

## **Curator Report for FOSJM Annual Meeting for February 19, 2022**

The Sheldon Jackson Museum had an incredible year the past year with much help from Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum. The Friends help the museum offer **11 months of Alaska Native-proposed, designed and delivered public programs**. The Friends help provide financial and logistical support to help the museum empower Alaska Native peoples. With their help, the museum acts as an incubator for Alaska Native artists and as a platform for culture bearers and Alaska Natives seeking to share their knowledge, culture and art.

- **Jan.-Feb. or March FOSJM Winter Share Your Culture/Share Your Research Series**
- **Feb. or March-May – AK Native Artist Solo Exhibition (the Allie High Exhibition, Sanctuary, opening Feb. 26, 2022 is part of this series.**
- **May-Sept. – AK Native Artist Residency**
- **Nov.-Dec. FOSJM Winter Share Your Culture/ Share Your Research Series**

Through these efforts, the Friends help empower Alaska Natives and decolonize the museum space. There is always more work to be done, but the work we do carry out in terms of programming, couldn't happen without the Friends.

Highlights of Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum's work in 2021 have been the Alaska Native Artist Residency Program, the continuation of the Alaska Native Artist Solo Show Exhibition Series, and involvement with the International Sites of Conscience.

To review a listing of attendees of all 209 public programs carried out by the museum in 2021, most of which was made possible with some or much support from the Friends, see page 4 of this report.

### **In 2021, the Sheldon Jackson Museum hosted 209 programs**

17 educational programs with 418 attendees

44 FOSJM events with 62 attendees

6 AK Native Artist Residency Talks with 92 attendees

33 AK Native Artist Residency classes with 181 participants

147 AK Native Artist Residency artist demonstrations

16 hours of Cultural Consultations in which culture bearers shared insights into artifacts with staff for museum documentation and augmenting our knowledge

1 Alaska Native Artist Solo Show Opening Reception Talk

And 1 Alaska Native Artist Solo Exhibition

**Of these programs 198 or 95% were Alaska Native Driven, Designed, and Delivered**

## **Alaska Native Artist Residency Program**

The Friends supported the Alaska Native Artist Residency Program, which in 2021, included 6 Alaska Native artists:

Danielle Stickman (Koyukon Athabascan and Dena'ina beader, fish skin sewer and mixed media artist

Laine Rinehart (Tlingit) Ravenstail and Chilkat and spruce root weaver

Robert Hoffmann (Tlingit) carver and painter

Rico Worl (Tlingit and Athabascan) computer-aided designer and sculptor

Neva Mathias (Cup'ik) doll, grass basket maker

Stacey Williams (Tlingit) Chilkat and spruce root and cedar bark weaver

The Friends were able to carry out this residency program thanks to a grant from National Endowment for the Arts, support from local hotels Westmark and Eagle Bay Inn, support from Alaska Airlines, and gifts from private donors.

## **International Sites of Conscience**

The Friends supported the Sheldon Jackson Museum by becoming the FIRST Alaskan member of the International Sites of Conscience in November 2021.

International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC). ICSC is a nonprofit association of memorials, museums, non-governmental organizations, and historic sites that:

- interpret history through site;
- engage the public in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues;
- share opportunities for public involvement and positive action on the issues raised at the site; and
- promote justice and universal cultures of human rights.

As a member of the Coalition, the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum and museum staff have access to Sites of Conscience trainings, workshops, and grants to foster understanding and engagement in the community and ideas for best practices in helping connect the past struggles to today's movements for human rights. Specifically, ICSC, will offer guidance on exhibit planning, public programming, and on engaging in the difficult dialogues with the community to inform planning and process.

Joining the Coalition is especially important at a time when museums' histories and collections are being examined in a new light. Museums with Native American artifacts and objects from non-dominant cultures must decide how to address issues of decolonization, history, truth, and reconciliation. Museum collections are usually faced with awkward questions about how much of the collection is here because of looting, plundering and theft. This museum gets its share of those questions. There are other sensitive issues like displaying shamanic or mortuary artifacts. Or how to address Dr. Sheldon Jackson's own paradoxical history of wanting to preserve artifacts yet bringing Christianity (and its judgement of

Natives), western education and a different lifeway that segregated the civilized Christian Natives from the heathen. Or the effect the boarding schools had on Alaska Native cultures.

The Alaska State Museums, including the Sheldon Jackson Museum, has a 5-year strategic plan that was passed in 2020. The plan includes several goals and objectives that mesh with the kind of assistance Sites of Conscience provides. One goal is to have our museums more accessible and inclusive. Another is to upgrade the physical gallery display itself, with labels that are respectful of the cultural groups and that are not ethnocentric. For example, we have been eliminating the word “Eskimo” from our displays and using the actual name, “Yup’ik, or “Inupiaq.” Visitors should be able to view this world class collection without guilt or resentment, and without ignoring history.

From Sites of Conscience: “Not only do Sites of Conscience provide safe spaces to remember and preserve even the most traumatic memories, but they enable their visitors to make connections between the past and related contemporary human rights issues.” The coalition has 300 members in 65 countries, assisting through grants, networking, training, transitional justice mechanisms and advocacy. Their website is <https://sitesofconscience.org>

<b>Programs in 2021</b>	<b>Number of Programs</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Virtual Hands On	10	231
Hands On, mailed	20	136
School Groups	7	187
FOSJM Events	4	62
NARP Residency Talks	6	92
NARP Residence Classes	33	181
NARP Demonstrations	147	
Conservator Talk for SJM	1	10
Native Artist Solo Show Talk	1	28
Film Screening	NA	0
<b>Youth Activities (non-school)</b>	NA - except for 2 NARP classes with 7 students, counted above in NARP	

Total Programs: 209

**Of the 209 programs, 198 or 95% were Alaska Native Driven, Designed, and Delivered**