

Exhibit features 4 Native artists

"The Artists Behind the Work," photographs and text featuring the life histories of four Alaska Native artists, will be on display at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art from Jan. 11 to Feb. 8.

The artists include:

- Lena Sours, an Inupiaq skin sewer from Kotzebue.

- Nick Charles, a Yup'ik carver from Bethel.

- Frances Dementieff, a bead worker from Holy Cross.

- Jennie Thlunaut, a Chilkat blanket maker from Klukwan.

The artists are known in their own communities and statewide for their artwork. They all have a depth of experience in their own traditional culture and all are respected elders in their own community.

A book which accompanies the exhibit was written to give readers a feel for the development of each artist's life and a glimpse into the role of art and artist in four different Alaska Native cultures.

The life history approach was chosen because it permitted the writers to describe the influences which shaped each of the artists' lives.

The writers for "The Artists Behind the Work" were selected for their familiarity with the artist and their home communities, for their sensitivity to cultural values and for their ability to write. They include Ann Fienup-Riordan, Katherine McNamara, Sharon Moore and Sophie Johnson, and Rosita Worl and Charles Smythe.

The project began in 1983 as part of the Oral History Program to document the life histories of four accomplished traditional Alaska Native artists. The University of Alaska Museum in Fairbanks, in cooperation with the Oral History Program, subsequently developed the exhibition and catalog based on this project.

The exhibition and book have been made possible through the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency; the Alaska State Council on the Arts; and the Skinner Foundation, on behalf of the N.C. Machinery Co. and Pepsi-Cola Bottling of Alaska.



Frances Dementieff stands in front of an altar cloth she created for the Holy Cross Catholic Church. UAM photograph