Introducing the Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society

Tim Rast
NLAS President

MISSION STATEMENT: *To promote an understanding of archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador and protect archaeological resources by fostering research, stewardship, education, and the exchange of ideas and information between professionals and the public.*

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the richest and most complex archaeological records of any place in Canada. For 10,000 years, generations of people have been coming from every direction to make a living, raise their families, seek their fortunes, meet one another, sometimes disappear, and sometimes thrive. Today we have a healthy population of archaeologists and archaeology projects in the Province, a Provincial Archaeology Office, a strong Department of Archaeology at Memorial University of Newfoundland, many independent and contractual researchers, and numerous community projects and avocational archaeologists spread across Newfoundland and Labrador, who are all working to uncover traces of the preceding cultures. Despite this, we have been without a Provincial archaeological society since the 1980s when the Association of Amateur Archaeologists of Newfoundland and Labrador was formed but eventually disbanded (Mathiesen 1984, Allston 1986. In the spring of 2013, we were one of only three Provinces in Canada that did not have an archaeological society or association that linked students, professional archaeologists, and the public.

On April 6th, 2013, a small group of volunteers organized an informal brainstorming session at Bitters Pub & Restaurant that was attended by sixteen people representing a wide cross-section of the local archaeological community, ranging from MUN faculty and students, provincial government archaeologists, the private sector, consultants, collections managers, as well as policy planners. There were people at the table with experience across the Island and Labrador, as well as those with national and international backgrounds. We unanimously decided at that time to pursue the creation of a Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society that would be open to everyone. We continued to meet throughout the spring, on a monthly basis, and after a short hiatus for the summer field season we resumed meetings in August.

The group composition changed and grew following the first meeting and over the course of the year more than two dozen people contributed their time, energy, and guidance to the creation and growth of the society. By the end of May, we incorporated the Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society, Inc., with founding directors: Catherine Jalbert, Lori White, Corey Hutchings, Stewart Wilson, and Tim Rast.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society held its inaugural Annual General Meeting at Queen's College, MUN, on November 4th, 2013. At that time, the NLAS held its first public talk, "The MUN Archaeology Field School at the WWI site of Admiralty Station, Mount Pearl" by Dr. James Lyttleton, which was also archived on the NLAS YouTube channel. During the AGM members voted to accept a constitution and the Society's first Executive Committee and Board of Directors were announced:

President: Tim Rast
Vice-President: Catherine Jalbert
Treasurer: Lori White
Secretary: Sarah Ingram
Director: John Erwin
Director: Scott Neilsen
Director: Corey Hutchings
Director: Chris Wolff

Much of the work that NLAS volunteers have undertaken so far has been the groundwork necessary

to create a new organization. We have opened a bank account, created a logo, drawn up membership forms, registered a Domain name, and formed working committees. Other jobs have been meatier, like writing a Mission Statement, drafting a Code of Ethics, and writing a Constitution and Bylaws.

Before heading into the field last summer we created a Facebook page and Twitter account which were our first forays into the public sphere. The Facebook page has been tremendously successful, with over 330 followers already, giving us the second largest Facebook presence of any provincial society in Canada, next to the decades strong Ontario Archaeological Society. We've created a YouTube channel to archive and broadcast our talks and events to members, and through the generous support of the Canadian Archaeological Association, we have a host for our website and e-mail client. Our e-mail is set up now and we are currently working on designing the website.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society's first face-to-face public event came at the invitation of The Rooms, who invited us, along with other archaeological organizations within the Province, to participate in International Archaeology Day, an initiative of the Archaeological Institute of America, on October 19th, 2013. This gave us an opportunity to meet with people, begin our membership drive and start fulfilling our mandate. Based on the success of our involvement with The Rooms at International Archaeology Day, we were invited back to schedule two speaking engagements at The Rooms in April 2014.

Our plans for 2014 include drafting a business plan, building our website, applying for charitable status, and seeking provincial funding. We'll continue our membership drive and plan to create exciting and diverse events and content for members through the year. We are really just getting started. If you would like to become a member, learn more about the NLAS, or volunteer on a committee here's how you can get in touch with us:

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References

Allston, Mark
1986 The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Amateur Archaeologists Report of the Year's Activities, 1985. In Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador 1985, Annual Report #6. Edited by Callum Thomson and Jane Sproull Thomson. Newfoundland Museum. St. John's.

Mathieson, Julia
1984 The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Amateur Archaeologists Report of the Year's Activities. In Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador 1983, Annual Report #5, Edited by Callum Thomson and Jane Sproull Thomson. Historic Resources Division, Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth. St. John's.

Figure 1. The Newfoundland And Labrador Archaeological Society's First Public Event Was Held At The Rooms In Celebration Of International Archaeology Day On October 19, 2013. (Photo Credit: Lori White)

Figure 2. The Newfoundland And Labrador Archaeological Society Logo Displays A Green English Wine Bottle Positioned Stratigraphically Above An Earthy, Ochre-Stained Maritime Archaic Harpoon Head, With The NLAS Acronym Cut From The Artifacts Like The Missing Pieces Of A Puzzle.

Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society

CODE OF ETHICS

Members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society (NLAS) agree to promote the advancement of archaeology by supporting the organization in its aims to stimulate the interest of the general public in archaeology and to discuss and disseminate archaeological information and ideas according to the NLAS's ethical principles:

Regarding Stewardship and Accountability:

(i) Members acknowledge an archaeological research permit is required by any person carrying out explorations or making excavations on any land (terrestrial or underwater) for the purpose of seeking archaeological objects. Members have a duty to encourage and support the permitted identification, recording, protection, and effective management of archaeological materials, collections, and established or suspected archaeological sites in Newfoundland and Labrador. Members shall respect the rights of landowners, tenants, lessees, and archaeological permit holders.

Regarding the Value of Archaeological Objects:

(ii) Members shall respect the archaeological objects of all societies and acknowledge the scientific, educational, and cultural significance that such irreplaceable resources hold for all people. Members will not support archaeological objects being bought, sold, traded, or bartered as commercial goods, as it is unethical to establish a commercial value on any archaeological site or object that may lead to its destruction, dispersal, or exploitation.

Regarding the Law:

(iii) Members will act in accordance with the applicable Provincial, Federal, and Aboriginal heritage legislation*****, and encourage non-members to do the same. It is illegal to disturb, collect, or remove archaeological objects through survey or excavation without obtaining an archaeology permit. In the spirit of these legislations, a Member agrees to make any archaeological finds (terrestrial and underwater) in his or her possession available for analysis and study by permit-eligible archaeologists.

*****Links to legislation regarding archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador:

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Government of Canada

Nunatsiavut Government