

Linda S. Thibodeau

Director

Division of Libraries, Archives,
& Museums

lam.alaska.gov

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Robert C. Banghart

Chief Curator

Alaska State Museums

395 Whittier St.

Juneau, Alaska 99801-1718

907.465.2901

Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **December 23, 2011**

January Artifact of the Month: Alutiiq Kayak Model

The January artifact of the month is a three hole Alutiiq kayak model (III.X.28). Before Russian contact, Alutiiq people built kayaks with one and two holes. Three hole kayak models were developed during the Russian period to ferry passengers in the center seat and were also used by sea otter hunters. Museum records do not indicate when this kayak was collected or who collected it.



The kayak model has a V shaped hull that would give the boat directional stability and a distinct bifurcated prow typical of kayaks from Kodiak Island, Prince William Sound, and Kachemak Bay. This design was engineered to help the boat cut through waves, and also made the boat buoyant, flexible and rapid. The wooden boat frame is covered by sealskin sewn together with sinew and decorated with an undulating line of stitched red yarn and grey and red hairs. Straps are fastened across the kayak deck to carry gear such as extra paddles, spears and a bailer.

The kayaker in the center is wearing a protruding labret and a red bentwood hat, while the other two paddlers wear spruce root hats. Kayakers typically wore gut skin parkas and kneeled on grass mats while paddling.

Kayak models like this one were popular as trade items during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because few full size kayak models exist in museum collections, model kayaks are useful as a record to examine design and construction elements from this period. Visit the museum on January 21 at 1 p.m. to learn more about Alutiiq traditions during our first 2012 winter lecture series event with guest speaker Dr. Sven Haakanson, director of the Alutiiq Museum.

A picture of the kayak model can be viewed on our web site:

http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html.

Winter hours are daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with \$3 admission. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 465-3004

www.museums.state.ak.us

[return to top](#)

[SJ Artifacts-of-the-Month](#) | [press releases](#) | [SJ home](#) | [Alaska State Museums](#)