Preserving Community Photographs

People bring all sorts of things to the museum. Sometimes it’s an interesting rock. Others it is a family heirloom, an old newspaper, or a beach find. A few years back, a kind person showed up with 755 color slides rescued from a garage sale. She didn’t know the people pictured but recognized an Alutiiq family and their activities. With a little sleuthing, we were able to identify the Nekeferoff family in the early 1960s.

Photos are among the most popular documentation of the Alutiiq world. People love to see family members and familiar places. And photos are great documentation of the recent past, the last century of Alutiiq life that is not well recorded in written accounts.

Yet, photographs are also some of the most vulnerable records of Alutiiq heritage. Paper images fade and disintegrate with time, especially if they are mounted in old, acidic albums or exposed to the light. They are also susceptible to mold, water damage, and fire. And as time passes, people forget the places, activities, and individuals in family photos, and they are discarded.

To assist Alutiiq communities with the preservation of family photographs the museum is leading a Community Photo Archive project this year. The one-year effort is funded by the US Bureau of Indian Affairs with assistance from the Sun’aq Tribe of Kodiak. A team of staff members will work with tribal councils to identify Alutiiq family photographs to scan, so that the digital copies can be given to families. The museum will also ask permission for the digital copies to be preserved at the museum.

“Our main goal is to help families save their photographs,” said project leader Amanda Lancaster. “We plan to travel to Alutiiq communities to scan images and provide them to families on jump drives. If people would like to share their pictures with the museum, we would be pleased to add them to our collections, but it is not a requirement.”

In addition to preserving family photos, the project aims to capture images of Alutiiq people and places today. Patrick Saltonfall and Marlise Lee, both talented museum photographers, will work with community members to identify the places and activities to photograph, and take personal and family portraits for those who would like to participate. The goal is to develop an archive of contemporary photographs that can be used for many projects.

“We are excited to create this visual archive,” said April Laktonen Counceller, the Alutiiq Museum’s executive director. “Documenting recent Alutiiq history and our people and communities today is important for the future. The information we collect now will help future generations understand our history and connect to relatives.”

Family photo of Robert Anderson, Alice Anderson, Elizabeth Kalamakoff, and Gus Kalamakoff, Nekeferoff Collection, AM580, ca. 1960
Cama’i Friends,

I am proud to share that the Alutiiq Museum turns 25 this year! After a quarter century, it may be hard to imagine what life was like before we had a community museum, archaeological repository, and culture center. I remember it strongly though. When I was a child, my friends and I in the village of Larsen Bay did not have access to Alutiiq culture in the school and community. We didn’t even know that we were part of a proud and ancient people that arrived on Kodiak shores over 7500 years ago. One of my strongest memories of elementary school was my teacher ordering cowboy hats for our spring musical performance of “Mamas, Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys,” popularized by Willie Nelson and Wayland Jennings!

Today, children learn Alutiiq songs alongside American classics, and they study Alutiiq arts and technologies in school. There is now a generation of youth, of all heritages, who have grown up knowing about Alutiiq culture and history. These youth may not even know what lack of access their parents and grandparents faced during their own schooling. Since the 1980s, the Alutiiq Cultural Renaissance has renewed our awareness of the beauty, ingenuity, and spirit that exists within the Alutiiq people. This museum is both a reflection of this renaissance, as well as a key player in it.

The founding of the museum was a watershed moment for Alutiiq pride as well as Alutiiq cultural survival. In the last few decades—a short time in the Museum world—we have gained prominence as a leading tribal museum, one of only two Native-run museums in the country to become accredited. We have connected with thousands of individuals and families with an interest in the sharing and perpetuation of Alutiiq culture, and partnered with dozens of other organizations and businesses to help further our mission.

You, dear reader, are a part of the community that we have formed, and we look forward to seeing or hearing from you this year as we remember the past and plan for the next quarter century.

With Warm Regards,
April Isiik Counsellor
Executive Director

Mission and Vision:
By preserving and sharing cultural traditions of the Alutiiq people, we celebrate Alutiiq heritage through living culture.

The Alutiiq Museum is governed by Afognak Native Corporation, Akhiok-Kaguyak Inc., KANA, Koniag Inc., Natives of Kodiak Inc., Old Harbor Native Corporation, and Ouzinkie Native Corporation. Each organization elects a representative to the Alutiiq Heritage Foundation, the Alutiiq Museum’s board. Funding is provided by charitable contributions, memberships, grants, contracts, and sales from the museum store.

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums
Tax ID #92-0150422

Alutiiq Kasitat is published quarterly by the Alutiiq Museum & Archaeological Repository.
Puukicaaq!—Buttons!

Visitors to the museum’s gallery will soon be able to experience the sounds of Alutiiq by pushing a button. With support from the Kodiak Community Foundation, the museum is updating its Alutiiq language display. The new, three-panel presentation will share maps illustrating the geography of Alutiiq speech, a diagram showing the relationships between Alutiiq and neighboring Native languages, photos, text, and best of all, interactive buttons.

“People really want to hear Alutiiq words when they visit the museum,” said Exhibits Coordinator Alex Painter. “This new display features sixteen buttons that play short digital recordings. The sound modules are small enough to sit behind the panels and they are battery operated. Each button will feature the voice of a first language speaker, recorded by the museum.”

One set of buttons shares common Alutiiq words and phrases, like cama’i—hello, or qunukamken—I love you. Another set illustrates how Alutiiq words are put together by adding an ending. For example, visitors can compare different forms of the word for kayak—qayaaq (kayak), qayaq (his kayak), and qayasinaq (big kayak). The third set compares Alutiiq words with similar terms in Yup’ik and Unanagax̂ to show the relationships between the languages. Alutiiq and Yup’ik terms are similar, but notably different from Unanagax̂—the language of the Aleutian Islands.

The displays are being designed and built by museum staff members with ideas from the Qiktarmiut Regional Advisory Committee—an island-wide group that assists language preservation. They will be installed in early March.

“The committee had fantastic ideas about how to introduce the language” said Alutiiq Museum Executive Director April Counceller. “They helped us unite our digital technology and design with useful lessons about Alutiiq.”

Ila’asnga!—Count Me In!

The 2020 United States census is under way and the Alutiiq Museum is supporting the count. Why? The goal of the census is to count every person in the country. Based on the results, the federal government will distribute over $800 billion dollars to states and communities—funding for schools, health care, housing, emergency services, arts programs, and much, much more. When Alaskans go uncounted, we lose our full share of this funding.

Historically, Native American people are one of the most undercounted groups in the country, often because they live in rural places. In consultation with tribal leaders, the census is working to improve this year’s count. Let’s help them. Whether you receive a census form in the mail, or a census taker comes to your door, please complete the survey. It’s fast, easy, and your information is protected by law.

Help us encourage people to participate in the census with a free Alutiiq language sticker. These colorful stickers say Ila’asnga!—Count me in! They are available at the museum’s front desk, from staff members, and at tribal offices around Kodiak. They were produced with a mini grant from Alaska Counts, where you can learn more about the census, https://alaskacounts.org/#faq.
Understanding Salmon

Alutiiq Elder Sally Carlough grew up in Kaguyak village where sharing fish was a part of daily life.

“Well, now we have refrigerators, you could save your fish. But them days, you’d give somebody half. We shared, we shared. We’d say ‘maybe that person doesn’t have any fish. Go ahead!’ We would say ‘pikarsgu! ’ ‘Take it to her!’ We shared. Everybody shared. Now, you don’t see that . . . Lucky we had our old fish from last year. That’s what we’re using.”

Since August 2019, the museum has been working with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) to document Alutiiq salmon harvesting traditions—to capture information preserved in Elders like Sally Carlough and document how fishing practices have changed in the Kodiak area. The project is called ‘Indigenizing Salmon Science and Management: Tamamta Iqallupet Anirtungnaqlluq (Trying to Save our Salmon).’

Led by Dr. Courtney Carothers, a Professor in the College of Fisheries & Ocean Sciences at UAF, the project aims to add Native perspectives to fisheries science and management decisions.

“The knowledge systems of Indigenous people have been in place for thousands of years. We started this project to draw attention to the sad fact that Native people, who know the most about fish and how to sustain them, are not being asked on how to manage fish in the best way possible. We want to change the system,” said Carothers.

Alutiiq Language and Living Culture Coordinator, Dehrich Chya, is acting as a cultural liaison for the University. This year he will lead focus groups and conduct interviews with Alutiiq Elders to record knowledge of salmon—from fish behavior, to harvesting and use.

“We started the interviews last fall,” noted Chya, “and have already learned a lot. For example, people forecasted the strength of salmon runs based on other environmental factors.”

Elder Kathryn Chichenoff of Karluk and Ouzinkie said, “Elders knew if iqallung’rkutartuq (there was going to be salmon in the river) or none.”

How did they know? Elder Sally Carlough reports that, “when there was lots of salmonberries, they used to say there would be a lot of humpies (pink salmon).”

These are the types of stories the Indigenizing Salmon Science and Management project would like to document. To contribute stories or experiences, please contact Danielle Ringer (djrisner@alaska.edu) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, or Dehrich Chya (dehrich@alutiiqmuseum.org) at the Alutiiq Museum. We would love to hear from you.

Salmon hanging in Herman Squartsoff’s Smokehouse, Ouzinkie, 2012.
**Research**

**History in Terror Bay**

On a clear, crisp, fall evening in Terror Bay, Alutiiq Museum archaeologists watched three bears digging for clams along Kodiak’s western shore. Thirty years ago, bears would have been scarce in the little cove. Home to the Helgason family, Terror Bay was the base of a well-known guiding operation. Hunters from around the world came here to stalk Kodiak’s big brown bears between 1949 and 1992.

Like much of Kodiak Island, Terror Bay and the Helgason property have a long and fascinating history. Recently, Kadiak, Inc. and the US Fish & Wildlife Service hired the museum to study this history, as the Helgason camp is now part of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. Museum archaeologists began their investigation with a visit last October. Clara Helgason, an Alutiiq woman who grew up around the Kodiak Archipelago, ran the bear guiding operation with her husband, Icelander Kris Helgason, and their son Leonard. Clara’s brother Bill Baumann Jr., and later, Clara’s grandson Steve also assisted with the business.

In the early twentieth century, Clara’s father, Bill Baumann, staked a mining claim in the area. He and his two mining partners each built houses in the little cove. Baumann and his second wife, Betty, lived there in a log cabin, cultivating extensive gardens, berry patches, and trees, until their deaths. Later, Clara and Kris acquired the property and added onto one of the homes, making it a proper house. They used her father’s log cabin for tanning hides, and added several outbuildings for sleeping quarters, storage, and processing.

But bear guiding was not the only activity in the cove. Beneath the many nineteenth century buildings lies a much older settlement—an ancient camp. Here, artifacts and animal remains record the activities of Alutiiq ancestors more than 1000 years ago. They weren’t tracking bears though. Stone sinkers suggest they used nets to catch pink, chum, and coho salmon headed up the bay. Shells show they collected clams and mussels.

While researching the Helgason property, museum staff members had the chance to interview Steve Helgason. Steve now lives in Anchorage but has a strong connection to Terror Bay where he spent childhood summers and helped his father guide. Steve and his wife, Dot, graciously donated copies of their Terror Bay photos to the museum. These carefully digitized and organized photos are a great addition to the collection and will be a lasting record of the life in a remote bear camp. They add to the story of how Alutiiq families played important roles in the history of local bear guiding.

**Whaling with Poisoned Spears**

A lecture by Patrick Saltonstall
April 15, 7:00 pm

Imagine spearing a humpback whale from a skin kayak! For centuries, Alutiiq hunters undertook this dangerous practice—alone—armed with slate lances, potent poisons, and spiritual assistance. For Whalefest 2020, Curator of Archaeology Patrick Saltonstall will speak about Alutiiq whaling traditions, sharing archaeological finds, historic records, and oral histories. Learn how hunters pursued Kodiak’s largest sea mammals and about the importance of these animals to daily life. Illustrated with photographs. Suitable for all ages.

Clara Helgason outside her Terror Bay home. Photo courtesy Steve Helgason.
2019 Additions

The Alutiiq Museum cares for more than 250,000 objects. Each year we accept donations and loans that reflect Alutiiq heritage and the Kodiak environment. In 2020, we added 7,417 items to our holdings—photos, artifacts, works of art, documents, and recordings. We extend our sincere appreciation to the following individuals and organizations for their contributions. If you are interested in donating objects to the Alutiiq Museum, please contact Collections Manager Amanda Lancaster, 844-425-8844, x22 (amanda@alutiiqmuseum.org).

Donations

- Roberta Townsend-Vennel, Mama, a fabric doll by Lalla Williams
- Margaret Mete, oral history recordings on Alutiiq holistic healing practices
- Michael Alexanderoff, artifacts from the Old Harbor area
- Sophie Ignatin, an artifact from the Old Harbor area
- Tom Chya, artifacts from the Old Harbor area
- Sandra Peotter, a mid-century style seal-skin bag
- Elizabeth McKee, her father’s photos of Hrdlicka’s 1930 excavations
- Fred Roberts, photos of logging on Afognak in the 1970s-1980s
- Estate of Don Clark, the bequest of his professional archive

Purchases supported by the Rasmuson Art Acquisition Fund

- Back Side of Ugak Island, oil painting, by Bruce Nelson
- Spirit of the Merganser, oil painting, by Linda Infante Lyons
- Sunset at Pyramid Mountain, oil painting, by Linda Infante Lyons
- Contemporary Dance Rattle, mixed media piece, by Hanna Sholl
- Oliver Octopus and His Treasures, colored pencil drawing, by Stacy Studebaker
- Sound of Fog, mixed media painting, by Woody Koning
- Nootka Rose, fabric doll, by Mary Jane Longrich
- Emerald Isle, beaded headdress, by Patricia Abston-Cox
- Woman’s Headdress, beaded headdress, by Melinda Abyo
- Sugpiaq Angyaq, boat model, by Andrew Abyo

Long-term Loan

- Old Harbor Native Corporation, artifacts from Sitkalidak Island
- Native Village of Old Harbor, artifacts from Kiavak Bay
- Koniag, Inc., artifacts found near the Karluk One site
- Koniag, Inc., artifacts excavated at Karluk Lake and Bruhn Point
- USFWS, artifacts excavated on Sitkalidak Island
- USFWS, a sample collected in Terror Bay
- Afognak Native Corporation, artifacts fromt Barabara Cove
- State of Alaska, artifacts collected at Viekoda Bay

Teaching Collection Addition

- Mrs. Don Richter, a granite oil lamp
- Marty Barton, an incised pebble
- Betsy Woodin, a Koniag-era oil lamp
Artist Hanna Sholl has been awarded a Luce Indigenous Knowledge Fellowship, a prize that helps Native culture bearers and creators pursue personal and community goals. The fellowship program, new this year, is a partnership between the First Nations Development Institute and the Henry Luce Foundation. Sholl was one of ten artists selected from a nationwide pool of over five hundred and fifty applicants. Three of the eight fellowship recipients are Alaskan Native.

Sholl is a full-time professional artist, known for her skin sewing, beading, graphics, and photography. She lives in Kodiak and is a regular participant in the Alutiiq Museum’s programs. Sholl sees the fellowship as both an opportunity for community service and a chance to learn from other honorees.

“The fellowship strives to network indigenous culture bearers, leaders, and seekers together. There are artists, educators, and researchers. There is someone studying traditional tribal justice, a person learning about traditional midwife practices, there are weavers, environmental activists, and more.”

Over the coming year, Sholl will create four separate collections of cultural objects as part of her fellowship. Her goal is to explore ancestral techniques, develop educational materials for the community, and expand her skills as an artist.

Her first collection will include a selection of objects created by studying ancestral pieces. She is focusing on learning traditional manufacturing techniques and documenting the process so it can be shared with others. Ultimately, she hopes this work will promote the practice of traditional artforms. Inspiration for this collection comes from her drawings of ancestral pieces held in Russian and Finish museums. She is already working on a headdress and a woven bird.

The second collection will mirror the first, but with objects created in a contemporary style. Sholl said she wants to, “…show how active our culture is currently, to celebrate and share stories through contemporary art inspired by ancestral pieces.”

Her third collection will be a selection of miniatures. Sholl aims to create objects accessible to young people so they can learn about Alutiiq history and imagine life in the past. She describes this collection as, “…sort of like an ancestral dollhouse with pieces that reflect our history.”

Her final collection will be a set of community murals designed to share Alutiiq culture and stories through vibrant images. She is currently reaching out to community organizations interested in providing a home one of her murals. The materials and time required will be covered under the fellowship.

“The fellowship is giving me the resources to do more artistically, and to reach more of the community than I previously could. It is a huge responsibility to take this to its maximum potential and so I want to create things that will help keep ancestral knowledge alive and accessible.”
**Events**

**Cisllaq — Calendar**

February 7, 5:00–7:00 pm | First Friday
Alutiiq Storytelling with Alisha Drabek and Dehrich Chya

February 8, Noon–3:00 pm | Craft Saturday
Alutiiq Valentines, Supported by City of Kodiak

March 14, Noon–3:00 pm | Craft Saturday
Salmon leather brooch with June Pardue
Supported by City of Kodiak

April 9, 5:00–7:00 pm | Business After Hours
Appetizers and a behind the scenes museum tour,
Supported by the Chamber of Commerce

April 15, 7:00–8:30 pm | Alutiiq Whaling
Whalefest Lecture by Patrick Saltonstall

April 18, Noon–3:00 pm | Craft Saturday
Beaded earrings with Alexandria Troxell,
Supported by City of Kodiak

May 1, 5:00–7:00 pm | First Friday

May 13, 2:00–4:00 pm | Alutiiq Museum’s 25th Birthday
Open House with Cake

May 16, Noon–3:00 pm | Craft Saturday
Family Craft, Supported by City of Kodiak

CONNECT WITH US

**MEMBERSHIP & DONATION FORM**

Quyanaasinaq! • Thank you very much!

Name(s):

Mailing Address:

Email:

Phone #:

- [ ] Suk • Person $40
- [ ] Ilat • Family $75
- [ ] Angnertaq • Leader $150
- [ ] Kasainaq • Boss $500
- [ ] Ptnertusqaq • Highliner $1000
- [ ] Custom Donation $ __________

Donor Note:

- [ ] In honor/memory of __________
- [ ] Make donation anonymous.
- [ ] Contact me about volunteering.

Renewal?

- [ ] New Donor
- [ ] Renewal

Payment:

- [ ] Check
- [ ] Money Order

Make payable to: Alutiiq Heritage Foundation
215 Mission Rd. 1st Floor, Kodiak, AK 99615

Credit cards: join or renew securely online, with options & subscription memberships at:

http://alutiiqmuseum.org/give

Or call our front desk at 1-844-425-8844

All memberships include a year of museum admission, store discounts, and invitations to members-only events. At the Ilat level and above, members receive a free copy of the Alutiiq Wild Foods Cookbook.

**Kiimeng arwarsurtaallriit qayakun. – They used to hunt whales in kayaks by themselves.**