

Unique Collection of Indian, Eskimo Toys On Display at University of Alaska Museum

A unique collection of toys and games, used by Alaskan Indians and Eskimos, went on display for the first time last week in the University of Alaska Museum.

L. J. Rowinski, museum director, said the games are part of the Rhoda Thomas Collection, donated to the museum late last spring.

Mrs. Thomas was district principal for Bureau of Indian Affairs rural schools

and well-known in Alaskan education circles until her death in a plane crash near Fort Yukon in 1965.

Over a period of many years in rural areas of the state, she collected native Athabascan and Eskimo materials and handicraft articles that totaled 174 pieces at the time the collection was donated to the UA. Rowinski noted:

"The exhibit materials, on

display here until December 15, are representative of nearly all types of games and toys used by Eskimo and Athabascan children." And he added:

"The collection includes tops of various types, dart games, an Athabascan game called 'Cup and Pin', Eskimo yoyos, rattles, 'falling sticks'—an old gambling game, an old form of hand-made ice-skates, balls, and, of course, dolls, plus a few older games many people are not familiar with."

Esther Billman, faculty member at Sheldon Jackson Junior College in Sitka and also curator of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, prepared the toy exhibit.

She is identifying and cataloguing items in the

collection as part of a graduate study in anthropology, Rowinski said.

The donation of another collection of Alaska native artifacts to the UA Museum also was announced this week.

Agnes Schlosser of Elfin Cove, now retired after many years of teaching in rural Alaska, has given her collection gathering during the 1920s and 1930s in the southwestern and western parts of the state.

The collection includes a woman's caribou parka made in Akiak; a pair of high wolf-skin mukluks from Bethel; wolf mittens made at Holy Cross on the Yukon River; a miniature dog sled and fish-wheel from Nenana, and a small kayak from Kotzebue.