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Yup'ik Eskimo Exhibition Opens at the National Museum of Natural History *Art, Science and Ethnography Are Explored*

The exhibition “Yuungnaqpiallerput (The Way We Genuinely Live): Masterworks of Yup'ik Science and Survival” presents 200 remarkable 19th- and early 20th-century tools, containers, weapons, watercraft and clothing that the Yup'ik people have used to survive for centuries in the sub-arctic tundra of the Bering Sea coast. The exhibition is on view at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History April 17-July 25.

Featuring masterworks ranging from a needle made from a crane-wing bone to elegant bentwood hunting hats, the exhibition celebrates the science behind the design and technology of these objects. Collections from 13 museums in the United States, including the Smithsonian, and Germany illuminate the legacy of intelligence and ingenuity of this ancient culture and illustrate the intimate relationship between the Yup'ik people and their environment.

“The Way We Genuinely Live” is based on knowledge shared by Yup'ik elders and takes visitors through the seasonal cycle of activities, showcasing tools and materials. At interactive science stations, visitors can engage in hands-on activities that demonstrate how and why these objects work. Video and audio programs document traditional activities as well as the construction of traditional Yup'ik tools. Not just a science exhibition, “The Way We Genuinely Live” illustrates the unique marriage between art, science and ethnography. At the exhibition's core is the recognition that the past and present Yup'ik way of life is grounded in deep spiritual values and scientific principles.

“Many of these objects are among the earliest obtained for the Smithsonian,” said William W. Fitzhugh, director of the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies Center. “They are some of the finest masterworks of traditional Yup'ik technology and art.”

Curated by cultural anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan, “The Way We Genuinely Live” is a joint project of the Anchorage Museum and the Calista Elders Council, developed with the guidance of Yup’ik elders, scientists and educators and with major support from the National Science Foundation. This exhibition was also made possible through the support of ConocoPhillips Alaska, Calista Corporation, Anchorage Museum Foundation, the Anchorage Museum Association and the Oak Foundation.

The Arctic Studies Center, established in 1988, is the only U.S. government program with a special focus on northern cultural research and education. The center is a part of the Department of Anthropology, in the National Museum of Natural History. Having pursued northern studies since the 1850s, the Smithsonian possesses one of the world’s finest anthropological collections from arctic and sub-arctic regions. Keeping with this long tradition, the ASC has hosted two other Yup’ik exhibits, “Agayuliyararput, Our Way of Making Prayer,” curated by Fienup-Riordan and “Inua: Spirit World of the Bering Sea Eskimo,” curated by Fitzhugh and Susan Kaplan. Research at the ASC seeks to bring its researchers together with community scholars in the collaborative exploration of the cultural heritage represented in these impressive collections. For more information about ASC, visit the website at www.mnh.si.edu/arctic. For more information about the exhibition and a list of events and activities visit <http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/yupik/index.html>.

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History is located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W. in Washington, D.C. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., except Dec. 25, and admission is free. More information about the museum is available at www.mnh.si.edu or (202) 633-1000, TTY (202) 633-5285.

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