

The Geological Survey of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1864–2014: Arcing 150 years of science and service

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The Geological Survey of Newfoundland and Labrador celebrates its sesquicentennial in 2014, marking a century and a half of geological mapping and resource investigations. Inaugurated in 1864 under founding Director Alexander Murray, the then-named *Geological Survey of Newfoundland* benefited from the epiphanies in the nascent science of geology of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries (e.g., Hutton and Lyell). Explorations of a geological bent were first undertaken in Newfoundland in the early-to-mid- nineteenth century (Cormack and Jukes), and were formally inaugurated in Canada in 1842 as the Canadian Geological Survey (under the now-famous Sir William Logan, and his able assistant, the Scotsman Alexander Murray). By 1855, Newfoundland had achieved Responsible Government, and in 1864 invited Mr. Murray from Canada to head up the country's own Geological Survey.

Murray soon hired the local James P. Howley to be his assistant, and Howley eventually succeeded Murray as Director. Together these two remarkable pioneering geologists left a legacy of exquisite geological mapping, topographical surveying and geological-resource documentation. After Howley's retirement in 1909, the Survey went into abeyance until the 1920s, emerging as a vital institution in the 1930s and beyond through the infusion of intellectual vigour by the so-called Princeton Expeditions. Newfoundland-born and Princeton faculty member Alfred K. Snelgrove was the leader of these research initiatives, serving as both faculty mentor and Government Geologist: Princeton provided the graduate students; the Geological Survey the field support.

In the 1940s, former Assistant Government Geologist under Snelgrove, Claude K. Howse, became Director and facilitated a number of mineral deposit studies (he was especially involved in the exploration developments for iron ore in Labrador West). After Confederation, for most of the Fifties, the Survey was led by illustrious geologist David M. Baird, who published the most up-to-date compilation of Newfoundland geology in 1955. Throughout the Sixties, the Geological Survey, then a small organization with the appellation Mineral Resources Division, focused on specific known mineral occurrences, industrial and metallic, with the goal of enhancing development. At this time, geologists John McKillop and John Fleming were providing steady leadership, as well as being prescient harbingers of the soon- to-be born modern Geological Survey.

The 1970s and 80s were the halcyon days of the MDAs (Mineral Development Agreements). With planning by Fleming and colleagues already in place for the contemporary infrastructure of a modern geoscience institution, the Geological Survey blossomed with substantial federal-provincial funding into the acclaimed, multidisciplinary, scientific institution that it is today. With geological maps, reports and databases of every description and discipline, available to a world-wide audience via the Internet, the excellence of the current Geological Survey makes it a worthy inheritor of its venerable origins 150 years ago. Government should recognize this historic institution's preeminence in our province, in this its sesquicentennial year, by formally enshrining its name as the *Geological Survey of Newfoundland and Labrador*.