

Linda S. Thibodeau

Director

Division of Libraries, Archives,  
& Museums

lam.alaska.gov

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Robert C. Banghart

Chief Curator

Alaska State Museums

395 Whittier St.

Juneau, Alaska 99801-1718

907.465.2901

## Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **May 22, 2010**

### **Native Artist Demonstrators schedule for June at Sheldon Jackson Museum**

The June schedule for the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Native Artists Demonstrators Program begins on the first of the month. Sponsored by the museum's Friends organization and supported, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the program brings artists from all across the state to Sitka to demonstrate their particular art or craft for museum visitors.

Beginning June 1, Tlingit artist Pam Eby, originally from Sitka, will begin demonstrating her art of bead working. Her specialty is Chilkat design earrings. Eby has worked with antique beads passed down in her family for many years, learning the techniques taught to her and her sister, artist Cass Pook, by their grandmother, Annie Jacobs. She is Tlingit from the Eagle Clan, Killerwhale House. Eby will demonstrate from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on June 1 and 2, and from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. on June 3.

The second week of June will bring Nome artist Mary Jane Anuqsraaq Litchard. Litchard was born in Kotzebue and raised in Northwest Alaska as well as in Anchorage and Fairbanks. She says she "learned art from childhood observations and by continuously doodling on any available paper space, along sides of magazines, (on) paper bags, etc. As a teenager, I made a promise to my uncle, Wilbur Walluk, to continue our Inupiaq family's lifeline of artwork." She also watched and learned from such noted artists as Joshua Sakeagak, Kivetoruk Moses and George Ahgupuk.

Litchard weaves baleen and grass baskets, carves ivory, paints, sews skins, and works in a variety of other traditions. She has several college degrees and works full-time as an instructor for the Kawerak ABE/GED program. She is also involved with the Bering Straits Inuit Council for the promotion of cultural heritage.

Litchard will be demonstrating at the museum June 7 through 11 from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 5 p.m. each day.

The following two weeks, June 14 through 18, and June 21 through 25, will see two artists each day. Selina Alexander will demonstrate from 8 a.m. to noon, daily, followed by Donald Varnell, who will be in the gallery from 1 to 5 p.m.

Alexander, an Athabascan artist, grew up along the Yukon River between Ruby and Galena, and now lives in North Pole during the winter, and at fish camp, 30 miles below Ft. Yukon, during the summer. She learned beading and skin-sewing from her mother, grandmother, and other elders, as well as from books, museums, and workshops. She has a special interest in studying and making the art of caribou hair tufting. She will be part of the faculty for the Sitka Fine Arts Camp as well as demonstrating at the museum.

Haida carver Donald Varnell is a young carver known for his highly contemporary work which often breaks from tradition. He is the grandson of noted Haida weaver Dolores Churchill and apprenticed with carvers Reggie Davidson and Nathan Jackson. He attended the University of Alaska Fairbanks and studied under Alutiiq artist Alvin Amason. He has completed a number of public art projects around Alaska. This will be his second summer with the demonstrators program. Varnell will also be on hand the week of June 28 – 30 and July 1 – 2, from 1 to 5 p.m. and is also teaching at the Sitka Fine Arts Camp in June and July.

Additional artist demonstrators are scheduled through September. Details will be announced. Participating artists are chosen for their acknowledged skill in tradition-based Native arts and for their ability and willingness to discuss their work and their culture. The program helps visitors make a connection with Native art and culture and allows visitors to see that traditional art forms continue to be a part of Alaska Native life.

Support for the demonstrators program comes from the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum, the Alaska State Museum, Alaska Airlines, Shee Atika Totem Square Inn, and donations from many individuals.

For more on the demonstrators program go to:

[http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon\\_jackson/sjnativedemos.html](http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/sjnativedemos.html), or contact the museum at 747-8981 for a complete listing of the 2010 Native Artist Demonstrators Program.

Summer hours at the museum are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with admission of \$4. Visitors 18 and younger and Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum are admitted free of charge. An annual pass, which also includes the Alaska State Museum in Juneau, is available for \$15.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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

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

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[return to top](#)

[press releases](#) | [Sheldon Jackson Museum](#) | [Native artist demonstrators](#)