The Rock-art of Point Pleasant Park in Halifax, Nova Scotia

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A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Honours Anthropology

April 2019, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Acknowledgments

I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude to my committee members for their guidance through the process of learning to write and improve an undergraduate thesis. To Dr. Henry, who has truly gone above and beyond the call of duty this past semester, thank you for your continued support. Your approachability helped ease the self-doubt and isolation I felt in my early days as a mature student. To Dr. Fowler, who is both a scholar and a gentleman, words cannot express my gratitude for the variety of unique knowledge and experiences you've made available to your students. Comrade, you've given me a faith in my abilities I never expected to possess. And to Dr. Crooks, thank you for taking part in my quirky little project. From my earliest thesis considerations, I knew I wanted your clarity of thought and expression on my team.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Shiva Nourpanah, who taught the visual anthropology course which held the first seeds of this work. The staff of both the Saint Mary's Patrick Power Library and the Public Archives of Nova Scotia have been of tremendous help. Finally, I'd like to thank those who will never read this thesis, but whose influence persists in every line:

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Abstract

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"The Rock-art of Point Pleasant Park in Halifax, Nova Scotia"
April 18, 2019

The rock-art of Point Pleasant Park has been largely unacknowledged by academic research and popular narratives. This study seeks to remedy such oversight by exploring the function of this contemporary assemblage, based on the (1) frequency, (2) placement, and (3) content of the art. To productively encompass and limit the research focus, this study defines *rock-art* as *human-made images, designs, or writing, irrespective of stylistic qualities, which occur on natural rock faces but not human-built features*.

Phase One data collection located rock-art throughout the 190-acre park via unstructured field-walking. Figure locations were mapped on paper, using visual estimation and cellphone GPS. Five areas of intense activity were identified. The current estimate for rock-art within the park is 488 figures, consisting of 375 petroglyphs and 113 pictograms. The coastal region near Chain Rock was selected for Phase Two, in-depth cataloguing and analysis. The majority of the target site figures are names, effectively and sometimes explicitly, stating "I was here". Culture is embedded in other works, such as Pacman ghosts or a quote from Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*.

Literacy has caused Haligonian rock-art to diverge from pictures as the predominate means of artistic rock adornment and communication of ideas; they instead rely on text. Yet these modern humans are still engaged in a vernacular form of meaning-making. Many researchers posit that rock-art is a human universal, suggesting that literate humans have continued this practice, albeit in modified form. Rock-art, varied as it is in appearance, time, place, and purpose, functions less as an artifact, or a collection of artifact-types; it more closely functions as a conversation.

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Section 1: Introduction

Rock-art is a global phenomenon, the "world's most widespread and longest-lasting form of visual heritage" (Taçon and Brady 2016, 3). To date, Australia and Africa each have 100,000 known prehistoric rock-art sites, dating from 28,000 years ago; sites in Spain and Southeast Asia date from 40,000 years ago (Taçon 2016, 245). The study of this fascinating medium of human expression is a subdiscipline of the field of archaeology (Whitley 2005, 2). Some archaeologists would like to position rock-art as a *unified* global tradition, complete with universal interpretive norms (Anati 1977; 2010; Haubt 2014; Nash 2010). In contrast, other researchers emphasize the importance of culture and context when considering human artistic expression (Heyd 2003; Frederick 2016; Geertz 1976; Gell 199; Whitley 2005). This research investigates this dichotomy, by comparing the contemporary rock-art assemblage of Point Pleasant Park to the broader literature.

The two biggest questions in researching a rock-art site are "how old is it?" and "what does it mean?" (Taçon and Brady 2016, 6). As the rock-art of Point Pleasant Park has been largely unacknowledged by academic research and popular narratives, there is no previously recorded data on how much art is in the park, or where it is. Yet, following the classic advice of archaeologist Lewis Binford, archaeology must aim not only to *explicate* the details, but to *explain* broader human or cultural conditions (1962, 217). It is not enough to simply catalogue this fascinating assemblage or collection. Therefore, this research explores the function of contemporary rock-art, based on the (1) frequency, (2) placement, and (3) content of the assemblage within Point Pleasant Park. This thesis estimates the volume of rock-art, its location in the broader landscape, and formulates some possibilities for what it all means.

We begin with a clear definition of key terms, as relevant to contemporary rock-art (Section 2). A brief history will explore the material and cultural uses of Point Pleasant (Section 3). Research (Section 4) relies heavily on methods proposed by archaeologists and rock-art researchers David Whitley (2005), Emmanuel Anati (1977, 2010), Paul Taçon (1998, 2016), and Christopher Chippindale (1998, 2001). Fieldwork was divided into Phase One, a large-scale mapping of the entire park, and Phase Two, a detailed analysis of a target site. A total of 488 rock-art figures were recorded, dating from at least 1815 to today. Distribution was non-random, with five areas of high activity identified (Section 5). The Phase Two target site artworks are discussed in detail, with possible frameworks considered for approaching the content and meanings (Section 6). Section 7 explores how this research may articulate with the broader literature.

Section 2: Clarification of Terms

Researchers, as well as the general populace, often distinguish between *rock-art* and *graffiti*. While archaeologist George Nash (2010) and others separate *rock-art* and *graffiti-art*, they do not provide a substantive basis for distinguishing between them, or between *graffiti-art* and *graffiti*. Anthropologist Paul Erickson defines *graffiti* as "writing where it isn't supposed to be or isn't wanted" (1987, 11). The Point Pleasant assemblage is predominately text, but also contains images and combinations of both. The matter of whether the text is "wanted" is highly subjective; who decides whether a work is artistic embellishment or property damage, when framed as public use of public space? Throughout this research, even after explaining the reasoning behind the definition of terms, I have been repeatedly corrected by members of the public that I am, in fact, studying graffiti. This suggests such definitions are not a simple matter of word choice, but highly charged frameworks of meaning and value. While both Nash and Erickson are clear to distinguish graffiti from rock-art, they both suggest similarities between these categories, with Erickson even going so far as to suggest cave paintings are a form of preliterate graffiti (1987, 12).

Whitley defines rock-art as "pictures, motifs, and designs placed on natural rock surfaces such as cliff and boulder faces, cave walls and ceilings, and the ground surface" (2005, 3). He writes that "the defining characteristic of rock art is its placement on natural rock surfaces, thereby distinguishing it from murals on constructed walls, paintings or carvings on canvas, wood, ceramics, or other surfaces, and free-standing sculptures" (2005, 3). Therefore, to productively encompass and limit the current area of research, I follow Whitley's lead in defining *rock-art* as *human-made images, designs, or writing,*

irrespective of stylistic qualities, which occur on natural rock faces but not human-built features.

So far, so good. Rock-art is on rocks, but does it truly qualify as art? Rock-art is often distinguished as some other (perhaps less valuable?) category, such as *pictures*, *image making*, or *rock-marking* (Conkey 2009; Frederick 2016, 341; Lewis-Williams 2009). Taçon and Chippindale write that "art has a very special meaning in recent western societies" (1998, 1), suggesting the term indexes certain levels of technical competence or formal style. In contrast, artist Linda Connor writes that "art in our society is nice, but inconsequential" (1988, xii). Avoiding the term *art* may reflect the imposition of Western values on *Other*: "how many times have we heard it said that rock art, body designs, artifacts, and other Indigenous creations are 'not really art in the Western sense'" (Frederick 2016, 337-338). Whitley attacks archaeologist Sven Ouzman for his stance "that 'we' create 'art', whereas traditional non-Western cultures create something else – and something less" (2005, 4).

Artist Ursula Frederick would have us broaden the Western definition of art to include a global variety of artistic forms that have had "different motivations, functions, and meanings across cultures and across centuries" (2016, 342). By comparison, Whitley argues that rock-art is not, and should not, be defined by a term narrowly embedded in Western values, suggesting rock-art should be divorced from the notion of "art" altogether (2005, 4). Archaeologist Margaret Conkey echoes these sentiments when she writes:

> Some of us have been rather insistent on displacing the term 'art' from our vocabularies. Actually, it is not so much that we want to dismiss 'art' as it that our preferred concern is with the material and social life of objects and images, and the experiential worlds that they produce and constitute. The images and forms were generated within and by *communities of practice*. They are, in that sense

then, not art images; rather, they are an 'artful integration'… of many entangled material and social factors. (2009, 182, italics in original)

This on-going discussion makes clear Frederick's observation that neither the definition of art or rock-art "are 'stable' categories and both are concepts emerging from Western scholarship" (Frederick 2016, 342). Although the Point Pleasant assemblage is a Western creation in a Western context, there is still some ambiguity whether it can rightfully be termed *art*. For better or worse, the Point Pleasant Park research has inherited the term *rock-art*, and all its attendant ambiguities, as a way of describing the human practice of altering rock faces for symbolic purpose. Perhaps it is best to think of rock-art in the context of *something made*, as anthropologist Susanne Küchler describes: "all made things partake of intentional and systematizing thought, and potentially serve as vehicles of knowledge, as threads of thought that bind things and people via things to one another" (2013, 25). This research will follow anthropologist Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency* (1998) in proposing that rock-art is best thought about in terms of *function* rather than *definition*; what it *does*, rather than what it *is*.

Section 3: Brief History of Point Pleasant Park

Point Pleasant Park's 190 acres, located on the southernmost tip of the Halifax peninsula, have undergone a reciprocal effect of human interaction with, and creation of, the landscape through "centuries of cultural modification" (Fowler 2011a, 6). This section will briefly trace the area's evolution through precontact Indigenous use, the colonial era, military implementation, and eventual designation as a municipal park. In Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987), he contrasts an "imperial history" which "reduces space to a stage, that pays attention to events unfolding in time alone" (xvi) against a "spatial history" of "forms and fantasies through which a culture declares its presence'" (xxii). The historical summary which follows seeks to provide a solid background for understanding both the material and cultural dimensions underlying Halifax's current relationship with the park.

The area known as Point Pleasant Park is part of Sipekne'katik, a district of Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people (Wicken 1994, 96). Although Nova Scotia has been inhabited for roughly 13,000 years (McCann 2012), not much is known about Mi'kmaq use of Point Pleasant prior to the founding of Halifax. To date, little archaeological evidence has been recovered to suggest habitation of the area (Schwarz 2005, 42). However, a pre-contact stone celt was unearthed during excavation near Prince of Wales Tower (Schwarz 2005, 42). Stone celts were attached to wooden shafts, and designed for a variety of purposes. This suggests the Mi'kmaq visited and used the area now called Point Pleasant, yet does not provide enough evidence to suggest frequent or regular use.

In 1749, Colonel Edward Cornwallis was tasked with establishing a British settlement in Nova Scotia, for military defence and resource exploitation (McCann 2012). While Cornwallis initially wanted to build on Point Pleasant, there was inadequate water supply and a lack of anchorage near shore, resulting in Halifax's establishment further north (Akins 1895, 10). Beginning in 1751, the fledgling settlement divided the Point Pleasant area into 5-acre farm lots (Schwarz 2005, 8). By 1761, a "good road" followed the shoreline from early Halifax's Water Street to Point Pleasant (Akins 1895, 213). Evidence of domestic building can still be seen in the park today (Schwarz 2005, 11). However, by 1784 these parcels of land had been gradually consolidated by Lieutenant Governor Edmund Fanning (Fowler 2011a, 6), as Point Pleasant was a strategic location for the settlement's defences (Davis et al. 2008, 3).

In 1762, the British settlement of St. John's, Newfoundland, was captured by French forces in the course of the Seven Years' War, causing somewhat of a panic in Halifax. As Nova Scotia had often changed hands between French and English control, Halifax feared to become the next target of French forces. A council-of-war was called, including the Lieutenant Governor, the head of the Halifax Militia, the head of the Royal Engineers, the Commander-in-Chief, and many others (Akins 1895, 66). "They recommended to Government the embodying a portion of the militia force, and that the Batteries on George's Island, Fort George, Point Pleasant and East Battery should be put in repair and guns mounted, and the erection of such works around the town and at the Dockyard as might be considered necessary for the protection of the place" (Akins 1895, 66). Two batteries were built at Point Pleasant: to the west, Barbette Battery on the entrance to the Northwest Arm, and to the east, and Breastwork Battery facing the

Figure 3.1: Point Pleasant Park today. Added stars indicate surviving or former historical military installments. SOURCE: Halifax Regional Municipality 2019.

harbour. These sites are now known as the Northwest Arm Battery and Point Pleasant

Battery, respectively (Davis et al. 2008, 18). In February 1763, less than a year later,

Britain and France made peace, and work on Halifax's defensive fortifications ceased for

the next twelve years (Piers 1947, 11-13). "The cause of alarm having subsided, further

expense was deemed unnecessary" (Akins 1895, 66).

Military building resumed in 1778 as a result of the American Revolutionary War, with four new batteries constructed. Bayside Battery No. 1 was a "small earthen, redan-shaped work with embrasures, fronting east", which was demolished circa 1930. Bayside Battery No. 2 was a "small blunted redan of sod-work" at Black Rock Point. Northwest Arm Battery No. 1 was a "blunted redan" at Chain Rock, and Northwest Arm Battery No. 2 was a "tiny redan" located to the south. Also, a 560' long "entrenchment" was built to the south of the present-day Cambridge Battery. The Barbette and Breastwork batteries of 1762 were improved and renamed Flagstaff and Fielding's, respectively (Piers 1947, 19). Again, it appears that a flurry of building activity resulted in most of these structures being abandoned when the threat of invasion had passed.

Construction on Fort Ogilvie began in 1793, in response to the French Revolution; this site was not abandoned after the war, like so many of its predecessors, and was renovated between 1862 and 1879 (Piers 1947, 21, 50). Prince of Wales Tower was built between 1796 and 1798, and improved in 1862 (Piers 1947, 26, 50). Both sites included barracks where soldiers were stationed (Fowler 2011a, 23; Fowler 2011b, 20). These men were likely the creators of many of the earliest petroglyphs which survive to today.

Despite continued military use, Point Pleasant also served as a seaside recreation site (Hallett 2001, 17). Halifax in the 1810s was presumably a malodourous town, lacking sewers and garbage removal programs (Haliburton 2011, 20). Between 1811 and 1816, Lady Katharina Sherbrooke took regular walks, sometimes twice a day, between Government House and Point Pleasant (Haliburton 2011, 20). Her visits would have coincided with the earliest dated rock-art figure in the park, inscribed by Richard M. Binns in 1815. On Tuesday, June 25, 1815, Lady Sherbrooke wrote in her diary: "In the

Evening it was fair, and we walked, the Sun set was most beautiful & the Sky had a very uncommon appearance – A fly bit one of my eyes very unmercifully whilst we were walking in the Evening" (2011, 185-6).

Black Rock became a popular swimming spot, "the resort of bathers", circa 1820 (Akins 1895, 202). A footpath followed the shoreline of Point Pleasant to Steele's Pond (Akins 1895, 202), a landmark which has not survived to the present day. Sarah Clinch, an 18-year-old Boston girl residing in Halifax from 1853-1854, often wrote in her diary of "walking round the Point" with her cousins. On December 26, 1853, she writes, "We went down by Steele's pond, and then struck though the woods. We were very tired but enjoyed it very much. We saw some beautiful places and brought home some pretty greens. We saw a great many trees blown down by the wind in the storm the other day" (Clinch 2001, 46). She also writes of visiting "the round tower" (Prince of Wales Tower), picking mayflowers, and watching the men of Artillery Park "going down to the chain battery for ball practice" (Clinch 2001, 25).

The final military complex to be added to Point Pleasant was the Cambridge Battery, between 1862 and 1868 (Piers 1947, 50). Yet in 1866, the British Government leased Point Pleasant for 999 years to the City of Halifax, with an annual rent of one shilling (Fowler 2011a, 7; Tulloch 2017, 1). By 1878, the Royal Engineers added several paths and roads to the site (Hopkins 1878). Geographer Carl Sauer writes that "the culture landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the national area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result" (1969, 343). We see that the physical landscape (Point Pleasant) was acted on by a culture group

(Haligonians), legitimized by the national government, and subsequently distilled into a form still recognizable today.

In its function as a park, Point Pleasant exists as a physical location with a socially constructed purpose, both as a "space" and "place" of meaning (Nash and Chippindale 2001, 6). Despite the devastation of Hurricane Juan in 2003, during which 57,000 trees or 70% of the forest was lost (Schwarz 2005, 6), the park's function and cultural value remained unchanged. "There is thus the landscape we initially see and a second landscape which is produced through local practice" (Hirsch 1995, 2). Today, Halifax Regional Municipality boasts the park is "a great spot for walking your dog, running, biking, or just sitting on a bench contemplating the ocean" (2019). Amenities include "39km of easy, criss-crossing trails, off-leash dog walking areas, public restrooms, cycling… preserved ruins of early fortifications, performances by the Shakespeare by the Sea theatre group, a self-guided cultural walking tour… [and] the park can be booked for weddings and special events" (HRM 2019).

There may be a reflexive impression of a tangible, objective reality of Point Pleasant, but this spatio-temporal location is embedded in a web of connections. Thus, the Point Pleasant rock-art, like all rock-art, are not physical objects that exist in a conceptual vacuum. "Rock art also exists as human marks on the land – as 'landmarks' – which means that a broader context yet is that of the surrounding environment" (Fitch 1988, 61-62). Not only is rock-art inseparable from landscape – an additional layer of meaning (Tan et al. 2016, 37) – but culture and landscape are similarly entangled:

> A place is identifiable but, unlike a site [or space], not separable from its surroundings. To try to describe a place is difficult, if not impossible, in the way that describing a dream or a nightmare is difficult: one is always confronted with

the question of *how far back do you get, when do you place the frame?* Unlike a
site, a place includes the observer as well, so that the configuration of a rock art
place – its series of contexts that expand like concentric circles around a center –
expands a notch further to include not only the surrounding land and time but also
me, you, us. (Fitch 1988, 62, italics in original)

The observer is part of this context. This suggests we interpret rock-art "not simply as a

'thing'", so much as "a 'happening' whose meaning is negotiated and apprehended through

people's participation and engagement with it" (Brady and Bradley 2016, 84). This theme

will be revisited in Section 7. For now, it suffices to say that approaching rock-art,

including the Point Pleasant assemblage, requires a certain receptivity to perhaps

unexpected connections and perspectives.

Section 4: Methods and Theory

Data collection was guided heavily by the work of Whitley (2005), Anati (1977, 2010), and Taçon and Chippindale (1998). Both Whitley and Anati have produced field manuals for the archaeological study of rock-art. These highly informative guides provided a methodological backbone for recording the complexities of this medium, as found in the Point Pleasant Park context. Taçon and Chippindale (1998, 6-8) offer a more theoretical framework for approaching rock-art research and evaluation, often described in the literature as "informed methods and formal methods". This simplified reference offers an incomplete view of Taçon and Chippindale's advice, as they describe five techniques necessary for understanding and appreciating rock-art: (1) description, (2) dating, (3) informed methods, (4) formal methods, and (5) analogy (1998, 6-8). These techniques have been directly applicable to the study of Point Pleasant rock-art.

Taçon and Chippindale begin by addressing the need for (1) a clear *description* of the object of study; while there is no universally accepted definition of rock-art, researchers must identify and limit their field of inquiry (1998, 6). This study explores human-made images, designs, or writing, irrespective of stylistic qualities, which occur on natural rock faces but not human-built features within Point Pleasant Park.

Effort must be made to (2) *date* rock-art (Taçon and Chippindale 1998, 6). Various forms of chemical testing are often employed, which is both outside the scope of this research, and unnecessary: there is little evidence of Point Pleasant rock-art preceding the colonial period. This suggests the assemblage falls within a 270-year range, from the founding of Halifax in 1749 to today. Poor preservation under coastal conditions heavily biases pictograms toward the extreme latter of this period. Data suggests the range of

surviving artworks are from at least 1815 onward, while new pictograms appeared

throughout the park and within the research's target site during the course of analysis.

(3) *Informed methods* refers to ethnographic knowledge of rock-artists, which is

essential for comprehending the intended meanings voiced through this form of human

expression (Taçon and Chippindale 1998, 6-7). As a lifelong citizen of Halifax, I possess

both insight to, and biases toward, this social milieu. Some meanings appeared clear

given my cultural perspective, while others have required investigation. Aware of my

preconceptions, reasoning and research has been given primacy over instinct. To add to

ethnographic data, the history and functions of Point Pleasant Park have been explored, to

understand how the site has been used and by whom.

(4) *Formal methods* of quantitative analysis take precedence when informed

methods are not possible (Taçon and Chippindale 1998, 7-8). Systematic data collection

should aim to create an "unbiased" record of rock-art, leaving cultural interpretation open,

rather than assumed or imposed (Taçon and Chippindale 1998, 7-8). Objectivity must be

established before meaning can be hypothesized. Formal methods for Point Pleasant

research relied heavily on Whitley (2005) and Anati (1977).

Finally, Taçon and Chippindale (1998, 8) suggest the use of (5) *analogy*.

Comparing assemblages of rock-art about which little is known to examples similar in

style or culture may provide deeper insight. A good example is Nash's suggestion that we

can learn more about prehistoric rock-art by studying modern graffiti, based on his

exploration of the contemporary petroglyphs of Heysham Head, United Kingdom (2010).

In a similar vein, I seek to add to our understanding of both the local cultural context of

Point Pleasant Park, as well as consider what insights the assemblage may hold for rock-art as a form of human expression.

By incorporating the methods and theories of Whitley (2005), Anati (1977 and 2010), and titans of the discipline such as Taçon and Chippindale (1998), this research analyzes rock-art from multiple angles for a greater appreciation of the whole. To explore the function of contemporary rock-art, based on the (1) frequency, (2) placement, and (3) content of the Point Pleasant assemblage, data collection was divided into two phases. The large-scale Phase One focused on frequency and placement within the broader park landscape; *how much* rock-art is there, and *where* is it? The smaller-scale Phase Two selected a target site for in-depth analysis, which was primarily concerned with content; what does the art *mean*? Data collection was completed over 12 days between September 9 and December 23, 2018. Weather, tides, and decreasing hours of sunlight were contributing factors to this extended time frame.

The Phase One survey encompassed nearly all 190 acres of the park, save areas excluded by law or high risk of bodily harm. Roads and trails were used to demarcate smaller areas for investigation by unstructured field-walking (Renfrew and Bahn 2015, 68). Coastal areas were explored at low tide. Figures (individual designs) were counted and categorized as petroglyph (carvings, etchings, incising, etc.) or pictogram (surface paintings or colourings). Locations were mapped on paper, using visual estimation and cellphone GPS, accurate within 4.9 metres under ideal conditions (GPS.gov 2017). This simple method of locating rock-art satisfied research requirements, in that it identified five concentrated areas for potential further study. However, the total number of rock-art figures within Point Pleasant Park is undoubtedly higher than that recorded by this

survey, as analysis of the target site will demonstrate (see Section 6). Paper maps were

copied into Google Earth to provide an overview of rock-art distribution.

Based on these results, the coastal region near Chain Rock was selected for the in-

depth cataloguing and analysis of Phase Two. Google Earth provided a detailed satellite

view of the area, which was used as a map to record the assemblage (Whitley 2005, 22).

Each figure was numbered and recorded in isolation, including data such as size

measurements, aspect (direction), creation methods, instances of superpositioning, state

of preservation, and a description of the art (Anati 1977, 27-29; Whitley 2005, 23-25).

These details were recorded in a spreadsheet for further analysis. The location was

photographed to establish the site within the landscape, and each figure was photographed

in close, detailed view (Anati 1977, 23-24).

Section 5: The Point Pleasant Assemblage

To return to our research questions: how much rock-art is in the park, and when was it made? The revised estimate is 488 figures (Fig. 5.1), consisting of 375 petroglyphs (Fig. 5.2) and 113 pictograms (Fig. 5.3). This means there are over three times more petroglyphs. Considering the ease of painting a rock compared to the effort required to etch into its surface, one might expect to see more pictograms. While it is possible that more art has been painted throughout time, the exposed coastal nature of the park leaves it, and its rocks, battered by fickle Nova Scotia weather. On average, Halifax experiences 142 days of rain and 25 days of snow (Government of Canada 2019). Daily temperature fluctuations from above- to below-freezing occur four months of year, representing prolonged patterns of freeze-and-thaw (Government of Canada 2019). Under these conditions, petroglyphs prove more tenacious than mere surface applications; the force required to erode a carved stone surface is far greater than that required to remove a layer of paint.

Based on both phases one and two of research, the earliest recorded date is an 1815 petroglyph. This represents Point Pleasant during its military phase. Batteries at Northwest Arm, Point Pleasant, Black Rock, Green Bank, Chain Rock, and Fort Ogilvie were still standing, if not in active operation (Piers 1947, 21, 50). There is a strong tradition of petroglyphs at Fort Ogilvie, and as the 1815 figure is located nearby on the North side of Maple Walk, the artist may have been connected to the fort in some way.

The distribution of art is clearly uneven, with most examples adhering to four basic site criteria. First, almost all artworks were *easily accessible*. This suggests that rock-artistry is not a rugged off-road activity. Sites are chosen for convenience of the
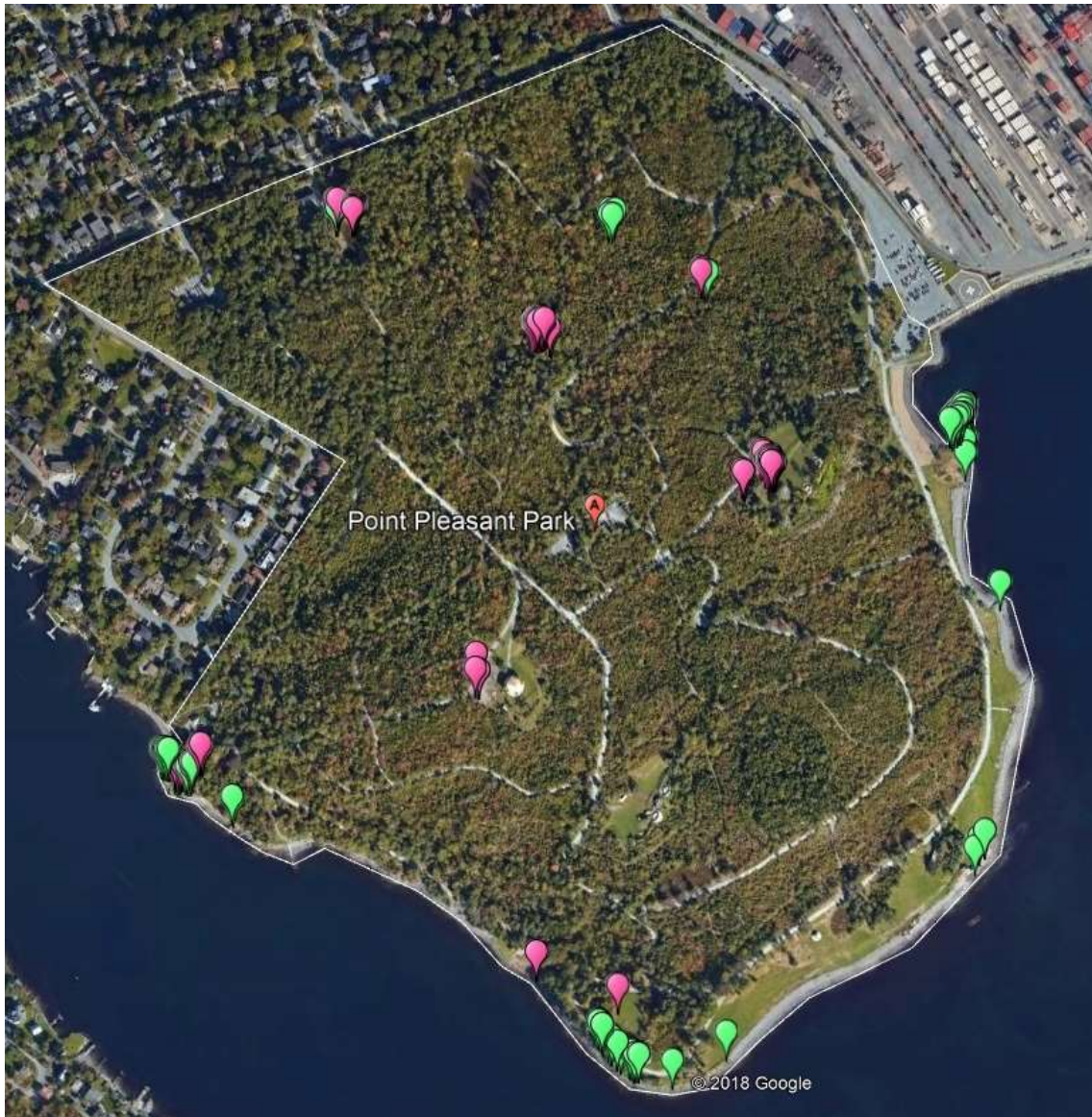
Fig. 5.1. Distribution of 488 rock-art figures in Point Pleasant Park. Pink represents petroglyphs, while green represents pictograms. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018.

artist, with little competition for unusual locales. Second, Whitley identifies "ease of

detection" (2005, 132), or *visibility* from a distance, as important to prehistoric rock-art.

This also holds true for contemporary rock-art. The situation of artwork within a

landscape gives us clues as how public or private a message is embodied (Whitley 2005,

129). In this, almost all of the Point Pleasant assemblage is intentionally public. Good
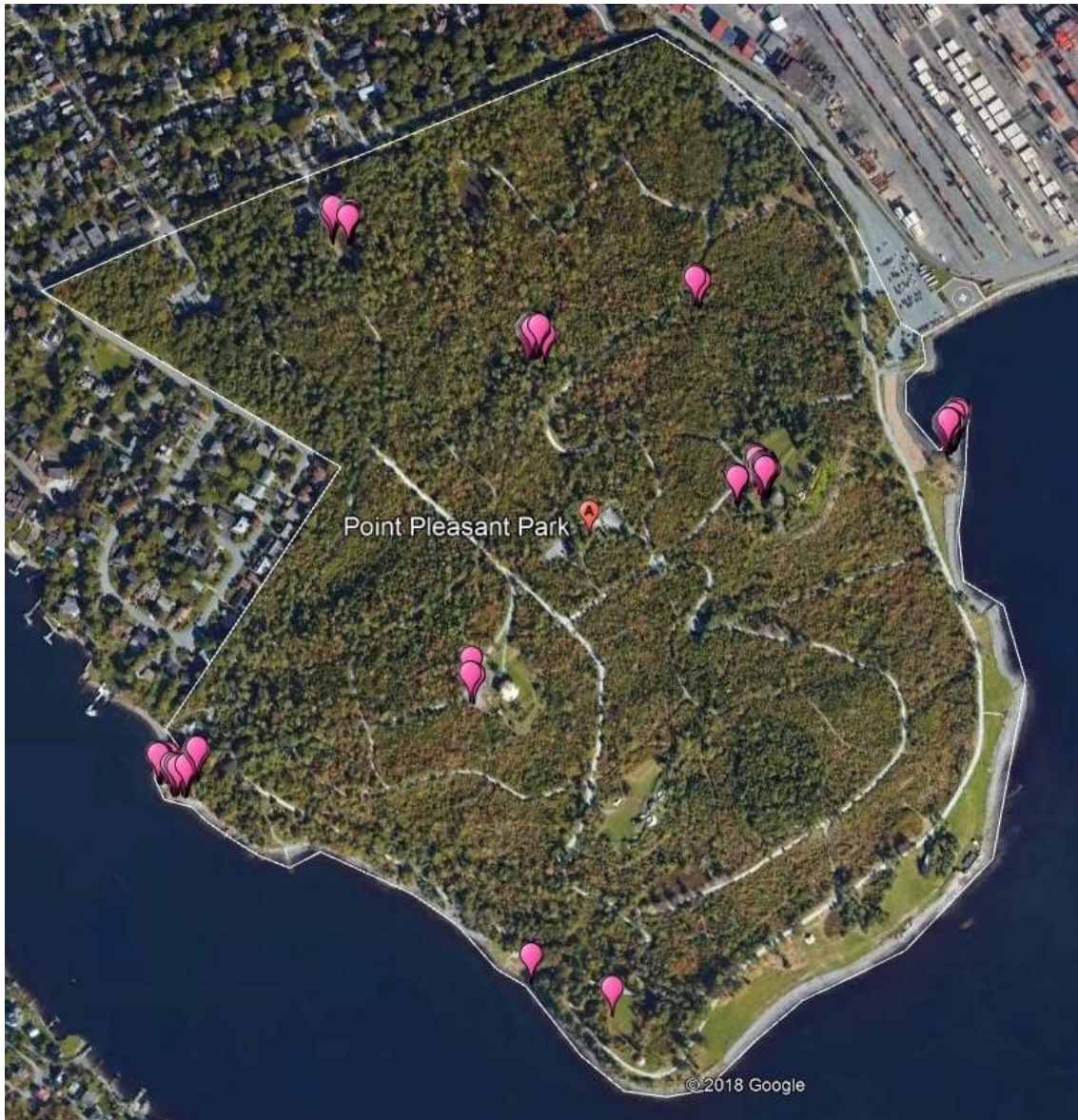
Fig. 5.2. Distribution of 375 petroglyphs. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018

visibility for the figure often results in a good view for the artist, as well.

Third, petroglyphs and pictograms tend to be found on different *rock types*.
Petroglyphs were often clustered on large, flat, mostly horizontal rock surfaces. As the
rock must be physically altered in the creation of a petroglyph, soft rock and a smooth
surface are key. As pressure must be applied regardless of the technique used, horizontal
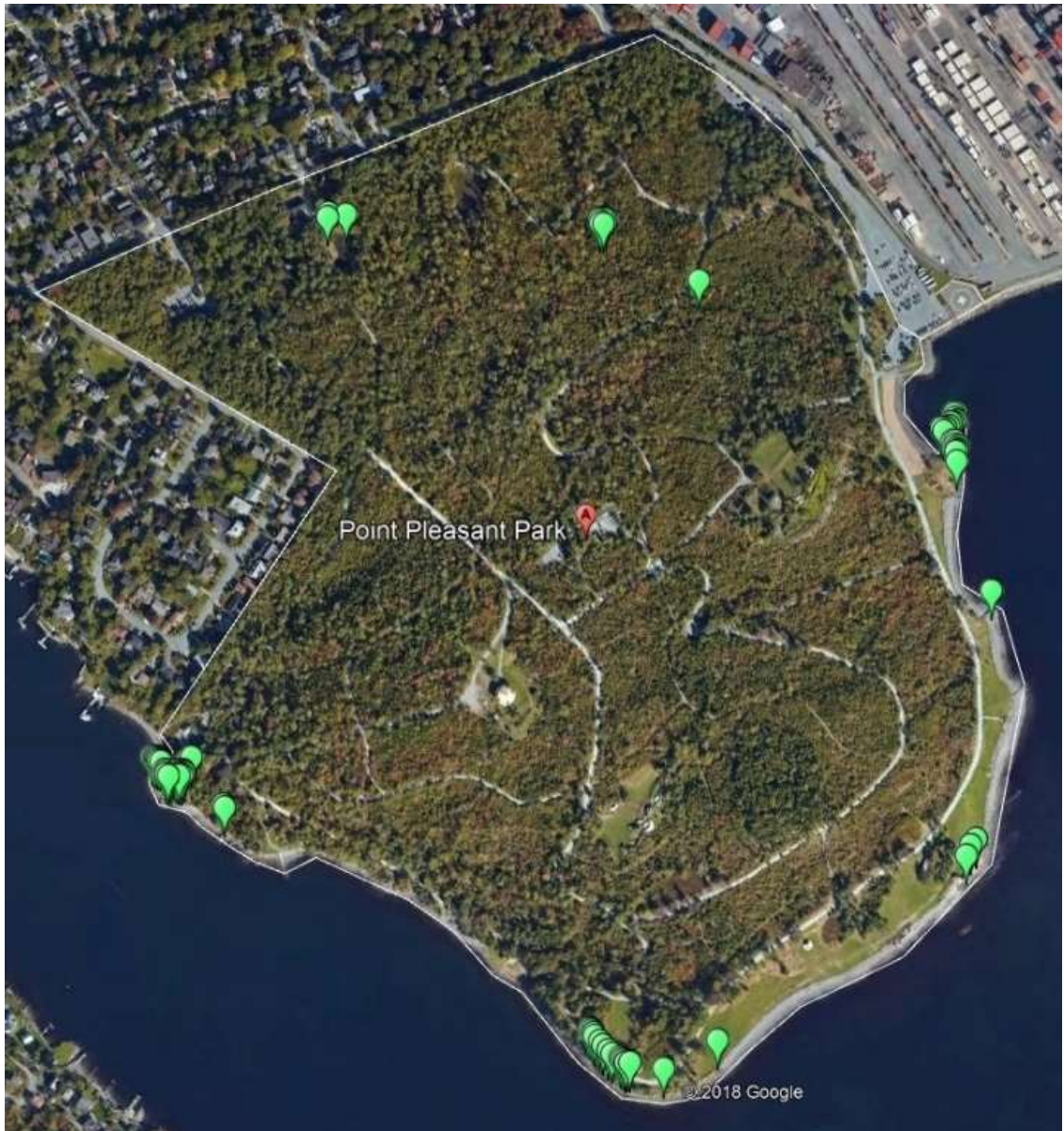
Fig. 5.3. Distribution of 113 pictograms. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018.

surfaces allow the artist to put more of their body weight behind this force. Pictograms

were found on a variety of rock faces, including a full range between large and small

rocks, horizontal and vertical angles, and smooth and rough surfaces, with some artists

even painting over lichen or moss. Spray paint is especially versatile in this regard,

allowing for direct application with no intermediary tool.

Fourth, locations for both art forms were often *near bodies of water*. This makes sense for petroglyphs, where one easily finds smooth, water-worn rocks surfaces, but this trend is even more pronounced for the more versatile pictograms. It is possible that pictogram artists choose these locations based on the principle of visibility, or that both forms of artists are intuitively drawn to the water's edge. Nearly half of all rock art occurs along the shoreline, a liminal space between land and ocean. Much rock-art worldwide is believed to have existed outside the spaces of daily community living, often in uninhabitable, "wild", or "empty" places, such as deserts or deep caves (Hirsch 1995, 4; Schaafsma 1988, 4; Tan et al. 2016, 54; Whitley 2005, 39-41). Point Pleasant Park, on the edge the Halifax Peninsula, is such a liminal space. Set aside for special purpose, it represents a synthesis of the Cartesian nature/culture divide. The coastline's ever-changing realm represents the outermost periphery of liminality.

Five areas of intense activity were identified: Black Rock, Chain Rock, Fort Ogilvie, the north side of Maple Walk, and the forest "piece" outlier. Each will be examined for adherence and divergence from these four site criteria, as well as brief mention of each site's unique characteristics.

Black Rock (Fig. 5.4) was once the site of Bayside Battery No. 2, a "small blunted redan of sod-work" (Piers 1947, 19). This structure, no longer standing, was built in response to the American Revolutionary War. Black Rock was later used for public executions. In terms of rock-art, Black Rock is estimated to contain 66 figures. This coastal site offers a good mix of petroglyphs and pictograms, and adheres nicely to the significant site criteria identified, affording easy access, good visibility, smooth flat rocks,

and proximity to water. A particularly striking artwork found at Black Rock is a collection of hand stencils, a popular motif in prehistoric cave art.

The Fort Ogilvie location (Fig. 5.5) offers the first three attributes, but without water access. This assemblage is entirely comprised of petroglyphs, the densest site with 136 visible figures, and perhaps more obscured by the sod. The area seems to hold little appeal for pictogram artists, perhaps owing to respect for the site's historical connections, or fear of reprisals for defacing heritage property. Fort Ogilvie was built in 1793, in response to the French Revolution, and later renovated between 1862 and 1879 (Piers 1947, 21, 50; Fowler 2011a, 8). This site was known to have included soldiers' barracks (Fowler 2011a, 23). Without more in-depth analysis, it seems that many of these artworks are historical, and all represent names, initials, and dates.

Similar to Fort Ogilvie, the north side of Maple Walk (Fig. 5.6) is an exclusively petroglyph assemblage, with many of the 96 figures historical. This area affords only two of the common site criteria: ease of access and smooth rocks. Perhaps its poor visibility, obscured from the trail by bushes, and uninspiring surroundings have caused it to be overlooked by pictogram artists. It is this site which boasts the oldest dated figure in the park, from 1815. Given its proximity to Fort Ogilvie, and many similar styles, this may have been an "overflow" canvas for the soldiers stationed there. Maple Walk includes more recent additions, such as an eight-legged figure accompanied by the word "Awokwejit" (Fig. 5.7), meaning "spider" in the Mi'kmaq language (Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk 2004).

The one area targeted solely by pictogram artists, and lacking in all expected site criteria, is the forest "piece" outlier (Fig. 5.8). A "piece" refers to a mural in the so-called
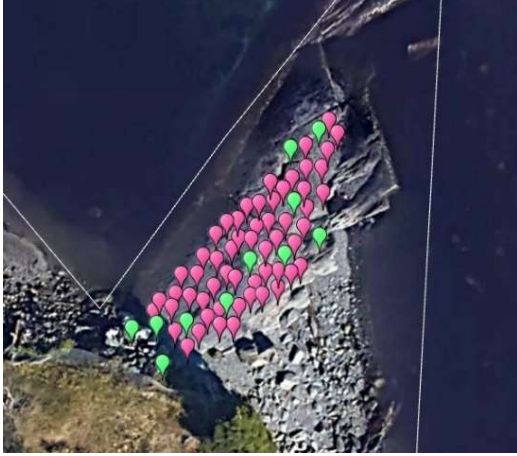
Fig. 5.4. Black Rock, with 66 figures. Pink represent petroglyphs, green represent pictograms. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018.

Fig. 5.5. Fort Ogilvie, with 136 petroglyphs. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018.

Fig. 5.6. The north side of Maple Walk, with 96 petroglyphs. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018.

Fig. 5.7. A Maple Walk petroglyph. *Awo'kwejit* means "spider" in the Mi'kmaq language (ACFNH 2004). SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

Fig. 5.8. The forest "piece" outlier. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018.

Fig. 5.9. The "piece". SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

"Hip Hop graffiti" style (Wilkinson 2014, 4). The area is difficult to access, well hidden by trees and bushes, with uneven and lichen-covered rocks, and effectively in the middle of nowhere. The site has absolutely nothing to recommend it, and yet there are eight pictograms, including one "piece" (Fig. 5.9) and several "tags" (stylized names) and "throw-ups" (more elaborately stylized names) (Wilkinson 2014, 4). Might this site have been used as a private training ground for an aspiring Hip Hop graffiti artist, or a secret hang-out spot?

The fifth area of increased activity, Chain Rock, will be explored in the next section.

Section 6: The Chain Rock Target Site

The fifth site, Chain Rock, was chosen for further analysis in Phase Two, given the area's archetypal nature and good mix of petroglyphs and pictograms. More in-depth study allowed for a greater appreciation of the setting and content of the art. Whitley tells us that rock-art is only one component of an archaeological site's context, and other features or deposits may hold important clues to the function of or methods employed in artworks (2005, 39-41). For this reason, we will turn to a brief summary of the Chain Rock's history, and a short glimpse of the site today.

This area earns its name from events of the Seven Year's War (Piers 1947, 11-12). This conflict was fought by Britain, Prussia, and Hanover against France, Austria, Sweden, Saxony, Russia, and Spain (Eccles 2006). In North America, this war permitted continued expression of hostilities between the French and English through attacks on each others' colonial holdings. As described in Section 3, the British settlement of St. John's, Newfoundland was captured by French forces in 1762, which resulted in fear and panic in Halifax. As Nova Scotia had often changed hands between French and English control, Halifax may have become the next target for the French. If an attack occurred, the town feared that French forces might sail up the Northwest Arm and disembark, to approach Halifax by land. Admiral Lord Colville was tasked with barricading the Arm, to prevent the passage of enemy ships. He erected "a boom of timber and chains, 120 fathoms long", guarded by a "sloop with eight 6- or 9-pounders and thirty rounds of round- or grape-shot". The anchor point on the Point Pleasant side was henceforth known as Chain Rock (Piers 1947, 11-12).

Two small batteries were built in the area in 1778, in response to the American Revolutionary War (Piers 1947, 19), and the Northwest Arm was barricaded once more in 1796 (Piers 1947, 102). These structures appear to have received little attention after their short period of use. Chain Rock battery is recorded in maps dating from 1800 and 1803 (Davis et al. 2008, 9; Fenwick 1803), but is simply labelled "Old Battery" by 1811 (Nicholls 1811). Any surviving structures were not recorded in an 1812 list of military fortifications (Piers 1947, 86), although Akins notes that the "ring bolts" were put in place between 1812 and 1815 (1895, 212). By 1851, the Chain Rock battery was "in ruins" (Smith and Savage 1851).

Today, all that remains resembling fortification is a crumbling rectangular concrete platform on the hillside, and a small concrete structure (approximately one metre square and a metre high) on the shingle. One can find a metal peg bearing the 1961 stamp of the Royal Engineers. (This is reportedly being used as a clue for a "mystery cache" in the popular Geocaching activity.) There are also two metal spikes driven deep in the rock, one near the shore and one within the treeline, each with an attached ring. These rings seem like good places to attach something; perhaps a chain?

Artifact scatter suggests contemporary use as a picnic area and campsite. Food and beverage trash on November 28, 2018, included a pepperoni wrapper, hot buffalo wing pretzel pieces, a can of Faxe beer, a Starbuck's cup, and a 1L carton of Farmer's 3.25% milk. Although open fires are not permitted, the site contains two rock fire circles, one used quite recently. Camping detritus included a sleeping bag, a sweater, an air mattress, two blankets, and two pairs of socks, one of them in blue leopard print. As these items were untouched upon later visits, one may assume the campers abandoned their

gear in a hurry. Camping is not permitted within the park. No found objects appeared to relate directly to the production of rock-art.

Most of the rock-art analyzed is contained on one large rock (Fig. 6.1). To the west lies the tidal waters of the Northwest Arm, with a few houses visible amid the trees on the opposite shore. To the east lies the bulk of Point Pleasant Park. Uphill and through a steep, rock-lined trail one may find the main gravel path. South, behind most working artists, the Northwest Arm shortly connects with Halifax Harbour. North along the Arm, one can see several private docks and boathouses connected with a wealthy subdivision just beyond the park. The figures faced all directions, but southeast and southwest predominated (77%), suggesting the artists generally worked facing northeast or northwest. The east/west shift is probably attributable to avoiding the glare of the rising or setting sun. The softly sloped south face of the rock is more heavily adorned, opposed to the more level north face, and smoother surfaces are preferred. In one instance, the artist Jakobsen appears to have wedged himself, or herself, between two rocks into a crouching position in order to take advantage of incising a particularly smooth patch. The author can confirm this is not a particularly comfortable position to hold for long.

Initial large-scale survey of the park identified 57 rock-art figures in the Chain Rock Battery area (Fig. 6.2). However, more detailed analysis was able to record 83 figures in merely 1/3 of the proposed research area (Fig. 6.3). This unexpected increase required a redefinition of boundaries for the target site, permitting more focused analysis within a smaller footprint and allowing a greater appreciation of articulation between a single rock "canvas" and the art inscribed upon it. Of the 83 figures recorded within the Chain Rock target assemblage, 57 were petroglyphs (69%) and 26 pictograms (31%).

Fig. 6.1. Main canvas of the Chain Rock target site. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

Fig. 6.2. Initial catalogue of the Chain Rock site. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2018

Fig. 6.3. Detail of the Chain Rock site. SOURCE: Google Earth 2018, Lütz 2019.

Most petroglyphs (86%) were created by incision (Fig. 6.4); repetitive scratching into the rock surface, which creates deep grooves over time (Whitley 2005, 11). This allows the artist a high degree of control over the image but requires patience. The second most common technique (10%) was pecking (Fig. 6.5); forcefully striking the rock face, directly or with an intermediary chisel (Whitley 2005, 11). While sculptors can produce fine works in this fashion, most pecking examples at the site were extremely rough. Pecking seems to entail a more violent energy and commensurate imprecision. There was only one case of stippling (Fig. 6.6), in which the artist bores several holes into the rock in the shape of a figure. There was also one example of acid etching (Fig. 6.7). The figure is ill-shaped but clearly intentional, suggesting the artist may have been fearful of being splashed by the falling acid, or that the realization and subsequent use of acid's effect on rock was merely serendipitous. In comparison, pictograms were predominately painted with a brush or other instrument (81%). Marker (11%), spray paint (4%), and white-out (4%) were also noted. While most prehistoric art uses the colours red, black, and white (Whitley 2005, 4), Halifax artists employ black, white, silver, purple, pink, yellow, blue, and orange. It is possible, however, that the bleaching effects of sunlight and salt water have faded the intensity of once-brighter hues.

The smallest figure was a tiny 1- by 3-centimetre petroglyph (Fig. 6.8), while the largest, a pictogram, was 210- by 170-centimetres (Fig. 6.9). On average, a petroglyph covers 65 cm^2, while pictograms cover 4051 cm^2, about 62 times larger. This may be attributed to the comparative ease of surface applications versus the labour-intensive creation of a petroglyph.
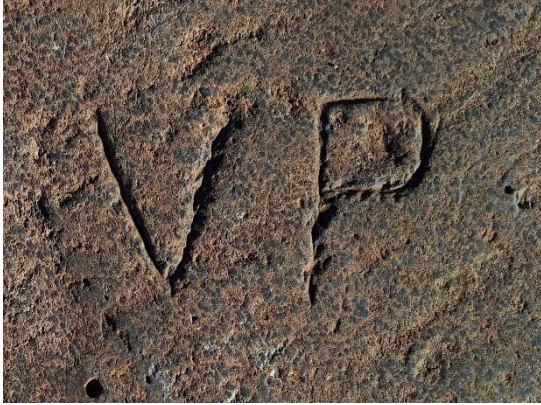
Fig. 6.4. Incised petroglyph. SOURCE: Lütz 2018

Fig. 6.5. Pecked petroglyph. SOURCE: Lütz 2018

Fig. 6.6. Stippled petroglyph. SOURCE: Lütz 2018

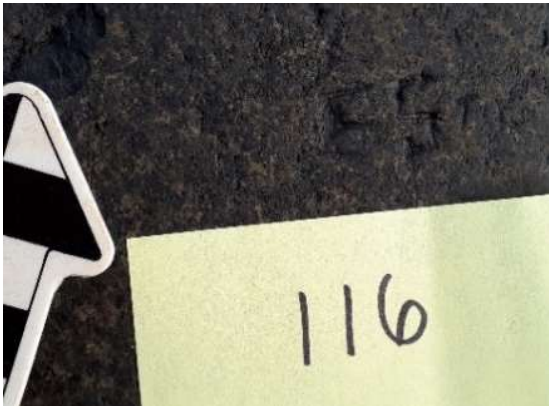

Fig. 6.7. Acid-etching. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

Fig. 6.8. The smallest figure at the Chain Rock target site. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

Fig. 6.9. The largest figure, in a very poor state of preservation. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

Nine of the figures (11%) were dated, including 1873, possibly 1895, possibly 1904, 1904, 1916, 1971, '15, '16. As the Chain Rock battery was "in ruins" by 1851 (Smith and Savage 1851), we may assume it unlikely that any of the rock-art was created by those connected to the Chain Rock batteries during their functional years. The ninth dated example is merely "19"; judging by the state of preservation, this is an abandoned artwork from the 20th century. As noted in the discussion of park-wide art, surviving artworks are skewed toward the recent past, most markedly for the less weather-resistant pictograms. Only four figures (5%) exhibited no signs of wearing, suggesting their recent addition. In fact, several new artworks (all declarations of love) appeared near Chain Rock during the course of fieldwork, but only one of these was within the research area.

Eleven of the figures (13%) showed evidence of superpositioning (Fig. 6.5). The panels studied in the Chain Rock site have by no means reached saturation. Most superpositioning occurred by pictogram artists covering petroglyphs with large paintings; whether they didn't notice the previous works or felt them inconsequential can only be a matter of speculation.

Of target site artworks, 95% made use of text. This suggests the human practice of rock-art has undergone a fundamental shift of representation from prehistory to today. Of the assemblage, 66 figures (or 79% of total) were exclusively text, while 13 figures (or 16% of total) combined text and images. Only four examples (5%) were image-only representations. These will be discussed first.

In figure 76, a white circle overlaid by an orange "C" shape appears to represent a planet (Fig. 6.5). That this geometric shape readily suggests a celestial body demonstrates symbolism, but what, if anything, the artist intended it to communicate is anyone's guess.

Figure 62 is a series of stacked arches, forming a rainbow of pink, yellow, blue, and purple. As noted in the above discussion of paint colours, weathering may have influenced the current hues. The artist appears to have tried creating a fifth colour between pink and yellow, not by mixing the pigments, but overlaying yellow with pink. Rainbows are often associated with the LGBTQ+ community, but there is no supporting evidence that this artwork indexes those connections. Figure 49 consists of two poorly decayed Pac-man "ghosts". (In this instance, a lengthy geometric description in the interest objectivity will be sacrificed for brevity.) The Pac-man arcade game featured four such ghosts, Inky (blue), Blinky (red), Pinky (pink), and Clyde (orange), as Pac-man's opponents. As the figures are simple black outlines, it does not appear particular characters are represented. This is one of few examples of a specific cultural commodity being invoked. Notably, both figures are smiling, something the characters did not do in the game. Figure 50 is unclear (Fig. 6.9); this large (210 by 170 centimeters), decayed white patch may have once been part of a mural, or it may represent censorship of a previous work.

Of artworks that employ images and text, two are collections that have merely been signed by their artists. Bhreagh's figure 71 is a collection of images, as follows (Fig. 6.10). A white circle may represent the moon. A white triangle with a line extending beneath it may represent an arrow, a tree, or a mushroom. A large, stylized figure in white and orange appears to represent an artistic flower with two leaves extending above and to the side. Finally, her name is signed in white capital letters with orange embellishments, the A filled with lines, resembling bricks, possibly a pyramid. What any of these images meant to the artist is unclear, possibly personal, possibly whimsical artistic play.

Fig. 6.10. Pictograms by Bhreagh. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

Fig. 6.11. Pictograms by Melanie. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

Melanie's figure 79 is a similar collection, including a black and white eye and a white tree (Fig. 6.11). A geometric stencil was used to create a white negative image. A black design shows a small circle encompassed by a crescent (perhaps moon), outlined by a circle with whorling appendages. A white circle is encompassed by another circle and surrounded by dots. She paints a nature scene in black, mountains behind coniferous trees and rolling waves. Melanie also signs her name in capitals, adding two strikes through the first line of M and an additional strike at the foot of A. The meanings and intention behind even contemporary examples of rock-art may be opaque.

A third example of the combination of text and images is figure 67, which explicitly states "Equality", surrounded by a circle. Nearby is a peace sign and a cross, both symbols with detailed histories. The cross, however, is upside down to the words. This may suggest the cross is not actually connected to figure 67, or that the cross, often representing Christianity, was intentionally inverted to distort this meaning.

Given that 95% of the art employs text, what else are Haligonian rock-artists writing about? Mostly, they're recording their names and initials. These 61 individuals account for 78% of the assemblage. As it turns out, humans have been similarly self-interested throughout time. Whitley claims the primary type of rock-art worldwide is totemic in nature: clan symbols that only members of the clan are permitted to create (2005, 96). One might argue that rock-artists, especially of those of preceding generations, might be invoking connections to their family or "clan" when they sign themselves simply "Jakobsen", or even "R. MacLeod". Speculation aside, Whitley goes on to say that the third most common form of rock-art is a biographical or personal

narrative (2005, 101). Artist Polly Schaafsma also describes the "autobiographical and self-promotional motivations" of rock-art, claiming them "similar to those underlying most modern graffiti" (1988, 4). Without re-visiting the debate between what counts as graffiti and what counts as rock-art, how can we index ourselves more directly than through our name or initials? We use our names to indicate ownership (lunch in the work fridge), presence (sign-in sheets), agreement (petitions), and a host of other actions. Gell describes this transcendent human ability to inscribe *self* on *thing* as "distributed personhood" (1998, 222). He writes that a "person and a person's mind are not confined to particular spatio-temporal coordinates, but consist of a spread of biological events and memories of events, and a dispersed category of material objects, traces, and leavings, which, in aggregate, testify to agency and patienthood during a biographical career which may, indeed, prolong itself long after biological death" (Gell 1998, 222).

At Chain Rock, we can see the "traces and leavings" of the agency of over 61 individuals. But beyond signing one's name, two artists chose to sign their names twice; one even did three times. Jakobsen, WH (perhaps HM?), and CI have produced multiple iterations so alike as to leave little doubt that they were made by the same hand. This may suggest a particular connection to the site or might only be evidence of an amusing pastime.

While most artists have left their initials, some have identified themselves by first name: Curt (40), Eliza (65), Sarah (68), Bhreagh (71) (Fig. 6.10), Melanie (79) (Fig. 6.11), and Naomi (81). These are almost exclusively female artists, predominantly creating pictograms. One possible explanation, especially regarding historic rock-art, is that women are or were less attached to their surname, or even initials, as a marker of

identity, given the expectation they will change with marriage. If this were true, it would suggest that both men and women are producing rock-art, but men do so in a way which obscures their gender. Another explanation may be the modern privileging of first names over family names, where identity is drawn from one's self rather than one's lineage. The idea of "being on a first name basis" with someone is largely passé. If this holds true, then the Chain Rock assemblage suggests that in recent years women are making, or at least proudly claiming, more rock-art than men.

Beyond names, 11 figures (13% of total) had an explicit message. 4 examples (5% of total) may be classified as inspirational messages. As all of these achieve some level of complexity, they will be treated individually below. Another grouping (4% of total) may be described as "cheeky" messages, conveying information of a less solemn nature. Examples include: "♥ Poutine", "Don't sniff this stuff" (seemingly painted in white-out), and "Everyone poops, But not everyone wipes ☺ so don't trust everyone". A third category includes romantic declarations: "K+K", and "A+B" within a heart-shape. The latter of these appeared during the later period of fieldwork. One example is commemorative, in the declaration, "I'll Miss you HALIFAX".

Figure 67, "Equality", was previously discussed, but is also included in the category of inspirational messages. These serve to focus the viewer's attention on a quality or idea expressed textually. Figure 45 reads "★★★ Always aim for the moon. Even if you miss you'll land among the stars ★★★" (Fig. 6.12). A quick Google search shows variations of this quote attributed to Norman Vincent Peale, Les Brown, and Oscar Wilde. One may also find such sentiments on a wide range of motivational plaques, mugs, and notebooks.
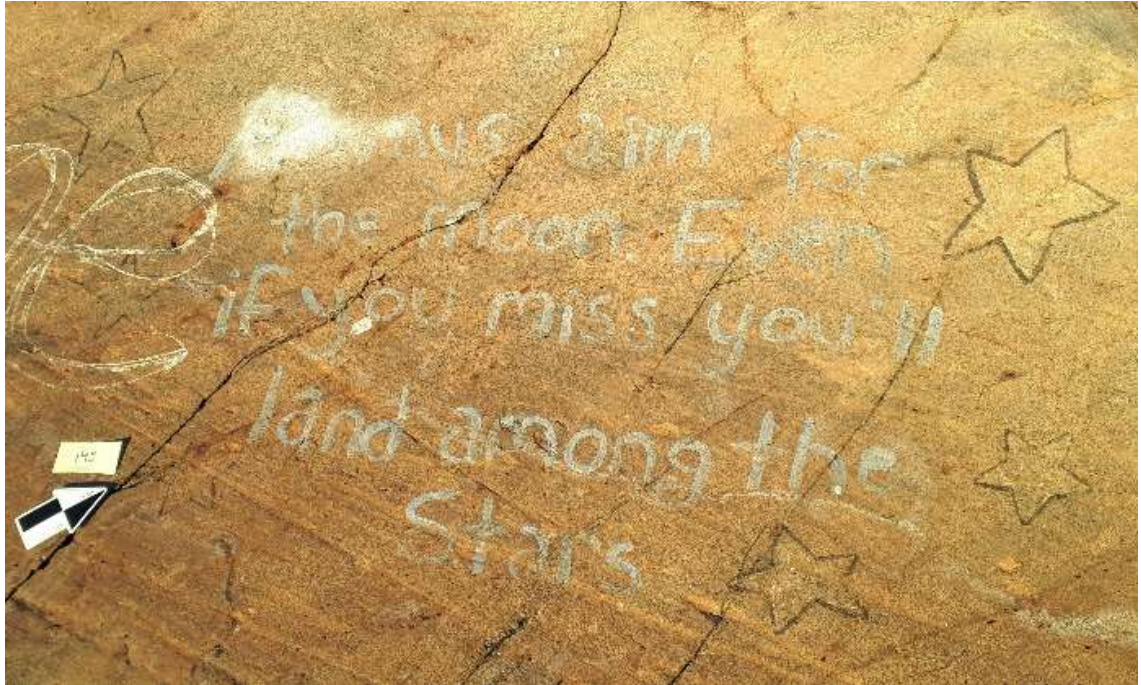
Fig. 6.12. "Always aim for the moon. Even if you miss you'll land among the stars". This example is superpositioning petroglyphs 40, 41, and 44. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.
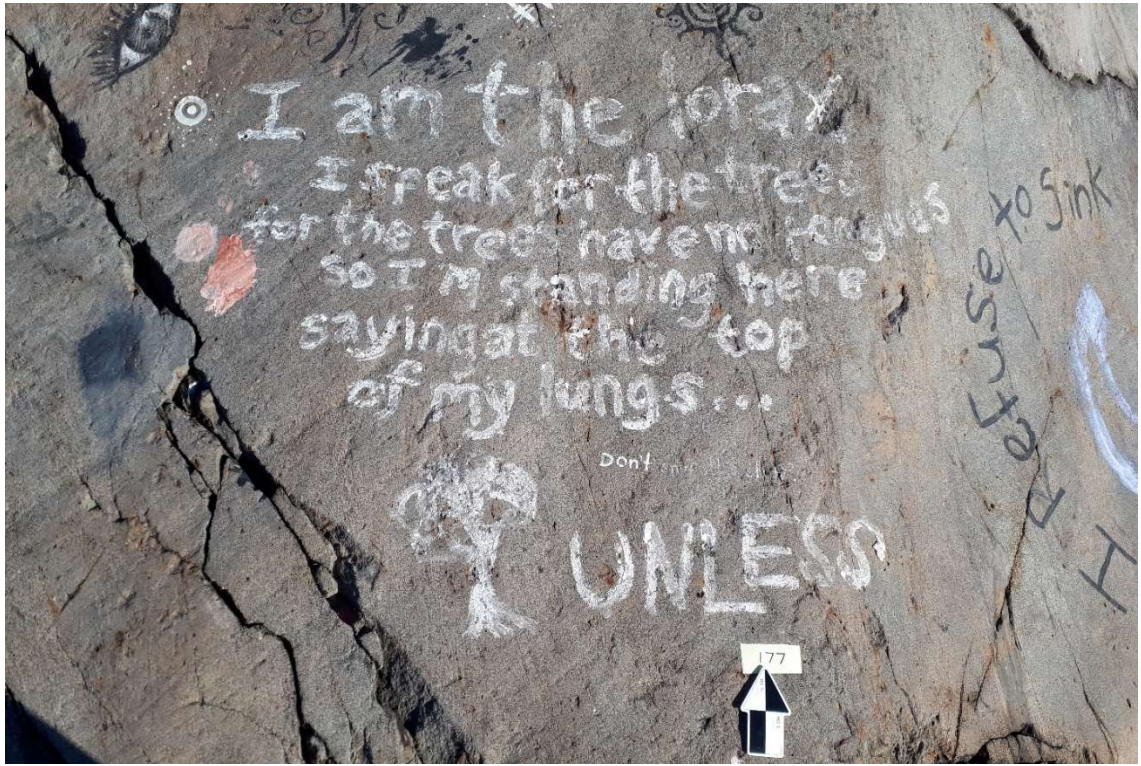

Fig. 6.13. From Dr. Seuss' children's book, *The Lorax*. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

By comparison, figure 77 is discernable as a paraphrase from Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*: "I am the lorax/ I speak for the trees/ for the trees have no tongues/ so I'm standing here/ saying at the top/ of my lungs… UNLESS" (Fig. 6.13). Although a children's story, *The Lorax* is a metaphor of environmental degradation. The Lorax fails in his mission to save the trees and leaves the area, inscribing the word "UNLESS" on "a small pile of rocks" (Geisel 1971). The story goes on to say that "UNLESS someone like you/ cares a whole awful lot, / nothing is going to get better. / It's not" (Geisel 1971). In this, the artist is not only reproducing a cultural commodity, but is drawing connections between "a small pile of rocks" in the lorax's world to Chain Rock in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax.

Another inspirational message which connects landscape to words can be seen in figure 48, "I Refuse to Sink ☾" (Fig. 6.14). This is a widely used phrase, perhaps derived from the expression "sink or swim" when faced with a challenge; we'll either rise to the occasion through increased effort or fail to exert ourselves. Curiously, this figure is positioned below the high-water mark, resulting in it being partially submerged at high tide. The location may be serendipitous, but there is a curious consistency in a "sink or swim" message rising from the water and being once more engulfed with the changing of the tides.

One final example does not quite qualify as "inspirational", but contains a stated message, nonetheless. Figure 58 reads: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (Fig. 6.15). This is a flawlessly punctuated copy of the final line of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). This suggests a certain level of intentionality. The artist may have had a copy of the book for reference, or may have memorized the line for personal, educational, or artistic reasons. The meaning of this

Fig. 6.14. Pictogram 48, "I Refuse to Sink". SOURCE: Lütz 2018.
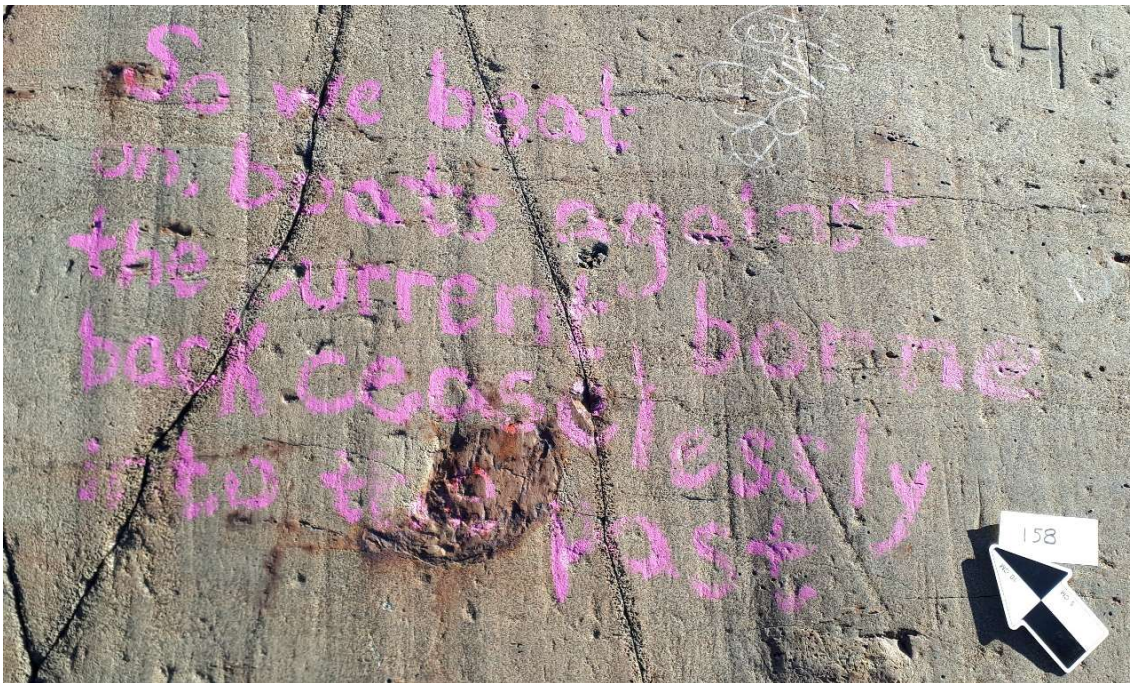

Fig. 6.15. The final line of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. SOURCE: Lütz 2018.

line, and how it affects interpretation of the novel, is perhaps best left to literary studies. For the purposes of this research, this artist is invoking a whole host of interrelated concepts and realities through these 14 words.

It is worth mentioning what *wasn't* found throughout the park – explicitly political messages or sexual images of any kind. The use of profanity was also extremely low, with no swearing represented at Chain Rock. If these categories are not being created or reproduced, it may suggest that politics, sex, and profanity are not seen as appropriate depictions for public rock-art – in essence, a self-censorship. Regarding prehistoric rock-art, archaeologist David Lewis-Williams writes, "there was never a time when people made pictures of anything that caught their fancy" (2009, 145). Alternatively, it may suggest that these are not the concerns foremost in the mind of a rock-artist in the creative process – not that these things *shouldn't* be represented, so much as other categories are preferable. Similarly, prehistoric artists in Western Europe focused on a core group of animal depictions, to the almost total exclusion of human figures (Lewis-Williams 2009, 145). A third possibility is that political messages, sexual images, and curses *are* produced, but are removed – censorship by park staff or other artists. This may explain figure 50, a large 210- by 170-centimetres patch of white. This pictogram is in a very bad state of preservation, making it unclear whether it is a faded and peeling mural, or the work of censorship.

We know that prehistoric rock-art was used as a "powerful communication tool", which was "used to tell stories, convey experience, enhance memory, and record history" (Taçon and Brady 2016, 3). In studying the Point Pleasant assemblage, we can see that modern humans are using this medium in much the same way.

Section 7: Discussion

Capacity for symbolic representation, as in rock-art, is a defining feature of humanity. "Not only do artefacts channel human productive action, they also attune the senses and the emotions, becoming part of the human 'extended mind'" (Gosden 2013, 43). It was once fashionable to posit a certain universal human psychic unity: "the mental processes of a man are the same everywhere, regardless of race and culture, and regardless of the apparent absurdity of beliefs and customs" (Boas 1955, 1). Anthropologist Franz Boas was writing in response to a perceived distinction between "primitive" and "civilized" man, but this sort of thinking paved the way for the belief that any human, anywhere, should be able to understand rock-art, given that we all have the same brains. More recently, Nash continues to argue for a universal grammar of rock-art (2001, 2010; Whitley 2005, 147). A current, more nuanced approach is the analysis of representations of trance or altered states of consciousness among modern peoples, compared to similar prehistoric depictions in rock-art, with surprising consistency (Lewis-Williams 2009, 136; Whitley 2005, 116-7). However, the neuropsychological model has serious flaws: "it is critical to recognize that most of these putatively universal characteristics of human behavior are themselves little more than assumptions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories about specifically Western economies and psychology" (Whitley 2005, 106).

When examining the rock-art of prehistoric peoples, researchers make inferences based on the surviving material evidence, yet we cannot conclusively establish the accuracy of these inferences without interrogating the artists' thoughts, beliefs, or cultures. Attempts to remain objective are met with difficulty: "one archaeologist's

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'phallic human' figure type is another's 'tailed lizard' motif" (Whitley 2005, 45). As archaeologists Liam Brady and John Bradley observe, "people draw upon different elements of their social world (religion, memory, myth, relationships, etc.) as part of a process to make sense out of what they see" (2016, 90). Art continues to exist in a "socio-cultural matrix" (Gell 1998, 7), whether that of the artist or the observer. Rock-art has multiple levels of meaning, and a social communication function even in the absence of the artist (Whitley 2005, 80). While Whitley posits that each system of rock-art symbolism is internally logical, consistent, and non-arbitrary (2005, 81), Gell claims it is more significant to "view art as a system of action; intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it" (1998, 6). Gell goes on to argue that art should be about social relations; not what art represents or symbolizes but what art *does* (1998, 7). And yet it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the social relations indexed and enacted by prehistoric rock-art from the range of social relations available to our present-day conceptual palette. Theories about prehistoric rock-art fall in and out of fashion; this has somewhat more to do with the gaze of modern humans, and less with the art itself.

In contrast, contemporary assemblages like Point Pleasant Park allow for both a material analysis and an evaluation of cultural context. This local, modern example may offer a small comment in the wider tradition of global rock-art research. Anati's list of rock-art figures (1977, 41), purported to be universally applicable, were practically useless at this site, with only three of 159 typologies represented (circles, stars, and text). As Anati's classificatory framework (1977, 41-56) cannot be unproblematically applied to the target site of Chain Rock, this contemporary collection does not support the theory of

rock-art universals as he and others propose (see Nash 2010; Haubt 2014). This suggests

we must rely on ethnographically-derived meanings to make sense of these artworks,

which supports a culturally-bounded view of rock-art (see Frederick 2016; Geertz 1976;

Heyd 2003; Whitley 2005).

Whitley declares that "we can no longer argue that an interpretive understanding

of all rock art is beyond our reach" (2005, 80). "Any anthropology that has the temerity to

post a mental unity to all of humanity, irrespective of context, is highly suspicious" (Chua

and Elliott 2013, 16). Anthropologists Liana Chua and Mark Elliott describe how

anthropology is "shying away from large-scale theorizing, from devising unifying

theories to account for multitudinous phenomena. While comparison remains acceptable,

universalist pronouncements are now panned as reductive, ethnocentric, dehumanizing,

overly vague *and* overly specific: in short, hopelessly flawed" (2013, 16, italics in

original). Schaafsma, writing 25 years earlier, enunciates the problem clearly:

> Abstract designs such as spirals, concentric circles, diamonds, and wavy lines
> occur in rock art throughout the world. Their intended meaning must be sought
> within each specific cultural context as the significance of such basic elements
> readily changes through time and between cultural groups. The same symbol may
> assume a variety of meanings. In the Pueblo world alone a spiral may stand for
> wind, water, or migrations. A simple cross stands for a star or roadrunner tracks
> among historic Pueblo people, or it may represent a crossing of trails (Salish) or
> lodges (Ojibwa). Universal meanings are indeed rare, if they exist at all. (1988, 2)

Analysis proves that the vast majority of contemporary rock-art at Point Pleasant,

and especially the Chain Rock site, employs text. Literacy has caused Haligonian rock-art

to diverge from pictures as the predominate means of artistic adornment and

communication of ideas; they instead rely on words. Yet these modern humans are still

engaged in a vernacular form of meaning making, the origins of which go back to the

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very beginning of the species. Like prehistoric rock-art, contemporary rock-art represents "material practices and performances that are linked to social facts and cultural logics, both as products of such and as ways of constituting them" (Conkey 2009, 182). As rock-art continues to be performed in much the same vein, it seems utterly absurd to claim that literate humans have abandoned *rock-art* in favour of *graffiti* on rocks. (If we equate *text* with *graffiti*, then how best should we describe figures containing both words and images?) Although it could be argued that the rock-art created today performs a different function than the rock-art of the past, such an argument presumes all prehistoric rock-art was created to fulfill the same function. Perhaps rock-art, varied as it is in form, time, place, and purpose, functions *less* as an artifact, or a collection of artifact-types, and functions *more* as a conversation.

Archaeologist Chris Tilley (1991) posits that material culture, speech, and writing exist along the same spectrum, with speech as the most direct (Whitley 2005, 147). Whitley (2005, 130) has suggested that rock-art is comparable to a speech event, as described by Dell Hymes (1972). "Writing and reading are interesting cultural practices in their own right, but they should not serve as unanalyzed metaphors for either human culture or human thought. Writing and reading, properly understood, imply texts, which are fabricated forms of graphic representation. As such, they are material objects and hence parts of the material environment" (Gow 1995, 56). As graphic representations, textual rock-art is still *art,* in the sense of intentional image embedded in social contexts, in which the artists "were not only and quite literally making meanings and producing visual culture; they were *making culture*" (Conkey 2009, 182, italics in original). Boutcher's observations regarding letters appear equally applicable to Point Pleasant

rock-art messages, some of which are direct quotes from published books. He writes: "there could hardly be a better example of an index of a social relationship than a book, and no more enchanting technology than the technology of letters, handwriting, and the codex. Letters are ripe for consideration as a technology that magically extends the operations of human faculties, books as residues of performance and agency in object form" (Boutcher 2013, 155). The rock-artists of Point Pleasant have inscribed *self* on *thing*, leaving a lasting testament of their presence. "Instead of trying directly to communicate with the dead and their inner 'selves', we can use [Gell's theory of distributed personhood] to try to hear and see them communicating with each other by means of specific techniques and artefacts" (Boutcher 2013, 158). Many of the dated names and initials of Point Pleasant represent persons now deceased; like prehistoric rock-art, these creations have, somewhat eerily, survived the lifespan of the creator. "Because of their very materiality, the culturally constructed images are 'public representations', even if the audience for them… is small, infrequent, and, in effect, restricted" (Conkey 2009, 182). This is not *l'art pour l'art*, but a series of uniquely situated human moments, at once social and personal, speaking across time.

Yet, these literal objectifications of human intentions remain ambiguous. Who decides what an artwork "says"? The (potentially deceased) creator? The viewer or reader? Some authoritative third party? Frederick refers to the field of reception studies, which posits the "audience/viewer" contributes to the meaning (2016, 341). In this, interpretation is a collaboration or co-construction between artist's intention, technical ability and execution, and the viewer's response. "Our concern is about the intersubjective space – that place between the viewer/responder and the art that determines meaning, or

where meaning emerges" (Brady and Bradley 2016, 84). If "meaning resides in the interaction or encounter between the text and its reader/viewer", then "the meaning-making process is dynamic" (Frederick 2016, 341). Although this may seem a bit postmodern, it perhaps serves to uncover a deeper cultural bias regarding the process of understanding and interpreting. Erickson, although discussing graffiti, makes a valuable example:

> Graffiti can be seen as charming gems of humanity that reach out to touch (and tickle) us as we walk by. At times life can be lonely without enough mystery. Existentially, finding a graffito is like finding a note in a bottle washed up on shore. That is why graffiti have been called "small tombstones of sentiment… across the anonymity of time" [Matthews 1983, 65]. And that is why discovering them says something like this: "I am me, uniquely alone, and a little strange, and I was here… You are there, by virtue of your reading this, and you're a little like me". (Erickson 1987, 44)

Erickson instinctively connects with the graffiti artist, separated from him by time but not culture. In comparison, Lippard reports, "a Native American was asked how he felt about all the rock drawings now drowned by damming and 'progress'. He replied: 'They're safer there'" (Lippard 1988, xii). Rather than mourn the loss of "small tombstones of sentiment", this individual would rather see the artwork inaccessible or destroyed by water than (mis)interpreted or (mis)appropriated by others. Rock-art does not represent a linear transmission from artist to recipient through the medium of culture, despite Erickson's sentiment. It is a far more complex interaction, with no predetermined endpoint.

The observer's gaze is an inextricable component of any rock-art assemblage. As a Haligonian anthropology student, I look at the Point Pleasant rocks and see rock-art. Most park visitors see graffiti. Erickson sees "a note in a bottle" (1987, 44). If, within a single

area, within a single culture, within a narrow timeframe, we cannot agree on what this human-created phenomenon *is*, much less what it *means*, how much greater is the challenge for prehistoric rock-art? Each contemplation creates rock-art anew; each figure speaks with a voice which is at once another's, and our own. Rock-art is a conversation; it is not a soliloquy.

Section 8: Conclusion

As rock-art is a global art form, it has been employed by humans throughout time, geography, and cultures. The Point Pleasant rock-art remains a little-explored feature of the park, which has offered this research a sample of vernacular Halifax culture. As a contemporary assemblage, it has afforded the opportunity to conduct both a material analysis and an evaluation of the cultural context in which it is embedded. This research represents one tiny piece of the worldwide rock-art puzzle.

In the face of ongoing debate regarding terms such as *rock-art*, *graffiti*, and *art*, I chose to limit the research area by defining *rock-art* as human-made images, designs, or writing, irrespective of stylistic qualities, which occur on natural rock faces but not human-built features. Returning to the research question: what was learned about the function of rock-art, based on the (1) frequency, (2) placement, and (3) content of the contemporary assemblage within Point Pleasant Park? Both Phase One's large-scale mapping survey of the 190-acre park and Phase Two's targeted small-scale analysis of the Chain Rock site yielded specific results. A total of 488 figures were recorded, including 375 petroglyphs and 113 pictograms. Dates ranged from 1815 to present. Five key sites were identified, including Black Rock, Fort Ogilvie, Maple Walk, the "forest outlier", and Chain Rock. Site placement generally adhered to four criteria, including ease of access, visibility, rock choice, and proximity to water. The content of the art was predominately autobiographical, but also historical, cultural, and expressive.

The Point Pleasant assemblage also offers a small comment on the function of rock-art. This research does not support the universal interpretative framework proposed by Anati (1977), Haubt (2014), or Nash (2010). I have suggested that while literacy has

made major changes to the contemporary expression of rock-art, textual rock-art should not be interpreted as a separate category (such as graffiti) which has largely replaced image-only rock-art. I have attempted to demonstrate that the Point Pleasant assemblage performs many of the same functions as much image-only rock-art in other times and places. Finally, I propose that Point Pleasant rock-art illustrates that meaning-making is a two-way process, as explained by the field of reception studies. In this, there is no "true" meaning of rock-art waiting to be uncovered; we must continually define and redefine what each assemblage means to us, making use of whatever sources – material, cultural, textual, or historical – yield informative possibilities. Whether we define the name of Richard M. Binns, etched over 200 years ago, as *rock-art* ("cultural heritage") or *graffiti* ("textual defacement"), is an ongoing decision between viewer, object, and culture.

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