.** Northwest Plains wintering sites & Cypress Hills hunting territory.

**Slide 2.** Gabriel Dumont — hunting brigade leader, Resistance war chief, escape from Batoche, Ft. Assiniboine arrival, Buffalo Bill Wild West Show sharpshooter, etc.

**Slide 3.** Métis hunters photographed by the British North American Boundary Commission and documented by George Dawson (in Haag and Barkwell 2009: 29-30) on July 18th, 1874, while camped near the Milk River. These hunters probably also wintered with their families in “*such places*” as the Cypress Hills (and Head-of-the-Mountain), e.g.: “*They spend the summer hunting on the plains. Making pemmican during the summer and collecting robes when they are prime in the autumn. They are mostly well-armed with repeating and breach loading rifles. In the winter they resort to Woody Mt. and such places [writer’s emphasis] where there is timber and they have shanties built. Most of them winter on the White Mud R. S. of Ft. N.J. Turney and consequently well into U.S. territory, and take goods out via the Missouri.... They have just held a council and decided to go N. to the Cypress Hills, scouts having reported plenty buffalo in that direction. They have not come from the hills more than a week or two and were then engaged in an Indian fight.... During the mornings march passed where the Half-Breeds had been running buffalo a few days before. The hillsides and valleys strewn with carcasses. Those in best condition had been completely stripped, while the poorer ones and old bulls had only the tit [sic] bits removed.*”

**Slides 4-5.** Views of same Métis brigade “big camp” near Milk River in 1874. Refer to map.

**Slide 6.** Many extended hivernant Métis families worked as independent traders on the Northwest Plains, wintering with hunting brigades or travelling on their own as shown, trading and resupplying nomadic hivernant families and indigenous tribal people. The photo shows 16 family members, including 9 males who appear old enough to use firearms and defend the family and its trade goods (if necessary) while travelling on the plains 1875-75.

**Slides 7-11.** Brigade out hunting, Paul Kane sketches of Red River cart & harnessed ox as primary brigade vehicle, putting up camp, camp scene, brigade leaders meeting before a hunt.

**Slide 12.** Stone tobacco pipes manufactured on-site using local sandstone, clay trade tobacco pipes and steel files from Head-of-the-Mountain cabins, Cypress Hills. The 2 clay trade pipe items include a stem and a bowl fragment (middle right). The stone pipe items include a finished elbow-style pipe, a finished Aboriginal-style decorative pipe fragment, and 4 unfinished pipe preform fragments. Pipes such as these would have been smoked at brigade meetings & more less constantly by men & women.

**Slides 13.** Hunting and defence items from Head-of-the-Mountain cabins, Cypress Hills. Left to right: flintlock firearm frizzen spring, damaged firearm cleaning rod, .60 cal. lead musket balls, .58 and .44 cal. rimfire cartridge cases, .44 cal. lead bullets, 2 stone projectile points and a fragment. The points may have been used by hivernant Métis boys too young to acquire firearms; (Touchie 2005: 72, Woodcock 1975: 47) indicate Jerry Potts and Gabriel Dumont were proficient with bows and arrows in their youth, although no supporting references are cited.

**Slides 14-15.** Paul Kane water color & sketch of Métis hunting buffalo near Ft. Edmonton in 1846 — discuss scouting, organization, terrain & wind during approach, chaos while running the herd.

**Slide 16.** Trading centre for Cypress Hills/ Milk River hunting territory. Images of 19th century Ft. Benton, Missouri River front & steam boat docks, 3 merchant princes who ran the trade, whiskey, etc.

**Slide 17.** 1874 Wood Mountain winter cabin, similar to those in the Cypress Hills (built by Randy Gaudry's grandfather).

**Slide 18-19.** Jean Johnston-Millie Picotte family leg bone fleshing tools and a composite hair scraping (graining) tool with a handmade steel blade. Images by M and M Hunting Adventures.

**Slide 20.** Quartzite hammer stone, and chert and quartzite resharpening flakes, from Head-of-the-Mountain cabins, Cypress Hills. Quartzites such as these are common throughout the Cypress Hills and were often used for local Aboriginal stone tool manufacture.

**Slide 21.** Drawings of quartzite teshoa cobble stone tools from the Gull Lake Bison Drive Site in Saskatchewan, similar to those observed in use by Shoshone women in 1870 for butchering and hide working. Frances Eyman (1968: Fig. 2) studied & illustrated these & many other *teshoa* from Wyoming, southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan. She notes:

*“The teshoa was first seen and noted as a tool used by Indian women. Joseph Leidy ... observed its manufacture and use among the Shoshone of Wyoming in the 1870's. When a woman needed a knife for butchering and skin dressing, she selected two quartzite cobbles from the nearest stream; she then used one as an anvil to knock a large spall from the other. When the edge of the teshoa had done its job, it could be discarded, and a new one could be quickly made....”*

*Proper material was always near at hand.... Leidy ... labelled it with a Shoshone name.... There are certain functional details that distinguish the teshoa from other flake tools. It was frequently made from quartzite, but other granular tools were used. It is a split or spall struck from a cobblestone. Its edge is thin and acute. The cutting edge is formed by the intersection of a split surface with the rind of a cobble.*

*... the rind is dense, homogeneous, and tough, even though the core may be porous, fissured, and brittle. The edge of the teshoa, formed in the rind, is flint-hard and file-tough, even though the body of the teshoa may be weak and not be hard.*

*The teshoa is a lens-shaped knife, its more curved face formed by a portion of the surface of its parent cobble, its flatter face formed by a split or a flaked surface.... Some examples are chipped to a remade edge. Retouch is usually upon the split face of the tool, removing flakes from the unaltered stone within the cobble, conserving the rind, and forming a new edge in the rind. Some teshoa were made by such massive blows that the cobble was shattered, producing some eccentric forms ...*

*In other cases, teshoa were struck one after another from the same platform, producing tools with more than one primary flake scar....*

*Tools of exactly this same kind were probably in normal use among other peoples of the Interior Basin and northwestern Plains within the nineteenth century, but no observer noted them or preserved examples.*

*.... I have come to feel the ethnographic teshoa was an impoverished survival, that it represents only the most central and fundamental part of the chopper complex that persisted after 1870. In earlier times, the teshoa was but one unit in a far more complicated industry of choppers, flake tools, and cortex flakes.*

*As far as I know, every American chopper complex includes teshoa. They are conspicuous in samples from western Canada. Many of them were discarded after their first use, without any resharpening and generally without any sign of wear. Others were resharpened once or several times ...."*

**Slide 22.** Quartzite cobble tools from Head-of-the-Mountain cabins, Cypress Hills. To the writer's eye, the tools are consistent with *teshoa* described and pictured by Eyman (*ibid.*). In addition to cutting or scraping, the tools were probably used for dressing (softening/smoothing/abrading) thick hides (Ruth 2013: 220-221; Young *et al* 1991: 119-h, 121).

**Slide 23.** Stone and steel bifacial tools from Head-of-the-Mountain cabins, Cypress Hills. Left to right: Hudson's Bay Co. pattern axe head, folding pocket knife, broken *teshoa* with abraded edges, and 3 broken smaller biface stone tool fragments. To the writer's eye, the granular, dense material in this particular *teshoa* doesn't look like quartzite. Also, the lower right biface may instead be a discarded gun flint. In addition to cutting or scraping, the *teshoa* was probably used for dressing/softening hides; the smaller bifaces may have been used for dressing/softening thin, delicate hides.

**Slide 24.** Antler, bone, stone and steel tools from Head-of-the-Mountain cabins (Elliott 1971). Left to right: broken quartzite cobble *teshoa* fragment with an abraded edge and a probable *teshoa* resharpening flake (Eyman 1970: 4-6, fig. 2-4), unifacially retouched jasper flake, broken and intact chert split-pebble end scrapers, elk antler scraper tool handle, toothed scapula bone fragment, and probable steel scraper and beamer blades. The 3 smaller stone tools, 2 steel blades and antler handle are probably elements of composite scraper tools used to grain and thin hides (e.g. Ruth 2013: 206-211). The scapula and 2 *teshoa* fragments were probably used for dressing/softening hides (Albright 1984: 55-59, Ruth 2013: 218).

**Thank you. Questions & Answers (10-15 min. approx.)**

**References:**

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