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FOR RELEASE A. M. FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

The remains of an Indian burial found on the west shore of Flathead Lake have been turned over to Montana State University for study, according to Dr. Robert T. Turner, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and acting director of the University Museum.

A few bones and the greater part of a skull were unearthed by Missoulians Jerry Aasheim and Ernest Johanson when they were clearing an area for a grill on their lakeshore property across from Melita Island. The bones were discovered among some rocks about 15 feet above the shoreline. Aasheim and Johanson recognized their potential scientific value and reported the find to the University.

Dr. Carling I. Malouf, MSU anthropologist who examined the bones, said the burial is of a type current in western Montana before 1500 A. D. This type is called a secondary burial because the body was first placed on a scaffold or in a tree until the flesh fell away and the bones dropped to the ground, and then the skeleton was buried, he explained.

In this procedure, the bones often deteriorated from exposure. Sometimes they were scattered by animals. This accounts for the poor condition of the bones found by Aasheim and Johanson, Malouf said.

The anthropologist says the remains are probably those of a female between 50 and 60 years old. He cannot positively identify the woman by tribe but it is possible she was a Kalispel Indian as the Kalispels were by far the most numerous tribe in the lake region at the time of the burial.

(more)

Dr. Malouf commended the men for bringing their discovery to the attention of the University, commenting that very few such skeletal parts have been available in Montana for scientific evaluation. He said he hoped other residents of the area would be as alert in telling anthropologists about bones or artifacts they might find.

"With current scientific methods, we can learn much from even meager remains," Dr. Malouf said. He pointed out that carbon 14, a radioactive substance, makes it possible to fix dates far into the past and disclosed that the scientist can now even determine blood type from residue found in old bones.

Such information not only adds to scientific knowledge but can also have immediate practical application, Malouf said. He noted that such anthropological data has been introduced as evidence in land claim cases to establish Indian rights to certain holdings.

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