

## MYSTERIES OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN EXPEDITION UNCOVERED BY ADVENTURE SCIENCE TEAM

*Elite Adventure Science athletes return with Franklin Expedition discoveries*

**DATE, LOCATION** – A team of four elite adventure athletes have wrapped up almost two weeks of exploration on King William Island in the Canadian Arctic to retrace the steps of Sir John Franklin and his men from Cape Felix to aptly named Terror Bay. As part of the 'In Franklin's Footsteps' expedition the team travelled over 250 KM on foot, marked well over fifty sites, and discovered human remains and grave-like structures along their route.

The team consists of Dr. Simon Donato, Myron Tetreault, Oliver Hubert-Beniot and Dr. Tim Puetz, all of whom bring a high level of elite athletics and advanced science expertise to the expedition. Their self-supported search was unique in that it was the only full north – south land search completed in a single season in nearly 100 years, and certainly the fastest, with the team covering over 250 km of rugged, and rocky terrain in 10 days. The four explorers took an unconventional approach to the exploration of the island by focusing their routes in-land rather than along the coast, using glacial geology to seek out additional routes used by Franklin's men. Geologist Donato says that "the vast majority of the searches that have sought to learn more about the fate of the failed Franklin expedition have focused along the coastline. We felt that it would be best to leverage our skill set of moving quickly over rugged terrain by focusing slightly inland, on the ancient beach ridges and glacial features, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of where the dying men might have travelled."

Franklin was an English Royal Navy officer and an Arctic explorer who disappeared alongside his crew in 1845 during an expedition focused on discovering the Northwest Passage. After spending two years stuck in the ice off the northwest coast of the island, the surviving 105 crewmen (out of 129) left their ships to head south for help. No one survived.

One of the more interesting sites the Adventure Science team discovered contained an old stone cairn and wind break wall and is likely related to the Franklin expedition, or possibly by one of the early searchers named Frederick Schwatka, a USA army lieutenant and noted explorer of northern Canada and Alaska. The structures would have possibly been built to mark a grave where they would have buried a member of the Sir John Franklin expedition in 1879. The discovery of the cairn and grave-like feature led to the discovery of several other grave-like sites in the immediate area - some coffin-like and two marked by large flat stone slabs. The team also discovered what appears to be a human bone in Erebus Bay which is very likely from a Franklin crewman. The team has been collaborating with the Nunavut Department of Culture and Heritage, and with the Royal Canadian Geographical Society sponsored search team of Tom Gross and Russell Taichman in order to verify these new sites with documented sites in the database and undocumented sites known from the air.

"Travelling such a large portion of the Arctic unsupported and on foot provided us with the opportunity to truly experience the struggle that Franklin's men faced on their desperate march south" says Simon Donato, President of Adventure Science. "Every newly discovered site unlocks another clue of what happened to Franklin and his men." The team experienced strong winds, sub-zero temperatures, sleet and rain during their 12 day expedition and saw numerous animals including wolves, fox, musk ox, and caribou. The expedition is supported by Monowalker, Urthecast, Merrell, Farm to Feet, Stoked Oats, First Air, and the University of North Alabama.

With the support of the Nunavut Government, the team has consulted the leading Franklin authorities and are bringing a spirit of collaboration and sharing to this project, providing waypoints to be studied and shared with the research community. A full report will be prepared for the Department of Culture and Heritage for the Government of Nunavut and shared on the Adventure Science website once completed.

### **About Adventure Science**

Adventure Science was established in 2008 by Simon Donato and is about getting outside, exploring the world, and understanding nature in a meaningful, scientific and physically challenging way. Our Adventure Science athletes explore the planet in a low impact manner, using non-motorized means when possible to make new discoveries. The concept of adventure science was developed to let us do more with our fitness, and innate curiosity to explore and understand nature's mysteries.

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