

Everybody's got a story about the trophy

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Yellowknife (Mar 01/04) - Athletes from the NWT are competing at the Arctic Winter Games and instead of a trophy, are hoping to come home with a photo of one.



Stuart Hodgson

The photo is of the Hodgson trophy, represents sportsmanship and is awarded to the winning team.

The trophy is a work of Inuit art. News/North ran a column two weeks ago on the trophy, exploring the origins of the carving.

After two weeks of phone calls and interviews, News/North is coming close to unravelling the puzzle that not even Stuart Hodgson, who bought the carving, knows the origin of.

"I bought that in 1977 and I can't remember if I bought it in Pond Inlet or Lake Harbour (Kimmirut)," said Hodgson.

Hodgson bought the carving on his travels through the NWT and donated it to the Arctic Winter Games in 1978.

The trophy is a six-foot tall narwhal tusk, with a carved walrus at the base and a carved bear clinging for dear life to the top.

Although News/North has managed to unearth a name in connection with the trophy's carving (that name is Moses Aupaluktuk, but we weren't able to confirm whether he carved it), our search for the carver generated other questions about the trophy that are begging to be answered.

Hodgson, who was NWT commissioner from 1967 to 1979, is now a citizenship judge swearing in new Canadians in Richmond, B.C.

Difficult travel

Initially the trophy would travel to each Games, but that became difficult.

Dennis Adams, a former Arctic Winter Games committee member and now CEO of Northern Employee Benefits Services, said the first attempt to transport the trophy across an international border was when the Games were in Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1982. The trophy was sent via Seattle, where it promptly got mired in red tape at customs because it contained ivory.

The NWT Arctic Winter Games committee had to send a representative down from Yellowknife to straighten things out.

It did eventually make it to Alaska. The trophy was displayed outside the governor's office in Juneau and at Fairbanks International Airport.

Don Cooper, a member of the Arctic Winter Games committee in the 1980's and now NWT's deputy minister of justice, said the decision was made to find a permanent home for the trophy "rather than try to get this thing across international borders. It's got ivory, it needs a special crate, it's fragile, and it's expensive to ship."

From 1984 to November of 1995, the trophy was in the collection of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. The museum would pull the trophy out of storage and put it in the lobby when the Arctic Winter Games would roll around.

In 1995 it was moved to the offices of Sport North, also in Yellowknife. But in recent years it has been on display at the Yukon Sports Hall of Fame in Whitehorse. Ian Legaree of Sport North said the move was because the NWT doesn't have a sports hall of fame.

Since 1984, a framed photograph of the trophy has been presented to the winning team, instead of the actual trophy.

The glass case

The carving itself isn't the only interesting story behind the trophy.

It was Simon Goudreau of Hay River who alerted News/North to the case of the case.

He helped build the travelling/display glass case for the Hodgson trophy when he lived in Whitehorse in 1980. He described the protective barrier as a cylindrical case made of plexiglass.

This jogged the memory of Adams, the former Arctic Winter Games committee member.

"When they first built it, the plexiglass used to pop right out," said Adams.

Susan Irving is a curatorial assistant who has worked on and off at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre for almost 20 years.

She remembered having the Hodgson trophy in the museum's collection, but it was the trophy's giant display case that left the deepest impression, and took up the most space in storage.

"It was this huge cylindrical case with curved glass all around," said Irving.

"It reminded me of a time machine."

The Hodgson trophy was first awarded in 1978, but the NWT didn't win it until 1992.

The NWT eventually carried off the framed photo in 1992 and again in 1996. Nunavut won it in 2000.