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## Cultural reunion highlights Smithsonian trip

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The Western Arctic's Inuvialuit people hope that a journey by elders, youths and cultural experts to Washington D.C.'s Smithsonian Institute this week will bring them closer to preserving their heritage.

They leave on Nov. 13 (and will return Nov. 21) to be "reunited" with hundreds of cultural items - which make up one of the museum's founding collections - as part of an international project based at Simon Fraser University's Department of Archaeology.

SFU post-doctoral fellow Natasha Lyons, who is leading the project, says the trek will reconnect the Inuvialuit community with the items - which include caribou skin clothing, footwear, pipes, knives and other tools - and allow them to document and record their own knowledge about them.

"These objects say a lot about the land-based lifestyle that Inuvialuit ancestors were living," says Lyons, who will join a dozen others on the journey.

Hudson's Bay trader Roderick MacFarlane collected the items, considered to be the best-preserved records of Inuvialuit life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century - between 1860 and 1870.

The visit will lead to the development of multi-media tools such as the creation of a virtual exhibit that can be used for school curriculum and which will enable youth and the greater community to connect with the objects.

Catherine Cockney, Manager of the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre, says the project will contribute to the community's ability to continue traditional knowledge teachings. "We hope to gain the elders' knowledge and share it with students in our schools and the people in general," she says.

The project is one of four initial community-based initiatives funded through the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (IPinCH) project, supported by a \$2.5-million Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant.

Researchers are exploring issues concerning control over and responsibility for the intangible aspects or products of cultural heritage, including traditions and knowledge.

### Background: Natasha Lyons

Lyons has been working with communities on cultural heritage projects since her first fieldwork at the Scowlitz site (east of Chilliwack) with members of the Scowlitz First Nation (an affiliate band of the Sto:lo Nation) in 1995.

She developed a relationship with the Inuvialuit during her tenure as a Parks Canada archaeologist, and pursued that relationship in her doctoral research, which worked towards developing a more Inuvialuit-focused approach to archaeology.

She continues to work with several First Nations and Inuit groups on different community cultural heritage projects, all of which have elements related to researching and promoting the knowledge and historical circumstances of these groups.

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