Archaeology of Households, Kinship, and Social Change

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Contents

9 Monumentality of houses

Collective action, inequality, and kinship in pithouse construction

Nathan Goodale, Colin P. Quinn, and Alissa Nauman

Introduction

Household archaeology has emphasized the importance of the routines of daily life in understanding past socioeconomic organization. However, episodes of house construction would have presented a different social context than normally available in daily life. Building a house provides opportunities for several forms of collective action: organizing labor, provisioning people, providing interim housing, and logistical planning. As house size and architectural complexity increase, the need for and the scale of collective action also increase.

The study of nonresidential public monuments provides a corollary for the study of house construction. Monuments are associated with social aggregations, often linked to some form of collective action. Monumentality is a way of actively building and maintaining kinship identities or even creating new ones (larger-scale identities; more collective/corporate groups) and provides opportunities for competition among social segments (Beck 2013; Bradley 1998; Trigger 1990; Wright 2014). We suggest a similar approach to the construction of houses, particularly large and complex houses: by focusing on how the construction process integrates people into cooperative groups, provides opportunities for sociopolitical and economic bottlenecks in the control of labor and resources, and creates permanent and visible material signals of collective action and identities. To this end, we develop an approach to monumentality in houses that interweaves theoretical concepts from collective action, political economy, and signaling theory to examine the dynamic relationship among kinship, houses, and social complexity.

As a case study, we focus on the construction of large pithouses during the late Holocene in the interior Pacific Northwest at the Slocan Narrows site in the Upper Columbia River area in British Columbia (Figure 9.1). Pithouses are semi-subterranean dwellings with an above-ground timber-and-earth superstructure. The establishment of pithouse villages as a settlement pattern is often linked to the emergence of inequality and complex hunter-gatherer socioeconomic systems. Hayden's (1997) "aggrandizer hypothesis" forming out of archaeological investigations at the Keatley Creek site in the

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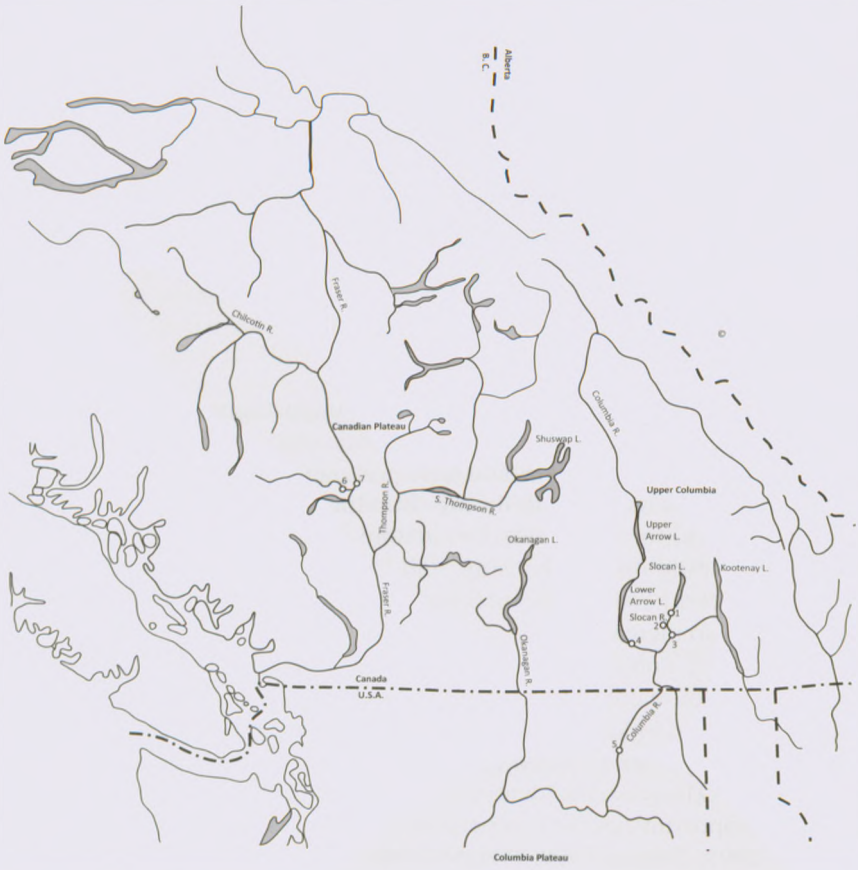

Figure 9.1 Map of the interior Pacific Northwest and location of the Slocan Narrows (DkQi-1, DkQi-2, and DkQi-17) and Vallican (DjQj-1) sites in the Upper Columbia area.

Mid-Fraser Valley of British Columbia suggests that certain power-seeking individuals will conspire to build large houses while exerting their control over others. In these houses, Hayden's hypothesis also expects evidence of social inequality where small houses would lack the quantity of goods and resources that the large houses should have in abundance (Lepofsky et al. 1996). At Slocan Narrows, there are a number of aspects that contradict Hayden's hypothesis: (1) The most material-rich pithouses recovered to date are the small houses, and, in contrast, the large houses have relatively little in their material record and (2) large pithouses exist very early in the archaeological record, with some up to 22 m in diameter that date 1,000 years earlier than other large pithouses in the interior Pacific Northwest,

making it unlikely to be an early experiment in sociopolitical complexity. Rather, it appears that there is some other socioeconomic mechanism driving the need for people to build large houses or structures related to ritual activities or other kinds of community gatherings or meetings. As an alternative, we argue that pithouse construction at Slocan Narrows would have aided in forming and maintaining collective social identities during the rise of semi-sedentary villages, and, perhaps more importantly, the large structures that were originally assumed to be residential were actually large structures for socio-ritual-based activities that could be called community houses. Kin-based corporate groups likely aggregated at Slocan Narrows, and the process of monumental house construction would have provided an opportunity to perform their collective identity through practice. We suggest that monumental house construction is not a marker of the presence of inequality, though it is possible the pithouse building tradition may have been coopted by emerging elites at a later point. Our thinking here is in the analogy that large pithouse construction at Slocan Narrows may be at least somewhat akin to mound-building in the southeast of North America where it began as a communal activity associated with ritual that was eventually associated with status distinctions and status distancing within Mississippian chiefdoms (Rodning 2009).

Eventful houses

Household archaeology has become synonymous with the study of everyday life (Robin 2013). At its inception, household archaeology was designed to address a gap in analytical scales (Wilk and Rathje 1982). The focus on settlements and settlement systems previously undervalued the role of households, a foundational social unit (Wilk and Rathje 1982). The rise of households as an analytical unit coincided with theoretical advancements that emphasize lived experiences while understanding the lives of ordinary people (Robin 2013).

The focus on the normal, seemingly mundane, aspects of human life provides windows into broader society. Households are central to the creation and maintenance of political, economic, and social institutions (De Lucia and Overholtzer 2014; Morehart and De Lucia 2015) and are political units that reproduce social structures through daily life (Robin et al. 2015). The focus on everyday actions of people from the breadth of possible roles within a society and the temporality of everyday life, however, leads to a challenge to understand the role of households in large-scale social transformations. Repetition in everyday actions reproduces the organization within and between households and therefore likely reinforces institutional structures. Change, alternatively, necessitates shifts in the practice of everyday life. Researchers need to also explore when households, as a foundational social and political unit, can be agents of social change (Carpenter 2019; Robin et al. 2015).

One approach to understanding households as agents of social change complements the study of repetitious everyday actions with a focus on events that can rupture institutional structures and hierarchies (Beck et al. 2007). Events are a sequence of linked occurrences that rupture the articulation of existing institutions and social relationships, which provides an opportunity for institutions and social relationships to rearticulate in novel ways (Beck et al. 2007; Sewell 2005). Pluckhahn (2015) argues that an event-based approach to the study of households and social change allows short-term social formations, such as households, to drive structural change over long-term timescales. Rather than replacing a focus on everyday life, the integration of an event-based perspective can provide a better understanding of the role of households in the structural transformation of societies. One of the most critical events in the life-history of a household is the initial construction and potential subsequent reconstruction event(s) of the physical residences that household members occupy. We argue that house construction is a historically contingent event that allows households the opportunity to rupture existing institutional organization and redefine identities and social relationships.

Constructing kinship in houses

While relationships of the members within a household were fundamental to the definition of a household in the earliest household archaeology research, kinship and other relationships among household members have not received as much attention as the material or behavioral aspects of a household. In the first conceptualization of household archaeology, Wilke and Rathje (1982:618) describe three components of a household: "(1) social: the demographic unit, including number and relationship of the members; (2) material: dwelling, activity areas and possessions; and (3) behavioral: the activities it performs." From the beginning, household archaeologists have emphasized that co-residentiality is more critical than kinship ties when defining households (Netting et al. 1984). Household members may or may not be related to each other through actual or fictive kin relationships (Douglass and Gonlin 2012:3) but likely would be at least co-involved in some agreed-upon cooperative network with negotiated structure and hierarchical relationships. In this conceptualization, most archaeologists continue to emphasize that households are defined by what they do (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Lightfoot 1994), particularly as a fundamental economic unit within society (Douglass and Gonlin 2012). Nevertheless, the nature of the relationships among household members, including potential intersections with kinship systems, should not be discounted. Kinship was the fundamental way that corporate groups in non-state societies were structured (Ensor 2013; González-Ruibal 2006; McGuire 1992; Peregrine 2001; Roth and Baustain 2015). The economic and political actions of households also create and maintain the social relationships of their members. The event

of household construction provides an opportunity to also create new social relationships, including expanding kinship ties, among the household's members.

Monumentality and collective action in house construction

The construction of large houses can be seen as a form of monumental architecture (Fisher 2009; Knapp 2009; Neiman 1997; Trigger 1990) that could function as either residential or as meeting/gathering structures. Building on previous monumentality research, Wright (2020:11) defines monuments as

> enduring architectural constructions that are built and used by a group larger than a single household (Adler and Wilshusen 1990), that exist at a scale exceeding what was needed for practical function (Trigger 1990), and that are of sufficiently high quality to inscribe social relationships on the landscape.
>
> (Thompson and Andrus 2011)

Monumentality is usually associated with public structures that are designed to create and maintain social structures and elite power hierarchies through ritual, feasting, and other social displays (see Fisher 2009; Neiman 1997; Trigger 1990). In state-level societies, palaces or other elite residences have been conceptualized as monumental architecture (Knapp 2009). While these structures often include some form of public spaces or administrative roles beyond normal domestic activities, this is not a requirement for monumental architecture. Broadly, monuments (1) require the mobilization of cooperative labor which may or may not be directed by a subset of society, (2) materialize social identities and political relationships through collective investment in both public and private works, and (3) structure space with the intention of permanently maintaining identities and relationships into the future (see Knapp 2009; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Wright 2020). Monumental structures have social meaning beyond their utilitarian function. They can serve as physical manifestations of social order and collective will, as focal points for population aggregation, and as daily reminders of identity and possibly political authority (Knapp 2009). As we will show, large pithouses at Slocan Narrows meet the expectations for monumental architecture.

While many studies focused on monumental architecture have focused on monuments as static and enduring structures, there have been recent calls to renew focus on the dynamic process of monument construction (Darvill et al. 2012; Kassabaum et al. 2014). Each step of the process in constructing a monument, including planning, preparing the land, acquiring various building materials, allocating labor, and actually constructing the monument, required a series of decisions each of which reflect cultural choices

that encode information about the society, political economy, and culture of the builders (Sherwood and Kidder 2011:69). The social significance of monuments likely changed throughout their use; changes that may have also occurred well beyond their abandonment (Wright 2014). Focusing on the construction of monuments provides insight into decision-making and broader societal institutions at a particular moment independent of how monuments, or perceptions of monuments, changed over time.

The construction of monumental architecture would have been a form of collective action (Carballo 2013; Carballo et al. 2014; DeMarrais 2016; Henry 2017). Building structures would have required the coordination of numerous individuals. Recent research into cooperation and collective action has demonstrated that mutual actions, such as the construction of monumental architecture, can be contexts for building corporate identity. While the majority of work has focused on supra-household and kin group coalitions (Carballo et al. 2014; Henry 2017; Henry and Barrier 2016), the same principles should be at play at the household level (Roth and Baustain 2015). Mutual investment of household members in the construction of a pithouse would have presented an opportunity to reinforce or expand kin relations. For example, the construction of a new structure would be an opportunity to establish new kinship or cooperative social ties likely at a faster rate than under an already established structure, made up of individuals who had not previously been members of the same household.

The mobilization of labor through monument construction may have been organized more collectively or more hierarchically (Carballo and Feinman 2016). In highly collective contexts, monumental architecture would have brought people together to promote group cohesion. When monument construction was less collective, it would likely foster a social environment of exclusivity. The control of labor by an individual or small number of individuals could be turned into political authority through the creation of unequal social debt. The control of labor is a key aspect of many political economic theories about the development of institutionalized inequality (Arnold 1996), and the construction of monumental architecture may have provided an opportunity for emerging elites to create and maintain unequal relationships. However, as many examples of monument construction have shown in small-scale societies, such as Poverty Point, institutional hierarchy is not necessary for people to build big structures (Ortmann and Kidder 2013).

Through collective action, small-scale societies could mitigate tensions and promote group identity, particularly in novel social environments and contexts of emerging inequalities (Kuijt 1996, 2008). Monument construction would provide the social mechanism to promote solidarity among the builders. Those relationships could have been critical when communities were confronted with problems such as resource shortfalls. Environmental change, economic collapse, and social tensions within or between communities are all examples of challenges to the fabric or cohesion of communities.

Communities that promoted solidarity through collective action may have been better equipped to deal with a broad range of destabilizing forces especially those changes that are large in scale.

Monumental constructions can be seen as part of a broader strategy of *place-making*, in which humans collectively modify the landscape to signify their bonds to the landscape as well as each other (Henry and Barrier 2016). Building a large house would have linked the builders and residents to the place and served as an anchor point for kin groups within the broader landscape. This place-making experience would have been particularly important in changing the relationship between people and the landscape during the development of semi-sedentary villages and hunter-gatherer communities. The investment in more permanent architecture during the mid-to-late Holocene in the interior Pacific Northwest would have fundamentally changed how people interacted with and lived in localized environment as well as shifting their relationship with external landscapes that their ancestors more freely engaged in for socioeconomic adaptations.

Once constructed, monumental houses would serve as an enduring mark of kin and cooperative group identities. Approaches from signaling theory have demonstrated that material culture communicates information, both actively and passively (Bliege Bird and Smith 2005; Goodale 2019; Quinn 2015, 2019). Monumental architecture requires significant expenditure of resources and labor (Neiman 1997). The ability for social groups to construct monuments can be a display of the ability of the group to deploy labor and consume resources. Groups that are unable to deploy sufficient labor or resources would likely be unable to participate in monumentality to the same degree. Once constructed, houses would be an enduring, and daily, reminder of the social, economic, and political prowess of the corporate/kin group that engaged in the enterprise of constructing the large house. This information would benefit new community members, or any community members looking for new kin affiliations. Consequently, constructing large houses may help households recruit or retain members well after the house is built.

A model of monumental houses, kinship, and social change

We argue that house construction is, in part, a performance of collective identity (Inomata and Coben 2006). Specifically, house construction is a performance of social relationships that can redefine kinship among the planned co-residential group as well as the broader community that may be assisting with construction. Once built, houses stand as markers of the co-residential group's ability to marshal and deploy collective labor. Signals of house construction are a daily reminder that reinforces the bonds among the co-residential group. Signals may also convey information to others, which may help recruit new members and play a role in structuring how

household members interact and how different households interact with each other as related or distinct cooperative groups.

Weaving together the theoretical strands of collective action, political economy, and signaling described above, we outline a model that characterizes the monumentality of large house construction in small-scale societies:

1 House construction is an event through which people can (re)define social identities, roles, and relationships.
2 Kinship, the fundamental way in which corporate groups are structured in non-state societies, is created and maintained through human agency.
3 The main collective group involved in house construction is the household, which is primarily organized around shared kinship identities (real or fictive).
4 The construction of houses involves the mobilization of labor. Large houses may have required labor across increasingly larger social scales (even beyond the intended residents), as well as significant logistical support in the forms of temporary housing, provisioning, and retooling for those involved directly or indirectly in the construction.
5 While not necessary, large house construction may have provided opportunities for emerging or established elites to control and mobilize collective labor.
6 The shared experience of constructing a house could help establish new and reinforce existing kin relationships.
7 Monumental houses would have provided an enduring signal of household success, which would have helped recruit new household members likely reinforcing the reoccupation of the house or village over long periods of time.
8 The material record for houses used as residences will match a pattern of domestic activity, whereas houses used as gathering places should produce cultural material records indicative of these special purposes, and there will be an underrepresentation of materials related to day-to-day domestic activities.

We explore this model through a case study of pithouse construction from the Slocan Valley located in Upper Columbia River area in the Interior Plateau region of western Canada (Figure 9.1). We also utilize a building episode of a modern First Nation pithouse at the Vallican site, used for purposes of cultural revitalization and preservation of traditional ways of life in the region. We then turn to the archaeological case study of pithouse construction and use at the Slocan Narrows site, located about 20 km north of Vallican. By examining the organization of pithouse construction, we can envision how kin groups are created, maintained, and better understand the relationship among different lineages during the transition from mobile to semi-sedentary hunter-gather-fisher lifeways.

The Sygaytskstx (Sinixt) indigenous peoples

The Lakes People, *ti'kul* or the informal term for "lake" in Okanagan/Colville/Lakes Salish, are also ethnographically and historically referred to as the Arrow Lakes Indian Band, the *Sinixt*, *sygaytskstx*, *sin nat ch eggs*, and many variant spellings (see Bouchard and Kennedy 1984, 2000:45–48; Pryce 1999:149–151; Teit 1930b). In the text here forward we use several of the names to refer to the Lakes People depending on the context of the discussion. The first recorded historical accounts of European explorers in the Upper Columbia encountering Lakes People begins in the early 19th century (Elmendorf 1935; Thompson 2009; Teit 1930a; Ray 1936). By the time ethnographers were in the Upper Columbia documenting the Lakes People they had abandoned pithouse residences. However, several Lakes informants to early ethnographers acknowledged that direct members of their lineage had lived in pithouses (Teit 1930b:226–228). Because of this history, our ethnographic evidence mostly relies on oral tradition of descendants of the Sinixt and the writings of ethnographers who were mostly in the intellectual lineage of Franz Boas.

In Lakes/Okanagan/Colville Salish (*nsəlxcín*), Slocan is thought to be the anglicized version of *slhu7kín*, likely a regional place reference (Teit 1930b:211). Ethnographic accounts of place names and archaeological surveys in the Slocan Valley suggest there were three major habitation sites from the drainage of the Slocan River into the Kootenay River to the outlet of Slocan Lake including: Slocan Narrows (*kā'ntcā'k*), Vallican (*nkweio'xten*), and Slocan Pool (*snt'ekwɬítkw*) (Ray 1936:127; Teit 1930b:210). Teit (1930b) and Ray (1936) identify the place name *kā'ntcā'k* as being on the Slocan River below Slocan Lake, which we interpret to be in the vicinity of the Slocan Narrows site. One possible translation for the word *kā'ntcā'k* that Teit (1930b) and Ray (1936) use for the habitation site south of Slocan Lake can be translated from *nsəlxcín* to English as "on the other side of the water" (LaRae Wiley and Chris Parkin, personal communication). The name and translation are suitable, as the village is arranged linearly on both sides of the Slocan River and pithouses are occupied on both the east and west banks throughout much of the village occupational history (Figure 9.2).

Pertinent to understanding the Sinixt presence and persistence in the Upper Columbia is a brief history of their experience with colonialism. The Arrow Lakes Indian Band was pronounced extinct in 1956 because of noncompliance with Canada's Indian Act. When the last remaining individual who had signed the census registry living on a small reservation at Oatscott, British Columbia, passed away in 1953, the Arrow Lakes Indian Band was pronounced extinct and the reserve land transferred back to the Crown. This event occurred even though the Lakes People were recognized at the time, and are recognized today, as one of the tribes of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in Washington State, USA.

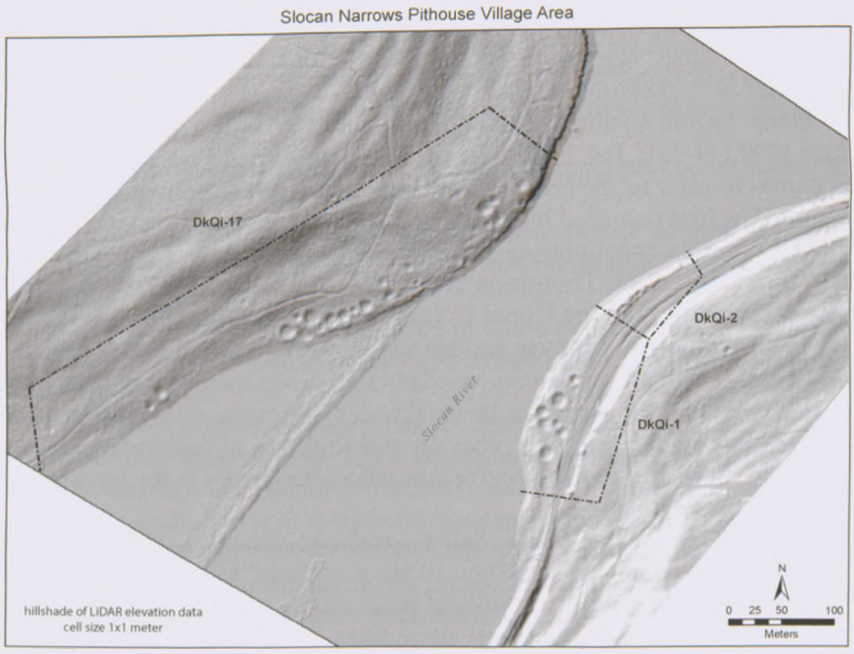

Figure 9.2 LiDAR image of the Slocan Narrows site with site boundaries (DkQi-1, DkQi-2, and DkQi-17).

Since this premature designation of extinction, Sinixt communities have turned to collective action to advocate for their cultural identity and cultural practice within their traditional territory. In the late 1980s, a road building project disturbed several burials at the Vallican site, subsequently a group of Sinixt predominantly from the Colville Reservation then led protests to stop the road building project and have since that time occupied the land surrounding the village and burial grounds (Pryce 1999) with a formal agreement between the Heritage Branch of the Province BC and Sinixt Elder (Smaʔmʔim) Marilyn James. As a part of cultural renewal, the Sinixt have built and rebuilt several pithouses at Vallican, the most recent attempt starting in the fall of 2010, when construction began on a large pithouse intending to seat up to 150 people for various purposes but predominantly as a gathering structure to hold the Winter Dance ceremony in the northern part of their traditional territory. This pithouse also signifies a return to Sinixt cultural practice of the Winter Dance ceremony occurring during the winter solstice, rather than at another time in order to accommodate the practice of Western cultural holidays. The complex history of this pithouse building project casts light on many issues of monumental house construction that can help direct our understanding of pithouse construction in the past.

Constructing a pithouse in the 21st century

Building the pithouse at Vallican was not simple. The initial planning for the pithouse started years before as a collaboration among the Sinixt and members of the local community in the Slocan Valley. Prior to the 2010 building effort, the communities had tried several times to build the structure, but each time something went wrong. For example, after a pithouse was erected without debarking the log poles, the timbers of the pithouse quickly became infested with termites and pine beetles. The infested structure had to be torn down and the house constructed anew. The project was a test in cooperative behavior, problem-solving, and persistence. The builders volunteered their time and tools, usually pitching in after work and on days off.

In the end, the Sinixt and members of the local community were able to build the pithouse at Vallican, which is still in use today and serves a variety of purposes. The initial housepit was excavated with a backhoe in a day. The pit was approximately 21 m in diameter and 3 m in depth. This housepit is on the scale of some of the largest in the region and at Slocan Narrows, but is certainly not uncommon for its size. Large structural supports of cedar and pine were cut with chainsaws and then debarked with metal hand tools (Figure 9.3). A large bench for sleeping and sitting was constructed around the perimeter of the house, and fine sand was brought in and compacted

Figure 9.3 Sinixt members and local community volunteers engaged in pithouse construction during the fall of 2010.

to form the floor. A large fire hearth was constructed in the center of the pithouse and a top entrance with a single pole notched ladder was placed in the center of the roof for access. Other than the modern technology used in its creation and a fire hearth larger than those found in the archaeological record, the pithouse is very similar to examples found in the archaeological record at Slocan Narrows. Other details of the modern pithouse that are different from archaeological correlates include extra trenches that were excavated to provide room for ventilation and air circulation ducts, the installation of a wood burning fireplace and cooking oven on the interior periphery of the house, and a side entrance to the pithouse to provide accessibility for elderly guests. Extra amenities such as ventilation and air circulation ducts were added during construction (Figure 9.4), while others such as the wood burning fireplace were added later. When the structure was completed, approximately 15 laborers had worked over the course of about three months to construct the final pithouse, which was intended to be used for events of up to 150 people (see Kuijt, Chapter 12). It is likely that the time needed to construct a pithouse of this size without modern tools (e.g., digging sticks and baskets instead of a backhoe) but with a much larger cooperative effort would have been on par with the time it took to construct the modern pithouse at Vallican.

Figure 9.4 The pithouse at Vallican under construction. Note the large debarked cedar log superstructure and the trenches dug to add additional air ventilation.

Estimating pithouse construction costs at Slocan Narrows

In the Upper Columbia River area of the interior Pacific Northwest, pithouse construction generally appears to be adopted between 3,000 and 4,000 cal BP, although some earlier examples do exist. In the Upper Columbia River area, pithouse architecture begins around 3,600 cal BP. In general, throughout the sequence from 3,600 cal BP to just before contact in the early 18th century AD, indigenous people built and occupied pithouses of a variety of sizes from approximately 5 m in diameter up to as large as 23 m in diameter (as defined by Stryd 1973:76, small pithouses <10 m in diameter, medium-sized pithouses >10–<15 m in diameter, and large houses are >15 m in diameter). At Slocan Narrows, there is evidence of houses of varying sizes being built and occupied from 3,100 cal BP continuously up to the late 18th century AD with only one major hiatus in pithouse construction from 2,400 to 2,000 cal BP (Goodale et al. 2004, 2008). Within the literature of Interior Plateau archaeology, there are various hypotheses that seek to explain why occupants would construct pithouses of various sizes.

The first and perhaps simplest explanation of why indigenous occupants would build a pithouse of a certain size is purely economical, dependent on the intended number of people to be housed (Rousseau 2004). This particular explanation assumes that the function of a pithouse is purely residential, or at least, Rousseau (2004) does not provide explanations for alternate uses of the interior space.

The second explanation of housepit construction with different sizes concerns wealth-based inequality. Under this model, the wealthiest people owned the labor to build large houses and the less wealthy or poor people lack those labor resources and build and reside in small houses (Hayden 1997; Lepofsky et al. 1996).

The third explanation of different housepit size constructions runs tangential to the second model where secret societies with small peripheral houses located away from the core of the village are special-purpose male ritual activity areas that enable secret societies to operate without the watchful eyes of the village (Morin 2010). Morin (2010) bases this interpretation on Northwest Coastal groups and applies the model for the interpretation of the Keatley Creek village organization in the Mid-Fraser. Problems with Morin's (2010) model include: (1) Small periphery houses do not date to the same time period as the core village, (2) material culture is so different it likely represents a different group of people, and (3) there is no evidence in the ethnographic records to indicate the same type of secret societies were operating in the interior as were on the coast.

A fourth hypothesis links economy, or the predicted number of people intended to be utilizing a pithouse, but also considering the intended function of any specific pithouse. Much like the modern Sinixt pithouse, those in the past were likely used for short-term residences (housing single-family or

multi-family kin-related groups), but they may have also served as ceremonial spaces, gathering spaces for people coming from long distances, educational spaces, and spaces for related activities. All of these considerations make the pithouse a center of collective action, providing a much more holistic understanding of a pithouse. This also allows for variability between houses, as is seen in the material record at Slocan Narrows. Large houses at Slocan Narrows contain few artifacts. Conversely, the small houses excavated so far demonstrate an abundance of materials that are likely a by-product of day-to-day domestic activities.

To estimate the labor required to build pithouses, we start by drawing upon estimates by Sherwood and Kidder (2011) for the labor required to move the dirt to construct mounds in the U.S. Southeast using similar technologies: human power, digging sticks, and baskets. Large and medium-sized houses at Slocan Narrows and Vallican required significant labor investment and collective action to build. For example, Housepit 2 at Slocan Narrows is nearly 23 m in diameter (Figure 9.5). The house would have provided approximately 400 m^2 of roofed floor space. If each person who lived in the space was allotted 2 m^2 that would mean that the house was potentially built for around 200 people (Hayden 1997; Prentiss (ed.) 2017). This represents approximately a 1,400 m^3 of sediment that was excavated to

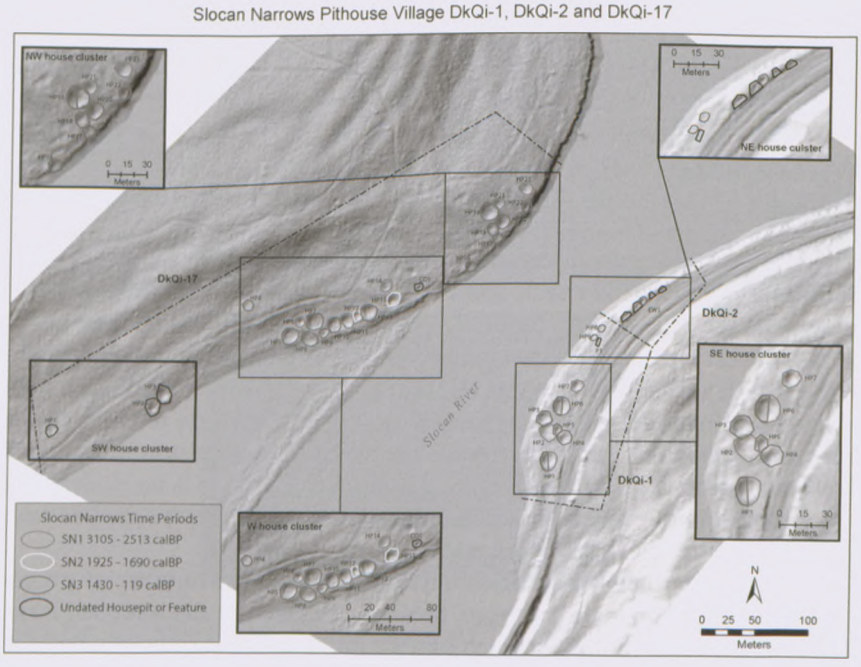

Figure 9.5 LiDAR image of the Slocan Narrows site coded pithouse period of occupation.

create the housepit. If half of those who were going to live in the house were the ones who built the house (excluding elderly members and children), it would be possible for each person to move 1 cubic meter per day (Sherwood and Kidder 2011). If all participants focused on excavating the housepit, they could accomplish that single task in approximately 14 days.

Excavating the pit represents only a portion of the labor-intensive process of building a pithouse. Afterward, or in tandem, large pine and cedar trees would have been cut down and debarked to provide the superstructure of the house with posts and beams. Smaller trees/beams would have been arranged perpendicular to the beams and lined up to the top of a cone-shaped roof. As our example illustrated above, all of the trees would have had the bark removed to prevent insect infestation and would have lengthened the use-life of the pithouse. A layer of mats, made from vegetation, would have covered the superstructure. The sediment that had been excavated from the pit would then have been moved again; this time to cover the wooden structure (Figure 9.6). A single post ladder would have provided access through an entrance in the roof.

We estimate that the 14 days of excavating the housepit represents approximately 25%–33% of the work that would actually go into building a pithouse of this size. To make a conservative estimate for the overall labor

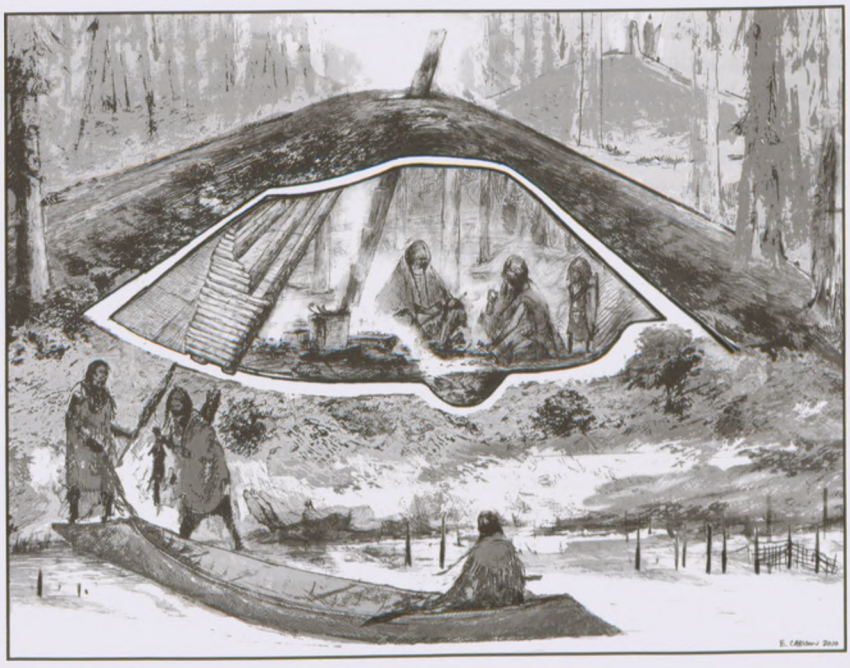

Figure 9.6 Artist reconstruction of HP9 at Slocan Narrows. HP9 is a small house measuring 8 m in diameter with cultural materials that demonstrate domestic activities. Artist, Eric S. Carlson.

requirements, if it were 25% of the work, it would take about two months to start and complete a pithouse. This estimate, though, does not account for the time required for all the other things that need to happen to support a population during this time, including food gathering and preparation, taking care of kids, and other somatic interests. If we do provision for all of the other daily tasks, it is likely a large pithouse expected to hold 100–150 people would likely take three-plus months to complete. This would have been no small task and would have likely dominated the lives of the people who were participating in constructing the pithouse.

The archaeology of pithouse construction at Slocan

Pithouses at Slocan Narrows are semi-subterranean, round to ovate in shape, and vary greatly in size and depth, ranging in size from 5 m to 23 m in diameter. The housepits also range from shallow 0.5 m in depth to over 3.5 m in depth. Based on our current excavations, small pithouses (5–10 m) were likely single- and/or extended-family residential dwellings. Medium-sized houses (10–15 m in diameter) and large houses (15+ m in diameter) were originally thought to be multifamily dwellings; however, the lack of material culture recovered from within the medium- and large-sized houses does not match expectations of day-to-day domestic activities.

Village layout at the Slocan Narrows site is complex, with pithouses arranged in a series of house clusters, and activities and activity areas likely organized by kin and/or corporate group (Figure 9.7). The organization in house clusters fits with how Lakes villages are described ethnographically (Bouchard and Kennedy 2000:282). In addition, house clusters at Slocan Narrows are likely related to an organizational strategy rooted in kinship. Ethnographically, Lakes villages or house clusters comprised autonomous households linked together by kinship (Bouchard and Kennedy 2000:282). These kinship relationships have been described as bilateral without lineage (Anastasio 1972) and nonunilinear (Ackerman 1994). The Slocan Narrows village is organized with house clusters, by geographic barriers that would have made it difficult, if not impossible, for residents in one house cluster to see the activities of another house cluster without having formal invitations to such knowledge. The east and west house clusters are divided by the Slocan River, which would require a boat to cross safely. The north and south of the site is subdivided by physical space with natural topographic relief that would make visibility from one house cluster to the next practically nonexistent, even if the residents managed the dense forest.

Archaeological excavations at Slocan Narrows have included a detailed ^{14}C sampling program focused on dating housepit superstructure remains and internal hearths. Results of this research suggest that the Slocan Narrows site had a complex occupational history beginning around 3,100 cal BP. The first period of occupation SN I began with multiple spatially separated house clusters at *c.*3,100 cal BP and lasted until 2,700 cal BP when

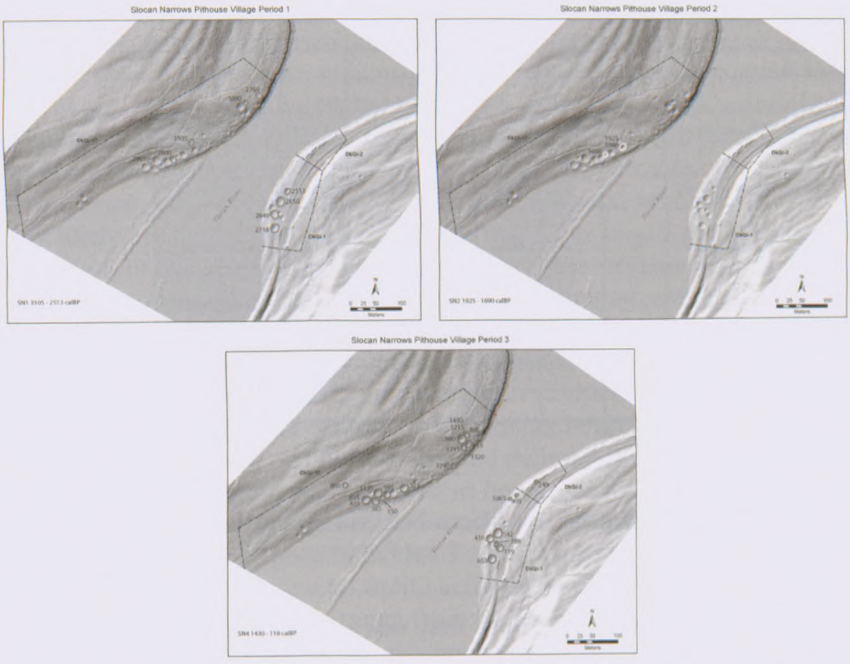

Figure 9.7 House clusters at Slocan Narrows through time. Numbers equate to the mean ^{14}C date.

the village and all house clusters were abruptly abandoned. The Bayesian Model (Figure 9.8) suggests the SE house cluster may not have been abruptly abandoned. However, one ^{14}C date falls within the Hallstatt Plateau and is likely skewing this model, and we suggest that all four house clusters were likely abandoned rapidly at 2,700 cal BP. The village was then reoccupied during SN II, only in the west house cluster, from *c.*2,000 to 1,600 cal BP. The west house cluster was abandoned and then in sequence the NW, NE, and SE, and finally the west house cluster emerged after 1,500 cal BP during SN III, many of the pithouses being occupied until roughly contact in the late 18th century AD (Figure 9.8).

With the kinship system and variation of descent possibilities within and between Lakes villages, membership was likely flexible where individuals were able to move between villages with ease (Bouchard and Kennedy 2000:282). People would have likely had the ability to join successful house clusters and villages or explore other viable solutions when a house cluster proves unsuccessful (Kelly 2007; Woodburn 1988). Because of this flexible kinship-based corporate group membership, people could pursue better options when they presented themselves, recruit others into their household, or even take the risk to establish a new household and begin recruiting. This pattern of kinship-based household clusters cooperating together,

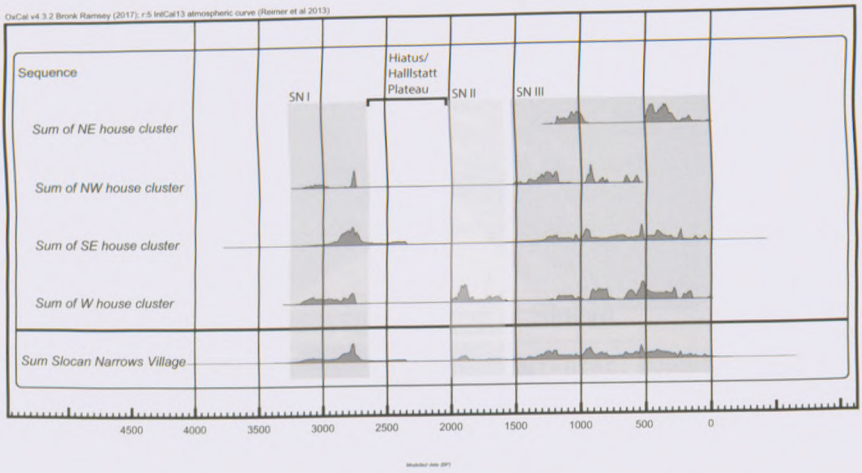

Figure 9.8 Bayesian Model of the Slocan Narrows occupational history by house cluster.

beginning with a founding house that was either successful in recruiting and/or raising offspring versus unsuccessfully doing so, is a possible explanation for the cycles of population aggregation and dispersal found in the Slocan Narrows occupational history. We also note that if the large houses at Slocan were built as special-purpose gathering structures for seasonal ceremonies, they could have played a social role integrating household clusters, the village, and at even larger spatial scales.

A model of monumental houses, kinship, and social change at Slocan Narrows

House construction is an event through which people can (re)define social identities, roles, and relationships. Pithouse construction at Slocan Narrows as outlined above likely represented a major event or at least departure from everyday activities in people's lives at the village. This likely included ways in which people defined or redefined their social identities and relationships within kin groups within and between pithouses, between different house clusters, and/or within the village (possibly even beyond the village). Social identities could have been tied to labor in constructing pithouses, whether or not an individual intended to participate in activities or social relationships within a given house or larger corporate group, and the nature of those relationships between other individuals (kin based and/or cooperative group based).

Kinship, the fundamental way in which corporate groups are structured in non-state societies, is created and maintained through human agency. In the ethnographic case of the Sinixt, kinship was a fundamental means at which household clusters were organized. In the archaeology of the Slocan

Narrows site, natural geographic boundaries, such as a major waterway—the Slocan River—and topographic areas make at least four house clusters very distinct within the site layout. We have defined house clusters as groups of houses in which, because of natural boundaries, residents would not have easy access to understanding the ongoing nature of people's activities in another house cluster. Because house clusters at Slocan Narrows range in size from small houses containing a few hundred m^2 of roofed space all the way to many large houses containing several thousand m^2 of roofed space, they likely contained family units all the way from single- to multi-family groups of 10–25 people to potentially much larger organized multifamily kin-based corporate groups of 100+ people occupying several houses. As we have noted however, the archaeological record of the medium- and large-sized houses suggests they were gathering spaces for ceremonies and ritual activities rather than domains for domestic activities. This interpretation will require archaeologists to reinterpret how pithouses signal paleodemographic patterns based on pithouse size and their distribution through time.

The main collective group involved in house construction is the household, which is primarily organized around shared kinship identities (real or fictive). In our model, those individuals who engage in the construction of a pithouse would be those who would actually benefit from its construction in some way. Benefits could range from an individual who is planning to live in the house, participate in everyday activities, or participate in special gatherings, all of which would likely allow access to associated resources. Benefits could include more indirect use if the house is also intended to be used to engage other members not directly involved in pithouse construction such as educating children, or still more intangible, for those who aid in construction and plan to attend other public or private events such as feasts or other seasonal ceremonies. This range of activities and individual engagement would set the prehistoric pithouses at Slocan Narrows in a similar context as the modern-day construction of the pithouse and its use at Vallican (Figure 9.9).

Figure 9.9 The completed pithouse at Vallican with side entrance (left) and Sinixt elder (Sma$^{?}$m$^{?}$im) Marilyn James engaging field school students in storytelling within the pithouse.

The construction of houses involves the mobilization of labor. Large houses at Slocan Narrows may have required labor across increasingly larger social scales (even beyond the intended residents), as well as significant logistical support in the forms of temporary housing, provisioning, and retooling for the builders. By our estimations, the large houses at Slocan Narrows likely took several months to complete. This would be considered a major labor investment, especially when considering all of the other resource procurement that was likely occurring throughout the time when the pithouse was being constructed and other abundant seasonal resources would have had to be procured. The Slocan Narrows site is located far enough from the coast that in prehistoric times, salmon runs would have reached Slocan; however, historical accounts record salmon populations that are very late in their lifecycle after swimming approximately 800 km up the Columbia River from the coast. Thus, the village is poorly placed from a keystone food resource standpoint. People at Slocan Narrows would likely have harvested salmon much farther south at a fishery such as Kettle Falls during the summer months. As a result, building a pithouse would have had a tight scheduling window after harvesting and processing salmon but before late fall and winter weather begins in the Kootenay Mountains. Therefore, building a large pithouse would have required the mobilization of labor beyond that available in any single household. This collective action likely included investment of other forms of social capital such as allegiance building for strengthening a cooperative group. The labor force may have even come from communities across the interior Northwest. While Slocan Narrows was not well positioned for salmon fishing (other than taking advantage of a natural "narrows" in the river that could have provided advantage for fishing or connecting the two sides of the river), there would have also been locally available terrestrial resources, and the place could have had social or spiritual significance, thus justifying aggregation and monumental house construction.

While not necessary, large house construction may have provided opportunities for emerging or established elites to control and mobilize collective labor. The Slocan Narrows village has a chronological occupation of over 3,000 years with only one real hiatus of *c.*500 years. In our previous works, we have argued that complex hunter-fisher-gatherer social organization likely did not emerge at the village until relatively late, likely after *c.*1,500 cal BP (Goodale et al. 2004, 2008). Between 1,500 cal BP and 600 cal BP, the four major house clusters were all occupied at the same time and the village was at its largest population level. However, the first occupation of Slocan Narrows beginning at around 3,100 cal BP also likely housed a significant population of people. In this early phase, pithouse construction would have been cooperative with no evidence for elite control. If large pithouses at Slocan Narrows were actually special gathering or ceremonial structures, we would have to revise our estimates for the residential population at the site down. Such an interpretation would provide evidence for an even greater

reliance on collective action for their construction, as these structures would have been constructed by people from multiple households. The earliest and latest occupations would have offered large collective labor investment, and possibly by the latest village occupation, the opportunity for emergent elites to harness further control and advantages over other members.

The shared experience of constructing a house could help establish new and reinforce existing social identities, including kin relationships. The evidence from Slocan Narrows that evinces this part of our model is that at least during SN I and SN II periods, house clusters were likely founded by a "parent" household and then expanded into multiple houses. We suggest that extended kin groups occupied house clusters at Slocan Narrows, based upon the site layout and occupation of houses; however, future research will be focused on material culture correlates that may provide alternative explanations that take more into account pithouse function where medium and large houses may have been large gathering structures for special or seasonal events. This may include a very different interpretation for the Slocan Narrows site as a place of noted recognition for special reoccurring events rather than a long-established residential village. The material remains will aid in this interpretation.

Monumental pithouses would have provided an enduring signal of household success, even if the structures were not exclusively residential. Finally, this aspect of our model possibly shows up at Slocan Narrows by the size of the pithouses, which, on average, are very large for the Upper Columbia, and are on par for the largest in the region. Small pithouses at Slocan Narrows are the only ones thus far that have yielded artifact assemblages indicative of day-to-day domestic activities. Medium and large houses at Slocan Narrows have yielded minimal cultural materials and, in some instances, rare materials such as red ochre and drilled bone and stone beads that have not been recovered in small houses. Monumental pithouses that would have required large-scale collective action to build and to maintain are evident at Slocan Narrows and may require archaeologists in the interior Pacific Northwest to reexamine the relationship between pithouse occupation through time and its relationship to demographic trends.

Conclusions

Archaeological interpretations of architectural patterns usually focus on the daily activities and the construction design and layout of a house rather than the construction event itself. In this chapter, we suggest that the construction of monumental pithouses likely played a role in the establishment of a large aggregated village at Slocan Narrows. A modern ethnographic example of pithouse construction at nearby Vallican offers the opportunity to see how collective action enabled a relatively small labor force, with modern tools and some machinery, to construct a pithouse on a scale similar to that of archaeological examples of monumental pithouses at Slocan Narrows.

We argue a similar process likely occurred in the past with pithouse construction at Slocan Narrows with larger labor forces that did not employ the use of modern technology to build pithouses. While we have considerably more work to do to link all of the aspects of our model of monumentality and house construction at Slocan Narrows, we argue that many facets are in alignment even though we have employed an excavation strategy that has focused first on obtaining ^{14}C dates from each house and establishing a detailed understanding of the occupational history at the village. Continuing investigations are focused on pithouse function. Whether marked by isolated events of monumental construction or as persistent places for ceremonial aggregation, pithouses in the Interior Plateau of the Pacific Northwest continue to offer new insights into broader understandings of household organization, kinship, and social change.

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Data availability statement: The code used to run the Bayesian ^{14}C summary in Figure 9.8 may be obtained from the corresponding author (ngoodale@hamilton.edu).

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