

## Press Release

## SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **May 21, 2011**

### **May Artifact of the Month: Pair of Yup'ik Dolls from Goodnews Bay**



A pair of Yup'ik dolls collected from Goodnews Bay in 1960 will be on display for the May artifact of the Month at the Sheldon Jackson Museum. The dolls were purchased by Mrs. Robert Hemp, a traveling nurse, who donated them to the Museum in 1970. The female doll, which is the taller of the pair, has a squirrel skin parka, sealskin pants, and brown wolf ruff with decorations. The male doll has a mink parka, sealskin pants, and wolf ruff. The faces are carved from wood.

Dolls such as these are made today as craft items and not as children's toys. Like children everywhere, dolls were an important part of everyday life along the Kuskokwim and the Yukon River deltas. A Sheldon Jackson Museum employee who is from the village of Napaskiak



recounted her childhood and the dolls she grew up with:

“The dolls were called “inuguat” or pretend people. There were always five dolls making up a family: a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, and a baby. In earlier days, girls had watched the way their mother carried infants and picked up sticks or pieces of moss from the tundra and imitated them. Mothers started making dolls that were simple with faces carved from wood, ivory or a bit of cloth with painted eyes. The girls would name their “inuguat.” They all had a change of clothes. The bedding was made from the shiny green feathers of the Mallard duck and the blanket was from the breast feathers of the Loon. Depending on how artistic the young girl's mother might be, feathers or other decorative pieces could be added to the doll clothing. Furniture would be made from bits of wood.”

Our employee was fortunate that her grandfather was a carpenter and built her a doll house with two rooms painted red and green. According to her, the inuguat could not leave the house during the winter. If they were taken outside, people believed that winter would stay longer and the snow would not melt for a long time.

Usually the dolls were passed on to younger children once the young girls reached puberty. Instead of giving up her dolls, our staff member kept them and later passed them to her first daughter.

The dolls will be on exhibit at Sheldon Jackson Museum from May 1 through May 31. An image of the dolls can also be viewed on our website at [http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon\\_jackson/artifact\\_of\\_month.html](http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html)

Winter hours are from 10:00am to 4:00pm Tuesday through Saturday and run through May 14. Discounted winter admission is \$3. Summer hours begin May 15 and are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Summer admission is \$4. 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](http://www.museums.state.ak.us)

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