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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **February 2, 2011**



Native Author to Speak

Sponsored by the Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum

SITKA – Inupiaq elder and activist, Willie Iggiagruk Hensley, will give a presentation on his book, *Fifty Miles From Tomorrow: A Memoir of Alaska and the Real People*, at 7 p.m. on Friday, February 11th at the Sheet’ka Kwaan Naa Kahidi Community House. Following Mr. Hensley’s presentation, there will be a reception and book signing with the author. This free event is sponsored by members of the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum. Preceding Mr. Hensley’s lecture, the Friends organization will hold their annual meeting at 6 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

Fifty Miles from Tomorrow is Mr. Hensley’s first book. He wrote the book, in part, “to inspire our own people to tell their story and to convey their knowledge of culture, history, and the natural universe – that we didn’t need our story to be filtered through people from the Outside.”

Born in 1941 in Kotzebue, AK, approximately 40 miles above the Arctic Circle, Willie and his family lived a traditional subsistence lifestyle by hunting, fishing, and trapping on the Noatak River delta. As a teenager, Willie went to a boarding school in Tennessee and spent his summers in Kotzebue. While a student at the University of Alaska in 1966, Hensley wrote a paper titled “What Rights to Land Have the Alaska Natives: The Primary Issue,” which encapsulated the land claims issue and provided the background that many Native Alaskans needed to take action to begin the land claims process.

Hensley graduated from George Washington University in Washington, D. C. with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science and a minor in Economics. Following graduation, Hensley was elected to the Alaska State House of Representatives where he served four years and was elected to the Senate for a four-year term. He was appointed by Governor Steve Cowper to the Senate again in 1987. Hensley also served as Chairman of the Capitol Site Selection Committee under Governor Jay Hammond and Chairman of the Land Claims Task Force under Governor Walter Hickel, and he was also appointed Commissioner of Commerce and Economic Development by Governor Tony Knowles. Mr. Hensley was also the Manager of the Federal Government Relations for Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, the organization that operates and maintains the 800 mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline System.

In addition, Hensley was a founder of NANA Regional Corporation and served as a director for 20 years. He was involved in the formation of the Alaska Federation of Natives and served as executive director, President, and Co-Chairman. He is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the First Alaskans Foundation.

Mr. Hensley will also be meeting with students at Sitka High School and Mount Edgecumbe High School while he is in Sitka. Funding for Mr. Hensley's visit is provided by members of the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum, with additional support provided by a Sitka Charitable Trust grant. For more information about Mr. Hensley's schedule, contact Beth Garrison, Business Manager for the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum at 747-6233.

Winter hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10a.m to 4 p.m. Discounted winter admission is \$3 for adults; age 18 and younger are admitted free.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 465-3004

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