

# Ruby Creek Stone Figure

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This carved stone bowl from the Ruby Creek area on the lower Fraser River is a real enigma. It is what is called a seated human figurine bowl. It is assumed to be part of the early stone bowl complex of southwestern BC, dating to around 2000 years ago. The bowl was originally found about 1880, by a private citizen and was acquired by the museum in 1917.

It is carved of a steatite or chlorite-like material, both types of metamorphic rock. The figure has unique facial features that are different from other stone bowls found in southern BC. What is of most interest is that the evidence shows that it was carved with metal tools. Is it an ancient artifact carved with iron tools or is it in fact of more recent manufacture?



We are left with three competing hypothesis regarding its origins:

- (1) The bowl was made after the 1790s when iron tools were well distributed on the coast and before the mid-19th century when machine cut files were generally more available.
- (2) The bowl dates to a pre-contact period and the First Nation that made it had access to iron files from shipwrecks or from long distance trade around the Pacific Rim.
- (3) The artifact was traded from far away or came from a shipwreck. The latter hypothesis could be answered by establishing the origin of the raw material from which it is made. Similar raw material does occur in the general area of the find but appropriate testing needs to be done.

For now, this bowl remains an enigma.