

ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS

Coast Salish Artifacts on eBay

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group (HTG) successfully filed a complaint against a resident of Sidney, BC for illegally collecting First Nations archaeological artifacts and selling them for profit on the Web site <www.ebay.ca>. Ten lots of artifacts were advertised for sale on <www.ebay.ca> in January, 2003. They consisted of a total of 43 stone, bone, and antler artifacts. The seller publicly advertised that they personally collected these artifacts from "Coast Salish" archaeological sites on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands within Hul'qumi'num traditional territory. The sale of these illegal artifacts netted over \$340.00 (Canadian).

The HTG requested the Sidney RCMP investigate the complaint that the seller committed an offence under the Heritage Conservation Act (1996). The collection of archaeological artifacts without a provincial heritage permit is prohibited under Section 14, which states "A person must not excavate or otherwise alter land for the purpose of archaeological research or searching for artifacts of aboriginal origin except under a permit or order issued under this section." Only qualified professional archaeologists can obtain such government permits for legitimate research and resource management purposes. The RCMP investigation contacted the seller who was unaware of contravening any laws and was apologetic of their actions. The seller retrieved the sold artifacts from the buyers, and has since donated them to the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria.

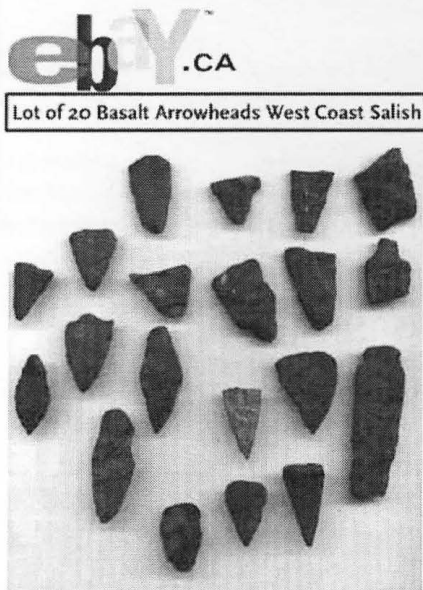
Many First Nations in BC consider archaeological heritage objects to be their cultural property. This incident highlights the need to address the broader issues concerning defining the legal ownership of archaeological heritage objects in BC.

Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group

SSHRC Grant to Continue Stó:lō Research

Dana Lepofsky (Simon Fraser University), Michael Blake (University of British Columbia), Dave Schaepe (University of British Columbia and Stó:lō Nation), Keith Carlson (University of Saskatchewan), Keith Moore (University of British Columbia), and John Clague (Simon Fraser University), just received a SSHRC grant to continue archaeological research in the Fraser Valley. This large, inter-disciplinary project is entitled "Aboriginal collective identity across time, space, and academic disciplines: Exploring Interactions among the Stó:lō of southwestern British Columbia." The project will bring together archaeological, historic, linguistic, and geomorphic information to understand social, economic, and political relations of the Stó:lō of the upper Fraser Valley. The archaeological investigations will involve the intensive excavation of at least three large village sites as well as testing of several others. Preliminary work will begin this summer, but full-scale excavations are scheduled to start in the summer of 2004, in conjunction with the Simon Fraser University field school.

Dana Lepofsky



Ontario Archaeology Society Artifacts, Records Lost

From the OAS:

Dear colleagues,

I have the great misfortune of having to relate to you some very bad news. It has recently come to the attention of the OAS that on or about the date of 1 May 2003, a disposal crew was directed, to knock down the walls of the secure, locked storage cages which housed the inactive artifact collections at the University of Toronto at Scarborough. The contents of those cages were loaded into dump trucks and disposed with the Toronto garbage in Michigan. All of this was carried out without the knowledge or permission of the steward of those collections, Dr. Marti Latta.

You must be feeling the same profound sense of loss and "this can't be happening" that I felt when Marti first told me. The scope of the loss is staggering. Its full extent is still being determined.

The current inventory: some or all artifacts from 23 sites, of which 21 are aboriginal and two are colonial. The lost material - 289 boxes of various sizes - included field records, analysis data, lithic raw material, and personal books and papers as well as artifacts, faunal bone, and botanical remains. An estimated total of 433,000 artifacts (not all diagnostics), have been destroyed.

Most of the sites excavated by members of the OAS in our early years are utterly gone.

We will be posting more details on this tragedy as they become available. In the meantime, let me go on record as stating that the OAS does not hold Dr. Latta responsible for this disaster in any way.

Indeed, if anything, she is a victim. We support Dr. Latta wholeheartedly and trust that the rest of our community does as well.

Christine Caroppo
OAS President