



Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society

July 19, 2017

For Immediate Release

Re: Closure of Important Parks Canada Archaeological Facility

The Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society is saddened to learn of Parks Canada's continuing plans to close their Archaeology Lab in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. This purpose-built facility was just opened in 2009, specifically designed to preserve, house, and protect the archaeological artifacts from Atlantic Canada's archaeological sites under federal jurisdiction.

According to a report from the Nova Scotia Archaeological Society (NSAS), Parks Canada's continued plans are to shutter this world-class laboratory, and ship the archaeological artifacts stored there to Gatineau, Quebec, for long-term storage.

According to data released by the NSAS, the archaeological collection numbers approximately "1.45 million archaeological objects representing thousands of years of Atlantic Canadian heritage". These include artifacts from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, including sites at **Signal Hill National Historic Site, Castle Hill National Historic Site, L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, Terra Nova National Park, Gros Morne National Park,** and the **Torngat Mountains National Park**. An archaeological collection represents more than just objects—also stored at this facility are the accompanying catalogues, site records, maps and photographs.



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This facility is used by a wide swath of heritage professionals and students. Federal and provincial heritage specialists, private heritage industry consultants, university researchers, conservators, community groups, and students of all ages have visited and made use of the centre. Indeed, the Archaeology Laboratory is more than just a state-of-the-art artifact storage facility for archaeological artifacts—its value also lies in the modern equipment housed in its laboratories, in the information held in its reference collections, site records, and book collections, and in the collective knowledge of its staff.

With the loss of this facility, we lose not just the easy access to the resources of a world-class laboratory, or the objects in archaeological collections. Just as importantly, we lose the ability to continue to build capacity in the heritage industry in Atlantic Canada.

Together with the Nova Scotia Archaeological Society, we call on the federal government to reverse its decision to close the Parks Canada Archaeological Laboratory.

Sincerely,

The Newfoundland and Labrador Archaeological Society

Email: nlas@nlarchsociety.ca

Website: <https://nlarchsociety.ca/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NLArchSociety/>

Attached: "Rescue Archaeology", Nova Scotia Archaeology Society



Rescue Archaeology

27 May 2017

Parks Canada Agency is planning to permanently close its Archaeology Laboratory in Woodside (Dartmouth), Nova Scotia, and move the facility's archaeology collection, historical objects collection, and staff to Gatineau, Québec. This state-of-the-art facility was purpose-built in 2009 and is the only laboratory of its kind in Atlantic Canada.

The archaeology collection contains approximately 1.45 million archaeological objects representing thousands of years of Atlantic Canadian heritage. The stories of our region's diverse Indigenous and immigrant cultures are told through artifacts from **Port Royal, Beaubassin, Fort Anne, the Melanson Settlement, the Halifax Citadel, Sable Island, Signal Hill, Port-la-Joye/Fort Amherst, Fort Beauséjour, and Kejimkujik**, among others. The lab is also home to tens of thousands of artifacts from national historic sites and national parks that are also UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These include **L'Anse aux Meadows, Gros Morne, and Grand-Pré**. Together with thousands of pages of associated site records, photographs, maps, and drawings, the archaeology collection is a critical resource for researchers and educators in our region. Community members, school children, university students, conservators, heritage industry consultants, provincial museums staff, graduate-level researchers, and university faculty have all used the lab and its archaeology collection to better understand, manage, and communicate the richness of our region's archaeological heritage.

A central concern is that the archaeology collection is a *living collection* to which researchers and heritage resource professionals in Atlantic Canada regularly return for comparison and study. Through it, and particularly through the facility's unique historical ceramics type collection and material culture library, they are able to identify and date newly discovered evidence in a way that would otherwise be far more costly, often prohibitively so. The laboratory's site records are likewise a valuable resource for



'archival archaeology', which allows new discoveries to be made by subjecting old finds to new analytical techniques. *Atlantic Canada's archaeology collection and its accompanying records will cease to be a living collection for Atlantic Canadian educators and researchers if it is warehoused in Gatineau.*

The removal of this one-of-a-kind facility and its archaeology collection is a regressive policy decision that will significantly erode our capacity to study, protect, and promote Atlantic Canadian heritage. By relocating conservation and collections staff positions from this facility to Gatineau, Parks Canada administrators will continue the troubling process of centralization that has in recent years seen other important federal labs in our region shuttered, such as the RCMP Forensics Lab (2015).

Perhaps most disturbingly, the decision contradicts best practices and archaeological ethics as defined in the charters and codes of conduct of virtually every professional archaeological association and organization. Archaeology's capacity to give voice to the histories of marginalized peoples is widely recognized and, given the troubling legacy of our colonial past, professional archaeologists today often go to great lengths to foster dialogue and partnerships with members of descendant communities. At a time when the discipline across the western world is turning toward constructive public engagement as a means of creating balance and equity in public memory, Parks Canada's decision to uproot a significant part of the archaeological heritage of the Acadian people, among others, is surprisingly tone deaf as well as damaging to historical science.

The CBC documentary series, *Canada: The Story of Us*, recently angered Atlantic Canadians by omitting our region's foundational contribution to Canada's early colonial history. If Parks Canada's plan to close its regional archaeology laboratory is allowed to proceed, it will physically dislocate much of our region's archaeological heritage and reduce our capacity to contribute to the national narrative.

Please join us in calling on the federal government to reverse its regressive decision to close the Parks Canada Archaeology Lab. It would be a wonderful gift, as we celebrate Canada's 150th year, for the Trudeau government to allow our archaeological heritage to remain in Atlantic Canada where it belongs.

Dr. Jonathan Fowler
Associate Professor of Anthropology, Saint Mary's University
Past President, Nova Scotia Archaeology Society

