

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: January 2, 2016**

**SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM JANUARY ARTIFACT  
OF THE MONTH**



The Sheldon Jackson Museum's January Artifact of the Month is a very old Yup'ik housewife or sewing bag from Andreafski (SJ.II.B.160). The bag is made of fish skin with a blue and off-white broadcloth pouch sewn to it with cotton thread and a cloth strap. The edge of the bag is trimmed with fur, likely fox. Strips of seal gut are applied with blue and pink or red embroidery thread curve around the contours of the bag between strips of salmon skin. This bag and others like it were used for storing small sewing articles including womens' needles, thimbles, sinew thread, small knives, and whetstones.

Housewives were designed with a U-shape flap similar to the female parka with the lower end usually terminating in a bag and the upper end being rounded with a cord attached, usually of rawhide. At the end of the cord would be a slim cross-piece of bone, ivory or deer horn usually carved with various designs. To close the bag, the cord would be wrapped around the rolled up bag and held in place by tucking the ivory crosspiece under the cord. While the cord is present in the January Artifact of the Month the cross-piece is missing.

Housewives were frequently embellished with needlework or ornamental patterns. Different and contrasting shades of skins were used to visually and symbolically emphasize the cut and joints of garments and bags. According to Valerie Chaussonnet, housewives, like nearly all garments made by Yup'ik and Inupiaq peoples were made with skins or hair from several different species.

The Sheldon Jackson Museum is home to nearly a dozen housewives or sewing bags. The majority of the bags are Yup'ik and from the Lower Yukon area. The museum is also home to many other sewing accessories including engraved walrus ivory and bird bone needle cases, almost two dozen thimbles, and nearly thirty engraved housewife fasteners. The January Artifact of the Month will be exhibited until January 31<sup>st</sup> and can be seen Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm. The museum is closed Sundays, Mondays and holidays. General admission is \$3 and free for those 18 and under or members of either the Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum or Friends of the Alaska State Museum.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Jacqueline Fernandez  
Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 747-3004  
[www.museums.alaska.gov](http://www.museums.alaska.gov)