

Cama'i—Hello,

Look closely at this newsletter and you will see an updated layout, fresh colors, new fonts, and even a tweak to our logo. This new look is part of a larger, organization-wide effort to improve the museum's infrastructure—our facilities and essential resources. The Alutiiq Museum is changing, remaking itself in direct response to community needs.

The seeds of this work are beginning to grow. By summer we expect to move the museum store into the new KANA Market-place, break ground on building renovations, initiate design work for a new set of gallery displays, and begin development of a new website. The coming year will not be like any other in the museum's history, but it will be exciting, and it will ensure that we can serve future generations with the same wonderful programs you've come to rely on. We thank you for your continued support and encourage you to watch for updates on our social media sites.

Happy New Year,

April Isiik Counciller
Executive Director

Generosity Matters

Alaskans remember to Pick.Click.Give. when you file for your Permanent Fund Dividend. It is a quick, easy way to support the Alutiiq Museum and the many programs and resources that share the Alutiiq story. Every donation helps people connect to the Alutiiq world.

Pick.Click.Give.

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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Dir. of Archaeology & Special Projects	Molly Odell
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Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Alutiiq Museum

Kayak Transferred

In January, an historic Alutiiq/Sugpiaq kayak was transferred to the Alutiiq Museum by Harvard University. The 14-foot, skin boat is a rare example of a complete ancestral kayak. This vessel has been at the center of a long-term collaboration between the Peabody and Alutiiq museums and is currently displayed in Kodiak. The transfer allows the Alutiiq community to care for the kayak, a culturally sensitive object made with human hair.

US Army Officer Edward Fast collected the kayak in 1869 and gave it to Harvard's Peabody Museum. The boat was professionally conserved in 2011, with assistance from Alutiiq culture bearers. Since 2016, the kayak has been on loan to the Alutiiq Museum and shared in a display on maritime technology.

Last fall, the Alutiiq Museum requested a transfer of ownership on spiritual grounds. Tufts of human hair adorn the boat's seams, likely as a talisman. Executive Director April Laktonen Counciller explained.

"In the Alutiiq world, hair holds a person's essence. Our ancestors incorporated hair into garments, tools, and ceremonial items to forge spiritual bonds. The hair imparts the qualities of its original owner—characteristics like strength or vision. It appears that the qualities of another bolstered the paddler of this boat. As such, this boat is a spiritually powerful object best cared for by our community."

The Alutiiq Museum's request expressed appreciation for the century of kayak care provided by the Peabody Museum. Counciller said, "Caring for objects demonstrates respect for the plants and animals incorporated in them, and it is an Alutiiq value. Because the Peabody Museum preserved this boat, our community can assume that responsibility and we are grateful."



Historic Alutiiq kayak. Photo courtesy Peabody Museum at Harvard University.

Exhibit Planning

“We have been living in this place for 7500 years and we are still here.” This central message will be woven throughout the Alutiiq Museum’s new gallery exhibits. As part of upcoming renovations, the museum’s entire exhibit gallery will be redone. The project will allow the museum to tell Alutiiq stories in new ways and focus on sharing on the vibrant living culture of the Alutiiq people. To identify exhibit themes the museum has been consulting a team of community advisors and inviting public comment.

“Our goal is to create the exhibits our community wants to see, to tell the stories that are important to our people,” said Executive Director April Counciller. “Advisors have asked us to create lively, colorful displays that stress the presence of our people, demonstrate the persistence of our traditions, and share our values. But they also want space to share more difficult stories on the impacts of colonialism. With an expanded gallery we will have space to explore both these areas.”

Creating an organized presentation is the job of museum staff members who are working with professional designers at ExhibitAK. In the coming months the team will select objects to display, draft introductory text, and create the first schematic design. To review these materials, the next advisory meeting will be held May 16th at 5:30 pm. The public is invited to attend.

“The public process is creative and exciting,” said Counciller. “We learn from our advisors, think of new approaches, and strengthen our ability to educate. We are very grateful to the people who are investing their ideas in this process.”

The project is supported by a grant to Koniag from the Institute for Museum and Library Services.



Alutiiq Museum Gallery.

Replica Artifacts

Twenty first century technology is helping students learn about ancient tools. Under the direction of technology teacher Anthony White, a Kodiak High School class recently made replicas of ancestral Alutiiq artifacts using 3D printing. The project helped the students learn 3D modeling techniques while creating a valuable educational resource.

White’s class came to the Alutiiq Museum to learn about Alutiiq tools and take high-quality pictures and scans. Using a computer program, they transformed images of six different tools—an ulu, halibut hook, adze, throwing board, maskette, and arrowhead—into 360° models. Then, they uploaded the scans to a program that printed 3D replicas using a white plastic filament. The final steps was to paint the replicas to match the originals.

“The details captured by this process are truly amazing,” said Education Manager Leda Ferranti. The replicas are very realistic, but at the same time they are sturdy. They can be handled and examined, while the fragile artifact is preserved in the museum. The same artifact can be in two places at one time!”

The replica artifacts will be shared with Kodiak’s rural schools and incorporated into classroom activities. “We will be working with teachers to integrate the artifacts into writing and art projects,” said Ferranti. “And they can stay in the classrooms to inspire students now and in the future.”



Anthony White’s high school technology class photographing a throwing board.

Language House



Mentors Dehrich Chya and Stevi Frets meet with apprentices Natalia Schneider, Hanna Sholl, Kariona Harford, and Max Pyles.

A group of Elders and young adults sit around a kitchen table playing cards and laughing. “Iqallugsurten!” (Go fish!), says Max Pyles to Kariona Harford. Pyles and Harford are two of four language apprentices learning to speak Alutiiq at the Suarwik. Suarwik means ‘a place to rise up into view,’ and it is the name of the language house created by the Sun’aq Tribe of Kodiak. Through the week, Pyles, Harford, Hanna Sholl, and Natalia Schneider meet with Alutiiq language mentors to advance their speaking skills in a home setting. The program operates out of a rented house in Kodiak where instruction is fun and friendly.

At the Suarwik, language learning happens while playing games, completing chores, baking cookies, telling stories, and having silly conversations. Learning in a household setting helps teach the vocabulary important to daily life and promote conversation. Several times a week, the apprentices and mentors meet with Elder Alutiiq speakers at the Suarwik, in Elder’s homes, or at the Alutiiq Museum. Once a month, the Suarwik hosts community language nights and potlucks where community members are invited to join, enjoy, and learn.

The Suarwik is part of a broader effort to grow a new generation of the Alutiiq language teachers with funding from the Administration for Native Americans. As the community of Alutiiq speakers ages, language learners need people who can teach classes at all levels, from preschool to college. To learn more about the Suarwik and its programs, please contact Hailey Thompson (haileyt@sunaq.org) or Stevi Frets (casemanager@sunaq.org) at the Sun’aq Tribe.

Board Member Fred Coyle

Fred Coyle joined the Alutiiq Museum’s board of directors in the spring of 1995, at the organization’s founding. For more than twenty-seven years, he has been a dependable presence at meetings, programs, and events, helping with everything from documenting Alutiiq vocabulary to charting a course for the future. Fred serves as the museum representative from Akhiok-Kaguyak, Inc. (AKI), his village corporation. In addition to his dedicated support for the museum, Fred has been on the AKI board for over fifty years.

Fred was born in Akhiok to Fred Coyle, Sr. and Jeannie Farsovitch Coyle, who raised their small family in the village. He left Akhiok for high school and spent his adult life as a seine fisherman. In 1964, he married his wife, Irene. In 1970, they moved to Kodiak where they raised six children. Fred and Irene are both fluent Alutiiq speakers. They are among the last people in their generation who learned Alutiiq as children. Both have actively used their knowledge to support Alutiiq language revitalization. This work fuels Fred’s passion for serving his people.

When asked about the importance of the museum Fred said, “Sharing who we are and showing how we are proud of our



Fred Coyle assists a child lighting an oil lamp at an exhibit opening.

ancestors... learning from them. Being proud of who we are and our people. It is so important to be together and to celebrate our heritage. The museum gives us a place to gather and share our story.”

“Our culture was asleep for a long time,” he said. “At one point we were ashamed to be Native and eventually it became something we were more proud of. I really love to celebrate my culture. . . I just like being involved and being with my people.”



First Friday Art Walk

March 3, 2023 5:00 - 7:00pm

Featuring Nacat—
Alutiiq beaded headdresses.

Meet Artists, see headdresses,
and watch a short film about
ancestral regalia.

Alutiiq Museum Gallery
FREE and Open to the Public!

Photo: Headdress by Patricia Abston-Cox.