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he Spirit Sings:

Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples



This amulet cluster probably arrived in the Mackenzie River area via the Siberian-Alaskan trade network, ca. 1864. (Collection: The Trustees, National Museums of Scotland.)

adaptation was difficult or impossible. The Beothuk Indians of Newfoundland disappeared entirely in the mid-nineteenth century, leaving only a handful of objects to document their once-thriving culture. Other groups such as the Micmac and Maliseet of the East Coast acted as middlemen in the fur trade, making use of their extensive tribal trading networks.

The many objects on view in *The Spirit Sings* reflect the strength, endurance, and resiliency of native cultural traditions. Native peoples quickly saw the commercial value of their cultural goods and demanded

For the first time in centuries, more than 600 cultural objects created by early North American native peoples are being returned to Canada for a historic exhibition organized by the Glenbow Museum in Calgary.

The exhibit, called *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*, will be on view at Glenbow from January 15 to May 1, 1988, and is an official presentation of the Arts Festival of the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary. As part of Canada Day celebrations the exhibition will also be shown in Ottawa from July 1 to November 6, 1988.

The *Spirit Sings*, which is the largest and most complex project ever undertaken by Glenbow, assembles in Canada rare Indian and Inuit cultural

objects that were taken to Europe by early visitors to North America. These visitors came for a variety of reasons. Explorers were sent to map the uncharted new land, and traders came attracted by the rich fur resources. Fishermen sought the harvest of fish and whales, while missionaries brought Christianity to native groups.

On their arrival in North America, the Europeans were often welcomed by native groups who presented them with special gifts. Excited by their travels in the new land and by their encounters with native peoples, many visitors also acquired "souvenirs," through purchase, trade, gift, and, at times, plunder. They took back with them to Europe baskets, amulets, drums, clothing, jewellery, ceremonial objects, and other native material as prized

mementoes of their journeys in the new country.

The effect of European contact on native peoples was immediate and lasting. Disease, the decimation of traditional food sources such as buffalo, the introduction of guns, and the encroachment of settlements forced many groups to adapt in order to survive. For some,

This stone buffalo figure is thought to be the finest example of such carvings, which predate the Europeans' arrival in North America, ca. 1200. (Collection: Glenbow Museum, Calgary.)

