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► **To cite this version:**

Reginald Auger, Grégor Marchand. Summary of the 2019 archaeological interventions at Saint-Pierre et Miquelon. Provincial Archaeology Office - 2020 Annual Review, 19, pp.7-10, 2021. hal-03372707

HAL Id: hal-03372707

<https://hal.science/hal-03372707>

Submitted on 15 Oct 2021

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Provincial Archaeology Office Annual Review

2020

Provincial Archaeology Office
Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

March 2021 Volume 19

Summary of the 2019 archaeological interventions at Saint-Pierre et Miquelon

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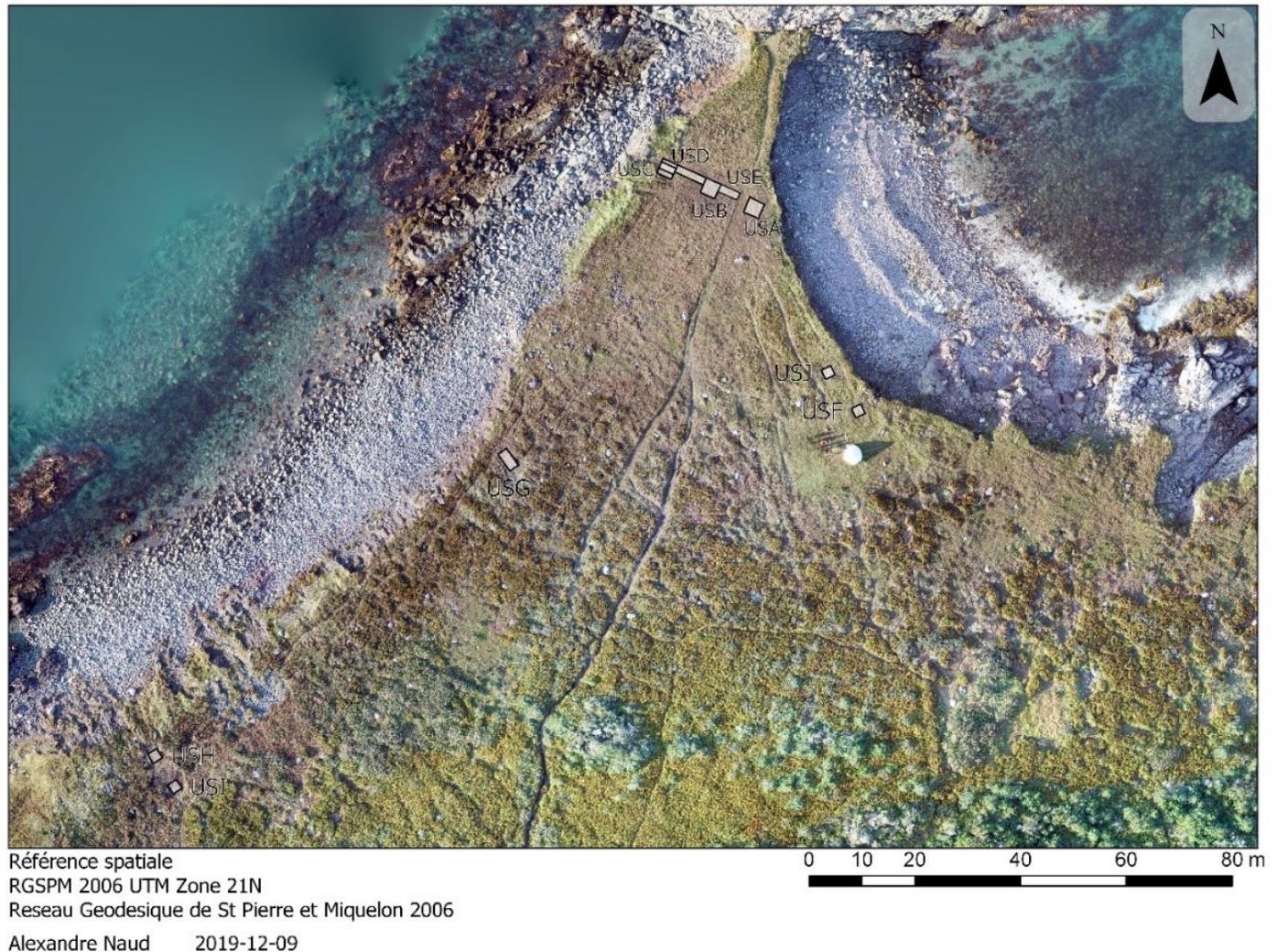


Figure 1: Aerial view of the Anse à Henry site with the location of test units.

Our first year was an exciting year and our team made of ten people, half-and-half from France and Quebec worked for five weeks; the last being plagued with poor weather conditions, we devoted most of that week to cleaning, classifying and analysing the material, which, we left in storage at Musée l'Arche in Saint-Pierre.

Our interventions focused on the areas of the site that are most threatened by coastal erosion, namely, the narrow isthmus near the Rocher de la

Vierge and the area between the isthmus and the brook that comes out at the west end of the site where Sylvie Leblanc had concentrated most of her collection (Figure 1, bottom left). It was not easy to come after the four years that Leblanc spent at the site and link our intervention to her interpretations. Nonetheless, we managed to develop our understanding of the Anse à Henry site history. Due to the dynamics of the site formation and the length of time the site was occupied, we had difficulty to grasp all its complexity.



Figure 2: Flat stone feature at Anse à Henry site interpreted as *grave* (fish flakes).

As for the planned archaeological prospecting for new sites, we could not go to Miquelon as much as we wanted, however, a few sites were discovered on Miquelon and an important quarry was located on Saint-Pierre.

Highlights of the 2019 season

1 - In the lower part of the Anse à Henry site, immediately to the south of the Rocher de la Vierge, we discovered an extensive feature made out of flat rocks all assembled in a leveled surface. The artefacts found at the surface of that feature indicate that it dates from the historical period (19th century). It seems to be what is called locally a *grave* (fish flake), a *grave* is used for drying cod and unlike the flakes made of wood that we find in Newfoundland, in Saint-Pierre they used flat rocks. That *grave* (Figure 2) was built on an old layer of dead vegetation about 15 cm thick.

The 15 cm thick decomposed sod layer on which the *grave* was built covered an ancient archaeological level incredibly well preserved with lithic flakes, finished tools and charcoal. Our initial assessment of the lithic assemblage suggests that we have a Palaeoeskimo Groswater component (-800 to -100

BC). Three charcoal samples were submitted for radiocarbon dating.

2 – The other sub-operations located in the west part of the site were opened near the excavations carried out by S. LeBlanc and J.-L. Rabottin at the beginning of the 2000s. The pits that we opened show the active geomorphological dynamics of the slope where the site sits. The colluvium weathering - and especially the action of “ploughing boulders” – that are on the slope have largely degraded the prehistoric habitats which yielded an abundant lithic assemblage. We recovered from that part of the site material culture from several groups including the Maritime Archaic, the ancestors of the Beothuk as well as the middle Dorset (Figure 3).

3 – We set up a three-year component for the monitoring of coastal erosion under the supervision of Pierre Stéphan (University of Brest) and Maureen Le Doaré (geographer). We secure the collaboration of the DTAM, which will do a LiDAR coverage of the site three times a year to follow the evolution of erosion. DTAM’s contribution will provide a precise and quantitative assessment of the ero-

sion rate, including the strong colluvium dynamics on the west part of the site.

4 - Prospections to find sources of raw materials and new historic sites were carried out throughout the project, by Cédric Borthaire, Max Pallares, Maureen Le Doaré, Gregor Marchand and Réginald Auger. Two lithic sources have been identified, including that of Bois Brûlé on the northwest shore of Saint-Pierre. It is a major quarry site, littered with thousands of lithic debris and rough bifacial blanks. A large number of the stone tools found at the Anse à Henry site could originate from that source. Two one-day visits to Miquelon confirmed the presence of four shell middens located on the northern part of the Grand Barachois (Figure 4), an old farm on Pointe aux Cacaouis and fishing facilities at a place called Le Boyau located north-west of the village of Miquelon. Surveys in Miquelon were based on



Figure 3: A selection of artefacts from the Anse à Henry site.

Maureen Le Doaré's analysis of LiDAR data.

Prospective

Our priority for 2021 will be to excavate a large area in the lower zone of the Anse à Henry site to better understand the nature of the modern occupation by fishermen and explore the well-preserved Palaeoeskimo (Groswater) component underneath. In addition to the salvage of an area that is bound to disappear in a near future due to erosion caused by storm waves, a research based on the principles of paleo ethnography

Figure 4: Shell middens located on the north shore of the Grand Barachois.



would be original for the North American continent. The shallowness of the occupation layer will make this excavation relatively easy once the coriaceous surface turf is removed. We also plan to go back to the western part of the site affected by surface erosion, however, it will be necessary to identify and focus on areas that have been spared from the geomorphological processes at work.

In addition to the pursuit of excavation at the Anse à Henry site, we will also continue to survey for new sites on the archipelago in order to document the history of peopling of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon.

Should that aspect of the project interest you, namely, the Mi'kmaq presence in Miquelon, we would be willing to look for money to hire a person to do oral history research.

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