

Tuktoyaktuk asks return of artifacts

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Tuktoyaktuk's Hamlet Council says the Federal Government is trying to steal a part of their community's heritage.

A large group of artifacts collected by a private individual and turned over to the Hamlet have been claimed as property of the crown and taken to Ottawa.

The dispute began when the ground was excavated for the Penacostal church three years ago. Bulldozers unearthed a large deposit of artifacts. These artifacts were quickly scooped up by local residents and tourists.

In an effort to keep all the artifacts from being taken out of Tuk as souvenirs, a local resident collected and bought as many of them as he could. In all he spent about \$1200 on 91 items.

A museum society was being formed in Tuk by some of the older residents with the help of a government grant and the man announced his intention to turn over the artifacts to the museum in Tuk.

But while on a trip to the South, he turned the collection over to the RCMP for safekeeping. During the time they were in the care of the RCMP, a Justice of the Peace delivered a court order stating that the artifacts were the property of the Crown under the Northwest Territories Archeological Sites Regulations.

The regulations state that no person may collect archeological specimens without a permit and that all specimens must be turned over to the northern affairs minister to be disposed of at his discretion.

If the minister decides that an object is an archeological specimen under this act, it is considered to be the property of the Crown.

The articles were sent down to the Museum of Man in Ottawa. Judd Buchanan, then the minister for Indian and Northern affairs, told the museum committee that they were just being sent down for cataloging and would be back in about two weeks.

When several months has passed, and there was no sign of the artifacts, the Hamlet made inquiries about their fate. It recently received a letter from The Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Warren Allmand, which stated that the artifacts would probably be coming back to the NWT, but not to Tuk. They appear to be destined for the new territorial museum in Yellowknife.

The hamlet council says the artifacts belong in Tuk. It has sent another letter to the Minister asking once again that the Artifacts be returned.

Hamlet Secretary Manager Terry Testart said "the older Eskimo people don't understand why their forefathers' belongings have been taken from them. All they want is to have what is theirs returned to them."