

THE AVERTOK ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

July 29, 2017 Laura Kelvin Archives, Community Archaeology, Education, Excavation, Explore
Posts, Fieldwork, Photography, Public Archaeology Communitiy Archaeology, Inuit Archaeology, Labrador, Nunatsiavut



The 2017 Avertok Archaeology Crew! Top from left to right: Laura, Emma G., John, Jacinda, Robyn, Maryssa, Bottom from left to right: Ida, Emma L.S., Kayley, Deirdre.

Checking in from Hopedale, Nunatsiavut, this is Ida Semigak, an archaeology summer student with the Avertok Archaeology Project. The Avertok Archaeology Project is part of the larger Tradition & Transition: PiusituKaujuit Asianguvalliajuillu project, which is a partnership between Memorial University in Newfoundland and the Nunatsiavut Government. Avertok is the name of the original Inuit settlement where Hopedale is located. It means “a place of whales.” The project started when the Hopedale community asked Dr. Lisa Rankin from Memorial University to conduct archaeological research in the area. John Piercy and I have been hired as summer students to work on various aspects of the research.

We begin every day at the Moravian Mission, where we have set up our archaeology lab in the Mission House. The Hopedale Mission was established in 1782, and the building is the earliest surviving Moravian structure on the Labrador coast. The building was completed between 1850-1861. We organize, clean, and catalog artifacts with archaeologists Dr. Laura Kelvin and Emma Gilheany. The building is very cold, but John particularly enjoys cleaning the nails and metals recovered from site. I enjoy cleaning and examining the ceramics. Some times we have visitors in the lab like cruise participants and the kids from the Hopedale literacy camp. We give them tours of the lab and tell them about what we do in the lab.



Doing an “archaeological survey” with the kids from the literacy camp. They found a lot of “artifacts” (toys and candy).



Dr. Kelvin showing visitors from a cruise ship artifacts in the lab. Photo Credit: Rosie Edmunds.



A soap stone artifact found this season at the Old Hopedale site. Photo Credit: Laura Kelvin.

This summer we have been looking at archival photos from the past that show what Hopedale used to look like. We have been taking photos and videos of these same spots around town to see what has changed.



Then and Now: The Moravian Mission 1886 (top) and 2017 (bottom) . Photo Credit: The Rooms Archives A7. 103, Laura Kelvin.



Then and Now: Hopedale 1930 (top) and 2017 (bottom). Photo Credit: The Rooms Archive VA 110-67.2, Ida Semigak.

We sometimes spend our days digging in town at the Old Hopedale site or at the nearby site of Karmakulluk being excavated by Jacinda. Emma Lewis-Sing, Robyn Fleming, and Deirdre Elliot trained us in excavation techniques. I really like digging for artifacts! For example, yesterday I found a piece of wood with a hole where a nail would have been decades ago.



Ida working at Karmakulluk. Photo Credit: Laura Kelvin.



John digging at Karmakulluk. Photo Credit: Ida Semigak.



Karmakulluk. Photo Credit: Ida Semigak.

Dr. Kelvin, John, and I are also interviewing community members to find out more about artifacts and traditional culture. Two of the interviews we have conducted dealt with traditional Inuit kayak-making. We are currently putting together a video, which will be posted to our YouTube page, showing the interviews. The video will also feature the cardboard kayak we made for the Rhubarb Festival's cardboard boat race. Our kayak came in second place! In addition to interviewing community members, we have also been interviewing other members of the archaeology team.

In the last three weeks, I have enjoyed working with the archaeologists, going to the Karmakulluk site, and finding artifacts. Interviewing community members about kayak-making made John interested in helping make a kayak in the near future.



Ross Flowers showing Laura and John the sealskin kayak he made. Photo Credit: Ida Semigak.



John making a video about Hopedale. Photo Credit: Laura Kelvin.



John and Elder Andrea Flowers during an interview. Photo Credit: Rosie Edmunds.



Making a cardboard kayak for the Rhubarb festival's cardboard boat race. Photo Credit: Rosie Edmunds.



Our cardboard kayak. We came in second in the race! Photo Credit: Laura Kelvin.