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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

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JUNE ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH **INUPIAQ PIPE MADE FROM WOOD AND METAL**

The artifact of the month for June at the Sheldon Jackson Museum is a wood and metal pipe collected by Dr. Sheldon Jackson in the early 1890s from somewhere in the Arctic Ocean region.

The 7 ½” pipe has a stem and bowl carved from wood. A brass rim is seated on the wood bowl with a section of a gun barrel in its center. Another piece of metal which is similar in appearance to a washer is at the end of the bowl where the stem attaches. The narrow wood stem fits into the washer-like piece. The unique-looking pipe has characteristics of a western style pipe, but seems to have been retro-fitted, with “spare parts.” Possibly parts were missing when it came into Native hands and was repaired for use.

There may be a story that goes with its construction but unfortunately all we know is that it was presented to Sheldon Jackson on one of his trips to the Arctic regions. The use of tobacco in the Inupiaq culture predates contact with Euro-Americans. Trade with Siberians brought tobacco, pipes, boxes, pouches, and the various uses of tobacco. Women and children generally used snuff, but in some areas smoked tobacco as the men did. Tobacco mixed with ashes from fungus or dried wood was pulverized with a pestle in a mortar to enhance the flavor and increase the amount. Pipes were designed to be taken apart or had a trap door on the bottom so nicotine residue could be removed and mixed to form a quid (a small wad of concentrated tobacco) which formed an even stronger flavored chew. This pipe does not have a trap door, but tobacco residue is clearly visible in the gun barrel and could have been easily scraped out and used in a quid.

The pipe can be seen in the museum gallery from June 1 through June 30. Summer hours are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with \$4 admission. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

The images can also be viewed on our website at http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html.

INUPIAQ PIPE



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