

INDIAN HARBOUR, LABRADOR
Dr. Lisa Rankin
Memorial University



Figure 1 Site FkBg-3 at Indian Harbour, Labrador (Rankin)

In 2009 Lisa Rankin conducted excavations at an historic period Inuit site (FkBg-3) at Indian Harbour, on Huntingdon Island near Cartwright, Labrador (Figure 1). The site had been briefly tested in 2006 and found to contain early historic period Inuit sod-walled houses similar to those previously excavated by Rankin at the site of Snack Cove 3, at the opposite (outer) end of Huntingdon Island. Initial indications were that the houses at Indian Harbour were slightly earlier than those at Snack Cove 3 and might represent a prior occupation by the same group of people. Plans were therefore made to conduct intensive excavations at the site when funds were available. The necessary funds materialized with the awarding of a SSHRC CURA grant in 2009. The crew consisted of 4 graduate students: Eric Tourigny, Marianne Hardenberg and Corey Hutchings from Memorial University, and Lindsay Swinarton of l' Université Laval.

The 2009 excavations focused upon a pair of contiguous sod-walled houses that appeared to share part of an entrance passage. By the end of the six-week field season, the larger of the two houses (House 1) had been almost completely excavated, along with its large entrance passage (Figure 2). The excavated house has a roughly rectangular paved subterranean floor area measuring 5.15m from front to back and approximately 2.75m wide. There are raised, partly paved earth benches on both long sides and at the rear which are faced on the inside with upright slabs of stone. At each corner of the floor is a lamp-stand/hearth area marked by upright stone slabs. The long, paved entrance passage features a very well defined sunken cold trap immediately outside



Figure 2 House 1, Indian Harbour, after excavation (Rankin)




Figure 3 Soapstone bowl in situ (Rankin)

the floor area.

Traditional Inuit artifacts recovered from this house include an almost complete rectangular soapstone bowl (Figure 3), a bone dog-trace buckle, and several iron-bladed ulus. European-manufactured artifacts include numerous nails and spikes (some modified), an iron flensing knife and the pewter handle and rim from a hinged-lid beer tankard. All of the items recovered point to a probable late 16th century date for the occupation of this house. A Recent-Indian period chert projectile point recovered from the roof-collapse layer indicates an earlier Amerindian use of the locality. The fact that a polynya occurs nearby suggests that year-round access to sea mammals may have been a consideration in the selection of this site by the Inuit, at least, and this is sup-

ported by the recovery of the flensing knife.

Mapping and further testing of the site in 2009 revealed a total 5 sod-walled Inuit houses, probably spanning the late 16th to early 18th century, and one stone tent ring of unknown date. Plans for 2010 are to complete the excavation of House 1 by removing the flag-stone floor, to completely excavate the adjoining house, and to excavate one of the later houses. Comparisons of the artifact and faunal assemblages between the houses at this site and the three houses previously excavated at Snack Cove 3 will provide the basis for an interpretation of changes in Inuit economy during the critical early historic period in the Sandwich Bay area as European objects became more readily available. 

PROVINCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY OFFICE 2009

Ken Reynolds, Delphina Mercer and Stephen Hull

Provincial Archaeology Office (PAO)

Southern Labrador

In June Stephen and Delphina traveled to southern Labrador. This trip was prompted by several reasons:

1. Search for further evidence of a spot find site found by Jim Tuck in Forteau in the early 1970s.
2. Search for Jim Tuck's area 11 at L'Anse Amour.
3. Search for evidence of baleen processing at Red Bay on the Boney shore and Kelpy Cove areas.
4. Search for sites in Carrols Cove and Western Arm.
5. Explore the L'Anse au Diable area for Arrowhead Mine
6. And as always check on the condition of known sites such as Cowpath and Pinware Hill.

On the morning of June 8, 2009 we excavated 12 test pits a proposed house location in Forteau. They ranged in depth from 15 cm to just over 50 cm deep. The stratigraphy of most of the pits consisted of a thin layer of grass and decaying matter, a layer of black or-

ganic material and then a layer of fine pinkish quartzite beach sand. In some of the pits nearest the road (left side of Figure 1) there was no pink sand layer. In one pit near the beach (near bottom right corner of Figure 1) the black layer was very dense, to the point the shovel had to be used to chip away parts of the layer; this may be a midden deposit.

Numerous artifacts were found in the field including typical white wares, lots of iron nails, brick fragments, pipe stems, bottle glass, gun flint and bone. None of those artifacts would suggest a date earlier than the 19th century. There were just two artifacts recovered that may be older: a single piece of blue hand painted Tin glaze and a single piece of Normandy Stoneware. None of the artifacts were found in an undisturbed context nor were there any features found, with the exception of the possible midden.

Foundations of recent buildings were notable in the field (Figure 1, Box around test pit C4). There was also a foundation noted near test pits A1 & B1, which, we learned dur-