



## Rescue Archaeology

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Parks Canada Agency is planning to permanently close its Archaeology Laboratory in Woodside (Dartmouth), Nova Scotia, and move the facility's archaeology collection, historical objects collection, and staff to Gatineau, Québec. This state-of-the-art facility was purpose-built in 2009 and is the only laboratory of its kind in Atlantic Canada.

The archaeology collection contains approximately 1.45 million archaeological objects representing thousands of years of Atlantic Canadian heritage. The stories of our region's diverse Indigenous and immigrant cultures are told through artifacts from **Port Royal, Beaubassin, Fort Anne, the Melanson Settlement, the Halifax Citadel, Sable Island, Signal Hill, Port-la-Joye/Fort Amherst, Fort Beauséjour, and Kejimkujik**, among others. The lab is also home to tens of thousands of artifacts from national historic sites and national parks that are also UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These include **L'Anse aux Meadows, Gros Morne, and Grand-Pré**. Together with thousands of pages of associated site records, photographs, maps, and drawings, the archaeology collection is a critical resource for researchers and educators in our region. Community members, school children, university students, conservators, heritage industry consultants, provincial museums staff, graduate-level researchers, and university faculty have all used the lab and its archaeology collection to better understand, manage, and communicate the richness of our region's archaeological heritage.

A central concern is that the archaeology collection is a *living collection* to which researchers and heritage resource professionals in Atlantic Canada regularly return for comparison and study. Through it, and particularly through the facility's unique historical ceramics type collection and material culture library, they are able to identify and date newly discovered evidence in a way that would otherwise be far more costly, often prohibitively so. The laboratory's site records are likewise a valuable resource for 'archival archaeology', which allows new discoveries to be made by subjecting old finds to new analytical techniques. *Atlantic Canada's archaeology collection and its accompanying records will cease to be a living collection for Atlantic Canadian educators and researchers if it is warehoused in Gatineau.*



The removal of this one-of-a-kind facility and its archaeology collection is a regressive policy decision that will significantly erode our capacity to study, protect, and promote Atlantic Canadian heritage. By relocating conservation and collections staff positions from this facility to Gatineau, Parks Canada administrators will continue the troubling process of centralization that has in recent years seen other important federal labs in our region shuttered, such as the RCMP Forensics Lab (2015).

Perhaps most disturbingly, the decision contradicts best practices and archaeological ethics as defined in the charters and codes of conduct of virtually every professional archaeological association and organization. Archaeology's capacity to give voice to the histories of marginalized peoples is widely recognized and, given the troubling legacy of our colonial past, professional archaeologists today often go to great lengths to foster dialogue and partnerships with members of descendant communities. At a time when the discipline across the western world is turning toward constructive public engagement as a means of creating balance and equity in public memory, Parks Canada's decision to uproot a significant part of the archaeological heritage of the Acadian people, among others, is surprisingly tone deaf as well as damaging to historical science.

The CBC documentary series, *Canada: The Story of Us*, recently angered Atlantic Canadians by omitting our region's foundational contribution to Canada's early colonial history. If Parks Canada's plan to close its regional archaeology laboratory is allowed to proceed, it will physically dislocate much of our region's archaeological heritage and reduce our capacity to contribute to the national narrative.

Please join us in calling on the federal government to reverse its regressive decision to close the Parks Canada Archaeology Lab. It would be a wonderful gift, as we celebrate Canada's 150th year, for the Trudeau government to allow our archaeological heritage to remain in Atlantic Canada where it belongs.

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