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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eskimo Men's Wood Bowl *August Artifact of the Month*

The Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for August is a Yup'ik man's food bowl. The bowl was collected by Sheldon Jackson in the early 1890s at Nushagak.

In May of 2000, a group of Yup'ik elders visited the museum to research the Nushagak materials located in the museum. As the objects were brought out the elders examined the artifacts, giving information about each piece. According to Elia Ishnook from the Dillingham area, "This is a bowl. The edge is painted with uiteraq (red ochre). And when they crack, they tie it together with something here." Ishnook was referring to a crack in the bowl mended with a piece of wire. Traditionally the bowl would have been mended in the same fashion, but root or hide would have been used.

Julia Apalayak of Manokotak made another observation: "This little bowl looks like the man's bowl. It looks like a boy's bowl. And the decoration looks like a bug with a lot of legs. It looks like that. It is painted with uiteraq. This little bowl looks like a boy's bowl. They made bowls like this for boys back then. That is how I understand this bowl."

Men's bowls are carved from one piece of wood, and are distinct from women's bowls in that they lack a bentwood rim.

Although all participants agreed this is a man's bowl, the decoration or pictograph painted in the center of the bowl posed a challenge to the elders. One thought it might be an insect, another thought it looked like arrows. According to anthropologists William Fitzhugh and Susan Kaplan, who describe a similar drawing in their book, *Crossroads of Continents*, p. 261, it is "a simple rendition of an animal face showing eyes, nose, whiskers and markings." The conclusion reached by Elder Mary Ishnook probably best sums up what most feel about the pictograph: "I don't understand this decoration."

Summer hours are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$4. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.



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