

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

By William Fitzhugh

Last spring, in a weak moment, I agreed to teach a course on the Arctic to Dartmouth College undergraduates. Two weeks into it, I have new respect for my teaching colleagues who manage to juggle instruction and administration and find time to attend the myriad lectures, seminars, and job interviews that make campus life a metropolitan experience, even in Hanover, and at the same time write grant proposals and papers. Last week a post-doc's dry-run talk for an up-coming job interview turned into a high-test seminar on anthropological theory. Halls buzz with conversation, and parades of artists, government officials, and foreign scholars crisscross the campus. Baker-Berry Library—crammed with coffee-charged students—is the heartbeat of the campus.

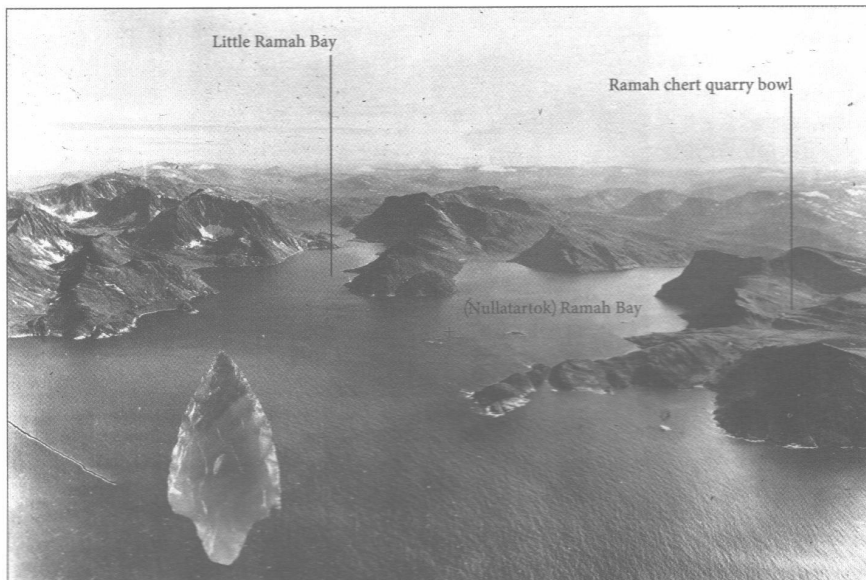
By these standards, a museum can seem a bit quiet. Instead of students we have interns and a few fellows, and while we have colloquia and museum gatherings, life in a research museum like the Smithsonian is truly an ivory tower—quiet, long empty corridors, few people—until you get to the public exhibit floors. Over the long haul, having a full year, we conduct more field research, produce more papers, and arguably advance our disciplines more than the average professor. But

the price paid is the absence of young minds constantly asking difficult “why?” questions—answers we museum types often bypass on our journeys of observation and documentation; museum scientists are more likely to produce monographs than ground-breaking syntheses. Perhaps the solution is to live in both worlds simultaneously.

Reveries aside, the close of 2014 brings the ASC to a watershed. As of this writing, we await a museum decision to extend core financial support for our program for several years—support that was once provided by the congressional “line item” that created and funded the Center in 1988. Interim support from museum trust funds carried us for a few years but ended with the budget

sequester of FY2013. Grants and private funds have enabled us to continue research and publication, but without core office and travel support our capabilities have been restricted. The recently received **Ernest Burch Endowment** helps but is for research and education, not administration and infrastructure.

Despite uncertainty, the year has been productive on many fronts. The ASC received a major grant from the SI's Grand Challenge Program to study the impact and causes of “Arctic crashes,” the sometimes abrupt



An Arctic Omphalos: Ramah Bay. Arguably one of the most significant landscapes of the Eastern Arctic, the Ramah Bay quarry sites were the source for the stone to fashion tools used by ancestral Indian and Paleoeskimo peoples for thousands of years throughout the Far Northeast and beyond. In January this year Canadian Minister of the Environment, Leona Aglukkaq designated the site as a national historic site of Canada. (See article p. 19) (Photo credit: Forbes Expedition, 1932 (Morse-ASC photo archives); Tshiash Innu Ramah chert projectile point from Mistetuet, Ntessinan.)

that it is the god Nabu, the son of the Babylonian King of the Gods Marduk, with a reference also being given here to Marduk's enemy in the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma Elish*, which tells how Marduk created Heaven and Earth out of the sea-goddess Tiamat's corpse after putting her to death and butchering her body:

*The which is inside the Moon is the god Nabu . . .
The dagger above the lion is of the hand of . . .
Tiamat is seen inside the Moon . . .*

Thus in partial answer to my original question, which brought me to Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, and the Smithsonian Institution: How much of what I read in cuneiform texts is specific to Mesopotamian culture, and how much is common to us all, past and present, here or there? - I would answer, that all human cultures seem to see pictures of traditional figures in the face of the Moon. This is common to us all. However, the variety of images that we see, and how we understand these images, reflects the diversity of human culture. Where the Babylonians saw gods, and their core mythological traditions, the Gwich'in see a culture hero, the Boy in the Moon, who represents an important value in Gwich'in culture, generosity to the needy in hard times. We might say, we all share the same Moon, but see in its face different reflections of our diverse selves.

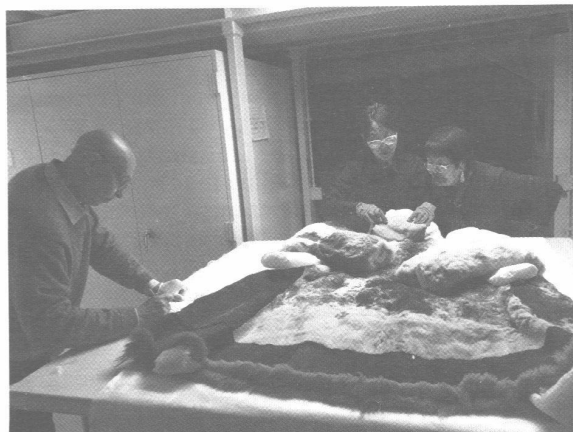
COLLECTIONS

'NOT OURS': OBJECTS REVEAL SMITHSONIAN LINK TO THE LOST DELONG EXPEDITION (1879-1881)

By: Igor Krupnik

A search leading to exciting discoveries in the NMNH Arctic ethnology collection began a few months ago with a causal comment by one of our research visitors. In November 2014, I accompanied Dr. **Zinaida** (Zina) **Ivanova** from Yakutsk, Sakha Republic, in Arctic Russia, to MSC. Zina, a partner from the **Jesup-2** era of the 1990s, has researched all major Siberian collections in North America hunting for objects from her native Sakha/Yakutia. The largest Sakha collection is in the American Museum of Natural History in New York and was assembled by **Waldemar Jochelson** who was a member of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition in 1901-1902. The Smithsonian's Natural History Museum also hosts a small collection from Yakutia that Zina studied during a previous visit. On her recent trip she just wanted to have a second look at a few objects and take some additional measurements.

The objects were already laid out when Zina arrived. After just glancing over a large reindeer fur coat, she quietly murmured 'Not ours!' and proceeded to other objects. When she had finished, I brought her back to the fur coat and asked for clarification. Zina explained that the coat had none of the characteristics of tradi-



Igor Krupnik, Zinaida Ivanova (right), and Evgeniya Ivanova-Unarova (center) examine Harber's fur coat (kukhlanka) at MSC. Photo: Maxim Ivanov-Unarov.

tional Sakha, Evenk, or Even clothing and most closely resembles Koryak garments from the Pacific coast hundreds of miles further east. It is a man's winter working coat made of doubled reindeer skins known by the Russian Siberian name *kukhlanka*, in good shape, but of little ethnographic interest, at least to her study. When I asked how a Koryak fur coat ended up in the Yakut/Sakha collection, she had no idea.

We measured the coat (105 cm long), and when I tested its length on me, Zina said, 'Yeah, it was made for a big man like you.' She explained that a Koryak man's winter coat should only reach slightly below a person's knee - which it did for me, but certainly not for a shorter Siberian man. Intrigued by the coat's unusual size, I checked it carefully and soon found an inscription scratched on the inside of its long collar (apron): Lt. G.B. Harber USN. In an instant of inspiration, I understood it as **Lt. Harber, US Navy**.

A few hours later, at my computer, I learned more about this man. Lt. Giles Bates Harber (1848-1926) was the US Navy officer sent to East Siberia in 1882 to explore the fate of the lost **George W. DeLong Expedition**, whose ship *Jeannette* was crushed in the polar ice and sank in the summer of 1881 in the East Siberian Sea. Thirty-three U.S. Navy officers and enlisted men under the command of Lt. DeLong (1844-1881), a veteran Arctic explorer, tried to reach the Siberian mainland shore. Many of them perished on that dangerous trek, including DeLong himself.

Thus our 'Koryak' fur coat was connected to one of the most heroic and tragic sagas in the history of the U.S. Arctic exploration. I immediately sought help from several experts: our own **Felicia Pickering** from Anthropology Collections, **Mark Mollan**, at the Old Navy/Maritime Reference Section of the U.S. National Archives, and **Kevin Wood** at the University of Washington, oceanographer and historian of polar explorations. Felicia dug in the SI acquisition and photo records, and also reached to **Tad Bennicoff**, at the Smithsonian

Institution Archives, whereas Mark sent me Harber's Navy Officer personal record. Soon we discovered an online copy of Harber's 80-page report in search for DeLong Expedition submitted in May 1884 to the U.S. Congress by the Secretary of the Navy. These sources, including Harber's notes and letters, acquisition cards, and old photos helped collect many pieces of our 'fur-coat puzzle.'

Giles Bates Harber was born in 1848 in Youngstown, OH, and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1868. He had the usual Navy officer's start, climbing the ranks and changing ships and stations, until, as stated rather cryptically in his record, he was detached in February 1882 "to special duty in search of *Jeannette*." He returned two years later, as if it were an ordinary voyage and continued his service. He had a distinguished Navy career, according to his record and a short Wikipedia entry, ending as a decorated rear admiral and the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. He lived for many years in the Washington area in his various assignments with the Naval Academy, also as the President of the Navy Retirement Board, President of the Navy Examining Board, and finally at age 70, as Commandant of the Navy Units of the Georgetown and George Washington Universities. He died in 1926 at his hometown of Youngstown.

Harber's most memorable accomplishment was his two-year mission to Siberia on a search and rescue mission for the DeLong Expedition remains. By the time he was sent to Russia, the tragic fate of DeLong's party was already known. *Jeannette* with 33 crew members sailed from San Francisco in July 1879 to explore a passage to the North Pole via Bering Strait and the recently discovered ice-free waters of the northern Chukchi Sea. The voyage was financed by **James Gordon Bennett, Jr.**, the owner of the *New York Herald* and a great enthusiast of Arctic polar exploration. After passing Bering Strait and Herald Island in the Chukchi Sea, *Jeannette* was quickly trapped in dense pack ice and remained beset for almost two years. The crew stayed with the ice-bound ship as it continued to drift slowly across the Arctic Ocean towards Siberia, and hopefully toward its goal, the North Pole. Unfortunately, this was not to happen. *Jeannette* was crushed by heavy ice in June 1881 at 77°N and 156°E, forcing DeLong and his crew to make a dreadful ice trek toward the Siberian shore,



"Lt. Giles B. Harber in Siberian costume, DeLong Relief Expedition" (caption on the back of the photograph, NAA inv 04121700)

hauling sleds with supplies and three ships' boats over the ice. Eventually they reached open water, and during a storm became separated into three parties. The smallest boat capsized and sank, whereas two other parties landed far apart from each other on the Lena River delta. One party eventually reached a Yakut settlement and was rescued; the other, under DeLong's command died of starvation, except for two men who were sent off to seek help. The bodies of DeLong and his companions were soon found and temporarily interred on the frozen Siberian coast, on top of a hill, that reportedly is still known as *Amerika Khaya* ('American Mountain'). Harber's daunting task was to retrieve these bodies and bring them back to the U.S. for proper burial.

Harber's mission was far from 'ordinary.' Accompanied by another U.S. seaman, **William Schuetze**, he crossed the Atlantic and travelled via Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Moscow to the city of Nizhny Novgorod, at that time Russia's easternmost railway destination. From there the two Americans traveled by sled across Western and Central Siberia to the headwaters of the Lena River. They traveled down the Lena River by boat until they finally reached the delta in July, 1882, and began their search for the remains of the DeLong party. They covered several hundred miles of coast on foot and in small boats before reaching the burial site. Then it took them 15 (!) months, crisscrossing northern Yakutia several times to obtain official Russian permission to exhume the bodies and to move them back to Yakutsk for further transportation to the U.S. The large sled caravan with ten caskets left Yakutsk in late November, 1883, and began its return trek

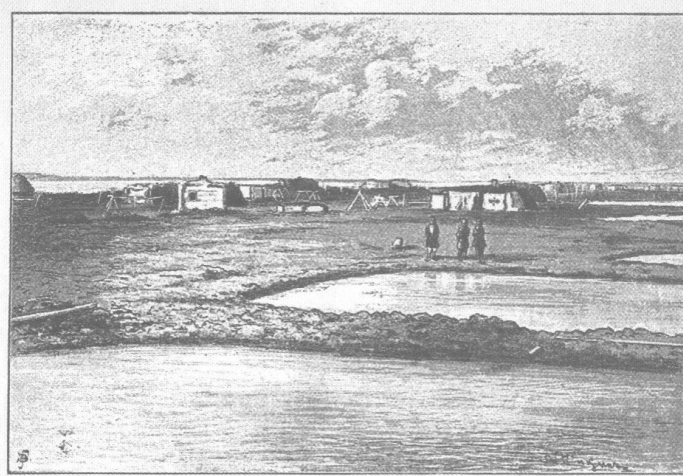
across Siberia. After almost two months, they reached the closest Russian railway station and proceeded by special train car to Moscow, Berlin, and Hamburg, and then by boat to the U.S. The bodies finally arrived in New York City and were given a public funeral on February 23, 1884, after which DeLong and five of his men were buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. On that day, Lt. Harber returned to his regular Navy duties. Three months later, a piece of wreckage from the *Jeannette* was found in the broken ice off the town of Juleanehaab (now Qaqortoq) in Southwest Greenland, completing her five-year drift across the Arctic Ocean and fulfilling DeLong's original dream. This failed venture soon inspired a similar ice-bound drift voyage by the Norwegian scientist, **Fritjof Nansen**, in *Fram* in

1893–1896.

Although DeLong was praised and honored as an American hero, there is no record that Harber was in any way rewarded by the Navy for his extraordinary service. He continued his Navy life surrounded by Siberian memories, notes, and memorabilia. Eight years later, in January 1892, he donated a box with 11 clothing items that he had purchased in Siberia to the U.S. National Museum (now NMNH); all entries were accessioned by the Museum's ethnology curator, **Otis Mason**. Number 1 on Mason's list was the large reindeer fur coat called a *kuklanka*, the very same piece that Zinaida and I inspected in November 2014. Harber's small collection also included skin boots, leggings, mittens, stockings, a fur hat (hood) made of fox skin, a pouch, and a 'boa' of fox tails to breathe through during cold weather, in other words, a full outfit for a winter traveler. The NMNH collection records for these objects now include some comments by the late Dr. **Ilya Gurvitch** (1919–1992), a Russian Siberian anthropologist recorded by **William Sturtevant** in 1982. Harber also posed for several photos in 1892 now kept at the National Anthropological Archives, wearing his Siberian clothing. They feature a big mustachioed man dressed in the full winter garb of an Arctic traveler.

In a rare case of excellent provenience, we even know when the clothing (or its prototype) was actually made and purchased by Harber. In August–October 1882, while traveling in the Lena River delta, Harber and his party visited local Native (Yakut and Evenk) camps and also the Russian observation station for the International Polar Year 1882–1883 at Sagastyr. Russian officers

at the station, **Nikolai Yurgens**, **Alexander Bunge**, and **Adolf Eigner**, assisted Harber in his surveys and facilitated his contacts with the Natives, who produced winter clothing for his party. As Harber writes in his report:



Деревня Кытахъ въ устьѣ р. Лены. — Dorf Kytach an der Lenamündung.

The village of Kytakh in the Lena River Delta where Harber's clothing was reportedly sewn. From the Russian report on the IPY Expedition to the Lena River, 1882–1884 (NOAA <http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/aro/ipy-1/images/EL-102-UR.jpg>)

Meanwhile our clothing had all been made from reindeer skins and sleeping bags from felt, which was given us by Lieutenant Jurgens [at the Russian IPY station]. Our outfit for sledging, consisted, besides the usual woolen underclothing and cloth suit, of a double "kuklanka" (sic.), a garment somewhat resembling a large shirt with a hood to cover the head; reindeer stockings, made from the skin of young animals, boots reaching to hips, made from the skin of reindeer legs, and a fur hood or bonnet made of fox skin. Sometimes trousers of reindeer-skin were worn, adding greatly to comfort if there was much wind or the cold was greater than 50 degrees below zero.



Felicia Pickering examines Yakut fur hat (hood) worn by Harber.

The clothing was most certainly sewn in the Yakut (Sakha) village of Kitakh of some 60–70 residents located next to the Sagastyr IPY station where Harber and his people spent several days in October 1882. Yakut seamstresses used skins from wild reindeer killed earlier by Harber's party, as well as those purchased from local residents at several nearby camps. These are the items that we now have in our 'Yakut' collection, except for the 'trousers' (skin pants).

Harber's small clothing collection turned out to be an unexpected entré to the heroic era of polar exploration of the late 1800s, marked by the names of DeLong, Nansen, the First IPY of 1882–83, and another tragic American expedition led by **Adolphus Greely**, some of whose members, including Greely, were rescued in the

same year of 1884. The story includes our Smithsonian pedigree from **Otis Mason** to **Bill Sturtevant**, **Ilya Gurvich**, **Zinaida Ivanova**, and **Felicia Pickering**. It also proves how valuable to our collection knowledge are visits by outside experts, particularly those with deep experience in their Native cultures and lifestyles. As in this case a passing comment, 'Not ours,' may be an invitation to an exciting new research journey.

In preparation for this paper, Felicia and I examined Harber's clothing pieces one more time. Some were clearly worn over his Arctic trips, whereas a few others looked fairly untouched and were perhaps purchased in Yakutsk in advance of his final journey to America in November 1883. They were obviously made for a visiting traveler, as seen from the size and lack of ornamentation, compared to Native garments in most museum collections and catalogs. Some objects have cloth lining, and Harber's fur coat (*kukhlanka*) even features front pockets that would have been unthinkable for a Native costume.

And finally: Why did the Yakut people in the Lena River delta produce a 'Koryak' fur coat for Harber in 1882? I believe this may have been a case of growing 'cultural globalization.' Traditional Native clothing worn by the local Yakut/Sakha, Evenk, and Even people was poorly suited for big European men who needed a different type of 'working clothing.' I believe local seamstresses had probably already developed a certain standardized 'Siberian' type of fur clothing items for their many visitors and produced them on the commercial basis. As European explorers, whalers, traders, teachers, doctors, and missionaries set foot across the Arctic, they created new markets for food, pelts, Native trade goods, services, museum objects, but first and foremost, for warm garments. We have reports from the late 1800s from many polar communities where Native women worked during the winter months to produce sets of warm boots, mittens, and coats for the Euro-American ships due to arrive the next spring. Naturally, while preserving some basic principles of Native fur clothing, they simplified local templates and ornamentation styles in favor of large sizes and sturdiness, like they do it today with the commercial skin boots, hats, and slippers sold in souvenir stores. They experimented with and often 'Creolized' the items produced for the visiting Europeans by mixing specific Native patterns, like combining a 'Koryak-style' upper coat with a typical Yakut fur hat (hood). Many of these items—like Harber's Siberian traveling suit—eventually ended up in museum

ethnological collections. This is yet another important message of the story of Harber's *kukhlanka* that started from a soft-spoken comment, 'Not ours.' I am grateful to **Felicia Pickering**, **Kevin Wood**, **Mark Molan**, and **Tad Bennicoff**, who assisted me on this search.

THE SHAW COLLECTION: A GIFT OF 60 ETHNOGRAPHIC OBJECTS FROM GREENLAND

By: Igor Krupnik

Like many good collection stories, this one began with a phone call from the Smithsonian Public Office in late April 2014. "Dr. Krupnik, Would you mind giving a call to Mr. **Craig Shaw**. He wants some assistance in assessing his family collection from Greenland." Such

requests most often come from people who have discovered an old family heirloom in their basement or attic and are looking for the insight on what they possess. A call to Mr. Shaw from Chantilly, VA., revealed that he was offering to our examination a small collection assembled by his late father, Lt-Colonel **Donald Shaw**, while on military service in Greenland during World War II. The 'younger' Shaw was now moving out of the area and he wanted to donate his father's specimens to the Smithsonian "if you are



Objects from Shaw collection laid out in Igor's office, May 2014.

interested." I asked Mr. Shaw to take some pictures of his collection and send it to me. A week later, I stared at images of a few dozen ethnographic objects assembled on a kitchen countertop and then shared them with my colleague **Stephen Loring**. "Oh, Igor, this is a great collection!" Stephen said. "It is exactly the sort of material from Greenland that we may be missing in our holdings. You better go and bring it here."

When I visited Mr. Shaw in Chantilly the next day, the movers were already hauling away the furniture and family possessions. The objects from the photographs had been taken off the kitchen countertop and were placed on large sheets of paper on the basement floor. It was clear from the first glance that we have been offered a fine collection. The set of 60 objects included dolls, wooden sculptures, miniature ivory figurines, models of hunting gear, and many pieces of 'souvenir art' – small pouches, ivory spoons, beaded necklaces, ornamented bead stripes, and the likes. As I was packing the objects in large plastic bins, Craig Shaw told me his father's story.

Donald A. Shaw was born on March 14, 1914 in Marblehead, small coastal town in eastern Massachusetts, where he spent his childhood and teen years, until the

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Notes from the Director.....	1	Preserving Mongolia's Heritage	
Anchorage.....	5	A Feather Pillow in a Viking Grave?	
The Yakutat Seal Camps Project 2014: Excavations at an A.D. 1200 Sealing Camp		Filming Livelihoods in Greenland	
Seal Hunters of Yakutat: Results of "Arctic Crashes" Fieldwork in Southeast Alaska 2014		The Polar Ukulele	
All You Need is Gut		Masters and Apprentices	
"Listen and Learn", Alaska Native Language Publications (Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yupik)		Rhythms of the Tundra: New Research on Arctic Drums	
Never Alone: A Breakthrough Inupiaq Video Game		Lagomorphs on the North Slope?	
Local Inspiration: Alaska Native Artists Study the Collections		Cuneiform Astronomy under Arctic Skies	
Alaska Native Film Premiere		Collections.....	54
New Microsite: Sharing Knowledge Alaska		'Not Ours': Objects Reveal Smithsonian Link to the Lost DeLong Expedition (1879-1881)	
Smithsonian Spotlight		The Shaw Collection: A Gift of 60 Ethnographic Objects from Greenland	
ASC Anchorage Interns		Outreach.....	60
News.....	17	Smithsonian Associates Travel in Mongolia	
IARPC Arctic Communities Collaboration Team Report 2014		Arctic Circle Report	
Top 10 Science Discoveries of the Year at the Smithsonian: The Genetic Prehistory of the New World Arctic		Zebras in the Arctic: A Partnership Between the Saint Louis Zoo and the Alaska Nanuq Commission	
Igor Krupnik receives IASSA Lifetime award (May 2014)		Reaching out with Guts on Social Media	
Igor Krupnik's new Yupik book received Honorary Mention from the Mills Prize Committee		Arctic Spring Festival Success	
2014 Smithsonian Education Achievement Award		Research Associates, Fellows, and Interns.....	69
Arctic Spring Festival at the National Museum of Natural History, May 8-10th, 2015		Arctic Fishes Research Project	
Ramah Chert Quarries: A New Canadian National Historic Site		Internship in Scientific Illustration	
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars		From San Antonio the Arctic Studies Center	
Polar Initiative		Excavation and Osteology	
A Special Thank you to Three Wise Mentors		Journey through Time and Place	
Welcome Meghan Mulkerin to the ASC		Cooper's James Bay Cree Canoe Models: Collections and Archival Research at Catholic University	
Research.....	22	Opening Doors to Inuit Material Culture	
<i>ASC Archaeological Fieldwork:</i>		Learning Archaeology through Field Reporting	
Archaeology in Labrador and Quebec		Crashing Into Anthropology: Web Writing on Arctic Crashes	
Still Searching for the Trail to Caribou House: Smithsonian-Tshikapisk Research in Ntessinan		Jordan Boggan's Internship Report	
<i>Arctic Crashes:</i>		Transition of Saami Tourist/Souvenir Art	
Arctic 'Crashes': ASC Advances Its Human-Animal-Climate Relations Project		Social Media Internship with ASC	
Harbor Seal Population Dynamics at Yakutat Bay, Alaska: Investigations in 2014		Book Reviews.....	78
Arctic Crashes: Harp Seals and Eskimos in Labrador and the Gulf of St. Lawrence		<i>Ice Ship: The Epic Voyages of the Polar Adventurer Fram.</i> Reviewed By: William W. Fitzhugh	
2014 Baffin/Labrador cruise of the M/V Cape Race		<i>Steaming to the North: the First Summer Cruise of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear, Alaska and Siberia, 1886.</i> Reviewed By: W. Fitzhugh	
Arctic Crashes Osteological Survey		<i>Nunamta Ellamta-Ilu Ayuqucia/What Our Land and World Are Like. Lower Yukon History and Oral Traditions.</i> Reviewed By: Igor Krupnik	
<i>Burch Lecture Series:</i>		<i>Toward The Open Waters: Exploration of The Ungava Peninsula Laurence.</i> Reviewed by: L. Dorr	
Caribou and People in the High Arctic: Tiger Burch's ASC Legacy		<i>Flore Nordique Du Québec Et Du Labrador.</i> Reviewed by: Rudolf Schmid	
The Archaeology of Caribou Hunters on Victoria Island, Arctic Canada		Bergy Bits.....	84
		Arctic Studies Online	

Smithsonian Viking Exhibit Popped up in Reykjavik Airport
 Maine to Greenland Released
 McMillan's Labrador Snowmobile Rediscovered
 Dr. Scott Heyes in from Down Under
 Online Arctic Resource: Encyclopedia Arctica, 15-volume Unpublished Reference Work (1947-51) at Dartmouth College
 Sit' Tlein Story Wins 1st Place!

Transitions.....86

Lyudmila S. Bogoslovskaya, 1927-2015
 Richard Dauenhauer, 1942-2014
 Donald Hurlbert, 1954-2014

Publications.....90

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Uummannaq Children's Home performs in the Rotunda of the National Museum of Natural History during the Arctic Spring Festival, May 9, 2015. Photo: James Di Loreto.

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The Danish Embassy hosted a reception to celebrate the Arctic Spring Festival, May 8, 2015. Left to Right: Ann Andreasen, Minister Plenipotentiary for Greenland Inuuteq Holm Olsen, Ambassador Lars Bo Møller, René Kristensen. Photo: Wilfred Richard.

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