



Bio

Ian Christopher Petty has earned a B.A. in History and Anthropology from the University of Connecticut ('12) and an M.A. Historic Archaeology from Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. He's worked as an archaeologist in the heritage sector for over a decade, employed in both field and museum roles across North America. Ian also serves as the Co-Director Black Cat Cemetery Preservation with his wife, Robyn Lacy, M.A.

Ian is pursuing an Interdisciplinary PhD at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador with a focus upon the historic logging industry of Newfoundland, circa 1850 to 1950. By combining archaeology, history, and geography, he will expand the number of recorded archaeological sites in the province and ultimately contribute a further understanding of the transportation and biogeographical data associated with the logging industry.

Research Project

The sites associated with this province's logging history include logging camps, roads, and sawmills, and remain in varying states of visibility upon the landscape of the island of NL. Hundreds of logging camps and sawmills were active in the interior and along the northeastern coast of the island during the late 19th century through the first half of the 20th century and while a selection of these sites have been visited, analyzed, and reported to the Provincial Archaeology Office, the overall total amounts to only 56 documented sites directly related to Newfoundland's logging industry. This project aims to address the dearth of research that focuses on the earlier decades of the industry through bolstering the overall lack of identified sites in order to gain a more accurate perspective of Newfoundland's industrial frontier. This project, adopting an interdisciplinary approach utilizing an archaeological, historical, and a biogeographical lens, aims to explore the impact and the heritage that Newfoundland's historic logging industry left behind in the dense forests, rivers, and lakes on the island.

This project will focus two distinct temporal periods. The first, a historic glimpse into the island's burgeoning forestry industry between 1880 and 1950, and the second, in the present-day interior of the province. Of the three disciplines that will comprise and address the overall objectives of this project, archaeological, geographic, and historical research will revolve around the historic facet in the earlier of the two timeframes, while the use of geography, and more specifically the use of biogeographical practices, will examine the current state of species diversification on the sites of these former logging operations.

Each discipline involved in this project provides a unique skillset that when combined will produce a beneficial product in the form of an expansion of Newfoundland's logging heritage. The use of historical research provides the overall framework of research and background into the people and communities that comprised the logging industry. Archaeological research connects that historic framework to tangible heritage, providing physical evidence to extend what's already known about this industrial environment through the use of material culture and sites that can not only be seen, but touched, documented, and ultimately preserved for present and future generations. The incorporation of biogeography expands the traditional limits of historic research by incorporating the environment as an active player participant rather than a static actor within this industrial environment. It aims to explain why logging operations were carried out when and where they were but is also able to re-examine these sites in the context of the present, in order to analyze how this island's forested landscape was able to recover and to what extent following the presence of logging.

There are four primary research objectives that this project will seek to address. The first combines all three disciplines into the identification, documentation, and preservation of previously undocumented, 20th century logging sites in Newfoundland. Drawing from archaeology and history, the second objective of this project is to identify, and analyze the material culture, i.e. the physical objects and architecture owned and constructed by people, that was forgotten, dropped, or purposely left behind on the landscape following the presence of logging crews. A third objective is an analysis of the transportation networks developed and utilized by the logging industry and is centered in the fields of transport geography and history. The final objective of this project utilizes tools of analysis from the field of biogeography as this project seeks to explore the effects of logging on Newfoundland's forests through an analysis of tree and vegetation species diversification and frequency following a series of disturbance events.