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# Rapid retreat of the southwestern Laurentide Ice Sheet driven by Bolling-Allerod warming

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Geology

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1 Rapid retreat of the southwestern Laurentide Ice Sheet during  
2 the Bølling-Allerød interval  
3

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19

20 **ABSTRACT**

21 The timing of Laurentide Ice Sheet deglaciation along its southwestern margin controlled  
22 the evolution of large glacial lakes and has implications for human migration into the Americas.

23 Accurate reconstruction of the ice sheet's retreat also constrains glacial isostatic adjustment  
24 models and is important for understanding ice-sheet sensitivity to climate forcing.

25 Despite its significance, retreat of the southwestern Laurentide Ice Sheet (SWLIS) is poorly  
26 constrained by minimum-limiting <sup>14</sup>C data. We present 26 new cosmogenic <sup>10</sup>Be exposure  
27 ages spanning the western Interior Plains, Canada. Using a Bayesian framework, we combine  
28 these data with geomorphic mapping, <sup>10</sup>Be, and high-quality minimum-limiting <sup>14</sup>C ages to  
29 provide an updated chronology. This dataset presents an internally consistent retreat record  
30 and indicates that the initial detachment of the SWLIS from its convergence with the Cordilleran

31 Ice Sheet began by ca. 15.0 ka, concurrent with or slightly prior to the onset of the  
32 Bølling-Allerød interval (14.7–12.9 ka) and retreated >1200 km to its Younger Dryas (YD)  
33 position in ~2500 yr. Ice-sheet stabilization at the Cree Lake Moraine facilitated a meltwater  
34 drainage route to the Arctic from glacial Lake Agassiz within the YD, but not necessarily at  
35 the beginning. Our record of deglaciation and new YD constraints demonstrate deglaciation  
36 of the Interior Plains was ~60% faster than suggested by minimum 14C constraints alone.  
37 Numerical modeling of this rapid retreat estimates a loss of ~3.7 m of sea-level equivalent  
38 from the SWLIS during the Bølling-Allerød interval.

39

#### 40 **INTRODUCTION**

41 Deglaciation of the Laurentide Ice Sheet (LIS) was the dominant control on Late Glacial (ca. 15–  
42 11.6 ka) sea-level rise (Carlson and Clark, 2012; Clark and Tarasov, 2014). The LIS response to  
43 Northern Hemisphere warming during the Bølling-Allerød (B-A) interstadial (14.7–12.9 ka;  
44 Rasmussen et al., 2014) is of particular interest because it provides an assessment of ice-sheet  
45 sensitivity to millennial-scale climate change. Numerical modeling (Gregoire et al., 2012, 2016;  
46 Tarasov et al., 2012) indicates a collapse of the ice saddle that connected the Cordilleran Ice  
47 Sheet (CIS) and southwestern LIS (SWLIS) was concordant with B-A warming (ca. 14.5–12.9  
48 ka). However, the rate of ice retreat and meltwater-equivalent contribution of the SWLIS during  
49 this period remains uncertain.

50

51 The existing deglaciation chronology for the SWLIS from Dyke et al. (2003), updated by Dalton  
52 et al. (2020), is based primarily on radiocarbon data. This has been problematic for the Interior  
53 Plains of Canada, where the earliest dates are associated with Quaternary vertebrates and limited  
54 by unquantified biases between ice retreat and colonization of the region by plants and animals

55 (cf. Froese et al., 2019). Within the SWLIS, luminescence dating and a small number of  $^{10}\text{Be}$   
56 exposure ages have been used to complement  $^{14}\text{C}$  chronologies; however, no attempts have been  
57 made to construct a regional retreat chronology that combines these methods. The existing  
58 deglaciation chronology assumes ice-margin stabilization at the Cree Lake Moraine, a moraine  
59 system  $>1200$  km northeast of the Last Glacial Maximum margin suspected to date to the  
60 Younger Dryas stadial (YD; 12.9–11.7 ka; Dyke et al., 2003). Yet, an absence of chronological  
61 control on this moraine system and large discrepancies between dating methods across the region  
62 mean the deglacial response of the SWLIS is poorly constrained.

63

64 We present  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages from glacial erratics spanning the western Interior Plains (Fig. 1).  
65 We combine the new chronology with geomorphic mapping and preexisting  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ( $n =$   
66 12), luminescence ( $n = 41$ ), and “high-quality” minimum-limiting  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates ( $n = 96$ ) to determine  
67 the timing and rate of retreat (see the Supplemental Material1). We combine these data within a  
68 Bayesian framework and present a retreat record consistent across chronological methods. We then  
69 use numerical model simulations to estimate the rate of ice-volume loss and sea-level contribution  
70 from the SWLIS.

71

## 72 **METHODS**

73 We collected samples from 26 boulders for  $^{10}\text{Be}$  cosmogenic surface exposure dating at five  
74 locations. These included: four from the Pine Lake Moraine (PLM), six from gravel bars within  
75 the Beaver River Spillway, five from erosional residuals at the head of the Clearwater Lower  
76 Athabasca Spillway (CLAS), five from the Cree Lake Moraine (CLM), and six from the western  
77 and eastern parts of the upper Cree Lake Moraine (Fig. 1). All samples were processed in the  
78 CRISDal Lab, Dalhousie University (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada), and analyzed for  $^{10}\text{Be}/^9\text{Be}$

79 at the Center for Accelerator Mass Spectrometry, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory  
80 (Livermore, California, USA).

81  
82 Dates are reported using the time-dependent CRONUS LSDn production-rate scaling of Lifton et  
83 al. (2014) and the “primary” production rate of Borchers et al. (2016). We report exposure ages  
84 with no correction for snow shielding or erosion. Glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA) affects the  
85 elevation, and thus the  $^{10}\text{Be}$  concentration, of our samples. In this region, the majority of surface  
86 rebound occurred shortly after ice retreat when our samples were at an elevation ( $\sim 40$  m) lower  
87 than modern. Accordingly, we applied a GIA correction of 3%–8% to all 26 samples (see the  
88 Supplemental Material).

89  
90 We performed a  $\chi^2$  test ( $p = 0.05$ ) to confirm that dates from each sample site are normally  
91 distributed, and use Chauvenet’s criterion of exclusion to systemically identify outliers. We then  
92 report error-weighted mean ages for each site. Internal age uncertainties were calculated as the  
93 larger of the standard error of the weighted mean or weighted standard deviation. Total  
94 uncertainties are reported by combining the internal error in quadrature with production-rate  
95 uncertainty.

96  
97 We combined our new  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure dates with a database of published luminescence (infrared  
98 and optically stimulated luminescence),  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure, and recalibrated minimum-limiting  $^{14}\text{C}$   
99 chronologies. This database of “high-quality” dates excludes  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates on bulk sediments,  
100 terrestrial shells, or mixed assemblages (see Table S3 in the Supplemental Material). We treated  
101 the existing luminescence and  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates at the site level similar to the  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure data and

102 group sites from a single landform or dune field within ~40 km regions (see the Supplemental  
103 Material).

104

105 We integrated these chronological data within a Bayesian age model using OxCal version 4.4  
106 (Bronk Ramsey, 2009). The model uses the known sequence of ice retreat, demarcated by  
107 recessional moraines, as a “prior model” and follows the transect of cosmogenic  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure  
108 dates from this study (Fig. 2).

109

110 We re-ran the best-fitting North American ice-sheet model simulations of Tarasov et al. (2012)  
111 with revised minimum-maximum isochrone nudging timing over the 21–9.28 ka interval  
112 consistent with our new ages. We used these new simulations to estimate the rate of ice-volume  
113 loss and equivalent sea-level contribution from the SWLIS (defined as  $49^{\circ}$ – $60^{\circ}\text{N}$ ,  $125^{\circ}$ – $105^{\circ}\text{W}$ ).  
114 The model includes 39 ensemble parameters that are calibrated to address uncertainties in climate  
115 forcing, basal drag, ice calving, and the amount of nudging toward the input target ice-margin  
116 chronologies. For each time step, the nudging adjusts surface mass balance (within physical  
117 uncertainties) for model grid cells that are inconsistent with the input target ice-margin minimum-  
118 maximum isochrones (interpolated between available time slices). We calculated the mean ice-  
119 retreat rate (Fig. 3) along transects taken at 100 km intervals perpendicular to ice retreat.

120

## 121 **NEW ICE MARGIN RETREAT CHRONOLOGY**

### 122 **Initial ice sheet separation and ice margin retreat across the Interior Plains**

123 Initial detachment of the southern LIS and CIS is reported at  $14.9 \pm 0.9$  ka from  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure  
124 dates from the Foothills Erratics Train (Margold et al., 2019; site A in Figs. 1 and 3A).

125 Luminescence dates from this region (sites E–F; Table S3) show a wide distribution when indi-  
126 vidual ages are considered, but grouping ages regionally to within ~40 km provides a chronol-  
127 ogy consistent with the exposure dates (Fig. 2). Tightly clustered minimum  $^{14}\text{C}$  ages on ultra-  
128 filtered collagen from bones from the SWLIS periphery indicate deglaciation before ca. 13.8 ka  
129 (sites B–D; Table S3). Samples from the PLM yield ages ~6–8 ka younger than all other sites.  
130 We interpret erratics at this site to have been exhumed post-glacially and exclude them from  
131 further discussion.  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure dates indicate the margin retreated to the Beaver River region  
132 by  $13.5 \pm 0.8$  ka ( $n = 6$ ). Tightly clustered  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates between the Foothills Erratics Train and the  
133 Beaver River region record deglaciation prior to 13.3 ka, including ultrafiltered collagen dates  
134 from Edmonton (site N; Table S3), and luminescence records, though variable, support this  
135 chronology (sites O–Q; Table S3).

136  
137 Our  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure dates indicate deglaciation of the CLAS region at  $13.0 \pm 1.1$  ka ( $n = 4$ ). These  
138 dates agree with luminescence dates to the northwest (sites Y–Z; Table S3). Minimum-limiting  
139  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates are also consistent with deglaciation prior to ca. 12.6 ka.  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure dates from the  
140 CLM and western upper Clear Lake Moraine (UCLM-W) indicate moraine formation by  $12.7 \pm$   
141  $0.9$  ka ( $n = 5$ ; excluding one outlier at  $16.9 \pm 0.3$  ka) and  $12.3 \pm 0.9$  ka ( $n = 3$ ), respectively. In  
142 contrast,  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates in the same region, largely from basal lake sediments, indicate later  
143 deglaciation (ca. 10.7–10.3 ka; Dyke et al., 2003; Fisher et al., 2009; Dalton et al., 2020). However,  
144 in the context of older more-southerly  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure, luminescence, and  $^{14}\text{C}$  ages, these samples  
145 likely reflect the minimum-limiting nature of deglacial  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates. Therefore, we regard the CLM  
146 and UCLM-W as the YD position of the SWLIS. This moraine system extends >600 km and  
147 represents a significant stabilization of the LIS during the YD cold reversal. We cannot determine

148 whether recession and re-advance preceded the formation of the outer moraines of the UCLM-E  
149 at  $11.2 \pm 0.7$  ka ( $n = 2$ ; excluding one outlier at  $16.0 \pm 0.3$  ka) or whether these moraines represent  
150 an  $\sim 1000$  yr stillstand.

151

## 152 **IMPLICATIONS**

### 153 **Opening of the deglacial ice free corridor**

154 The rapid deglaciation of the SWLIS has implications for the biogeographic connections between  
155 Beringia and continental North America, including human migrations. The combined chronologies  
156 presented here indicate southern LIS–CIS detachment began at ca. 15 ka, with substantial retreat  
157 of the LIS and formation of a deglacial “ice-free corridor” after ca. 13.5 ka (Margold et al., 2019;  
158 Froese et al., 2019). This chronology does not support the open passage at 15 ka proposed by Potter  
159 et al. (2018). Their approach utilized  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates that have not been reproduced, and placed  
160 emphasis on isolated luminescence dates that fall outside site means considered here (cf. Froese et  
161 al., 2019). Likewise, the later opening hypothesized by Pedersen et al. (2016) based on dates from  
162 basal lake sediment is unlikely given our chronology, which places the LIS at the CLM position  
163 by ca. 13 ka. At present, the intermediate model by Heintzman et al. (2016), which uses  $^{14}\text{C}$  and  
164 paleogenetics of bison to argue for an ice-free corridor by 13.2 ka, is most consistent with our  
165 chronology.

166

### 167 **Northwestern drainage of glacial Lake Agassiz**

168 The timing of ice-free conditions in the CLAS provides a minimum estimate on the northwestern  
169 drainage of glacial Lake Agassiz. Geological interpretations in northern Alberta (Smith and Fisher,  
170 1993), luminescence evidence from the Mackenzie River delta (Murton et al., 2010), and offshore

171 data in the Arctic Ocean (Condrón and Winsor, 2012; Keigwin et al., 2018) propose the spillway  
172 constituted the northwestern outlet of Lake Agassiz during the YD (Teller et al., 2005). Our  
173 chronology supports this and implies the CLAS provided a viable link for the northwestern  
174 drainage of Lake Agassiz during the YD, but not necessarily at its beginning (cf. Young et al.,  
175 2020; Norris et al., 2021). This chronology is also consistent with the results of data-constrained  
176 glaciological modeling (Tarasov and Peltier, 2005) that found even without opening of  
177 northwestern drainage, mass loss from the Keewatin ice dome provided a meltwater flux during  
178 the YD. In the glaciological model simulation most consistent with our ages, a freshwater flux into  
179 the Mackenzie River outlet occurs without, but would be amplified by, drainage from Lake  
180 Agassiz during the YD (Tarasov et al., 2012).

181

### 182 **Ice sheet response to climate forcing**

183 Coupling the new chronological dataset with the North American ice-sheet model simulations of  
184 Tarasov et al. (2012) demonstrates a retreat pattern primarily driven by surface ablation and  
185 increased ice streaming to the ablation zones (Figs. 2 and 3D). Rapid succession of changing ice-  
186 stream orientations (Ross et al., 2009; Ó Cofaigh et al., 2010; Norris et al., 2017; Margold et al.,  
187 2018) provides geomorphic evidence of a rapidly evolving deglacial system. Numerical  
188 simulations indicate the SWLIS margin experienced initial rapid retreat of 380–340 m a<sup>-1</sup>  
189 following CIS-LIS separation (after ca. 14.9 ka) until the YD (ca. 13.0 ka). Between ca. 13 and  
190 11 ka, numerical modeling shows low retreat rates ( $\leq 160$  m a<sup>-1</sup>) or ice-sheet stabilization in  
191 response to the YD cooling. Retreat rates are higher and more variable than contemporaneous  
192 rates observed in the southeastern LIS (e.g., Lowell et al., 2021). We suggest this reduction in

193 retreat rates is, in part, influenced by the LIS margin retreating to the Canadian Shield, which  
194 could support higher shear stresses at the ice-bed interface (Tarasov et al., 2012).

195  
196 The more-rapid deglaciation of the Interior Plains, and the older age for the CLM as the SWLIS's  
197 YD position, results in retreat rates up to 60% higher than suggested by  $^{14}\text{C}$ -constrained margin  
198 chronologies (Dalton et al., 2020). More-rapid deglaciation of the SWLIS margin translates to a  
199 sea-level contribution of  $\sim 3.7$  m in the 1700 yr of the B-A interval and a total contribution of  $\sim 5.7$   
200 m for the total retreat period. This response of the SWLIS parallels reconstruction of the CIS  
201 (Menounos et al., 2017), providing a growing body of evidence to support a rapid continental-wide  
202 response of the North American Ice Sheet Complex to B-A warming.

203

## 204 **CONCLUSIONS**

205 Chronological reconstruction using  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages in addition to preexisting  $^{10}\text{Be}$   
206 exposure, luminescence, and minimum-limiting  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates presents an internally consistent  
207 retreat record for the SWLIS. These data demonstrate rapid deglaciation of the SWLIS  
208 contemporaneous with B-A warming.  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages establish the YD margin position that  
209 facilitated meltwater drainage to the Arctic from glacial Lake Agassiz. Direct dating from the  
210 CIS-LIS convergence zone to this position demonstrates the LIS retreated  $>1200$  km from its  
211 coalescence with the CIS in  $\leq 2500$  years, reaching retreat rates of  $\sim 350$  m  $\text{a}^{-1}$ . Coupled with  
212 numerical modeling, these results suggest the SWLIS contributed  $\sim 3.7$  m of sea-level rise during  
213 the B-A period. The rapid ice-margin retreat was followed by stabilization of LIS at the CLM  
214 during the YD..

215

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### 381 **FIGURE CAPTIONS**

382 Figure 1.  $^{10}\text{Be}$  sample locations from Beaver River (BR), Clearwater Lower Athabasca Spillway  
383 (CLAS), Cree Lake Moraine (CLM), and the western and eastern upper Cree Lake Moraine  
384 (UCLM-W and UCLM-E) in the Interior Plains, Canada. Deglacial isochrones (presented in  
385 calibrated years B.P.) from ca. 19,000 to 11,400 ka are labeled in gray (after Dalton et al., 2020).  
386 Preexisting selected luminescence,  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure (using a  $\text{LSDn}$  production rate scaling and 0  
387 mm of erosion rate correction), and  $^{14}\text{C}$  are grouped (sites A–Z, AA; sites within 40 km of each  
388 other are grouped). Ages included in Bayesian modeling are in white. Outliers are removed  
389 following the original authors or as explained in Table S3 in the Supplemental Material (see  
390 footnote 1), and average dates are indicated along with number of samples ( $n$ ). Individual and site  
391 means (in bold) expressed using an error-weighted mean are displayed for newly acquired  $^{10}\text{Be}$   
392 ages. CIS—Cordilleran Ice Sheet; LIS—Laurentide Ice Sheet; OSL—optically stimulated  
393 luminescence; IRSL—infrared stimulated luminescence.

394

395 Figure 2. Modeled ice margin retreat for the southwestern Laurentide Ice Sheet extent between 15  
396 and 10 ka. Locations of  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages are in gray. BR—Beaver River; CLAS—Clearwater

397 Lower Athabasca Spillway; CLM—Cree Lake Moraine; UCLM-W, UCLM-E—western and  
398 eastern upper Cree Lake Moraine); FET—Foothills Erratics Train; CIS—Cordilleran Ice Sheet;  
399 LIS—Laurentide Ice Sheet.

400

401 Figure 3. Compiled chronologies, retreat rates, and sea-level equivalent relating to the  
402 southwestern Laurentide Ice Sheet (SWLIS). MWP-1a—Meltwater Pulse-1a; B-A—Bølling-  
403 Allerød; YD—Younger Dryas; OSL—optically stimulated luminescence; IRSL—infrared  
404 stimulated luminescence; FET—Foothills Erratics Train. (A)  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure, luminescence, and  
405  $^{14}\text{C}$  chronologies listed vertically from bottom to top following direction of ice retreat. See Figure  
406 1 for site locations.  $^{10}\text{Be}$  dates are reported with  $1\sigma$  uncertainty combined with production rate  
407 uncertainty, luminescence dates at  $1\sigma$  uncertainty using a LSDn production rate scaling and 0 mm  
408 of erosion rate correction, and  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates at  $2\sigma$  uncertainty (see Table S3 [see footnote 1] for sum-  
409 mary of dates). IFC—Ice Free Corridor. (B) Modeled age ranges at  $2\sigma$  (bracketed age) and  
410 probability density functions of initial separation of Cordilleran Ice Sheet (CIS) and Laurentide  
411 Ice Sheet (LIS) and formation of Cree Lake Moraine. (C) Light gray line shows mean rate of  
412 deglaciation from model simulations using Tarasov et al. (2012); dashed dark gray line is from  
413 Dalton et al. (2020). (D) SWLIS cumulative sea-level equivalent (cum. SLE) between 18 and 11  
414 ka from model simulations using Tarasov et al. (2012). (E) Global mean sea level relative to  
415 modern mean sea level (Lambeck et al., 2014). (F)  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  record from North Greenland Ice Core  
416 Project (NGRIP) (Rasmussen et al., 2006).

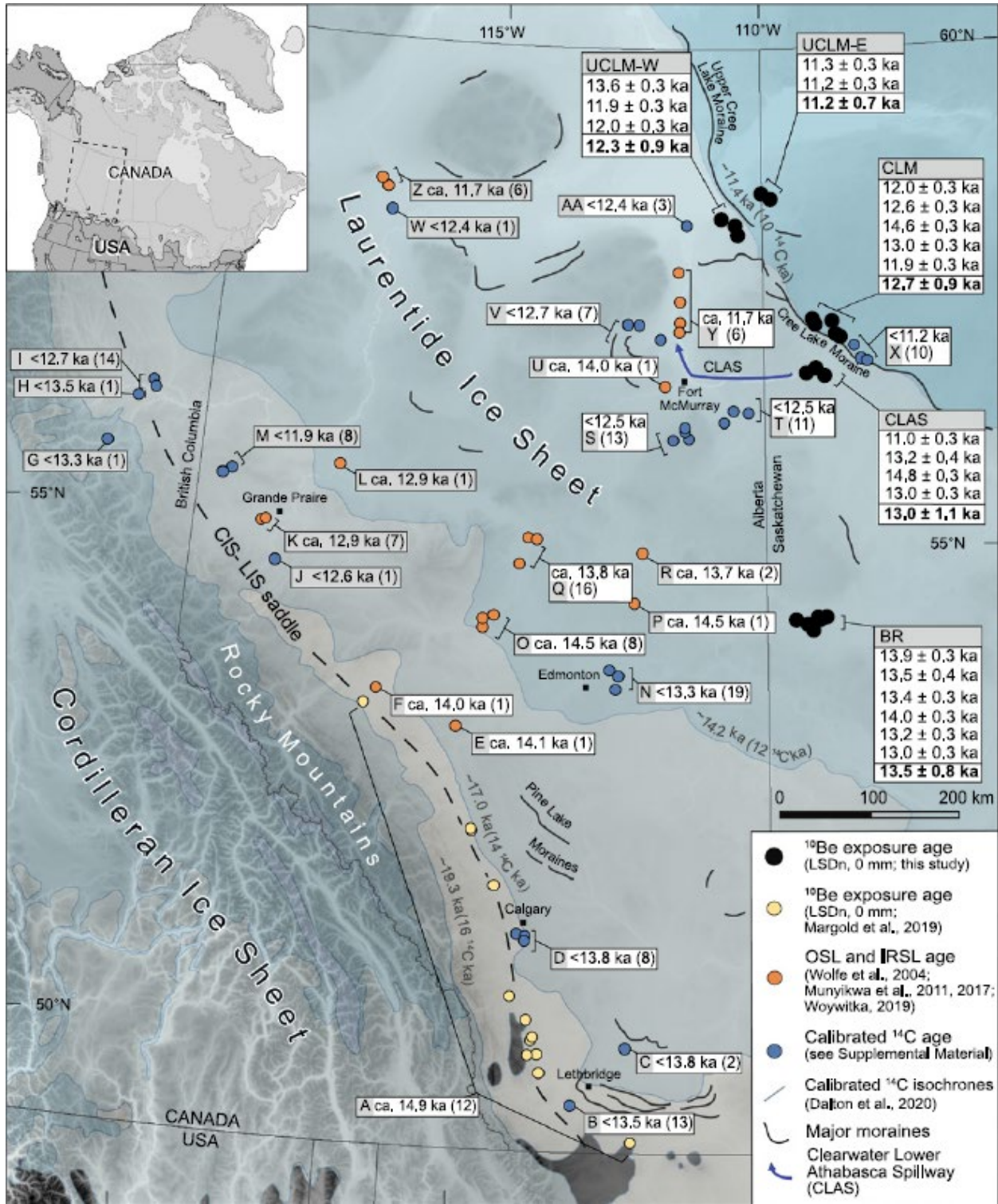
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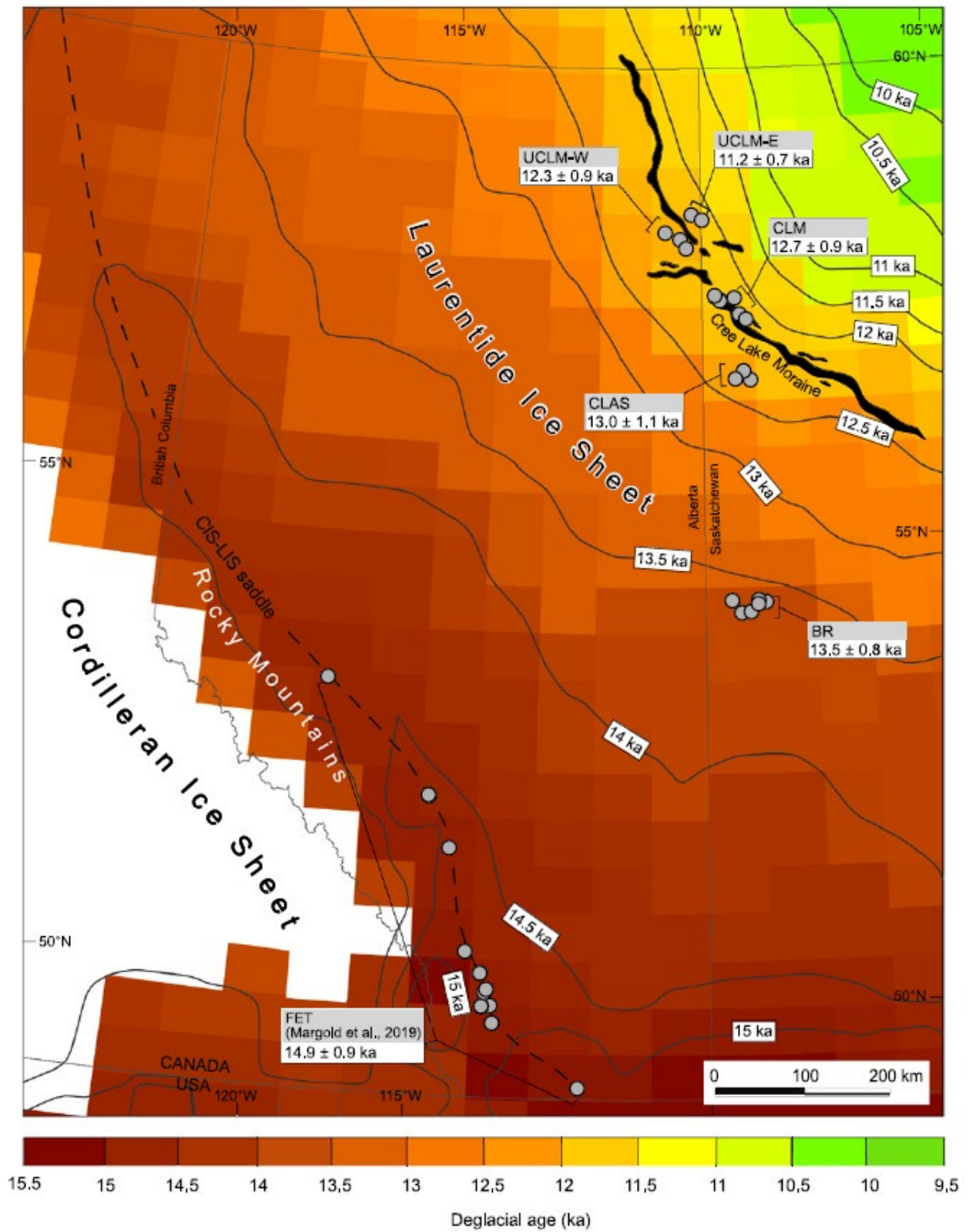
421 **Figure 1:**

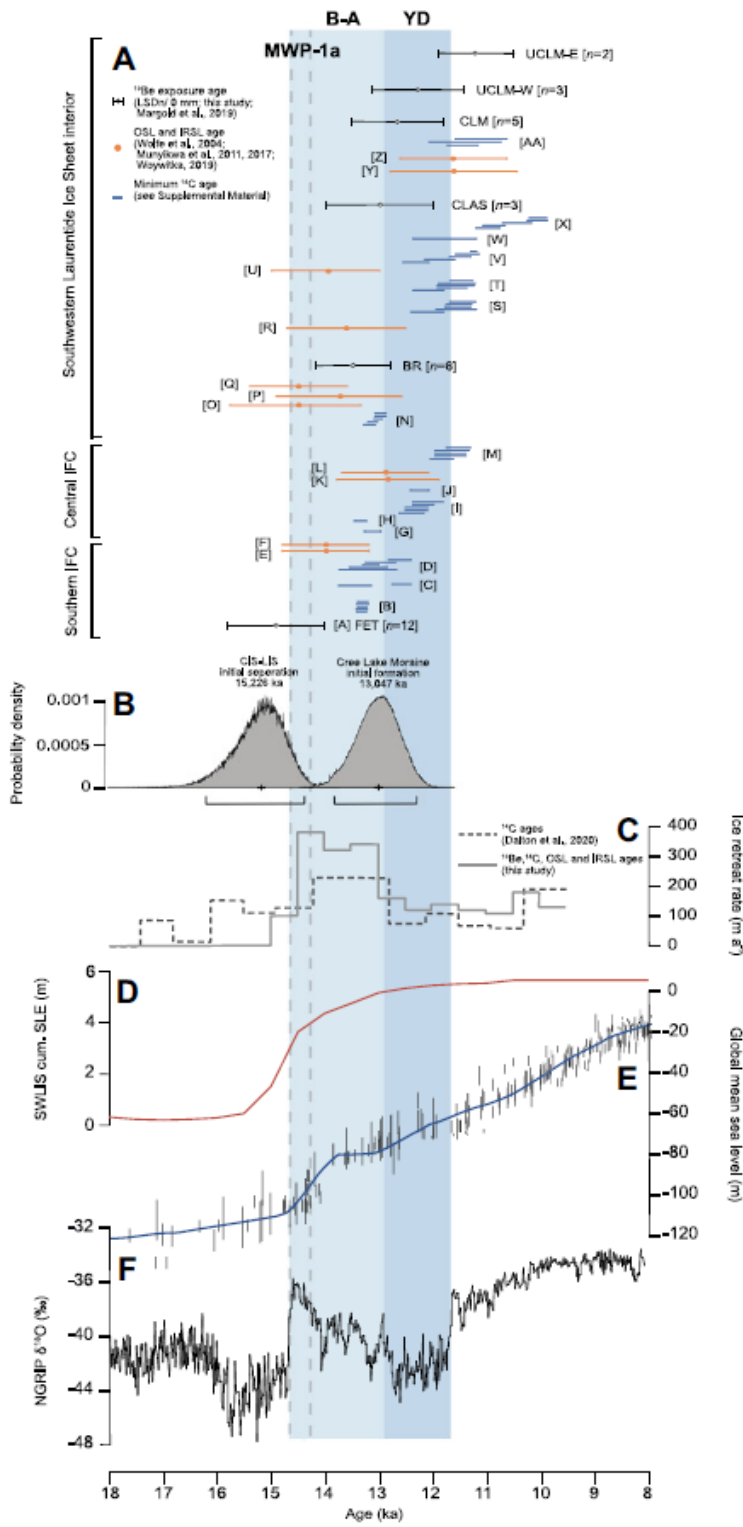


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425 Figure 2:





## **Rapid retreat of the southwestern Laurentide Ice Sheet during the Bølling-Allerød interval**

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### **Methods**

#### **Cosmogenic nuclide exposure dating**

##### *Laboratory methods*

26 boulder samples were collected for cosmogenic exposure dating using  $^{10}\text{Be}$  at five site locations. These included: four from the Pine Lake Moraine (PLM), six from gravel bars within the Beaver River Spillway (BR), five from erosional residuals at the head of the Clearwater Athabasca Spillway (CLAS), five from the Cree Lake Moraine (CLM) and six from the western and eastern parts of the upper-Cree Lake Moraine (UCLM-W and UCLM-E). Samples reflect erosion residuals and gravel bars were formed by catastrophic outburst floods that drained, contemporaneous with ice retreat, from ice dammed lakes (see Norris et al., 2019, 2021).

Samples were collected for exposure dating with a diamond blade cutoff saw or hammer and chisel. The sampled erratics consist of Precambrian rocks from the Athabasca Group sandstone and granites from the Canadian Shield. All samples were prepared as BeO targets at CRISDal Lab, Dalhousie University. To facilitate isolation of sufficient quartz, the following laboratory techniques were employed.

The samples were cleaned, crushed, and ground, and the 250-355  $\mu\text{m}$  fraction was rinsed, leached in aqua regia (2 hours), and etched in HF, before mineral separation using combinations of froth floatation, Frantz magnetic separation, air abrasion, heavy liquids, and controlled digestions of non-quartz phases using hydrofluoric or hexafluorosilicic acids. When the quartz concentrate was sufficiently pure (as determined optically and with  $<100$  ppm Al and Ti as determined on a 1 g aliquot with the lab's ICP-OES), approximately 35 wt% of the dried quartz concentrate was removed over three digestion-rinse cycles using an ultrasonic bath with dilute HF as per Kohl and Nishiizumi (1992). The samples were spiked with approximately 240  $\mu\text{g}$  of

the lab's BeCl<sub>2</sub> carrier ('Be-Carrier-31-28Sept2012'; prepared from a deeply mined Ural Mountain phenacite with <sup>10</sup>Be/<sup>9</sup>Be below 1 x 10<sup>-16</sup>), and were digested in a HF-HNO<sub>3</sub> mixture, evaporated twice in perchloric acid, and treated with anion and cation column chemistry to isolate the Be<sup>2+</sup>. After acidifying with perchloric and nitric acid to remove residual B, Be(OH)<sub>2</sub> was precipitated using ultrapure ammonia gas, transferred to a cleaned boron-free quartz vial and carefully calcined in a Bunsen burner flame to a white oxide for over three minutes. In an antistatic glovebox the BeO was powdered, mixed 2:3 by volume with high purity niobium powder (325 mesh), and packed into stainless steel cathodes for <sup>10</sup>Be/<sup>9</sup>Be measurement at the Center for Accelerator Mass Spectrometry, Lawrence Livermore National Lab (CAMS-LLNL). These measurements were made against the 07KNSTD3110 standard with a known <sup>10</sup>Be/<sup>9</sup>Be of 2850x10<sup>-15</sup> (Nishiizumi et al. 2007). Process blanks were also analysed and used (average 1 blank per 8 samples) to subtract <sup>10</sup>Be introduced during target preparation and analysis. For all samples, this correction was less than 1% of the adjusted <sup>10</sup>Be values.

### ***Age calculation***

Exposure ages were calculated using the 'age calculator formerly known as CRONUS-Earth Online Exposure Age Calculator' (Balco et al., 2008; v3.0; constraints 3.0.3, at [https://hess.ess.washington.edu/math/v3/v3\\_age\\_in.html](https://hess.ess.washington.edu/math/v3/v3_age_in.html)) using the default calibration set of Borchers et al. (2016) and the time dependent 'LSDn' production scaling scheme of Lifton et al. (2014). Utilizing other scaling schemes or production rates does not alter our conclusions as the ages are within the internal uncertainty of our reported ages (Table DR1). Various factors control the cosmic ray flux to the boulder and therefore causing the calculated exposure ages to underestimate or overestimate the timing of ice marginal retreat at a site. Factors that will cause exposure ages to underestimate the age of retreat besides inheritance of cosmogenic <sup>10</sup>Be from exposure prior to deposition:

#### **1. Snow and ice cover**

The history of precipitation throughout the study area is uncertain, let alone the height and density of snow or ice cover which can be quite variable depending on local conditions (solar attitude, wind speed and direction, local and micro-topography, and vegetation). In the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains, the study region currently has low winter

precipitation, and because the sampled boulder surfaces are mostly 0.5 m above ground level (mean=90 cm, median=82 cm, min=30 cm, max=160 cm above local ground level, only one boulder <50 cm), Table DR1) and situated on open plains or ridge tops, we would expect boulders to be windswept of snow or ice cover. Nevertheless, we tested the sensitivity of snow or ice shielding by using the climate normals data for a representative location inside the field area (Fort McMurray Airport, Alberta, 56.65°N, 111.22°W, 368 m asl) which has an elevation within 200 m of most samples (except for the Pine Lake moraine samples which are 926 m). The normals data indicate no month with an average snow depth >30 cm, although an extreme snow depth of 68 cm was recorded on Jan 2, 1968. Nevertheless, while most of the boulders are above that snow height, boulders would have still carried some snow cover. The mean snow depth is 25 cm in the four months with the greatest mean snow depth. Assuming that every boulder was covered by this amount for the four months every year since exposure began, and that the average snow density for the region is 0.224 gcm<sup>-3</sup> (Williams, 1956), the shielding effect would be to decrease average <sup>10</sup>Be production rate by 3.66%. However, given the boulder height and exposed position of the boulders which would cause snow cover to be thinner and shorter, this is likely a significant overestimate, and the actual effect of snow or firn cover is less than 2%, i.e. the unadjusted exposure age could be an under-estimated by up to 2%. Wind speed and tree cover can also affect this estimate.

## **2. Tree shielding**

The effect of tree shielding is difficult to estimate not only because it varies with time (and forest cover at each of the sample sites over the past 15 kyr is not certain), but it varies with forest density, forest type, fire frequency, and other factors (Plug et al., 2007). Plug et al. indicate that a temperate boreal forest may contribute as much as 2% shielding, and as most of the sample locations did not experience such a dense forest cover over the exposure duration (e.g. Ritchie, 1976) the average effect would likely be to underestimate the exposure age by < 1%.

## **3. Erosion**

As indicated, the sampling strategy optimizes the collection of boulders with no evidence of erosion. Therefore, there may not have been any erosion. However, allowing for an average erosion rate for granitoid lithologies of 1 mm/kyr (Zimmerman et al., 1994; Blackwelder,

1978), and knowing the impact of erosion on exposure age will increase with exposure time, we compared the exposure ages calculated assuming both 0 and 1 mm/kyr. If the exposure history was adjusted for a 1 mm/kyr erosion rate, the exposure age would increase by an average of 1.0% (0.4% for the 6 kyr exposure, and 1.3% for the 16 kyr exposure). We cannot preclude that the boulders exhumed through some sediment cover (e.g. by frost heave or sediment erosion). However, because the boulders are relatively large and high, the terrain gently sloped, and the ages at each site relatively consistent and show no correlation with boulder height, we suggest that if boulder exhumation did occur it would have been early in the exposure history and not a significant impact on the  $^{10}\text{Be}$  production history.

#### **4. Atmospheric pressure changes**

The mass of the atmosphere above a sample controls the energy spectrum and flux of secondary cosmic radiation to a boulder. Glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA) of the region, resulting from the depression of the land surface by a >1.5 km thick continental ice sheet (Lambeck et al., 2017), affects the elevation and thus controls atmospheric thickness and secondary cosmic radiation shielding (Jones et al., 2017). Unlike snow or tree cover which have a large uncertainty owing to the lack of precise paleoclimate or paleovegetation data for each of the field areas, there is no doubt that some isostatic adjustment has occurred. The question is the magnitude and the change in the rate of surface uplift over the exposure history. As the study areas are not at the LGM limits of the LIS, post-glacial GIA here would mean that the production rate for the modern position of each boulder is overestimated and the exposure age is therefore underestimated. Correcting for a thicker atmospheric shielding early in the exposure history would therefore cause the adjusted ages to be slightly older, as with erosion or shielding. We apply a GIA correction using numerical model simulations of Tarasov et al. (2012) to determine the average elevation of the sample site since deglaciation. We calculate the elevation for each sample site at 1000 yr intervals, from ice free conditions within the model to 0 yrs, using dRSL data (Tarasov et al., 2012). Based on 1000 yr interval elevations we calculate a average dRSL for each sample site for this deglacial period. We then correct the modern elevation of our sample sites by the average deglacial dRSL elevation before the exposure age was calculated.

A GIA correction using alternative numerical model simulations (e.g. Lambeck et al., 2017; see Table DR1) display consistent results. The GIA-corrected exposure ages (e.g. Table SD1,  $^{10}\text{Be}^b$ ) range from 8% to 3% older than the calculation without considering GIA ( $^{10}\text{Be}^a$ ) depending on the exposure duration. While this is a significant systematic error, it is very ice-sheet model dependent, and ignores the many complex changes in atmospheric pressure related to katabatic winds off both ice sheets, changes in the density distribution of the atmosphere with global temperature, and more complex changes related to the impact of ice sheet geometry on atmospheric dynamics (Staiger et al., 2007). Using a global climate-model coupled with an ice sheet model, Staiger et al. (2007) showed that the atmospheric effect at high altitudes (Himalaya, ignoring GIA) would cause the production rate to be  $6.5 \pm 1.5\%$  greater during the LGM than today, but after the LGM the effect on time-integrated production rate would decrease and result in a total effect of 3% higher post-LGM time-integrated production rate than at that site today. The total effect at lower elevations and after the LGM such as this study will be less, but the complications related to the presence of ice sheets are difficult to assess. A further consideration is that while dRSL increments can be interpreted from various global datasets, the effect of a lower sea level and the displacement of atmosphere by ice sheets (Osmaston, 2005) also complicates the modeling of the atmospheric dynamics above land. Therefore, while the GIA adjustments may have contributed percent-level increases in the production rate of a boulder over time, the uncertainty in correcting time-average atmospheric shielding requires future effort to refine.

### **Compilation of pre-existing chronology**

We compile a dataset of pre-existing luminescence,  $^{10}\text{Be}$  surface exposure ages and ‘high quality’ minimum radiocarbon chronologies. Individual dates are summarised in Table 3.

Pre-existing  $^{10}\text{Be}$  surface exposure ages are limited to a single study (Margold et al., 2019) in the region. 16 glacial erratic boulders that mark the zone of coalescence of the Laurentide and Cordilleran Ice Sheet have been recently re-dated (Margold et al., 2019) using  $^{10}\text{Be}$  surface exposure ages. Of the 16 boulders dated, 12 accurately constrain the age of decoupling of the two ice sheets and are used by the original authors to provide a weighted mean age, including

propagated uncertainty, of  $14,900 \pm 900$  cal yr BP. We present these dates at one standard deviation uncertainty consistent with our samples.

Optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) and infrared stimulated luminescence (IRSL), from eolian sands have been previously used to constrain deglaciation within the study region (Wolfe et al., 2004; Munyikwa et al., 2011, 2017). We collate dates and group them into sites within 30km and present the oldest reliable sites where several exist within a 40 km region. We remove outliers proposed by the original authors and present dates with one standard deviation uncertainty.

A large number of  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates (see DR3) have been used to constrain the deglaciation of the southwestern sector of the LIS. We focus on ‘high quality’ minimum limiting  $^{14}\text{C}$  chronologies and present the five oldest reliable dates from within a 40 km region. We exclude dates on bulk sediments, terrestrial shells or mixed assemblages. Where available Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS)  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates are prioritized over radiometric (conventional) dating methods. In cases of bone, ultrafiltered collagen samples, where available, are prioritized. We remove outliers proposed by the original authors or where later data complications make clear arguments for the exclusion of single unreproduced dates. Radiocarbon dates are recalibrated using the northern hemisphere IntCal20 calibration curve (Reimer et al., 2020) and presented at two standard deviation uncertainty.

### **Bayesian age modelling**

We integrate luminescence dates (OSL/ IRSL),  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages and  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates within a Bayesian age model using OxCal v.4.4 (Bronk Ramsey, 2009a). The model uses the known sequence of ice-retreat, across the western Interior Plains (southwest-northeast demarcated by recessional moraines), as a ‘prior model’ and follows the sampling transect of cosmogenic  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure dates from this study. The existing luminescence and five oldest  $^{14}\text{C}$ -dates from a single landform, or within a 40 km region, are treated at site level similar to the cosmogenic data.

Within the *Sequence* model we place dates associated with the Foothills Erratics Train and the Cree Lake Moraine in continuous *Phases*, with no defined (stratigraphic or temporal) internal

order. We took this approach as the Foothills Erratics Train was sampled following the CIS/LIS saddle (Margold et al., 2019), while dates from the Cree Lake Moraine closely overlap and represent a prolonged still-stand. These *Phases* were separated by *Boundaries* which allowed us to quantify ‘start’ and ‘end’ dates for the Cree Lake Moraine emplacement (Bronk Ramsey, 2009a). Because  $^{14}\text{C}$  ages do not directly date ice-retreat, but the age of organic carbon deposited an indeterminable amount of time after the ice has melted,  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates were integrated into the model using the *Before* function which treats the data as minimum (*terminus ante quem*) age controls only. This approach was necessary as large numbers of comparatively precise  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates could not be reconciled with luminescence and  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages which were typically older than the  $^{14}\text{C}$  measurements, and more closely date the timing of deglaciation.

Prior to model construction anomalous  $^{14}\text{C}$ -dates from bulk sediments, terrestrial shells or mixed assemblages were manually excluded (see above) from the database and were not included in the *Sequence* model. A ‘general’ *Outlier\_Model* was applied with a 5% chance of any date being an outlier. Statistical outliers that should be considered for rejection were identified using Agreement index values (<60%); however, dates were only removed if they reduced the overall Agreement Index of the model to below the recommended 60% threshold (Bronk Ramsey, 2009b). In practice, the manual filtering of anomalous data, treatment of  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates as minimum ages and the large uncertainties associated with luminescence and  $^{10}\text{Be}$  exposure ages meant that no dates needed to be removed from the Bayesian model.

### **Modelling of ice retreat and meltwater equivalent**

We reran the two best-fitting North American ice-sheet model simulations of Tarasov et al. (2012) to estimate the rate of ice volume loss and equivalent sea level contribution from the SWLIS based on our new chronology. The original simulations were derived from an approximate Bayesian calibration of a glaciological model against a large set of geological and geophysical constraints. The model included 39 ensemble parameters that were calibrated to address uncertainties in climate forcing, basal drag, ice calving, and the amount of nudging towards the input target ice margin chronologies from Dyke (2004) (interpolated between available time-slices). The total amount of nudging is a part of the misfit score for the calibration and thereby the calibration endeavored to minimize the amount of nudging required. The

chronological acceleration of the target chronology was progressively increased from 21ka (calendar) to a maximum acceleration of 2.0 kyr (shifting the original 18.3 ka isochrone to 16.3 ka) then progressively relaxed to line back up at 9.28 ka. A mean ice sheet retreat rate was calculated using multiple transects, taken at 100 km intervals, perpendicular to ice retreat direction across the SWLIS. In order to further assess the connection between SWLIS ice retreat rates and rapid Bølling-Allerød warming a fully coupled ice/climate modelling should be applied.

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Figure S1. Photographs of boulders sampled for  $^{10}\text{Be}$  surface exposure ages.



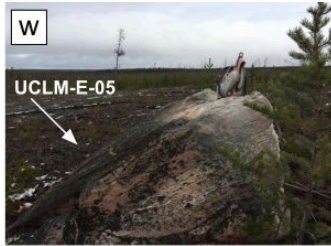
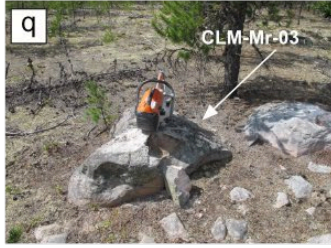


Figure S2. Probability density functions (i.e. ‘normal kernel density estimate’) for all  $^{10}\text{Be}$  surface exposure samples sites. Blue lines represent reported age and 1 SD uncertainty, black lines are summed probabilities. Vertical black line represents the mean and grey boxes 1 SD excluding outliers of each sample site. Average ages, in bold, with propagated uncertainty calculated using the default calibration set of Borchers et al. (2016) and the time dependent ‘LSDn’ production scaling scheme of Lifton et al. (2014), with no correction for snow shielding and a zero erosion rate.

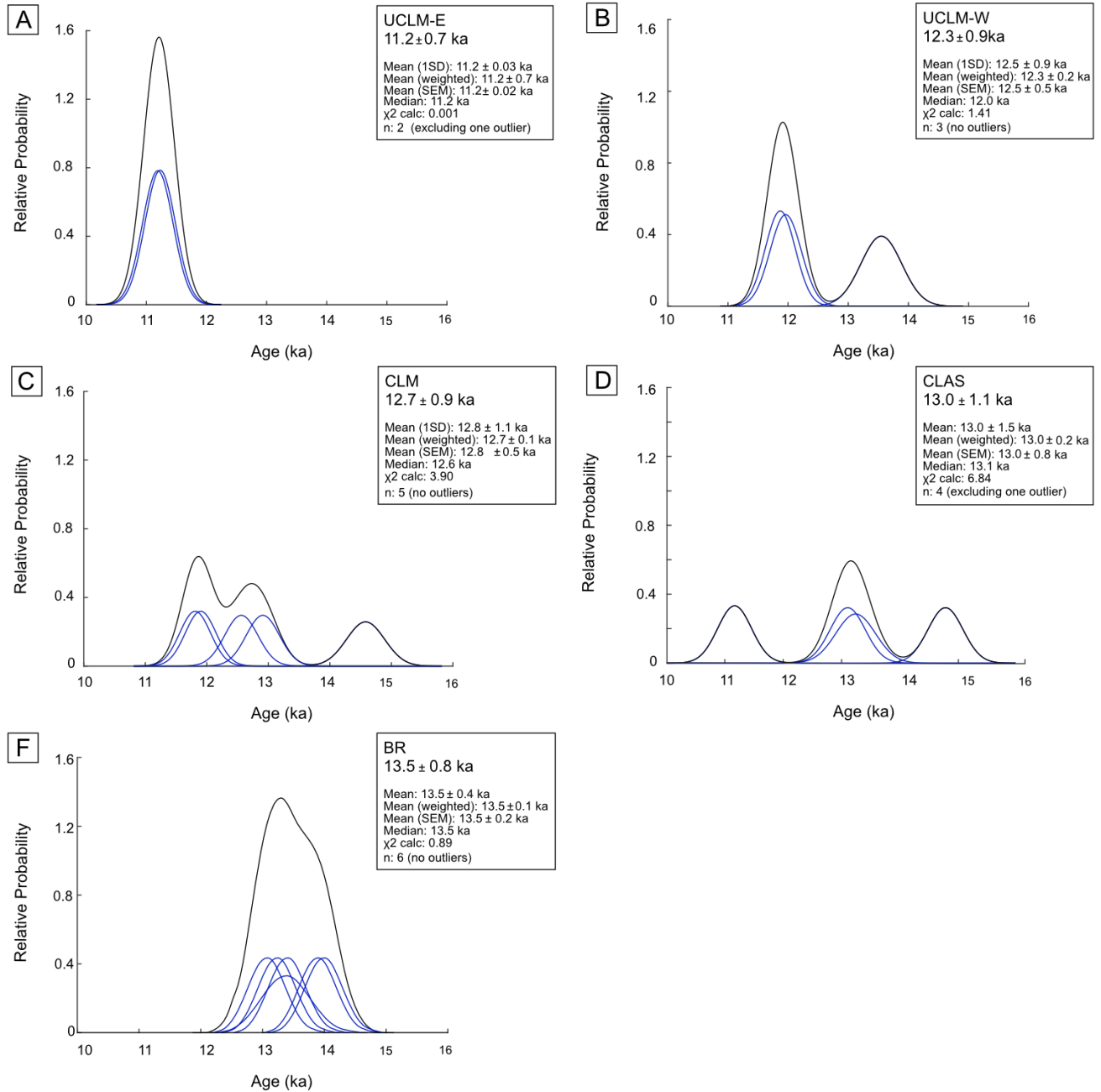


Figure S3. Bayesian age model output from OxCal v.4.4 (Bronk Ramsey, 2009a), using the IntCal20 calibration curve (Reimer et al., 2020) applied to the manually vetted radiocarbon, luminescence, and cosmogenic ages from the southwestern Laurentide Ice Sheet. The unmodelled (likelihood) probabilities are light grey, with modelled (posterior) probabilities in dark grey. Thick bar underlying the probability distributions is the 2-sigma confidence interval. Agreement indices (A:x) show probability of individual dates agreeing with the model.

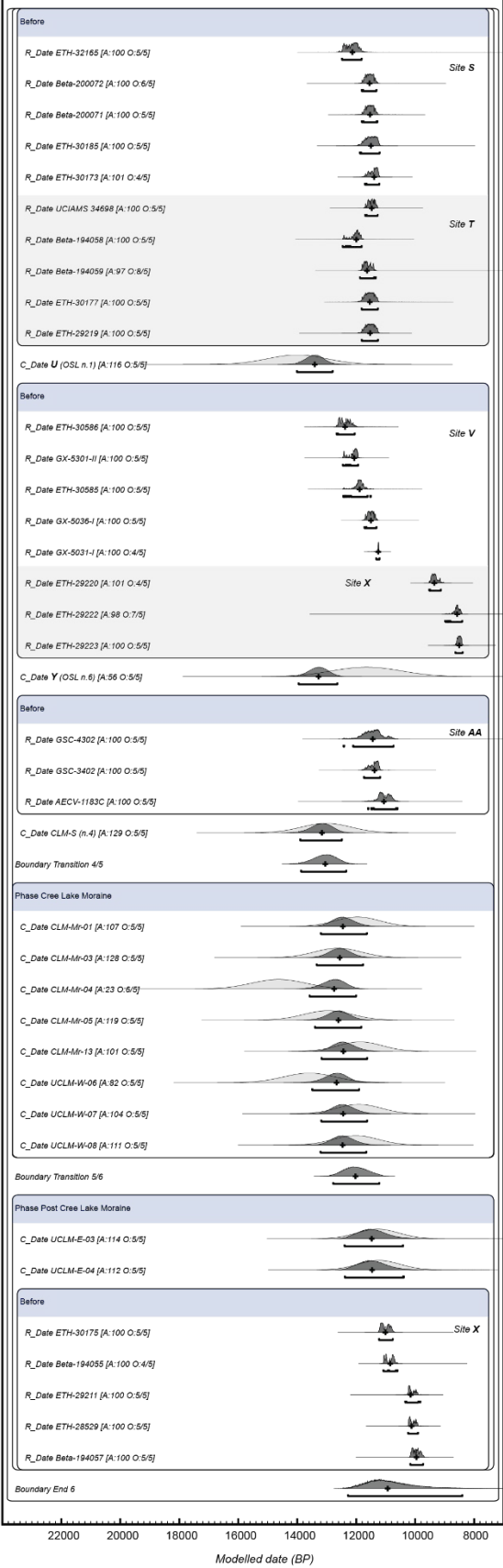
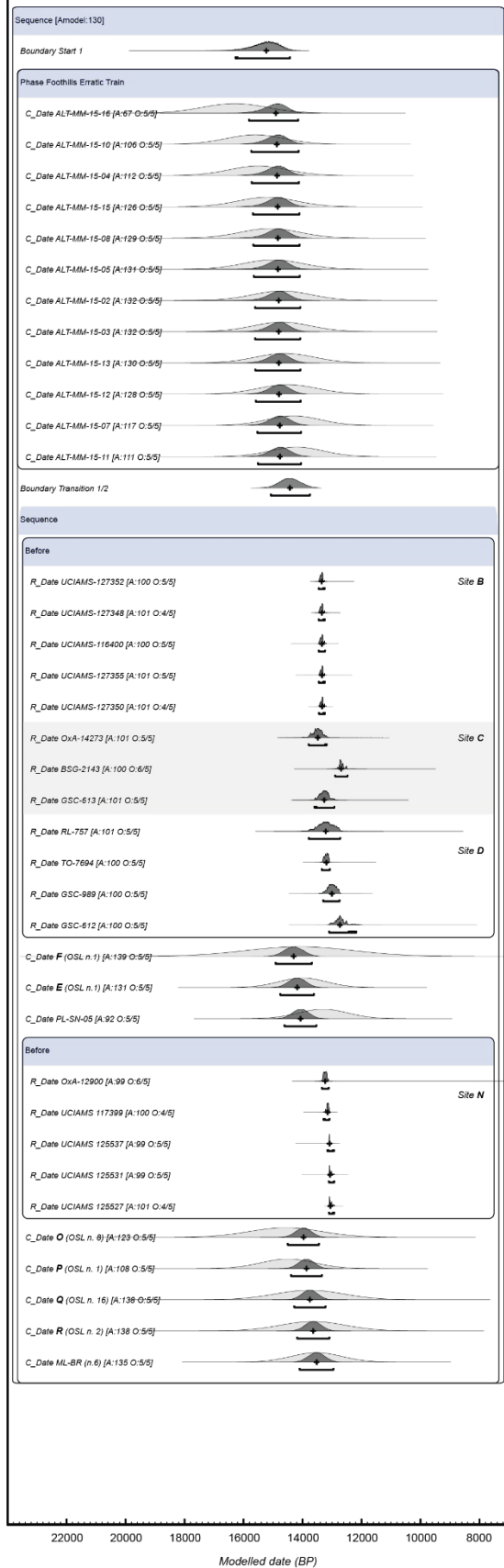


Table S1. Cosmogenic  $^{10}\text{Be}$  sample details and modelled surface exposure ages

Laboratory no.	Sample ID	Latitude (DD)	Longitude (DD)	Modern elevation (m a.s.l.)	Palaeo-elevation (m a.s.l.) <sup>a</sup>	Palaeo-elevation (m a.s.l.) <sup>b</sup>	Boulder height (m)	Sample thickness (cm)	Quartz Mass (g)	Be carrier mass (g)	$^{10}\text{Be}/^9\text{Be}$ ( $10^{-14}$ )	$^{10}\text{Be} \pm 1\sigma$ (atoms $\text{g}^{-1}$ $\text{SiO}_2$ )	$^{10}\text{Be}$ age <sup>c</sup> (ka)	$^{10}\text{Be}$ age <sup>d</sup> (ka)	$^{10}\text{Be}$ age <sup>e</sup> (ka)
JG3829	PL-SN-01*	52.1622	-113.5128	927	890	898	0.7	2	20.2010	0.2504	6.56	$56602 \pm 1607$	$5.8 \pm 0.2$	$6.0 \pm 0.2$	$6.0 \pm 0.2$
JG3830	PL-SN-02*	52.1622	-113.5127	927	890	898	0.8	2	20.0614	0.2103	7.51	$54769 \pm 1976$	$5.7 \pm 0.2$	$5.8 \pm 0.2$	$5.9 \pm 0.2$
JG3831	PL-SN-03*	52.1621	-113.5127	926	889	897	1.6	2	25.0204	0.8262	13.16	$80616 \pm 1695$	$8.3 \pm 0.2$	$8.5 \pm 0.2$	$8.4 \pm 0.2$
JG3832	PL-SN-05*	52.1607	-113.5440	976	939	951	0.8	2	25.1980	0.8199	21.60	$130685 \pm 2587$	$12.9 \pm 0.3$	$13.3 \pm 0.3$	$13.3 \pm 0.3$
JG3826	ML-BR-01	54.2769	-109.0520	496	464	470	0.7	3	20.0280	0.208	12.48	$90900 \pm 2205$	$13.5 \pm 0.3$	$13.9 \pm 0.3$	$13.9 \pm 0.3$
JG3827	ML-BR-02	54.2770	-109.0521	492	460	467	0.8	2.5	20.0498	0.2109	11.93	$88020 \pm 2402$	$13.1 \pm 0.4$	$13.5 \pm 0.4$	$13.5 \pm 0.4$
JG3612	ML-BR-03	54.2769	-109.0535	492	460	467	1	3	30.0720	0.2087	17.78	$87398 \pm 1848$	$13.1 \pm 0.3$	$13.5 \pm 0.3$	$13.4 \pm 0.3$
JG3613	ML-BR-04	54.2768	-109.0540	501	469	476	1.3	3	27.6640	0.1994	18.03	$92033 \pm 1943$	$13.6 \pm 0.3$	$14.1 \pm 0.3$	$14.0 \pm 0.3$
JG3614	ML-BR-06	54.3168	-109.5247	490	458	469	1	3	20.2070	0.212	12.04	$85866 \pm 1965$	$12.9 \pm 0.3$	$13.2 \pm 0.3$	$13.2 \pm 0.3$
JG3828	ML-BR-07	54.3179	-109.5248	526	494	502	1.6	3	20.0501	0.211	11.85	$87450 \pm 2179$	$12.7 \pm 0.3$	$13.0 \pm 0.3$	$13.0 \pm 0.3$
JG3602	CLM-S-02	56.8340	-109.0767	455	401	408	0.8	2.5	15.2180	0.206	11.62	$106578 \pm 2095$	$16.3 \pm 0.3$	$17.1 \pm 0.3$	$16.9 \pm 0.3$
JG3603	CLM-S-03	56.8344	-109.0761	457	403	413	0.7	3.5	20.2939	0.2065	9.71	$69762 \pm 1890$	$10.7 \pm 0.3$	$11.2 \pm 0.3$	$11.1 \pm 0.3$
JG3604	CLM-S-04	56.9179	-108.9774	432	376	382	1	3	20.2990	0.2064	11.24	$80821 \pm 2165$	$12.6 \pm 0.3$	$13.3 \pm 0.4$	$13.2 \pm 0.4$
JG3605	CLM-S-05*	56.9178	-108.9780	425	369	373	0.5	2	27.6148	0.2134	16.56	$90659 \pm 1910$	$14.2 \pm 0.3$	$15.0 \pm 0.3$	$14.8 \pm 0.3$
JG3606	CLM-S-06	56.9179	-108.9780	425	369	373	0.5	2.5	20.1880	0.2070	10.99	$79711 \pm 1897$	$12.5 \pm 0.3$	$13.2 \pm 0.3$	$13.0 \pm 0.3$
JG3607	CLM-Mr-01	57.5234	-109.3115	566	497	510	1.2	1.5	30.0719	0.2141	16.63	$83839 \pm 1766$	$11.4 \pm 0.3$	$12.1 \pm 0.3$	$12.0 \pm 0.3$
JG3608	CLM-Mr-03	57.5233	-109.3106	569	500	515	0.7	1.5	27.5660	0.2022	17.04	$88465 \pm 1866$	$12.0 \pm 0.3$	$12.8 \pm 0.3$	$12.6 \pm 0.3$
JG3609	CLM-Mr-04	57.3490	-109.2239	554	493	507	0.5	2	20.2944	0.2059	14.08	$101095 \pm 2170$	$14.0 \pm 0.3$	$14.8 \pm 0.3$	$14.6 \pm 0.3$
JG3610	CLM-Mr-05	57.3500	-109.2241	562	501	515	0.5	1.5	30.0501	0.2067	18.61	$90668 \pm 1868$	$12.4 \pm 0.3$	$13.1 \pm 0.3$	$13.0 \pm 0.3$
JG3611	CLM-Mr-13	57.5237	-109.3104	573	504	514	0.3	2	30.1446	0.2076	17.11	$83457 \pm 1758$	$11.3 \pm 0.2$	$12.1 \pm 0.3$	$11.9 \pm 0.3$
JG3615	UCLM-E-03	58.4685	-110.1993	285	207	217	1.6	4	27.5495	0.1992	11.59	$59225 \pm 1336$	$10.7 \pm 0.2$	$11.6 \pm 0.3$	$11.3 \pm 0.3$
JG3616	UCLM-E-04	58.4688	-110.2001	281	203	216	1	4	30.0464	0.2061	12.12	$58797 \pm 1336$	$10.7 \pm 0.2$	$11.6 \pm 0.3$	$11.2 \pm 0.3$
JG3617	UCLM-E-05*	58.4678	-110.1981	283	205	218	1.3	4	27.5301	0.2004	16.15	$83232 \pm 1761$	$15.1 \pm 0.3$	$16.3 \pm 0.3$	$16.0 \pm 0.3$

<b>JG3618</b>	UCLM-W-06	58.1798	-110.4310	315	250	263	0.6	4	30.0209	0.2088	14.99	73800 ± 1839	13.0 ± 0.3	13.9 ± 0.3	13.6 ± 0.3
<b>JG3619</b>	UCLM-W-07	58.1807	-110.4298	344	279	288	1	4	27.5892	0.2035	12.82	66875 ± 1412	11.4 ± 0.2	12.2 ± 0.3	11.9 ± 0.3
<b>JG3620</b>	UCLM-W-08	58.1807	-110.4296	335	270	279	1.3	4	27.5556	0.2132	12.22	66859 ± 1432	11.5 ± 0.2	12.3 ± 0.3	12.0 ± 0.3

Notes: Rock density for all samples is 2.6 g cm<sup>-3</sup>; no shielding correction applied to samples; exposure ages were calculated using the online calculator formerly known as CRONUS (Balco et al., 2008; v3.0; constants 3.0.3)

\*Statistical outliers excluded from site mean ages

<sup>a</sup> Palaeo-elevation derived using a GIA correction using numerical model simulations of Tarasov et al. (2012)

<sup>b</sup> Palaeo-elevation derived using a GIA correction using numerical model simulations of Lambeck et al. (2017)

<sup>c</sup> Ages (reported with 1σ internal error), calculated using the CRONUS default production rate (Borchers et al., 2016), Lm scaling (Lal, 1991/Stone, 2000) and modern-day elevations

<sup>d</sup> Ages (reported with 1σ internal error), calculated using the CRONUS default production rate (Borchers et al., 2016), Lm scaling (Lal, 1991/Stone, 2000) and glacioisostatic palaeo-elevations.

<sup>e</sup> Ages (reported with 1σ internal error), calculated using the CRONUS default production rate (Borchers et al., 2016), LSDn scaling (Lifton et al., 2014) and glacioisostatic palaeo-elevations.

Table S2. Summary statistics for  $^{10}\text{Be}$  surface-exposure age distributions

Data Set	$N$	$N_{\text{removed}}$	Mean age (ka)	$\pm 1\sigma$ (ka)	Propagated uncertainty (ka)	Error-weighted mean (ka)	Standard error of the weighted mean (ka)	Weighted standard deviation (ka)	Median age (ka)	$\chi^2$ calculated	$\chi^2$ expected (95%)	$\chi^2$ test (Pass/Fail)
<b>UCLM-E (outliers)</b>	3	-	12.8	2.7	1.6	12.3	0.2	1.6	11.3	11.64	5.99	Fail
<b>UCLM-E (no outliers)</b>	2	1	11.2	0.03	0.7	11.2	0.2	0.02	11.2	0.001	3.84	Pass
<b>UCLM-W (no outliers)</b>	3	-	12.5	0.9	0.9	12.3	0.2	0.5	12.0	1.41	5.99	Pass
<b>CLM (no outliers)</b>	5	-	12.8	1.1	0.9	12.7	0.1	0.5	12.6	3.90	9.49	Pass
<b>CLAS (outliers)</b>	5	-	13.8	2.2	1.3	13.7	0.1	1.0	13.2	13.90	9.49	Fail
<b>CLAS (no outliers)</b>	4	1	13.0	1.5	1.1	13.0	0.2	0.8	13.1	6.84	7.82	Pass
<b>BR (no outliers)</b>	6	-	13.5	0.4	0.8	13.5	0.1	0.2	13.5	0.89	11.07	Pass