



CUPIDS Cabin 1
STRUCTURE 1
LOOKING SOUTH
02 10

Digging History

From Pacific shores, over vast plains and ancient forest to the islands of the Atlantic coast, Canada hides a wealth of stories in her soil. By Ann Chandler



Almost half a millennium ago, pioneering groups of Inuit began to establish their winter villages on Labrador's northern coast, relocating from the High Arctic to milder climatic conditions. Archaeologist Peter Whitridge has been excavating the village sites in order to shed more light on this neglected period of Labrador's history.

PETER WHITRIDGE

For many Canadians, summer is a time to travel and explore the vast and diverse land we call home. It may seem as though much of the land is untouched, but wherever you go in Canada, people have been there before you, some of them much earlier than can be imagined. This land has been inhabited for more than 11,000 years, but the archaeological traces of human activity are often buried in the earth or lying beneath a sea bed.

While there have been extraordinary archaeological discoveries, much of the ground is unexplored. And the digging has really just begun. Even huge archaeological finds, such as the unearthed evidence of a Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northern tip of Newfoundland, have been discovered only in the last 50 years.

Archaeologists are devoted to studying the traces of material culture left behind by humans many, many years ago. Sites, discovered remains of human activity, can include single artifacts, kill-site areas, encampments and more defined habitation, such as villages and fortifications. In Canada, our largest archaeologi-

cal sites include the Fortress of Louisbourg in Cape Breton, the Rainy River Burial Mounds in northwest Ontario and Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in southern Alberta, among others.

While summer is a time for travel, it is also the prime time for site excavation. All across the country, field archaeologists are digging in the dirt. It's not always a glamorous career, but the discoveries help complete our understanding of Canada's past and the people who lived on the land hundreds or even thousands of years ago. This special *Beaver* project profiles some of the most recent archaeological findings, illuminating the most current digs.



Conception of a New Life

Canada's first English settlers leave a rich Elizabethan legacy.

It was August 1610 when English colonists first arrived in Newfoundland under the leadership of John Guy, a Bristol merchant, and walked the beaches of Cupers Cove in Conception Bay in search of a suitable area for a plantation. In an October letter sent to England to Sir Percival Willoughby, an investor in the company to settle Newfoundland, John Guy confirmed his choice:

This harbour is three leagues distance from Colliers bay to the Northeastward and preferred by me to begin our plantation before the said Colliers bay for the goodness of the harbour, the fruitfulness of the soil, the largeness of the trees and many other reasons ...



WILLIAM GILBERT, BACCALIEU TRAIL HERITAGE CORPORATION

The cellar beneath the storehouse at the Cupids site was carefully excavated, revealing the depths of one of the oldest European buildings built on North American soil.

The plantation, near present-day Cupids, occupied throughout the 17th century, was Canada's first official English settlement. By May 1611 the colonists had cleared the land and constructed several dwelling houses, a work house, storehouse, forge and wooden defense works upon which three cannon were mounted. The need to make money for English investors spurred the colonists to try to

establish a fur trade with the native Beothuk, a venture that never succeeded.

The winter of 1612 was challenging, with eight of 62 residents succumbing to scurvy. But on March 27, 1613, a child was born. The significance likely escaped his father, Nicholas Guy, but the boy would go down in history as the first recorded English child born in what is now Canada.

In September 1612 a party led by Henry Crout hiked overland, cutting a trail as they headed to Trinity Bay, 25 kilometres west on the other side of the peninsula, searching for signs of Beothuk. That search was unsuccessful, but when Crout and John Guy approached Trinity Bay by water the following month, they found what they were looking for. Guy wrote in his journal:

At twilight they came to the said place, where they found no savages, but three of their houses, whereof two had been lately used, in one of which the hearth was hot. The savages were gone to the said island, whither we could not go for want of a boat. We found there a copper kettle kept very bright, a fur gown, some seal skins, an old sail and a fishing reel.

The artifacts indicated they were not the first Europeans to trade with the Beothuk. The following month they were able to make personal contact, sharing a meal and trading goods such as knives, clothing and linen.

(Faced with increasing European settlement, the proud but shy Beothuk, known as the "Red Indians" for their practice of painting themselves with red ochre, retreated to the interior, rarely seen. They were decimated by disease, starvation and hunting by Europeans. In 1829 the last known remaining Beothuk, Shawnadithit, died of tuberculosis following six years living in St. John's.)

Some of the settlers who landed at Cupers Cove in 1610 gradually established other settlements on Conception and Trinity Bays. By 1631 Nicholas Guy had moved his family further up Conception Bay to Carbonear, establishing them as a prominent planter family. Guy wrote to Willoughby in September of that year:

This year I have made by my industry one hundred pounds clear in my purse ... for flesh I have enough and sufficient butter and cheese which part I sell and part I spare to my neighbours.

Nearly 385 years later, guided by the original letters and journals of Guy and his fellow settlers, a team led by William Gilbert, chief archaeologist with the Baccalieu Trail Heritage Corporation, located the site of the original plantation. Among the buildings excavated at the site are the dwelling house and storehouse finished by John Guy's party in December 1610, two of the oldest European buildings in North America.

Among more than 100,000 artifacts recovered since 1995 are 17th-century clay pipes, an Elizabethan silver four-pence coin minted at the Tower of London between