



Lakehead researcher describing mummy's final days

March 5, 2015 – Thunder Bay, ON

Lakehead Anthropology Professor Dr. Carney Matheson will describe the final days of Europe's oldest frozen mummy, Ötzi the Ice Man, during a Research and Innovation Week talk on Thursday, March 12.

Dr. Carney Matheson and one of his former students travelled to Bolzano, Italy last year to study the weapons and tools found with Ötzi.

"Some people call Ötzi the greatest archaeological discovery of the last century," Dr. Matheson said. "He's one of the oldest natural mummies in the world which is pretty exceptional."

Ötzi was discovered in 1991 by two German hikers in the Italian Alps.

The frozen mummy was so well-preserved that police were called to investigate the discovery as a homicide. At 5,300 years of age, Ötzi lived during the Neolithic Age and is Europe's oldest natural mummy. Previous examinations of Ötzi's tools revealed DNA from the blood of four humans. Technology found in Ötzi's possession, such as medicinal fungi, has not been found elsewhere in the Neolithic Era.

"Our work is a fascinating forensic investigation around the last moments of Ötzi's life," explained Dr. Matheson.

The Institute of Mummies and the Iceman, and the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology requested that Dr. Matheson replicate analyses of blood traces on the mummy's equipment and clothing originally performed by Dr. Matheson's former supervisor, Dr. Tom Loy. Dr. Loy was a researcher at the Institute for Molecular Biosciences at the University of Queensland, who died before his results could be published.

"There are many publications on Ötzi looking at him from all angles; however Dr. Loy was the only researcher to examine the mummy's tools. Ötzi's tools and equipment could be the key to everything," Dr. Matheson said.

Dr. Matheson's research team travelled to the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, where the 5,300-year-old Ice Man is housed, in Bolzano, Italy last year. His team examined approximately 20 artefacts found with Ötzi's body, including hunting equipment, a first aid kit, medicinal items, and clothing.

Dr. Matheson brought equipment from Lakehead University to perform biochemical analyses of residues found on the artefacts, and to bring samples back to Canada for further study.

A major supporter of this historic research endeavour and of Dr. Matheson's talk is the Institute of Italian Studies-Lakehead University (IIS-LU), which helped fund and equip the research team. Crupi Consulting Group provided shirts and lab coats which identified that the researchers were from Lakehead University and the Institute.

The talk will be at 7:30 pm in the John N. Paterson Auditorium (PA 3006) at Port Arthur Collegiate Institute.

– 30 –

Media: For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Brandon Walker, Media Relations Officer, at (807) 343-8177, or mediarelations@lakeheadu.ca.

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