

## Cama'i—Hello,

Giving is an Alutiiq tradition. Our Elders teach us that acting generously creates strong communities. Success comes from working together. I'm very pleased to report that 130 people and organizations have stepped forward to support the Alutiiq Museum's renovation. With their help, we have raised more than \$457,800. We are grateful for this tremendous community support and the belief in our mission it represents.

This newsletter is full of the museum's resources and ways that you can connect to the Alutiiq world. If you believe that heritage education matters and you enjoy the museum's services, please help us build a strong foundation for their future. Give to the renovation.

You can see a list of our generous contributors on the renovation page of our website ([alutiiqmuseum.org/visit/renovation](https://alutiiqmuseum.org/visit/renovation)). There is still time to add your name to the list and the to museum itself. Every renovation supporter will be recognized in our new lobby by name. Make a donation by visiting the renovation page of our website, using your smartphone to scan the QR code below, calling us, or mailing a gift.

Wishing you a peaceful, happy holiday season,

April *Isiik* Counciller  
Executive Director



<https://alutiiqmuseum.org/visit/renovation>

### Newsletter Sponsors



### OUR MISSION

The Alutiiq Museum preserves and shares the heritage and living culture of the Alutiiq people.

### OUR VISION

Celebrating heritage through living culture.

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### ALUTIIQ MUSEUM STAFF

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## Atkuk—Parka

The snow-falling *atkuk*-parka is an iconic piece of Kodiak Alutiiq clothing. In the past, women stitched these dramatic, hoodless robes from the shimmering, blue-black throat skins of cormorants, and then decorated them with strips of red leather and tassels of ermine fur. As people danced, ermine tufted tassels floated in the air like falling snow. These ancestral garments are the inspiration for many of the contemporary parkas made and worn today. Until recently, the Alutiiq Museum didn't own one.

With grant funds from Rasmuson Foundation, the museum commissioned Elder Susan Malutin to create a contemporary *atkuk*. Her task was to make a parka inspired by historic examples she studied in Helsinki and St. Petersburg, but also representative of modern regalia. The result was *Threads of Remembrance*.

Completed this fall, Malutin's parka is made of heavy, black, crushed velvet accented with red ribbon, ermine tails, and hand-sewn beading. It is 47" long and Malutin's daughter, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters all contributed to its intricate beaded details.

Malutin chose the garment's title to honor the seamstresses that came before her. While working she thought of her ancestors—how they collected all the materials for each garment, and how they transformed them into incredible works of art without modern conveniences like electricity. She also remembered her mother, Nona Morrison, a seamstress who filled Malutin with a love of sewing.



Susan Malutin with *Threads of Remembrance*



## Ancient Weaving



A fragment of 3,000-year-old grass matting found beside Karluk Lake.

Three thousand years ago Alutiiq/Sugpiaq ancestors laid woven grass mats on the floor of their sod house, creating a space for sitting and sleeping. They were settling into their fall village beside Karluk Lake, preparing to harvest and preserve salmon for winter. Sometime that season, their house burned down, and the family moved on. This past summer Alutiiq Museum archaeologists excavated the house, hoping to learn more about life by Karluk Lake through a project supported by Koniag. Did Alutiiq ancestors build substantial houses or temporary shelters? Did they come for a few weeks or stay all winter? What did they do beside fish?!

As the archaeologists scraped away layers of the house's collapsed dirt roof, they started to find pieces of charred grass and wood. Lines of wood charcoal showed that there were once wood planks lining the floor and walls of the house. Careful examination of the charred grass fragments revealed that they were woven pieces of grass mats. Each piece was small, no more than a couple of inches across. But it was a unique find.

The Karluk Lake weavings are the oldest known examples of grass working from the Kodiak region. However, they are remarkably similar to pieces collected 250 years ago. They show that weaving techniques are ancient and that the construction of mats changed very little over the past three millennia.

These weavings are now being preserved and studied at the museum, where they are already providing inspiration. Artist Hanna Sholl studied the matting as part of a grass weaving project supported by The CIRI Foundation.

## Who Are We



Dancers practice in a scene from *Who Are We*.

A mother kisses her child. A carpenter works in his shop. An Elder shares a song. A fireman starts his rig. These are a few scenes from *Who Are We*, a short film on Alutiiq/Sugpiaq identity released in November by the museum. The nine-minute production explores what it means to be an Alutiiq person in the twenty-first century with interviews, historic photos, and songs in the Alutiiq language. It was directed by Anchorage filmmaker Joshua Branstetter who traveled around Kodiak in 2023 meeting community members.

The museum developed *Who Are We* as a cultural orientation tool—to help answer common questions about Kodiak's Native community.

"Visitors to the museum—tourists and community members alike—are often confused by the variety of names we use to identify ourselves—Alutiiq, Aleut, and Sugpiaq," said the Museum's Executive Director April Counciller. "Others wonder who the Alutiiq are and how Native people maintain their identity in the modern world."

"The film allows our people to answer those questions in their own words. It is filled with voices that illustrate our ties to the land, our love of traditions, and the endurance of our language and culture. There is no correct way to be Alutiiq," said Counciller. "There are many pathways into the culture. Josh's film captures that nicely. It builds understanding and leaves you smiling."

*Who Are We* is currently available on the museum's website. It was produced with generous support from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council and the CORaL Network.

## Liicugtuten-qaa Alutiit'stun?

### Do you want to learn Alutiiq?

Designed for high school and college students, the soon-to-be-released Kodiak Alutiiq Language Textbook will take you on an exciting journey into one of Alaska's Indigenous languages. This 230-page publication features 15 chapters that explore the unique sounds, grammar, and vocabulary of Alutiit'stun—the language of Kodiak's Native community. Each chapter includes engaging lessons with numerous example words and sentence, and worksheets.

The Alutiiq Museum and the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak worked together to create this resource with grant support from the Administration for Native Americans. It was written by the Alutiiq Museum's Executive Director, April *Isiik* Counciller, and Language and Living Culture Manager, Dehrich *Isuwiq* Chya, who both learned the Alutiiq language as adults. Peggy *Arnangcuk* Azuyak, Michael *Nani't'sqaq* Bach, Candace *Cutmen* Branson, Alisha *Agisaq* Drabek, and Tonya *Iwa'ista* Heitman also contributed to the publication.

"This book is designed to help the many people who are interested in learning Alutiiq or growing their developing skills," said Chya. "Whether you are an experienced language learner or a new student, the textbook will be a valuable part of your language-learning journey."

Copies of the textbook will be available for free download on the Alutiiq Museum's website and from [www.alutiiqlanguage.org](http://www.alutiiqlanguage.org). If you would like a paper copy, please contact Dehrich Chya at the Alutiiq Museum ([dehrich@alutiiqmuseum.org](mailto:dehrich@alutiiqmuseum.org)) or Hailey Thompson-Ivanoff at the Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak ([haileyt@sunaq.org](mailto:haileyt@sunaq.org)) to reserve one while supplies last.



April *Isiik* Counciller, Ph.D.  
Dehrich *Isuwiq* Chya, M.A.

## Dexter's Dream

Dexter Cleveringa is a California teen with a passion for all things Alutiiq. His grandmother is from an Afognak village family and her ancestry has always intrigued him. To learn more about his Alutiiq roots, Dexter frequently visits the museum's website. Here he explores traditions, listens to Elders, and practices Alutiiq vocabulary. In 2022, Dexter had the chance to travel to Kodiak with his family. The trip allowed him to visit the Alutiiq Museum and provided an important afternoon of connection.

Dexter said, "It was awesome to see everything in person. I found the cultural arts amazing. It was amazing to see all these different years of history and the cultural path of the Alutiiq people . . . and the qayaq was mind-blowing!" Dexter didn't forget about the museum when he returned to California. When he learned about our renovation, he wanted to help. This past summer, through social media and word of mouth, he raised \$5162 to help future generations connect with the Alutiiq world.

Dexter said, ". . . to travel to Kodiak and see all of this, I want that there in the future for my family. I want the museum to keep going and keep our culture available for all people. . . to keep educating younger generations and preserving the heritage of the Alutiiq people."

*Quyanaasinaq* Dexter, our biggest thanks.



Dexter Cleveringa in Alaska. Courtesy the Cleveringa Family.

*Guangkumt'nek ellpet'sun, agayunek'gcikici.*

From all of us to all of you, have a happy holiday:

Alutiiq  
MUSEUM Store

Holiday Bazaar

**Saturday, December 2nd** 10:00 am to 4:00 pm  
At the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center

Featuring local artists selling unique, handmade gifts inspired by Kodiak.