

SCIENTIST: ALEUTS BONAFIDE ESKIMOS

Intriguing Finds By Archaeologist

Archaeologist Finds Evidence in Ancient Artifacts on Katmai

By SHEILA TURNER

Fishing for salmon on the Brooks River at Katmai National Monument is a 4,500 year old habit, according to Don Dumond, University of Oregon anthropologist.

Dr. Dumond has been scraping the muddy banks of the Brooks for artifacts since 1960. Wryly, he claims to be the world's leading authority on the prehistory of a one and a half mile long river site.

From artifacts, he has found evidence that people have set up summer fish camps on the Brooks since 2,500 B.C.

Until he came along, the people of the Katmai-Bristol Bay area figured they were descendants of Aleuts, probably because under the Russians, all Christian natives were called Aleuts.

But the artifacts—stone weapons and pottery fragments—match those of Bering Sea Eskimos to the north.

Now the people will just have to get used to the idea that they really are Eskimos.

Dr. Dumond became interested in Brooks River while a graduate student. In 1960, while a graduate student, he was asked by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to study the size of early salmon runs in the Brooks.

"We didn't find out much about the salmon runs, but we did find the weapons, animal bones and pottery of the people who fished the river," Dumond said.

Later, he returned under other grants to collect more artifacts. A prize find has

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ARCHAEOLOGIST AT KATMAI—Dr. Don Dumond, archaeologist from University of Oregon, has been working on a riverbank site on Brooks River investigating campsite remains he estimates to be around 4,500 years old. Dr. Dumond also claims that Aleuts and Eskimos are of the same stock judging from artifacts found on the Katmai site.

—Photo By SHEILA TURNER

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been a 1,700 year old stone vessel with a boat shape on one side and a face with two lip plugs (labrettes) on the other. Definitely Bering Sea Eskimo, Dumond said.

He also has found a connection with Pacific Coastal Eskimos about 500 A.D. He has an idea of when Aleuts and Eskimos were one group of people, but he isn't saying yet. He wants to think about it a bit longer.

Katmai is a good place to study relationships because it's right between different groups of people, he explained.

Scientists know that Aleuts and Eskimos are related because their languages are from the same family. But no one has yet pinned down when the groups separated.

Until Dr. Dumond, the Katmai area never had been studied by archaeologists.

This summer he is helping the National Park Service locate sites of semisubterranean aboriginal houses dated from 1,800 to 1,200 B.C. They have charcoal stained floors with fire places in the middle and artifacts scattered about.

Roofs of caribou hide and poles will be reconstructed for the benefit of visitors to the area.

The houses apparently looked like early inland Eskimo and Athabaskan houses, Dumond said. They resembled a loaf of bread with a door in it.

Dumond also is picking up a few last artifacts. He doesn't plan to return for a while. He has enough evidence to work out relationships of Bering Sea to Pacific Coastal to Aleut natives.

Besides technical information about kinds of pottery and weapons, Dumond has learned a few facts about people who camped on the Brooks River.

They fished, hunted caribou and liked beaver tails.

In a few years, Dr. Dumond may return to learn more.