

[U of T architecture students explore Partridge Island for inspiration](#)

Site visit organized by Monica Adair and Stephen Kopp of Saint John firm Acre Architects

By Julia Wright, [CBC News](#) Posted: Sep 26, 2017 12:35 PM AT



A team of graduate students paddled to Partridge Island this week as part of a research for a course offered by the University of Toronto's John H. Daniels faculty of architecture. (Submitted by River Bay Adventures)

Fourteen University of Toronto architecture students got a crash course in New Brunswick history this week, donning life-jackets and boarding kayaks in Saint John Harbour.

The students are researching Partridge Island, the former quarantine station off west Saint John, as part of a graduate class at the John H. Daniels faculty of architecture.

The class is taught by Stephen Kopp and Monica Adair of Saint John architecture firm Acre Architects. They've been travelling from Saint John to Toronto each week to teach the semester-long class on tourism design.

"We wanted to help tie something that we're passionate about investigating into the research and the ideas that the students are coming up with," said Kopp, "as well as sharing part of the East with the students in Toronto."

'Steeped with fog and stories'

As part of their final projects, the graduate students have to analyze the historic significance of Partridge Island and design their interpretation of a writer's studio on the island.

"Partridge Island is so unique," Kopp said. "It's a challenge finding out enough about it online. Understanding the site means also understanding memory, history. Partridge Island is steeped with fog and stories."

One of the students, Jamie Howard, said the island's layers of history were a departure from the landscapes of her hometown of Brooklin, Ont., east of Toronto.

"It was interesting to see a place like that that has so many layers of history, some of which you can see, and others that you've heard in the town," she said.



The island in Saint John Harbour is not in use, but Stephen Kopp of Acre Architects hopes his architecture students will generate a fresh perspective on its future. (Julia Wright / CBC)

The site visit was a valuable experience, she said.

"It's difficult to understand the essence of a space when you're far away," Howard said. "To go there and have the visitor's experience is really important. You get the smells, the textures, the weather, the time of day, all of that adds to what you need to think about."

'We want to see some compelling visions for what can be done, rather than just a bunch of reasons why they can't.' - *Stephen Kopp, Acre Architects*

The students also visited the Hopewell Rocks, the iconic rock formations at Hopewell Cape caused by tidal erosion.

They presented their preliminary research at a public workshop Tuesday morning in Saint John.

The final projects will be completed by early December, at which time they will be submitted for final review and shared with the public.

Kopp and Adair hope the final projects will generate fresh perspective on how the island could be redeveloped.

"It's this really mysterious island sitting there that begs the questions: What's out there? Why can't you go there? What could be done with it? And it's right there in the harbour," Kopp said.

"We want to see some compelling visions for what could be done, rather than just a bunch of reasons why they can't."