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Short Communication

A New Perspective on the Peopling of the Americas

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Theory

I would like to point out that there is a region of Eastern Beringia within central western Yukon that has potential to reveal when the earliest primeval hominin or early human entry into the Americas occurred, hence, also to provide insight into the original culture and heritage of the earliest peoples. At present, anthropologists speak of human migration into North Americas beginning possibly 40,000 years ago or thereafter, after their crossing from Siberia into Alaska. However, the fossil record in Siberia indicates people were there 200,000 years ago. Moreover, a number of fossil sites in China indicate hominids, possibly hominins, were migrating slowly toward Siberia two million years ago.

The Bering Strait region has experienced multiple ice ages over the last 10 million years (see Can. J. Earth Sci. 57: 199–226 (2020), dx.doi.org/10.1139/cjes-2019-0048). A severe glacial period began 2.58 million years ago, and several others followed. The last glacial maximum, about 21,000 years ago, was relatively mild compared to the earlier ones. Based on sea level drop and the presence of a land bridge across the strait during the last glacial maximum, it can be suggested that land bridges surely existed earlier on multiple occasions. Indeed, in terms of invasion of Alaska from Siberia of now extinct mammals, there is ample evidence that this was the case.

Thus, although artifacts remain to be discovered, it is a reasonable hypothesis that human migration into North America could have begun 200,000 years ago and possibly much earlier. Our knowledge of the first human settlement of the Americas presently seems to be principally based on an absence of research rather than on open-minded searching to discover the truth. Scientific evidence may well exist, buried within sediments maintained frozen for millions of years within Yukon Beringia. There are numerous undisturbed sites within Yukon Beringia valley bottoms that have been exempted from all known glaciations (see the publication cited above). They hold frozen sediments probably exceeding a hundred metres of depth, and they surely contain records of past biotic and abiotic changes. However, no scientific effort has yet occurred to excavate, systematically, down through their millions of years of frozen layers.

Mineral exploration and placer mining activities severely damaged the scientific value of the Klondike region. The disruption disclosed and continues to provide ample fossil evidence but has nevertheless been a crude pseudoscientific approach to discovery. The glitter of gold nuggets brings with every passing year more invasion and disruption of the frozen anthropological record within Yukon Beringia. My suggestions to the governments of Yukon and Canada that they take action to ensure that at least some of the multi-million-year scientific value is preserved from placer miners and mineral exploration in general have gone unacknowledged. It would be helpful if the international community could voice its concern and help Canada better appreciate the potential of the remaining undisturbed valleys in Yukon Beringia to facilitate anthropological, archaeological and paleontological research. If even one such valley could be systematically excavated through the depths of permafrost to reveal, sample and document the buried artifacts, this would be immense progress.

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