

2011 BLACK ISLAND (HeCi-15) EXCAVATION

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Figure 1 HeCi-15, facing south, House 1 and House 2.

This past summer I went back to Black Island with an initial crew of five, three undergraduate students from MUN (Steven England, Susan Geddes, and Dan Pedder) and one student from Nain (Walter Piercy). Unfortunately our gear did not arrive when we did, shipping troubles along the coast meant my gear stayed on the island while we were up in Nain waiting. Fortunately for us, PhD student Lindsay Swinarton and Jim Woollett of Université Laval were in the area and suggested we head out to their site at Dog Island and they had enough extra gear to suit us up. Realizing how well we worked together and how much work a larger crew could accomplish we stayed together after my gear arrived and spent three weeks with Lindsay's crew to finish her excavations. Black Island then saw a drastic increase in population when all eleven of us arrived on August 6th.

Based on the 2010 season I had decided to focus solely on House 2, the sod house with a clear 18th century occupation (Figure 1). My crew now consisted of the original five plus Lindsay Swinarton, Andreanne Couture, Melissa Burns, Ashlee Pigford, Amy Reedman, and Martin Merkuratsuk. With a much larger crew we were able to set up the grid with ease and spread out across the house.

We re-opened the test units from 2010, all six had been tarped and only one (Test Unit 5) remained unfinished near the entrance tunnel. House 2 is 7m x 8m with a fairly short entrance tunnel of about 4m long. We excavated in stratigraphic levels and quickly noticed that the stratigraphy throughout the house varied greatly. The North wall of the house, closest to House 1's entrance tunnel, was incredibly disturbed as compared



Figure 2 House 2, north wall.

to the stratigraphy from House 2's centre. Many of the paving stones and other structural elements from House 2 were probably used in the reconfiguration of House 1 as they were lacking. Furthermore, the two houses may have at one point been attached or House 1 cut into House 2 later on as there is a distinct entrance with a stone wall that perfectly align with House 1's entrance tunnel (Figure 2).

Along the west and south walls we exposed a sleeping platform and bench made from hard-packed sand and wooden beams and rocks were used to shore up these platforms. The paving stones that remain in the house are flat pieces of the local anorthosite with labradorite inclusions (which looked really beautiful when it rained). The cold trap was also present as were the wooden beams used to frame the house entrance.

The artifacts from House 2 have been sent to conservation as needed and catalogu-

ing is near-complete. Combined with the artifacts recovered from House 2 during the 2010 season we have an assemblage that represents a household that wholly embraced European trade objects. Preliminary counts put pipe fragments as the largest artifact category (n= 304), followed by glass beads (n= 192), iron nails (n= 185), ceramic sherds (n= 128), and glass fragments (n= 127). Soapstone fragments, which include part of a lamp and a pot fragment with charred fat, are under-represented (n=8) as are worked whale bone artifacts (n= approx. 40). Further analysis will provide a clearer picture of the artifact assemblage and distribution.

The faunal remains will be sent to Lindsay Swinarton at the Université Laval for analysis, and soil samples were sent to Cynthia Zutter and her student Amy Reedman at Grant MacEwan University for botanical analysis.

Despite the complications with ship-



Figure 3 My crew working at HeCi-15.

ping and poor weather conditions throughout August our large crew excavated 39 (1x1m) units and completed the excavation of House 2. The data from this excavation will be compared to other 18th century houses in the Nain area as part of my dissertation.

Acknowledgments

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