

Arctic Waves

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Radio News and Stories from Canada's Arctic Region

A wreck and a change of heart

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IKALUKTUTIAK/CAMBRIDGE BAY

If you can't beat them, join them. That's what Cambridge Bay resident Vicki Aitaok, lead member of the Keep the Baymaud Committee is doing.

Aitaok says she is respecting the choice of the community's residents to not challenge the plans of a Norway group to remove the shipwreck, and she will not undertake any other steps to keep the shipwreck in the waters off Cambridge Bay. She will meet with other committee members at a later date to decide what to do, she added.

"I'll be optimistic, 20 per cent of people in Cambridge Bay want the ship to stay. The rest don't care one way or the other," she said. "Cambridge Bay is going to win something out of this deal. It's likely we don't have enough support to sway the government. I'm sad about it because I do see the long-term potential of having her here but nobody else is seeing that at this point. And the people that do agree to keep her are not interested in fighting for her. I'm going with the flow."

She added she hasn't heard anything from the federal government nor from Nunavut MP Leona Aglukkaq on the issue.

Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, the first person to successfully traverse the Northwest Passage by ship, tried drifting across the

North Pole with the Maud in 1918 but was unsuccessful.

The ship was sold by creditors to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1925. Renamed Baymaud, it became a floating warehouse and **wireless radio station** outside Cambridge Bay before it sank in its moorings in 1930. The Hudson's Bay Company sold it to the people in Asker, Norway, for \$1 in 1990.



above: the wreck of the Baymaud as it looks today
(www.nunatsiaqonline.ca)

Aitaok's comments follow a public meeting held in Cambridge Bay Aug. 16, where Jan Wanggaard, a project manager with Maud Returns Home, a Norwegian group supported by investment company Tandberg Eiendom, and Dag Hansen presented their plans. Those include moving the shipwreck to Norway and make it the focal point of a future museum.

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Wanggaard said the meeting was “good.”

“People seem very relaxed and they understand the importance of the ship to Norway and the historical value for us,” he said. “Everybody appreciated seeing the ship from underwater, which is not something many people have seen. From the point of view of the surveying we did here, the ship looks as good as we could hope. It makes us optimistic about the possibility of a salvage operation that can be successful. People took interest in the project in detail and everybody understands our goal.”

Aitaok said about 20 people attended the information session, where she made a PowerPoint presentation of the efforts to repatriate ownership of Maud to the community.

“It was very informational for everybody. It wasn’t a debate per se, it was just a sharing of information. It was really good,” she said.

“Their plan seemed very progressive and it seemed very logical, very reasonable - very exciting, actually.” <>

Additional Notes:

The petition notes that the Baymaud also served as a supply vessel and a floating warehouse, then later as a wireless radio station, **broadcasting from the Arctic to what is now the CBC.** (www.nunatsiaqonline.ca)

Maud was seized by creditors in Seattle and sold at an auction. The Hudson's Bay Company purchased the ship to supply its Arctic outposts. After refitting in Vancouver, and with a new name, Baymaud sailed for the Western Arctic in June 1926. It never returned. After freezing in for the winter of 1926-1927, the ship was moored close to shore and used by the Hudson's Bay Company as a floating machine shop, warehouse and wireless station. **Twice a day, the wireless operator, W. G. Crisp, sent out regular weather reports through the R.C.C.S. Mackenzie network. These were the first regular winter reports by radio from Canada's Arctic coast.** (Central Arctic Archeological Reports 1996)