

Research Day | March 15, 2017

Title: Wedges

Presenter: Grant Keddie

Abstract:

A distinctive feature of cultures of the Northwest Coast of North America was their unrivalled development of woodworking technology. An artifact of major importance in this industry was the wedge.

A prime objective in archaeology is to reconstruct human behavior in the past. Accurate interpretations are dependent on an accurate knowledge of the function of tools such as those we call wedges. The general assumption upon the finding of wedges in archaeological sites is that they are evidence of woodworking in the production of wooden artifacts ranging from large house beams, wall planks and canoes to a wide variety of household objects, weapons and small utensils.

A hypothesis that needs further exploration is the question of whether or not all the objects we call wedges are in fact woodworking wedges.

I will examine the RBCM's archaeological and ethnological collections and their associated data, in combination with the ethnographic and historic literature. The objective will be to see if our understanding of the use of wedge-like artifacts is too simplified a view that may lead to some inaccurate interpretations of archaeological findings.

