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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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



The Sheldon Jackson Museum's November Artifact of the Month is a Tlingit telescoping spruce root basket (SJ.I.A.853 a,b). The basket was originally owned by Reverend Andrew P. Kashevaroff, a Russian Orthodox priest of Russian and Aleut (Unangan) heritage and first full-time librarian and curator of the Alaska Historical Library and Museum (now the State Library, Archives and Museum in the newly constructed Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff State Library, Archives and Museums Building named after the same original owner of the basket.) The basket was inherited by

Kashevaroff's granddaughter, Natasha Calvin who sold the basket and nearly two dozen other objects to the museum in 2001.

Telescoping baskets are among some of the most beautiful Tlingit baskets made. Telescoping baskets are generally small, cylindrical, have an inner and outer component with the outer sliding over the top to completely seal the contents. The baskets are typically covered with bands of decorative false embroidery, a decorative technique in twined basketry whereby a supplemental weft or horizontal element, usually derived from the exterior portion of spruce root, is wrapped over the weft strand as it passes over the warp or vertical element, usually derived from the interior of the spruce root, on the outside of the basket. Smaller telescoping baskets were sometimes used to carry shot for muzzle-loading guns. Larger ones were used to carry materials for ceremonial use such as eagle down, distributed over the heads of dancers at important events.

In many ways, the November Artifact of the month is illustrative of a typical telescoping basket. It features false embroidery, is cylindrical, and comprised of two parts – an inner and an outer case. The inner case is the more simple in design than the outer case and has a strip of leather tacked to its base with commercial thread. It has four design bands done in alternating rounds of three-strand twining (2 dark and 1 natural) and bands of self-weave in the chevron and diamond pattern. The outer case is far more colorful and has a top with purple dyed weft, natural, and magenta grass false embroidery in the fern frond pattern. A broken loop of plaited spruce root is sewn to the center of the top and a small split is visible on the right side. The rim of the top has a band of dyed purple, natural and light red weft followed by another band of natural and purple dyed weft. Yellow and green dyed grass false embroidery in the “shaman’s hat” pattern are placed on the dyed weft outer bands. The inner band between the Shaman’s hat patterns is “tying” done in natural, magenta, and deep blue dyed grass false embroidery. What makes this basket an unusual telescoping basket is that its outer cover is covered in colorful false embroidery while the inner basket is relatively plain. The reverse scenario in which the outer basket is more plain than the inner or the scenario in which both basket components are elaborately embellished with false embroidery is more common.

The Sheldon Jackson Museum has over two hundred and fifty examples of spruce root basketry in its permanent collection. The museum’s basketry includes finely made and varied examples of spruce root berry baskets, spoon bags, bottle baskets, hats, mats, teacups, saucers, and several other telescoping baskets. The November Artifact of the Month will be on exhibit until November 30th and can be seen during winter hours Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm. The museum is closed on Sundays and Mondays. 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. The museum is closed holidays year round.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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