

Cabox geopark: exploring the Galapagos of Plate Tectonics

PAUL WYLEZOL - *Chairperson, International Appalachian Trail and International Appalachian Trail Newfoundland & Labrador, c/o IATNL, P.O. Box 38, Corner Brook, Newfoundland & Labrador A2H 6C3, Canada <p.wylezol@nl.rogers.com>*

The International Appalachian Trail Newfoundland & Labrador (IATNL) is the primary proponent of a Canadian and Global Geopark in Western Newfoundland, focused on the Bay of Islands Ophiolites, and the region's rich history of exploration, as epitomized by famed maritime explorers Jacques Cartier and James Cook. The name "Cabox" refers to the highest point on the island of Newfoundland and Lewis Hills, the most southerly of the four large tectonic mesas which form a series of ophiolite complexes of mafic and ultramafic rock high in magnesium and iron. The other three – Blow-Me-Down Mountains, North Arm Hills, and Tablelands – extend north to Bonne Bay, with the latter being contained within the boundary of Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The mafic rocks are composed largely of gabbro and derive from the Earth's oceanic crust, while the ultramafic rocks are composed mostly of peridotite, and come from the earth's mantle below. Both heaved to the surface during tectonic collisions hundreds of millions of years ago, and are some of the best examples on the planet. They serve as evidence for the theory of plate tectonics, one of the most important ideas in modern science. Each also supports tens of thousands of hectares of boreal, subalpine, alpine, and serpentine wilderness. The area was explored by famed French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1534 during his first voyage to the new world, and subsequently surveyed in 1767 by renowned explorer and cartographer James Cook, the year before his first voyage to the Pacific Ocean.

In addition to the IATNL, the Geopark committee also includes the Western Newfoundland Destination Management Organization, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Ltd., and 15 municipalities in the Bay of Islands and Bonne Bay. It is also anticipated that the local campuses of Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic will participate and provide academic and artistic interpretation of the area's natural and cultural heritage.

Presented in Theme 4