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## Press Release

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Artists to demonstrate at Alaska State Museum in recognition of Native American Heritage Awareness Month**

In recognition of Native American Heritage Awareness Month, the Alaska State Museum will present a series of artist demonstrators on three Saturdays during the month of November. The public is invited to attend these events free of charge.

On November 13 from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm, Tommy Jimmie Jr. will be doing "traditional Tlingit storytelling for a family audience." Over the last several years, Jimmie has been an addictions counselor. Prior to that he was a teacher, or cultural specialist. Since 1976 any work he has done included his interest and background in his cultural heritage. Much of his cultural education came from having grown up in the Raven House in Haines, Alaska and of time spent with his grandfathers of the Thunderbird House of Klukwan.

Much of Jimmie's childhood and adult life was spent as a member of the Geisan Dancers of Haines and later as a member of the Naakahidee Theater who performed stories called "Fires on the Water" throughout the United States. In 1979, he went to the University of Oslo in Norway and shared what he understood and had experienced of the Tlingit culture and history. He has been involved in Tlingit traditions as a practice of everyday life, particularly through ceremonies. Throughout, he has relied on what he was taught of Tlingit Stories. Jimmie said, "my grandfather use to say, "There is a story for everything.'"

On November 20 from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm Anna Brown Ehlers will demonstrate weaving. Ehlers is Tlingit of the Raven moiety, Gaanaxteidí (Woodworm) clan, Yaay Hít (the Whale House) of Klukwan. She lives in Juneau and has been weaving in the style of her ancestors for her entire adult life.

Ehlers has been called one of the most accomplished weavers of modern times. She began weaving as a young woman in 1982 and became a student of the late Jennie Thlanaut (Shax'saani Kéek'), the woman credited with saving the knowledge of Chilkat weaving from being lost. Ehlers continues to spread the knowledge of Chilkat weaving in seminars, conferences and demonstrations throughout the United States.

Ehlers has received several awards for her work, including a State of Alaska grant in 1983 for the intensive study of Chilkat weaving that allowed her to begin weaving full-time. Since then, she has received four prestigious First Peoples Fund fellowships, the inaugural United States Artists Rasmuson Fellowship in 2006 and the Governor's Award for Native Arts in 2006. Her work is featured in natural history and art museums and private collections around the world. Two of her weavings will be on display during the demonstration at the museum.

On November 27 from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm Abel Ryan will demonstrate Tsimshian style carving. Ryan, a member of the Wolf Clan, was born in Ketchikan and is a member of the Metlakatla Indian Community. He received a bachelor of arts degree from Sheldon Jackson College in 2006, going on to receive a bachelor of fine arts in Native Arts Studio and Printmaking from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2009.

Ryan has practiced traditional Tsimshian art for more than 16 years and has also studied under master carver Jack Hudson of Metlakatla. Concentrating primarily in the medium of wood, Ryan has produced masks, bowls, spoons, pipes, ladles, plaques, combs and other hand-carved Northwest Coast formline art. He has also taught at Sheldon Jackson College, the University of Alaska Southeast and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. His work is sold in galleries around the state and many of his pieces have been purchased for inclusion in private collections.

An annual pass that allows unlimited visits to the Alaska State Museum and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka is available for \$15. Assistance is available for visitors with special needs. Please contact Visitor Services at 465-2901 before the visit.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Phone (907) 465-2901 Fax (907) 465-2976

[www.museums.state.ak.us](http://www.museums.state.ak.us)

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