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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **February 25, 2011**

March Artifact of the Month: Aleut Basketry Hat



In honor of International Women's Day, the Sheldon Jackson Museum has chosen an Aleut basketry hat as Artifact of the Month for March. Each year around the world hundreds of events occur throughout March to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women.

Aleut women were the basket makers, and Aleut grass weaving is some of the finest weaving in the world. There are baskets known to have as many as 1,053 stitches per square inch. Preparation for weaving the baskets included gathering the rye grass, drying, bleaching it and splitting it. Weavers accomplished the splitting using an elongated and sharpened thumbnail as their only tool, making fine grass threads, often as thin as silk.

Aleut grass weaving is usually associated with finely woven baskets or mats. At the time of Euro American contact, these items, along with grass socks and summer hats, were made for everyday use. As ready-made products became available, the time-consuming, handmade grass objects became less important in the Aleuts' daily life. Instead of creating basketry objects for their own use, Aleut women began making grass objects as trade or souvenir items.

This Aleut basketry hat was acquired and then donated by the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum in December 2009. It is a small hat, approximately 9 inches in diameter, pre 1900s. It is finely twined, possibly the "Attu fish-basket stitch," which is described as plain twined weaving over divided warp.

The hat will be on exhibit at Sheldon Jackson Museum from March 1st through March 31st. An image of the hat can also be viewed on our website at

http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html

Winter hours are from 10:00am to 4:00pm Tuesday through Saturday. Discounted inter admission is \$3 for adults; no admission is charged for those 18 and under. The Sheldon Jackson Museum is located at 104 College Drive.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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

www.museums.state.ak.us

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