

As you know, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's aboriginal territory spanned nearly four million acres and for thousands of years the people of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe have centered their lives on Lake Coeur d'Alene and its tributaries, leaving evidence of their lives in the region.

We were disappointed and concerned by the *Coeur d'Alene Press* article on January 22, 2013, "History in the Water", which painted a romanticized view of the removal of historic artifacts from public lands. Our Tribe works hard to preserve our cultural resources, yet articles such as this one will inevitably lead to an increase in "looting" in the area and ultimately, the tragic removal of the Tribe's historic resources.

Notably missing from the article was any discussion about the laws that prohibit these kinds of actions. There are a number of tribal, state and federal laws in place to protect historic and cultural artifacts. Unfortunately, the State Historic Preservation Office made a mistake in their response to the article and incorrectly assumed the gentleman profiled was on private land when in fact he was digging on the bottom of the lake, which is public land. The fact of the matter is removing artifacts from public lands throughout Idaho, including the lake bottom, is against the law.

Depending on where in the state you are, there are different laws under which looting is illegal. For example, Idaho state code prohibits looting on public lands in Idaho, so those searching the lake bottom near Coeur d'Alene would be breaking state law. And those looting in tribal waters or on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation may be subject to tribal or federal laws that protect historical and cultural artifacts. One such law that often applies on federal lands is the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, which was put into place to provide more effective law enforcement to protect public archeological sites.

These myriads of laws are complex, but suffice it to say it is illegal to remove or vandalize cultural resources and artifacts such as those found on public lands and in known historical sites in and around Lake Coeur d'Alene and throughout the entire state of Idaho. Violators may be prosecuted and may be subject to fines and jail time. In fact, just a few years ago, there was a man who was arrested in Newport, WA for looting and for illegally possessing and selling historic artifacts he had taken from public lands and Indian reservations over a period of several decades.

We recognize that there are many in our community who do not understand the damage that is done when you remove an artifact. Furthermore, we know that some people may be unaware that it is illegal. Everyone needs to be informed about laws that protect our historical artifacts on public lands before attempting to remove anything. Searching, digging for and removing artifacts destroys everyone's history and breaks the law.

Information can be obtained at state, tribal or federal historic preservation offices. Put simply, to avoid criminal charges, do not take or remove artifacts including bottles, tin cans, arrowheads, etc. from public lands and do not use a stick or a tool to dig, probe or remove any artifact from the ground.

The Tribe would be happy to provide additional resources to answer any questions and we hope in the future the *Coeur d'Alene Press* and its readers will be aware of the cultural implications and laws that prohibit looting and collecting artifacts.