

around 30 centimeters [one foot] deep sealing the whole site," Black says. He adds that because of its location the site was never occupied by Europeans. The natives used the site season after season discarding heaps of shellfish debris from clams, sea urchins and mussels along with animal bones. Calcium carbonate from the shells helped to preserve the contents. A closer analysis found other glimpses into the culture, such as pottery

he says. The researchers found bones from pigs, chickens, cattle, sheep, trapped beaver and mink. They uncovered metal cod fishing hooks and a two-tined fork, haddock and dogfish bones. Bliss owned a schooner named the *Hazard* that may have transported potatoes from markets in Nova Scotia. He died in 1803, in his early 50s. From his home, "Bliss could see all the way to the American border," Black says. "On a beautiful day, it was a stunning place, on a nasty day it just howled."

Today the Bliss Islands sit within one of the densest aquaculture arenas in the Gulf of Maine. Black says the boat traffic connected to the operations has degraded the water quality in areas surrounding the island, and that tourism and development are on the rise.

"I guess you have to take the long view and say people are creating new archaeological sites to replace the old ones," Black says. "But it is troubling because with more access to offshore islands and more foot traffic, there is much more potential for destruction of the sites, either intentional or unintentional."

## Keeping those shipwrecks under caps

From the 1500s on, the Gulf of Maine and Scotian Shelf have served as the graveyards for scores of shipwrecks. Nova Scotia leads with 5,000 documented wrecks, but estimated numbers reach to 10,000 or more, says Robert Ogilvie, curator of Special Places for the Nova Scotia Museum. Just like heritage resources on land, the shipwrecks are protected by law. To eliminate plundering by scavengers and souvenir hunters, divers must obtain a permit to explore these locations. Individual violators that remove or disturb artifacts can be fined up to \$10,000 and companies up to \$100,000. That applies to offshore oil and gas companies as well as land developers. "If you damage something during construction, we can issue a stop order and you could be prosecuted," Ogilvie says. "So it pays to spend some money to do an archaeological assessment," of potential development sites.

Ogilvie says enlisting the help of sports diving groups and community members to caretaker archaeological sites on land or sea makes it less likely for vandals or collectors to disturb them. "Many people realize that these are truly nonrenewable resources," he says. "If we allow them to be lost, they are lost for good and we can never get them back."

To 'wean' people away from disturbing historic shipwrecks in Massachusetts Bay, the Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources lists 40 exempt shipwrecks on its Web site that the public is free to explore without a permit, provided they do not do any damage. The sites include the Albert Gallatin, a steamer that went down in 1892 off Boo Hoo Ledge in Manchester, and the Henry Endicott, a four-mast schooner that sunk in 1939 off Plymouth.

"These are sites that have been tampered with in the past and have lost their historical integrity," says Mastone. As for



Students at the Samuel Bliss homestead site in New Brunswick.

Photo: David Black

the designated historic shipwrecks, he adds, "We keep those at a low profile."

While archaeologists know they can't save every site, more resources to excavate and preserve the most valuable remains are desperately needed.

For the earliest coastal sites, in particular, the clock is ticking. As inhabitants of the Gulf of Maine have learned over

the millennia, rising waters show no mercy.

To be sure, Christianson of the Nova Scotia Museum recalls visiting several pre-historic sites in the southwestern part of the province in the early 1970s. They have since slipped beneath the sea.

## Abbe Museum pays tribute to Maine's earliest people

By Andi Rierden, Editor

Visitors to the new Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor will find compelling exhibits conveying some of the most notable collections of native artifacts in the Gulf of Maine. The museum holds more than 1,000 baskets, mostly from Maine and the Canadian Maritimes, as well as pottery and stone and bone tools from the museum's archaeological excavations.

"Wabanaki: People of the Dawn," a timeline designed and developed by Rebecca Cole-Will, Abbe's curator, begins with the lives of contemporary native people and traces back 12,000 years. Cole-Will composed the exhibit with assistance from Native Americans in Maine who shared their research, stories and photographs.

The Wabanaki nation includes the Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet and Micmac. While all four tribes maintain communities in Maine, their range overlaps into Canada. The Micmac extend across New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The Passamaquoddy and Maliseet also live in New Brunswick and Quebec. And the Penobscot also live in southern Quebec.

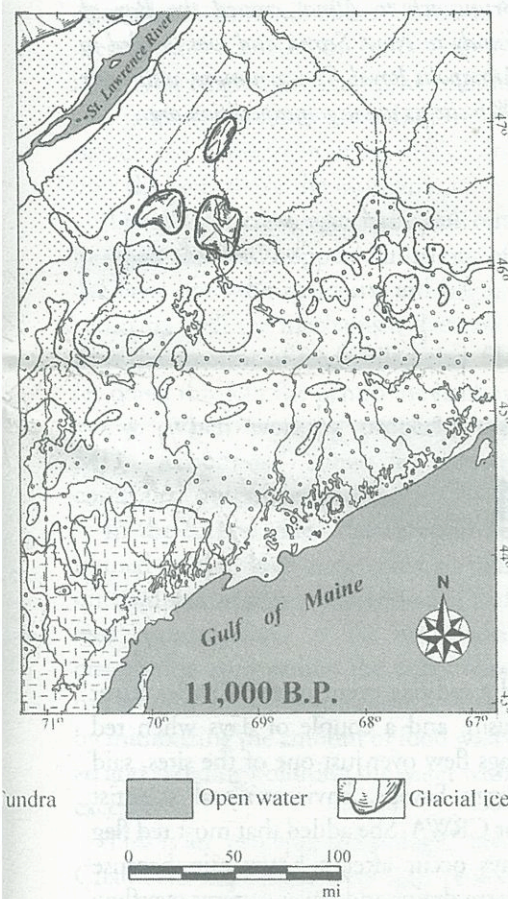
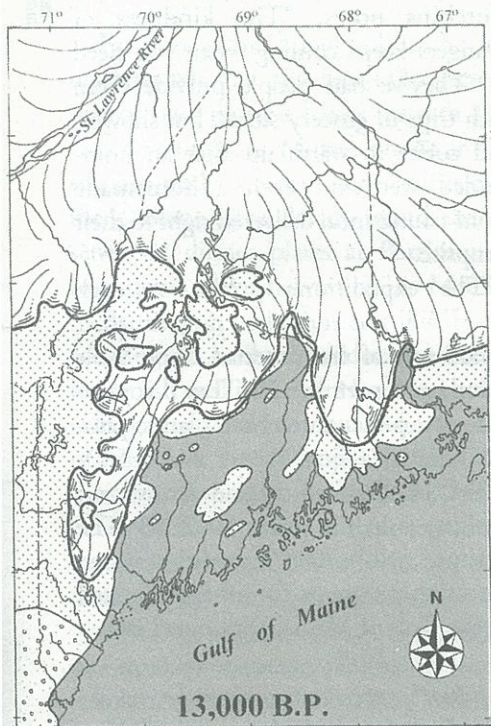
Cole-Will says the exhibits and displays are designed to break stereotypes and show the enduring history of the Wabanaki people. She adds that even the earliest people left timeless contributions such as canoes, snowshoes,

moccasins and pottery. "Theirs wasn't this tooth and nail struggle for existence," she says. "They had very sophisticated technologies."

The museum was originally founded in 1927 by Robert Abbe, a New York surgeon, and opened a year later in a traiside building at Sieur de Monts Spring in Acadia National Park. While it remains opened seasonally, the small space lacked the proper climate control and lighting essential to preserve many artifacts.

After years of fundraising for a new space, the museum opened last fall in an 1890s landmark in downtown Bar Harbor. Extensively renovated, the museum is softly lit and spacious. The expanse of 17,000 square feet contains exhibition halls, education centers for adults and children, a conservation laboratory and gift shop.

Located on Mount Desert Street, the Abbe is open year-round. For information contact the museum at (207) 288-3519 or visit the Web site at [www.abbe-museum.org](http://www.abbe-museum.org).



and Years: American Indians in Maine by Bruce J.

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shards that were used to cook seal meat or render seal fat.

Black says the artifacts, which belong to the province of New Brunswick, contain a trove of untapped information. From an ecological standpoint he says, "We have all these sea urchins that go back 2,500 years. If we investigate further, that could tell us something about micro-scale climate change and what has happened to sea urchins since that time."

A Loyalist officer from Massachusetts, Samuel Bliss, later inhabited another part of the island. Bliss received the islands as part of a land grant following the American Revolution and in 1784 built his house. Excavations led by Black surrounding the Bliss homestead revealed middens of a different sort. "They had quite a farming operation,"