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Archaeology, History, and the Beothuks

RALPH T. PASTORE

THE SYSTEMATIC STUDY of the Beothuks may be said to have begun with James P. Howley (1847-1918), a geologist who was obsessed with Newfoundland's aboriginal people and their fate.[1] For forty years he collected published works, maps, newspaper accounts, government documents, personal papers and oral traditions pertaining to the Beothuks. The result was his monumental collection, *The Beothucks or Red Indians* (1915). Every study of the Beothuks since 1915 has begun with Howley, and it is remarkable how relatively little new documentary material has been added since his collection was completed. In many ways Howley was ideally suited for this work. He had spent much of his life carrying out geological surveys of the island in the company of Micmac guides from whom he acquired both an intimate knowledge of the island's environment and a collection of Micmac oral traditions about the Beothuks. Howley also knew John Peyton Jr. (1793-1879), an Exploits Bay merchant and magistrate who had captured Mary March (Demasduit) in 1819 and who had kept Shanawdithit, the last known Beothuk, in his household for five years. Howley's research has served modern scholars well. He was a diligent collector who applied a strong critical sense to both oral and documentary material.

Howley is best known as an historian, but he was also interested in the physical remains of Newfoundland's Native peoples. He excavated Beothuk burials on Swan Island and Yellow Fox Island in Notre Dame Bay, and he reported on the investigations of similar burials on the Straight Shore on the northeast coast, Rencontre Island (on the South Coast), Hangman's Island and Tilt Island in Placentia Bay, and Big Island and Comfort Island in Notre Dame Bay (Howley 1915:288-94, 330-335). Much of the resultant material from this work was deposited in a museum in St. John's, of which Howley was for a time the curator. That museum and its collections formed the basis of the Newfoundland Provincial Museum which is today the repository of a wide range of archaeological collections.

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In the summer of 1914, the American anthropologist Frank Speck made a brief visit to Newfoundland and eight years later published *Beothuk and Micmac*, a short ethnographic description of the Newfoundland Micmacs as well as a number of Speck's observations on the remains and history of the island's aboriginal Indians. Given the brevity of his research, Speck came to a number of conclusions which have, for the most part, withstood the test of time. For example, in reacting to the growing notion that the Beothuks were different in most respects from the other Native peoples of the region, Speck argued that, "we should be careful...not to overestimate the peculiarity of the position of the tribe simply because it became extinct under rather tragic circumstances, or because so little is known of it" (Speck 1922:12). Rather, Speck concluded, the Beothuks were "a divergent early branch of the eastern Algonkian" with "local distinctiveness" (*ibid.* p. 13). Speck was especially interested in the question of Beothuk-Micmac interaction. On the basis of what must be admitted are rather superficial similarities, Speck concluded that there had been some material cultural borrowing by the Micmacs from the Beothuks (*ibid.* pp. 32-46) and on the basis of stories collected from Micmac informants, Speck also believed that the Micmacs and the Beothuks "were undoubtedly on friendly terms originally and that they intermingled" (*ibid.* p. 29). The Micmac informants whom Speck interviewed vehemently denied that their ancestors had played a role in the extermination of the Beothuks and countered with an explanation — one that would be echoed much later by academic researchers — that the Beothuks "were doomed to their fate through an unconquerable fear of their fellow-men..." (*ibid.* p. 47).

Speck also carried out preliminary excavations in a number of housepits along the Red Indian Lake-Exploits River system and recognized that "some systematic excavation in the region would prove very profitable" (*ibid.* p. 25). A start toward that investigation began in the 1920s when Diamond Jenness, under the auspices of Canada's National Museum, began research on the Beothuks. In 1927 he reported on a Beothuk burial on Long Island, 15 km west of Inspector Island, which consisted of the skeletons of a male, female, and sub-adult as well as carved bone ornaments and bark containers (Jenness 1929:36-37). Jenness also investigated Beothuk burials on Triton Island and Long Island in Green Bay (Jenness 1934: 26,28; Marshall 1974:45). By the standards of his time, Jenness was a competent anthropologist, but his historical treatment of the Beothuks left something to be desired. In *The Indians of Canada*, first published in 1932, he drew uncritically upon Howley and set out to a Canadian audience an explanation of the Beothuk demise that would become conventional wisdom. For Jenness, the reasons for the Beothuks' extinction were straightforward:

> The European fishermen who settled around the shores of the island in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries resented their petty pilfering, and shot them down at every opportunity, the French even placing a bounty on their heads; and the

> Micmac who crossed over from Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century hunted them relentlessly far into the interior (Jenness 1932: 266).

This theme of unrelenting slaughter was luridly amplified in Harold Horwood's "The People Who were Murdered for Fun," published in *MacLean's* in 1959. According to Horwood, "Newfoundland's proud and peaceful Beothuck Indians are extinct today because, for more than two centuries, a favourite sport of the island's whites was hunting natives like big game." One example of the sort of evidence upon which this conclusion was based is Horwood's treatment of a brief reference in Howley to an alleged massacre of Beothuks in Trinity Bay. Howley, in relating a story told to him by a resident of Trinity Bay, named Jabez Tilley, stated only the following:

> Another tradition was current to the effect that on one occasion 400 Indians were surprised and driven out on a point of land near Hant's Harbour, known as Bloody Point, and all were destroyed (Howley 1915:269).

Horwood turned this brief reference into the following:

> The largest massacre of Beothucks took place near Hants Harbor, Trinity Bay. There a group of fishermen, armed for hunting, managed to trap a whole tribe of Beothucks, driving them out on a peninsula which juts into the sea. They followed the panic-stricken Indians until they were crowded to the last inch of land, against the salt water, and there proceeded to slaughter them with their guns. Those who rushed into the sea were shot as they tried to swim and those who knelt and pleaded for mercy were shot as they knelt. The carnage did not stop until they had murdered every man, woman and child. They did not make an exact account of the number killed, but reported it to be "about four hundred" (Horwood 1959).

The bloody details, of course, have all been added, but there are other points that should alert a sceptical researcher. Most notably is the unliklihood of there being some four hundred Beothuks found on a peninsula in Trinity Bay. It is difficult to imagine how four hundred Beothuks could have gathered together in such a place. What would they have eaten? Hants Harbour, on the east side of Trinity Bay, was outside the southernmost limit of the onshore harp seal migration in that bay (Sanger 1977:142) and the only other resource that could have kept such a large number of Beothuks alive would have been a major Newfoundland caribou herd, also not likely to be found on a peninsula on the east side of Trinity Bay.[2]

This, and the other appalling slaughters to which Horwood referred, had happened because "...the island was gradually populated with families of deserters" who had fled British fishing ships. These deserters were a "rough and lawless" lot, and hence "trouble was inevitable" between them and the Beothuks. Modern Newfoundland scholars, of course, do not accept the notion that Newfoundland was settled by "families of deserters," nor that they were an especially "rough and

lawless" people. Unfortunately, Horwood's article was followed by a number of similar pieces with titles such as "Hounded into Extinction" (Forrest 1974), *Murder for Fun* (Kelly 1974) and Keith Winter's *Shananditti* (1975). This last work repeated all of the sensational accounts of Horwood, *et al.* and added to the tragedy with a completely unsupported assertion that the island had once been home to a population of 50,000 Beothuks. The following year, Canada's foremost popular historian, Pierre Berton, following Horwood's lead, alleged that many of the settlers of the northeast coast were "indentured seamen who had fled the slavery of shipboard life for the wilder freedom of the northeast coast. Such men could not return to England" (Berton 1976:124). He concluded that from the beginning of the 17th century to the beginning of the 19th, "visiting fishermen, lawless deserters and Micmac Indians carried out what can only be described as a policy of genocide against the Red Indians" (Berton 1976: 125).

Although scholars in the 1970s and 1980s had begun to put together a version of Beothuk history that was much more complex than the simplistic explanations of Horwood *et al.*, this more sophisticated analysis would be slow to be adopted by writers outside of academe. As late as 1984, for example, Farley Mowat flatly stated that the Beothuks "...were exterminated to the last man, woman, and child by Newfoundland settlers and fishermen" (1984:148). Most of these writers based their work upon Howley's collection (liberally augmented by vivid imaginations) and the so-called Liverpool manuscript, a document which had been acquired by a private collector in 1944 and deposited in the Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1959 (Marshall 1989: 22). The Liverpool manuscript is itself an abstract of the Pulling manuscript which Memorial University linguist John Hewson had unearthed in the late 1960s (Hewson n.d.:1). The Pulling ms was the product of Lt. George C. Pulling who, in 1792, while acting as a captain in the employ of a local merchant, had interviewed fishermen, furriers, and merchants along the northeast coast and collected a number of accounts of atrocities inflicted upon the Beothuks. The Pulling manuscript is an important supplement to Howley's collection, but it relates to a time when friction between Europeans and Beothuks may have been at its worst — and the events that it describes were not necessarily typical of the entire span of Beothuk-European relations.[3]

Indeed, all of the sources upon which our knowledge of the Beothuks is based must be read with an understanding of the historical context in which they were written. For example, in 1768 Lt. John Cartwright was asked by the naval governor of Newfoundland, Hugh Palliser, to ascend the Exploits River in 1768 in an attempt to make contact with the Beothuks. Cartwright did not succeed in locating any Beothuks, but he did produce a report of his efforts. His account of that expedition resonates with many of the same sentiments to be found in popular accounts of the Beothuk demise some two hundred years later. Cartwright had a dim view of Newfoundland fishermen, and in speaking of their depredations against the Beothuks wrote:

> The fishermen generally even take a brutal pleasure in boasting of these barbarities. He that has shot one Indian values himself more upon the fact than had he overcome a bear or wolf and fails not to speak of it with a brutal triumph, especially in the mad hours of drunkenness (Howley 1915:36).

In fact, Cartwright's view of European civilization, not just Newfoundland fishermen, was generally low. In comparing the Beothuks to Europeans he wrote:

> If they know not the arts which embellish life, and those sciences which dignify humanity, they are ignorant also of the long train of vices that corrupt the manners of civilized nations and of the enormous crimes that debase mankind (Howley 1915:39).

This view of the world was consistent with Cartwright's later career. He was very sympathetic to the American Revolution and he was a strong advocate of Parliamentary reform including such then radical measures as annual elections and universal suffrage. He was also in frequent correspondence with anti-slavery leaders and his officer's commission was cancelled for his support of the French Revolution (Smith 1921-22:1133-34).

This is not to say, of course, that Cartwright should be discounted as a source of evidence about the Beothuks, only that what he said should be considered within the context of his career and times. Obviously Cartwright had heard of actual atrocities, but it is necessary to ask why Newfoundland settlers and fishermen had been so demonized. It is difficult to read Cartwright, and later writers such as Horwood, Berton, and Mowat, without concluding that white Newfoundlanders were somehow more brutal than the Europeans who settled elsewhere in North America. Such thinking can lead to dangerous oversimplifications such as the statement made in April of 1989 by the wildlife coordinator for the Toronto Humane Society which explicitly linked Newfoundlanders' participation in the seal hunt with their earlier destruction of the Beothuks (Westcott 1989).

Significantly, the first change in this one-dimensional explanation of Beothuk extinction would come from the results of archaeological, rather than historical, investigation. The process began in 1965 with the work of the Ontario researcher, Helen Devereaux, who, under the aegis of the National Museum, investigated the well-known Beothuk site at the Beaches in Bonavista Bay. She excavated the interior of one house pit, but found only a stone flake, an iron spike, and some charcoal. The relative paucity of cultural material was the result, Devereaux suggested, of the house pit being "flushed out" by high waves. Extensive testing of another house pit resulted in the recovery of a small number of stone and iron tools as well a limited quantity of faunal remains (Devereux 1969).

Devereaux was very hesitant about drawing conclusions from her relatively limited work at the Beaches. The artifactual material did not allow her to date the site with any precision, and she concluded only that the Beothuk component dated to the historic period. The site did yield seal and bird bones which suggested an

early spring to fall occupation (*ibid.*). Devereux also carried out surveys of Notre Dame Bay in the 1960s and directed excavations at the Pope's Point site on the Exploits River (Marshall 1980:16-35,41). In 1969 and 1970 she worked at the important Indian Point site on the eastern side of Red Indian Lake in central Newfoundland, just south of the community of Millertown (Devereux 1970). It appears to have been the camp from which the Beothuk captive Demasduit was taken in 1819 (Howley 1915:99). Devereux's pioneering efforts at locating and assessing Beothuk sites would be followed up by a number of archaeologists in the years that ensued.

In the early 1970s as part of his work toward an M.A. from Memorial University, Paul Carignan also began work at the Beaches site as well as at a number of other locales in Bonavista Bay including the large, multi-component site at Cape Freels (Carignan 1975, 1977). He isolated a lithic assemblage characterized by relatively large side-notched projectile points, frequently made of rhyolite, which he identified as Beothuk. We now know, however, that what Carignan called historic Beothuk actually were produced by the ancestors of the Beothuks some 500 years before the arrival of Europeans. However, Carignan did make one point which still holds today, *i.e.*, that it was not possible to draw an explicit line of continuity from the Maritime Archaic tradition to the Beothuks (Carignan 1975:141).

Carignan had been a student of James Tuck who had been hired by Memorial University in 1968. Tuck's work at the Maritime Archaic cemetery at Port au Choix (Tuck 1976a), as well as that of another of his M.A. students, Raymond LeBlanc, resulted in the beginnings of a fuller answer to the question of the Beothuks' demise. Analysis by Frances Stewart of the faunal remains at the interior Wigwam Brook site on the Exploits River, which LeBlanc (1973) had dug, revealed that the Beothuks who had lived there in the late 18th/early 19th century had attempted to subsist year-round on caribou. As Tuck pointed out:

> An unknown number of natives were actually killed outright by Europeans. But important to the survival or extinction of the race, the remaining Beothuks were denied access to the coast and forced to try and survive on the resources of the interior. Because of their inability to return to the coast in late winter...the Beothuks slowly became extinct, because the resources of interior Newfoundland were not sufficient to provide a year-round occupation for people who had traditionally exploited the rich resources of the coast for nine or ten months of every year (Tuck 1976b:75).

Soon after Tuck's pioneering synthesis of Newfoundland prehistory appeared, Senator Frederick Rowe's *Extinction: The Beothuks of Newfoundland* (1977) appeared. Rowe, the descendant of northeast coast settlers, was justifiably offended by the depiction of his ancestors by writers such as Horwood and others. In a detailed, well-reasoned narrative, Rowe laid out the thesis that:

> ...there is no defence or apology possible for the actions of some of the settlers. They did murder Beothuks and they committed other indefensible outrages against them, and the sum total of their actions must be regarded as a factor contributing to the decline and eventual extinction of that people. But this story of barbarous atrocities needs no exaggerations or inventions of the kind published in recent years. It must be seen in the perspectives of history, geography, economics and prevailing attitudes and customs (Rowe 1977:8).

Rowe's case was strengthened by the publication of an article by historian Leslie Upton in 1977 which concluded that the primary factor which had brought about the extinction of the Beothuks was European disease (Upton 1977). Positing a pre-contact population of about 2000 (which may be too high) Upton argued that the death rate due to disease which was characteristic of other North American Native groups, would have been more than sufficient to account for the Beothuk demise by 1800. Clearly, Upton's argument had been informed by works such as Sherburne Cook's (1973) "The Significance of Disease in the Extinction of the New England Indians" which had begun to give historians and archaeologists a new appreciation of the devastating role that European disease had played in the history of the New World peoples who lacked immunity to them. In a refinement of the Upton argument, Marshall (1981:71) suggested a pre-contact population of ca. 1,100 with the caveat that since so little archaeology on the Beothuks had been done, it was possible that Beothuk population was significantly smaller. Arguing that a scattered Beothuk population had largely avoided European contact, she concluded that it was "unlikely that during the first two centuries of the historic period (1500-1700) imported disease had a significant impact on their demography." That scattered, small, isolated population, in Marshall's view, made smallpox less of a threat than it had been to other Native groups, but it was likely that tuberculosis "played a significant role in the eventual demise of the Beothuk group" (Marshall 1981:75-76).

Although Marshall and Upton had significantly advanced our understanding of the Beothuks, a crucial question remained. Why had the Beothuks, unlike other Native peoples in North America, consistently withdrawn from contact with Europeans? LeBlanc's pioneering work had documented that withdrawal, at least for the later period, but it was clear that the Beothuks had followed a general strategy of avoiding Europeans from at least the early 17th century. There was, of course, an over-simplified explanation for this. In the fall of 1612 John Guy, who had attempted to establish a colony at Cupids at the bottom of Conception Bay, had led an exploratory expedition to nearby Trinity Bay, in part to make contact with the Beothuks. Guy's people met Beothuks at the bottom of Trinity Bay and effected an amiable meeting with them (Cell 1982:73-75). Some twenty-seven years later, the entrepreneur David Kirke, who had taken over George Calvert's premises at Ferryland, related the outlines of Guy's encounter with the Beothuks and reported that Guy had agreed to meet with the Beothuks the next year. Unfortunately,

according to Kirke, Guy was unable to return and the Beothuks who had showed up at the agreed-upon time and place were fired upon by another English vessel which by chance, had happened to be there. As a result, Kirke concluded, the Beothuks withdrew from contact with the English "and from that day to this have sought all occassions every fishinge season to doe all the mischiefe they can amongst the Fishermen..." (Kirke 1639). Howley included this account in his collection (without comment) and a number of subsequent writers alluded to it to explain why the Beothuks, after the early 17th century, avoided European contact.[4] This explanation is simply too facile. Elsewhere in North America, violent encounters between European fur traders and Native people were not that unusual, but they did not lead to a complete end to the trade.[5]

The answer to the question of why the Beothuks had not entered into a developed fur trade was unlikely to be answered by historical research alone since the historical record contains surprisingly few references to the Beothuks. The reasons for this lay in the nature of the Newfoundland economy and society. As Upton (1977) had noted, Indian agents, missionaries, and fur traders, who were the usual sources of information about Native people, were not to be found in Newfoundland. Upton had not explained why these sorts of Europeans were absent from the island, however, and in the reasons for their absence it was possible to discern an explanation for the Beothuk strategy of withdrawal. Although there was a small resident European population from the early 17th century onward, from the early 16th century until the middle of the eighteenth century Newfoundland had been in large measure a base for a migratory European fishery. The tiny English population did not warrant its own cleric until the beginning of the eighteenth century (Rowe 1980:189-190), so it is perhaps not surprising that there was no English missionary to the Beothuks. And, in any case, the colonial English were not known for their persistence in trying to convert North America's Native people to Christianity. The French did, of course, but there is no record of a French missionary effort to the Beothuks. The French, in fact, may not have had the opportunity. While they possessed their colony at Placentia (1662-1713) the Beothuks appear to have vacated Placentia Bay and the French there apparently had no direct contact with them.

A number of factors also weighed against either the French or English appointing an Indian agent to deal with the Beothuks. The small resident European population in both cases militated against such an office, but, more to the point, Newfoundland was an island, and whatever European power possessed naval superiority in the area could dominate it. As well, given their small population the Beothuks would have counted for little in the conflicts between the British and the French and would have hardly warranted the appointment of an Indian agent. Elsewhere in North America, Indian agents were often the medium through which Native peoples were deprived of their lands, but the island's poor-quality (in agricultural terms) land was hardly worth the effort of setting up the machinery of

an Indian office. In any case, an Indian agent would have had a difficult time after the early 17th century in even finding a Beothuk group with which to deal.

If the reasons for the lack of missionaries and Indian agents appear relatively straightforward, the absence of fur traders is more puzzling. Elsewhere in North America it was the practice for Europeans to trade European goods for furs procured by Native peoples. In Newfoundland, by contrast, Europeans were trapping their own furs as early as 1612, and by the end of the century it was a well-established winter occupation for settlers (Pastore 1987:50-51). A clue as to why this had happened was provided by the artifacts from the Beothuk site at Boyd's Cove, Notre Dame Bay, which had been discovered in 1981. The overwhelming majority of European goods at that site consisted of hundreds of nails many of which had been modified by the Beothuks into projectile points and other tools. With the exception of some 677 tiny blue and white beads, almost all of the rest of the European-produced portion of the assemblage consisted of fish hooks, scraps of iron and brass or copper, and a few broken knife blades. Only a few objects, such as an axe fragment and a chisel might have been obtained in trade, and even here, these items might have been picked up, as the nails undoubtedly were, from seasonally-abandoned fishing premises. The historical record contained a number of references, beginning in the early 17th century, to Beothuks pilfering from fishing premises,[6] and the beautifully-fashioned projectile points from Boyd's Cove suggested to this writer that perhaps the Beothuks had not engaged in a fully-developed fur trade because they did not need to. In "Fishermen, Furriers, and Beothuks: The Economy of Extinction" (1987), I argued that participation in an early fur trade was potentially a traumatic process which could be avoided if a Native group could acquire the desired metal objects without trapping furs and without face-to-face contacts with dangerous, unpredictable Europeans. Newfoundland was unusual in the Northeast in that for perhaps two hundred years, much of its coastline was not permanently occupied by white settlers, but seasonally, by European fishermen who, when they left in the fall, left behind wharves, stages, flakes, nails, and all of the metal debris of an early modern fishery. Such places must have seemed like treasure troves to the Beothuks. With this supply of highly-desired raw material available, the need to modify settlement and subsistence patterns would have been much less than on the mainland. As Burley (1981) has pointed out with respect to northeastern New Brunswick, even the early fur trade resulted in Micmac groups modifying their seasonal movements and hunting patterns in potentially stressful ways. The historically-recorded pattern in the Maritimes had Micmacs spending the warmer months in large concentrations on the coast waiting for fishermen/fur traders and the winter months in small, often family, groups in the interior hunting fur-bearers when their pelts would have been at their prime. Those winter months were, according to early French accounts, sometimes periods of famine which would have been even worse had it not been for the availability of European foods. Those starvation periods may have been the result of the Micmacs' inability to carry out communal caribou hunts, and might

also have been exacerbated by the Micmacs' settlement pattern which no longer included residence in large winter villages which contained supplies of preserved food. Such a pattern, Burley argues, would not have maximized the exploitation of the resources of northeastern New Brunswick and was so unstable that it is unlikely to have existed in the pre-contact period.

Recent work by Rowley-Conwy (1990) and Schwarz (1994) points to the likelihood of prehistoric Beothuks following a pattern of exploiting coastal resources in sheltered "inner" areas during the summer, spending fall and winter in the "near coastal" interior, where caribou would have been hunted, and moving in spring to "outer coastal" locations where harp seals were available. If, as I suspect, prehistoric Beothuks (or some of them) congregated in large winter villages and lived on stored food, participation in a fur trade by their descendants would have meant breaking up those village populations into small groups to hunt fur-bearing animals in the interior. Lacking stored food and the inability to carry out large-scale communal hunts, the Beothuks might have experienced the same shortage of food which seems to have characterized the Micmacs in the 17th century. In fact, the Beothuks might have undergone even greater stress than the Micmacs because the impoverished environment of interior Newfoundland, lacking as it did moose, varying hare, porcupine, and dense beaver populations, would have made survival itself that much more difficult (Tuck and Pastore 1985). In short, there were significant short-term advantages for the Beothuks to adopt a strategy of acquiring European goods through pilfering rather than trade.

Unfortunately, there were also long-term disadvantages to this strategy. A developed fur trade between the Beothuks and the Europeans would likely have regularized relations between the two groups to the extent that Beothuks and Europeans might have coexisted together in somewhat the same manner as the Micmacs and the Acadians. Instead, the pattern of Beothuk pilfering of European goods led over time to retaliation by Europeans. Such actions by migratory European fishermen were something that the Beothuks might have lived with indefinitely, but when whites began to settle permanently in Newfoundland, the pattern of Beothuk pilfering and European retaliation intensified. The Beothuks reacted to this by vacating the shores of one bay after another as European settlement advanced northward from its beginnings on the Avalon peninsula. Other portions of the island were also denied to the Beothuks by other ethnic groups. The French presence in Placentia Bay, the Micmacs in the southern third of the island from St. George's Bay to Placentia Bay, and the Inuit use of the Strait of Belle Isle, all contributed to a shrinking of the territory available to the Beothuks. After about the middle of the 18th century, the Beothuks were increasingly refugees in their own land, first in Notre Dame Bay, and then ultimately along the Exploits River where the remnants of the Beothuk people were unable to live on the inadequate resources of the interior (Pastore 1989).

Although we may now have a reasonable explanation for the extinction of the Beothuks, a number of significant questions about their history remains. Perhaps

the most important of these is that of the size of the Beothuk population at the time of European contact. Because of the lack of archaeological work on the island as well as the paucity of historic sources, estimates of Beothuk population have of necessity been based on relatively little evidence. Drawing upon the works of Eggan (1968) and Kroeber (1939) who had produced generalized estimates of the hunter-gatherer carrying capacities of the various regions of North America, Upton, for example, calculated that the aboriginal population of Newfoundland lay between 1123 and 3050 people (Upton 1977:134). This figure was based upon Eggan's argument that the "northeastern forest" could support one hunter-gatherer per 100 km^2, modified by Kroeber's suggestion that one mile of coastline, with its interior, could also support one person. Upton further assumed that while "the ability of the northeastern forest to support life decreased as man moved north, the lower figure would seem more reasonable; but as Newfoundland had a climate mild by comparison with the mainland in the same latitude, I would place the pre-contact population at 2000" (*ibid.*). This figure must be taken with a very large grain of salt if for no other reason than it does not take into account Newfoundland's specific environment with its relatively few prey species and its marine environment which is characterized by abundant, but highly seasonal (and sometimes unreliable) resources. Without a great deal more systematic archaeological surveying of the island, it is simply impossible to arrive at a figure for the pre-contact population of the island that can be accepted with confidence.

Not until the middle of the 18th century did Europeans comment on the population of the remaining Beothuks, and even here, it must be noted that these figures have to be treated with caution because of the lack of contact between Europeans and Beothuks. These estimates ranged from 300 to 600 (Marshall 1977:234). For her part, Marshall drew on a recently discovered map by John Cartwright who had indicated the wigwams he had seen along the Exploits River. Marshall arrived at a figure of 352 Beothuks alive in 1768, but this estimate is based on the assumptions that of the 94 dwellings recorded on the Exploits, only half had been occupied in 1767-68 and that these wigwams on average were occupied by five individuals. These assumptions result in a figure of 235, but since Cartwright also suggested that only 2/3 of the Beothuks were to be found on the river, another 117 individuals would have to be added to the total (Marshall 1977:235). Clearly, the difficulties in arriving at Beothuk population figures which can be confidently accepted are considerable and are likely to remain so for some time.

Marshall's treatment of Beothuk population was only one of a number of studies that she has carried out over the years. Her M.A. thesis, *Beothuk Bark Canoes: An Analysis and Comparative Study*, published in the National Museum Mercury Series, was a meticulous examination of all of the known representations and descriptions of Beothuk canoes which concluded that the Beothuks had built two different types of canoes, a specialized sea-going canoe, and a more generalized type (Marshall 1985). Other aspects of Beothuk culture examined by Marshall included the beautifully-carved bone ornaments, which in Marshall's view, were

"stylized representations of meaningful forms such as those of living beings, and that the decorations are not superimposed patterns, but originally signified an intimate part of the form from which the carvings were derived." In Marshall's opinion, this implied "a basic similarity between the Beothuk carvings and the Dorset pieces, particularly those from Port au Choix" (Marshall 1978:152). Broadening her scope to include a study of all of the European illustrations of the Beothuks and their material culture, Marshall found that the majority of these illustrations "constituted artistic imagination or were based on borrowed material, that is, on pictures of native people other than the Beothuk" (Marshall 1988a:47). Only John Guy's sketch of a canoe, John Cartwright's drawing of a Beothuk camp (including a canoe), and an 1819 painting of Demasduwit by Lady Hamilton (wife of Governor Sir Charles Hamilton) can be considered authentic representations (*ibid.* p. 65).

In addition to these studies of Beothuk material culture, Marshall has also offered a number of new interpretations of Beothuk history. Most notably, in "Beothuk and Micmac: Re-examining Relationships" (1988b) she has exhaustively surveyed Beothuk-Micmac relations and concluded that this investigation "has produced evidence of hostilities which would have contributed to the decline of the Beothuk population. ..." (Marshall 1988b:82). More recently, Marshall has proposed that the Beothuks followed at least two distinct subsistence patterns, "a generalized adaptation centering around coastal base camps, and a specialized one concentrating on the exploitation of migrating caribou herds" (Marshall 1990:216).

Marshall's work, like that of most Beothuk students, has been, of necessity, interdisciplinary in character relying both upon historical and archaeological research. Elsewhere in North America students of other Native peoples have been able to draw upon linguistic evidence in an attempt to determine the answers to questions such as the nature and degree of contact between Native groups and Europeans.[7] Unfortunately, only three vocabularies, collected from three Beothuk females in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, are known, and the total number of entries from these three sources is only 350. These vocabularies were of course compiled by untrained collectors, and, to compound the difficulty, later transcribers garbled what were already problematic texts (Hewson 1978:7). Hewson's careful analysis of this body of work has resulted in an invaluable source for researchers who now have an authoritative treatment of the original vocabularies and their derivatives. In addition, Hewson's comparison of Beothuk vocabularies with Proto-Algonkian, a hypothetical protolanguage for which Hewson has produced a dictionary (1993), strongly indicates that Beothuk belongs within the Algonkian family of languages. As well, although the evidence is quite limited, it is also possible that Beothuk is related to Central Algonkian (as is that of the Labrador Innu) rather than Eastern Algonkian, the subgroup to which Micmac belongs (Hewson 1978:146).

Given the relatively limited nature of the linguistic, as well as the historical, record, it may be expected that new insights into the Beothuk experience will come

from the discipline of archaeology. Although the pace of archaeological research on the Beothuks has slowed in recent years (due largely to a lack of funding), the archaeological foundation for a more solid understanding of the Beothuks is in place. After the pioneering work of Tuck and LeBlanc, a succession of Memorial University students have made significant contributions to the field of Beothuk studies. Most notably, Gerald Penney (1982) identified the Little Passage complex, the bearers of which were the prehistoric ancestors of the Beothuks. Now, for the first time it was possible to trace the prehistory of the Beothuks back at least 800 years or more. Penney's work was buttressed by the detailed attribute analysis of Beothuk, Little Passage, and the earlier Beaches complex projectile points carried out by Fred Schwarz (1984) which extended the culture history of the prehistoric Beothuks to perhaps 1000 B.P. The ultimate origins of the Beothuks, however, remain somewhat of a mystery. It is still not clear if the Beothuks are descended from a remnant population of Maritime Archaic people on the island, or if they arrived on the island from Labrador sometime perhaps in the first millennium A.D. Only further archaeological research will answer this question.

Schwarz has continued to add significantly to our understanding of the prehistory of the Beothuks. His surveys of the Gambo Pond area have suggested that prehistoric use of the island's interior resources may have been greater than previously suspected. Schwarz, representative of a new generation of archaeologists, has also called for researchers to look beyond environmental factors to explain why, for example, the ancestors of the Beothuks were more successful in maintaining their occupation of Newfoundland than their Palaeo-Eskimo predecessors who became extinct after relatively short occupations of the island. In his words, Newfoundland archaeologists must seek "to understand the social and cultural contexts within which past economic strategies were practiced and within which the documented extinction events occurred" (Schwarz 1994:68).

Schwarz is not the only recent Memorial graduate to make a contribution to Beothuk studies. Laurie MacLean, for example, has recently resumed work at the Beaches, the data from which has led him to the conclusion that the 16th and 17th century Beothuks who occupied that site were living "a mostly traditional lifestyle that was only slightly modified by exposure to Europeans" (MacLean 1994:71). Earlier, drawing upon his M.A. work, MacLean had suggested that "Europeans in Newfoundland made objects specifically for trading with the Beothuk" (MacLean 1990:175). Based on metallurgical analysis of a number of Beothuk artifacts, MacLean concluded that some had actually been made in a European forge, presumably to be traded. This distillation of MacLean's thesis appeared in this journal which also carried an article by William Gilbert (1990) who carefully traced John Guy's 1612 voyage in Trinity Bay and predicted the location of a number of the Beothuk sites which Guy had noted. One of those sites, which Gilbert appears to have found, lies on Dildo Pond, just inland from the bottom of Trinity Bay. Gilbert has suggested that this locale may be a caribou kill site, which may be part of a pattern suggested by Peter Rowley-Conwy. Rowley-Conwy, bringing to his

work the fresh perspective of his background in Old World faunal analysis, concluded that "Beothuk winter activities in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries involved specialised caribou hunting during the fall migrations located deep in the interior of Newfoundland." By contrast, he posited, early historic-late prehistoric Beothuks would have followed "a more generalized strategy based on both caribou and coastal resources" with "winter settlements a little way inland from the coasts" (Rowley-Conwy 1990:27-28). Given the possibility of periods of caribou minima, the earlier pattern would have been the more optimal of the two. The Beothuks, Rowley-Conwy argued, would have had to abandon that more optimal strategy by the late 17th and early 18th centuries because of the increasing European winter transhumance into the near-shore interior, a practice documented by Smith (1987). Thus, Rowley-Conwy concluded:

> ...the generalized overwintering strategy suggested...was replaced by specialised reliance on caribou deeper in the interior, with all the dislocation that this implies. Because of the transport problem, stores from the previous summer would be less likely to play a part in survival over the winter (and the European presence on the coast would also have made it more difficult to procure sufficient summer resources for this purpose in the first place). If oscillations in caribou populations did actually occur in Newfoundland, the deep-interior base camp option would have been impossible to maintain in all but the shortest term (*ibid.* p. 29).

Douglas Robbins, a Ph.D. candidate at McGill University, has also provided a fresh look at Beothuk extinction. Noting the absence of prehistoric (and historic) Beothuk sites on the Northern peninsula, Robbins posited that there had been little contact between the inhabitants of the island and those of mainland Quebec-Labrador.[8] If, Robbins argued:

> there was only sporadic interaction between the Island of Newfoundland and the Quebec-Labrador mainland during the late prehistoric period..., then the exinction of the historic Newfoundland Beothuks was an understandable outcome. Lacking well-established trade partners and allies, and having no motivation for forming an alliance with whites on the Island, extinction was almost inevitable for Beothuks in the face of an expanding and unsympathetic white population (Robbins 1989:32).

Robbins and Rowley-Conwy have both re-examined old data to produce new explanations for the extinction of the Beothuks. Similarly, Ruth Whitehead has shown that it is possible to extract new information from material which has long been ignored. In her case, it was a "shroud" from a mummified body of a Beothuk child which had been recovered from the Burnt Island site in 1886. During the course of Whitehead's analysis of the Beothuk infant's covering, she determined that it was actually a woman's legging sewn from a number of small pieces of skin. She has also found that the child's moccasin was sewn together with spruce roots. The patchwork shroud and the use of spruce roots rather than caribou sinew both

indicate a group under considerable stress because of their inability to secure sufficient quantities of caribou to provide for the basic necessities of life (Whitehead 1987).

Ruth Whitehead has shown that it is possible to make real progress in an area by examining, or re-examining, museum collections. Perhaps we should look upon this era of reduced funding as an opportunity to study the historic and prehistoric Beothuk collections that already exist. If Whitehead's work is any indication, those museum cases may contain some real treasures.

Notes

[1]I would like to thank Ingeborg Marshall and James Tuck for reading earlier versions of this article. In the interest of brevity I have chosen to omit discussion of a number of nineteenth-century writers, such as Bonnycastle (1842), Jukes (1842), Tocque (1856, 1878), Wilson (1866), Lloyd (1875), Gatschet (1885, 1886, 1890), Patterson (1892), and Prowse (1895), upon whose observations Howley drew.

[2]Rowe (1977:25-31) does an excellent job of debunking Horwood's treatment of the alleged Hant's Harbour massacre.

[3]Recently, Pullings's motives have been questioned by Olaf Janzen. In 1786, Pulling, who was then a young midshipman, proposed that he be given the command of a vessel and extensive civil powers in order to bring about some measure of order on the northeast coast. In Janzen's words: "... it seems obvious that here was a young and ambitious officer, looking for any opportunity which could lead to promotion from midshipmen to lieutenant. He was looking for a command, not justice for the Indians" (Janzen 1991:74-75).

[4]Surprisingly, even Upton (1977:137-138) explained the Beothuk strategy of withdrawal as resulting from this incident.

[5]As for example when Jacques Cartier fired two cannons over the heads of Micmacs in the Bay of Chaleur in 1534. They continued to try to trade with him, and it was only when Cartier fired two fire-lances among them that they were discouraged (Cook 1993:20-21).

[6]As Richard Whitbourne, the sea captain and advocate of Newfoundland settlement, wrote in 1622, "... the Sauage people of that Countery [Bonavista Bay] ... euery yeere come into *Trinity Bay* and Harbour, in the night time, purposely to steale Sailes, Lines, Hatchets, Hookes, Kniues, and such like" (Cell 1982:118).

[7]See, for example, Bakker's (1988) "Basque Pidgin Vocabulary in European-Algonquian Trade Contacts."

[8]As is so often the case in archaeology, new finds can require the modification of one's hypotheses. The discovery of Recent Indian (prehistoric Beothuk) artifacts at Port au Choix by the site's excavator, Priscilla Renouf (1992, 1993) and at Eddies Cove, north of Port au Choix, by two geologists (Renouf 1993:78) for example, weakens Robbins's argument, but the assertion that Beothuk prehistory and history were characterized by a lack of trade and diplomatic networks remains an intriguing possibility that deserves further investigation.

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