The culture today known as Dorset existed in the eastern Arctic from approximately 1850 B.C. to 1050 A.D., miles north of Napatalik Island, while the Newfoundland chert material sources. Ramah chert use is highest at the Rose Island site nearest Ramah Bay, while Newfoundland cherts are more frequent at the southernmost site of Napatalik but only about 50% of the weight, indicating that the inhabitants were working this material more finely than others, more local materials.

The tools discovered in the house represent hunting, skin processing, and the needers of tool manufacture. The assemblage also includes 8 fragments of 2 soapstone lamps that once burned blubber for heat and light and almost 400 fragments of seal bones.

The patterns of raw material use at Napatalik suggest that the site’s occupants were able to obtain non-local cherts from Ramah Bay to the north and Newfoundland to the south relatively easily on both sides in the assemblage. Analysis of the debitage from other Middle Dorset sites in Labrador reveal that frequencies of both Ramah chert and Newfoundland chert increase as distance from their sources decreases. This tendency to avoid long-distance transport of large chunks of raw material may explain why the weight of the Ramah chert at Napatalik comprises a smaller proportion of the total debris than the count. This site’s inhabitants may have obtained partially-processed Ramah chert artifacts through trade networks, which needed only fine, detailed working later. Trade networks may also be responsible for the presence of the two small Newfoundland-style endblades and the small sherds of Woodland pottery. The endblades’ finished condition, and the lack of Newfoundland chert preforms at the site, suggests that Dorset peoples obtained these endblades through participation in formal social networks extending along the coast Labrador. Whether these contacts were only occasional, as suggested, or more formalized and regularized, as suggested by the presence of Newfoundland chert lithic debris at Napatalik, Koliktalik, and Rose Island, is a subject for future study.

CONCLUSIONS

The patterns of raw material use at Napatalik suggest that the site’s occupants were able to obtain non-local cherts from Ramah Bay to the north and Newfoundland to the south relatively easily on both sides in the assemblage. Analysis of the debitage from other Middle Dorset sites in Labrador reveal that frequencies of both Ramah chert and Newfoundland chert increase as distance from their sources decreases. This tendency to avoid long-distance transport of large chunks of raw material may explain why the weight of the Ramah chert at Napatalik comprises a smaller proportion of the total debris than the count. This site’s inhabitants may have obtained partially-processed Ramah chert artifacts through trade networks, which needed only fine, detailed working later. Trade networks may also be responsible for the presence of the two small Newfoundland-style endblades and the small sherds of Woodland pottery. The endblades’ finished condition, and the lack of Newfoundland chert preforms at the site, suggests that Dorset peoples obtained these endblades through participation in formal social networks extending along the coast Labrador. Whether these contacts were only occasional, as suggested, or more formalized and regularized, as suggested by the presence of Newfoundland chert lithic debris at Napatalik, Koliktalik, and Rose Island, is a subject for future study.