



ARMS LEADERS > Pitchers lead Yankees to AL championship series B7
< CANADIAN SONGBOOK
 Second annual tour kicks off tonight D1



TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

HEALTH DOCTOR'S BLOOD BOILING OVER PLAN TO AXE SAINT JOHN FACILITY > C1

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2009

TELEGRAPHJOURNAL.COM

Hockey stick dating stalled

ADAM HURAS
 TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

The quest to determine if a piece of Cape Breton sugar maple is in fact a national treasure and hockey's Holy Grail has been halted indefinitely.

Experts at Mount Allison University have stopped work at verifying what some historians believe is the world's oldest hockey stick because it's not a paying gig.

Colin Laroque, head of the university's dendrochronology lab, said the age verification of the stick will remain on hold as other funded projects continue to take priority.

"It's unfortunate, it really is," Laroque said. "No one is paying us so the projects that are being paid for have to be higher priority and worked on actively."

The stick was thrust into the national spotlight last February when Nova Scotian Mark Presley, the owner of the stick, appeared in Campbellton for Hockey Day in Canada.

Presley claimed to be in possession of a stick dating from the 1830s or even earlier.

Hockey historians at the Society for International Hockey Research believe

PLEASE SEE → DATING, A2



PHOTO COURTESY MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

Amanda Young, a researcher at Mount Allison's dendrochronology lab, examines what may be the world's oldest hockey stick after it arrived for testing in February.

Researcher says completing project could cost about \$10,000

DATING ← A1

the stick could be the real deal.

The owner then lent the stick to Mount Allison tree-age specialists who work in Atlantic Canada's only dendrochronology lab.

Preliminary tests had revealed the stick may have enough pattern rings to scientifically identify the stick's age accurately to within five years. But to make a date verification, similar trees had to be found.

Presley had said from day one that he would not be funding the project, urging the scientists to complete the work on their own time when they could.

The lab accepted the arrangement although it has previously hampered work on the stick, now grinding it to a halt.

An oral history of the hand-carved stick led scientists to believe they could uncover the mystery by finding matching sugar maple trees in the Pottle's Lake area, near Cape Breton.

They headed there in July to search.

Laroque had funds to employ a team of four for roughly four days with financing from another funding source.

"We had about four days of time that I was willing to pay for," he said. "They did a lot of work in the Sidney, N.S., area but we had to get a good tree ring pattern going back further than the 1800s.

"We were searching for a roughly 250-year-old tree and we didn't find too many."

The group took some samples of what they believe are older Pottle's Lake trees, but whether or not they are matches to the stick is yet to be determined.

"We took some core samples, but again no one is paying us so those projects that are being paid for are being worked on actively," Laroque said.

"We have a couple cores sitting there waiting and we might be able to do something or we might not.

"This is still a needle in a haystack."

Laroque's team spent the summer researching climate change and its connection with tree lines in Newfoundland, amongst a series of other projects.

The funding comes from sources such as the National Research Council and other academic bodies as well as private funds.

Laroque said it may cost roughly \$10,000 to complete the stick project.

"We're still very interested in this project and I could spend every research cent I have and potentially solve it tomorrow, but then I wouldn't be doing any of my other work," Laroque said. "Everyone thinks the stick is valuable, but I don't think Mark has the about \$10,000 to say 'here, figure it out for me.'"

Presley said that "there is nothing new to report" when asked by the Telegraph-Journal about funding and that research on the stick had been stopped.

Laroque said that his team may return to Sydney this fall for a funded project which deals with the age verification of a heritage house.

He said if there was time, they may again look for an old stand of sugar maples to unlock the truth behind Presley's stick.

"We have one or two leads that may find us an old enough tree," Laroque said. "Eventually we'll get lucky..."