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**NORSE OF
THE NORTH:**
Vikings in Canada

Hosted by MICHAEL SERAPIO



**NEWS
IN
REVIEW**

IN THIS ISSUE

Norse of the North: Vikings in Canada (Duration 13:44)

A thousand years ago, Vikings were renowned as a great seafaring nation and known to have travelled far and wide in their long ships. Back in the 1960s, researchers found evidence of a Viking settlement in Newfoundland. Now, thanks to satellite imaging, a new discovery indicates that the Norse may have travelled further inland in Canada than originally thought.

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News in Review – November 2016 – Teacher Resource Guide
NORSE OF THE NORTH: Vikings in Canada

VIDEO REVIEW

Before Viewing

// To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history? **//**
– Marcus Tullius Cicero

To what extent do you agree with Cicero’s comment about the importance of knowing history? How would you describe the extent of your own knowledge of Canadian and world history? In what ways does your knowledge of history add worth to your life?

Viewing

1. According to the scientific evidence, how many years before Columbus did the Norse reach North America?

2. On Stephen Colbert’s show, how does archeologist Sarah Parcak describe the “space archeology” technology?

3. What did the satellite imagery reveal about the site at Point Rosee?

4. What did researchers at Point Rosee first uncover?

5. What does anthropogenic mean?

6. What evidence and location factors raise questions about the validity of Point Rosee as a Norse settlement?

7. What must guide “real scientists”?

8. Why are butternuts significant to the exploration of Point Rosee?

9. Suggest some reasons why the people of Codroy Valley might be hopeful that the area will be confirmed as a Norse settlement.

10. Which geographical elements described in the Viking Sagas seem to match the area?

11. What does the most recent evidence suggest Point Rosee might have been used for?

12. Why does it make sense that the Norse would want to live in an area like Codroy Valley?

After Viewing

After watching the archeologists working on site in the video, what skills and characteristics do you think you might need to be an archeologist? Is this an occupation that interests you? Explain your thinking.

THE STORY

Minds On

Consider the map below that includes Norway, Scotland (with the Faroe and Shetland Islands), Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

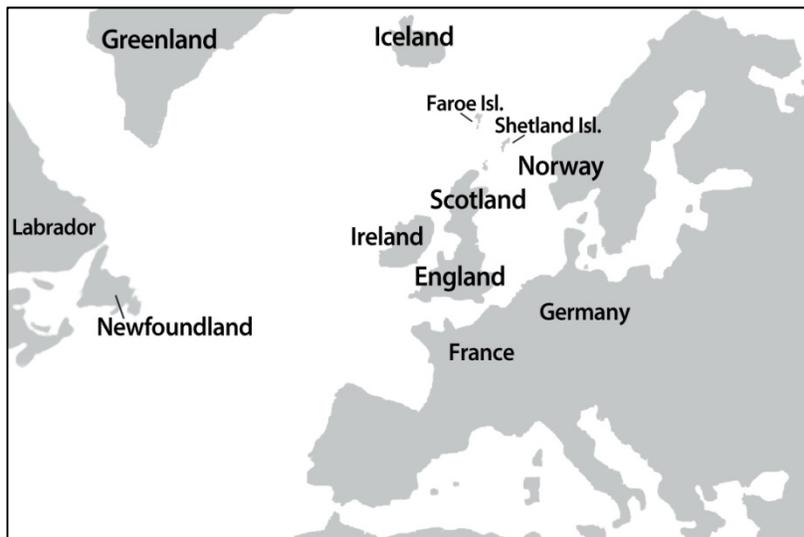
**Teachers: You may choose to create a paper copy of this map for students or you can encourage them to access it online using Google Maps.*

1. Working with a partner, determine a reasonable sailing path from Norway to Newfoundland. What route would you sail? Where would you stop? Which areas look most promising for settlement? Explore reasons for your choices and decisions. This is a long distance to travel over challenging waters; make a list of possible reasons that might make people feel compelled to take this journey.
2. Next, add the following locations to your map: L’Anse aux Meadows, Point Rosee and the Codroy Valley.



Setting out

In April of 2016, a crew of sailors set out from Norway to follow the route to North America that was most likely taken by Norse explorers over a thousand years ago. Sailing the Draken Harald Hårfagre, a replica of a Norse sailing ship constructed using traditional methods, the 32 volunteer sailors made it successfully across the Norwegian Sea and North Atlantic to wind their way past L’Anse aux Meadows, down the coast line in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and up the St. Lawrence River to Brockville, Ontario. Their journey took them past Point Rosee, supporting the idea that the Norse travellers would likely have stopped — if not settled — at that location all those years ago.



Technology – Old and new

While the crew of the Draken Harald Hårfagre drew on historical sailing technology to further an understanding of Norse exploration of North America, it was a decidedly modern technology that would lead scientists to explore the Point Rosee site in earnest. As an archeologist, Sarah Parcak explores the Earth’s surface using advanced satellite imagery for the specific purpose of identifying potential archeological sites.

Gamifying Archeology – As the video report suggests, archeology is a slow and time-consuming process. To help speed up the rate of discovery, Parcak intends to create a crowdsourced citizen science game that will allow anyone to investigate satellite imagery, looking for evidence of sites with potential archeological significance. Protecting the specific location information, the game will prompt users to scan and question the shapes they see. Multiple reports on the same location would prompt scientists to take a closer look at that location in the hopes that it might turn out to be a viable archeological site.

Keep the following important definitions in mind as you read:

Anthropogenic – made or caused by humans

Ovoid – shaped like an egg

Rectilinear – a shape made up of a straight line or lines

While most of Parcak’s “space archeology” has been directed towards discoveries in Egypt, a recent focus on the Canadian coast revealed several sites with potentially anthropogenic structures. On Point Rosee, Parcak felt that both an ovoid feature that seemed to be the same size and shape as a longhouse and curious rectilinear features merited further exploration.

The first season of work at the Point Rosee dig site revealed what the scientists believe to be a hearth that the Norse had been known to use to smelt bog iron. In addition, researchers found what they thought might be the geological traces of a turf wall, indicating the possibility that a structure had been built there. It was enough to encourage further exploration the following season.

The Importance of stories

The Codroy Valley community, where Point Rosee is located, is understandably hopeful that a Norse settlement can be confirmed. Beyond their scientific importance, historical sites can bolster tourism and create economic benefits for the surrounding area. These are practical reasons for excitement regarding the recent discoveries, but there are other less tangible impulses at play here. Stories, serving a vital role in connecting our human experience through time and across space, are an important part of this discovery: without the Viking Sagas, we might not have known to look for Norse settlements in North America. The legends of Norse discovery tell of a people willing to set out without any guarantee of safe arrival. They tell of a culture that chased adventure and opportunity and embraced hard work in often hostile environments. Standing on the shores of Newfoundland, feeling certain that this place would have reminded the Norse of home, elicits a strong desire for kinship and shared achievement.

Bog Iron is an iron ore that is made up of iron oxide minerals such as limonite and goethite. It forms in areas with high concentrations of oxygen and bacterial activity — areas such as bogs or wetlands. Bog iron is found in thinly spread layers over relatively large areas so, although the iron content is significant, harvesting bog iron is not cost efficient from a modern industrial context. The Norse harvested, roasted and smelted bog iron to create the nails used in their sea-faring ships.¹

Check out this video for a demonstration of the process as it was used by the Vikings:

[youtube.com/watch?v=j33Logly-mo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j33Logly-mo)

Viking Sagas

Also known as the Icelandic Sagas and originating from an oral tradition, the Sagas are stories likely written in the 13th or 14th century that describe the history of the Norse inhabitants of Iceland in the 10th and 11th centuries. Among other tales, they tell the stories of the settlement of Greenland by Erik Thorvaldsson (Erik the Red) and the discovery of Vinland (Newfoundland). The Sagas also describe how Leif, Erik's son, eventually claimed and settled Vinland. To explore the Sagas in more detail, check out the following links:

Erik the Red's Saga:

canadianmysteries.ca/sites/vinland/whereisvinland/eriktheredsaga/indexen.html

The Saga of the Greenlanders:

canadianmysteries.ca/sites/vinland/whereisvinland/sagaofgreenlanders/indexen.html

New Evidence

The second season of exploration in the Codroy Valley has unearthed evidence that does not support the notion Point Rosee was a Norse settlement. The striations found in the earth extend too far to be an indication of a sod wall. The bog iron found in the dig's first season, that they assumed had been roasted over a hearth (an initial step in the smelting process), is being found throughout the site rather than concentrated only around potential hearth structures. The scientists need to determine whether the breakdown of the bog iron has been caused by environmental conditions or human action. This does not mean they have given up hope. The story told by the

satellite imagery still suggests this site likely featured in the Norse narrative — and so the methodical science of archeology continues.

Whatever story unfolds at Point Rosee it is, as Reg Sherren notes, “a lovely place to dream about history.”



To Consider

1. What are the potential benefits of the new “space archeology” technology that uses satellite images to locate potential dig sites? Are there any drawbacks to this new technology?
2. What is the value of learning more about the Norse exploration of North America?
3. Visit this interactive map that provides some information about Norse exploration: thinglink.com/scene/672411731087065088

After exploring the map, develop three questions that you have about the Norse exploration of North America and the world. Conduct further research and answer your questions.



Try This!

Explore the Norse culture in more depth. Working with a partner, or in a small group, select a topic from the list below.

- Research your topic and present what you have learned to the rest of your class.
- Try to highlight how Norse culture is different from modern culture.
- Use the application Storify (storify.com/) to organize your resources and interpretation of your research. Prepare to share your work.

1. Religion	6. Trade and Commerce
2. Arts, craft and decoration	7. Government
3. Gender roles	8. Conflict and war
4. Stories	9. Other
5. Technology – sailing, agriculture, architecture	

Sources:

1. Bog Iron Ore. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved from britannica.com/science/bog-iron-ore.

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Wallace, Brigitta. (2003). The Norse in Newfoundland: L’Anse aux Meadows and Vinland. The Journal of Newfoundland and Labrador Studies, Vol 19, No 1: The New Early Modern Newfoundland: Part 2. Retrieved from journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/NFLDS/.



ACTIVITY #1: MARKING TIME



Try This!

Working with a partner, create a student account with an online timeline application such as Time Glider (timeglider.com/).

Create a list of 3-5 historic events that you find particularly important or interesting. Possibilities include: technological discoveries or inventions, artistic creations, contact between peoples and military conflicts.

Then add the following events to your list:

- First use of sailing technology
- First record of iron smelting
- First record of agricultural development
- Paleo-Eskimo settlement of Labrador
- Columbus' contact with North America
- Norse settlement of L'Anse aux Meadows (and possibly Point Rosee and Codroy, Newfoundland)

Research and plot each event using the timeline application that you and your partner have chosen. After you have completed your timeline, look back over the information you have plotted and consider the following questions:

1. What stands out for you when you look at these historical events when compared with each other?
2. What questions are raised by this comparison?
3. In your opinion, how does the Norse settlement in North America fit into the larger context of world history?
4. In a short paragraph, describe the impact this activity had on your appreciation or understanding of history.

ACTIVITY #2: THE POETRY OF EXPLORATION

While the Norse reached North America 500 years before Christopher Columbus, humans had populated this area for thousands of years before. In 1925, one of those groups of humans was identified and named the Dorsets by archeologist Diamond Jenness. The Dorsets were a cultural group that overlapped the so-called Paleo-Eskimo. You can learn more about this culture on the Canadian Museum of History website: historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/archo/paleoesq/ped01eng.shtml.

Canadian poet Al Purdy wrote a poem called “Lament for the Dorsets” that captures an important aspect of the nature of history and our interest in it. Read Purdy’s poem at the following link: alabelforartists.blogspot.ca/2006/10/late-great-al-purdy.html.

Questions

1. What do you think Purdy’s poem says about our relationship with history?
2. Based on the ideas in Purdy’s poem, describe the connection between our current time, the Norse exploration and settlement of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Indigenous people who lived in that area before the arrival of the Norse.