

The Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913–1918

A Travelling Exhibition by the Canadian Museum of Civilization

Presented at the CMC from November 12, 2009 to September 6, 2010

Curator: Dr. David Gray

Exhibition space proposed for travelling version:

Option A: 418 m² (4,500 ft²) — approx. 400 artifacts

Option B: 142 m² (1,500 ft²) — approx. 100 artifacts

Option C: Discovery Box (approx. 1 metre x 1 metre)

Touring dates: Tentative tour starting in 2011

Loan fee: To be determined

About the Exhibition

This exhibition brings to life the story of the Canadian Arctic Expedition (CAE) of 1913-18, inviting visitors on a journey of exploration and discovery as they follow in the footsteps of some of Canada's most notable scientists and ethnologists. The Canadian Arctic Expedition was the first Canadian multifaceted scientific expedition to the Arctic, and was the first major Arctic expedition in which the collected artifacts, specimens, photos, film, and sound recordings stayed in Canada. This material, along with written accounts by explorers and scientists, will tell the story of the Expedition and its impact, with a focus on the themes of exploration, discovery and sovereignty.

A Short History of the CAE

In 1913, the explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson approached the Canadian government for support for a new Arctic expedition. Concerned about Canadian sovereignty, and not wanting an American expedition to claim new Arctic lands, the Government decided to fund the Expedition entirely. With an ambitious program of scientific research added to its objectives, the Expedition was divided into two parties: the Northern Party under Stefansson, exploring for new land; and the Southern Party under Arctic zoologist R.M. Anderson, with ethnographer Diamond Jenness, conducting research along the Arctic coast.

Setting off on a three-year expedition, the ships of the CAE brought 14 international scientists to the Arctic — geologists, anthropologists, and zoologists among them. The first year was one of survival — for some, an ice-crushed ship and starvation — and of learning: to drive dog teams, to hunt, and to navigate through ice. Local people were hired as hunters, seamstresses and ship's crews to bolster the Expedition's ranks.

In spite of the setbacks, including the loss of 12 men during the first year, the Expedition was a great success. The scientists of the Southern Party arrived back in Ottawa in October 1916 with thousands of specimens of animals, plants, fossils and minerals, along with artifacts from the Copper Inuit and other cultures. After five years of exploration and the discovery of the last major new islands in the Canadian High Arctic, Stefansson headed south in 1918.



Photo: R.M. Anderson



Photo: F. Johansen

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Visitor Experience

Upon entering the Canadian Arctic Expedition exhibition, visitors will embark on a journey of adventure and discovery. The exhibition will focus on the personal experiences of Expedition members and local assistants, male and female. Visitors will "hear" their voices, and acquire insights into the challenges, joys, hardships and emotional realities of being on this most important expedition in this most severe of environments.

Key Artifacts

- Stefansson's sleds, Jenness's Inuit parka, Anderson's backpack, plus expedition compasses, stoves, and snow-goggles illustrating the everyday working life of CAE members.
- Diaries, political and personal letters, newspaper accounts of the Expedition, and rare letters from people of the North, providing a wide-ranging perspective on the Expedition.
- Expedition photographs, movie film and sound recordings displaying the sights seen and sounds heard by members of the Expedition.
- Copper Inuit games, clothing and tools — from needles to a 7-metre (23-foot) kayak — which were traded to the Expedition for access to new hunting and trapping technologies and modern utensils.
- The Arctic wolf that bit Jenness, polar bear skulls, rare Ivory Gull eggs, the northern-most mammoth tusk, and other fascinating specimens representing the animal life of the Western Arctic.
- Fossils, native copper, minerals, and crystals, reflecting the results of the first economic resource exploration in the Western Arctic.

Have a look at the CMC/VMC Web site: *Northern People, Northern Knowledge* at: www.civilization.ca/hist/cae/splashe.html

Contact Person

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Photo: G.H. Wilkins

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Please participate in our important FAX-BACK survey!

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____ E-mail _____

1. Interest

Is your institution interested in borrowing: *The Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913-1918*?

Yes: __

No, the size is not appropriate: __ if so, what would you require? _____ft²

No, the exhibition subject/thematic does not work with our mandate: __

No, our schedule is complete for this period: __

2. Physical Specifications

__ Option 1: 418m² (4,500 ft²)

__ Option 2: 142 m² (1,500 ft²)

__ Option 3: Discovery Box (approx. 1 metre x 1 metre)

3. Loan Fee

What is your budget for the size of exhibition specified above? _____

4. Duration

Tentative tour starting in 2011

Please indicate the length of time you would prefer to borrow this travelling exhibition.

_ less 3 months

_ 3 months (12 weeks)

_ 6 months (24 weeks)

_ more than 6 months: # _____ months

5. Comments:

Thank you for completing this survey!

Please fax back to Malcah Sussman, Coordinator, Travelling Exhibitions Program, Canadian Museum of Civilization: 819 776-8209.