At Winter Work: Delineating the Nature and Extent of Newfoundland’s European Transhumant Tradition
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The goal of this project is to fill a major gap in the collective memory of this province by exploring Newfoundland’s European transhumant tradition. This understudied and poorly understood lifestyle revolved around European settlers abandoning the sedentary lifestyle of their home countries in favour of seasonal movements between fishing villages in the summer and interior cabins in the winter. Despite being practiced by most of the European population for almost 300 years, scholars have largely ignored this topic in favour of exploring the summer activities of the Europeans in Newfoundland and Labrador; inadvertently neglecting half of the life ways of the people they were studying. This research seeks to reverse this trend through an interdisciplinary approach that is employing archaeology, historical geography, and geographical information systems to locate, identify, and examine the few known winter houses and archival references to them. It also seeks to create a predictive model to examine how the environmental variables interacted to sustain this enduring tradition and identify more winter house sites in the future. In so doing, this research is opening up a new frontier of research into this highly unorthodox and uniquely Newfoundland method of European adaptation to the environmental and political challenges posed by North American settlement.