A wonderful opportunity presented itself when Mr. Len Donaldson offered a collection of over 1,000 stone tools to the Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology at Simon Fraser University in 2014. Mr. Donaldson collected these artifacts as he managed his land near Rolla, in the Peace River region in northeastern British Columbia, over his lifetime of farming. The large collection provided important artifacts to interpret a region in which archaeological evidence is scarce and important archaeological theories are still hotly debated.

Dr. Barbara Winter, director of SFU's Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (SFU MAE), did not accept the donation, but preferred to prepare the collection for curation, and then return it to the north, where the Treaty Eight Tribal Association (T8TA) and schools could use it in educational programmes. Mr. Donaldson agreed, and he drove the collection to Burnaby. Karen Aird, the cultural heritage advisor for the T8TA, gave a presentation to the class about the proposed Tse'K'wa Interpretive Centre and the significance of the Charlie Lake Cave site to Treaty 8 First Nations. Dr. Jon Driver and others explained the significance of the site to the students. Dr. Winter's students accessioned, catalogued, and housed the collection, creating an exhibit in the SFU Museum gallery. Dr. Winter then secured a small amount of funding from the SFU President's office to create a resource for schools and non-school learning for the T8TA. Museum research associates made two teaching kits that give learners hands on interactive activities to explore the tools and the lifeways of First Nations in the Peace River region.

"This project has been both a hands-on project in museum curation for the university students, giving them experience in the development of a collection, and a wonderful way to support First Nations communities in the north", said Dr. Winter. Winter is advising the Treaty 8 Nations in their plans for "Tse'K'wa", a centre to be built at the site of Charlie Lake Cave, excavated by SFU Archaeology professors Dr. Knut Fladmark and Dr. Jon Driver some years ago. This important early site has yielded information on early people and animals in BC at the end of the last ice age. On May 29, 2012, the First Nations of Doig River, Prophet River, and West Moberly, purchased the land containing Charlie Lake Cave. Their intention is to reclaim and repatriate this land and use it once again as part of the Treaty 8 First Nation's cultural heritage – as an active, and interactive landscape.

Tse'K'wa (Stone House), or Charlie Lake Cave, is a very important archaeological site located near the southern tip of Charlie Lake a few kilometers north of the community of Fort St. John, near Mr. Donaldson's farm. The Charlie Lake Cave site is one of only a few known archaeological sites in northern North America that dates to before 10,500 years ago, and is one of even fewer with a well preserved stratigraphic record of human activities. The site contains evidence of a series of temporary occupations, with undisturbed layers of deposits that can be dated. These layers contain a small number of stone and bone artifacts, including a fluted point, and retouched flakes. These small stone tools were found together with animal remains including bison, snowshoe hare, large hare, ground squirrel and fish. The bison bones exhibited cut marks that researchers believe were created by humans using stone tools. Charlie Lake Cave is the only archaeological site in Canada in which fluted point tools and associated animal remains have been found in an undisturbed context. Excavators also found two raven skeletons and a bead, interpreted to be the oldest evidence of ritual acts in Canada.

The return of this collection will assist the Treaty 8 First Nations communities of Northern British Columbia to gain material from their cultural heritage, building on and solidifying their narration of their own history as well as that of the province as a whole.

Around 11,500 years ago, the land was in the last grip of the Ice Age with towering walls of ice to the west

crossed the Bering Land Bridge from Siberia, traversed unglaciated regions in Alaska and the Yukon, and then followed this ice-free corridor to settle in the lands to the south of the ice sheets by 11,500 years BP.

The ice-free corridor hypothesis was first proposed in the 1930s and for many years was widely accepted as the most likely means of entry for the first North Americans. The corridor was thought to have been open and accessible throughout most or all of the Late Wisconsinan Glaciation, allowing early settlers to make the journey even during the height of the Ice Age. More recent evidence, however, indicates that the ice-free corridor did not open until after the glacial ice began to recede, about 12,000 years BP, and so was too late to account for the arrival of the first peoples.

Archaeologists have spent decades looking for evidence that the ice-free corridor was the route used by those who brought Clovis technology to the Americas. If the ice-free corridor was the point of first entry, then at least some of the archaeological sites in the corridor region should predate the Clovis sites south of the ice sheets, and should contain artifacts and tools that are ancestral to the Clovis toolkit. No such evidence has yet been found.

Probably not, the corridor was not open until too late. The Charlie Lake Cave site is one of the earliest sites in the corridor region. People were camping at Charlie Lake Cave by 11,000 to 10,500 years BP, and were manufacturing fluted points similar to Clovis points.

It is important to remember, however, that the archaeological record is incomplete, and often reveals only a glimpse of the past. Archaeological evidence in the corridor region may be hidden in areas that are inaccessible today. It may have been swept away by post-glacial floods or lie buried beneath tonnes of glacial debris. Poor preservation conditions may have resulted in the destruction of organic archaeological remains. For that reason, Charlie Lake Cave, being a protected shelter with intact layers of archaeological deposits is very important. Future geologic and archaeological survey and excavation in the ice-free corridor area may one day provide us with new information about the earliest people in this region.gla4n Tm[(h)4(a)-4(e)-3(o)-103

Geologic research has supplied valuable evidence concerning the existence and extent of the ice

If humans passed through this corridor while the glaciers remained near their maximum extend, what would have this land looked like to them? Doubtless these early travelers where well versed in dealing with dangerous terrain, but what would they have to deal with when traveling between two giant sheets of ice?

By at least 13,000 to 12,000 years