

Canada considers fate of Arctic explorer's ship

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A panel of experts on Thursday considered a proposal to repatriate Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen's three-mast ship Maud from the Canadian Arctic.

A Norwegian group asked the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board to revisit a decision in December denying an export permit for the ship, after residents of Cambridge Bay, Canada opposed losing a treasured artifact that has become a tourist attraction in the far north.

The remains of the ship that once belonged to the Norwegian explorer sit at the bottom of Cambridge Bay in Nunavut, but its hulk is partly visible above the [frigid waters](#) that preserved it for decades.

"Today's hearing went well and we are optimistic about the possibility of reaching a positive result," Jan Wanggaard, manager of the effort to bring the Maud to Norway, told AFP.

A decision is expected as early next week.

In 1906 Amundsen became the first European to sail through the [Northwest Passage](#) searching for a shorter shipping route from Europe to Asia, something explorers had been trying to find for centuries.

Five years later he became the first person to reach the South Pole. His attempts to reach the North Pole however failed.

Amundsen again sailed through the [Northeast Passage](#) with the Maud in 1918-20, but was unable to get far enough north to launch a North Pole expedition. Amundsen tried, and failed, one more time from the [Bering Strait](#) in 1920-21.

The Maud, built in Asker, Norway and named after Norway's Queen Maud, was sold to Hudson's Bay Company in 1925 and rechristened the Baymaud. It ended its days as a floating warehouse and the region's [first radio station](#) before sinking at its moorings in 1930.

In 1990 Asker Council in Norway bought the wreck for just \$1 and obtained an export permit from Canada. The permit however has expired.

The Norwegian group hoped to obtain a new export permit to return the [shipwreck](#) to Norway at mid-year to be the centerpiece of a new museum, but the Canadian review process has so far delayed that to at least 2013.

The board heard arguments by the Norwegian group against a government expert's call for an archeological survey of the ship and a delay of its removal from Canadian waters to allow a Canadian group to buy her.

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