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## Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: October 30, 2007

### NOVEMBER ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH CALIFORNIAN OBSIDIAN PROJECTILE POINT

An obsidian projectile point is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for November. Although the museum now collects artifacts only from Alaska Native cultures, a few Native American objects from other areas were acquired through the 1970s. Each November the museum exhibits one of these pieces to honor the diverse Native cultures of North America in recognition of National American Indian Heritage and Alaska Native Heritage Month.

Almost nothing is known about this beautiful example of an obsidian projectile point from northern California. It is listed in the accession book but only lists the point as having been collected in northern California near Burney, and donated in 1979. Even the donor is a bit of a mystery – the entry says only that it was given by V.F. Smith of Tiburon, CA.

The Burney area of California is home to the Wintu people who were well known for their obsidian projectile points. Because the point was found in the area of the Wintu, it is likely its manufacture could be attributed to them.

According to Jeff Rasic, archeologist for the National Park Service, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve and Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, there is "a joint project between the National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution, and University of Alaska Museum of the North being conducted to analyze obsidian artifacts from Alaska, match them to geological sources, and build a database available to the research community with which to explore patterns of prehistoric trade and exchange." The Sheldon Jackson Museum has loaned a number of projectile points to the Smithsonian labs in Suitland Maryland to take part in this study.

The projectile point can be seen at the museum until November 30 or online 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 10:00 a.m. to 4p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Winter admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

[return to top](#)

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

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[return to top](#)

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