

Cama'i Hello,

We are in the final days of renovating the museum's facilities. As contractors complete finishing touches, our staff has moved back into the building and we are preparing for visitors. There is furniture to assemble, an exhibit hall to fill with new displays, library shelving on the way, a donor wall in the works, and more. For the next few months, we will remain closed to the public while we clean up and set up. Thank you for your patience.

While you wait for us to reopen, you can find the museum store in the downtown marketplace, enjoy lots of great content on our website, and participate in events we are hosting in the community. There will be two beaded cuff workshops in March, and staff members are leading cultural activities during Alutiiq Week celebrations in village schools.

Save the date. Our grand reopening will be on Thursday, May 22. We can't wait to welcome everyone back to the museum and to thank the many generous people, businesses, and organizations that made our building transformation possible. It will be worth the wait!

Quyanaa,

April Isiik Counciller
Executive Director



Newsletter Sponsors



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OUR MISSION

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

OUR VISION

Celebrating heritage through living culture.

ALUTIIQ HERITAGE FOUNDATION BOARD

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ALUTIIQ MUSEUM STAFF

Executive Director	April Laktonen Counciller, PhD
Director of Operations	Sharon Anderson
Director of Advancement	Djuna Davidson
Chief Curator	Amy Steffian
Dir. of Archaeology & Special Projects	Molly Odell
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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Alutiit *Kasitat*

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Alutiiq Museum

Artwork Shines Light

With a Dremel tool, Rolf Christiansen hollows out dark grey cobbles, transforming Kodiak stone into oil lamps inspired by ancestral designs. Alutiiq artists are beginning to explore lamp making, and Christiansen's work is ambitious and filled with meaning.

He collects water-worn granite and greywacke cobbles from the beach surrounding Refuge Rock—where the 1784 massacre of Alutiiq people by Russian traders took place. Today Refuge Rock is on Native land near Christiansen's home. By creating beautiful cultural objects from rocks collected in this infamous location, he demonstrates the persistence of his people and culture. Two and a half centuries after the massacre, the Alutiiq have reclaimed Refuge Rock and are reawakening traditions.

From each rock, Christiansen carves a unique work of art. He gradually wears away the stone a process that takes patience and strength. His larger lamps often feature incised petroglyphs or a mask face. Others are smaller hand-sized pieces perfect for the dinner table.

Three of Christiansen's lamps are among eight pieces of artwork recently purchased for the museum's collection with support from Rasmuson Foundation and the Alaska Art Fund. Other additions include a pair of graceful baleen bracelets by Janelle Barton—one of grey whale baleen, the other of humpback: a decorated spruce root hat by Arlene Skinner; a three-dimensional beaded mask by Cheryl Lacy; and a color pencil drawing of a Kalsin Bay sandpiper by Stacey Studebaker. Each piece was selected for its craftsmanship, ties to the museum's mission, and the story it can tell. You can see them all on the contemporary art page of our website.



Oil lamps by Rolf Christiansen, 2024.
Purchased with support from Rasmuson Foundation.



KONIAG Cultural LIBRARY

Many people don't know that the Alutiiq Museum has a publicly accessible library. The Koniag Cultural Library has over 3,800 books, 11,000 photographs, 208 audio-visual recordings, and 2.4 linear feet of vertical files reflecting Kodiak, the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq world, and the museum's work. For years, this large collection lived in our basement, and patrons had to make appointments to visit. Now, with a grant to Koniag from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the library will move to a bright, clean room on the second floor and have public hours.

The funding will support the *Liigwik*—Learning Place project, an effort to enhance public use of the Koniag Cultural Library by outfitting the new space with professional shelving, computer terminals, and seating. During the project, staff will work with community members to identify their library needs and host a series of events connecting people to library resources. This will include a unique Kodiak Alutiiq genealogical database.

"Our goal is to create a better functioning library," said Counciller. "We receive hundreds of requests for information about the Alutiiq world each year, requests that demonstrate a deep interest in exploring Alutiiq history, language, and traditions. *Liigwik* will transform our library into a learning center. It will elevate the library program to the level of other AMAR programs. And when Kodiak learns about Alutiiq people, we address lingering stereotypes, elevate respect for Native people, and build a stronger community."

A Shuyak Fishtrap

Shuyak's thick spruce forests, wind-battered capes, and long, protected waterways are unique in comparison with many Kodiak landscapes. What Shuyak has in common with the rest of the archipelago is its human history. Alutiiq/Sugpiaq ancestors lived along Shuyak's shores for millennia, hunting and fishing in its productive waters. Western settlers explored the island for gold and fished commercially. Today, Shuyak is a State Park visited by hikers, kayakers, and sportspeople.

Documentation of archaeological sites reflecting this history has been limited. Past investigations revealed that the island holds small shell middens, large villages with multi-room sod houses, and historic gold mines. They also hinted at the presence of a rare, ancestral fish trap—an intertidal wall of stones engineered to catch fish with the falling tides. With grant funding to Koniag from the National Park Service, the museum began a two-year survey to better document the island's heritage, especially the fish trap.

In 1989, late Kodiak Alutiiq Elder Neil Sargent reported a Shuyak fish trap to an archaeologist. He had seen the trap in 1928 as a young man and recognized that it was a human-made feature. Museum archaeologists visited this site in 2024 and agreed with Sargent. There is an unusual line of stones crossing a small cove and nearby, an area where people appear to have cleaned and dried their catch. This is just the fourth ancestral fish trap documented in the archipelago, and it adds to the growing documentation of intertidal salmon fishing.

Museum archaeologists will return to Shuyak in May for a second season of survey. Watch our social media for the results. We plan to give a public lecture and to share a video slideshow online.



Protected cove on Shuyak Island.

Playing in the Museum



Kaganaq set carved by Gage Sholl.

At the Alutiiq Museum, people learn in different ways. Some visitors like to explore exhibits—reading text and looking at objects at their own pace. Other patrons appreciate classes. They enjoy working beside an artist to practice a new skill or learning from discussions with an Elder. Our youngest visitors are all about exploring with their hands. They want opportunities to play. The newly renovated museum will have spaces for all of these activities. One of the most anticipated is the *wamwik*—a place to play.

The exhibit hall will feature a replica of a *ciqlluaq*—sod house room designed for active learning. Inside the wood-paneled space, youth will find displays of ancestral toys and games, and baskets filled with cultural toys. The room will be similar to the play space in our old gallery, but large enough for all ages to enter and well-equipped with new playthings.

To fill the *wamwik*, we turned to Alutiiq/Sugpiaq artists. David Tucker made two new wooden puzzles. One features berry picking and the other shows a drummer. Gage Sholl and Hunter Simeonoff made pieces for traditional games—so youth can experience *kakangaq*—the disk game, and *maqaq*—Alutiiq dice. Hanna Sholl dressed male and female dolls in Alutiiq *atkut*—decorated parkas. Susan Malutin made Alutiiq language name tags for fourteen animal puppets. Each is a species found in the Kodiak region.

The *wamwik* will serve as a play space for visiting youth and a gathering spot for classroom groups. *Quyanaa* to the Munart project, Exxon-Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, and US Coast Guard Spouses' Association of Kodiak for helping to develop this space.

Volunteer of the Year Lynn Walker

Every January the Alutiiq Museum reflects on the many people who gave their time and talents to our previous year's projects. Then, on Valentine's Day, we select one outstanding contribution for our Volunteer of the Year award. For 2024 that recognition goes to Lynn Walker, a PhD student, researcher, and the Curator of the Kodiak History Museum.



Lynn Walker at work in the Kodiak History Museum.

Lynn supported the museum renovation in two important ways. For months, she served on our volunteer Exhibits Advisory Committee, reviewing the text and design for the museum's upcoming exhibits. Lynn was a remarkable resource. She read draft panels in detail, attended long meetings, and brought thoughtful comments tied to her knowledge of local history. She was a reliable evaluator and her insights significantly improved our upcoming displays. Lynn also gave her time to our collections move, sharing her expert knowledge of artifact care. She helped to move ancestral objects and artwork into the new storage vault, ensuring a safe transition to their new home.

For Lynn, volunteering is second nature and a way to support organizations she cares about. She said, "Volunteering is something I am quite passionate about . . . a way to get even more involved at a meaningful level. I may not be able to donate money, but I can donate my time, my skills, and my perspective."

Lynn's commitment to service made a meaningful impact on the Alutiiq Museum. *Quyanaa*—We thank you.

GRAND REOPENING

May 22nd, 2025 • 4-8PM



Alutiiq
MUSEUM
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
REPOSITORY

Save the
Date!



This month say
qunukamken—I love you,
with a piece of genuine,
Native made jewelry.

Watercolor painting by Cheryl Lacy, beaded moose hide barrette by Nancy Butler, heart earrings by Marcia Patrick, and flower earrings on antler by Yvonne Mullan.

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