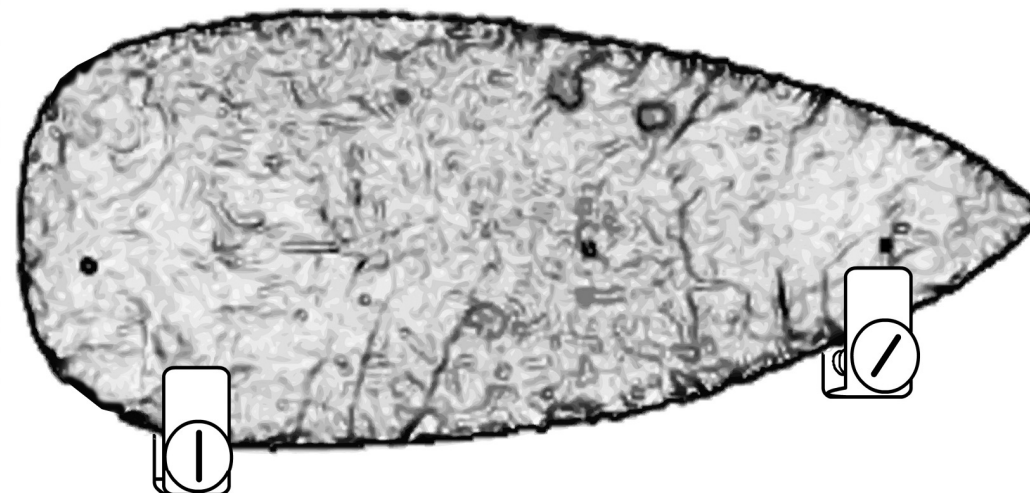




The Archaeologist

The archeologist took lots of notes, making a very good record of how I was found so he could learn about the past. Today I am in a museum, and the archeologist published his notes in a magazine called a journal.

Now you know my story. I hope if you ever find a tool like me you will do as the young lady did and help people learn about history instead of putting me in your pocket!



Knife Blade



Hozomeen Chert



6,000 BCE

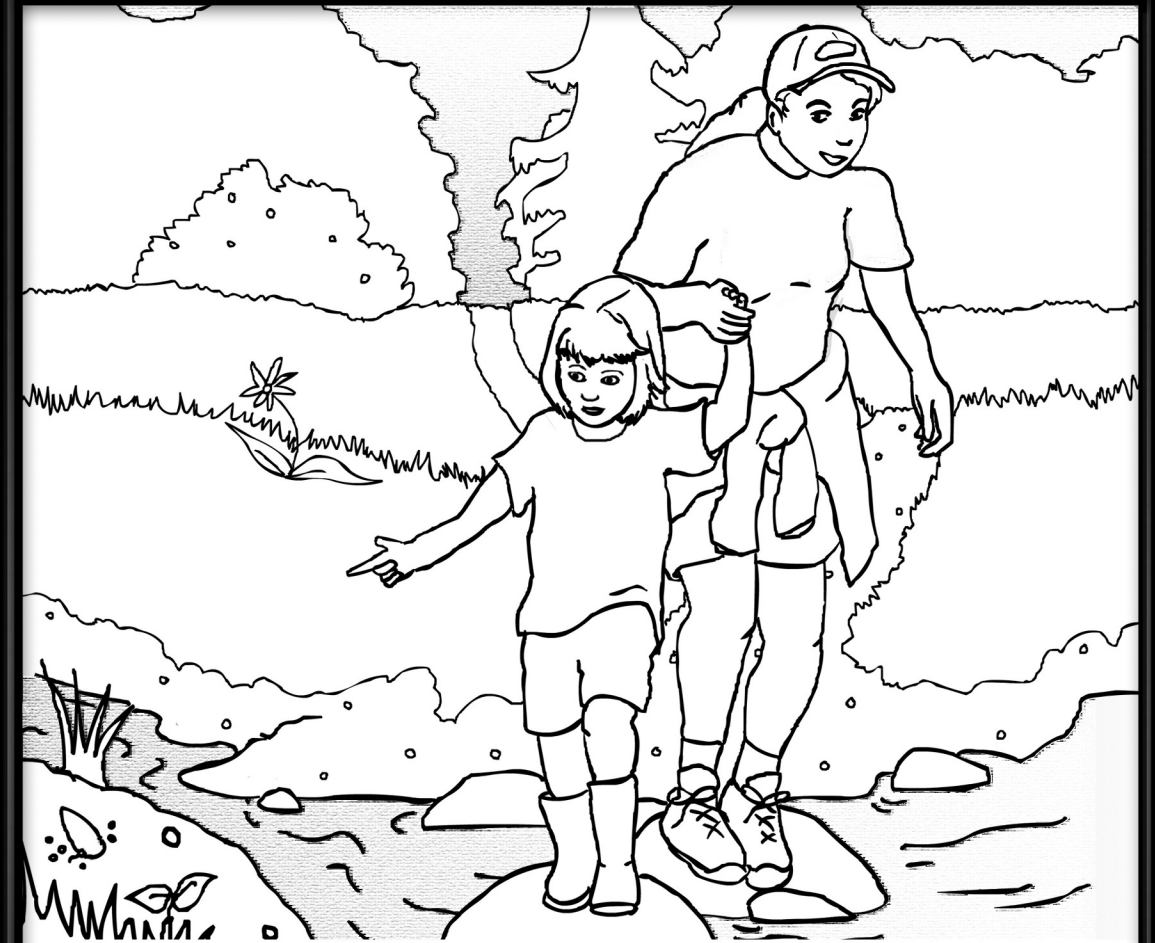
Today is my 8,000th birthday. I would like to tell you my story. Birthdays make me think of how much has happened since I was first a rock. Today I am an old blade hanging in a museum, but I didn't used to be mounted on a wall...

A long time ago, before iron technology, before copper technology, it was the time of stone technology. I had been sitting inside the mountain since the mountains were first pushed up toward the sky. Today you call my kind of rock "Hozomeen chert," because you can find my type on Mt. Hozomeen.

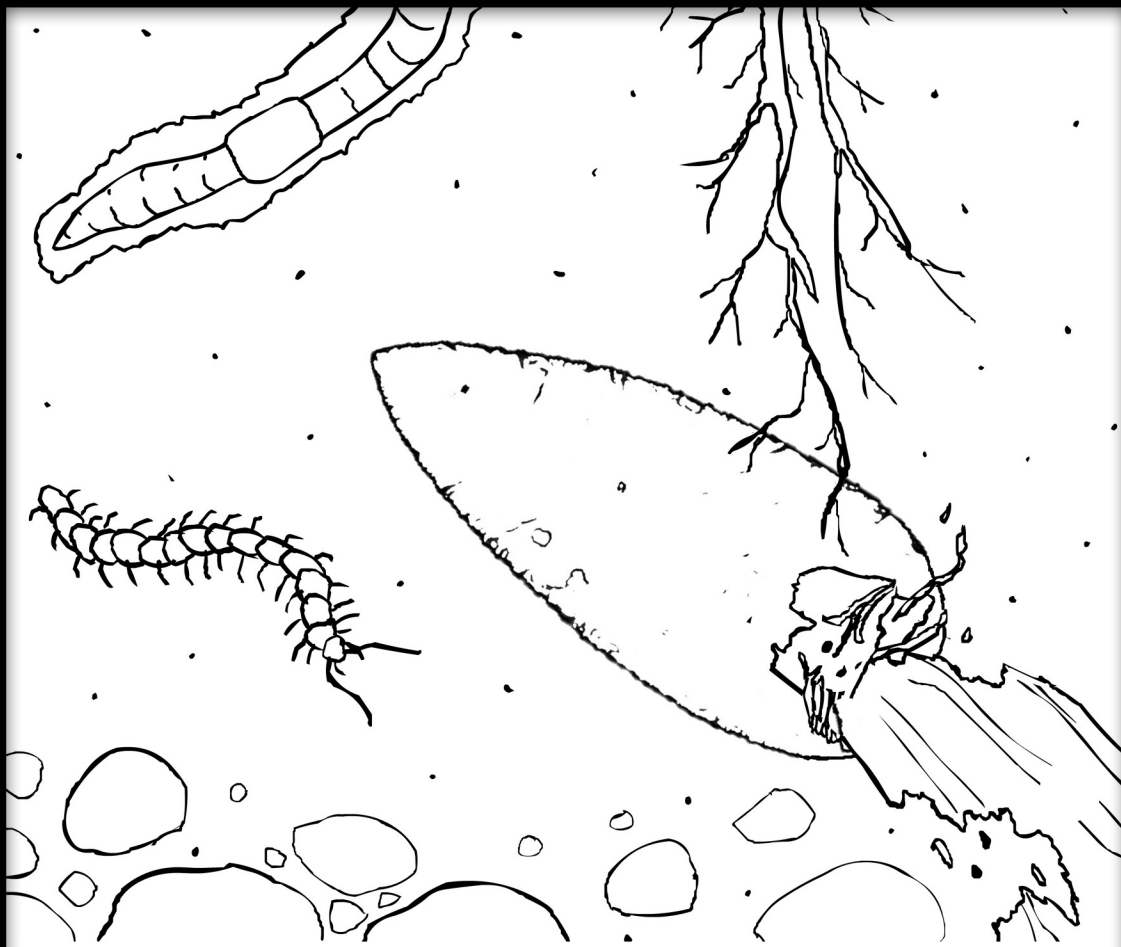


But during the time of stone technology, my kind of rock had a different name. That name is forgotten now. However, the hands that made me left their mark and we can use signs left from the past to understand what happened to me.

Far up the side of Mt. Hozomeen today there are the remains of an ancient quarry. It is not easy to get to, and we can guess Hozomeen chert was very valuable if people went all the way up the mountain to collect it.



I was buried near the river for 7,976 years until the mud washed away and I was seen by a young lady who was hiking. She took a picture of me with a dollar bill to show how big I was, and wrote down on her map where she found me. Then, she and her mother used leafy branches to cover me up, so no one could easily find me and take me! The young lady called a ranger station when she finished hiking. The ranger station sent a type of scientist called an archeologist to come and get me.



I was buried under mud carried by the flood. With no one able to find me, I sat still for a long time. It was like being a rock again. Crawling things chewed on my handle. Water and time weakened the sinew until it began to fall apart until almost all that was left of me was my stone blade.

After thousands of years the valley's river became a stream. In time, the stream wore a new path through the valley, washing away dirt. Finally, I was uncovered.



At the quarry those ancient people used stone, wood, bone, and antler to harvest chert. Chunks of Hozomeen chert were very good for tool making, better than any other rock you could find in the mountains. On Mt. Hozomeen it could be cold and windy, there was not much fuel for fire. It was not easy work! Sometimes little pieces of chert would be washed down the mountain by rain and found in the river, but those pieces were nothing like the nice chunks the Native People took out of their quarry!

Stone



Blank



Blade



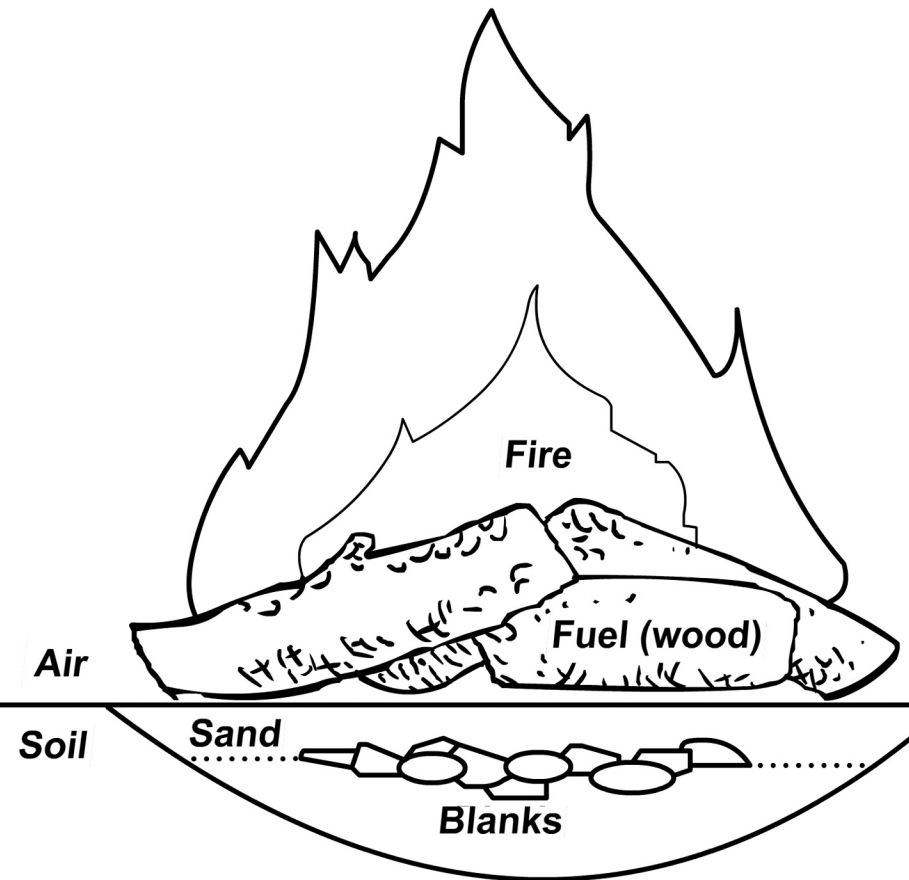
The Native People knew about business. They didn't only get chert for themselves, they got extra to use for trade. So they made blanks, shaping the Hozomeen chert until it almost had the shape of a knife blade, az blade, or other tool. The unfinished tool blanks were valuable because people who could not go to the chert quarry would trade to get the blanks so they could make chert tools. Blanks were also much smaller and lighter than chunks of rock, so more could be carried off the mountain.



During all this work I was well taken care of. When I would get dull because my razor sharp blade had done so much work, the woman would sharpen me. I used to look wider than I am today. Each time I was sharpened parts of me had to be chipped away to make a new sharp edge. The woman lost me by accident one day. There was a flood, and everyone had to move their things out of the river valley, and I was left behind by her hearth, where she cooked food.



A few days later, I was traded again! Now I belonged to woman who lived in a valley beyond the forest, she never went into the mountains, but sometimes went into the forest. I had very important jobs. I was used to prepare food, and help make other tools. I worked with a rock scraper, awl, and bone needle to make warm clothing that was sewn to fit the woman and her family. The woman could use many, many kinds of tools, many of them she could make herself. Can you use a hundred different kinds of tools? She could!

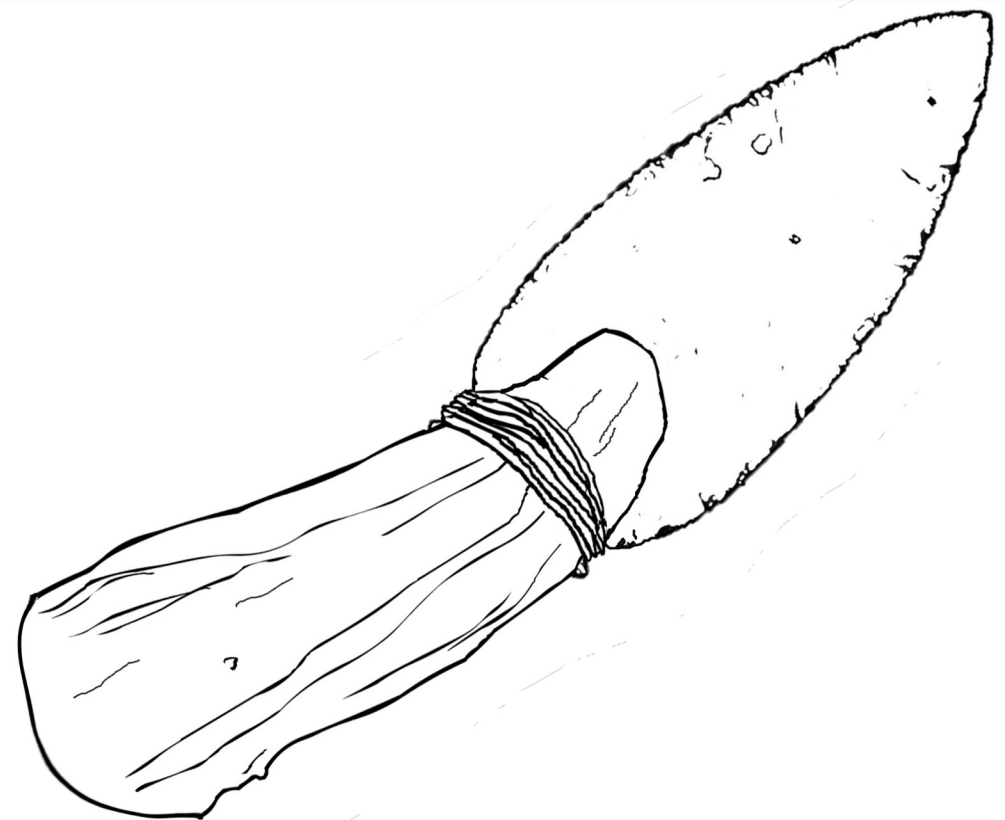


I was traded to a very skilled man who made many tools. He lived in forests near the mountain, but usually didn't visit the high peaks. The only way he got big pieces of chert was through trading with the people who worked in the quarry. The man lived with his family and would trade his finished tools for other things.

Before he could make me into a tool, I needed to be heat treated. If chert is made very hot, it is much nicer to work with. So the man dug a shallow hole and packed down a layer of sand. then he put the blanks in the center and packed more sand on top.



When the fire died out and I had cooled off, I was dug out of the sand. There was a cooking fire and the man's family was talking. When I was being made into a blank I was struck very hard with a big rock called a hammer stone, but this time it was different. The man held me in his hand and pressed a piece of antler against me until the pressure made a flake pop off. In this way the man removed little bits of rock until I had a sharp edge and a good shape for a knife. It is hard to make a blade from glassy rock like chert, but the man did an excellent job.



After they were done with dinner, the craftsman brought out a handle that he had carved with other tools. The handle was carved from a tree branch. I was squeezed into a split in the wooden handle. To hold me in tight, the split was wrapped with a long string made from animal parts. This string, that we call sinew, also had glue on it to hold it in place.

I was a complete knife! I was so sharp I could cut hair! Not every kind of rock can make a knife like chert can, especially when chert's been heat treated in a fire!