



Jon Maiak espedizio honi buruzko kronika harrigarriak idatzi zituen. Espedizio horrek mila milia baino gehiago egin zituen eta euskaldunek Kanadan utzitako asentamendu garrantzitsuenak bisitatu. Honakoa. honakoa, protagonistetako batek kontatutako abenturaren laburpena da.

The expedition set sail on June 5th from the St. Lawrence River, sailing downriver past the mouth of the Saguenay to the Gaspé Peninsula. It then headed to Prince Edward Island and on to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. From there the expedition crossed the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Port aux Basques on the west coast of Newfoundland. The crewmembers then sailed up the coast, crossed the Strait of Belle Isle and ended the journey at Red Bay. The expedition covered a total distance of one thousand nautical miles and included stops at the most significant Basque settlements. The following pages include excerpts of impressions from Jon Maia's exciting chronicles.

Logbook

Beothuk is finally slicing through the waters of the St. Lawrence River. Since the wind isn't helping us make much headway, Xabier Agote, our skipper, has ordered us to start rowing. The motorized craft and sailing vessels greet us as they pass. People know who we are – we've been featured in most of the media. We take it easy with our oar strokes: our rowing is for long-distance, not racing. Nightfall has caught us unawares in the town of Saint Michel. Above the port there's a grassy area, where we'll spread our goatskins and sleep.

We got up at three in the morning to sail with the current at low tide, given that on this great river it's impossible to sail against the current. At times we seem to be surfing, and it's a pleasure.

Island to island with the wind

Saint Jean de Port Jolie is not an island, but a small village on the south bank of the river. A northeasterly storm there cut us off from the outside world for four

days. The river is as rough as the sea. When that happens there is nothing to do but wait. On the morning of the fifth day the river is still; it's time to set off, we've been itching to move on.

We had a school of beluga whales (small, white whales that resemble dolphins) following our wake for about a half hour. Just keeping an eye out for them helped to alleviate the drudgery of rowing.

We set off from Kakuna at five in the morning bound for Île aux Basques (Island of the Basques). We have an important appointment: first with our own history, and at the same time with the mayor of the town of Trois-Pistoles, opposite the island. "Basques" is their sign of identity and hallmark for tourism: buildings, bars, Basque television, a Basque pelota court and even a "Basque Adventure Park." You can also see ikurriñas here and there.

The wind, which until now has been speeding us along, has with us with no choice but to stay where we are.



We're tired ... All of a sudden we hear a watery explosion to port, but only the quickest among us catches a brief glimpse: It's a whale! After 400 nautical miles, our first whale.

Cap-des-Rosiers is located inside Forillon National Park, one of many nature reserves under the protection of Parks Canada, our sponsor.

Today is a big day, the day we leave the great river behind. We know that from this point we'll be sailing between huge cliffs.

Farewell to the river

Everyone has told us that the last few miles of the river are magnificent, but as long as the mist holds out, it's all invisible us. At the exact place where the waters of the river and the bay flow together, we rested and ate some cheese and walnuts. After the short break, it was time to cross the seven-mile-wide Bay of Gaspé with the current in our favour but the wind against us. So we rowed steadily and in just over two hours reached the shores of this new territory.

The port of Barachois had a very familiar ring to it, since so many places in Euskal Herria have similar names. Five hundred years ago our Basques ancestors named this place "barratxoa," (small sandbank). We're back again. Aaron used our oars and sailcloth to make a typical North American Indian tepee, common among the Hurons, Cree, Montaignais and a few other tribes. The Mi'kmaq people make theirs with birch bark instead of cloth and call them wigwams.



John Joe Shark is the Mi'kmaq's spiritual leader on Prince Edward Island and represents them before the UN and the Vatican. He tells us that the Mi'kmaq know all about the Basques' sailing skills. Together with the local natives, the Basque sailors were known to be the best at sailing in fog. Documents written at the time reveal that the Mi'kmaq sailed in boats like the Basque Beothuk. The spiritual leader told us the Mi'kmaq had learnt from the Basques how to sail the galleons stolen from foreign fleets.

There is little infrastructure in the small village; no public telephone, no square, the streets are unpaved The Mi'kmaq have a small museum and a school where the Mi'kmaq language is taught a few hours a week. They all speak English. Today, as in the past, the



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mainstay for the people is fishing, along with government aid. There are only 400 inhabitants in this village. Yet the natural surroundings are spectacular, one of the most beautiful places we have seen so far.

The Acadians, a nomadic people

Even though we are approaching the English-speaking provinces, in Miscou the people are Acadian and mainly French speakers. Marine archaeologist Michel Bujold tells us about this town.

Acadia means "beautiful land." The first generations of Acadians were French people who came to these beautiful lands in the seventeenth century in search of a better life. When the English crown wanted to take control of the lands, they went to war with the Acadians. The local Native Americans sided with the Acadians, while people from certain European countries sided with the English. Acadia eventually passed to the English crown, bringing with it the total suppression of the French language and Roman Catholicism. Many Acadians were deported to France and other territories. But when the Acadians returned to France 150 years later, their mother country rejected them. It was too late to return home; by then it was a different country. The Acadians were sent to other areas including Quebec and the U.S State of Louisiana, a French colony at that time. Many took refuge in the Mi'kmaq lands.

In 1763 the Treaty of Paris brought peace between the French and English courts. Yet the Acadians had no part in the treaty. When they returned to their lands, they had to work as servants to the English. Two and a

half centuries later the deportation orders are still in force in those lands, and the Queen of England has yet to present her apologies. According to Michel Bujold, they are still second-class citizens in their own land.

A tree for Newfoundland

We can see Newfoundland ahead and that's where we're bound. As we draw closer we can make out Saint Paul, "the Island of Death." It takes its name from the countless vessels that have run up on the rocks. We are in the village of St. Lawrence, opposite the Island of Death. We have just passed the halfway stage in our voyage.

The fishermen of the on the Cap Breton peninsula have a four-month fishing season: two months for lobster and another two for [0]a kind of large crab [1] similar to the spider crab. Sometimes they also catch cod, halibut and turbot. Once the four-month fishing season is over, there is no other economic activity to do in winter, and the people live off government subsidies.

Cap Breton is truly interesting from a sociological point of view. In some towns the French-speaking Acadians are in the majority. The rest of the inhabitants are mainly of Scottish and Irish descent and Gaelic is taught in some of the schools. The music culture has deep roots here. The Celtic roots have absorbed the local styles, influenced by the Scottish, Irish and Acadians.

We cut down a tree from a wood on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, peeled off its bark and took it down to the port. There we removed Beothuk's small bow mast and replaced it with a new one, two and a half meters taller. Instead of the small sail used so far, we've now hoisted a foresail with a bigger surface area to catch the wind and sail more quickly. We are taking a new tree to Newfoundland in search of our old roots, roots that reach all the way down to the bottom of this sea.

Fair Newfoundland

Seen from the sea, Newfoundland looks like a massive, limestone cliff. Broad green meadows, unending forest, clear, shallow sea, smiling people ...

The whole of Newfoundland's northwest coast has been christened with Basque names: Port aux

«Red Bay is one of the world's foremost maritime sanctuaries. Four Basque whaleboats lie at the bottom of the small bay.»

Basques, Opor Portu, Baye Ederra (Bonne Baye), Aingura Txar (Ingunachoix), Amuitz (like in Hondarribia), Amuitzko punta, Irlatxoak, Portutxoa (Port Aux Choix), Ferrol zaharra ... Opor Portu (literally "Port of Rest"), for example, is a calm, sheltered place, perfect for a rest. Aingura Txar (literally "Bad Anchor") is not a good place for vessels to enter. And everything about Baye Ederra (literally "Beautiful Bay") is truly beautiful. At the museum we are welcomed by the authorities and members of local cultural associations. The next day we are taken to see Portutxo Zaharra, a cove with a small, rocky island in the middle. This is where the wooden constructions put up by the Basques to secure their vessels were found.

Leaving Opor Portu behind, Beothuk sails past the lands of the Beothuk people, who were wiped off the face of the earth by colonists. They, too, reached Newfoundland 10,000 years before. The Beothuk people spent spring and autumn on this seashore.

We've been warned to expect bad weather, so we have to push forward our plans to cross from Newfoundland to Labrador. After sailing for twelve hours we spot Labrador and moor at Red Bay sooner than expected.

The Red Bay declaration

Red Bay is one of the world's foremost maritime sanctuaries. There are four sunken Basque whaleboats in the small bay in front of us. On Saddle Island 140 Basque sailors are buried, all facing the sea. Dotting the island are the remains of numerous ovens used to render the whale blubber, huts where the barrels were made, roofing tiles brought from Euskal Herria to build the huts ... For several decades, starting in the sixteenth century, on average two thousand Basques lived in Red Bay – four times the number who live there today.

When we reached Red Bay, there were a lot of people in the small port awaiting Beothuk's arrival. Just a few more strokes of our oars would find us rolling above the sunken Basque whaling galleon, the San Juan. Positioning ourselves over her, we raised our oars in salute.



The San Juan, named after the town of Pasajes de San Juan, sank in 1565; this is the "sunken treasure" of Red Bay, and an element which UNESCO has chosen to protect as a symbol of underwater cultural heritage. The San Juan is the best-preserved galleon and the one that has contributed the most information of all the sixteenth-century ships found in the seven seas. The cold waters of Labrador have preserved it perfectly.

In Red Bay they put up a building exclusively for 'our' chalupa, as it now belongs to the world. The museum house much more than the Basque chalupa. Also on display are the San Juan, the jugs found at the bottom of the bay, receptacles, work tools, pieces of the vessel, clothing found in the graves on Saddle Island, possessions found buried with the sailors, ovens, places where the barrels were found All these form the mosaic of an era – the most complete ever found, which soon will be designated a World Heritage site.

The Canadian government has invested millions of dollars in this bay in order to recover our people's heritage and history. And in this bay we've been able to draw a major conclusion: that the sea is Euskal Herria's largest window to the world. Century after century, our nautical history has been the most advanced of any people's in the world. The Dutch, the English, the French, the Spanish ... they all learnt from the Basques how to hunt whales, how to build ships, how to get to this remote corner of the earth. If there's anything on this planet in which Euskal Herria has been in the forefront, it is the sea.