

Thunder Bay · **New**

## Crab legs, bathtubs and booze: The final journey of the original Colonial Cup



Kris Ketonen · CBC · Posted: Feb 13, 2019 5:13 PM ET | Last Updated: February 14



A trophy recently donated to the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame is the original Colonial Cup, the organization's executive director said. (CBC News)

Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame executive director Diane Imrie sums up the incredible tale of the newly-rediscovered, original Colonial Cup perfectly: "It's one of the best stories."

The Colonial Cup, which was Colonial Hockey League's championship trophy, was recently rediscovered in the home of the late Andy Morrow, who was president of the Thunder Bay

Thunder Hawks.

And while there was some doubt as to the trophy's authenticity at first — it was heavily damaged when it came in, and didn't bear any inscribed player names, even though three Thunder Bay teams won it in the 90s — any concerns have since been allayed.

It is the Colonial Cup. Or, rather, the original Colonial Cup.

- [\*\*A hockey history mystery: Has the original Colonial Cup been found in Thunder Bay, Ont?\*\*](#)

The cup that's sitting at the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame today is the cup won by the Thunder Hawks during the Colonial Hockey League's inaugural 1992 season after a triple-overtime, game-seven win, a contest Imrie said team coach Bill McDonald described as "one of the finest hockey games ever played at the [Fort William Gardens]."

That night, however, is notable for one other thing: it marked the first and last time the original Colonial Cup was awarded.

"As the story goes, their exuberant celebrations throughout, perhaps, about a week, resulted in a bit of damage to the Colonial Cup," Imrie said during a recent interview at the hall of fame.

## **Damaged during post-win party**

Imrie is being ironic in her description here. The original Colonial Cup was actually so badly damaged in those celebrations that the league didn't even want it back. Rather, they let the Thunder Hawks keep it, and ordered the team to pay for a replacement.

What, exactly, did they get up to during that 1992 celebration? Details are scarce, but Imrie has dug up a few.

It was put back together after falling apart at least three times. Players ate crab legs out of the cup (and, of course, drank out of it). It spent some time at the Wayland, and player Vern Ray actually hid it in his bathtub for a while in an attempt to keep it safe.

"The boys definitely enjoyed the cup," Imrie said. "I've been working here for over 30 years, and it's one of the best stories."

Lakehead University athletic director Tom Warden played on that 1992 Thunder Hawks team. And while he doesn't remember the specifics of those days following their championship win, he fondly recalled being part of a team that had gained a big following in the Lakehead.

"It was a joyous time for a team that was really happy about winning," he said. "I think it was 12 o'clock midnight when Everton Blackwin scored the goal to win that game, and the town just went goofy."

"We had some festivities," Warden said. "I don't remember the specifics."

## **A 'neat story'**

Warden visited the hall of fame earlier this week, and saw the trophy for the first time in nearly three decades. He said it brought back a flood of memories.

"It was a lower-level pro league, but a great league," he said. "It was a lot of people that had already played in the NHL, or were on their way up or on their way down."

"Sort of a nomadic group, but a group that was great to be around a group that loved playing in Thunder Bay, and really, honestly, a group that Thunder Bay really appreciated, and came out and watched in droves. It's kind of fitting, the way that this whole thing has played out, with finding it in Andy Morrow's garage 27 years later."

"It's a neat story."

Neither Warden nor Imrie knew how much the team paid for the second Colonial Cup. A chuckling Warden did recall, though, that Morrow "was not pleased about spending that money. I don't know the exact costs, I know that it was not money that was budgeted at that time."

The second Colonial Cup, by the way, lasted through the remaining seasons of the Colonial Hockey League, and was retired in 1997. It's currently at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto.

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