
Britannia Creek and the late glacial character of the upper Yukon River

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Résumé

The Yukon River corridor has been suggested as a possible migration route for early people moving out of Beringia. Evidence for this proposed migration route has been non-existent. The Britannia Creek Site (Yukon Territory, Canada) has late glacial occupations dated between 12,700 and 13,500 cal BP and is currently the only site of this age located on the main branch of the Yukon River. Archaeological surveys of the Yukon River have resulted in many mid-Holocene archaeological discoveries, but only three sites have ever been recorded that are older than 9,000 years before present. In this paper we review the context of the Britannia Creek discovery in relation to observations of sedimentary contexts at localities within 30 km of the site. It is observed that the late glacial character of the upper Yukon River was as a broad and un-entrenched glacial outwash plain with water flowing through many braided channels. This character appears to have resulted in the deposition of stratified loess in riverside areas. It is also observed that the character of the river may have changed, due to post-glacial river entrenchment, after 9000 years before present. Developing and understanding of the late glacial character of the Yukon River will help archaeologists identify the earliest indigenous occupations of this landscape.

Mots-Clés: Beringia, Yukon River, Canada

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