Museum Publishes Book on Alutiiq Graphic Arts

Released today, the Alutiiq Museum’s latest publication is a study of graphic art. *Igaruacirpet—Our Way of Making Designs,* introduces Alutiiq cultural arts and explores the imagery found in rock art, designs incised in stone, painting, and body art. The book establishes a cultural context for Alutiiq designs, helping readers appreciate the functions and symbolism of traditional imagery. *Igaruacirpet* also includes over three-hundred illustrations and photographs, many showing previously unpublished objects.

“This book pulls together a great deal of information that has not been easy to access,” said April Laktonen Counceller, the Alutiiq Museum’s executive director. “We wanted to share Alutiiq designs in ways that examine their meaning. Our ancestor’s objects are beautiful in their own right, but when you understand why an artist selected blue paint, or why circles are so common in our artwork, designs come to life.”

Many people contributed to the publication. Counceller and her museum colleagues Amy Steffian and Patrick Saltonstall researched and wrote the text. Their chapters are supplemented with short essays by contemporary artists Lena Amason Berns, Sven Haakanson Jr., Jacquie Madsen, Susan Malutin, and Gloria Selby who share their inspirations and creative process. Alutiiq scholar and designer Alisha Drabek contributed a chapter on symbolism. Elder Alutiiq speakers selected vocabulary for a glossary. Hanna Sholl provided drawings of traditional clothing, Sven Haakanson Jr. shared images of petroglyphs from his studies at Cape Alitak, and Pam Foreman and Mike Haffeman helped with photography.

Funding for *Igaruacirpet* came from the Munartet Project, a partnership between the Museum, Kodiak Arts Council, Kodiak College, and Kodiak Island Borough School District to promote teaching in and through the arts and culture. Copies will be distributed to teachers and schools as a classroom resource. The museum has already built a traveling education box around the volume, with graphic art activities and lesson plans.

Although the publication is a resource for Kodiak schools, Counceller believes it will have broad appeal.
“I think our artists will be delighted to discover new images and information,” she said. “And there is plenty for the public. I can’t tell you how many requests we get for information on petroglyphs or tattoos. Each of these topics is carefully covered in the book.”

Igaruacirpet is a 208-page paperback with six chapters, six short essays, 344 illustrations, eleven tables, and a glossary of Alutiiq vocabulary. The public can purchase copies from the Alutiiq Museum Store for $25, online or in the gallery.

The Alutiiq Museum is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and culture of the Alutiiq, an Alaska Native tribal people. Representatives of Kodiak Alutiiq organizations govern the museum with funding from charitable contributions, memberships, grants, contracts, and sales.