

## Haida shirt returns to Canada

A rare Haida dance shirt was brought back to Canada this summer after two Albertans bought it at a New York auction and presented it anonymously to Calgary's Glenbow Museum, reports the *Canadian Press*.

Made of heavy black trade cloth, the shirt is striking for its elegant design of two bear heads. The bears are outlined with dentalium shells — hollow tube shells found in the Columbia River — and embellished with large, rounded pieces of iridescent abalone.

"There aren't many of these shirts in museum collections," said Carol Sheehan, assistant curator of ethnology at the Glenbow. "The later shirts are worked in pearl buttons obtained in trade from white people."

The well-known piece, which toured North America six years ago as part of a Northwest Coast Indian art show called *Form and Freedom*, was estimated to be worth about \$30,000.

There was no money in the Glenbow budget for such a purchase and there was not enough time to get a federal government grant. Because she felt strongly the tunic should come back to Canada, Sheehan got in touch with two Alberta collectors, who decided to bid at the auction.

## Historical value

But the story did not end there. Even before the shirt arrived in Calgary, Sheehan was doing some detective work. "My research backed up the hunch I had that these kinds of shirts were found on the northern Northwest Coast. Then it dawned on me that I had seen the shirt before and it was just a matter of finding out where."

Her search took her back to her own unpublished 1977 master's thesis, which included several early photographs showing ceremonial clothing.

Two late nineteenth-century photographs showed what looked like the same tunic being worn in a potlatch ceremony in the Alaskan village of Klinkwan. "When the shirt came in, out came the magnifying glass. I was counting dentalium shells and ripples in the abalone, even stitches in the tunic, to verify that this shirt is the one in the photograph. And it is," said Sheehan.

Clear documentation gave the shirt such increased importance that the owners decided to donate it to the museum.

As a bonus, Sheehan discovered the man wearing the shirt in the photograph

has been identified by some people as either master Haida carver Charlie Edenshaw or his son Robert.

Charlie Edenshaw was one of the most prolific Haida artists at the turn of the century.

"But whether or not the man in the photograph is Edenshaw isn't the important fact..." said Sheehan. "What's important is that the shirt was worn by a Haida on a ceremonial occasion at a very early date, probably in the late nineteenth century, and it's rare to find that kind of documentation and authentication."

## Arts groups get funding

The federal government is making \$597,882 in financial assistance available to various Canadian cultural organizations.

The cultural initiatives program, set up to assist arts and culture organizations and activities across Canada, is operated by the Department of Communications and is financed through revenues accruing to the federal government under the federal-provincial lotteries agreement of 1980.

The program has a budget of \$39.6 million to be distributed over three fiscal years. The government announced \$11.2 million in funding from the budget to various Canadian cultural organizations at the annual meeting of the Canadian Conference of the Arts last spring.

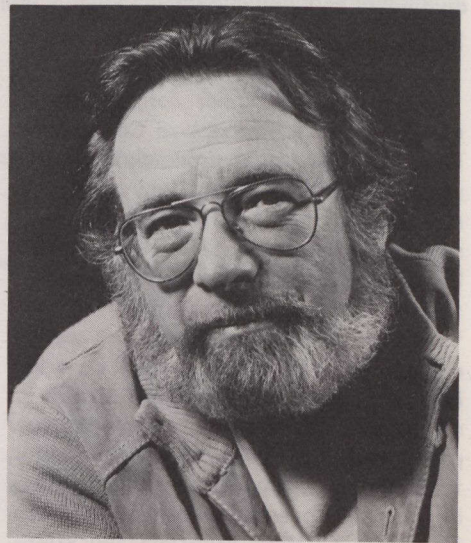
## Cultural centre head named

Jean Herbiet will take over as Director of the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, the Department of External Affairs has announced.

Mr. Herbiet has headed the National Arts Centre French theatre company in Ottawa since 1970 and has directed almost 200 plays.

Mr. Herbiet is a former drama professor at the University of Ottawa where he staged more than 30 plays. His staging of Ionesco's *La Cantatrice chauve* won him the Gold Medal and Second Prize in 1964 for the university's drama society at Nancy's International University Drama Festival.

Mr. Herbiet's theatre work has earned him public and critical acclaim on both the national and international level and won numerous prizes. In particular, his staging of Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Strindberg's *Dream Play*, in collaboration with



Jean Herbiet

Felix Mirbt, received praise in Canada and Europe by theatre critics and the public, who admired the imaginative use of actors and puppets in both productions.

At the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, Mr. Herbiet will be responsible for planning and implementing a program of cultural activities in the visual, performing and literary arts. He will also work closely with the Canadian Embassy in Paris to further Canada-French cultural relations.

## Books given to organizations

The Canada Council recently distributed books to 624 organizations across Canada.

Among groups receiving books are libraries in rural communities, prisons, senior citizens' clubs, cultural centres, hospitals, community groups, native peoples' associations, primary schools in remote areas and high schools that provide library service to their community.

Groups receiving books must have limited budgets for book-buying and make the books available to people in their communities. The program is designed to help both community groups and Canadian writers and publishers by providing high-quality Canadian books to areas of the country where they are not easily available.

Recipients can request a kit containing 80 works of fiction, poetry and plays, 80 works of non-fiction, or 40 works of children's literature. Kits are available in English or in French. The books were purchased by the Canada Council from 76 English-language and 42 French-language Canadian publishers.