

# Faceted Inuit-European contact in southern Labrador

## Les contacts à multiples facettes entre Inuit et Européens au sud du Labrador

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### Résumé de l'article

Nous présentons ici les découvertes archéologiques effectuées dans trois sites fouillés ou sondés entre 2009 et 2013 et nous montrons leur intérêt pour l'interprétation de la nature diverse des premiers contacts entre Inuit et Européens dans la zone de contact du sud du Labrador. À partir de la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les documents français puis anglais portant sur cette région décrivent, en parlant des Inuit, des relations qui étaient motivées par la traite mais qui tournaient régulièrement à la violence. De fait, si nous ne disposions que des documents d'archives, nous ne pourrions pas apprendre grand-chose de l'éventail des réponses apportées par les Inuit au colonialisme en-dehors de ce contexte d'agression. En contraste, les données archéologiques décolonisent l'histoire et montrent un paysage de contacts plus nuancé que ne le suggèrent les écrits des archives, avec des indices qui mènent à diverses intersections culturelles et qui montrent également la résilience et la ténacité des Inuit.

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Nous présentons ici les découvertes archéologiques effectuées dans trois sites fouillés ou sondés entre 2009 et 2013 et nous montrons leur intérêt pour l'interprétation de la nature diverse des premiers contacts entre Inuit et Européens dans la zone de contact du sud du Labrador. À partir de la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les documents français puis anglais portant sur cette région décrivent, en parlant des Inuit, des relations qui étaient motivées par la traite mais qui tournaient régulièrement à la violence. De fait, si nous ne disposions que des documents d'archives, nous ne pourrions pas apprendre grand-chose de l'éventail des réponses apportées par les Inuit au colonialisme en-dehors de ce contexte d'agression. En contraste, les données archéologiques décolonisent l'histoire et montrent un paysage de contacts plus nuancé que ne le suggèrent les écrits des archives, avec des indices qui mènent à diverses intersections culturelles et qui montrent également la résilience et la ténacité des Inuit.

**Abstract:** Faceted Inuit-European contact in southern Labrador

Archaeological evidence from three sites excavated or tested between 2009 and 2013 is shown to be valuable for interpreting the diverse nature of the early Inuit-European contact zone in southern Labrador. Beginning in the late 17th century, French and then English archival records for the region describe relations with Inuit that were motivated by trade but that repeatedly devolved into violence. Indeed, if only the historical records were available we would learn little of the range of Inuit responses to colonialism other than its context of aggression. The archaeological data, in contrast, decolonize this history and point to a more nuanced contact landscape than suggested by the written records, with clues to varied cultural intersections, and Inuit resilience and persistence.

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## Introduction

Archaeological and documentary examinations of the Inuit following European contact in Labrador have generally been framed by colonialist themes of cumulative

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acculturation and of loss (of material culture, of land, of resources, of traditional ways, of beliefs, and even of being Thule). Finding elements in archaeological remains that reveal the variation and dynamism of the contact zone, and the ways Inuit adapted to and modified the new environment without cultural loss, guide this searching attempt to identify the “transformational becoming” (McGlade and Garnsey 2006: 2) of Inuit in southern Labrador during the early colonial period. The evidence for this study comes from three sites that span the early colonial period from the early French era to the first decades of British control of southern Labrador (Figure 1). Cultural, economic, and symbolic transformations can be identified that reflect a range of Inuit responses to European presence. These responses highlight the resilience of Inuit, who have juggled many variables and absorbed the effects of continual encounters while maintaining and *creating* themselves. Inuit culture has changed but Inuit ethnicity is ever-present and has never disappeared.

Reaching beyond the privileging and primacy of the written record, archaeologies of transition have shown the interpretive strength of archaeological remains in rewriting the colonial experience of First Peoples. New cultural traits were indeed acquired but manipulated in countless ways to fit within underlying and persistent ideological structures. Examples include Indigenous art production of the 17th to 20th centuries, which was on a massive scale: baskets, clothing, furniture, miniatures, bric-à-brac, and other objects made using traditional and European techniques were destined for European buyers. Long considered acultural and inauthentic, these remarkable works and their production have in recent decades been reconsidered for what they reveal of cross-cultural negotiation and the Indigenous continuum, not to mention adept business acumen (Phillips 1990; Phillips and Steiner 1999). Similarly, close study of the acquisition of European beads by Indigenous peoples in the Northeast has revealed many forms of appropriation, recontextualization, and socio-cultural reproduction (Turgeon 2004: 21). These signifiers of change are at the same time markers of resilience such that southern Labrador Inuit, as a relevant example, were able to reorganize under multiple conditions of uncertainty and destabilizing forces while both retaining and creating identity (Gullason 2004-2005; Lightfoot 1995; Redman and Kinzig 2003; Rubertone 2012; Silliman 2005; Trigger 1976; Williamson 2004).

For the sake of clarification, the term “study area” throughout this paper refers to coastal Labrador south of Sandwich Bay as far as today’s Blanc Sablon (Figure 2). One of the studied sites is in easternmost Quebec, or the Quebec Lower North Shore (henceforth LNS). Inuit were long-distance travellers and the archival record indicates that regular voyages from regions north of Hamilton Inlet were made to the Strait of Belle Isle throughout the early historic period. Nonetheless, it is not assumed that any conclusions and observations pertaining to the study area reflect the nature or experience of all Labrador Inuit.

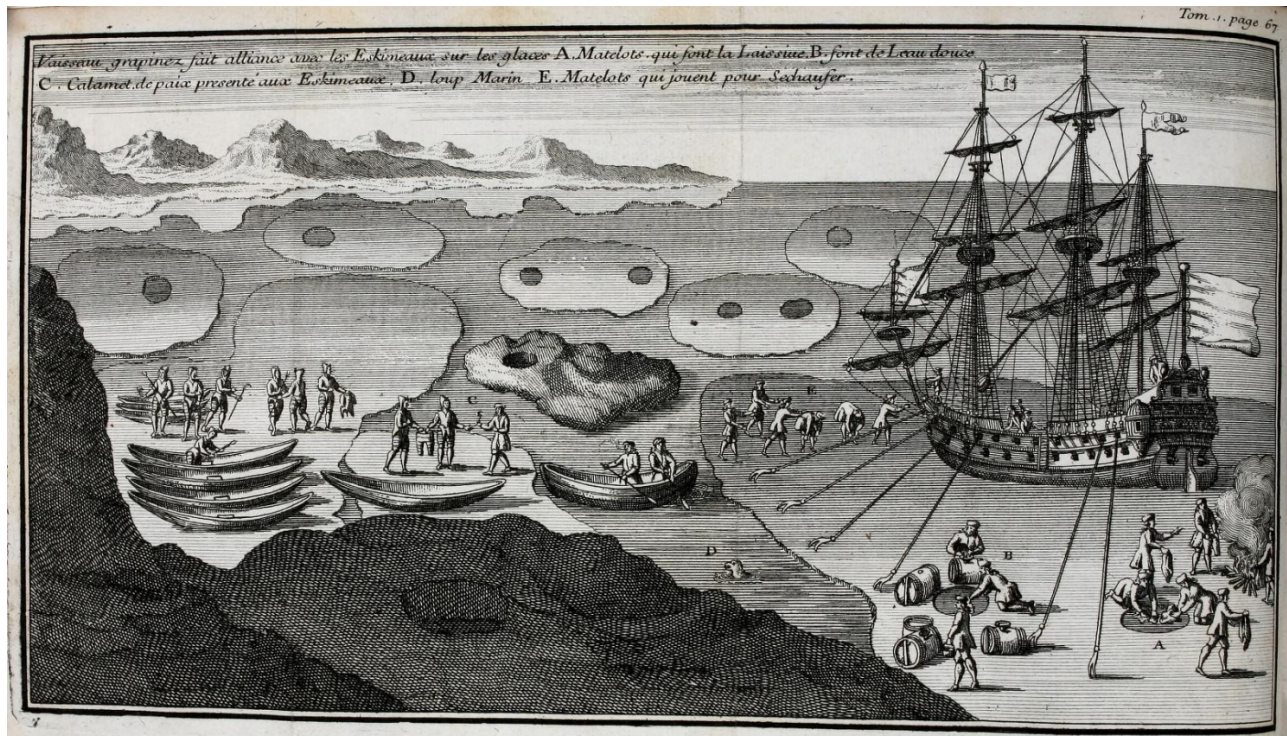


Figure 1. Three years after Louis Jolliet’s 1694 voyage along the coast of southern Labrador, another French expedition travelled even further north. Among the earliest known depictions of a meeting between French and Inuit, this 1697 image is set near Digges Islands (northwest of Nunavik, Hudson Bay) with ice floes, Inuit kayaks, and a European ship that appears to be icefast. Translation of the French text: “Anchored vessel making alliance with the Eskimos on the ice. A) sailors washing clothing, B) making freshwater, C) peace calumet presented to the Eskimos, D) seal, E) sailors playing games to keep warm.” Engraving by Jean-Baptiste Scotin. Source: Bacqueville de La Potherie (1722: 67). Image from the Biodiversity Heritage Library. Digitized by Smithsonian Libraries.

## Background

### *Research context*

The question of *whether* Inuit had ever settled the study area is no longer the uncertainty it once was. Until the 1980s, it was generally held that the southernmost extent of Labrador Inuit settlement was the area of Sandwich Bay and Hamilton Inlet and that Inuit only ventured southward for brief visits to acquire European goods through trade and/or scavenging at European fishing stations. References in early archival material to “Esquimaux” along the LNS were convincingly shown to refer to Algonquian peoples, not Inuit (Mailhot et al. 1980; Taylor 1979), although other archival material described Inuit in very specific terms (Martijn 1980). In that same decade, however, a number of Inuit encampments and other features were recorded in southern Labrador, including sod houses in Baie des Belles Amours; sod houses and Thule-type artifacts in Red Bay; sod houses and tent rings at the mouth of Sandwich Bay; and sod houses, fox traps, storage pits in relict cobble beaches, and isolated Inuit artifacts between the LNS and Chateau Bay (Stopp 2002: 86). A number of sod houses

were recorded and examined on both shores of the eastern end of the Strait of Belle Isle (Auger 1991, 1993, 1994). These houses highlighted the problematic of cultural affiliation, since most yielded only European artifacts, and dated to the time of early year-round European settlement, that is, from the late 18th century onwards. Were such structures inhabited by Inuit, or were they adopted as an architectural form by Europeans? The question of cultural affiliation continues to be central to Inuit studies in southern Labrador (e.g., Beaudoin et al. 2010; Fitzhugh 2009; Gaudreau 2011, Rankin et al. 2012).

By the 1990s, several cornerstone studies had been completed on Inuit between Hamilton Inlet and northwards. These studies continue to provide baseline comparative data and to frame basic research questions and approaches (e.g., Jordan and Kaplan 1980; Kaplan 1983; Schledermann 1976; for a summary of explanatory models, see Woollett 2007). Particularly influential has been Kaplan's (1983, 1985) examination of Labrador Inuit responses to 500 years of European presence.



Figure 2. Map of places mentioned in text. Map adapted by M. Stopp from GeoScience Atlas.

The first archaeological survey of the coast between Chateau Bay and Sandwich Bay, in 1991 and 1992, resulted in more evidence of Inuit, with sod house foundations as well as storage pits in low elevation cobble beaches, and some stone fox traps and stone burial cairns (Stopp 1995, 1997). Based on ceramic evidence, some sod houses in this sample could be dated to the late 19th to early 20th centuries. When tested, they proved to be wood frame structures that could be assigned to the heyday of the Labrador fishery, with outer sod layering over wood struts, and floors of either wood or crushed mussel shell. Another set of sod houses dated to the late 18th century or earlier; these houses were without wood frames, had cold-trap entrance passages, stone floors, but still yielded European materials. In view of Auger's (1991, 1993, 1994) results, these structures were cautiously assigned to Inuit, with Inuit-European affiliation not ruled out. This survey pointed to multi-season Inuit settlement in southern Labrador (as opposed to summer forays by male leaders to trade with Europeans) where trade or scavenging at European fishing sites fitted in with a wider spectrum of complex year-round resource exploitation that included sealing, salmon fisheries, caribou hunting, birding, and potentially walrus hunting in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (this stock being depleted by the late 1700s; Niellon 2010: 18) (Stopp 2002).

My 2009-2013 work took place at Baie des Belles Amours on the LNS, and in southern Labrador at sites in Pinware, in Western Arm (Red Bay), on Great Caribou Island (St. Lewis Inlet), on North Island (St. Michael's Bay), and in the Seal Islands-Frenchmans Run area. This paper is not a report of field results; preparation of the field data for publication is underway and some analyses are available on the project webpage, *Inuit in Southern Labrador and the St. Michael's Bay Archaeology Project* (Stopp 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). Fieldwork included survey, site revisits, controlled excavation and test pitting of dwellings and middens, site mapping, archival and ethnohistorical research, analyses of zooarchaeological and material culture assemblages, and some informant interviews. Faunal analyses referred to below were completed on contract to the author by Université Laval doctoral candidate Lindsay Swinarton. This work coincided with productive and interesting research on Inuit sites both to the north and to the southwest of my study area: in the Sandwich Bay and Rigolet areas under L. Rankin's supervision (2013, 2014; this volume; *Understanding the Past...* n.d.); and a joint Université de Montréal and Smithsonian Institution initiative along the LNS directed by W. Fitzhugh (this volume; Fitzhugh 2006, 2009, 2014; Fitzhugh and Phaneuf 2014; St. Lawrence Gateways Project n.d.).

### ***Inuit and Europeans in southern Labrador***

Inuit settlement of the study area spans the early colonial period. Recognizing the important distinction between contact encounters and the process of colonialism (Silliman 2005), we can say that colonialism in southern Labrador involved assumptions of sovereignty, exertions of power using superior weaponry, extraction of raw materials for mercantilist and capitalist ends, and large numbers of non-indigenous men taking over resource areas. Archival documents also attest to slave raiding and to violent encounters. It must be assumed that there were also several mass disease events

among the Inuit, one of which was recorded by Cartwright (1792: entry for 28 March 1779).

Inuit hold a unique position in the study area's early colonial history because they themselves were new colonizers of southern Labrador. Their southward settlement of Labrador was, in effect, the last part of a process of settling the eastern Arctic and Greenland following their rapid migration from the western to the eastern Arctic, with the earliest wave dated to the 13th century (Friesen and Arnold 2008; McCullough 1989). By the late 1400s, Inuit migrants from northern Labrador were beginning to overwinter in the bays and inlets between Sandwich Bay and the Quebec North Shore and were coming into early contact with French Basques, Bretons, and Spanish Basques. A polished slate harpoon endblade and a polished nephrite drill recovered in a disturbed context at Red Bay are rare evidence of Inuit who still possessed a Thule-type lithic toolkit in southernmost Labrador (Tuck 1989).

The study area in the 16th to mid-18th centuries was a much-visited and multicultural region. By the time Cartier sailed through the Strait of Belle Isle in 1535, Inuit were already present along this coast (but in what numbers is unknown), and various fisheries brought repeated and frequent contacts with hundreds of vessels and thousands of fishers and sealers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Strait of Belle Isle. Innu (Montagnais) and Mi'kmaq worked alongside the French. French in northwestern Newfoundland carried out a busy fishery from stations throughout the area of the Petit Nord, and were in contact with Inuit on both shores of the Strait of Belle Isle.

In both southern Labrador and the Petit Nord, the fishery had developed a land-based component by 1700 (Martijn 2009; Pope 2008; Prowse 2002[1895]; Trudel 1978; Turgeon 1998). Trade opportunities were frequent during the fishing season in the summer, while French concession grants for autumn sealing and winter trapping along the LNS and towards Hamilton Inlet brought about contact events during winter. A single trade event could be complex, as seen in an exchange between Louis Jolliet and Inuit that took place in 1694 in today's St. Francis Harbour (named by Jolliet). By that time, Inuit had been trading for over a century and, while the event was face-to-face, the description conveys considerable tension. As Jolliet recorded, "One of [the Inuit], however, always stood by their bows and arrows while the other bartered, and they always came up one at a time saying *tcharacou*, that is, "Peace! No treachery!" (Delanglez 1948: 221).

War with Britain in the late 17th century, and the resulting Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, consolidated France's holdings in the Atlantic region. France was allowed to retain portions of the Island of Newfoundland, all of Labrador, and Cape Breton Island. French presence in much of southern Labrador took the form of concessions issued by its king to carry out the seal and cod fisheries, fur trapping, and trade. These were land grants to influential individuals in New France who with few exceptions never visited their holdings but hired a manager to run operations with labourers. Initially, large tracts of land were granted in perpetuity, but these tracts soon became smaller, with land grants covering 4-5 leagues of coastline (including islands) for periods limited to

10-20 years. Posts were supplied from Quebec City by regular vessels that brought needed food, hardware, and trade goods, and took back furs, fish, seal oil, and Inuit products such as baleen. By 1735, 22 posts were operating along the coast between Mingan and St. Lewis Inlet (Niellon 1996; Trudel 1978: 105). From 1743 to 1763, *at least* one supply vessel each year sailed along the entire length of the southern Labrador coast en route to Louis Fornel's concession in Hamilton Inlet, bringing European goods to Inuit along the way.<sup>1</sup>

The archival records point to three periods of Inuit expulsion from southern Labrador, each punctuated by conflict. The first is traceable to the years around 1735, when Inuit were cut off from the rich resource region of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the LNS. In 1717, 800 Inuit, "inapproachable, ferocious and cruel," attacked Courtemanche's post at Brador, and between 1720 and 1735 Brouague recorded nearly annual violent confrontations. Following retaliation, however, Brouague reported that Inuit were no longer residing in the bays of the southernmost Strait of Belle Isle and along the LNS (Brouague 1923[1718-1744]). A second expulsion event took place around 1765-1770, when expanded (and aggressive) English and American fishing presence and permanent fishing communities along the Strait of Belle Isle impeded Inuit movement south of St. Lewis Inlet and Chateau Bay (Thornton 1977; Whiteley 1969). A third expulsion event began around 1770, when fewer Inuit settled south of Hamilton Inlet due to vastly expanded British resource enterprises. After 1763, English takeover of existing French stations was immediate and included Chateau Bay, St. Lewis Inlet, and Fornel's Hamilton Inlet posts. By 1775, every river mouth between Chateau Bay and Sandwich Bay was occupied by English salmoneers and fur trapping crews, and the mouths of all bays were occupied by sealing and cod fishing installations (Stopp 2008).

British measures were introduced to prevent Inuit from travelling to former trade points in northwestern Newfoundland and along the coast south of Hamilton Inlet. The intent was to end Inuit pillaging at English stations and at French stations along the Petit Nord, but there was also an expressed humanitarian purpose, namely to protect Inuit from what had become rampant predation and attacks by European and American fishers. Merchants, Moravian missionaries, and the British navy were involved in containment measures that had some effect, for altercations and Inuit visits declined—but the visits were never stopped altogether. Inuit were at Quirpon in 1764 and at Fogo Island in the summers of 1766 and 1771, and they camped at Sacred Bay in 1767 (Martijn 2009; Martijn and Dorais 2001). Small Inuit parties associated with George Cartwright visited between 1770 and 1786. In the mid-1780s, larger groups in search of

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<sup>1</sup> A 1720s concession named "Passage-des-Loups Marins," sometimes incorrectly shown to be at Frenchmans Run, south of Sandwich Bay (Budgel and Staveley 1987: map), was likely the one granted on 8 April 1721 to Pierre André de Leigne, a well-placed Lieutenant-General at Quebec City. This post was likely at Seal Islands in Bad Bay, near Chateau Bay (Anonymous 1721; Roy 1921: 159-160). Niellon (1996: 173), moreover, states that the "Ile à Loup-Marin" concession, granted to P. André de Leigne in 1721, was not operational until 1735. The latter date coincides well with the time of the first French concessions beyond Brador.



better trade goods than those offered at the Moravian missions in northern Labrador came to Chateau Bay for a short while.

Events in the study area paralleled tensions and violence at the heart of trade relations everywhere in North America. First Peoples held control of their territories for some time after European arrival through resistance (Trigger 1976). Inuit asserted their presence, even domination for a time, in southern Labrador and along the western part of the Petit Nord by active pilfering and plundering but also in other ways that included assertion through surprise arrival in large numbers, through fleets of kayaks, umiaks, and shallows travelling en masse, and by large encampments set up in proximity of European stations. Their winter sod houses signaled their ownership of place. Mutual agreements on the nature of exchange developed only gradually, if at all, and a middle ground (*sensu* White 1991) was frequently short-lived. Parallels can be found up the St. Lawrence where, in 1706-1707, Vaudreuil was negotiating with the Ottawa in an attempt to gain access to furs from the interior of the continent. Traders, however, failed to fulfil Algonquian expectations of exchange, becoming too greedy. Gift-giving as payment for services was not always fully understood, nor were bribes, and most confusing were gifts as loans on future returns of furs. Exchange gave way to pilfering, a direct expression of what one did to the untrustworthy (White 1991: 112).

### **Many-faceted contact**

If Inuit-European relations in southern Labrador were considered using only the archival data, we would come away with a picture of nearly continuous frictions and violence that typified the contact zone. The archaeological data considered in the remainder of this paper reveal little friction and more of Inuit negotiation with changing times.

### ***Forms and facets of the Inuit experience***

The following approach seeks to go beyond acculturation perspectives that consider the Inuit experience to be one of exchange, adoption, retention, and abandonment of their own cultural traits (Lightfoot 1995: 206; Silliman 2005: 65). It will also depart from standard analytical directions for archaeological data from Inuit sites in Labrador, which typically emphasize European aspects, such as identification of European ware types, ware type origins, and what these traits reveal about European mercantilism.

Some of the evidence examined here will reveal new Inuit adaptations and reflect ingenuity and resilience. Variability of Inuit responses will be illustrated, rather than a trajectory of cultural demise by acculturation. Inuit transformed the contact experience into one that continued to exert identity rather than cultural loss and/or disappearance. Meanings cannot always be fleshed out, but by shifting emphasis from the acculturation story we see that contact events were not simple oppositions but rather a process of

mediation of relationships. Inuit responses reflected aforementioned themes of resilience, recontextualization, transformation, and becoming.

The archaeological examples have the unique advantage of coming from sites that were undisturbed by later settlement or fishery activity, and that are considered reliable indicators of Inuit life, spanning the French and early British periods. The sites are North Island-1 (FeAx-3) in St. Michael's Bay, Great Caribou Island-1 (FbAv-13) in St. Lewis Inlet, and Baie des Belles Amours (EiBi-12) in a small bay of that name between Blanc Sablon and St. Paul's, LNS (Figure 2).

### *North Island-1*

North Island-1 was recorded in 1991 during the Labrador South Coastal Survey (Stopp 1997). This site has a Dorset component and two Inuit sod houses that date to the earliest period of sustained contact between Inuit and Europeans in southern Labrador, from AD 1500 to 1770 (Stopp, in preparation). Between 2009 and 2011, House A was tested and House B was excavated (Stopp 2014a; Figure 3). Both semi-subterranean sod houses were built back-to-back into a hillock of stone and peat with walls of mounded sods, and interior floors of carefully laid beach rocks. The House A living platform appears to have been of natural bedrock, with remnants of a beach rock platform visible in House B. Entrance passages extend downslope from the point of entry to create a cold trap, and both have small semi-circular side-rooms built on the shore side of the tunnel. Middens are positioned directly outside the entrance passage. Middens at this site differ from those at other Inuit sites in the study area, consisting of a dense mussel shell matrix for artifacts and including unusually high numbers of cod fish bones. Stonewares and earthenwares from northwestern France and other objects establish a connection with the French fishery and trade. Artifacts associated with Thule Inuit culture include worked bone and ivory such as sled runner sections, two whalebone trace leads, an ivory pin, three Thule Type 5 harpoon heads, and various unidentifiable whalebone pieces.

Eighteen European iron fish-hooks and large numbers of cod fish bones are two lines of evidence that Inuit were appropriating and adapting to cod fishing at an early date. A total of 18,410 faunal elements were recovered at this site. Of these, 52% (9,527) were fish remains, 16% (2,888) being identifiable as cod and 36% (6,620) unidentifiable to species but most likely cod given that all other fish species (salmonids and sculpins) represented only 3% of the sample. Cod fish bones were found in the middens at 9-20 cm below the surface and point to accumulation over a period of unknown duration.

Inuit traditionally relied on salmonid species such as salmon and char, which could be caught at narrows and rapids using weirs, spears, and nets. An ethnohistoric example of an iron fish-hook used to catch salmon by an Inuk was recorded in 1772 by George Cartwright (1792, entry for 18 June 1772). Cartwright used a fly rod, while Shuglawina had "the skin of the leg of a sea-pigeon, which is scarlet, fastened on the shank of a

cod-hook, tied to a cod-line” (in itself a description of creative appropriation). Cod, unlike salmon, were caught in deeper waters and required a hook-and-line jigging approach (and a shallop or umiak). Bait may have been the mussels that form the unusual midden matrices at this site. The concentration of cod bones in the middens shows that fish were brought back to camp for on-shore processing. This finding evokes a scene of the French fishery, one that Inuit would have witnessed on both shores of the Strait of Belle Isle. The fish bones and fish-hooks point to an appropriated economic strategy, and to processes of cultural maintenance through new adaptations. A greater diversity of resources would have augmented nutritional returns and social reproduction during this period of change (Kaplan 1985; Woollett 2007). Cod fishing may also mark Inuit involvement in the wider French mercantile economy.

Cultural resilience and changed or recontextualized function and meaning are represented in metal and ceramic items of European origin. Two pewter spoon bowls are separated from their handles and pierced along the proximal edge, illustrating a familiar transformation found throughout the North American contact zone (Figure 4). In an Inuit context, the spoon was removed from the category of kitchen or dining utensil and became both a decoration and a pendant symbol of a moment of Inuit-European interaction, with furthered layered meanings that are lost to us. Known examples of such spoon-pendants are found in museum collections (e.g., Karklins 1992: 197; McCord Museum, *amauti*, object M5836<sup>2</sup>). Similarly recontextualized objects include a coin, two bale seals, and beads (discussed separately below). The coin is a *double sol* or *denier* that was made from a copper/silver alloy known as “billon” and minted between 1710 and 1713 for the colonies. Raised lettering around the edge on one side places it during Louis XIV’s reign. A small hole drilled along one edge suggests that it, like the spoons, was used as clothing decoration or in some pendant way. Two bale seals may also have been transformed into pendants. They are of lead and stamped with LXV (Louis XV, King of France) and date to 1715-1748.

Ceramics from the houses point to different aspects of cultural transformation and recontextualization. First, blackened and encrusted sherds of Normandy stoneware recovered in House B were used as combustion surfaces, taking on new, non-European functions either as small lamps or as cooking surfaces. Second, a small number of partial vessel bodies may have kept their function as containers. Even in incomplete condition, a vessel held “a conception of permanence” and a potential for re-use, and might lie about for some time in a broken but still inherently useful state (Welbourn 1984: 22). Indeed, it is quite possible that Inuit collected discarded, broken ceramics during their frequent visits to seasonally abandoned French fishing stations. Third, in House B a portion of a small blue-and-white tea bowl of what may be Portuguese faience may represent new foodways. Decorated faience was widely distributed in North America’s French and English colonial trading sphere (Curtis 1993; Pope 2012; Wilcoxon 1999). This type is unusual, however, among ceramics from all of the early colonial era sites in southernmost Labrador. This particular cup, like the spoon bowls, may be memorabilia and/or exotica from a contact-zone meeting (Figure 4).

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/M5836>.

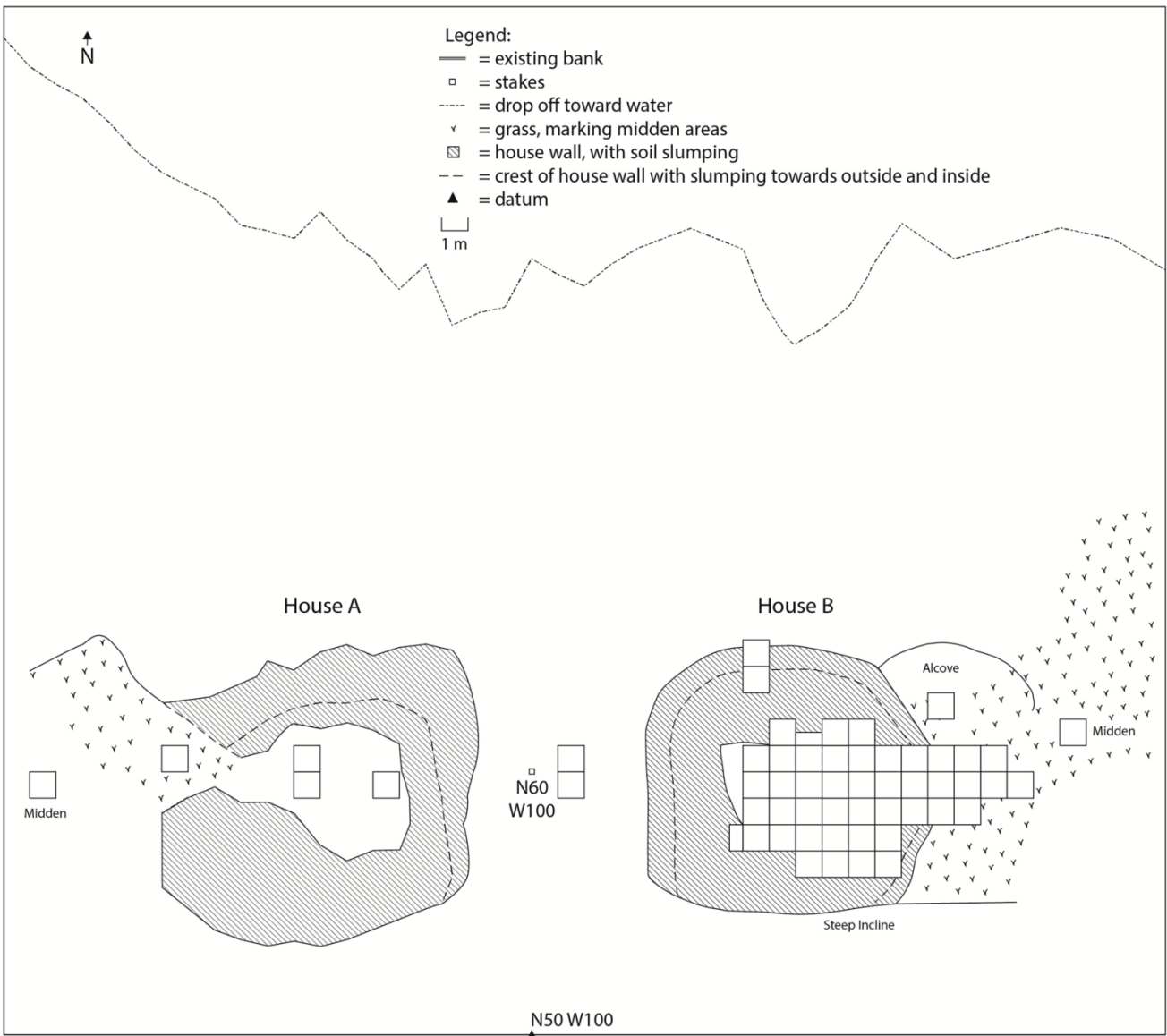
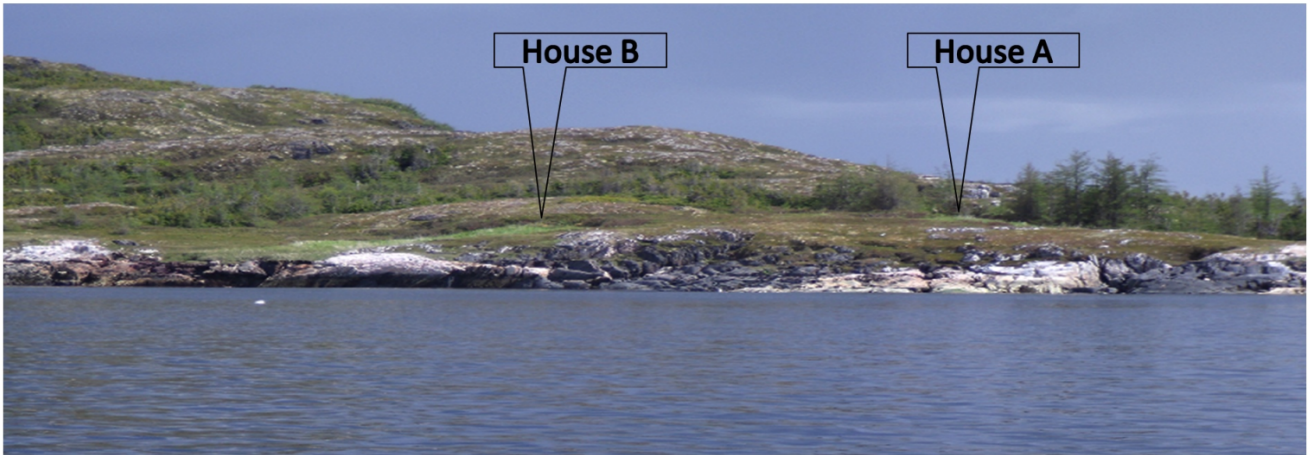


Figure 3. North Island-1 (FeAx-3) sod houses and excavated 1 x 1 m units in relation to shoreline. Map: C. Jalbert, E. Alvarez, J. Higdon, and M. Stopp. Photo: Marianne Stopp, 2011.

It may also reflect early transformation of household practices of preparing or consuming foods, or the early beginnings of tea consumption in Labrador (Cabak and Loring 2000). The popularity of tea drinking had reached France in the mid-1600s, somewhat earlier than England, and by the mid-1700s was well established throughout Europe and in the colonies. Finally, two nearly complete vessels (one a salt-glazed stoneware soup bowl and the other a large stoneware storage bowl) were unusual in the context of a highly fragmented ceramic assemblage. Each vessel was found pedestaled above the house floor on adjacent stone caches inside House B, and resting on a cluster of seal bones. Their apparently pristine surfaces show no food residues and no cut marks from long-term knife and fork use, or other use-wear. These unusually positioned vessels may have held fluids or represent other transformations (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Artifacts of transition. Top: partial faience bowl (possibly Portuguese; FeAx-3:151). Bottom (left to right): coin as pendant (double sol denier, minted 1710-1713, with hole at top edge, FeAx-3:7); spoon bowl as pendant with hole at neck (FeAx-3:575). Photos: Chelsea Arbour.

### ***Great Caribou Island-1 (FbAv-13)***

This site was first recorded in 1991 during the Labrador South Coastal Survey (Stopp 1997) and consists of two sod houses built into a terrace 3 metres above sea level at each end of a broad, north-facing cove. In 2009, both houses were test-pitted (Stopp 2014b; Figure 5). Ceramics show a narrow, late 18th century occupation for both. An Inuit affiliation is indicated by the sod house form with sloping entrance passageways, the seal bone middens outside the entranceways, two collapsed stone fox traps, and a large number (>30) of pit features in relict cobble beaches thought to be associated with Inuit economic strategies tied to food storage (Stopp 1994, 2002) and possibly trade (see below). Forty percent of the faunal sample was identified to “small seal,” likely ringed seal, a winter species, and the proportion may be as high as 78% when the “small mammal” identified elements are included. Artifacts consist of a small number of beads and very fragmented pearlware sherds and pipe fragments. Thin cultural layering points to short-term occupation.

Great Caribou Island-1 is a site that represents contact-zone negotiation. This was a time when Inuit were being prevented from visiting southern Labrador, and permanent, year-round crews for sealing, salmon fishing, and trapping were taking over all of the bays and islands between the Strait of Belle Isle and Sandwich Bay (Stopp 2008; Whiteley 1973). Great Caribou Island was situated in one of the busiest areas of late 18th century English enterprise, where at least three major merchant outfits operated year-round with hundreds of labourers. A naval blockhouse, York Fort, was built in nearby Chateau Bay and manned year-round from 1766 to 1775 (Stopp 2014e).

Inuit winter residency at that time and place may reflect creation of an Inuit-English middle ground through connections of friendship and trade. It may also indicate resilience and cultural maintenance. By the 1770s, the area held associations with complex social memories that included ca. 200 years of contact as well as the deaths of Inuit by smallpox and by gunfire, capture of Inuit by Europeans, and Inuit journeys to Europe (Rollmann 2011; Stopp 2009; Taylor 1983, 1984). New foodways are reflected in 15 pig elements (1% of the 1,448 total faunal elements). Trading of fur and seal products may be represented by the fox traps and the pit features. Great Caribou Island-1 is situated in one of southern Labrador’s prime sealing areas. The many pit features may have been used for winter seal meat storage and conceivably also for storage of skin pokes filled with seal blubber and destined for trade with Europeans. Seal blubber stored this way was typically left to ferment over winter and into spring and early summer. Rendered, it resulted in oil of good quality and was a valued trade item for local merchants, such as George Cartwright (1792: entry for 12 Dec. 1770), who held strong ties with Inuit. Fourteen gunflints suggest that Inuit had successfully obtained firearms. The gunflints are D-shaped spall and arrissed-edge blade types of dark and gray cherts, probably English in origin.

It is unlikely that the Great Caribou Island-1 sod houses were European winter residences or even the residences of Inuit-European couples. Although these were the earliest years of recorded partnerings between Inuit women and European men in

southern Labrador (Cartwright 1792), all men were tied to the seasonal work patterns of the merchant enterprise. Places of winter residency were not on the outer coast but within the bays and near the mouths of rivers, where rinds and hoop-poles were collected, where wood was cut, and where trap lines were managed.

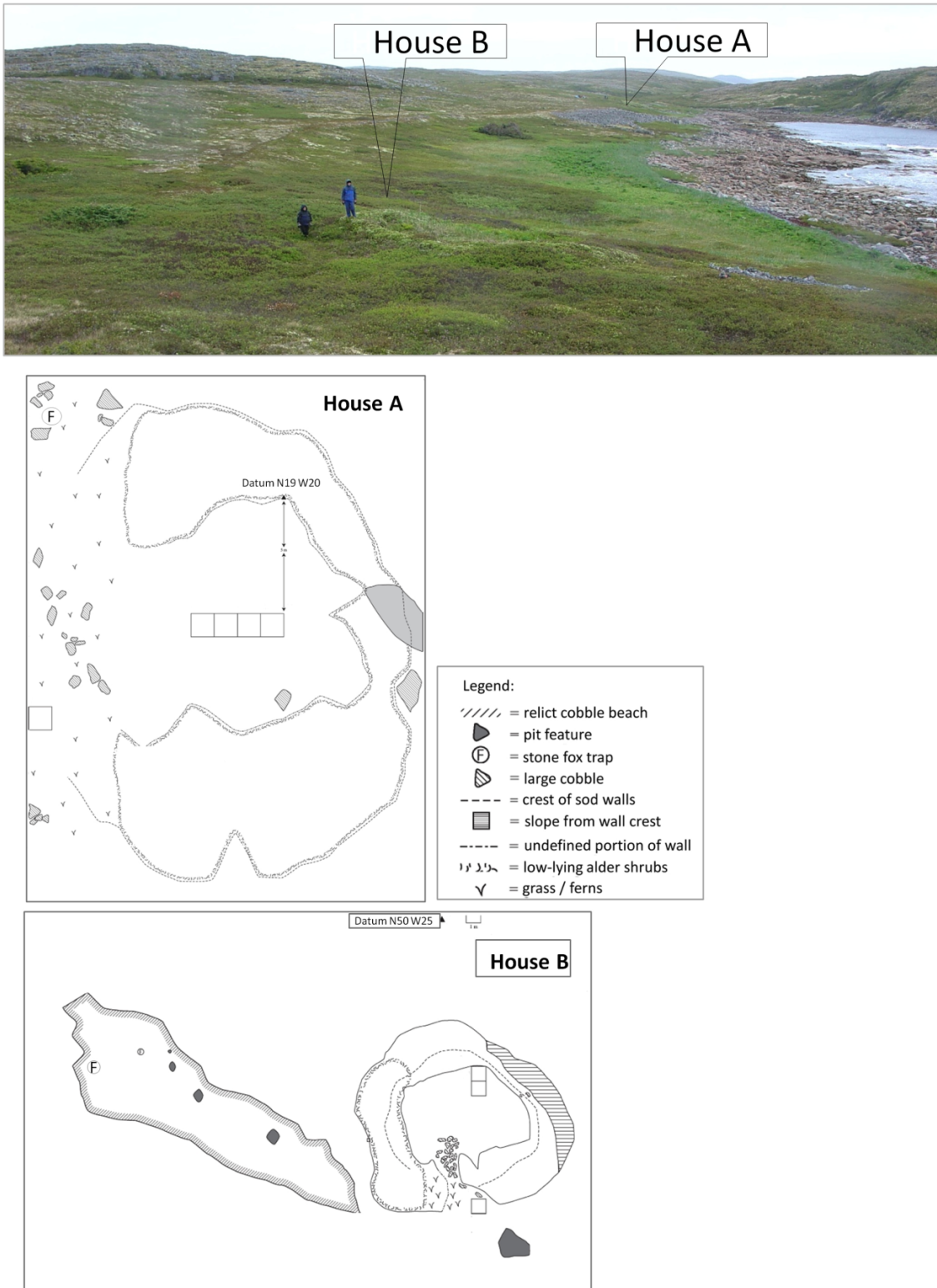


Figure 5. Great Caribou Island-1 (FbAv-13) sod houses and excavated 1 x 1 m units. Map: C. Jalbert, E. Alvarez, J. Higdon, and M. Stopp. Photo: Marianne Stopp, 2009.

### ***Baie des Belles Amours (EiBi-12)***

The site of Baie des Belles Amours was first recorded and tested in 1983-1984 (Dumais 1985; Dumais and Poirier 1994), revisited in 2008 (Fitzhugh and Phaneuf 2008: 105-108), and again in 2013 by the author (Stopp 2014c; Figure 6). The two sod house foundations are rare, well-preserved remains of the southernmost Inuit encampment along the coast of the Labrador-Quebec peninsula that is both unequivocally Inuit and undisturbed by later cultural contexts. In 2013, test pits were placed in each house and the surrounding heath, and faunal samples were collected and analysed. The cultural layer within these houses is thin throughout; no midden deposits have been found, and cultural material is scarce. To date, the combined recovered artifacts number about 60 and consist mainly of forged iron nail fragments alongside a single glass sherd, six small earthenware sherds, and a polished and perforated soapstone fragment. A blue glass bead, a pyrite nodule, and a slate whetstone fragment were collected in 2013. Inuit cultural affiliation is based on architectural characteristics, such as entrance passageways, living platforms, a side chamber in one structure, sod walls, beach stone flooring, and the high number of faunal remains within the structures.

This site was inhabited during the period of French presence along this coast. The drawn glass bead resembling Ila40 or Ila44 (Kidd and Kidd 1970: 56) can be broadly dated to the late 17th to early 18th centuries (Moreau 1994: Figure 3). The sod houses suggest Inuit resistance and inter-cultural negotiation, situated as they were *inside* the zone of French settlement, which by AD 1700 was year-round on the LNS and included Fort Courtemanche at Brador (Dumais and Poirier 1994: 28; Niellon 1996, 2010).

The site is unusual in the context of other Inuit sites in the study area for the relatively high frequency of caribou bone. The choice to winter in this bay, within French territory, may reflect the critical importance of caribou in southern Inuit life. Caribou represented a minimum of 37% (56 elements) of the faunal assemblage and may have been as much as 63% if elements identified as “large terrestrial mammal,” all likely caribou, are included. Just over half of the caribou elements (54%) were found in a cluster or cache-like position within House 1 and were split longitudinally, as if processed for marrow. Their uniform size suggests that they were deliberately kept, perhaps for re-shaping into tools.

Until the growth of a permanent colonial presence, the southern Labrador caribou herd would have been a key component of the Inuit way of life in the study area, important not only for meat and marrow, but also for antler, bones, sinews, and skins. It may have been one of the key reasons for Inuit presence in southern Labrador during the cold season, since caribou hunting in northern Labrador required journeys far into the interior barren lands. The existence of a southern Labrador caribou herd was first recorded in the 1770s by George Cartwright, and it appears to have become extinct shortly thereafter, likely due to European over-hunting. Cartwright observed the movement of this herd and in one observation noted the abundance of caribou between today’s Wreck Cove (east of Red Bay) and Brador (LNS), writing, “The Deer beat to



the southward by us [in St. Lewis Inlet]; then westerly along the Straights from the middle of December to the middle of January; crossing the South Head, or Punt Pond on their way to Niger Sound, thence by the head of St. Peter's and Temple Bays they get upon the western ground. Between Rack Cove and Bradore they are in the greatest abundance till the beginning of April" (Stopp 2008: 216).

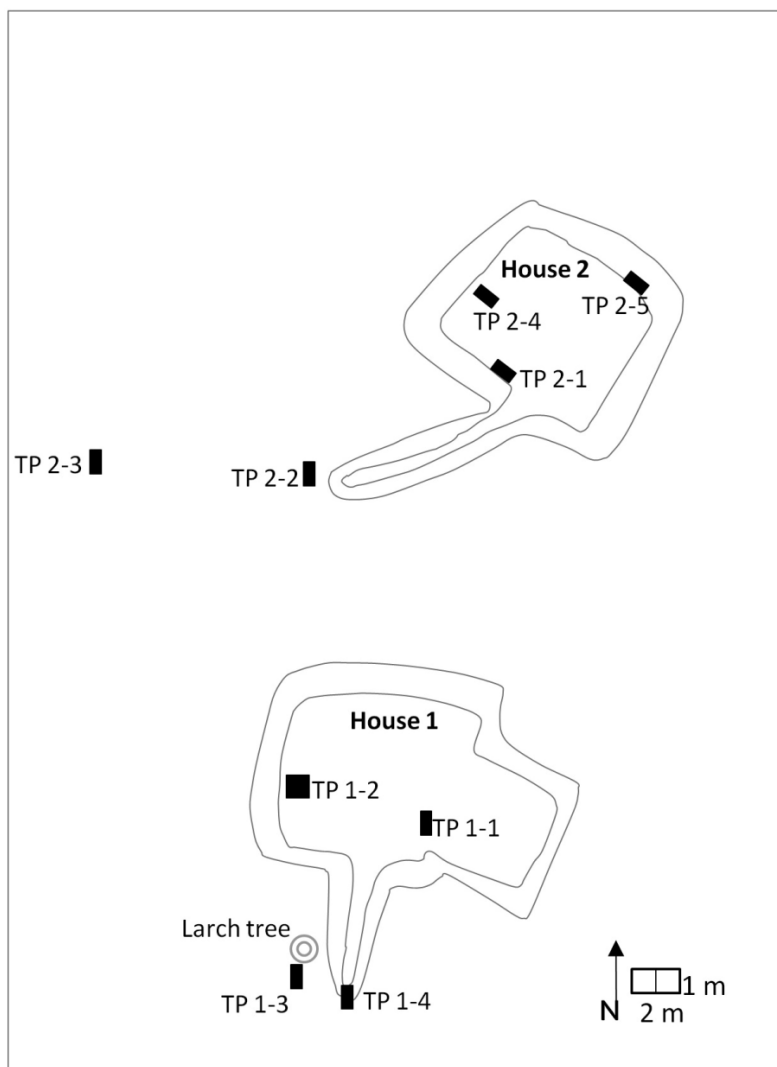


Figure 6. Baie des Belles Amours (EiBi-12) sod houses and excavated units. Map adapted by M. Stopp from Dumais and Poirier (1994: 24). Composite photo: Marianne Stopp, 2013.

### *The beads*

All three sites produced beads that would have originated in French manufactories and were brought to eastern Canada by French and early British traders and mariners (Opper and Opper 1991; Turgeon 2004). European in origin, beads are also reliable indicators of Inuit presence in the study area. After iron, this artefact class was ranked among the trade items the most sought after by Inuit during the 18th century. In a 1771 letter to his father, George Cartwright noted that, “beads are the staple commodity” of trade alongside “Tools of iron & a few other conveniences” (Stopp 2008: 214). Their precise symbolic function and transcultural meaning are not really known for the Inuit of southern Labrador, and cannot with confidence be inferred through analogy (*contra* Hammel 1992). Beads were, nevertheless, in demand and thus integral to Inuit culture, for women and men alike, as seen in a small number of portraits known of 18th century Inuit (Stopp 2009).

Beads represent the appropriated and the culturally recontextualized and redefined, becoming Inuit objects of social reproduction and cultural regeneration (Turgeon 2004: 21). Bead colours appear to have been symbolically significant, with red, blue, and white being the most common colours seen in portraits of Inuit. Beads in these colours are the most frequently found at Inuit sites in the study area, and at the site of George Cartwright’s 1771 station, *Ranger Lodge* (Stopp 2004, 2009). During the Basque period, blue glass beads were important in the St. Lawrence and are specially mentioned in notarial records because of the large quantities brought for the fur trade (Turgeon 1998: 601). A bead, furthermore, represents face-to-face trade and interaction—not pilfering—and carries with it the memory or “narrative” of that moment (Turgeon 2004: 30). Small items such as beads could be brought by individual fishers specifically with the intent of meeting Inuit and trading. They represent a planned and intentional interactive sphere rather than the oppositional one recorded in many historical documents.

### **Conclusion**

This study examines the many-faceted nature of Inuit engagement with French and then British colonialism through the lens of archaeological data. It shows the interpretive potential of archaeological data in developing an alternative picture of Inuit history in the early colonial era. Each of the three examined sites consists of two contemporaneous Inuit sod houses, a pattern that suggests households that worked together to eliminate risks of isolation (LeMoine 2003: 133). Together, these sites reflect centuries-old ways of constructing household space, which may in turn reflect long-held organizational principles of Inuit households and communities (cultural continuity) throughout the early colonial period in southern Labrador. The material culture differences between North Island-1 and the later sites nevertheless suggest rapid technological change away from tools of stone and bone. The faintly outlined evidence of relationships across cultures, and of recontextualized objects and new practices, offers insight into Inuit maintenance of cultural identity. Archaeology is decolonized

through examples that move away from themes of aggression and Euro-usurpation found in historical documents.

Inuit responses to colonialism are variable from site to site. Expressions of contact are non-predictive and non-linear, and there is no single representation of Inuit-European engagement. Inuit who came south and built and settled in sod houses during the cold season may be unrepresentative or unusual in the wider context of Labrador Inuit. They may have been the colonizing front, or the resisters and outliers, or, equally, those most closely tied to local European crews.

If resilience is the capacity of Inuit society to absorb disturbance and to reorganize in response to colonial pressures while maintaining ethnicity, then the preceding data reflect these precepts. Adaptive resilience and signifiers of cultural intersection are seen in gunflints, fish-hooks, and cod fish bones. The recontextualized beads, spoons, medallions, and other objects represent cross-cultural negotiation and cultural continuum. At their simplest, the positioning of European objects on the body as clothing decoration “spoke” to Inuit and Europeans alike as intercultural signalling. It is likely that these hybrid objects retained ancient meanings transferred onto new media that were no less authentic in the form of a spoon than as a hawk’s claw. Objects such as beads, which are unlikely to have been obtained through pillaging, or brought to Labrador without trade in mind, add another facet to the trade story, namely one of face-to-face, intentional contact. The positioning of Great Caribou Island-1 and Baie des Belles Amours within European settlement areas also speaks to cultural resilience, to Inuit success in establishing a middle ground, and potentially also to Inuit resistance/aggression inasmuch as they suggest insistence on returning to traditional areas and building visible structures within contested cultural landscapes.

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