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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **May 5, 2010**

Native Artist Demonstrators Program set to go for another summer at Sheldon Jackson Museum

The Sheldon Jackson Museum's Native Artists Demonstrators Program will be in full swing again this summer, thanks in part to a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to the Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum. The program is now in its twenty-second year, and the \$20,000 grant, which also helped fund last year's program, enables the museum to bring artists to Sitka from all across the state to demonstrate their particular art or craft for museum visitors.

Working in the museum also affords artists time to study the Sheldon Jackson Museum's extraordinary collection. Focused on materials made prior to 1930, with most dating to the 19th century, it is one of the world's most comprehensive collections of early Alaskan ethnographic art and technology.

From May until September, artists present traditional arts as they are practiced by Alaska's indigenous cultures. These traditions include: woodworking, ivory and silver carving, drum making, beading, skin sewing, and basket and textile weaving. The artists may be Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Aleut, Alutiiq, Athabascan, Yup'ik, or Inupiaq, and although not all cultures and all art forms are represented in any one year, over time, the program aims to be comprehensive.

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.

The program begins on Thursday, May 13, when Mary Beans will demonstrate Inupiaq skin-sewing and beading. Beans was born in Bethel, on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and currently lives in Sitka. She learned skin sewing from her mother and grandmother and has since learned beading from her daughter. In the late 1980s, while attending Sheldon Jackson College, she made several presentations for school groups at the museum. She has BA in education and has taught elementary school. Beans will also demonstrate on May 14 and 15. She will work from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. all three days.

Metlakatla resident Abel Ryan, a Tsimshian carver, will demonstrate May 17 through 21, from 9 a.m. to noon, and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Ryan studied traditional Tsimshian art under master carver Jack Hudson of Metlakatla. He has concentrated primarily in the medium of wood, and produces masks, bowls, spoons, pipes, ladles. He is also proficient in two-dimensional Northwest Coast graphic design. Ryan has also taught art at Sheldon Jackson College, University of Alaska Southeast, and University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Ryan was born in Ketchikan in 1978. He is a member of the Metlakatla Indian Community and is from the Wolf Clan. Last year he graduated from the University of Alaska Fairbanks with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Native Arts Studio and Printmaking.

Longtime Sitka resident Sarah Williams, originally from Fort Yukon, will work in the museum May 25-27. She will demonstrate Athabascan beading from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. the first two days, and on the 27th from 9 a.m. to noon, and from 1 to 4 p.m.

Williams learned her beading craft at an early age by watching her grandparents. She creates a wide range of beaded objects including purses, scissors cases, and traditional baby carrying straps. Williams moved to Sitka some 30 years ago where she continues her traditional Athabascan artwork. "My people are known worldwide for their beadwork, especially for the style that comes from Fort Yukon," Williams said. Brightly colored floral patterns on a white background is the Fort Yukon beading style.

The museum will be closed May 31 for Memorial Day. June's schedule begins on the 1 with Inupiaq artist Paula Williams. Additional artist demonstrators are scheduled through September. Details will be announced.

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.

The museum is again working with the Sitka Fine Arts Camp and will be sharing two artists: Haida artist Donnie Varnell, who will be here for both the middle school (June) and the high school camps (July); and Athabascan artist Selina Alexander, who will be at the middle school camp only.

For more on the demonstrators program go to:

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.

Current hours at the museum are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Summer hours begin May 13 and 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

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