

# WALKING THE DEBRIS FIELD

Public Geographies of the Halifax Explosion

## At Turtle Grove

Presented by Narratives in Space + Time Society



**Mi'kmaq encampment at Tuft's Cove, Halifax County, ca. 1871**

Joseph S. Rogers Nova Scotia Archives Rogers' Photographic Advertising Album, 1871, p. 18 / negative no. 1029/418

We gather in Mi'kma'kik, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People  
We are all Treaty People

**Saturday May 23, 2015 - Research Walk (Turtle Grove; Tufts Cove; Shannon Park)**

**Tuesday December 6, 2016 - Turtle Grove Commemoration Ceremony**

**Tuesday April 25, 2017 - *Difficult Knowledge in Public Workshop***



Mont-Blanc fragments mounted to display board. Collected at Tufts Cove by Jerry Lonecloud  
Maritime Museum of the Atlantic



Mi'kmaq encampment near Halifax  
Watercolour, ca. 1790, by H. N. Binney  
Nova Scotia Museum



Numbered locations on map:

1. Turtle Grove School
2. Tufts Cove School
3. Point of collision between Imo and Mont-Blanc
4. Ground Zero (formerly Pier 6, now the Irving Shipyard Assembly Hall)
5. Where the crew of Mont-Blanc came ashore after abandoning ship
6. Pinecrest Park (where the stern cannon from the Mont-Blanc landed)
7. Area ceded to Millbrook First Nation in 2014
8. St. Peter's Cemetery
9. Tufts Cove Cemetery
10. Halifax Explosion Memorial Bell Tower, Fort Needham Park

## Walking the Debris Field: Public Geographies of the Halifax Explosion At Turtle Grove

The explosion in Halifax harbour on December 6, 1917, was a wartime disaster that killed almost 2000 people and injured over 9000 others. It destroyed the Halifax working class neighbourhood of Richmond and much of north end Dartmouth, including Turtle Grove. Although the trauma caused by this event is barely visible today, with no markers or official commemorations within the core of the 'devastated area', it continues to reverberate, shaping our identities and communities, and our future.



India Street, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Mi'kmaq have lived in Kjiptuk (Halifax) and Punamu'kwati'jk (Dartmouth) for thousands of years, traveling between the Minas Basin and Bay of Fundy and the Atlantic coast via the waterway of Se'gepenegatig (Shubenacadie). The shore along Kepe'k (the Narrows) was where approximately 30 Mi'kmaq lived in Turtle Grove at the time of the Explosion. These families were awaiting relocation to land further east, near Albro Lake, in accordance with government decisions based on Dartmouth settlers' complaints and demands. The Explosion killed nine members of the Turtle Grove community, and injured a number of others. Many other Dartmouth residents were killed or injured that day, including some from the surrounding settler neighbourhood. The Mi'kmaq survivors of Turtle Grove were dispersed and relocated to other parts of the province, and offered no disaster relief or other assistance. The dead were buried in St. Peter's Cemetery in Dartmouth, and in St. Bernard's Cemetery in Enfield. These graves are unmarked today.

Frank Brooks, 70  
Henry Cope, 12  
Louis Francis Cope, 14  
Janet Glode, 33  
Ben Labrador, 13

Hannah Lonecloud, 15  
Johanna Nevin, 62  
Howard William Nevin, infant  
Mary Paul, 34

The traditional land of Turtle Grove is now known as the neighbourhood of Tufts Cove. The NS Power Tufts Cove Generating Station was built here in 1965. Further north, Shannon Park was built as a housing development for Royal Canadian Navy families in the 1950's. The streets in Shannon Park were named after vessels in the Tribal Class of naval destroyers, which were given First Nations names. Shannon Park was closed in 2004, the land de-accessioned in 2014, and the buildings demolished in 2016-17. In 2014, the federal government ceded a parcel of the Shannon Park land to the Millbrook First Nation, in recognition of the loss of Turtle Grove in 1917.



Street Sign from Shannon Park

### NiS+TS acknowledges the generous participation and guidance of our collaborators and contributors:

**Catherine Martin**, a member of the Millbrook First Nation, and an independent film producer, director, writer, facilitator, communications consultant, community activist, teacher, drummer, and the first woman Mi'kmaq filmmaker from the Atlantic region. She holds the 2015-2017 Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University; **Joe Michael**, a respected Elder of the Indian Brook (Sipekne'katik) First Nation, Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq nation, and a retired member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He has a lifetime commitment as a 'Pipe Carrier', and helps us all to better understand indigenous culture; Members of the Mi'kmaq community, especially those whose ancestors died or were injured at Turtle Grove; **Gary Wright**, a Tufts family descendent who has researched the history of the pioneers and settlers, and helped restore and protect the Tufts Cove Cemetery; Members of the public who walk with us.

In truth and reconciliation

**NiS+TS** (Narratives in Space+Time Society) is an interdisciplinary creative research group working on public art projects involving mobile media, psychogeography and walking. Founded in 2012 and based in Halifax and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, NiS+TS promotes the use of mobile media by artists and members of the public. NiS+TS projects are sited in spaces that are often overlooked, disused or vacant. Participants use mobile media such as GPS, smartphones and mobility tracking devices, in combination with other modes such as walking, talking and making objects, in interactive explorations of locations and subjects. The members of NiS+TS are Robert Bean, Renée Gruszecki, Brian Lilley, Barbara Louder and Mary Elizabeth Luka.



Turtle Grove Commemoration Ceremony. Tuesday December 6, 2016

<https://www.facebook.com/narrativesinspaceandtimesociety>

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<https://twitter.com/NiSTSNS#halifaxexplosion>

*Please note that this event is being recorded for documentation and promotional purposes, and by participating, you are consenting to our use of the material. If you do not wish to be recorded, please stay behind the camera operator.*

**NiS+TS**

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