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INTRODUCTION

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More than a hundred organizations with collections are thriving in rural and urban locations across Alaska, from Utqiagvik to Ketchikan. Visit the Museums Alaska website (www.museumsalaska.org) and you will discover that museums and cultural centers are not alone in their preservation and outreach efforts. There are zoos, botanical gardens, even railroads! All striving to interpret, and in many cases cooperatively reinterpret, Alaska's rich legacy of culture, history, and art.

In the twenty-first century, Alaska's museums are not only plentiful, they are doing critical work—revealing little-known history, lifting up marginalized voices, connecting and expanding community dialogues on the Alaskan experience, and filling a great diversity of community needs. In Alaska you can find economic development programs, Native language classes, historic preservation initiatives, and much more harbored in museums.

An increasing number of collaborations between museums and Alaska communities are also demonstrating a commitment to shared authority and participation in decision-making processes. For a museum, collaboration can result in enhanced understanding of the collection, multivocal exhibits and projects, and development of relevant interpretive programming. Community benefits of collaborating with museums may include bringing museum research and information back to the community, using collections for artistic inspiration, and adding to or correcting collection records (School for Advanced Research 2019).

The recent development of multiuse facilities across the state speaks to a growing emphasis on the need for museum–community relationships and multidisciplinary narratives to understand the cultures and history of Alaska. Notable recent examples of such partnerships include

the Seward Community Library and Museum (2013); Cordova Center (2015); Alaska State Libraries, Archives, and Museums in Juneau (2016); and the Richard Foster Building in Nome (2016). These Alaska museums and their counterparts are serving as important catalysts for social change, resource centers, and mediators between researchers, schools, and communities.

The idea for a volume exploring Alaska museum anthropology originated during the 2018 Alaska Anthropological Association annual meeting in Anchorage with a session titled “New Approaches to Collaborative Exhibit Development in Alaska.” The session brought together a diverse group of scholars and practitioners from anthropology, cultural studies, education, media, conservation, and art to share recent projects that emphasize shared curatorial authority and integration of multiple perspectives.

The papers in this volume expand the conversations started during the conference with useful examples of exhibits, programs, and conservation projects that invite community members into the physical and intellectual spaces of organizations as respected collaborators and partners. Authors offer balanced reviews of their projects, discussing components of programs that didn't work in addition to initiatives that met with more success. They show not only the power of shared authority but the tensions that surface when museums make space for multiple voices and choices.

Exhibit development is a natural place for collaboration, one with a strong recent history in Alaska (Clifford 2004). Three papers show how this practice continues and expands. Aron Crowell writes about the development of a truly massive exhibit project for the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center in the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson

Center. *Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage* involved in-depth consultation with 25 subject experts from cultural groups across the state. Community experts helped to identify, select, and describe objects for the exhibit and advised on specific details for presentation. This ensured that objects were “placed at contextual orientations and elevations”—boots at the bottom of a case, masks at face height. Moreover, the exhibit’s mounting system allows for objects to be temporarily removed for hands-on study and discussion. Interpretation of the cultural heritage objects didn’t end with finalization of an exhibit script. Instead, the exhibit structure has facilitated continued interaction with the collection.

Like Crowell, Amy Phillips-Chan shares an ambitious exhibit project: the development of displays for the new Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum in Nome. *Nome: Hub of Cultures and Communities across the Bering Strait* benefited from the input of over 50 community advisors. Importantly, the exhibit doesn’t shy away from the community’s difficult history but instead highlights strengths and commonalities. By interpreting topics like fishing and food, and considering the many stories a single object could tell, the museum engaged its advisors around shared experiences. The process also made room for advisors to help in ways that fit their strengths—discussing objects, sharing stories, contributing skills and resources—and took the process to people rather than always expecting them to attend meetings. This respectful, flexible approach helped to build community ownership.

At the Ahtna Heritage Foundation’s *C’ek’aedi Hwnax* Legacy House in Copper Center, Jim Dixon, Dorothy Shinn, and Taña Finnesand shared the findings of archaeological research with the Athabascan community through a collaborative exhibit called *Archeology on Ice*. Their research, which focused on artifacts recovered from melting mountain ice patches, was led by the University of New Mexico with supportive participation from the Ahtna. Research included themes of importance and interest to the tribal community, and displays were crafted expressly with the Ahtna audience and facility in mind. The exhibit was not designed for a general audience but carefully crafted for and with the Ahtna community.

Educational programs are also a common locus for collaboration. Amy Margaris and Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak discuss how Oberlin College’s long-forgotten Arctic artifacts were brought to life by connecting them with culture bearers. Through a series of classes, Margaris invited Alaska Native people to study the collections with

students. Here, students engaged in participant observation, Native people shared their authority, and curios were transformed into documented cultural objects. The classes illustrate how even small and poorly provenanced collections can be powerful tools for building collaboration and understanding.

Amy Steffian and April Counciller write about language programming, arguing that museums are well suited for language documentation, exploration, and education. The Alutiiq Museum’s Alutiiq Word of the Week program illustrates these important activities. By asking Elder Alutiiq speakers to choose lesson topics, they transformed an educational initiative into a long-lasting research project. The program has documented cultural and linguistic knowledge for over 20 years. By letting go a bit and allowing cultural experts to lead, the museum is addressing its community’s hunger for linguistic information and advancing its institutional mission. The wildly popular program is distributed to a huge audience by community partners—building awareness of the Alutiiq world and a strong local coalition of support for heritage education.

Perhaps a less obvious place for collaboration is the precise, specialized practice of object conservation. Yet two contributions illustrate how decisions about object care can be informed by traditional knowledge, include authentic materials, and add to the biography of objects. They also show that relaxing strict professional proscriptions can yield valuable results and build community.

Anna Brown Ehlers, a renowned Chilkat weaver, and Ellen Carrlee, a professionally trained conservator, worked together to repair a Chilkat blanket for exhibit at the Alaska State Museum. The collaboration was not essential. The blanket could have been stabilized and displayed without it. However, Carrlee saw a unique opportunity to “address a higher museum mission”—creating access. By inviting a modern master to make treatment decisions, select materials, and complete interventions, the project gave a Tlingit artist authority over the care of an ancestral object. It also expanded Tlingit connections to the object. Importantly, Ehlers chose techniques that restored the object’s ability to function, not just its appearance, asserting a Tlingit view of conservation. During the six-month process, shared experiences strengthened Carrlee and Ehlers’s friendship and resulted in many ideas for future collaborations.

Paige Van Tassel writes about caring for a pair of dentalium shell earrings from the collection of the Agnes Etherington Art Center in Kingston, Ontario. Her per-

spective is that of both an Indigenous person and a student conservator. To stabilize broken shells in a set of historic Tlingit earrings, she sourced dentalium shell from the Northwest Coast. Materials from other cultures were an option—Japanese tissue paper, for example—but Van Tassel opted for authentic material purchased directly from a First Nations community. As part of this effort, she also researched and improved the earrings' provenance, re-connecting them with their Tlingit origins.

While community collaborations are a powerful tool for educational museum projects and programs, they are also a practical necessity in the North. In areas with few roads and high transportation costs, museums are often hundreds of miles from experts, supplies, and training. Such isolation breeds creativity and promotes collaboration. Behind every museum project is a neighbor, a colleague, or a friend with tools and talents—local students and photographers who share artwork, or a public radio station with a desire to serve rural communities. Woven throughout these papers is that sense of Alaskan ingenuity, camaraderie, and crazy, bold ambition that characterizes museum anthropology, and life, in the North.

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LIVING OUR CULTURES, SHARING OUR HERITAGE: AN ALASKA NATIVE EXHIBITION AS INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE NEXUS

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ABSTRACT

Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska opened in 2010 at the Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center in the Anchorage Museum. Based on extensive Alaska Native consultation and collaborative research, the exhibition of 600 masterworks of art and design from Smithsonian collections was envisioned as a coming home of these heritage objects to support Indigenous cultural renaissance. The *Living Our Cultures* exhibition serves as a statewide center for Indigenous knowledge studies and community-based programming, suggesting new directions in the evolving relationship between museums and First Peoples.

INTRODUCTION

The Smithsonian Institution's Alaska Native ethnological collections—including some 30,000 nineteenth- and twentieth-century objects¹ as well as photographs, sound recordings, and film—are tangible expressions of Arctic and subarctic Indigenous knowledge that have been archived outside the stream of living culture, often for many generations (Crowell 2020; Fitzhugh 1988, 2002; Hinsley 1994).

As defined by the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Indigenous (traditional) knowledge is “a systematic way of thinking applied to phenomena across biological, physical, cultural and spiritual systems” and is acquired through “direct and long-term experiences and extensive and multigenerational observations, lessons and skills” (Council 2013:1). It includes deep experiential understanding of Arctic biomes (traditional ecological knowledge); designs and technologies for northern living; oral history and traditions; social systems based on reciprocity and the sharing of resources; diverse languages and arts; mythologies; and sacred cosmologies (Fienup-Riordan 2007; Kawagley 2006). In contemporary communities, Indigenous knowledge is an essential foundation for cul-

tural identity and expression, health and well-being, sustainable ecosystem use, resilient responses to social and environmental stresses, and ultimately cultural survival (Barnhardt and Kawagley 2005; Chapin et al. 2006; Freeman 2000; Nuttall 1998; Pearce et al. 2015; Robards and Alessa 2004; Simpson 2004).

Heritage items in museum collections embody the rich multidimensionality of Indigenous knowledge, and these meanings may be explicated through object study and discussion by members of source communities (Crowell 2004, 2009a, 2009b; Fienup-Riordan 1996, 2005). Such interactions are an “opportunity to engage in a dialogic translation of knowledge” (Silverman 2015:5). Museum-facilitated sharing of Indigenous knowledge, especially between elder and younger generations, may be of direct and substantial benefit to the cultural vitality of Indigenous communities while supporting complementary museum objectives of public education and appreciation for others' cultures.

In response to these potentials, *Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska*, an exhibition organized by the Smithsonian's Arctic Studies

Center at the Anchorage Museum, seeks to synergistically connect heritage objects housed in museums with community knowledge through collaboration, dialogue, discovery, and education (Crowell et al. 2010). *Living Our Cultures* advances the collaborative paradigm that emerged in recent decades as museums shifted “from ‘colonial’ to ‘cooperative’ museology” (Clifford 1991:224) and recentered their Native American exhibitions on the ideals of community participation and self-representation (Ames 1992; Clifford 2004; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2004; Crowell 2004, 2020; Cruikshank 1992; Fienup-Riordan 1996, 1999; Golding and Modest 2013; Karp et al. 1992; Krmpotich and Peers 2014; Peers and Brown 2003; Phillips 2003; Sleeper-Smith 2009).

Collaboration during *Living Our Cultures* has been multifaceted and sustained, extending over nearly two decades through collections research, exhibition planning and design, media production, publication, and outreach programming. The latter includes work with Alaska Native artists to document the Indigenous knowledge represented by Arctic skin clothing, basketry, walrus ivory carving, and other traditional manufactures, and with fluent speakers of Alaska Native languages to document object-related lexicons. Ancestral objects in the *Living Our Cultures* collection serve as exemplars for artists, teachers, and students, and knowledge is passed on through workshops in rural communities, Smithsonian websites, and online videos. Through-collaboration of this kind contrasts with the relatively limited and short-term advisory roles that have often characterized Indigenous–museum relations (Ames 2003; Phillips 2003; Swan and Jordan 2015).

For Alaska Native contributors, *Living Our Cultures* has been an opportunity to activate ancestral objects and Indigenous knowledge as resources to build cultural resiliency in their home regions, supporting recovery from colonial legacies of suppression and loss. Gwich’in elder Trimble Gilbert, who participated with other Athabascan community scholars in documenting Smithsonian objects in Washington, DC, for the Alaska exhibition, and who later co-taught young apprentices from his region during a *Living Our Cultures* snowshoe-building residency, said: “We can shoot this arrow in the air. I wonder, how far will it go? That’s the future. That’s what we are here for: future generations need to know our cultures” (Crowell et al. 2010:26).

LIVING OUR CULTURES, SHARING OUR HERITAGE: THE FIRST PEOPLES OF ALASKA

Through engaged research, exhibitions, publications, and public programs, the Smithsonian’s Arctic Studies Center (Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History) seeks to make the Smithsonian’s circumpolar ethnological collections both widely known to the public and accessible to northern Indigenous communities (Crowell et al. 2001; Fitzhugh and Crowell 1988; Fitzhugh and Kaplan 1982; Krupnik and Kaneshiro 2011; Shutt and Biddison 2014a, 2014b). The Alaska office of the Arctic Studies Center (ASC-Alaska), hosted at the Anchorage Museum since 1994 through a federal-private partnership, takes the lead in making Smithsonian resources and programs available to Alaska Native constituencies, supported by grants and gifts from nonprofit foundations, corporations, philanthropic individuals, and state and federal governments.

Living Our Cultures opened in 2010 at the Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage and includes more than 600 works of Indigenous art and design from the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) (Fig. 1). It presents the traditions and cultural knowledge of Alaska Native peoples through diverse testimonies and first-person perspectives (Chan 2013; Jonaitis 2011; Steffian 2010; Williams 2011). The exhibition was envisioned as the “coming home” of Smithsonian collections to their place of origin and was organized in partnership with the Anchorage Museum and Alaska Native cultural organizations statewide. Nearly 200 Alaska Native community scholars, artists, advisors, translators, and educators contributed to the exhibition, the catalog published by Smithsonian Books (Crowell et al. 2010), the exhibition website (*Alaska Native Collections: Sharing Knowledge*, <https://alaska.si.edu>), and outreach programming.

Design and construction of the 8000-square-foot *Living Our Cultures* exhibition was funded by private, corporate, foundation, federal, and state funding through a capital campaign by the Anchorage Museum and direct grants to the Arctic Studies Center, at a total cost of \$14 million. This included exhibition research, design, fabrication, media production, and contracts for loans, conservation, mounting, and shipping of the NMNH and NMAI objects. All 12 Alaska Native regional corporations were cosponsors. Research and content development



Figure 1. The Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: First Peoples of Alaska exhibition gallery at the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, Anchorage Museum. The Yup'ik region case and Yup'ik introductory film with narrator Alice Aluskak Rearden are at center, flanked by the Sugpiaq (left) and St. Lawrence Island (right) displays. Photo: Chuck Choi, with permission from the Anchorage Museum.

were led by the Alaska office of the Arctic Studies Center (Aron Crowell, exhibition curator; Dawn Biddison, assistant exhibition curator) with guidance from a 25-member advisory panel. The exhibition was designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates (New York), whose staff participated in advisory meetings and responded creatively to panelists' recommendations. The Alaska Native Language Center (University of Alaska Fairbanks) assisted in translation and transcription of Alaska Native languages, reinforcing their presence throughout the exhibition as texts and spoken voices.

In the gallery, heritage items of all kinds—clothing, hunting equipment, tools, ceremonial regalia, carvings, basketry—appear to float inside floor-to-ceiling glass cases, cantilevered on horizontal supports from vertical steel poles (Fig. 2). Three cases along the west wall of the gallery display objects related to the cross-cultural themes of community, ceremony, and connections to the sea and land, flanked by graphic panels portraying Alaska Native history and contemporary lifeways. Seven double-sided cases

arrayed down the length of the gallery present collections from the major cultural regions of Alaska and adjacent parts of Russia and Canada: (1) Tsimshian and Haida; (2) Tlingit; (3) Athabascan and Eyak; (4) Sugpiaq and Unangaġ; (5) Yup'ik; (6) St. Lawrence Island Yupik and Eastern Siberia; and (7) Iñupiaq. Objects are placed at contextual elevations and orientations; thus boots, clothing, armor, and masks are at heights corresponding to how they are worn on the body; drums face toward or away from the viewer according to how they are played in their home regions; harpoons point down as if toward the ocean or sea ice; and darts and arrows arc though the air high up in the cases.

Innovative features of the case and mounting system (described below) allow objects to be temporarily removed for study and discussion in a Cultural Consultation Room adjoining the gallery. This aspect of the exhibit design supports a major goal of the project for both Alaska Native advisors and the Arctic Studies Center—that *Living Our Cultures* serve as an active center for Indigenous



Figure 2. Detail of the Iñupiaq exhibition case in Living Our Cultures showing the contextual height and orientation of sealskin boots, a winter parka made of Dall sheep fur, mittens ornamented with puffin beaks and polar bear fur for the Wolf Dance, a mask for whaling ceremonies, a bentwood feast bowl ornamented with walrus ivory carvings, small boxes and carving tools, a sealing harpoon and stool (far left), and other heritage objects. The pole-and-bracket mounting system is barely visible yet secure and permits easy removal of objects from the case for community study. A text and graphic panel depicting Alaska Native history and contemporary lifeways is seen to the right. Photo: Chuck Choi, with permission from the Anchorage Museum.

knowledge studies as well as an engaging public exhibition for general audiences.

On the gallery walls are greetings to visitors in all 20 Alaska Native languages; a 12-foot-high touchable map showing Alaska's cultural areas and communities; and a Dena'ina welcome wall acknowledging that the exhibition stands on Dena'ina land with the permission of tribal authorities. Large-format introductory videos narrated by residents of each region, placed at the end of each case, introduce contemporary life, history, and cultural values (Fig. 1). Touch-screen computer kiosks offer close-ups of the pieces on display (including 3-D rotatable views) accompanied by transcripts of elders' commentaries, ethno-historical data, Indigenous language names, and other learning resources. Kiosk information is periodically updated through a back-of-house curatorial interface to include new information provided by elders, artists, and

others during community programs, and corresponding updates are made to the exhibition website. The digital design is flexible, interactive, and responsive to community input, allowing the Indigenous knowledge content of the exhibition to grow.

With assistance from Anchorage Museum staff, and through partnerships with Alaska Native cultural and funding organizations, the Arctic Studies Center co-organizes and presents exhibit-based programs in the gallery, including artists' residencies, language documentation seminars, youth events, lectures, docent tours, and community study visits. The center's archaeology lab, adjacent to the gallery, doubles as a publicly accessible studio for arts programs, and a dedicated "Listening Space" offers an immersive audio program of Alaska Native oral traditions. *Living Our Cultures* receives over 200,000 Alaskan, national, and international visitors

each year, including 5000 to 7000 public school students and teachers on class visits.

Living Our Cultures is scheduled at the Anchorage Museum through 2022, when current NMNH and NMAI collection loans expire, but it is anticipated that new agreements will extend the project for five years or more, with new selections from the Smithsonian collections replacing some of the display items. *Living Our Cultures* was intended to be a long-term exhibition with a slowly shifting population of objects, allowing new items of community interest to be brought from Washington and others to be returned, so plans for a 2022 changeover are consistent with the original concept. This arrangement also accommodates conservation concerns about fragile items that may need to be taken off display after a certain time, such as a Dena'ina beaded caribou hide tunic (catalog number NMAI 151841) that was returned to the National Museum of the American Indian in 2017 to avoid potential fading and stretching on its exhibit mount.

COLLABORATIVE EXHIBITION RESEARCH AT THE SMITHSONIAN (2001–2005)

We will discuss the Indigenous–museum collaborations that were mobilized to create *Living Our Cultures* in three parts, focusing on the themes of collections research (2001–2005), planning/design/production (2006–2010), and postproduction programming (2010–present). In 2001, ASC-Alaska launched the Alaska Native Collections Project to bring community scholars to Washington, DC, to document heritage collections at NMNH and NMAI, supported by grants from the Rasmuson Foundation, National Park Service (Shared Beringian Heritage Program), Anchorage Museum Foundation, Smithsonian Institution, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Museum Loan Network. Over four years, 40 Alaska Native scholars traveled in seven contingents to Washington with ASC-Alaska staff on “reverse expeditions” to rediscover—and temporarily reclaim for exhibition—cultural objects that had been acquired from their communities many decades earlier by traders, museum collectors, and Smithsonian scientists.² The delegates were recommended by regional cultural organizations and comprised a truly distinguished group. Rosita Worl of the Sealaska Heritage Institute introduced Tlingit and Haida representatives Clarence Jackson, George Ramos, Peter Jack, Dolores Churchill, Donald Gregory, and Anna Katzeek with words that could apply to all who

participated: “I would like to say for the record that these are our scholars. These are the people that we selected to represent us and who carry the wisdom of our people and our ancestors” (Crowell et al. 2010:293).

Consulting with Indigenous experts about cultural knowledge—as opposed to collecting and analyzing quantifiable or personal data about them as individuals—does not constitute “research involving human subjects” under federal law or Smithsonian guidelines (Smithsonian Institution 2009; Smithsonian Human Subjects Institutional Review Board 2011). Nonetheless, the methodology employed for the Washington research followed ethical standards set by these guidelines, including informed consent and the right to review. Prior to each trip, participants were briefed in detail about the project and signed consent forms acknowledging their understanding that the discussions at NMNH and NMAI would be videotaped and transcribed; that information they provided would be presented in a public exhibition, printed catalog, and website; that their comments would be attributed to them as named individuals; and that they would be compensated fairly for their participation. Importantly, the consent agreement included the right to review transcripts, make corrections, and retract material they did not wish to share publicly. ASC-Alaska provided honoraria and travel expenses at standard federal rates to the visiting scholars, from grant funds.

During the weeklong sessions in Washington, the Alaska Native delegates engaged in self-directed group dialogues about potential exhibit items, addressing a wide range of topics, including how the objects were made and used, their probable places of origin based on design and iconography, social contexts of use, and related oral traditions and spiritual concepts (Fig. 3). Each group followed its own social protocols during these discussions, including opening prayers, personal introductions, order of speaking, and observance of proprietary rights to speak about objects of clan patrimony. Curatorial interjections were limited to providing the discussants with available museum documentation (e.g., date of acquisition, reported provenance, collector's notes) and asking occasional follow-up questions. Many of the visiting scholars were fluent speakers of Alaska Native languages and preferred to converse in those languages about ancestral objects, providing summaries in English for the benefit of staff.

The visiting scholars embraced their role as educators for the benefit of both their own communities and the world at large and were generous in sharing their expertise.



Figure 3. Unangaġ (Aleut) Alaska Native community scholars Daria Dirks, Vlaas Shabolin, Maria Turnpaugh, and Mary Bourdukovsky (left to right) examine a pair of woven grass socks from the Aleutian Islands at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH E316670, Sheldon Jackson collection, 1921) during a research visit in preparation for Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage. Mary Bourdukovsky recalled her father wearing socks like these inside his waterproof sealskin boots. Photo: Aron Crowell, Arctic Studies Center.

When examining a *qantaq* bentwood eating bowl, John Phillip Sr. spoke in Yup'ik about the traditional men's house as the communal center of learning where he saw such bowls being made. The exhibition could be a new way of teaching, he suggested: "We want your help with these things... We want you to understand our way of living" (Crowell et al. 2010:112).

Because of the enormity of the Smithsonian Alaska collections, costs of travel, and limited time available with NMNH and NMAI collections staff, it was possible to present the visiting scholars with only a sample of the Smithsonian objects from their respective regions, generally about 125 to 150 items that were curatorially preselected for exhibitable condition and typological variety. Items were presented one at a time for discussion rather than in multiples, to avoid confusion of reference in the transcripts.

The Alaska Native scholars suggested objects that should be included in the exhibition to represent their cultures and declined others as of lesser importance or inauthentic. For example, Tlingit elders rejected a ceremonial copper shield (*tinaa*) collected in Klawock in 1926, saying that it was made of sheathing from a ship's hull rather than native copper and that the crest designs inscribed on it did not appear to be authentic; it was "not a real *tinaa*" and could even be a non-Native forgery. Community scholars avoided speaking about items outside of their direct knowledge, as when Yup'ik elders from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta declined to discuss objects from "upriver" or from Nunivak Island because they were unfamiliar with their construction and design.

Altogether, the Washington trips generated discussions of nearly 1000 heritage items in the NMNH and

NMAI collections, documented by over 4000 pages of annotated transcripts with passages in Yup'ik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, Inupiaq, Tlingit, Haida, Koyukon, and Gwich'in as well as English. This large corpus of Indigenous knowledge documentation was published online by the Arctic Studies Center in 2006 as Alaska Native Collections: Sharing Knowledge (<https://alaska.si.edu>), produced by Second Story Interactive (Portland, OR) and hosted on Smithsonian servers (Fig. 4). Object-

level pages on the website include high-resolution studio photography, edited transcripts, curatorial summaries referenced to anthropological and historical sources, names of objects in the language/dialect of their region of origin, historical photographs, related objects, and location maps. Objects from the Bering Strait region are also presented in Russian translation for the benefit of Indigenous audiences in eastern Siberia. Advanced search and browse features, cultural overviews, and biographies of contributors are provided.

The Alaska Native Collections website continues to serve the research and educational objectives of the *Living Our Cultures* program and was adapted in 2010 to support the information kiosks in the exhibition gallery. However, the website is now technologically outdated and nearing the end of its viability. As a remedy, the Arctic Studies Center has proposed a new Smithsonian-hosted site, programmed in Drupal and drawing on updated EMu (electronic museum) collections databases at both NMNH and NMAI, to provide access to all information developed during the Alaska Native Collections Project. Support for development of the website will be primarily in-kind from the National Museum of Natural History and National Museum of the American Indian, including contributions by information technology and collections staff.

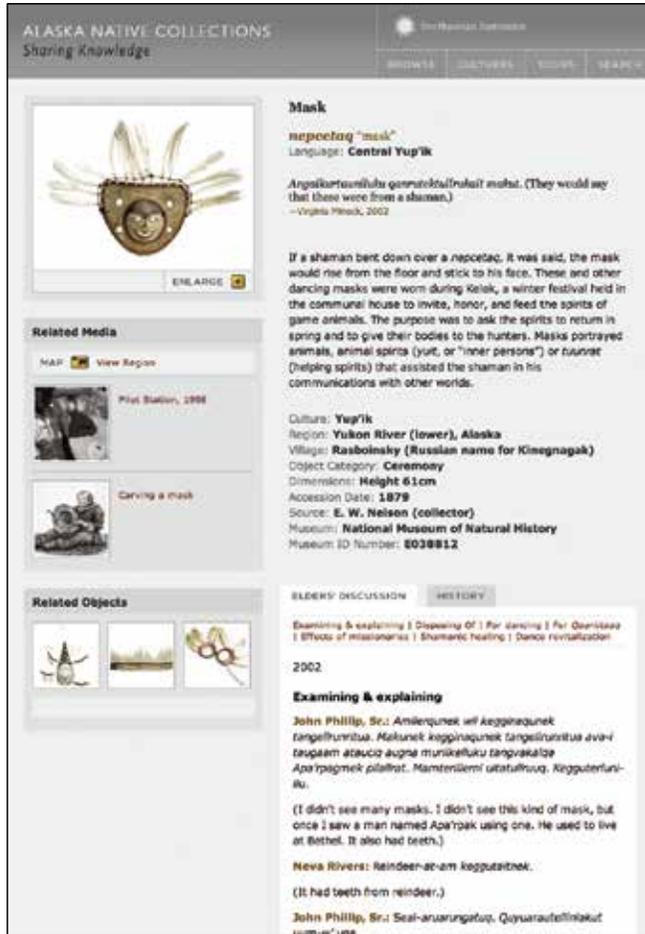


Figure 4. Screen shot from the Alaska Native Collections: Sharing Knowledge website (<https://alaska.si.edu>) showing a Yup'ik shaman's mask purchased by Smithsonian naturalist Edward W. Nelson in 1879 (catalog number NMNH E038812). The page includes the Central Yup'ik (nepcetaq) word for this type of mask, a 23-page edited transcript of community scholars John Phillip Sr. and Neva Rivers discussing the mask in Yup'ik (Elders' Discussion), ethnohistorical data (History), museum cataloging information, a high-resolution image of the mask that can be enlarged, historical images, and related objects in the online collection.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING, DESIGN, AND CONTENT DEVELOPMENT (2005–2010)

As an exhibition concept, *Living Our Cultures* presented the considerable challenge of representing all cultural regions of a state that is home to 229 federally recognized Alaska Native tribes (generally corresponding to individual villages) and 20 different Indigenous languages. This was an enormous increase in scope from *Looking Both Ways: Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People*, an earlier Arctic Studies Center exhibition focusing on the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq region of Prince William Sound, the Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, and the Alaska Peninsula (Crowell et al. 2001). The collaborative approach adopted for *Looking Both Ways* included Smithsonian partnership with the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak; formation of a regional advisory committee of Indigenous and humanities scholars; and elders' planning conferences at the Alutiiq Museum in 1997 and 1998, attended by representatives from all 17 villages in the region (Crowell 2004). Themes and content from discussions during these gatherings, combined with Smithsonian and Alutiiq Museum col-

lections, oral traditions, archaeology, and ethnohistory, provided the foundation for the exhibition and catalog (Clifford 2004, 2013).

While appropriate and successful for collaborative exhibition development within a single cultural region, the *Looking Both Ways* model of engaging local representatives from all constituent communities was impractical for planning *Living Our Cultures*. As a solution, ASC-Alaska scaled up the process by enlisting advisors from Indigenous, academic, and cultural institutions around the state to serve as representatives of their home regions in shaping the voice, content, and style of the exhibition. Their effort would build on the foundational research in Washington and help to bring the knowledge and perspectives of community scholars into the public sphere. Seventeen Alaska Native advisors with backgrounds in education, museums, and cultural leadership joined eight non-Native museum and educational professionals on the advisory panel in 2005, representing the Alaska State Museum, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Anchorage Museum, Alutiiq Museum, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Calista Elders Council, Chugach Heritage Foundation, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Ilanka Cultural Center, Kawerak Inc., North Slope Borough, Sealaska Heritage Institute, University of Alaska (Anchorage and Fairbanks), and Yupiit Piciryait Cultural Center and Museum.

The panel worked closely with the ASC-Alaska curatorial team, exhibition designers (Ralph Appelbaum Associates), film producer (Donna Lawrence Productions), web designers (Second Story Interactive), and Listening Space producer (Charlie Morrow Productions). Five two-day, full-panel sessions were held in Anchorage to share ideas and review successive versions of exhibit scripts, graphics, object selections, case designs, gallery layouts, and digital presentations. Group discussions and reviews continued apace between panel meetings via phone and email. Paul Ongtooguk, an Iñupiaq advisor and faculty member of the School of Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage, likened the intensive advisory experience to serving on the “Alaska Native United Nations” because of the unique opportunity it afforded to collaborate with colleagues from all parts of the state.

Among the issues that the panel considered was how to present culturally sensitive ceremonial and spiritual objects, with concern for misunderstandings that might arise among non-Native audiences. The specific question of whether to display masks, amulets, rattles,

and other instruments associated with Southeast Alaska shamanism was referred externally to the Sealaska Heritage Institute’s Council of Traditional Scholars (CTS) and the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA). Meeting jointly in Juneau in 2008, the CTS and CCTHITA adopted a resolution supporting inclusion of these pieces in *Living Our Cultures* with guidance that the role of shamans as healers and spiritual guardians of their communities should be emphasized, and that cultural protocols in the handling of these objects must be observed (Council of Traditional Scholars 2008).³

Many aspects of the exhibition design reflect ideas and recommendations provided by the advisory panel, including its overall layout. *Living Our Cultures* occupies a large, open gallery with the seven regional cases arranged in geographical sequence from north to south along its length, offering visitors a sweeping entry view of Indigenous art and design from the Arctic coast to central Alaska to the southeastern panhandle of the state. There is no fixed path through the floor plan, inviting visitors to explore the gallery as an analog cultural landscape where contrasts and similarities between the different regions may be discovered. In this way, Alaska Native cultures are experienced as adjacent and related, reflecting their shared histories and connections through trade, migration, and cultural exchange.

A principal outcome of design collaboration was to envision a new kind of exhibition that would serve Alaska Native communities as an active nexus for Indigenous knowledge studies and education. The integrated solution included: (1) cases with sliding glass panels that can be opened to provide access to the objects; (2) a mounting system on which objects are secure but easily released, allowing them to be temporarily removed by museum staff and transported by mobile carts to the Cultural Consultation Room for study (Fig. 5); (3) Smithsonian–Anchorage Museum loan agreements that permit hands-on examination and discussion of objects by community participants; (4) ASC-Alaska commitments to securing funds and organizing programs that utilize the objects as knowledge resources; and (5) making Indigenous knowledge documentation and updates available online and in the exhibition gallery.

In Washington, the massive task of preparing one of the largest loans ever made by the Smithsonian was undertaken over a nearly three-year period by project conservators, registrars, fellows, and interns. Their work with



Figure 5. Unanga̋ student Delores Gregory studies the construction of a bentwood hunting hat in the Living Our Cultures Community Consultation Room during the Art of Aleutian Islands Bentwood Hunting Hats residency in 2012. The hat has been removed from display and attached, still on its exhibit mount, to a mobile consultation cart. Photo: Wayde Carroll for the Arctic Studies Center.

the loan objects, which included documentation, archival research, and Alaska Native consultations, set a new standard for collaborative ethnographic conservation. Artists Chuna McIntyre, Sylvester Ayek, David Boxley, and others met in Washington with NMAI and NMNH conservators to advise and assist with object treatments; and Elaine Kingeekuk made expert repairs to a torn St. Lawrence Island *sanighraq* (ceremonial seal intestine parka) using traditional materials and methods (Smith et al. 2010) (Fig. 6). Smithsonian staff and contractors fabricated object supports and test-mounted the pieces in a mock-up exhibition case to plan their final placements. The Smithsonian’s Conservation Analytical Lab assisted

Ralph Appelbaum Associates in designing the cases, support system, and mounts to withstand Alaska earthquakes, preparations that have enabled the exhibition to survive multiple temblors since 2010 with only minor damage to the cases (cracked glass during a severe 7.1 Mw event in November 2018) and none at all to the objects (Crowell 2019a; Pressler 2012).

The implementation phase included collaborative writing and editing of the exhibition catalog, *Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska* (Crowell et al. 2010). The volume, coedited by Aron Crowell, Rosita Worl, Paul Ongtooguk, and Dawn Biddison, includes cultural and historical overviews by the three senior editors followed by 18 chapters and short essays by Alaska Native authors highlighting culture and heritage in their home regions. The chapters are illustrated with contemporary images, historical photographs, and color plates of exhibition objects captioned with oral and ethnographic information. The result, as one reviewer put it, is a multivocal assemblage in which “Western, linear notions of past and present are suspended in favor of a more fluid sense of time where ancestors’ objects contribute to the broad, complicated landscape of contemporary life” (Steffian 2010). Tlingit clan leader and educator Elaine Chewshaa Abraham wrote: “*Haa Shaagoon ayah aa eet x’eiwatán*—it is as if our Ancestors have spoken to us. When community experts viewed these objects for the first time, the sacred objects awakened in them the ancestors’ spirits” (Crowell et al. 2010:back cover). Both comments speak to a fundamental concept: that heritage objects are material expressions of Indigenous knowledge that are meaningful and relevant to contemporary life-ways and challenges.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING (2010–PRESENT)

The May 2010 grand opening of the exhibition in Anchorage honored the many Alaska Native individuals and organizations who contributed to its creation and marked the beginning of a new chapter in which *Living Our Cultures* would actively give back to Indigenous communities.

Initiatives to collaborate with Alaska Native artists arise from their “creative activist” role in reenergizing Indigenous arts, skills, and knowledge. Artists seek out elders to learn the complex knowledge required to harvest and process natural materials (wood, grass, spruce roots,



Figure 6. St. Lawrence Island Yupik artist Elaine Kingeekuk making traditional repairs with sinew thread to tears on a ceremonial seal intestine parka in the conservation lab of the National Museum of the American Indian, in 2009. Elaine also replaced some auklet feather ornaments that were missing from the parka, using materials brought from home. Photo: Kelly McHugh for the Arctic Studies Center.

cedar bark, berries, ivory, skins, furs, quills) and to transform them into fine handcrafted pieces, often combining local knowledge of these arts with studies of museum collections (Crowell 2016c). Artists imbue their work with the social and spiritual meanings that are a profound part of cultural inheritance. Alaska Native corporations, foundations, and tribal organizations support participatory heritage work and teaching by artists, including culture camps and community workshops where art-making is viewed as a life-affirming pathway for young people and adults to engage with culture and identity.

To support these grassroots efforts, ASC-Alaska organizes teaching residencies at the Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage during which pairs or trios of artists work together, instruct young adult learners, interact with the museum public and school groups, and study objects in

the *Living Our Cultures* and Anchorage Museum collections for insight into ancestral design and techniques (Fig. 7). Smithsonian and Anchorage Museum conservators take part in these events to learn methods of working with natural materials that can inform the care and preservation of ethnological collections. Recent residency programs have been paired with art-making and material-harvesting workshops in rural towns and villages, including Ketchikan, Bethel, Nome, Metlakatla, Kenai, Soldotna, and Quinhagak. Program sponsors include The CIRI Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Alaska State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, First National Bank of Alaska, Anchorage Museum, and the Smithsonian Council for Arctic Studies (Biddison 2014; Crowell 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018, 2019b).



Figure 7. Yup'ik artist Mary Tunuchuk demonstrates how to stitch together strips of prepared seal intestine to make waterproof parkas and bags during the Sewing Gut arts residency at the Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage in 2014. With Tunuchuk are Inupiaq-Athabaskan artist Sonya Kelliher-Combs (far left) and students Danielle Larsen and Eve Mendenhall, both undergraduates in the Alaska Native Arts Program at the University of Alaska Anchorage. In back are museum conservators Kelly McHugh (NMAI, left) and Monica Shah (Anchorage Museum, right). Photo: Wayde Carroll for the Arctic Studies Center.

ASC-Alaska's Dawn Biddison produces video documentaries of the residencies and workshops featuring interviews with the artists and step-by-step demonstrations of their work. The videos are published to the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center Alaska YouTube channel (<https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCNpC1tX-kqJaSU7ZSxUWafA>, accessed 20 December 2019) and comprise a uniquely in-depth Indigenous knowledge resource. The documentaries are also distributed on DVD to assist artists and learners in rural areas with poor internet service. The 17 heritage arts programs completed to date (Table 1) have had statewide scope and impact. Together they have involved 35 artists and elders, more than 250 adult students, thousands of visitors in person and online, and hundreds of thousands who have learned about them through extensive print, television, and radio coverage.

Another framework for creative interaction with the *Living Our Cultures* collection is Urban Interventions, a program benefiting Indigenous youth undertaken in partnership with the Anchorage Museum, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Kennebec Youth Center, and Covenant House, an Anchorage shelter for at-risk teens. For *Skate Art* (2015), New York-based skateboarder and graphic artist Jim Murphy (Lenni Lenape) and Inupiaq artist Holly Nordlum led a youth workshop on designing and painting skateboard decks, inspired by artistic motifs in the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition (Biddison 2016). For *Street Art* (2016), Arizona artists Dwayne Manuel (Onk Akimel O'odham) and Rene Garcia (Tohono O'odham) were joined by Alaska artist Arielo Taylor (African American/Unangaḡ) to lead an Anchorage youth team in

Table 1. Heritage arts programs conducted by the Arctic Studies Center (2011–2019) in connection with the Living Our Cultures exhibition, including museum residences and community workshops.

Date	Location	Event	Artist and Elder Faculty
2011	Anchorage	Athabascan Snowshoe Making (museum residency)	George Albert (Koyukon), George Yaska (Koyukon), Trimble Gilbert (Gwich'in)
2012	Anchorage	Aleutian Islands Bentwood Hunting Hats (museum residency)	Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory (Unangā), Michael Livingston (Unangā)
2012	Anchorage	Sewing Salmon—fish skin bags (museum residency)	Audrey Armstrong (Koyukon), Coral Chernoff (Sugpiaq), Marlene Nielsen (Yup'ik)
2013	Anchorage	Dene Quill Art—porcupine quillwork (museum residency)	Emma Hildebrand (Koyukon), Shirley Homberg (Tanana), Nancy Fonnicello
2014	Anchorage	Sewing Gut—seal intestine bags (museum residency)	Mary Tunuchuk (Yup'ik), Elaine Kingeekuk (St. Lawrence Island Yupik), Sonya Kelliher-Combs (Iñupiaq-Athabascan)
2015	Bethel	Sewing Gut (community sewing workshop)	Mary Tunuchuk (Yup'ik)
2015	Anchorage	Sculpting Ivory—walrus ivory carving (museum residency)	Jerome Saclamana (Iñupiaq), Levi Tetpon (Iñupiaq), Clifford Apatiki (St. Lawrence Island Yupik)
2015	Nome	Sculpting Ivory (community carving workshop)	Jerome Saclamana
2015	Anchorage	Voices from Cedar—cedar wood whistles and rattles (museum residency)	John Hudson (Tsimshian), Norman Jackson (Tlingit), Donald Varnell (Haida)
2015	Ketchikan	Voices from Cedar (community carving workshop)	John Hudson
2016	Anchorage	Twining Cedar—cedar bark basketry (museum residency)	Delores Churchill (Haida), Holly Churchill (Haida), Kandi McGilton (Tsimshian)
2016	Metlakatla	Twining Cedar (community bark harvesting and preparation workshop)	Delores Churchill, Kandi McGilton
2016	Metlakatla	Twining Cedar (community basket weaving workshop)	Delores Churchill, Holly Churchill, Kandi McGilton, Annette Topham (Tsimshian), Karla Booth (Tsimshian)
2017	Anchorage	Tanning and Sewing Moosehide in the Dene Way (museum residency)	Joel Isaac (Dena'ina), Melissa Shaginoff (Ahtna)
2017–2018	Kenai, Soldotna, Chickaloon, Gulkana	Tanning and Sewing Moosehide (community workshop, documentation of tanning and smoking hides, consultation with elders)	Joel Isaac, Melissa Shaginoff, Helen Dick (Dena'ina), Sondra Shaginoff-Stuart (Ahtna), Jeanie Maxim (Ahtna), Charlie Hubbard (Ahtna)
2019	Quinhagak	Yup'ik Twined Grass Baskets: Renewing an Ancestral Art (community weaving workshop)	Grace Anaver (Yup'ik), Pauline Beebe (Yup'ik), Sarah Brown (Yup'ik)
2019	Quinhagak	Yup'ik Twined Grass Baskets (documentation of grass harvesting and preparation)	Grace Anaver

creating spray-painted murals on temporary walls set up on the Anchorage Museum lawn, also inspired by exhibition themes (Biddison 2017).

Many individual artists have accessed the Smithsonian and Anchorage Museum collections through Local Inspirations and Polar Lab, programs co-organized with the Anchorage Museum. Inupiaq performance artist Allison Warden, Deg Hit'an/Inupiaq mask carver Brian Walker, Unanga painter Julia Orloff-Duffy, Yup'ik painter and skin sewer Peter Williams, Tlingit weaver Ricky Tagaban, Haida weaver Jacinthe LeCornu, and dozens of others have studied Smithsonian and Anchorage Museum pieces to inform their contemporary work.

The Arctic Studies Center also builds on *Living Our Cultures* as a resource for Indigenous language education, responding to the crisis of language endangerment in Alaska (Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council 2016; Krauss 2007). In 2010, Dena'ina speakers Helen Dick and Gladys Evanoff discussed objects in the Smithsonian collection, using them to teach lessons in their language (Crowell 2011). Instructional dialogues from the sessions are available on the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center Alaska YouTube channel (<https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCNpC1tX-kqJaSU7ZSxUWafA>).

In 2011, with funding from the Shared Beringian Heritage Program (National Park Service), Jana Harcharek (North Slope Borough School District) and Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle (Eskimo Heritage Program, Kawerak) worked with elder participants Willie Goodwin, Herbert Foster Sr., Alvira Downey, Faye Ongtowasruk, Sylvester Ayek, and Rachel Riley to document Inupiaq language dialects through discussion of exhibition objects. In 2012, Chris Koonooka of the Bering Strait School District joined a delegation from St. Lawrence Island including Ralph Apatiki Sr., John Apassingok, Lydia Apatiki, Elaine Kingeekuk, Angela Larson, Merlin Koonooka, Vera Metcalf, and Jonella Larson White to discuss pieces from St. Lawrence Island. The Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yupik sessions, each four days in length, were transformed into *Listen and Learn*, a video-based bilingual education curriculum (Shutt and Biddison 2014a, 2014b; <https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCNpC1tX-kqJaSU7ZSxUWafA>, accessed 20 December 2019). In 2018, in conjunction with the *Twining Cedar* basketry project, the Haayk Foundation in Metlakatla worked with ASC-Alaska to produce a basketry-related Tsimshian language curriculum (McGilton 2018).

Through these programs, as well as scores of other individual and group visits, gallery lectures by Alaska Native scholars and artists (see the *Living Our Cultures* YouTube playlist <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL33278BF298794573>, accessed 20 December 2019), Indigenous film screenings, internships, and research fellowships, *Living Our Cultures* is serving its larger purpose as a vehicle for Indigenous knowledge activation and renewal.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

Living Our Cultures was made possible by an extended partnership between the Smithsonian Institution and the Anchorage Museum, with a special focus on enhancing source community access to the historic Alaska Native collections held by the National Museum of Natural History and National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC. Seeding a small but active program in Alaska in 1994 and giving it time to grow has produced roots and branches of alliance across the state, the only way that it was possible to form the large, generous circle of Alaska Native contributors who made the exhibition on behalf of their communities and who contributed the knowledge and voices of their people to its realization.

Exhibition content, design, and programming for *Living Our Cultures* have been shaped by Alaska Native intellectual contributions and leadership, complementing the anthropological curatorship, research, project management, technical and design expertise, and fundraising capacity of museums. The keys to the strength of this relationship have been balance, dialogue, mutual respect, and shared commitment. *Living Our Cultures* started with collections-based research by community scholars, laying a foundation of Indigenous knowledge that informed the total project. During planning and design, Alaska Native advisors recognized the potential of the exhibition not only to portray their cultures but to serve communities, and they helped to envision it as a nexus of Indigenous knowledge learning and exchange—a living, growing program rather than a static museum representation. Exhibition-based programming since 2010 has demonstrated this concept, tapping a wave of cultural activism and revitalization led from within communities, to which museums may contribute.

The “terms of engagement” between museums and Indigenous communities are complex, contingent, and evolving, and in this sense *Living Our Cultures* has been an experiment in methodology (Crowell 2004; Silverman

2015). Its expansive geographic scope is not unprecedented for the circumpolar region—*Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska* was even broader (Fitzhugh and Crowell 1988)—but strong collaboration with so many different cultural groups appears to be. At this scale it was not possible to achieve the level of individual community involvement and intensive focus achieved by other Alaska exhibitions that were based on collaborative work within single cultural areas, such as *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks: Agayuliyararput (Our Way of Making Prayer)* (Fienup-Riordan 1996); *Yuungnaqpiallerput: The Way We Genuinely Live* (Fienup-Riordan 2007); *Looking Both Ways: Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People* (Crowell et al. 2001); and *Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi: The Dena'ina Way of Living* (Jones et al. 2013). Yet the broader scope of *Living Our Cultures* explores the possibility of presenting and comprehending all of Alaska in a holistic way, as a diverse and interconnected panoply of Indigenous knowledge and cultures.

The idea of reaching out to all, sharing Indigenous knowledge, and telling the stories from each place and people seems to have inspired everyone involved in the creation of *Living Our Cultures*, whether they were discussing heritage pieces in Washington, meeting as a planning committee in Anchorage, teaching from objects in language seminars, or interacting with students and artists during Arctic Studies Center residencies and community programs. Ultimately, perhaps the most important part of the *Living Our Cultures* experiment in collaboration has been to make it open-ended; and we, in the collective sense of all who have been involved, hope that it will always be a work in progress.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From my perspective as curator and project director, the scale, time investment, complexity, and expense of *Living Our Cultures* at times felt like huge risks with uncertain prospects of achieving the collaborative outcomes to which we all aspired. Dawn Biddison's extremely capable, creative, and tireless contributions as ASC-Alaska assistant curator helped make it possible, yet for both of us the sheer volume of research, multitrack detail, deadlines, budgets, and logistics was unrelenting. Thankfully, many others shared this burden with incredible energy and dedication, far too many to individually acknowledge. A complete list of Alaska Native advisors, scholars, translators, and authors is included in the exhibition catalog (Crowell et

al. 2010:5), and to all of them we owe the first and deepest gratitude. We extend special thanks to members of the exhibition advisory panel: Larue Barnes, Scott Carrlee, Craig Coray, Angela Demma, Barbara Donatelli, Ann Fienup-Riordan, Sven Haakanson Jr., Eleanor Hadden, Joan Hamilton, Beverly Faye Hugo, John Johnson, Eliza Jones, Suzi Jones, Merlin Koonooka, Aaron Leggett, Allison Young McLain, Paul C. Ongtooguk, Patricia Partnow, Patricia Petrivelli, Gordon L. Pullar, Jonathan Ross, Monica Shah, Clare Swan, Jonella Larson White, and Rosita Worl.

On the museum side of the complex equation that produced *Living Our Cultures*, we recognize the deep and abiding support of the Anchorage Museum, led by directors Patricia Wolf and later James Pepper Henry, and of the Anchorage Museum Foundation. Julie Decker, the current Anchorage Museum director, has provided essential support and staff assistance to ASC-Alaska's arts, language, and heritage programming. Lead professionals in design and production of the exhibition included Sarah Barton (RISE Consulting Group), Jennifer Whitburn and Tim Ventimiglia (Ralph Appelbaum Associates), Julie Beeler (Second Story Interactive), Donna Lawrence (Donna Lawrence Productions), Charlie Morrow (Charlie Morrow Productions), and Carolyn Gleason (Smithsonian Books).

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ENDNOTES

1. St. Lawrence Island Yupik elder Roger Silook gave the title *Sakwat* (Objects) to a temporary exhibition of ancestral Old Bering Sea walrus ivory carvings that he co-curated at an Arctic Studies Center tribal museums workshop (Crowell 2000). It would

be ideal if *sakwat* (or another Alaska Native word) could be used as a general designation for all items of Alaska Native heritage held by museums, but each Indigenous language has its own appropriate synonym and “objects” serves here by default. However, its inadequacy of connotation, especially in relation to intangible meanings and values, is recognized. In New Zealand the Māori word *taonga* (“property, goods, possession, effects, object” but also “cultural treasure”) has displaced English terms in Indigenous museum discourse (Moorefield 2011).

2. The Alaska project was not intended to take the place of repatriation, a legal process that at the Smithsonian is governed by the National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAIA) of 1989 (Public Law 104-278) as amended in 1996 (20 USC 80q et seq.). Through the NMAIA, federally recognized tribes, including those in Alaska, may request the permanent return to their communities of human remains, funerary or sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. In order to avoid interference or overlap with this independent effort, no items requested by tribes as of 2010 were selected for *Living Our Cultures*. In 2012, however, the Hoonah Indian Association (HIA) requested repatriation of a Tlingit wooden model of a slave-killer club (NMNH E73831), designated as a funerary object, that had been included in the exhibition (Hollinger 2012). The club was formally repatriated to HIA, but the tribe agreed that it could remain temporarily on display in Anchorage, where it remains as of this writing.
3. Council of Traditional Scholars Resolution 02-08, jointly adopted with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA), specifies that only members of a shaman’s clan can safely and appropriately handle his or her instruments or clothing; however, if clan affiliation is unknown, as is the case for all shamans’ objects included in *Living Our Cultures*, then museum personnel should handle them, with full respect for their sanctity (Council of Traditional Scholars 2008). If such objects are displayed, their cultural significance must be made clear to viewers. At the council’s recommendation, the following text is included in exhibition labeling for Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian shamans’ items: “The traditional *ixt’* (Tlingit) or *nang sgáagaa* (Haida), or ‘one who has spirits and supernatural powers’ (in English, a shaman) had responsibilities to

care for the physical, economic, and social welfare of his or her clan. While a shaman’s work benefitted the community, a witch (in Tlingit, *nooks’aati*; in Haida, *st’áw*) brought only misfortune. The two must not be confused. The *ixt’* or *nang sgáagaa* (shaman) used masks and instruments to beckon the helping spirits. These items may be sensitive to some viewers and to members of specific clans.” CCTHITA clan leaders Harold Jacobs, Edwell John, Bob Sam, John Eugene Bartels Sr., and Raymond Wilson took part in ceremonial blessings of the shamans’ objects in Washington prior to their shipment to Alaska and/or in Anchorage before they were installed in the *Living Our Cultures* gallery.

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BERING STRAIT NARRATIVES AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES OF EXHIBIT DEVELOPMENT IN NOME, ALASKA

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ABSTRACT

The Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum in Nome, Alaska, reopened in November 2017 following final installation of the exhibition *Nome: Hub of Cultures and Communities across the Bering Strait*. Over 70 community collaborators participated in interviews, shared stories, and contributed materials to a series of immersive displays that blend technology with hands-on interactives to inspire visitors and connect past and contemporary narratives from the Bering Strait. This article explores challenges and opportunities for engaging local communities and integrating multivocal dialogue into exhibit frameworks.

INTRODUCTION

Reemergence of cultural autonomy within Indigenous communities and the proliferation of tribal museums and cultural centers have contributed to a gradual deconstruction of museums as dictators of authenticity into venues for self-determination and civic engagement (King 2017; Lonetree 2012; Pullar et al. 2013; Sleeper-Smith 2009). The need for more robust cross-cultural understandings of museum collections has led to interdisciplinary paradigms of collaboration that involve, among other fields, anthropology, oral history, Indigenous aesthetics, and scientific evidence (Ahtone 2009; Crowell and Howell 2013; Cruikshank 1995; Griebel 2013). Changing philosophies toward equal representation and decision-making power in the exhibitionary space have also prompted an increasing number of museums to renegotiate displays of historical and cultural heritage. New exhibitions developed within a post-museum framework strive to decentralize authority through shared ownership in the collaborative process (Chavez Lamar 2008; Lindauer 2007; Phillips 2011), integration of multiple ways of knowing (Ames 1994; McMaster 2007), emphasis on microhistories (Beier-de Haan 2006), and communication of divergent histories through controversial subjects (Bennett 2006; Dubin 1999).

This article explores challenges and opportunities encountered when engaging a local community in exhibition development for the new Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum in Nome, Alaska. *Nome: Hub of Cultures and Communities across the Bering Strait* opened in 2017 in the main gallery of the Carrie McLain Museum and includes over 500 cultural and historical objects and works of art from the Bering Strait region (Fig. 1). The exhibition revolves around experiential themes that address topics of Arctic concern, including subsistence and the environment, mining, the built landscape, transportation, and community sustainability.

The Carrie McLain Museum received \$1.1 million in funding to develop the new 3200-square-foot exhibition as part of a larger capital campaign by the City of Nome to construct the multiuse Richard Foster Building. The designated exhibition funds supported two phases of design and fabrication, audiovisual programming, shipping, and installation. Content development and writing was led by the Carrie McLain Museum (Amy Phillips-Chan, director), with guidance from the Nome Museum and Library Commission (MLC). Formations, Inc. (Portland) provided design and fabrication services. Atlas Fine Art Service (Seattle) crafted artifact mounts, Farthest North Films



Figure 1. Visitors explore the exhibition *Nome: Hub of Cultures and Communities across the Bering Strait*. Photograph by Michael Burnett, 2017.

(Juneau) offered media production, and *The Nome Nugget* newspaper and University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Oral History Office and Film Archives contributed audio and film resources. Both the Nome Eskimo Community and Kawerak Eskimo Heritage Program (Nome) assisted with the transcription and integration of Inupiaq language and object names into exhibit content. Finally, a diverse group of over 70 local historians, cultural knowledge bearers, artists, and students contributed to exhibition planning and development from 2015 to 2017. *Nome: Hub of Cultures and Communities across the Bering Strait* is scheduled to be on display through 2027.

Development of *Nome* drew on and greatly benefited from previous models of successful museum–community partnerships. Community and tribal museums in Alaska have been at the forefront of multivocal and collaborative exhibitions over the past two decades (Crowell et al. 2001; Fienup-Riordan 1999; Lee 1998). In Kodiak, the Alutiiq Museum hosts an ongoing roster of community-led exhibits such as *Naut’staapet—Our Plants* (2019) focused on

local plant lore that opened in conjunction with an Alutiiq Plants smartphone app.¹ The Sealaska Heritage Institute in Juneau strives to promote Indigenous curation of exhibits, as seen recently in *Yéil Yádi—Raven Child: A Nathan Jackson Retrospective* (2019) curated by master carver Steve Brown.² Likewise, a growing number of metropolitan museums are demonstrating commitment to collaboration with Alaska Native communities, as seen in the exhibitions *Gifts from the Ancestors: Ancient Ivories of the Bering Strait* (Chan 2013a; Fitzhugh et al. 2009) that ran at the Princeton University Art Museum and *Objects of Exchange: Social and Material Transformations on the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Glass 2011) held at the Bard Graduate Center in New York.

Construction of new museums and creative redesign of existing galleries in Alaska over the past 10 years have offered timely opportunities to involve communities in exhibit-making processes. In 2010, the exhibition *Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska* opened in the new 10,000-square-foot Smithsonian

Arctic Studies Center in the Anchorage Museum (see Crowell this volume). *Living Our Cultures* represents the culmination of an eight-year multi-institutional partnership that involved over 100 cultural advisors who contributed their voices to the gallery space, catalog, and website (Crowell et al. 2010). In 2016, the Alaska State Museum (ASM) reopened with new permanent galleries in the Father Andrew P. Kashevaroff building in Juneau. Exhibit development at ASM involved community consultation that influenced thematic content and the layout of displays, including a Tlingit clan house co-designed by members of the *Áak'w Kwáan* (see Carlee and Ehlers this volume; Miller 2015). In 2017, the Alaska Gallery at the Anchorage Museum reopened with 12,000 square feet of new thematic areas focused on human interaction with the Alaska landscape. Displays of museum objects in the Alaska Gallery are enlivened by immersive soundscapes, videos, and interactives informed by recent work with representative community members (Dunham 2016). In Ketchikan, renovation of the main gallery at the Tongass Historical Museum offered an opportunity to collaborate with the local community through forums, inter-

views, and social media to develop the multivocal exhibit *Ketchikan is...* that opened in 2018 (Ketchikan Museums 2018). These museum–community collaborations offer an example of how seeking balance between curatorial formulations and community aspirations can lead to a new museology focused on (re)presenting cultural heritage through multiple perspectives (e.g., Peers and Brown 2003). The pursuit of collaborative projects by museum colleagues across the state also provided valuable guidance for a new exhibition in Nome.

NOME /SITNASUAQ

Nome (known today as *Sitnasuaq* [Inupiaq]) stretches across the southern edge of the Seward Peninsula and merges into the rough coastal waters of Norton Sound (Fig. 2). Rolling tundra blanketed with lichen and berries melds into the foothills of the Kigluaik Mountains and provides a home for a diversity of mammals and birds including moose, muskox, fox, ptarmigan, and tundra swans. Clear, fast-flowing rivers provide nutrients for northern pike, whitefish, Arctic grayling, and all five species of Pacific

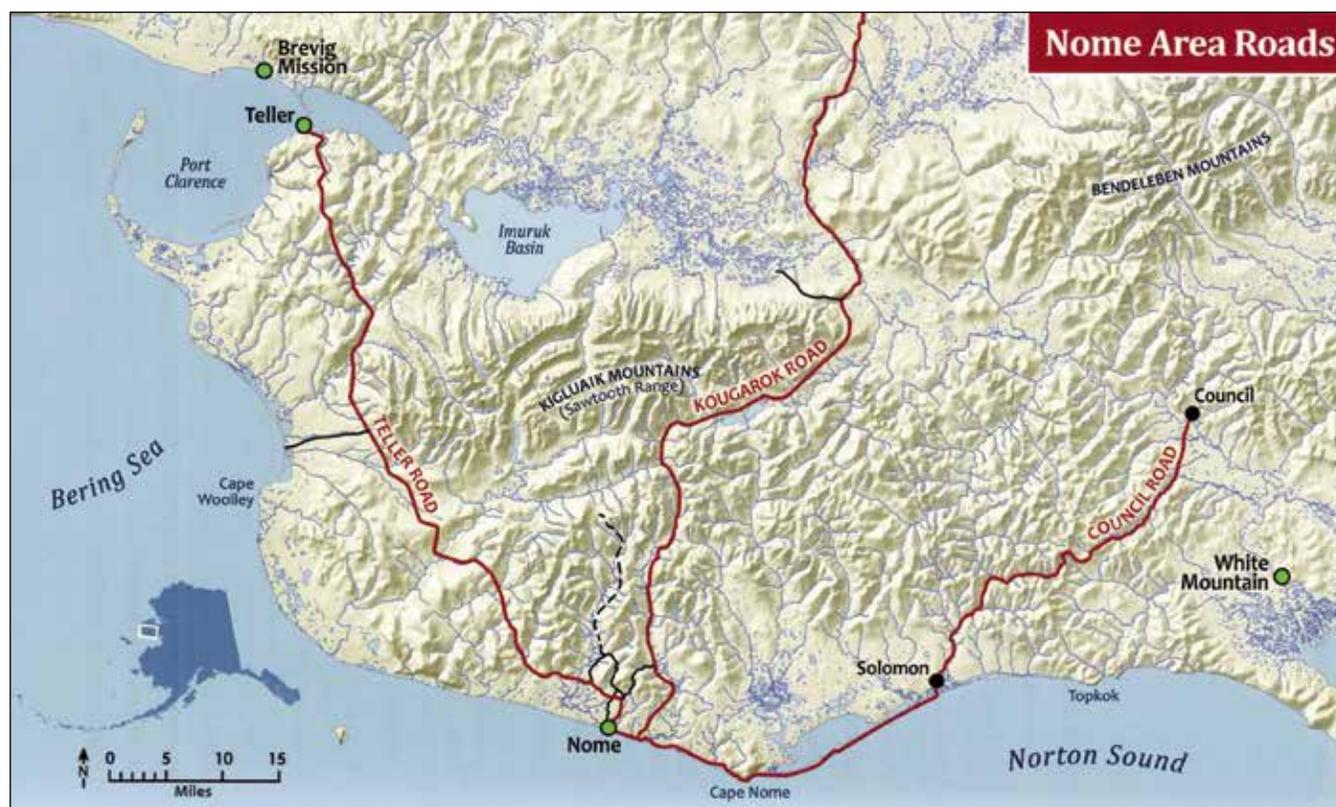


Figure 2. Three main roads lead out of Nome and stretch across more than 250 miles of coastline, tundra, and rocky hills on the Seward Peninsula, Map from Sutton and Steinacher 2012.

salmon returning to spawn. During spring and fall, migratory seals, walrus, and whales can be spotted following the pack ice as it moves steadily through the Bering Strait.³

Alaska Native communities have relied on the rich natural resources of the Bering Strait region for over 4000 years (e.g., Anungazuk 2009; Burch 2006; Seeganna 1988). The area is home to 20 villages and three cultural groups, including Inupiat, Central Yup'ik, and St. Lawrence Island Yupik peoples. Bering Strait Native communities practice a seasonal cycle of culturally based activities that are guided by a set of time-honored values and framed by a reverence toward nature.⁴ Visible reminders of the area's deep cultural roots can be seen at Cape Nome, where dozens of over-500-year-old house depressions surrounding the old village of Ayasayuk speckle the tundra (Bockstoce 1979:81–85). Recent archaeological findings at the mouth of the Snake River also indicate year-round habitation in the Nome area before frequent interaction with Euro-Americans (Eldridge 2014). Successful fishing, cross-cultural trade fairs, and increasing numbers of Western ships during the late 1800s prompted new generations of Bering Strait residents to establish summer camps and more permanent residences along the northern coastline of Norton Sound (e.g., Ray 1975).

The 1898 discovery of gold on Anvil Creek brought waves of steamships and *umiak* (open skin boats) to the Nome beach, and by 1900 the population had swelled to 20,000 individuals seeking their fortunes on the sandy shore and crowded streets (Cole 1984; McLain 1969; Phillips-Chan 2019). Over the next 100 years, Nome experienced dramatic changes in development patterns following drops in gold prices, the advent of world wars, and a series of catastrophic Bering Sea storms and citywide fires (Gillette 2008). Despite the harsh environment and rural location, the town of Nome has continued to endure with steadfast residents who forge a connection to the land that generations of people have called home.

A NEW MUSEUM FOR NOME

Smithsonian field collector Edward Nelson traveled along the snow-cruised coastline of Norton Sound in the spring of 1880 and stopped close to Ayasayuk, where he acquired over 500 items of Inupiaq material culture from bird spears and seal net floats to engraved ivory drill bows and decorated boxes for arrowheads (Chan 2013b:79–83; Nelson 1899).⁵ The heritage objects assembled by Nelson

represented the first sizable collection from Cape Nome, and it would be 20 years before another collecting craze swept through the area.

The Nome gold rush enticed thousands of prospectors from the Lower 48 to the crowded tent city sprawled along the beach. Families from King Island, Little Diomedea, Wales, Savoonga, and Gambell also traveled to Nome, where they set up camps on the Snake River Sandspit. Native families launched diverse economic ventures that included hauling freight for steamships, selling wild game and furs, and keeping up a steady production of ivory carvings and sealskin mukluks for sale (Borden 1928:132; Renner 1979:14, 75).⁶ Old household articles such as skin scrapers, bola weights, wood ladles, and stone blades also made their way into a burgeoning consumer market eager for Indigenous representations of Arctic life (Ray 1980:7).

Summer tourists to Nome, as well as local business owners, miners, and homemakers, sought out ivory artwork, fur clothing, and other cultural items for sale from Bering Strait families and mercantile stores, such as the Golden Gate Store and A. Polet Store (Phillips-Chan 2019:48, 70). Collectors displayed new curios and older cultural items inside both Victorian homes and rough-hewn cabins as part of fashionable arrangements along walls and atop side tables (Krug and Krug 1998:156–160; Kunkel 1997:92, 146). Over the ensuing years, large and small collections of Bering Strait material would be assembled; some objects remained in Nome with established families while other collections traveled aboard steamships, and later airplanes, on return journeys to reconnect with relatives or seek out fortunes in less-demanding environments.

During the late 1950s, Nome historian Carrie M. McLain traveled across the country to visit former residents and locate historical photographs and objects to start a museum in Nome.⁷ Carrie McLain's efforts to preserve local history were soon followed by State of Alaska initiatives during the 1960s to celebrate the centennial purchase of Alaska through capital projects dedicated to showcasing the state's history. In 1967, the City of Nome applied for and received state funding to build a small, 1000-square-foot museum on Front Street.⁸ One of the founding donations included a collection of photographs and ivory artwork from Carrie McLain. Upon her passing in 1973, the Nome Common Council renamed the museum the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum in recognition of her efforts to preserve and share Nome's history.

Over the past 50 years, the Carrie McLain Museum has benefited from generous donations of artifacts, photographs, and archival materials from individuals looking to return family treasures and memories to Nome. The museum collection now contains over 15,000 historical and cultural objects, 12,000 photographic prints and negatives, and several hundred boxes of historical documents. The museum's greatest collection strength includes ivory carvings and heritage objects from the Bering Strait acquired during the height of the gold rush. The collection also features a significant number of items related to gold mining, sled dogs, and reindeer herding, as well as business and household articles from early Nome and archaeological material from the surrounding region. A small but growing collection of contemporary Alaska artwork, including pieces by Sonya Kelliher-Combs and Ron Senungetuk, strives to bridge the temporal gap with the historical material and give voice to individual narratives and ideologies (see Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Macdonald 2006).⁹

The museum collection in Nome quickly outgrew the 1967 building, and by the 1990s objects and records were spilling into facilities and storage spaces across town with limited organization and environmental controls.¹⁰ The building's prime location on Front Street also placed the museum in a flood zone, which forced staff to evacuate the collection several times. Lack of space and natural threats to the collection provided the impetus for City of Nome staff and community members to advocate for a new museum beginning in 2003. City efforts to procure funding for a new museum coincided with endeavors by Kawerak, Inc., a regional nonprofit corporation organized under the Bering Straits Native Association, to develop and fund construction of a cultural center in Nome. Early discussions for the city and Kawerak to join forces and build a shared facility fell flat, as questions arose over construction costs, space allotments, collections stewardship, and decision-making authority (*Nugget* staff 2004:12, 14).

In 2010 and 2011, the City of Nome received capital funding from the State of Alaska to construct a new building to house the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum. A flurry of tense deliberations ensued over the next three years that focused on the location of the new building and whether the facility should include Kawerak's Katirvik Cultural Center as well as the City of Nome's Kegoayah Kozga Public Library (Medearis 2014:1, 4).¹¹ Additional financial support from private, corporate, and founda-

tion partners ultimately ensured the inclusion of both the cultural center and the library in the new Richard Foster Building (RFB), named after long-serving Alaska Representative Richard Foster (1946–2009).¹² General contractor ASRC SKW Eskimos broke ground for the RFB in 2014, and in 2016 the 18,000-square-foot facility was completed at a total cost of \$19 million. The grand opening celebration featured speeches, dances, and a feast that focused on coming together as a community (Phillips-Chan 2016:19–20).

ENVISIONING A COMMUNITY EXHIBITION

Museums in rural Alaska are uniquely positioned to form long-term relationships with local communities that can advance collaborative projects based on the unique cultural values of the region (Gaither 1992:5; Griebel 2013:10). A new exhibition for Nome offered an opportunity for fresh local representations and narratives on Bering Strait culture and place. The exhibition also held promise for an inviting setting where parents and Elders could teach children about their cultural history, an engaging area where objects could evoke oral histories and traditional knowledge, and a creative space where artists could draw inspiration from historical material (Brumfiel 2003:214; Henrickson 2001:93).

A need to connect the historical collection with our contemporary community led to adaptation early on of an upstreaming method used by ethnohistorians to look at a period of study from the present and then backward to the past (Burch 2010:131; Jensen 2012:145). Together, museum staff and the Nome MLC envisioned thematic areas around collection strengths that could address topics of current concern and historical relevance to the Bering Strait. The five selected themes included *The Natural Landscape*, *The Tent City*, *Building a Town*, *Staying Connected*, and *Nome Today and Tomorrow*.¹³ Displays within themes were visualized to feature modern and archival photographs as well as contemporary artwork and historical objects to help illustrate patterns and connections between historical eras (Fig. 3).

The new exhibition carried significant potential to communicate commonalities within the blended histories and cultures of Nome. For instance, a cursory reading of the collection as Native and non-Native overlooks specific nuances and connections that the objects hold. A squirrel-skin parka worn by musher Gunnar Kaasen



Figure 3. A display on Bering Strait Native celebrations emphasizes connections between historical eras with dance beads from the 2000s, a raven mask from the 1960s, and a photograph of children dancing from the early 1900s.

in the collection can speak to the knowledge and skill of an Inupiaq seamstress, but it also provides understanding into the history of sled dog racing, clothing assimilation, and the interrelationship of our community members. Rather than delineate our differences, the exhibition was envisioned to celebrate our connections and strengthen us as we move into the future. Immersive areas, such as one on food and fishing, also offer an example of these shared experiences with images and stories that illustrate the compositional richness of our families (Fig. 4). Conceptualization of a community-focused exhibition that could play a formative role in cross-cultural engagement and historical understanding offered critical guidance as exhibition planning and design began in 2015.

EXHIBITION STARTUP CHALLENGES

As plans took off for *Nome*, a number of challenges rose to the forefront that may resonate with other museums juggling projects while striving to incorporate best practices of collaborative exhibit development. First, a delayed start to building construction meant we were designing

an exhibition for a yet-to-be-built space. This necessitated a balancing act in staff time and financial resources between building decisions such as flooring, lighting, and fixtures and exhibit decisions such as object layouts, graphics, and interactives.

A second challenge was the lack of existing data on the objects and archival materials, as well as the dispersed nature of the collection. Before we could conceptualize a major exhibition, we needed to know what there was to work with in the collection. A comprehensive inventory was undertaken of all the historical and cultural material along with detailed examination of the photograph and archival collections. Due to the impending move, objects were inventoried, entered into the database, and immediately packed for relocation to the new museum. Although this assembly-line method proved effective in processing the collection, it left little time for exhibit work involving hands-on discussions of objects with community members.

Finally, each phase of the two-part exhibition had a turnaround time of less than a year, which had to encompass content development, writing, and design as well



Figure 4. Thematic areas on food and fishing communicate the shared importance of these activities to the Nome community, 2017.

as fabrication, shipping, and installation. This fast-paced production stretched the resources of our small museum staff and limited opportunities for lengthy community involvement. Outside of exhibit development, community members were encouraged to stay connected with the museum through site tours, open houses, and volunteer opportunities, from helping to break down old exhibits to cataloging and labeling objects (Fig. 5).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE EXHIBIT PROCESS

During initial exhibit development, it became clear that community collaboration needed to encompass various modes of engagement. Reliance on discussion of objects for exhibit content, involving hands-on examination of materials and construction, was not going to be possible

with a building under construction and objects being packed for the move across town. The museum needed to create additional avenues for community involvement. As emphasized by Byrony Onciul (2013:81), a community is not a homogenous entity but “multifaceted, ever-shifting, loosely connected groups of people.” This lens is helpful when seeking out museum–community partnerships, as discovered in Nome where some community members wanted to look at and discuss objects, while others wanted to share oral histories, contribute objects and photographs, or lend their unique skills. Flexibility in the collaboration process allowed the museum to partner with more individuals, support participant strengths, and foster local ownership in the exhibition process and product.

As a starting point, the museum drew on existing relationships with local groups for discussions about the new exhibition. Members of the Nome MLC met with



Figure 5. King Island Elder Grace Pullock (left) discusses a skin scraper with Hannah Atkinson (center) and Daphne Stein (right) during a museum cataloging workshop held in partnership with King Island community members and the Nome Archaeology Camp in 2015.

museum staff and the design team to recommend themes and share oral histories for exhibit content (Fig. 6). MLC members also participated in filmed interviews and donated materials, including a rocker box, for displays. A group of Elders from the King Island Native Community also met with museum staff to envision a new skin boat display. Elders participated in the review of shop drawings, selection of objects, and discussion of appropriate content to share with visitors (Fig. 7).

Group discussions helped to foster shared understandings of exhibit content, but internal hierarchies sometimes hindered communication from all participants. To increase the diversity of voices, the museum extended an open invitation for local “community historians” to share photographs and stories within the new exhibition. Minimal response to the community-wide invitation led to the museum seeking out specific individuals who possessed knowledge on historical and cultural topics.¹⁴ Personal invitations to participate in the exhibition were met with more success, and interviews were held with a diverse cross-section of the community, including subsistence hunters, fishermen, gold miners, birders, mushers, artists, traditional dancers, and local business owners. Interviews were recorded and filmed on site where possible, such as at fish camp, inside gold dredges, and during a dance festival (Fig. 8). Transcriptions of audio and

film footage were integrated into the exhibit and added to the museum archives for future community research and programming.

Several Nome community members sought to be involved with the exhibition by contributing their unique skills and resources. Museum and Library Commissioner Charlie Lean helped to prepare a 17-foot kayak frame for display and used the restoration process as a teaching experience for museum staff (Fig. 9).¹⁵ Nome historians Carol Gales and Jim Dory donated a double-pane window from the Discovery Saloon, and miner Ron Engstrom donated a 100-year-old pump organ from St. Joseph Catholic Church to be used in a display on historic preservation (Fig. 10). Local photographers, including Esther Pederson and Wilfred Anowlic, donated images from around the region to help illustrate exhibit themes (Fig. 11).¹⁶

The museum also sought to engage local youth in the exhibition process and explored several options for involvement, including collections research, creative writing, and making artwork. Based on expressed interest, the creation of artwork was pursued through a two-day watercolor workshop in August 2017. Fifteen youth between the ages of 8 and 16 participated in the workshop led by local art instructor Angela Hansen (Fig. 12). Students painted the people, places, and activities that made Nome special to them and shared their thoughts in short interviews.



Figure 6. Nome Museum and Library Commissioners meet with museum staff and the exhibit team at Formations, Inc. to share ideas for the new exhibition during the collections move, 2015.



Figure 7. King Island Elders Ray Paniataaq, Wilfred Anowlic, John Pullock, and Joe Kunnuk Sr. discuss skin boat construction during planning for phase two of Nome, 2016.



Figure 8. Nome resident Nancy Mendenhall and granddaughter Ayla Kavairlook check on salmon in their smokehouse during a filmed interview for Nome, 2016.



Figure 9. Museum and Library Commissioner Charlie Lean and museum aide Sam Cross repair a Norton Sound kayak frame in preparation for the new exhibition, 2016.



Figure 10. Discovery Saloon homeowners Carol Gales and Jim Dory pose with a window donated to the museum and featured in Nome in a display on historic preservation, 2016.



Figure 11. An immersive kitchen area in Nome includes images of subsistence foods donated by local photographers Esther Pederson and Wilfred Anowlic.

Digital images of the artwork, interview narratives, and photographs of the artists formed part of a new display focused on Nome’s future.

FINDING BALANCE IN THE EXHIBITION FRAMEWORK

Local knowledge and oral histories shared during engagement with community members helped shape content for *Nome*. The exhibit attempts to find balance between curatorial writing and local voices through a combination of interpretive text and personal stories communicated through authored quotes on photomurals, display case windows, and reader rails (information stands with graphic panels). Audiovisual components also offer visitors an opportunity to hear community stories, on topics from fishing and gold dredges to traditional dancing

and dogsled racing, via handsets, video monitors, and touch screens placed throughout the gallery (Fig. 13). Community member expectations and aspirations also impacted the physical structure of the exhibition, including the presentation, engagement, and delivery of exhibit content.

DISPLAY CASES VS. IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

The Carrie McLain Museum is the only museum in the Bering Strait region, and for many of our community members it is their first museum experience. At the forefront of exhibit design was the inclusion of elements that could help visitors feel at ease, such as creating a familiar-looking environment with contemporary photographs from the region, local sounds, and natural colors. Inclusion of alternate presentation methods such as im-



Figure 12. Art instructor Angela Hansen demonstrates a painting technique to Son Erikson during a watercolor workshop for phase two of Nome, 2017.

mersive environments also sought to diminish physical and mental barriers that can surround objects housed in museums (e.g., Ames 2003).

Each of the five thematic areas delivers content via display cases, open decks, and immersive settings. Display cases reference wood crates that were packed aboard steamships that traveled to Nome (Fig. 14). Upper sections of the “stacked crates” provide space for signage, photographs, and authored quotes. Lower sections include pull-out drawers for open storage. Standard case interiors feature LED lighting with deep decks and slat wall panels that accommodate graphic panels, gravity shelves, and artifact mounts.¹⁷ Enclosed display cases offer the museum controlled lighting, dust mitigation, and secure access to objects. The cases also assist in highlighting small and fragile items.

Flat decks with clear acrylic shields provide an alternative to enclosed case design. The decks offer clear views of objects while still keeping collection materials outside of the touch zone. Open decks also offer an effective and economical method to display large objects from the collection, such as a dogsled from the first Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in 1973 (Fig. 15).

Immersive environments feature a range of touch props, interactives, audiovisual programs, and object displays. For example, visitors to the *Tent City* area can enter a stylized façade of a canvas tent to imagine life in early Nome and learn more about the McDaniel mining family (see Fig. 1). Inside the tent, visitors encounter a barrel with a tactile gold pan, a steamer trunk, and distressed wood shelves with layered object displays behind a clear shield. Stacked “crates” on the right feature a showcase



Figure 13. An immersive environment on gold dredges weaves together community narratives through local stories and knowledge shared in a documentary film, quotes, and photographs, 2018.

interior for small items, and three lift doors on the front reveal answers to questions about the tent city. An interactive rocker box next to the tent invites visitors to experience a historic technique for mining placer gold. Since the exhibition opened, the diversity of presentation methods have been an effective technique for encouraging visitor engagement and potentially assisted in prompting a visual and mental switch that reignites interest and reduces visitor fatigue (Hill 2006).

DO NOT TOUCH VS. PLEASE TOUCH

Integration of open decks and immersive areas necessitated a strategic approach to the protection of museum objects. Rather than posting “Do Not Touch” signage, the exhibition attempts to make creative use of physical and visual barriers. Acrylic shields, stepped platforms, and

reader rails all help to position objects outside of the touch zone while affording up-close viewing opportunities.

Conversations with community members revealed strong interest in things to *do* in the new exhibition. The request for interactives influenced the design of diverse sensory experiences, among them pull-out drawers, animal fur squares, audio discoveries, lift-the-flap panels, touch props, scent elements, flip cards, and rotating wheels displaying exhibit content. Interactive experiences are not confined to a children’s area but appear throughout the gallery with labels such as “Pull” and “Push” to invite exploration by visitors of all ages.

The area on historic preservation offers an example of “Please Touch” with a stepped deck fronted by a reader rail that features two slide interactives and a series of tactile architectural elements (Fig. 16). Visitors can push a button on the right rail to hear organ music, while a nearby



Figure 14. Exhibit cases reference old wood shipping crates and feature various configurations of open-display drawers, slat wall panels, and open decks as seen here in the phase one exhibit installation, 2016.

reading bench invites visitors to peruse books on the built history of Nome. Active engagement with these rather simple interactives suggest that they are some of the most popular exhibit elements and help to foster interest in the associated content.

ANALOG VS. DIGITAL DELIVERY

Exhibit planning and design for *Nome* provided a timely opportunity to envision content delivery through the use of analog and digital techniques. Physical or analog methods to deliver exhibition information include wall labels, graphic panels, and reader rails, while digital platforms



Figure 15. A 10-foot-long deck with a clear acrylic shield displays a dogsled from the collection loaded with mandatory trail items for the Iditarod; visitors use a menu panel to view programs on a flat screen behind the sled, 2018.

encompass audiovisual programming, touch screens, and websites. Visitors to the Carrie McLain Museum span a range of ages and interests, and it was hoped that use of various methods to present content would appeal to a diversity of visitors from Elders to youth (Serrell 2015).

Analog techniques in *Nome* include graphic panels, reader rails, murals, discovery wheels, lift-the-flap panels, flipbooks, and bins of cards. Digital techniques include video monitors, touch screens, and iPads. Combined methods of content delivery appear in each thematic area, as seen in *Building a Town*, which includes an over-size book with photographs of Nome houses as well as a framed touch screen with categorized images from reindeer herding to mining. In *Staying Connected*, visitors can peruse display cases with text panels and museum objects, a bin of cards with images of historic transportation, and enter a phone booth to listen to oral histories. The area

also features a stylized section of a 1940s metal Quonset hut with content presented on graphic panels, a disc that can be turned to reveal aviation milestones, and an iPad featuring historic aviation films (Fig. 17). Delivering exhibition content through physical components and relatively simple digital technologies has been integral to reaching various interest groups of the community.

REENERGING PARTNERSHIPS

SNAKE RIVER SANDSPIT SITE (NOM-00146)

In 2005, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District discovered a cultural site at the mouth of the Snake River during construction of navigational improvements to the Nome Harbor. Excavation of the Snake River Sandspit site (NOM-00146) by the Corps and community volunteers



Figure 16. An exhibit area on historic preservation encourages sensory exploration with tactile architectural elements, interactive graphic sliders, and an audio discovery. Photograph by Michael Burnett, 2017.

revealed two partial subterranean houses and a midden containing cultural artifacts and faunal specimens dating to the late Western Thule culture over 300 years ago (Eldridge 2014). The site holds significance for Bering Strait communities because material spans an entire year of subsistence activities, which indicates year-round habitation by Native peoples before the gold rush. Discovery of the ancient site prompted collaboration between local organizations but also resulted in conflict between the City of Nome and Nome Eskimo Community over the ownership and storage of uncovered artifacts (McNicholas 2007:1, 5).¹⁸ A memorandum of agreement (MOA) executed in 2011 between the Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer, the city, and the Nome Eskimo Community assisted in easing tension between local stakeholders and outlined stipulations for the archaeological collection, including cataloging by the Corps and exhibition by the Carrie McLain Museum, in consultation with the Nome Eskimo Community.

Exhibit development for *Nome* offered an opportunity to reconnect with the Corps and fulfill the final stipulation of the MOA: an updated museum exhibit and new display case provided by the Corps for the NOM-00146



Figure 17. Content is offered in physical and digital formats as seen here in the Wings and War display with information inside the Quonset hut and on the reader rail, along with an interactive disc that is turned to reveal aviation milestones and an iPad with historic films. Photograph by Michael Burnett, 2017.

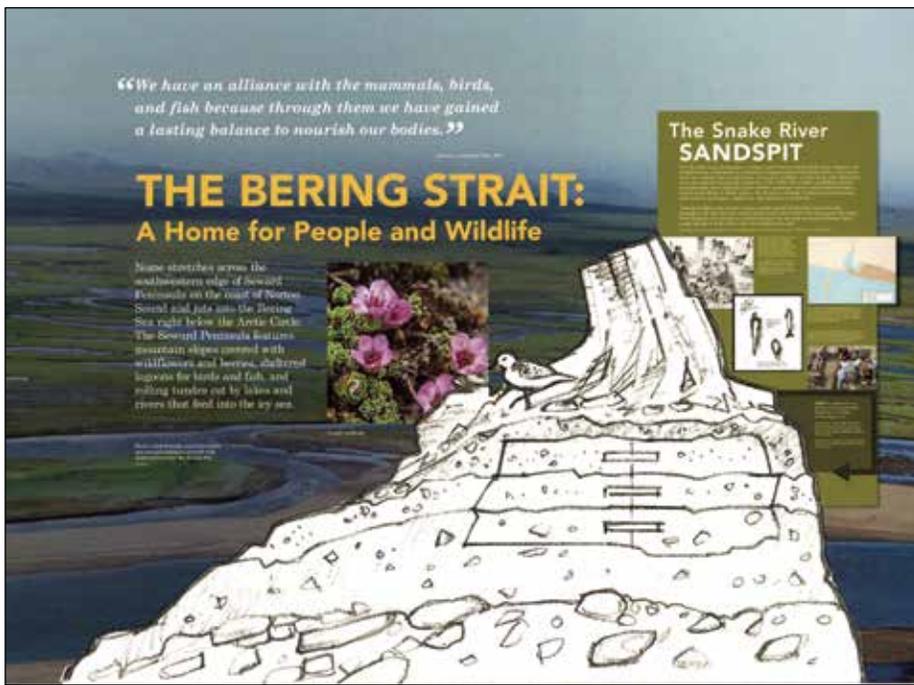


Figure 18a. The Snake River Sandspit display includes a ground roll with pull-out drawers that resemble archaeological sifting screens. Design by Formations, Inc.

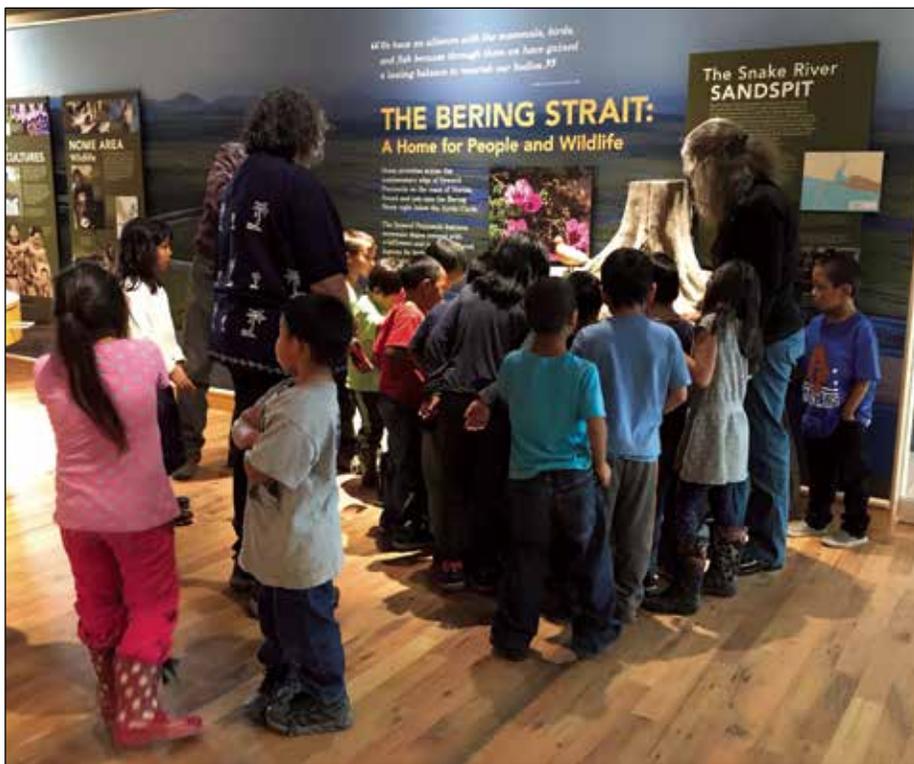


Figure 18b. Elementary students from Teller gather around the Snake River Sandspit display to get a close-up look at cultural material from their region, 2017.

artifacts. Plans for the new exhibit also reignited a partnership with the Nome Eskimo Community, which came onboard to provide valuable assistance on cultural content and object names given in Qawiaraq Inupiaq. The Snake River Sandspit display is designed as a stylized section of ground covered with sand, sea glass, and other findings from the Nome beach and three discovery drawers (Fig. 18a). A sidebar panel provides an overview of the excavation and features a small showcase with objects from the collection. Drawers are designed to resemble sifting screens with gravel backgrounds and graphic inserts. The drawers contain material related to fishing and birding, marine mammal hunting, and household equipment. The scene is presented against a mural that introduces visitors to the Bering Strait and situates the archaeological site within a broader discussion of the natural and cultural history of the region. An audio program projects ambient sounds of migratory birds along the wall to help animate the material and communicate a message of a living culture. The Sandspit display is one of the most popular spaces in the gallery and serves as a visible reminder of the ongoing significance of early Alaska Native lifeways to our region (Fig. 18b).

KING ISLAND UMIQA AT SUMMER CAMP

During development of *Nome*, the King Island Native Community emphasized that an *umiaq* (skin boat) should be included in the new exhibition. King Island families and those from surrounding Bering Strait villages traveled to Nome from the 1900s to the 1960s in long *umiat* that were covered in walrus or bearded seal hides and packed with hunting and fishing gear, clothing, and household articles (e.g., see Bogojavlensky 1969). Today, *umiat* are strong signifiers of cultural strength, Indigenous rights, and traditional ecological knowledge (Fair 2005; Pulu et al. 1980). The museum does not hold a full-size skin boat in its collection, and the last King Island *umiaq* was made over 40 years ago.¹⁹

Initial discussion for an *umiaq* display focused on potential relocation of an older skin boat frame from Anvil Square Park. The MLC weighed in on this possibility and determined the skin boat frame should not be moved as it was an essential landmark that greeted visitors upon their arrival to Nome. Next, King Island Elder Ray Paniataaq and I climbed on top of a local Conex (large metal shipping container) to examine and photograph an old *umiaq* frame. The King Island Elders Council reviewed the photographs and concluded that necessary repairs to the frame would leave little remaining of the original structure. Finally, we explored commissioning a new *umiaq* by a skin boat maker from the region, but a new boat could not be completed within the short timeframe.²⁰

The museum finally pitched the skin boat concept to our design and fabrication team at Formations, Inc., which agreed to take on the challenge. A stream of communication ensued, illustrated with photographs, diagrams, and sewing techniques used for skin boats. King Island community members met at the museum to review shop drawings, look over accompanying objects and photographs, and share construction details for skin boats. Local direction also guided the inclusion of tactile features and the integration of a family scene of cutout images (Fig. 19a).²¹

Upfront distinction between a real *umiaq* and a skin boat prop was important for both flexibility of design and use of alternative materials. The final 23-foot skin boat features a rugged steel-and-wood frame (Fig. 19b) that fits flush against the gallery wall with an open interior to display objects. The cover is made from translucent reindeer skin, which offered a viable substitute for skin from marine mammals that are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972). Inset graphic panels and

objects are organized into groupings of summer supplies, sewing skins, carving ivory, and artwork for sale. Smaller objects are presented inside display cases while other items are left in the open and secured to bases of packing crates. A curved interpretive rail system creates a barrier to the interior and provides additional stories and images, tactile features, and an iPad with historic film footage of *umiat* in Nome. The skin boat rests on a base of stylized beach sand that merges with a photomural on the wall to provide historical context and blend the display into the gallery space.

The circuitous journey of the skin boat display offers an example of the flexibility often required from communities and museums that undertake big ideas for new exhibitions. Although we originally wanted to offer an accurately constructed *umiaq* to visitors, the skin boat prop is an effective alternative. Within the display, the skin boat structure ultimately fades away and creates a backdrop for the stories that animate *umiat* and make the boats an integral component of Bering Strait lifeways.

WORLD WAR II—ERA PHONE BOOTH

Military personnel buildup during the 1940s at Marks Air Force Base in Nome ushered in a new era of telecommunications in the Bering Strait (Lewis 1945). Nome received its first public phone booth shortly after World War II. Patrons could visit the booth inside the Old Federal Building, where the caller would give the operator the number they wished to dial. After about 15 minutes, the call would connect and the operator would yell at the patron to pick up the phone and begin talking. After many years of active service, the phone booth, like other utilitarian objects, moved from the realm of defunct technology into historical artifact. The phone booth sat quietly in off-site storage for over two decades but was mentioned frequently by community members during exhibit planning for *Nome*.

The phone booth needed to be reenergized for the new exhibition, and the museum looked to produce audio recordings with local community members that could be integrated into the display. However, development of a new digital audio program proved too ambitious within our time frame. Searching for an alternative, the museum reached out to the UAF Oral History Program, which partnered with us to use and edit recordings from the 1996 Nome Communities of Memory Project.²² In developing the phone booth interactive, the museum reached out to participants from the 1996 project to discuss the

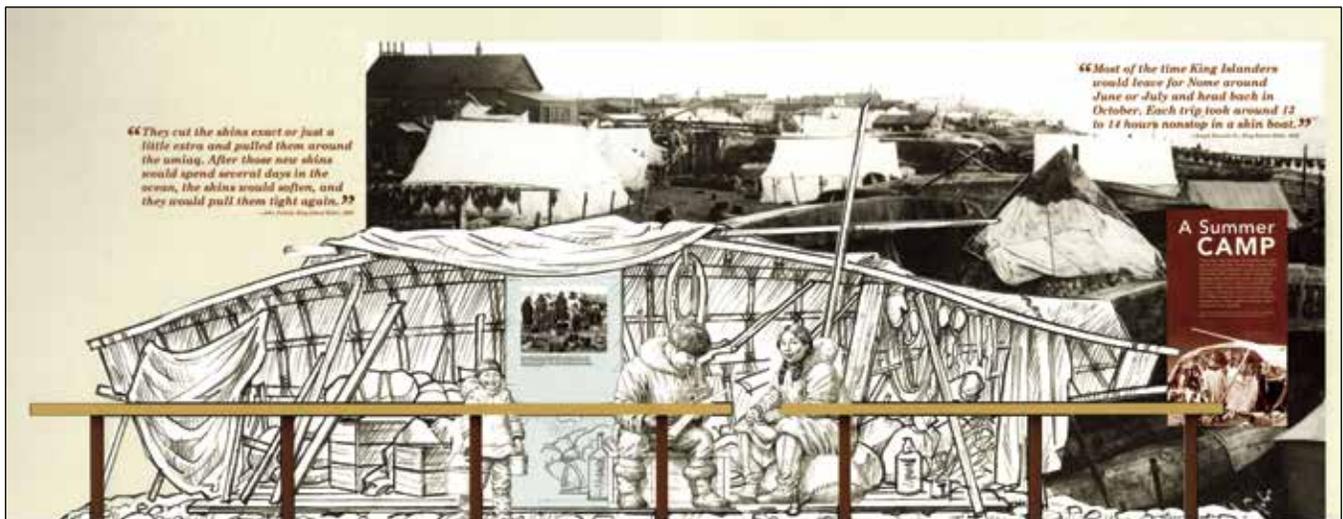


Figure 19a. The summer camp area features a 23-foot-long skin boat model loaded with props, objects from the collection, graphics, and life-size cutout images. Design by Formations, Inc.



Figure 19b. An interpretive rail along the front of the skin boat creates a barrier to display artifacts and provides additional stories, images, and tactile opportunities for visitors, 2017.

new exhibition. Former storytellers and their families provided photographs and biographical information to create an illustrated phone book for the display. Visitors can now step into the booth, pick up a rotary dial phone, peruse the phone book, and dial their selection to hear historic audio recordings from community members.

The phone booth interactive requires only modest technological features, but it is one of the most-frequented areas by children and adults (Fig. 20). Originally designed to connect Nome to the outside world, the phone booth now offers a micro setting of our town with a link to stories from the past. This short social biography of the phone booth is shared because often in the museum field we are pushed to continually develop new content and narratives for exhibitions. However, museums are often faced with real-time challenges such as galleries under construction, disorganized collections, or shortages of staff and resources that leave us discouraged at the extent we were able to collaborate with our stakeholders. In our pursuit of new knowledge production, we may overlook existing resources that can offer rich historical insight and be used as a valuable framework for contemporary perspectives.

CONTINUING THE DISCOURSE

Nome is not intended to be a closed narrative but rather a living space with ongoing dialogue. Interactive features, such as a hands-on topographic map paired with iPads playing regional films, help to elicit continued stories about families, subsistence activities, and past ways of life



Figure 20. Students from Teller form a line outside the telephone booth for a chance to listen to recordings from local historians and knowledge bearers, 2017.

(Fig. 21). In 2018 the museum launched a gallery talk series that reinvents community collaborators back into the exhibit space for public discussion on contemporary topics utilizing collection objects and photographs as points of discourse. Objects are also made available for community research, discussion, and educational programming, including the annual Nome Archaeology Camp (Fig. 22).²³

Spring 2020 will see the integration of a maker space into the exhibition to foster multigenerational engagement and conversation. The interactive area will be positioned around the *Building a Town* theme and feature KEVA planks, unique building blocks that encourage creative play and problem-solving for children and adults. KEVA models of Nome structures including a dogsled, steamship, and historic building will be on display as well as challenge cards to inspire and foster STEM development.

Conversations are continuing outside the museum in a multiauthored exhibit catalog that will expand on material presented in *Nome*. The catalog will feature over 50

historical and cultural objects from the Carrie McLain Museum along with archival materials and contemporary photographs from the region. Object stories will be framed by a series of essays from community members ranging from subsistence practices and ivory carving to the establishment of roads and airline services in Nome. The catalog seeks to offer insight into the unique social biographies of the collection and provide a space for community members to share their own perspectives on meaningful aspects of Nome history and culture.

DISCUSSION

Nome: Hub of Cultures and Communities across the Bering Strait seeks to communicate the vibrant history and culture of Nome and the Bering Strait region through a rich assemblage of objects, images, and local stories. Development of the exhibition from 2015 to 2017 involved a multimodal approach to collaboration that involved the integration of local knowledge, resources, and skills from community members. Not all attempts to engage the local community in the exhibit process met with success, such as the unproductive community historian project. Likewise, the exhibition could have benefited from the perspectives and stories of more individuals from surrounding Bering Strait communities. Additional object discussions with local knowledge bearers would have further guided and enriched exhibit content. As a regional museum, we have



Figure 21. A topographic map of the region elicits stories of camping, hunting, and fishing from old and young visitors alike, 2018.



Figure 22. Participants in the 2016 Nome Archaeology Camp work on a 3-D modeling exercise of an ivory harpoon head from the Snake River Sandspit site.

the invaluable opportunity and responsibility to continue partnerships with our community members.

As director of the Carrie McLain Museum and one who was enmeshed in development of *Nome*, a critical review of the exhibition's success would be better accomplished through visitor surveys, tracking metrics, and other evaluative measures. However, I hope the preceding discussion offers insight, and perhaps encouragement, for other museums attempting to collaborate with communities and integrate local stories into the exhibit space. Real-time challenges such as buildings under construction and dispersed collections can prompt alternative and creative modes of engagement with your local community. Museums that hold in-depth knowledge of their local stakeholders have the unique capacity to reach out to specific groups or individuals and adapt exhibit involvement based on unique interests and skill sets. For our museum, local participation helped to shape the exhibition framework but also served, perhaps more importantly, to foster longitudinal relationships between the Nome community and the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The new Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum and exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the Nome community, including an invaluable cohort of over 70 collaborators who shared oral histories and local knowledge, contributed materials, and championed the new museum and exhibition from start to finish. A complete list of collaborators appears in the exhibition and will be featured in the forthcoming exhibit catalog. Generous financial support from the State of Alaska, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation, the Rasmuson Foundation, and the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation allowed for construction of a state-of-the-art, multiuse facility suited to the shifting permafrost and harsh climate of the Bering Strait. Lead team members in design, production, and installation of the exhibition included Fred Paris, David Hancock, Stephen State, Chris Williams, and John Higgins (Formations, Inc.), Scott Jones (Atlas Fine Art Service), and Sarah Betcher (Farthest North Films). Generous use and coor-

dination of video content was provided by Diana Haecker (*Nome Nugget*) and Robyn Russell (UAF Oral History Program). Additional organizational support came from Kelly Eldridge (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District), Yaayuk Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle (Kawerak Eskimo Heritage Program), and Mike Sloan and Jacob Martin (Nome Eskimo Community). Joe Horton, David Barron, Troy Miller, and JJ Alvanna (City of Nome Public Works Department) contributed their construction and electrical skills to help us reach our opening dates. Thank you to Amy Steffian, Ken Pratt, and the two peer reviewers for their comments and suggestions that greatly improved this paper. *Quyana*. Thank you!

ENDNOTES

1. *Naut'staapet—Our Plants* opened at the Alutiiq Museum on May 3, 2019. The exhibition is based on the research of anthropologist Priscilla Russell, who worked with culture bearers in Kodiak communities to collect and prepare plants in 1990. The free Alutiiq Plants app for Android and iOS, designed by Jonelle Adkisson, features a selection of Kodiak plants and traditional uses along with audio files of Alutiiq plant terms. <https://alutiiqmuseum.org/visit/on-exhibit>
2. *Yéil Yádi—Raven Child: A Nathan Jackson Retrospective* ran at the Walter Soboleff Building in Juneau from April 5 to October 15, 2019, and featured approximately 60 pieces of Jackson's artwork from block prints to bentwood boxes. Jackson and Steve Brown are continuing their collaboration with co-development of a carved screen and house posts for the Alaska State Museum (Hohenstatt 2019).
3. For a detailed overview of the flora and fauna of the Nome area, including handy subsistence and wildlife calendars, see Sutton and Steinacher (2012).
4. For a detailed list of Inupiaq values and principles as outlined by the Sitnasuak Native Corporation, visit <https://snc.org/social-mission/mission-values/>.
5. In 1880, Nelson acquired around 543 cultural objects that he designated as "Cape Nome" that originated from Wales, King Island, Sledge Island, and other Inupiaq community members who were camped along the northern coast of Norton Sound due to food shortages in their home villages. (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7364, Edward William Nelson and Edward Alphonso Goldman Collection, circa 1873–1946 and undated, Box 11, Field Journals, March 13–16, 1880.)
6. The discovery of gold in 1898 permanently shifted the Bering Strait Native curio trade from St. Michael and Port Clarence to Nome. See Hollowell (2004) for further discussion on the growth of Bering Strait curio and archaeological markets.
7. Caroline "Carrie" Mary Stipek (1895–1973) arrived in Nome with her family on the fringe of the gold rush in 1905. After high school she taught in Teller, where she met and married Arthur T. McLain. Upon returning to Nome, Carrie raised four children, served as the Nome city clerk from 1943 to 1957, and wrote about life on the Seward Peninsula. One of her first efforts to share Nome history included a display of photographs inside the old Pioneer Igloo #1 located at the corner of First Avenue and Bering Street in 1959.
8. Centennial museums represented a statewide effort to gather and preserve cultural and historical material from diverse regions of Alaska. Museum displays of artifacts, including natural history specimens and archaeological objects, also served to publicize the importance of Alaska's rich natural resources and deep history to the rest of the United States. Other museums constructed in 1967 include the Alaska State Museum (Juneau), Pioneer Museum (Fairbanks), Centennial Building (Ketchikan), and Cordova Historical Museum.
9. Integration of contemporary artwork into displays of cultural history appears to be a growing trend among museums with historical collections from Alaska and the Circumpolar North. For a colorful example, check out the exhibition *Kachemak Bay: Exploration of People and Place* at the Pratt Museum in Homer (<http://www.prattmuseum.org/kachemak-bay-an-exploration-of-people-place/>) or visit the Hall of Cultures at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage (<https://www.alaskanative.net/>).
10. The museum on Front Street underwent a major renovation in 1987 to reduce the cluttered appearance of collections and present new displays designed by Dorothy Jean Ray and local assistants Caroline Reader and Bonnie Hahn (see Hill 1987).
11. The RFB is on the north side of town in a relatively out-of-the-way area that inadvertently subverts what Tony Bennett (1995:87) describes as past power practices of the nation state to "show and tell" by placing

museums in the center of cities. The RFB can also be viewed as a social outcome of political exigencies held by various organizations involved in setting boundaries for the shared facility (e.g., see MacLeod 2005).

12. The Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum and Katirvik Cultural Center share an overlapping mission to promote awareness and understanding of the history and cultures of our region. However, museum activities are often collections-focused, drawing from the museum's wealth of historical material assembled over the past 50 years. Although the cultural center contains a growing collection, programming is often at its forefront, from cultural orientation for new hospital employees to hosting support groups for substance abuse. In effect, the museum and cultural center enjoy intermittent partnership on community projects, such as the annual Nome Archaeology Camp, while staff more commonly focus on activities specific to their organizations. Increased collaboration between the museum and cultural center, as well as the library, represents a critical and ongoing area of need if the RFB is to serve as an active and inclusive community resource.
13. The Carrie McLain Museum had fostered a local reputation for accuracy over the years, but there was also skepticism about its ability to reflect a variety of community perspectives, interests, and knowledge. Steven Dubin (1999:9–11) describes museums as “battlegrounds” when complexities of community empowerment and social history vie for influence on the exhibitionary framework. For our museum, local stakeholders were primarily concerned that “their” topic, from sled dogs and gold dredges to skin boats and trains, be included within the new exhibition. This wide range of community interests guided development of the five broad thematic areas.
14. Invitations to participate in the new exhibition as a “community historian” were sent out via the local newspaper, social media, and community listserv. The museum also extended invitations to participate in the exhibition through newspaper articles and city reports, but these did not prove effective in recruiting community collaborators. Minimal response to the invitations affirmed that community members often need to feel personally invested, either in the project or staff, to participate in museum activities.
15. The Norton Sound kayak frame features a single hatch, straight line along the deck ridge, and handgrips on the ends formed by extensions of the bow and stern stringers. The frame features local and manufactured materials, including steamed and bent willow ribs, sealskin lashing, and an elegantly carved bowsprit from driftwood. The kayak had been damaged prior to museum acquisition, with a crushed hatch and a few broken slats. Restoration involved stabilizing the frame and repairs to the hatch using local materials.
16. The Carrie McLain Museum cares for a rich collection of historical photographs but very few contemporary images. In-depth knowledge of the Nome community was extremely beneficial to be able to reach out to specific individuals known for their particular photographic interests. Altogether, 18 local photographers shared images, which gave an invaluable contemporary perspective to the exhibition.
17. The museum explored several options to design artifact flexibility into the exhibit structure. The slat wall panels are an inexpensive method that can accommodate gravity shelves of various widths and positions. Additional objects are displayed on custom brass artifact mounts as well as standard acrylic risers. Many thanks to Dr. Aron Crowell, Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, for his insightful comments and suggestions on removable artifact display systems.
18. Nome Eskimo Community advocated for tribal ownership of the artifacts and storage at a state facility in Anchorage or Fairbanks as the site was excavated under a federal program. The city argued that since the site was located on city lands, the artifacts fell under city ownership and should be stored in Nome. The Nome Common Council decided that the city retain ownership of the artifacts. In 2007, a public viewing of the artifacts was held at Old St. Joe's Hall followed by an exhibit at the Carrie McLain Museum on Front Street with a special reception for the Nome Eskimo Community, whose members expressed approval of the exhibit (Haecker 2007).
19. The last known skin boat from King Island was made in the 1960s by John Saclamana (Ray Paniataaq pers. comm., September 18, 2016).
20. The ongoing challenge of acquiring a skin boat for the new exhibition was captured in a newspaper article that began “*Umiag? Umiag??* Who has an *umiag?*” (Medearis 2016).
21. Community members stressed the importance of the boat construction process as well as the representa-

tion of women and children at camp. This direction guided the inclusion of tactile features for boat construction (driftwood, sealskin rope, walrus skin) and mukluk sewing (bearded sealskin, sinew).

22. The Alaska Humanities Forum sponsored the Alaska Communities of Memory Project from 1994 to 1996 for people across Alaska to share memories about their communities. Gatherings were held in Bethel, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau, Kenai-Soldotna, Kotzebue, Nome, Unalaska, and Wasilla. The University of Alaska Fairbanks selected nine stories from Nome for the UAF Project Jukebox. Jim Sykes and Western Media Concepts videotaped the Nome sessions in February 1996. The original recordings are stored at the Oral History Office in the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks. To listen to the full interviews, visit <https://jukebox.uaf.edu/site/7/comnome>.
23. The National Park Service Nome Archaeology Camp began in 2015 to bring students from Northwest Alaska to Nome for an immersive week of archaeology, oral history, and museum studies. The museum has partnered with the camp each year to offer a range of activities from a cataloging workshop with King Island Elders to hands-on examination of cultural objects and faunal remains from the Sandspit site.

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ARCHEOLOGY ON ICE

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ABSTRACT

Archeology on Ice is a museum exhibition describing the unique archaeological discoveries found melting from ancient ice as a result of climate change. The exhibit results from a partnership between the University of New Mexico Maxwell Museum of Anthropology and the Ahtna Heritage Foundation (AHF). The exhibit was funded by the National Science Foundation and installed at the AHF *C'ek'aedi Hwnax* Legacy House in Copper Center, Alaska, where it serves as an educational resource for the AHF. It includes replicas of unique artifacts collected at ice patches and interprets artifacts from lands traditionally used by Athabascan people. This region now comprises much of Alaska's Wrangell–St. Elias National Park and Preserve and is administered by the U.S. National Park Service. The exhibit includes four videos, artifact replicas, photographs, and interpretive panels. The exhibit's development identified its primary target audiences to be Ahtna tribal members, other Indigenous people, and individuals and groups interested in the Arctic and Alaska, archaeology, and the science of climate change.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of climate warming, rare archaeological materials are emerging from ancient glaciers and ice patches worldwide, and significant archaeological discoveries have been reported from Alaska and the Canadian Yukon and Northwest Territories (Alix et al. 2012; Andrews et al. 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Dixon 2009; Greer and Strand 2012; Hare et al. 2004, 2012; Vanderhoek et al. 2012). To better understand this phenomenon in Alaska, a research program was undertaken in Wrangell–St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST) to locate and preserve artifacts found at small stable glaciers known as ice patches. The project began in 2001 with funding from the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs (NSF-OPP Award 0613002). It was originally based at the University

of Colorado Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research and was subsequently transferred to the University of New Mexico (UNM) Maxwell Museum of Anthropology in 2007, where James Dixon continued to serve as principal investigator and Dorothy Shinn, tribal members, and Ahtna Heritage Foundation (AHF) employees continued to participate and advise the project until it was completed in 2015. A parallel research project funded by the National Park Service (NPS) in Alaska's Lake Clark National Park (LACL) was also part of the larger research program.

Ice patches are cryogenic features that were used in the past for a variety of subsistence activities. Ice patches attract caribou attempting to escape warm temperatures and insects in the summer; other game, such as ground squirrels

and ptarmigan, are often found around them as well. The people who hunted and camped at ice patches occasionally lost tools, weapons, and other objects that became frozen in the ice and preserved for thousands of years. The artifacts recovered from them, along with field observations, indicate that caribou (and possibly sheep) hunting was the most important economic activity at most ice patches in traditional Athabascan territory. The lost artifacts have remained frozen until being exposed by melting ice due to the recent increase in global temperatures.

The artifacts found at these sites provide unique insights into traditional and customary resource use by Athabascan people in specific areas of higher elevation. Most are made of organic materials, such as wood, leather, antler, and birch bark, that soon decompose after being exposed to the environment after the ice melts. Consequently, this research provides a cautionary message that as warming continues, the fragile organic artifacts emerging from melting ancient ice will be lost forever unless they are discovered, collected, and preserved shortly after they are exposed.

The research program in WRST began at the University of Colorado in 2001 and was transferred to the University of New Mexico in 2007. In its initial stages, it focused primarily on identifying ice patches that were most likely to contain artifacts using geographic information systems modeling and geomorphic and environmental analysis (Dixon et al. 2005). This was followed by aerial reconnaissance and archaeological ground survey of ice patches to determine if artifacts melting from the ice were present. Significant artifacts discovered during the course of the fieldwork include ancient arrows (some with preserved feathers and paint), hunting tools, and a partial birch-bark basket. The discoveries provide rare glimpses into perishable material culture of the Athabascan people and a unique link to traditional resource use and people living in the region today. Historic materials, including a metal knife manufactured in France and horseshoe nails, were also found.

EXHIBIT DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

Archeology on Ice is an outgrowth of the collaboration that developed during the field research as a product of the partnership between the AHF and UNM Maxwell Museum of Anthropology. The partnership began in 2001, when Dixon contacted the AHF, described the

proposed research, and AHF expressed interest in partnering in the research. AHF supported and endorsed the proposals submitted to the National Science Foundation, and the grants included funding for one tribal member to participate in the field survey each year. Tribal participation in the field research strengthened the partnership between the research team and the AHF and was sustained throughout the project.

The study area was large, and the only practical way to access the glaciers and ice patches is by helicopter or small fixed-wing aircraft at a few locations where landing is possible. Helicopter use in WRST is tightly controlled, and consequently field crews were small, generally consisting of only three or four people. Tribal members participating in the fieldwork were selected by AHF and included Ruth Ann (Warden) Shinn (two field seasons), Lishaw Lincoln, Albert Craig, Joey Leonard, Jason John, and Roy Hancock. Joeneal Hicks also provided valuable consultation and advice to the research team. In addition, Liana Charley-John and Taña Finnesand coordinated the logistics that enabled tribal members to visit one of the more accessible ice patches at which artifacts had been found. Subsequently, Liana Charley-John, Taña Finnesand, Martin Finnesand, and tribal elders Markle Pete, Phillip Sabon, and Elaine Sinyon were flown by helicopter to the site and shared their insights, observations, and recommendations with the researchers. Concurrently, the AHF and the National Park Service planned, and subsequently constructed, the *C'ek'aedi Hwnax* Legacy House in Copper Center, Alaska.

The principal investigator (PI) made a presentation describing the project to approximately 25 Ahtna tribal members, NPS staff, park visitors, and community members on July 29, 2011, at the Ahtna Cultural Center. Discussion during and following the presentation led to the idea that an exhibition at the *C'ek'aedi Hwnax* Legacy House might be an excellent means to locally share the research findings with a larger audience. At the same time, the AHF would also provide the Maxwell Museum at the University of New Mexico the opportunity to highlight the research with the larger university community and enhance the university's educational outreach with the development of a smaller traveling exhibit. However, it was recognized that it was essential to achieve consensus and funding before proceeding.

Subsequent conversations and discussions between AHF members and researchers led to an outline of exhib-

it themes focusing on Ahtna customary and traditional resource use, climate change in high-altitude regions, and connections between the archaeological materials and contemporary Athabascan culture. This process resulted in a request for supplemental funding for the development and design of *Archeology on Ice* that was submitted in 2013 to NSF under UNM's existing award (# 0613002). The proposal was funded and included support for an Ahtna delegation to travel to New Mexico for initial planning. A subsequent focus group meeting was organized and hosted by AHF in Copper Center, Alaska. AHF and tribal elders, members, and the PI participated in the meeting. AHF agreed to provide photographs, video, and content review, and the Maxwell Museum agreed to produce the draft exhibit text, panels, and videos based on AHF direction and subject to AHF review. These collaborations provided both the AHF and UNM with specific direction for exhibit content and defined the practical parameters for exhibition design. AHF representatives and the PI also met with appropriate WRST personnel to incorporate their recommendations and ideas in the proposed exhibit.

The Maxwell Museum produced two sets of identical exhibit panels and videos, which were ultimately used to create three exhibits, each designed to reach a different audience. The first was scaled to meet the needs and exhibit area of the *C'ek'aedi Hwnax* Legacy House. The second was installed as a temporary exhibit at the Maxwell Museum, where it was enhanced with additional objects. The third was a small traveling exhibit that reused the panels from the Maxwell exhibit; it is available to other venues upon request through the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology.

The primary purpose of the exhibit at the *C'ek'aedi Hwnax* Legacy House is to engage local residents and visitors to the Ahtna region to consider how science and traditional cultural knowledge complement one another and to illuminate understanding about the changing environment and resource use. Furthermore, the exhibit at Copper Center enabled researchers and tribal leaders to share the project's results with local communities and residents and for local residents to share their interpretations about the significance of the archaeological discoveries. This collaborative research and educational partnership grew organically over many years and required patience, perseverance, and trust on the part of the AHF as an organization, tribal members, and the university-based researchers.

EXHIBIT CONTENT

Archeology on Ice presents the results of this decade-long project using graphic panels (Figs. 1 and 2) containing text and reproductions of select artifacts discovered during the field surveys. The exhibits also contain four short educational videos filmed in the spectacular settings of Lake Clark and Wrangell–St. Elias National Parks. The videos, which are also available online as podcasts (Dixon and Taylor 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d), capture the excitement of archaeological discovery. They include interviews with tribal members, scientists, student participants, and NPS personnel. The videos document local knowledge and observations that provide important insights about climate change and the artifacts found at these small glaciers.

Each video focuses on a different aspect of ice patch research. The first introduces ice patch resources and discusses the customary and traditional use of caribou and other resources in Ahtna culture. The second describes the contributions of ice patch archaeology to understanding past human–environment interactions and its relevance to the study of modern climate change. The third shares rare footage of ice patch archaeological finds, including the discovery of a worked caribou hide and an incredibly well-preserved arrow. The final video emphasizes the important role of Indigenous knowledge and collaboration in ice patch research and highlights important aspects of ancient technology that have been revealed by the study of glacial archaeology at various locales in North America.

COLLABORATION

An important aspect of the tribal–university partnership was the recognition of the need to bring local and public attention to the importance of collecting, preserving, and studying the materials melting from ancient ice. The exhibit at the AHF *C'ek'aedi Hwnax* Legacy House opened in November 2014. UNM graduate student Michael Grooms and James Dixon helped install the exhibit, and Dixon spoke at the opening ceremony. The opening in Copper Center was accompanied by a welcoming-home ceremony for the ice patch artifacts that were returned to WRST. The larger enhanced temporary exhibit opened at the Maxwell Museum in September 2014 and was decommissioned in May 2015. Liana Charley-John (executive director of the AHF), Albert Craig (tribal member and field

text of Alaska ice patches and glaciers and their relevance to the lives and history of Native and non-Native people in Alaska, as well as the larger issues of global climate change.

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EXPLORING ALUTIIQ HERITAGE ONE WORD AT A TIME

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ABSTRACT

Every Sunday the Alutiiq Museum publishes the Alutiiq Word of the Week—a short cultural lesson. The program shares Alutiiq language and traditions with radio, print, and digital resources. What began as a community cultural lesson, designed to promote awareness of hidden history, has become a tool for Alutiiq language research. This essay explores language documentation and education in museum settings and reviews the evolution of the Alutiiq Word of the Week program as an example. The discussion illustrates how museums are not simply places to archive language information, but community organizations uniquely situated to assist with the study and sharing of the world's languages.

INTRODUCTION

It's eleven am on a Friday, and Alutiiq Elders are gathered around a conference table sipping tea, socializing, and sharing cultural knowledge at the Alutiiq Museum, a tribal cultural center in Kodiak, Alaska. The six assembled are fluent Alutiiq language speakers and a significant portion of the last people to learn Alutiiq as children. They converse in both English and Alutiiq, switching seamlessly between languages as they discuss topics raised by museum staff members. This week the group focuses on a draft of *Coloring Alutiiq*, a culturally themed activity book the museum is producing for youth (Sholl 2018). They pore over line drawings of Alutiiq clothes and the animals and tools used in their manufacture. For each image Elders discuss Alutiiq vocabulary that could be added to the presentation and make recommendations for the words that best describe the images. Their goal is to reinforce language learning in children as they color pictures of ancestral parkas, boots, and hats. Many of the terms are easily agreed upon. Others, especially the word for a pair of tall skin boots, invoke long thoughtful discussion or are deferred for additional consideration at the next meeting.

This vignette is just one example of the diverse subjects considered at the museum's weekly Elders' Sessions.

Earlier in the month, the group watched a PowerPoint presentation on recently identified archaeological sites. A museum archaeologist presented his finds. He shared site photographs and information on locations, characteristics, and historically known uses. Then, Elders developed an Alutiiq name for each ancestral settlement. The discussion induced memories of travel, resources, and family harvesting activities. This influenced name selection and enriched site provenance.¹ In future weeks, Elders might review Alutiiq terms from a historic account to decode awkward transliterations and confirm or challenge the reported meanings of words. They may share recollections of Alutiiq place names with a researcher or answer a public request for assistance with an Alutiiq title for a local newsletter, award, office sign, or program (Fig. 1).

These gatherings are part of the Alutiiq Museum's *Qik'rtarmiut Alutiit* (or "people of the island") Language Program, a long-term effort to document and preserve the Alutiiq language. Alutiiq is one of the five Alaska Native languages that form the Esk-Aleut language family, a group of indigenous languages spoken from Greenland to the Gulf of Alaska (Woodbury 1984). Alutiiq, also known as Sugpiaq or Sugt'stun, is part of the Eskimoan branch,



Figure 1. Alutiiq speakers Katheryn Chichenoff, Nick Alokli, and Sally Carlough watch a presentation and discuss Alutiiq terminology at an Elders' Session. Staff photograph courtesy the Alutiiq Museum.

and it is most closely related to Central Alaska Yup'ik (Krauss 1982). It is spoken in Prince William Sound, the outer Kenai Peninsula, the Kodiak Archipelago, and the Alaska Peninsula, in two dialects—Chugach Alutiiq and Koniag Alutiiq. The Alutiiq Museum's programs focus on documenting and sharing the Kodiak Island subdialect of Koniag Alutiiq. This includes both the northern and southern ways of speaking found in the Kodiak Archipelago. According to Alutiiq Museum surveys, there are only about 25 fluent speakers of the Kodiak subdialect living today, down from the 45 speakers identified in 2005 (Hegna 2004:6).

Launched in 2003, the *Qik'rtarmiut Alutiit* Language Program unites the efforts of Kodiak Alutiiq speakers, tribes, corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), community organizations, and the Alutiiq Museum for the urgent and arduous work of language preservation. The program documents the Alutiiq language, creates language learning resources and opportunities, trains new Alutiiq speakers, and leads terminological development—all to ensure the continued vitality of Kodiak's first language (Counciller 2010, 2012). Scholars note the critical importance of these efforts to the Kodiak Alutiiq cultural renaissance (Drabek

2012:57) and demonstrate how linguistic research is essential to cultural revitalization (Counciller 2015:347; 2018:117–125, 187–192; Counciller and Leer 2012:1–2; Kimura and Counciller 2009). Documenting the Alutiiq language—from vocabulary and grammatical constructions to regional ways of speaking—provides critical information for cultural education. Languages are lineages, living systems inherited from previous generations (Heggarty 2014). As such, they encode cultural beliefs, values, perspectives, environmental information, cultural encounters, and much more. Alutiiq is a rich record of Kodiak's Native heritage, and it provides an alternative view of Alutiiq history, distinct from archaeological finds or genetic studies. Moreover, documenting and sharing Alutiiq gives authority to culture bearers, builds a sense of community and identity among speakers, helps people live their culture, and returns heritage to community awareness (Counciller 2012:16). For all of these reasons, linguistic research and language education have become a core component of anthropological studies at the Alutiiq Museum.

Although the Friday gatherings of Elders may appear informal on the surface, focused on tasks supporting museum projects, they are rich research sessions. Each

meeting is carefully planned, recorded, and archived. Discussions follow a loose agenda but leave ample room for culture bearers to share their knowledge of history and traditions, in addition to language. The museum infuses the meetings with Alutiiq values. Elders are esteemed partners placed at the center of research efforts. They have authority over linguistic choices—their decisions are honored. Moreover, the museum works to make the research experience respectful by providing a staff liaison, meeting reminders, transportation arrangements, snacks, comfortable seating, an honorarium, and ready acknowledgement of Elders' contributions. The result is an effective linguistic research program that fuels the museum's collections care and education efforts. Elders' Sessions generate linguistic information and oral history for the museum's archives, which feed exhibits, publications, and programs that elucidate Alutiiq traditions. The Alutiiq Word of the Week, the museum's weekly radio broadcast on all things Alutiiq, is an example of this process.

For 22 years, the Alutiiq Word of the Week has shared Alutiiq heritage, integrating information from linguistic, archaeological, historical, and cultural research to create a versatile, lasting educational resource for public education. The development and evolution of the program mirrors that of linguistic studies at the Alutiiq Museum and illustrates the value of Native language research to public programming.

LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AND MUSEUMS

The number of museums devoted to language study, interpretation, and/or education is small but growing. Of the estimated 55,000 museums around the world (De Gruyter Saur 2017), just 80 (0.14%) have a substantial linguistic focus. This includes museums that share the history of language, document specific languages, chronicle the lives of linguists, and interpret writing or written culture (Grepstad 2018).² While additional anthropology museums hold substantial linguistic collections and share exhibits exploring language, the number of museums actively leading language research and education is small. This is especially true for museums focused on non-European languages. Grepstad (2018:5) notes that the majority of living languages are found outside of Europe. However, two-thirds of the museums identified as having a language focus explore European languages. And in the United States, tribal museums and culture centers often address

language documentation and education, but non-Native museums seldom do (McClain 2014:2, 48).

In part, the paucity of museum-based language research and programming reflects the history of museums. Museums originated as object repositories. In the United States, anthropology museums developed from natural history museums to study cultural materials (Wali et al. 2012). They began as places to share curios assembled by the wealthy; evolved into homes for creating, preserving, categorizing, and sharing collections; and have long been defined as institutions that own or use objects (Alexander and Alexander 1996:2; Cameron 2004; Herle 2016; McClain 2014:55; Macdonald 2011). Although there are abundant examples of language collections, historically, archaeological and ethnographic research have produced the bulk of collections found in anthropology museums. Moreover, until the 1970s, the Western museum paradigm slanted museum-based language research toward ancient texts and Eurocentric interpretations of world cultures as past, static, or less developed (Wilson 2012:34). Research on living languages, and the products of this research, fit more comfortably in academic departments rather than museums. Similarly, language education was the domain of school and university classrooms.

Over the past 40 years, the museum landscape has changed dramatically. Questions of representation—the dominance of colonial perspectives, the assumed authority of curators, the lack of source community choices and voices—challenged museums to transform their research and interpretive processes (McClain 2014:56–57; Wali et al. 2012). The new museology redirected institutional attention toward decolonization, collaboration, and public service (Alexander and Alexander 1996:8–10; Macdonald 2011:3). Museums moved away from bounded, paternalistic views of culture, grounded in classification and the dissemination of perceived facts, to a more inclusive, open model that stresses multiculturalism, contextualization, and mutual benefit (Herle 2016; Macdonald 2011:2). Many now work to share the dynamic nature of culture and facilitate experiences that support community interests and participation and build visitor understanding (Wilson 2012:34). Cameron (2004:73) describes this as a transformation from temple (a shrine to art and artifacts) to forum (a place of discussion and idea sharing), although he notes that museums by necessity have elements of both.

Under this new paradigm, there has been a renewed effort to unite learning from research with museum practices (Macdonald 2011:6). Perhaps as a result, language research and programming are on the rise in the museum setting. According to Grepstad, about half of the world's museums with a substantial language focus formed since 2000 (2018:5). Many other museums are exploring ways to integrate multilingualism and even language research into programming. For example, museums in the United States are offering tours and workshops in languages other than English, hosting cultural celebrations for immigrant communities, developing written and digital resources in other languages, holding second-language classes for children, and entering into international exchanges that promote language acquisition and cultural learning (Lever 2015; Wilson 2012:9). There is even a science museum at Ohio State University with a large language research pod in its exhibit gallery. Here visitors can watch linguists at work and participate in linguistic research (Wagner et al. 2015:421).

Why are museums expanding their focus on language research and programming, and why should they do this work? At a broad level, there is an urgent, worldwide need for language documentation and preservation. Of the roughly 6000 languages spoken around the globe today, 43 percent are likely to be lost by the end of this century (UNESCO 2010). Another 40 percent of world's languages will be endangered, leaving few safe (Krauss 2007a:3–4). This situation is particularly pronounced in the Pacific Rim, where an estimated 72 percent of the nearly extinct languages are spoken (Miyaoaka and Sakiyama 2007:xi). This includes most of Alaska's Native languages (Krauss 2007b:408). Organizations like the United Nations, U.S. Administration for Native Americans, the American Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, the Smithsonian Institution, the nonprofit Endangered Language Alliance, and many others emphasize the value of linguistic diversity and the immediate need for research and education to preserve unique pieces of the human experience (Haworth 2017).

Governments are also taking notice. The Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006 provides federal support for the protection of Native American languages. In 2012, Alaska lawmakers passed legislation establishing the Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council, a state-level voice

for language documentation and education (McClain 2014:35–36). This was followed by the Official Languages Act of 2014, legislation that added 20 Indigenous languages to Alaska's list of official languages (Smith 2014). And in 2018, at the urging of the Alaska legislature, Governor Bill Walker declared a state of emergency for Alaska Native languages and directed the Alaska Department of Education to work with tribal partners to promote the use of Native languages in public education (Baxter 2018). All of these circumstances, and growing multilingualism in America, have created new incentives for museums to implement language research and programming. There are also subtler reasons for this work.

Wilson (2012) argues that the goals of language education and modern museology overlap strongly and that museums are uniquely positioned to assist. First, language education has long been provided by schools, and museums have a history of partnering with schools (Wilson 2012:8). Second, language education supports cultural education. The two are tightly linked and complementary. Learning another language strengthens cultural competency. It helps audiences move beyond shame, misunderstanding, ethnocentrism, and stereotyping, a goal of a number of modern museum programs (Wilson 2012:15). Third, many communities have publicly expressed needs for language education or preservation, needs that museums can help address and that help museums demonstrate their commitment to public service (Wilson 2012:6). Finally, museum collections are valuable tools for language education. Objects provide opportunities for experiential learning that can strengthen language lessons. They stimulate multiple ways of learning (Wilson 2012:11–14).

Although Wilson does not explore the value of linguistic research in museums, it is not hard to see how such investigations elucidate the cultural content of objects and provide a foundation for language education in the museum setting (McClain 2014:7). Moreover, in their role as collecting institutions, museums are excellent repositories for the products of linguistic research—notes, texts, audio and video recordings, and photographs. Add to this the limited number of linguists available to document and teach hundreds of threatened languages (McClain 2014:40), as well as the interest of many linguists in theoretical research rather than language documentation or education, and the potential for museums to assist is evident.

THE ALUTIIQ WORD OF THE WEEK

The Alutiiq Museum's efforts to document and teach the Alutiiq language reflect the widening of the museum concept generally and efforts to address the Alutiiq community's strong desire for language preservation specifically. In 1995, the museum was established by eight Kodiak Alutiiq organizations as an archaeological repository.³ Funding secured by the Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA) from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council supported the development of a 5500-square-foot facility. The building was designed to house archaeological collections from the spill area, advance historic preservation, and provide a home for cultural programming already under way at KANA (Pullar et al. 2013). The earliest years of the museum's operations were devoted to establishing institutional systems, developing exhibits, shaping the collections program, and conducting community-based archaeological research (Steffian and Saltonstall 2007).

Alutiiq language research and education, although nascent in Kodiak (Hegna 2004), did not begin formally at the museum until 2003, when the *Qik'rtarmiut Alutiit* Language Advisory Committee (or Qik Committee) formed to coordinate language preservation efforts across the region (Kimura and Counciller 2009:130). Museum staff members helped to lead the island-wide group through strategic planning and then worked to implement aspects of the committee's community language plan.

The first major museum initiative was a master-apprentice program. This three-year effort to grow speakers paired fluent Elders with adult learners for an immersive experience, mirroring language revitalization programs implemented by other Indigenous communities (Hinton and Hale 2001). This important initial project created a foundation for a diversity of language documentation, education, and resource development projects throughout the region that continue today. In particular, it developed a bond between speakers and the museum. Just 15 years after the master-apprentice project commenced, there is an online language portal with a large archive of the language recordings compiled by the museum (<http://languagearchive.alutiiqmuseum.org/home>), a website filled with language education resources (www.alutiiqlanguage.org), a published orthography, a conversational phrasebook, online vocabulary finders, a picture dictionary of Alutiiq terms, digital story books in Alutiiq, an Alutiiq language nest where preschoolers are immersed

in the language, and many other resources built through community partnerships.

One of the museum's significant contributions to this effort was the creation of the Alutiiq New Words Council—a group of Elder speakers assembled to conduct terminological development (Counciller 2010). Languages are living systems that change as cultures change. For Indigenous languages to thrive in the modern world, speakers needed to be able to discuss modern items and concepts, from credit cards to St. Patrick's Day. Funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and advice from the Hawaiian Lexicon Committee (Kimura and Counciller 2012:131, Hua'olelo et al. 2003) helped the museum create the council and establish protocols for word creation. Briefly, council meetings focused on a selection of needed words proposed by anyone. Words moved sequentially through three lists—upcoming, in discussion, and approved—with careful review, discussion, and consensus building. Counciller describes the variety of linguistic techniques used in new word creation and the ways that Elders led this process (Kimura and Counciller 2012:132–134). Equally important, council meetings became a forum for broader linguistic and cultural sharing and, eventually, a model for language research. When the NSF-funded project ended, the museum found ways to continue the council's work through regular Elders' Sessions and to link linguistic research to other museum programs, including the Alutiiq Word of the Week.

The Alutiiq Word of the Week began in 1998. As originally conceived, the Word of the Week was not a research project or a language program. It was a public education program, a way to make Alutiiq culture and history accessible to the public. Two centuries of cultural suppression had made it hard for the Kodiak Alutiiq to know and share their culture, and it had perpetuated hurtful stereotypes (Black 1992; Pullar 1992). Much of the Alutiiq world was hidden from view—preserved in the knowledge of Elders, published in obscure books, stored in distant museums, and buried in archaeological sites. When the museum opened its doors, there was a hunger for accurate, accessible, cultural information and an overwhelming number of public requests for this information. When KMXT Public Radio expressed interest in airing a weekly cultural lesson, staff members saw an opportunity to share Alutiiq language and traditions broadly via the airways. The Alutiiq Word of the Week program was the result.

The program started as a radio spot, a few-minute lesson that aired three times per week. Each lesson featured an Alutiiq word, pronounced in Alutiiq and translated into English by speaker Florence Pestrikoff, with a related Alutiiq language sentence. A brief cultural lesson followed the language offering. These three-paragraph summaries shared cultural and historical information and were often tailored to the season (Steffian and Counciller 2012; Steffian and Pestrikoff 1999). A lesson on berry picking aired in August and one on gift giving debuted in December. In the first few years of the program, museum staff member Amy Steffian developed the lessons in consultation with Pestrikoff. Much of the content focused on information gleaned from archaeological research and ethnohistorical accounts of Kodiak (e.g., Birket-Smith 1953; Clark 1987; Davydov 1977; Knecht and Jordan 1985). The lessons were fresh to listeners, but shared information available in published sources and often about the past. They were a repackaging of existing information not easily accessed by the public.

The program was immediately popular, and soon after it first aired, the museum started to fax and email broadcasts of the lessons, and the *Kodiak Daily Mirror*

added it to the Friday edition of the newspaper (Steffian and Counciller 2012). Strong community interest and a series of small grants encouraged the museum to make the program an annual offering. However, it was clear that the museum needed help generating lesson content—both linguistically and culturally. What began as an effort to simply meet a crushing demand for cultural information developed into a unique opportunity to involve Native voices in sharing the long-hidden Alutiiq world and to create community conversations about all things Alutiiq—from the language to twentieth-century history, modern traditions, place names, food, medicine, spirituality, humor, and the natural world. April Counciller, who led the museum’s language programs at the time, offered to help and to involve Elder Alutiiq speakers. In 2002, Elder Sophie Katelnikof Shepherd became the voice of the program. In 2004, Elder Nick Alokli joined her.

Partnering with the developing language program proved to be a good fit. Speakers were familiar with the lessons and had ideas for improvements. Moreover, Elders’ discussions about Alutiiq words generated interesting, unpublished information for lessons, expanding the content of the program to represent much more



Figure 2. Alutiiq Word of the Week lesson graphics for social media posts (left) and website and email broadcasts (right). Graphic design by Brian Fraley and Alex Painter. Photograph by Amy Steffian. Courtesy the Alutiiq Museum.

of the Alutiiq experience. One lively discussion led to a lesson on the uses of Spam. Another conversation revealed the hazards of eating unripe salmonberries (Fig. 2 and lesson example).

Example lesson:

Urungilet, Urunguliit—Green Salmonberries

Aanamaniu'utaaqinga "Urunguliit piturkunaki."—My mom always told me not to eat the unripe salmonberries.

Word and Sentence: <https://alutiiqmuseum.org/images/stories/audio/archive/greensalmonberries2.mp3>

Podcast: https://alutiiqmuseum.org/media/com_podcastmanager/2108_GreenSalmonberries2.mp3

Salmonberries (*Rubus spectabilis Pursh*) are perhaps the most widely harvested wild fruit in the Kodiak region. The big juicy berries are a favorite summer treat, enjoyed fresh and in a mouth-watering assortment of desserts and preserves.

Salmonberries flower in late spring and bear fruit between June and August. Harvesters have different opinions about when they are best to pick. Some gather the fruit when it is bright red. Others wait until the berries ripen to a deep crimson color. However, all agree that unripe berries should be avoided. Eating green, yellow, or even lightly red berries can cause constipation. For this reason, many Alutiiq people eat salmonberries mixed with sugar and milk. This simple dish helps people avoid the unpleasant side effects of consuming quantities of these tasty but binding berries, especially if they are not entirely ripe.

If a love of salmonberries leads to an uncomfortable situation, there are traditional remedies. Tea made from pineapple weed (*Matricaria discoidea* DC) is said to be soothing and have a gentle laxative effect. If you need something more powerful, culture bearers advise eating boiled sourdock leaves and stems (*Rumex occidentalis* S. Watson) by themselves. A tea made by boiling sourdock roots is also an effective treatment. Be careful, however, sourdock is also an emetic. Too much taken by itself can induce vomiting!

Today, the format of the Alutiiq Word of the Week radio show is the same as in 1998, but lesson development is purposefully different. Every spring the museum creates 12 to 15 new lessons for the upcoming season and systematically selects older lessons to recycle. After eight

years of writing a weekly lesson, program staff and advisors felt that there were many great topics that deserved to be shared again. The selection of new lessons begins with presentations at Elders' Sessions. Staff members, who have collected ideas for feature words over the previous year, develop a PowerPoint presentation. Each slide includes a photo and any available linguistic information for about 20 potential words. Word ideas also come from the museum's research efforts, recent acquisitions, or public requests for information. Some of the words are terms collected at previous Elders' Sessions. For example, when the museum received a donation of a rare bentwood quiver, staff members asked Elders for the Alutiiq term. A year later, Elders selected *ruuwauteq*—quiver (literally "thing for holding arrows")—to feature in a new lesson.

At Elders' Sessions, speakers review the suggested words and discuss whether they are appropriate to use. Sometimes a word isn't well known, and Elders are not comfortable with its selection or pronunciation. Staff members suggested the word "mushroom" for several years, until, after many discussions, Elders agreed on *slaaparaaq* or *sliyaaparaq* as appropriate terms. If Elders approve of a word, by unanimous consent or deference to someone in the group with specific knowledge, they help to write a related sentence. They may also offer some cultural information for the lessons. The lesson on *urungilet, urunguliit*—green salmonberries (Fig. 2 and example lesson)—came from an Elders' Session discussion, which expanded cultural knowledge collected in 1990 (Russell 2017:71).

With word selections made, staff members write the cultural lessons, assemble a script, and work with Shepherd and Alokli to record the content for the radio broadcast. In recent years, this process has included adult language learners Marya Halvorsen and Dehrich Chya, who recorded the English portion of the lessons. Over the years, the program has also evolved technologically. The museum dropped the fax broadcast years ago in favor of online tools that make the lessons widely accessible, interactive, and easy to share (Table 1). Patrons who enjoyed the written lessons asked for a way to hear the Alutiiq words. Many wanted to practice pronunciations. The museum responded by developing a short audio file for each word and sentence combination and linking them to lessons posted online. Now recipients of the email broadcast or followers of the museum's social media sites can click on the Alutiiq language portion of their lesson and hear

Table 1. Alutiiq Word of the Week program features.

Distribution	Description	Reach
Radio broadcast 1998–present	Lesson recorded by the museum and aired by KMXT Public Radio. Each lesson includes an introduction with Alutiiq music and a welcome message, Elders saying a word and sentence in Alutiiq, a community member reading the cultural lesson, and an outro with acknowledgements and music. KMXT airs each individual lesson three times per week.	KMXT broadcasts to all Kodiak communities, a total population of about 13,200, and has online live streaming. Other stations, like KBBI in Homer, also broadcast the lessons.
Email broadcast 1998–present	A copy of the lesson broadcast to an email list open to anyone. The email broadcast began soon after the lessons first aired on KMXT. It included just the lesson text but eventually expanded to include a template with a photo and, in 2014, a program logo. Today the emailed lessons include links to audio files.	The current broadcast list includes 343 subscribers.
Fax broadcast 1998–2002	A copy of the lesson text faxed to a distribution list open to anyone. The fax list was particularly helpful in sharing the list with organizations and businesses.	Less than 50
Newspaper publication 1999–present	Weekly lessons published in the Friday edition of the Kodiak Daily Mirror. About six months after the program debuted, the <i>Kodiak Daily Mirror</i> agreed to publish the weekly lessons in its Friday edition. In recent years, the paper has included lesson images provided by the museum. Since 2012, the <i>Kodiak Daily Mirror</i> has also archived the lessons on its website. Other publishers have also picked up the lessons. The <i>Alaska Native News</i> has been publishing the lessons on their website since 2013.	<i>Kodiak Daily Mirror</i> 's current circulation is about 1100.
Booklet 1999	Paperback. After the program's first season, the museum published a booklet of the 52 lessons and sold it through the Alutiiq Museum Store (Steffian and Pestrikoff 1999).	1999 booklet, ca. 200 copies printed and sold
Website posts ca. 2000–present	Lessons posted to the museum's website. At first, the lessons posts included just text. By about 2005 we added photos and linked audio files to the Alutiiq words and sentences to help people practice Alutiiq pronunciations. In 2014 the program received a facelift, with a logo and a new online template.	Available for free to a global online audience. In 2019, there were 1179 lesson pageviews in 909 unique sessions.
RSS feed ca. 2006–present	A subscription service that delivers lessons to a feed on a personal computer. The original feed included text and a linked audio file. In 2017, the RSS feed began sharing the entire program podcast.	Unknown
Social media posts Facebook 2010–present Instagram 2016–present Twitter 2019–present LinkedIn 2019–present	Lessons posted to the museum's social media sites with photos and links to audio files and podcasts. The program's social media presence grew as the museum added platforms. In 2019, we adopted software that allows us to post one lesson to all platforms simultaneously.	6342 Facebook followers 1176 Instagram followers 2211 Twitter followers 68 LinkedIn followers
Book 2012	Paperback. Funding from the Kodiak Island Borough School District and the Alaska Humanities Forum allowed the museum to publish a comprehensive volume of 15 seasons' worth of lessons with introductory articles, photographs from the museum's archives, indexes in Alutiiq and English, and references.	1000 copies printed, 870 sold or distributed to date
Archive of past lessons 2012–present	A complete set of all past lessons organized and archived on the museum's website. The museum developed the archive in 2012 and has added new lessons each year. There are now more than 560 lessons in the archive, each with text, a photo, and an audio file. As we produce podcasts, we link them to the archive.	Available for free to a global online audience. In 2019 there were 16,381 archive pageviews, 16% of the museum website's total pageviews.
Podcasts 2014–present	The complete radio lessons, produced by the museum, uploaded to iTunes for free subscription.	Unknown

Note: Statistics compiled January 2020.

an Elder speaking. They can also subscribe to a full lesson podcast available for free on iTunes and available by RSS feed.

Another valuable feature of the program is an archive of all the lessons written to date, available on the museum's website. Each year the museum adds newly written lessons to the archive, which now has over 560 entries. Here, visitors can access all program resources. They can read lessons, listen to audio files of Elders saying words and sentences, play lesson podcasts, and see a picture from the Alutiiq world accompanying each lesson. The photos come from the museum's activities and archives and are another way that the museum can share collections and research. The archive is organized alphabetically by featured word (in English), but the lessons are tagged in thematic categories and searchable in Alutiiq and English. Click on the music category and you will find lessons titled "Accordion," "Baby Song," and "Drum," among others. Type the word "*taquka'aaq*" or "bear" into the search box, and the website retrieves every lesson that mentions bears. The result is a miniature encyclopedia of Alutiiq culture and history, a place that compiles and summarizes information not available elsewhere and from sources that can be hard to access.

IMPACTS

It would be much easier for museum staff members to select words and record lessons, but the effort to involve culture bearers in the process has significantly improved the Alutiiq Word of the Week and promoted the museum's vision of helping the Alutiiq people know and live their culture. At its foundation, the process of developing lessons gives authority to culture bearers. It reaffirms the importance of the knowledge stored in the Alutiiq community and honors those who share. Although many remember the shame attached to speaking in Alutiiq (Hegna 2004:5; Kimura and Counciller 2009:129), the museum's language programs create a safe space for cultural expression and teaching. They also highlight the importance of Elders by sharing their knowledge and voices publicly. Elder Nick Alokli, who was born at the Alitak Cannery in 1936 and learned to speak Alutiiq by listening to his grandpa, credits participation in language research programs with enriching his senior years.

Before I started teaching [Alutiiq] I just went to work every day. I wasn't happy because I didn't do

anything else. I thought, "is this it? Is this all I'm going to do?" Now I'm happy because I teach. It gives me something to look forward to. (Hegna 2004:1)

For Alutiiq people who don't know their heritage language, in the Kodiak region and beyond, programs like the Alutiiq Word of the Week represent a powerful bridge to ancestry. Elder voices, heritage language, and cultural information ignite feelings of pride and connection. Today's Elders knew Elders of previous generations—grandparents and great-grandparents who are no longer living—whose cultural and linguistic knowledge is preserved in them (Counciller 2012:29). Alutiiq people express these feelings of connection in emails and social media posts. They share memories tied to the lessons, express excitement about the topics covered, report that they are passing the lessons to others in the Alutiiq community, talk about their experiences with the Alutiiq language, express pride in their heritage, and ask for additional information. Here are a few examples of their messages to the museum:

When I was little, we met every weekend at grandma's for *banya* [steam bath] and tea... crackers and smoked salmon were always offered and consumed with grateful gusto! Those are some of the best memories of my childhood in Kodiak. The women and children went first and then the men.

I have a half-sister whose mother is half Alutiiq, from Larsen Bay, Kodiak Island I believe. She left shortly after my sister was born... and my sister knows nothing of her heritage on that side of her biological makeup. I pass along the word of the week each week to her.

I enjoy the word of the week. My nephew in Seattle has it on his phone and he also enjoys it with his family.

Thank you for keeping us so well informed. I live in Illinois and Aleuts are few and far between out here!⁴

It is awesome to know I have walked these places and we are reclaiming our heritage.

From a broader perspective, the program builds community knowledge of the Alutiiq world. When the museum opened in 1995, the Alutiiq were poorly known. The rapid conquest of their homeland by Russian traders led to an early and profoundly disruptive period of cultural change. Losses of political sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency, combined with catastrophic loss of life and

assimilative colonial policies, suppressed the transmission of Alutiiq cultural knowledge and hid Alutiiq traditions from view. One of the museum's long-term efforts has been to reawaken awareness of Alutiiq heritage in the Kodiak community, to combat misunderstanding and promote cultural celebration. Most of the museum's programs have contributed to this work, but the Alutiiq Word of the Week has been a particularly valuable tool. It has helped the museum broadly and publicly share learning from academic research and increase access to collections. The program provides an ongoing forum to tell Alutiiq stories, combat stereotypes, and even address community issues like land ownership, changing environments, and cultural perspectives on homosexuality.

The impacts discussed above, on both Alutiiq people and the non-Native community, reflect important characteristics of the Alutiiq Word of the Week. First, the program is easy to access. Anyone can enjoy the lessons in private and in a comfortable format. The lessons are free and available in audio, print, and digital formats (Table 1). Whether you like to read the newspaper or listen to podcasts, there is a program version for you.

Lath Carlson, the keynote speaker at the 2015 Museums Alaska conference, argued that museums can feel unsafe. Museums have rules about noise, touching, checking belongings, paying admission, and more that can make people feel uneasy about visiting. Beyond rules, visitors worry about what they will find in museum galleries. Will they be welcomed? Will they understand exhibits? Will they feel embarrassed or uneducated? A 2013 community survey illustrated that the Alutiiq Museum faces some of these challenges. People are interested in local history, archaeology, and traditional lifeways, but they wonder if they will feel welcome in a Native museum. Others fear they will feel shame about historical atrocities or for not knowing more about their ancestral culture. One of the reasons the Alutiiq Word of the Week program has been effective is that it is not in the museum. You don't need to enter a gallery to hear it or read it. People can explore the program in their own space and at their own pace. Moreover, the program's friendly tone sets people at ease and invites learning. As Hegna (2004:11) points out, the weekly lessons are designed to promote language familiarization, not acquisition. They are a starting point for discovery. A program user confirms this value of this approach.

My hope is to share my language with people. Unfortunately, I am not a fluent speaker. The good news is that today the Alutiiq people have a ton of resources to learn from. My favorite (outside of my late grandparents) has always been "Alutiiq Word of the Week" because it's not too overwhelming and gives me a week to practice...⁵

Second, by Kodiak standards, the program reaches a huge audience and has been doing so for over two decades (Table 1). Through the radio broadcast, the newspaper article, and the museum's digital resources, each weekly lesson reaches several thousand people. Sharing by other organizations adds to the program's reach. The museum decided early on that it was important to connect the lessons with the largest possible audience. As such, we've encouraged people to use and redistribute the content. In 2012, we provided the Kodiak Island Borough School District with a file containing all lessons from the first 15 years of the program to distribute to educators. For the past six years, the Alaska Native News has been reposting the lessons on its website. Prince William Sound College, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, the Two Spirit Journal (Pruden 2016), and the University of Alaska Museum of the North have also shared lessons, as have many followers of the museum's social media sites. Today you can also find the Word of the Week cited in academic research (Stevens 2014:87), listed as a resource for completing Girl Scout merit badges, tagged on Pinterest, and shared in the University of Northern Iowa's Living Arctic exhibit.

Finally, the lesson content is fresh, engaging, and sometimes unexpected. The goal of the program has been to share all things Alutiiq. This means infusing the lessons with both cultural knowledge and Alutiiq values like humor and resourcefulness. This starts discussions. A lesson on the word *kinguq*—worm, with the sentence *Tawa kingugurningaitua!*, "No, I won't eat this worm!"—prompted a note from a well-meaning colleague. The writer felt that the sentence was obscure and not an effective language learning tool. Who would ever say such a thing? We saw it as an example of Alutiiq humor. Other lessons feature challenging information. A lesson on *aakanaq*—old fish—discussed traditional uses of spawned-out salmon. Many people consider such fish inedible, but Alutiiq Elders recognize them as a valuable food source that can be harvested in winter. In a spawned-out salmon some people see fertilizer. An Alutiiq Elder sees a meal. The *aakanaq* lesson illustrates how people view and interact

with the world differently, and it encourages reconsideration of assumptions.

It is difficult to measure community change, or the Alutiiq Word of the Week's possible contributions to such change. However, 25 years after the Alutiiq Museum's founding, there are meaningful signs of increasing cultural awareness in Kodiak's non-Native community. The visitor's guide, which once opened with a discussion of Russian conquest, now includes a summary of Native history, introductions to village communities, and photos of Alutiiq people and traditions. Similarly, recent displays at Kodiak Airport, the Kodiak Public Library, and a local bank share Alutiiq traditions and images. The school district now holds Alutiiq culture weeks and Alutiiq language classes, and it is training educators to integrate cultural arts instruction into classroom lessons. Kodiak College has an Alutiiq studies program with a dedicated assistant professor. And in 2018, the City of Kodiak worked with the Alutiiq Museum to transform a downtown lot into the Alutiiq Ancestors' Memorial—a public park honoring the Alutiiq people. The Alutiiq Word of the Week did not create these changes, but it is an example of how museum-based language programming can help to expand cultural dialogue—even one word at a time.

ENDNOTES

1. The archaeological site names developed by Elders are newly coined terms recorded in the museum's technical survey reports and reported to the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey at the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology. For example, in 2019 Alutiiq Museum archaeologists documented an intertidal stone fish trap in Afognak Island's Long Lagoon (AFG-370). After reviewing photos and discussing the feature, Elders gave it the name *Saputaq*, meaning fence. They named an adjacent settlement (AFG-377) *Igya'aq*—throat/outlet—for its strategic location at the entrance to a lagoon (Steffian and Saltonstall 2019:19). These names do not represent long-recognized place names. Rather, they extend the privilege of naming ancestral properties to Native Elders, promote the use of Alutiiq terms for Alutiiq cultural properties, express the connection people feel to these properties, and support the use of the Alutiiq language (Counciller 2015:347). The process connects the living language

and culture of the Alutiiq people to ancestral settlements whose histories are beyond modern memory.

2. Grepstad includes the Alutiiq Museum in his catalog of language museums. His e-book is available for download at https://www.aasentunet.no/filestore/PDF/Talar_og_artiklar/814-20180314Language-museumsOG.pdf.
3. The Alutiiq Museum's founding and sustaining Native organizations include the Kodiak Area Native Association, the nonprofit social service provider for the Kodiak region, as well as seven Native corporations established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971: Afognak Native Corporation, Akhiok-Kaguyak, Inc.; Koniag, Inc.; Leisnoi, Inc.; Natives of Kodiak, Inc.; Old Harbor Native Corporation; and Ouzinkie Native Corporation.
4. Native people on Kodiak sometimes used the term *Aleut* as a self-designator, a term introduced by Russian traders. *Alutiiq* is how people say Aleut in Kodiak's Native language. It is the Native way of pronouncing the Russian-introduced word *Aleut*. The terms reflect the region's complex Native and Russian history.
5. A "week to practice" refers to the museum's weekly publication of word of the week lessons. Patrons have a week to practice pronouncing the featured word before a new lesson becomes available.

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REVITALIZING A “DANGLING” ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION: MATERIALITY, ARCTIC TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, AND THE LIBERAL ARTS^I

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ABSTRACT

This essay aims to raise awareness of small, scattered ethnographic collections and illustrate how a liberal arts model of open-ended, object-based inquiry can help breathe new life into old collections. The term “dangling collection” is introduced to specifically describe college- and university-housed orphaned collections that lack museum stewardship and curricular inclusion. My example centers on a small but important group of ethnographic objects from the North American Arctic that is now maintained at Oberlin College. Academic scholarship, university teaching practices, and Indigenous community interests are all coalescing around object-centered inquiry, and I demonstrate how the Arctic Collection’s dangling status in this era of material-focused research has helped to spur a collaborative approach to its curation. Oberlin’s Arctic Collection is now emerging as a point of meeting, dialogue, and knowledge exchange between various stakeholders, including Alaska Native culture bearers and undergraduate student researchers.

INTRODUCTION

This essay argues for the importance of small, scattered ethnographic collections and illustrates how a liberal arts model of learning that stresses open-ended, object-based inquiry can help breathe new life into such collections. My example centers on a small group of Arctic cultural materials housed at Oberlin College in Ohio, which includes objects ranging from Yup’ik fish skin bags to Cree/Métis snow goggles. The objects were originally obtained by Smithsonian Institution naturalists and provide a valuable record of nineteenth-century Indigenous lifeways as well as scientific collecting methods. In recent years the collection has spurred collaborations between college faculty, library staff, students, and source community members that are transforming once-hidden objects into meaningful opportunities to build and exchange knowledge.

The Arctic Collection came to Oberlin College 130 years ago, reasonably well documented but without any relevance to the school’s teaching mission of the time. Although it once shared space with a campus natural history collection, the Arctic material lacked formal museum stewardship for decades. In short, it had become orphaned—a term used to describe natural history and anthropology collections that are in some way imperiled due to factors ranging from lack of documentation to the closure of a stewarding institution (Adrain and Work 2017; West 1988). In a recent Society for American Archaeology webinar, Danielle Benden (2017) defined orphaned collections as “groups of objects and/or associated records with unclear ownership that have been abandoned.” Finally, Barbara Voss (2012:145) uses the term “orphaned” for

collections “that have either lost curatorial support or were never curated in the first place” and shows how community-based research activities can help address archaeology’s “curation crisis” (Marquardt et al. 1982; Sullivan and Childs 2003), wherein the buildup of collections, including those generated by cultural resource management (CRM) activities, has long outpaced archaeologists’ ability to adequately care for or study them.

For several years I have been engaging with orphaned collections of various types on Oberlin’s campus and at other academic institutions, where faculty and staff have generously opened cupboards and desk drawers to reveal the institution’s once-prized teaching collections of botanical samples, archaeological finds, and mounted bird specimens. The phenomenon of nearly forgotten institutional collections is so widespread that I have come to give them the special term “dangling collections”: natural history and cultural collections that were widely accumulated in nineteenth-century U.S. college and university museums, largely as teaching aids. Their remnants now linger in institutional shadows, uncurated and museumless, as a result of shifting ideals in science and anthropology.² Some dangling collections are poorly documented, although this is not true in the case of Oberlin’s Arctic Collection. Instead, what primarily defines dangling collections is their loss of apparent academic relevance.

The tide is now shifting, however, as a new materiality, in numerous realms of knowledge making, is gaining ground within educational institutions. Indigenous community interests, university teaching practices, and many areas of academic scholarship are all turning to object-centered inquiry to address a series of intellectual problems to which dangling collections may offer an ideal solution. A liberal arts education stresses creativity, open-minded inquiry, and communication skills, making college and university collections ideal resources around which various stakeholders can interact and learn.

I begin by discussing three distinct threads of material-focused inquiry into which dangling ethnographic collections can be productively woven, followed by an introduction to Oberlin’s Arctic Collection. The sections that follow show how Voss and colleagues’ view of “curation as research” (Voss 2012; Voss and Kane 2012; also see Benden 2017) has become a guiding premise of recent work with Oberlin’s once-dangling Arctic Collection: the perspective that “accessioning, inventory, cataloguing, rehousing and conservation are not simply precursors to the research, but rather meaningful gen-

erative encounters between scholars and objects” (Voss 2012:145). Object curation-based research helps build learning networks of students, faculty, and staff working in a Western educational setting and can extend beyond the institution to include traditional knowledge bearers. Excerpts from a collection consultation with Rosemary Ahtuanguak (Iñupiaq) and a description of a class session led by Sven Haakanson Jr. (Sugpiaq/Alutiiq) demonstrate how the goals and methods of inquiry used by Indigenous consultants can transform a classroom status quo, engender reciprocal learning within a liberal arts learning context, and contribute to more multivocal considerations of ethnographic collections in their past and current settings.

MATERIAL TURNS

In academic research circles, “things” are back. Art history is retreating from purely visually based interpretive approaches and has experienced a “material turn” in the last 20 years (Gell 1998; German and Harris 2017; Yonan 2011), while scholars working across various disciplines, from science and technology studies (STS) to political science, draw our attention to the social and political contexts in which technologies are created and used (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Latour 1988; Lubar and Kingery 1993; Pfaffenberger 1992; Pinch and Bijker 1984). And while archaeology has long been attentive to object histories and human-object interactions (e.g., Leroi-Gourhan’s *chaîne opératoire* [1964, 1965]; Schiffer’s “life history” approach [1976, 1992]), the success of material culture studies in British anthropology has also contributed to an interdisciplinary effort to “learn from things” by tracing the web of social relations in which objects play a role (see Hicks 2010; Miller 2010). Such lines of inquiry inspire an ever-blossoming number of theoretical schemes whose employers nonetheless share the standpoint that the things we create push back at us, often in unanticipated ways.

Many scholars’ works reflect a deep concern over contemporary problems of (over)consumption (Bennett 2010; Winner 1989). Archaeologist Ian Hodder (2014) writes of humans’ increasing “entanglement with things” over an evolutionary time span. The changes brought about by humans’ earliest experiments with plant and animal domestication, he argues, launched our species’s ever-increasing dependencies on our built environment, producing an inescapable stream of pollution and waste. Hodder references the seemingly irreconcilable pull-push of the material in

daily life, a tension that's epitomized in hit reality television shows that tell us it's okay to aggressively compete to acquire a stranger's repossessed belongings (A&E's *Storage Wars*), yet we should only retain those personal possessions which "spark joy" (Netflix's *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*)! Scholars' Western-centric narratives of material treachery can feel justified in an era of climate change that is demonstrably linked to broad human consumptive patterns. We need not look far, however, to find examples of more sustainable and enriching relationships that can exist around *things*.

Academics are not just theorizing about material culture—many of us are now asking our students to engage with it directly as a valued approach to teaching. Object-based instruction is widespread among archivists and special collections managers (Tuckett and Lawes 2017). Now the trend is extending across the humanities to other disciplines (Chatterjee et al. 2015) and, with support from funds like the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Arts and Cultural Heritage grants, is spurring stronger partnerships between library, museum staff, and faculty (Dimmock 2016).

Object-based learning offers a complement to traditional text-based methods of instruction, helping students develop observational skills through close study and engaging the sense of touch, sound, and even smell. Today's object-based teaching surely owes a nod to the "specimen-based" teaching in the natural sciences that first took hold in the U.S. in the post-Civil War era and led to the development of university museums in the first place (Kohlstedt 1988a, 1988b; Walsh 2002). This includes ethnographic collections, which were considered vestiges of "dying cultures" and first housed in natural history repositories. The current enthusiasm around object-based teaching differs from earlier scientific teaching, however, in "posing objects as flexible or agile in their pedagogical application" (German and Harris 2017:248).

In other words, educators are adopting a more inclusive attitude toward the types of collections with which students might engage, and in what ways. A Panamanian textile could be used to provide students a lesson in ethnoaesthetics, demonstrate a particular material production technique (Adams 2015), or illustrate how ethnic identity can influence a political movement (Marks 2014). Principles of physics can be demonstrated in a campus fine art museum using an image of a milk drop captured with high-speed photography (Milkova and Volk 2014:47–50); a Mexican tortilla accessioned as an herbarium specimen

both speaks to nineteenth-century research in economic botany and presages the influence of Mexican cuisine in the modern U.S. (Ulrich et al. 2015). Traditional collections divisions like natural history, fine art, ethnographic, or scientific instrument can be scrambled in order to prompt new questions and perspectives (Lubar 2017; Ulrich et al. 2015).

As German and Harris (2017:255) argue, "Teaching with objects, though, is not just about making the collections newly accessible to wider audiences. It is about making those audiences and all their diverse fields of expertise accessible to the objects, in order that they might be better and more fully understood." There is a particular weightiness to engaging ethnographic objects in our teaching practices because ancestral objects encourage us to consider the expertise that may lie outside of academic settings.

This brings us to a final material turn, which draws from widespread Indigenous cultural revitalization efforts and critical museology. In North America, Oceania, and elsewhere, Indigenous community representatives and museum professionals are increasingly seeking opportunities to exchange knowledge around museum-curated objects (e.g., Adams et al. 2018; Fienup-Riordan 2005; Haakanson and Steffian 2009). For museum professionals, the stories and information Indigenous consultants provide help collecting institutions store, handle, conserve, interpret, and display collections in ways that are better attuned to the values and traditions of their source communities (Ogden 2004). And for Indigenous community members, museum consulting visits provide opportunities to study the types of garments, tools, and ceremonial objects they may not have seen since their youth or have only heard about from Elders.

Wassilie Berlin, a member of a group of Yup'ik Elders viewing ancestral collections at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin in 1996, put it this way: "I'm thankful for the objects we have looked at which we don't see at home anymore. . . . While the white people push for assimilation, they apparently would also make it possible for us to see cultural objects in gatherings like these" (Fienup-Riordan 2005:403, 405). For many Indigenous communities, historic ethnographic collections can be important reservoirs of cultural knowledge, traditions, and beliefs in the present day.

The chance to study, discuss, and reconnect with material culture from an earlier time can also lead to knowledge repatriation, when the information and excitement is brought back and shared with the wider community (e.g.,

Haakanson 2016; Parks and Surowidjojo 2019; Steffian 2015). Often the main goal of delegations like the Yup'ik Elders in Berlin is not “to reclaim museum objects but to re-own the knowledge and experiences that the objects embodied” (Fienup-Riordan 2005:xxii).

Thus, academic scholarship, pedagogy in higher education, and Indigenous cultural revitalization efforts converge in the material realm. The specific meanings imparted to the objects themselves vary with their interactor, each of whom may approach their work with different goals, values, and methods of interaction. Many colleges and universities that house ethnographic collections today, including Oberlin College, encourage just this type of epistemological flexibility, making them ideal settings for collaborative learning around objects.

OBERLIN'S ARCTIC ETHNOGRAPHY COLLECTION

The Oberlin Arctic Collection comprises 35 cultural objects (Table 1) that were originally obtained from nineteenth-century Native villages and trading centers throughout Arctic and Subarctic North America by such renowned Smithsonian naturalists as Edward Nelson, William Healey Dall, and Lucien Turner. The objects are wide ranging in terms of provenance and function. We believe most were designed for utilitarian purposes, although many are very finely crafted. As detailed previously (Margaris and Grimm 2011), Oberlin received the collection from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in 1889 in exchange for ethnographic materials obtained in southern Africa by the Oberlin-affiliated missionary Erwin Hart Richards. Oberlin's long history of producing graduates, both women and men, who pursued teaching and missionary work around the world resulted in substantive ethnographic holdings at the college. Yet the Arctic material did not fit this pattern. It had no direct connection to Oberlin's mission and was sent by the National Museum simply, we believe, as compensation for the African objects.

Oberlin's ethnographic materials shared space with a growing natural history cabinet, which its curator, Professor A.A. Wright, carefully developed to aid in classroom science instruction (Margaris and Grimm 2011). By 1903 the cabinet, which by this time Wright had christened the Oberlin College Museum, included an impressive array of natural history specimens with 35,000 botanical specimens and 5700 fossil trays, “each

containing from 1 to 50 individual specimens” (Merrill 1903:144–145). As with so many museums of its era, however, changing times and loss of its primary, charismatic champion (A. A. Wright, in this case) led to the museum's slow demise. Eventually its components were distributed to various campus departments: the mounted bird collection to biology, fossil collections to geology, and so forth. A few items perceived to be of special artistic merit (e.g., Plains Indian beaded moccasins) made their way to the campus fine arts museum, while the remaining 2000 or so other ethnographic materials, including those from the Arctic, were eventually deposited haphazardly in a pair of campus custodial closets until a fire marshal threatened to intervene (Linda Grimm, pers. comm. 21 October 2018).

In the early 2000s, Anthropology Department faculty member Linda Grimm successfully undertook a major project with undergraduate students to research, catalog, digitize, and carefully store the ethnographic materials, which are now the Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection.³ When I joined the Oberlin faculty in 2006, my background as an Arctic archaeologist drew me into Grimm's project and to an exploration of Oberlin's Arctic objects in particular.

Since that time, Grimm, student researchers, and I have worked to piece together the Arctic Collection's life history and subsequent implications for how the collection might be used and understood in the present day. Our initial investigations focused on the Arctic Collection as a whole (see Margaris and Grimm 2011; Margaris 2017), while our recent focus has moved to the scale of individual objects. Given that the items come from across Alaska and even eastern Canada, one important goal is simply to determine each object's cultural affiliation. This is the first step toward consulting with appropriate tribal councils regarding their wishes for the affiliated objects, whether it be physical or digital repatriation, creating a traveling exhibit, facilitating in-person study by Native Elders or artisans, or other paths the collection might take.

Both published and oral information are key to connecting past and present. Unlike many orphaned objects, most of the Arctic materials at Oberlin retain relatively good provenance information included on their original National Museum of Natural History tags, which list collector and location of acquisition. Several of the collectors acquired objects from multiple areas within the Arctic; Lucien Turner, for example, collected in three distinct areas (Labrador's Ungava Bay, Unalaska, and Norton Sound [see Heyes and Helgen 2014]), and Oberlin has objects

Table 1. The Oberlin College Arctic Collection

Object Name	OCEC Catalogue No.	Collection Location	Yr. Collected	Collector
skin preparing knife	APP.C1.ab.0474	Togiak River, AK	1887	Applegate
doll	APP.C5.clah.4605	“Kassianamute”/Qissayaarmiut, Togiak River, AK	1886	Applegate
wooden bowl/dish/tray	DAL.C1.a.0091	Lower Yukon, AK	1869	Dall
wooden ladle	DAL.C1.a.0768	Yukon River, AK	1869?	Dall
wooden lance/dart w/metal tip	DAL.C1.abf.1130	Port Clarence, AK	1881	Dall
wooden ladle	DAL.C1.aq.0090	Yukon River, AK	1869	Dall
bent wood container	MCK.C1.ad.0098	Bristol Bay, AK	1882	McKay
wooden tobacco box w/lid	NEL.C1.ad.0132	“Kushunuk”/Qissunaq, AK	1879	Nelson
throwing board	NEL.C1.ar.0481	AK, location unknown	unknown	Nelson
fisherman’s tool bag	NEL.C1.df.0099	“Newlukhtulgumut” (Newlukhtulugumut/ Nevertuliq), AK	1879	Nelson
fishskin bag	NEL.C1.dfqx.0177	Lower Yukon, AK	1879	Nelson
walrus hide snare	NEL.C1.dq.0138	St. Michaels, AK	1879	Nelson
ivory and cord seal drag	NEL.C1.draf.0130	Cape Nome, AK	1889	Nelson
stone sinker for sculpin fishing	NEL.C1.k.0077	Cape Nome, AK	1880	Nelson
ivory story knife	NEL.C1.r.0133	“Chalitmut”/Calitmiut, AK	unknown	Nelson
ivory netting needle	NEL.C1.r.0134	Sledge Island/Ayaak, AK	1880	Nelson
seal tooth charm/ belt fastener	NEL.C1.r.0140	Sledge Island/Ayaak, AK	1880	Nelson
ivory charm/ belt fastener	NEL.C1.r.4601	Sledge Island/Ayaak, AK	1880	Nelson
ivory and metal sculpin hook	NEL.C1.rbx.0078	Norton Sound, AK	1880?	Nelson
ivory and cord seal drag	NEL.C1.rf.0137	“Kushunuk”/Qissunaq, AK	1879	Nelson
carved bone spoon	NEL.C1.t.0054	Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, “Chalitmut”/ Calitmiut, AK	1874	Nelson
carved ivory bird ornaments/ charms (set of 10)	NEL.C5.r.4606	St Lawrence Island, AK	1882	Nelson
fishskin pouch	XXX.C1.df.0135	Cape Darby, AK	1880	Nelson
wooden dart w/slate tip	NEL.C2.ak.xxxx	Norton Sound, AK	1878	Nelson
ivory ornament/buckle	XXX.C1.r.4603	Norton Sound, AK	1879?	Nelson
bone and bead wolf scarer	XXX.C7.abdefmq.4596	Sledge Island/Ayaak, AK	1880?	Nelson
ivory knife w/iron blade	RAY.C1.ebf.0136	Port Barrow, AK	1884	Ray
glass bottle w/woven spruce root cover	SHE.C5.cpq.4607	Fort Wrangell, AK	unknown	Sherry
sinew before shredding	STN.N6.f.0131	Kotzebue Sound, AK	1886	Stoney
wooden snow goggles	TUR.C1.af.0178	Ungava, Labrador, Quebec	1884	Turner
bone scraper/skin dresser	TUR.C1.e.0072	Ungava, Labrador, Quebec	1884	Turner
gut bag	TUR.C1.fhiq.0139	Unalashka, AK	unknown	Turner
ivory bead or toggle	TUR.C1.r.4600	Norton Sound, AK	1876	Turner
carved ivory doll	TUR.C5.r.4604	Norton Sound, AK	1876	Turner
children’s game?	XXX.C1.aebdqx.1417	Ungava, Labrador, Quebec	1884	Turner

from each. Some items collected by Edward Nelson are documented to a general region (e.g., “Lower Yukon,” “Norton Sound”) but others are to a specific village (e.g., “Kushunuk”/Qissunaq; “Newlukhtulgumut”/“Newlukth ulugumut”/Nevertuliq, a former winter village on Nelson Island, Alaska [O’Leary 2009:210–213]), and we are working to match the (anglicized) ancestral village names to contemporary related settlements. Nelson’s and Turner’s written texts, along with more contemporary sources (e.g., Crowell et al. 2010; Smithsonian Institution n.d.) have provided important contextual information on the objects’ materials and manufacturing techniques, traditional uses, and Native language names. Undergraduate students research and maintain this information in each object’s condition report and have also generated high-resolution scans of the 130-year-old National Museum tags—now artifacts themselves (Fig. 1).

On-site visits from two Alaska Native knowledge bearers, Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak (Iñupiaq) and Sven Haakanson Jr. (Sugpiaq/Alutiiq), provided a turning point in our research by providing fortuitous opportunities to expand knowledge around the collection through direct, meaningful dialogue with individuals who are culturally

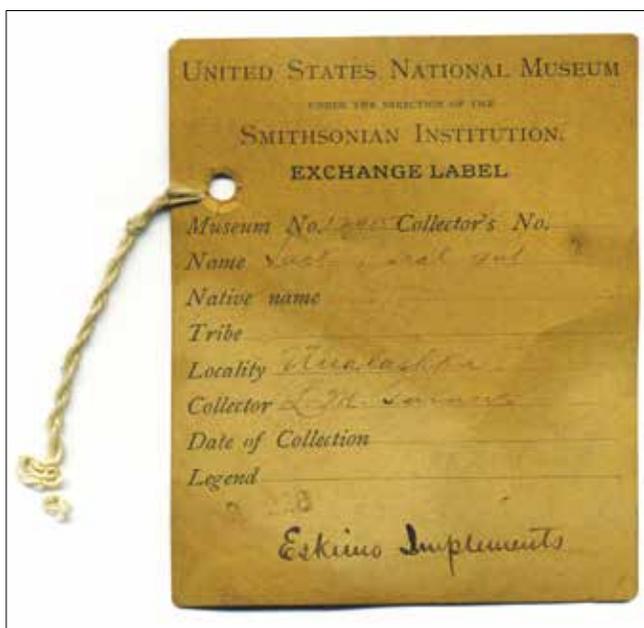


Figure 1. Oberlin student researchers Alice Blakely and Cori Mazer created high-resolution scans of the collection’s original Smithsonian Institution tags. Faint writing indicates the bag associated with this tag was recorded as a “Sack, seal gut” from “Unalashka,” obtained by L. M. Turner, NMNH 129337 (see Fig. 3). Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection TUR.C1.fbiq.0139.

connected to the Arctic Collection. Most material culture theorists today would argue—and indeed our experience illustrates—that diverse stakeholders impart different meanings to the objects. These meanings need not align. Instead, Ahtuanguaruak’s and Haakanson’s visits provided sources of mutual engagement in a learning environment that fosters dialogue, collaboration, and reciprocal knowledge building.

INDIGENOUS OBJECT LESSONS

In May 2017, Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak received an honorary doctorate of humanities from Oberlin College for her extraordinary work as an Iñupiaq environmental, cultural, and political leader and human rights activist. Ahtuanguaruak is from the northern Alaska village of Nuiqsut, where she has served as mayor, and she has spent her life advocating for the health of Arctic peoples and their lands. Ahtuanguaruak’s congressional testimony to oppose oil and gas development in culturally and biologically significant places in Arctic Alaska contributed to President Obama’s decision to ban oil drilling in large areas of the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans.

After the graduation ceremony, Ahtuanguaruak and two accompanying family members, Lucy Brown and Mae Masuleak, visited the Anthropology Department to view the Arctic Collection. We were joined by one of our newly graduated students, still in her graduation gown, who had spent the year conducting research on the collection’s history. The student’s (astonished) parents were also present, along with my colleague Chie Sakakibara, a fellow Arctic researcher, who was instrumental in bringing Ahtuanguaruak to campus.

What we planned as a brief excursion emerged, over the course of several hours, as a richly informed consultation (Fig. 2). Ahtuanguaruak, with input from her Iñupiaq companions, sat with the collection and shared detailed knowledge of traditional materials, techniques, uses, and meanings of nearly two dozen ancestral objects from Native communities across Alaska. At Ahtuanguaruak’s suggestion, we quickly launched into documentary mode, taking a series of notes, photos, and voice recordings as the consultation was under way.

The objects Ahtuanguaruak studied include several bags constructed of fish skin and other animal tissues, a skin-preparing knife, and a wooden berry basket. Two student researchers fully transcribed the recorded consultation (Ahtuanguaruak 2017), which now provides a per-



Figure 2. (L to R): Rosemary Ahtuanguaruak, Mae Masuleak, and Lucy Brown examining a wooden throwing board (NEL.C1.ar.0481) collected by Edward Nelson. Photo credit: Amy Margaritis.

manent record of Ahtuanguaruak’s observations. Below are excerpts from the account as they relate to objects in the collection (Figs. 3–4).

When you go out hunting you don’t go out thinking about how to kill the animal, it’s against tradition to be bold or braggart, taboo to name the kind of animal you want to hunt in advance, it can produce badness around the hunt. You must keep good thoughts, be responsible, not argumentative, take care of your equipment, be respectful of your community—all these were expected of the hunter.

This skin preparing knife was made by a very gifted flintknapper. You can tell because the blade is very thin, and the edge was sharpened with one, expertly-placed blow. The knife was made for a skilled skin sewer who clearly cared about taking good care of her skins.

A small container probably used for collecting berries has a sinew handle, a sturdy cedar body that has been steamed and bent into shape, and a bit of red staining in its bottom creases, perhaps from escaped berry juices (Fig. 5). Both Ahtuanguaruak and our second consultant, Sven Haakanson Jr., remarked that steaming the wood properly was a repetitive and time-consuming task: the techniques were difficult to teach and learn, and many uncertainties in the process meant things could still go wrong. So, as with pottery making and metalworking in many non-industrial societies, steaming cedar effectively called for prayer and song—in addition to technical knowledge and hand skills.

Our session was educational, humbling, and sometimes emotional, such as when we encountered a shaman’s rattle whose residual power warranted a moment of prayer to clear the air. It offered a marked contrast with



Figure 3. Iduġilgix (bag, sack), Unangāx̄, Aleutian Islands, Alaska. Collected by L. M. Turner between 1878 and 1881, NMNH 129337. Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection TUR.C1.fhiq.0139, 27 cm long x 23 cm wide. Photo credit: Heath Patten.



Figure 4. Ikkun (skin-preparing knife), Yup'ik, Alaska. Collected by J. Applegate in 1887, NMNH 127381. Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection APP.C1.ab.0474, 9.2 cm long x 6.85 cm wide. Photo credit: Heath Patten.



Figure 5. Berry basket, Yup'ik or Sugpiaq/Alutiiq, Bristol Bay, Alaska. Collected by C. L. McKay in 1882, NMNH 5600. Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection MCK.C1.ad.0098, 11 cm long x 11 cm wide x 9 cm tall. Photo credit: Heath Patten.

the ways student researchers and I had interacted with the objects previously, such as to produce a standardized set of condition reports. The picture that emerged that afternoon was of a series of cultural treasures. We marveled at the thinness of a carved bone spoon and the perfect stitches a Yup'ik seamstress used to craft a durable storage bag. Ahtuanguaruak's insights complicate our understanding of the "everyday" because even common items like a berry container or skin-preparing knife embody both utilitarian and spiritual notions of usefulness that are impossible to disassociate from their Indigenous context. Ahtuanguaruak's detailed observations also draw out a range of northern subsistence activities for which the objects were created, including hunting, hide preparation, and fish processing.

The next year brought a second inspirational encounter when Dr. Sven Haakanson Jr. (Alutiiq/Sugpiaq) visited Oberlin to present a lecture on his work examining museum specimens to help recover knowledge of traditional Alutiiq seafaring technology. Haakanson is the former executive director of Kodiak's Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository and the current curator of North American anthropology at the Burke Museum in Seattle. I invited Haakanson to speak with students in my upper-level archaeology seminar, and as the class gathered around we were able to pull out several of the objects for him to inspect in person. To our delight, Haakanson demonstrated use of a Yup'ik throwing board (Fig. 6) and shared insights on bentwood steaming technology. His views are based on his own experiments as a carver and woodworker, and they align closely with Ahtuanguaruak's observations. He also examined an animal tissue bag from the Aleutian Islands and bravely lifted up its stiff and crinkled opening to investigate its interior construction. The bag had been carefully stitched together from a number of different pieces, but it had been difficult to identify the materials without physically manipulating the delicate artifact. Haakanson's deftness reflects his expertise both as a museum curator and a skin sewer who instructs his own university students in the craft. Haakanson pointed out a light-colored band running up the center of the bag that identifies it as gut—an ideal medium for bags and outer garments based on its waterproof qualities.

I expected the hands-on work to segue to the typical lecture or discussion class format. Instead, Haakanson pulled out sewing kits that he had assembled in advance for each student: envelopes containing pre-cut squares of animal gut (everyday sausage casing), artificial sinew, and



Figure 6. Sven Haakanson Jr. demonstrating how to hold a throwing board (NEL.C1.ar.0481). Photo credit: Amy Margaris.

a needle, and then proceeded to give the class an Alutiiq-style lesson in skin sewing. For the rest of the class period we observed, questioned, laughed, and struggled greatly to reproduce the special double-threaded waterproof stitch that Alutiiq sewers used to ensure that *kanaglluk* (gut parkas) kept their wearer dry in inclement weather. A number of students were inspired by Haakanson's lesson to continue stitching on their own time, and one student eventually crafted a variety of small bags like the one shown in Fig. 7.

We are extremely fortunate that Oberlin College was able to provide financial support to bring Ahtuanguaruak



Figure 7. Gut bag prepared by archaeology student Val Masters using an Alutiiq waterproof stitch learned from Sven Haakanson Jr., approx. 10x10 cm. Photo credit: Amy Margaris.

and Haakanson to our campus. It is important to note, however, that both visitors were willing to travel the long distance to Ohio and went far beyond what was expected of or planned for them (receipt of an honorary degree; presenting an invited lecture) in their engagements with ethnographic material and students. Both are passionate community advocates who are interested in learning where scattered ancestral objects are located today, and they viewed their visits as opportunities to raise awareness of their respective cultures. Haakanson generously shared his knowledge first by examining extant objects, then bringing them to life by directing students' own craftwork as a form of embodied learning. Ahtuanguaruak and Haakanson offered complementary lessons on the Unangan gut pouch collected by Lucien Turner: one from a hunter's perspective and the other from a sewer's. Ahtuanguaruak, whose in-depth observations and encouragement were profoundly influencing, feels that "much good" can come of bringing collections like Oberlin's into the light of day. Ahtuanguaruak's work with undergraduates continued when she returned to our campus in fall 2019 for a weeklong consultation residency, the centerpiece of a new undergraduate course called "Learning with Indigenous Material Culture." Our collaborative,

multivocal approach to contextualizing ancestral collections aligns well with the new museology's decolonizing aims but also expands its reaches to include a different sort of institutional collection: one which is museumless and, hence, more easily overlooked.

THE ROLE OF CAMPUS LIBRARIES

Some of the curatorial activities undergraduate researchers have pursued with the Arctic Collection are conservation, documentation, database creation, photography, transcription, and digital scholarship. We have found that in this current era of material-focused teaching and learning, undertaking these fundamental curatorial activities has had a compounding effect, drawing attention to the collection in a way that has garnered institutional buy-in and promises to increase the accessibility of the Arctic Collection and the college's wider Ethnographic Collection over time.

To illustrate, in the early 2000s when Oberlin museum anthropology students conducted the vital work of cataloging and describing the entire Ethnographic Collection of roughly 2000 objects (of which the Arctic materials represent only a small percentage), no space could be found to adequately house the collection for active study. A custom database was designed as a salvage project, meant to record detailed information about each object's physical attributes before submitting the entire Ethnographic Collection to deep storage in a set of closets. Twenty years later, the higher education landscape has greatly shifted as university libraries simultaneously embrace new digital resources and champion object-based teaching (Barlow 2017; Chatterjee and Hannan 2015; Dimmock 2016). Staff of Oberlin's Terrell Library, recognizing the ongoing importance of various physical collections for interdisciplinary student engagement, recently provided a new safe and secure storage area for the entire Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection (including the Arctic materials) that is close to the College Archives and other associated resources. Library directors, reference librarians, heads of archives and special collections, and more have all been critical in bringing this major transition to fruition.

The college library now also stewards the digital collection by hosting the catalog on its large server. Maintaining digital collections requires specialized knowledge and skills with which library staff are most expert, including database management, metadata practices, and intellectual property concerns. Finally, library staff are central in facilitating students' use of online platforms for knowledge

sharing around the Arctic Collection. Software packages like Omeka and Esri Story Maps include mapping and timeline features whose use can complement the information relayed in online collection catalogs. In the classroom, students are encouraged to employ these platforms, which provide an outlet for rigorous scholarship coupled with greater public impact than is possible with traditional term papers (e.g., Blakely and Mazer 2017; Culture Contact and Colonialism n.d.). Digital scholarship benefits the students because the skills they develop are in high demand in museum fields, library and information sciences, and other cultural heritage disciplines, which are popular career destinations. In turn, digital projects can serve as valuable community resources, especially when projects are built collaboratively.

CONCLUSION

We use the case of Oberlin's Arctic Collection to help draw attention to the often little-known ethnographic collections that are housed in colleges and universities across North America. Many such teaching collections were left "dangling" as nineteenth-century collecting gave way to new trends in anthropology and natural science. Today, dangling cultural collections lack formal stewardship and a place in teaching curricula. Rather than view these collections as a nuisance, we can act on their incredible potential at this ideal moment when scholarly, educational, and heritage revitalization efforts are converging on the importance of material-focused inquiry.

A liberal arts education is one that stresses openness to multiple viewpoints, interpretations, and ontologies (Henseler 2017), a philosophy that makes university collections the perfect setting for knowledge exchange across the institution and beyond. All of us who live or conduct research in Alaska, for example, are acutely aware of the effects of climate change on the cultural and ecological landscape of the region. What better way for young people to realize the significance of warming waters and lands than to observe and study a fish skin bag or the caribou fur used to craft the feet of a Yup'ik doll (Fig. 8) while hearing Rosemary Ahtuanguak's own words about them?

Human-crafted objects hold the potential to speak to us in many ways. Given the right opportunity, they can reflect and nurture relationships between people and things which are multivalent, dynamic, and sometimes unanticipated. As Rosemary Ahtuanguak's sister, Lucy Brown, expressed to the newly minted Oberlin

student graduate at our recent collection consultation (Ahtuanguak 2017): "Come on over and listen to the story too! You keep writing stories as you go."

ENDNOTES

1. This essay is written from the first-person perspective of Amy Margaris and features quotations from Rosemary Ahtuanguak's 2017 consultation. Ahtuanguak's ongoing commitment to "growing goodness" through Oberlin students' engagement with the Arctic Collection has profoundly influenced our research approach.
2. Portions of this article, including a similar definition of "dangling collections," were first published on the Dangling Collections blog (Margaris n.d.).
3. For the complete online catalog, see <http://www2.oberlin.edu/library/digital/ocec/>.

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Figure 8. Nuguaq (small wooden doll) or irniaruaq (pretend person, doll), Yup'ik, Kassianamute (Togiak River), Alaska. Collected by J. Applegate in 1886, NMNH 127294. Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection APP.C5.clah.4605, 13 cm long x 8 cm wide. Photo credit: Heath Patten.

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CHILKAT BLANKET RESTORATION: A CASE STUDY IN ALASKA NATIVE AUTHORITY IN MUSEUM CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the recent legacy of Indigenous object treatment authority in Alaska museums and examines in depth the case study of a Chilkat blanket restoration. Museum conservator Ellen Carrlee and master Chilkat weaver Anna Brown Ehlers collaborated on the treatment of a Chilkat blanket for exhibition in the new Alaska State Museum clan house gallery in 2016. Ehlers was given authority over treatment decisions, including interventions that would not be possible under standard museum conservation protocols. Museums have a long history of altering objects in their care, but there has been reluctance to afford source community experts the same privilege. In this article, we explore the benefits and challenges with an emphasis on creating space for Native authority.

INTRODUCTION

The Chilkat blanket¹ is a traditional Northwest Coast Indigenous textile woven today by Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, and Kwagulth (*Kwak.wakawaku*) culture bearers. In 2016, the Alaska State Museum contracted with Anna Brown Ehlers to repair a damaged Chilkat blanket, museum object number II-B-861. The blanket was selected for exhibit in a clan house display for the new Alaska State Museum galleries because its design matched a wood pattern board painted in formline and other weaving-related objects intended for the display. However, the blanket had significant areas of damage and loss. Although the extensive intervention to stabilize and augment the blanket's structure challenged current ethics and guidelines for museum conservation treatment (American Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works [AIC] 1994), the museum's presence in the Native homeland made collaboration imperative.

Juneau is built on Tlingit land, *Lingít Aaní*, and received its English name from gold miner Joe Juneau, who arrived in the area in 1880. The Tlingit are a Northwest

Coast Indigenous group whose regional tribal groupings are called *khwáan*. Downtown Juneau (*Dzantik'i Héeni*, literally translated "river at the base of Flounder") has been part of the land of the *Áak'w Kwáan* people for an estimated 10,000 years. Today, the *Áak'w Kwáan* people of downtown Juneau are organized into two main clans, the *Wooshketaan* (shark clan) and the *Leeneidí* (dog salmon clan), who are of the Eagle and Raven moieties, respectively. The Alaska State Museum has existed on the land of these people since its collecting activities began in 1900.

The new Andrew P. Kashevaroff State Library, Archives, and Museum (SLAM) opened to the public on June 6, 2016. A clan house exhibit within the long-term galleries depicts the history and culture of the three Northwest Coast Indigenous groups in Alaska: Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian. Exhibit design in consultation with source communities included a Chilkat blanket on a loom, a pattern board, a warping stick, balls of yarn, yellow cedar bark, and mountain goat wool (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, the most appropriate blanket in the museum's collection, the



Figure 1. Display of a Chilkat blanket (Alaska State Museum object number II-B-861) in the clan house exhibit of the Alaska State Museum, designed to showcase weaving technology. Photo by Ellen Carrlee.

one that matched an important pattern board, had disfiguring damage, including large losses to the fringe and unraveling areas of instability. Although the museum had in-house object conservation expertise in Ellen Carrlee, the degree of intervention required to make the blanket whole again was beyond the repairs she could complete without deceiving viewers about what was original and what was repair. Since the 1980s, North American museum preservation of collections has focused heavily on preventive care, as the intensely interventive treatments of past generations have often resulted in regret for museums. This is especially the case with Indigenous objects, whose meaning and value to source communities have not always been properly recognized by museums.

One example of evolving museum practice is the widespread replacement of toxic pesticides with a regime of monitoring and freezing objects to control insect infes-

tation. Another is the control of temperature and humidity to preserve leather, along with acceptance of an aged stiffness, instead of routine applications of oily dressings to artificially keep animal skins supple. Leather dressings over time were found to ooze, spew, darken, and rot leather fibers as the oils and greases themselves became rancid and deteriorated. Strong irreversible adhesives such as epoxies were replaced with weaker adhesives like Acryloid B-72, which could be readily reversed in the future if the orientation of break edge joins were incorrect or if an artifact endured new stress. While past generations of museum caretakers might have repainted a worn mask, later curators came to realize that uninformed but well-intended “improvements” to objects were not always in keeping with cultural principles. Today’s museum professionals are rightly reluctant to interfere with materials in a way that could obscure the original makers’ and users’ intentions.

Forward-thinking museums strive to make space for Indigenous voices that assert current cultural needs for museum objects (Bernstein 1992; Clavir 2002; Harrison et al. 2011; IARC SAR 2015). The SLAM budget for exhibit development afforded a rare opportunity to contract with a Chilkat weaver, whose interventions would meaningfully contribute to the blanket's biography.

BACKGROUND

Anna Brown Ehlers (*Saint' Teen*)² is a renowned Chilkat weaver of the Raven moiety. She is *Ghaanaxhteidi* (Woodworm clan) of the *Yaay Hit* (Whale House) (Fig. 2). She is descended from Klukwan, the main village of the *Jilkháat Khwáan*, approximately 100 miles north of Juneau. Anna's mother was Elsie Brown (*Yeix' Na What'*

Kla or *Daax' Aas Gidtk*), also a Raven of the Woodworm Whale House because Tlingit clan identity is matrilineal. Anna is also *Dakhl'aweidi yádi* ("a child of the Killer Whale clan") through the clan identity of her late father, Austin Brown (*Naahaan*). *Jilkháat Khwáan* was by far the most productive center of Chilkat weaving technology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as a result blankets created here were labeled "Chilkat" despite their Tsimshian origins and pockets of production elsewhere (Jones 2018; Milburn 1997:375–380). Anna remembers seeing her first Chilkat blanket as a child when her uncle Roy Brown wore one in the Juneau Fourth of July parade during Alaska's celebration of statehood in 1959. During Anna's childhood, she was aware of just three living Chilkat weavers: Mary Willard (*Akhlé*), Annie Klaney (*K'aanakéek Tlaá*), and Jennie Thlunaut (*Shax'saani Kéek'*).



Figure 2. Interior of the *Yaay Hit* (Whale House) of the *Gaanaxteidi* (Woodworm clan), Klukwan, Alaska, 1895. Photo by Lloyd Winter and Percy Pond. Alaska State Library Historical Collection ASL-P87-0010.

By 1980, when Anna began weaving, only Jennie Thlunaut remained in Klukwan. Jennie was an important conduit of both weaving and cultural knowledge. She is credited with instructing many of the master weavers active today, particularly through workshops and apprenticeships she undertook late in life (Hudson 2008; Worl and Smythe 1986). Jennie Thlunaut was close friends with Anna's paternal grandmother, Mary Betts Brown (*Kossanux'*), and stayed at her house whenever she traveled to Juneau. Anna studied with Jennie in 1982, and describes her as a mean, strict, traditional teacher who would pinch her arm or kick her under the table if she made an error. Jennie would only teach Anna in Tlingit. Anna would audiotape Jennie's instructions and take them to her father for translation. Jennie once wove a blanket for her uncle, who ordered the blanket as a commission but perished at sea before the work was completed. After Jennie finished the Chilkat blanket, she took it to the location in Lynn Canal where he drowned, cut it into pieces, and put it in the sea. This was a version of a long-standing Tlingit tradition of cutting up and distributing pieces of Chilkat blankets ceremonially (Emmons 1991:228). Jennie's action may have been the last ceremonial cutting of a Chilkat blanket until Anna wove a blanket expressly for the purpose for the *koo.eex* (memorial potlatch) for her father, Austin Brown, in Klukwan on September 7, 2007.

Anna studied with Jennie for over six months when Jennie was in her eighties (Fig. 3). Anna also studied weaving with Dorica Jackson, her brother Nathan's wife. In the 1980s, Betty Hulbert, Alaska State Museum curator



Figure 3. Jennie Thlunaut (left) and Anna Brown Ehlers (right) demonstrate Chilkat weaving at the 1984 Smithsonian Festival of American Folk Life in Washington, DC. Photo by Dane Penland, Smithsonian Institute.

of collections, invited Anna to study the old blankets in museum storage. Anna spent many afternoons examining the construction techniques of past weavers. She credits this access with a five-year leap forward in her early weaving skills. Anna has since completed 13 full-size blankets (robes), three tunics, three aprons, several bibs, and hundreds of other Chilkat weavings. Anna's first full-size blanket was commissioned by the grandson of Franz Boas. She has also received numerous awards and grants. Although she has a house in Klukwan, Anna's main residence is in Juneau, where she grew up. In autumn 2016, during the project to repair this blanket in the Alaska State Museum conservation lab, Anna was also working at home processing dozens of sockeye salmon from the Chilkat River in Klukwan, demonstrating her ongoing connection to her ancestral village and subsistence values.

When the Alaska State Museum sought a weaver to repair the blanket, it searched for a local master weaver who could meet the deadline requirements for the exhibition and the object security requirements of the museum. It is estimated that a few dozen living Northwest Coast Native artists identify as Chilkat weavers, and only a handful are accomplished enough to teach apprentices the weaving tradition. Fewer still have completed a full-size blanket and understand the construction technology intimately enough to repair a historic blanket. Anna's authority, therefore, comes from several perspectives: heritage, training with other respected weavers, intensive study of old blankets, connection to her culture, connection to Chilkat country itself, her own prolific output creating Chilkat weavings, her revival of the tradition of cutting up a blanket at a memorial ceremony, and her status as a master weaver who has taught many apprentices. She has reached over 500,000 people since first demonstrating her craft to the public in 1984.

Alaska State Museum conservator Ellen Carrlee holds a master's degree in art history and object conservation from New York University and is a PhD candidate in anthropology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Her efforts to pursue collaborative object treatments are part of a trend in museums to make space for cultural experts to influence the care and treatment of museum collections (Kaminitz et al. 2008; Kaminitz and Poiss 1999; Odegaard 2005; Stable 2012). On a national level, tribal consultation expanded dramatically in the 1980s as museums struggled to comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) legislation. The development process for the Smithsonian's National Museum

of the American Indian's 2004 inaugural exhibits on the national mall established a new standard of expectation for community consultation in museum exhibition of Indigenous materials in the United States (Drumheller and Kaminitz 1994; Johnson et al. 2005; Kaminitz et al. 2005). A generation of museum conservators was trained in this approach through internships, fellowships, conference presentations, and publications, but the profession still struggles to incorporate collaboration into its praxis (Malkogeorgou 2013; McHugh 2012; Saunders 2014; Wharton 2005).

In Alaska, community collaboration in museum artifact treatment has a legacy extending back at least to 1971. That year, the bare frame of an Iñupiat *umiaq* (open skin boat, ASM object number II-A-4935) was re-covered with walrus skins. The boat had been built by Jonathan Onalik in Wales, Alaska, in the 1920s. An Alaska State Council on the Arts grant funded the project, called "A Live Introduction to Traditional and Contemporary Eskimo Culture," and brought four Siberian Yupik couples (John and Lillie Apangalook, Vivian and Lewis Igakitan, Thelma and Homer Apatiki, and Fred Angi and Flora Imergan) from Gambell to Juneau with fresh walrus skins to re-cover the boat. A similar project took place in 2003, when the Museum of the North at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks re-covered a kayak frame (UAMN object number UA72-078-0001) commissioned from Simon Paneak in collaboration with the Iñupiaq community of Anaktuvuk Pass (Linn 2004). Other examples of hands-on Indigenous interventions in treatment collaboration include the 2002 repair of a birchbark canoe (object number SJ-IV-X-20) at the Sheldon Jackson Museum with the collaboration of Athabascan canoe maker Howard Luke (Carrlee 2003), and Siberian Yupik skin sewer Elaine Kingeekuk's collaborations to repair a gut parka (NMAI 12/3434) for the National Museum of the American Indian/Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage (McHugh 2008) and another gut parka (object number 93-56-1) for the Cordova Museum (Gibbins 2015). Totem pole treatment has been an especially active focus of Indigenous collaboration in Tlingit country. Examples include Nathan and Dorica Jackson's preservation work on Nathan's totem poles; the 2003 treatment of the Auke Pole (object number 81.01.033) for the Juneau-Douglas City Museum; Haida carver Lee Wallace's 2008 restoration of his grandfather's Four Story Pole (object number 84.19.001) for the Juneau-Douglas City Museum; Tlingit carvers Wayne Price and Fred Fulmer's 2015 res-

toration of the *Yax Te' Hit* pole for the U.S. Forest Service in Juneau (Granger 2017; Jenkins 2015; McCarthy 2017); and Tlingit carver Tommy Joseph's 2017 restoration of the Chief Johnson pole for the City of Ketchikan (Dudzak 2017a, 2017b; Kauffman 2017).

THE BLANKET AND ITS TREATMENT

The Chilkat blanket in this project was collected in Sitka around 1900 and purchased by the Alaska State Museum in 1946 from Dr. Bertrand K. Wilbur. The maker and clan are not known at this time, but Zachary Jones and Harold Jacobs's research suggests the unusual green areas of the fringe and the extensive checkered border indicate the work of *Kháaxh'eidei.át*, a late-nineteenth-century weaver of the *Ghaanaxhteidi* clan in Klukwan (Jones 2018:57–59). The motif seems to be a diving whale. Some Chilkat blankets are woven with clan designs of either the Raven or the Eagle moiety (examples might include blankets that feature clan crests such as a frog, a wolf, or a killer whale). In 1985, Tlingit culture bearer Anna Katzeek told Anna Brown Ehlers that the diving whale blanket was made for trade within the culture, as it could be used by either Raven or Eagle moiety. Diving whale blankets were sometimes made for the art and tourist market, though most older blankets tend to have clan significance and are considered *at.óow* (sacred clan property not belonging exclusively to a single individual). If the blanket depicted a clan crest, the museum would have considered protocols to balance the moiety of the blanket and the moiety of the weaver chosen to make the repairs.

Damage to the blanket that occurred pre-collection (i.e., prior to 1946) included missing sections of fringe, a damaged area on one side, and losses to a horizontal woven element in the bottom fringe. These gaps and losses made the blanket look incomplete, disfigured, and poorly cared for. A standard museum conservation repair would have gently stabilized those areas by reinforcing the damaged edges with fine stitching of cotton thread or hairsilk, and with cultural consultation might have considered loss compensation to fill the missing areas with new material. These actions would have been aimed at maximum preservation of original material and making the blanket look visually whole for the exhibition. Anna came to the museum in the summer of 2015 to consult on the condition of this blanket and two others. While conservator Ellen Carrlee could have stabilized the blanket adequately for exhibition, the chance to add to the blanket's biography

and integrity while creating an opportunity for a living weaver to interact intimately with an old blanket seemed to address a higher museum mission. Creating access and inviting in cultural experts to further their own priorities is a role museums need to embrace, even though doing so means giving up some control and authority.

Anna made the treatment decisions to address the damages. Regarding fringe replacement and the border stabilization, Anna's approach had much in common with Ellen's conservation training. In her approach to caring for the bark within the warp fringe and the damaged twining across this fringe, Anna's actions would have been inappropriate for a conservator to undertake. In those areas, the damage was not to the blanket's appearance but to its capacity to perform its cultural function. For museum objects such as firearms, clothing, machinery, and musical instruments, inclusion in a museum collection almost always marks the cessation of active cultural use and the termination of activities to prolong their physical functionality. Continued cultural activity of a museum object is referred to as "consumptive use" and is considered contrary to the museum goal of preserving the object for future generations. Many museums maintain a separate collection of "lesser" objects for consumptive use, often labeled "educational," "hands-on," or "reference" collections. The disadvantageous historical circumstances of artifact collection for Native people, coupled with the need for material culture access supported by the North American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) legislation, has led museums to reevaluate the notion of consumptive use for Indigenous objects. "Ceremonial use" is increasingly used to identify this kind of purpose for museum collections.

Treatment of the blanket by an expert like Anna does not begin when hands touch the damaged blanket any more than weaving a new blanket begins at the loom. The work begins in the woods, gathering bark from a yellow cedar tree in the spring. Bark is spun into the warp of a Chilkat blanket along with mountain goat wool. The oldest blankets are made with cedar bark, mountain goat wool, and natural dyes, but a great many existing blankets include commercially dyed sheep wool as the weft (horizontal weaving element). Cedar bark and mountain goat wool continue to be the standard expected for the warp (vertical weaving element), even though both are difficult, expensive, and time-consuming to gather. Inclusion of bark in the warp is a unique feature of Chilkat weaving, creating the stiffness needed to execute the surface

braids that permit curvilinear design forms. Anna gathers and processes her own cedar bark with local permission from property owners in Kake, Sitka, and Ketchikan. These property owners, consulted each time, are typically the ANCSA corporation of that area or the U.S. Forest Service. Her mountain goat hides are usually gifted or bartered with hunters. The processed bark and wool warp are thigh-spun together by hand. When Anna started the hands-on intervention phase, she brought several boxes of bark in various phases of processing and wool both roved and spun into warp. Roved wool has been pulled and lightly twisted into fluffy lengths in preparation to spin it into yarn. The presence of these materials in the lab emphasized the extensive resources, labor, and knowledge required to weave Chilkat. Rarely is one person an equally skilled spinner, dyer, and weaver. Many people cannot handle processing the raw materials. Some do not want to do spinning. Anna herself does not do much dyeing, preferring the colorfastness and brilliance of the commercial wool, silk, or blends of 50 percent wool and 50 percent silk as her wefts. When Anna travels, she brings wool and bark with her to spin. Other weavers often want to buy warp from her.

Long ago, the Tlingits of the Chilkat valley (*Jilkháat Khwáan*) would send mountain goat hides and bark to the interior Athabascans in the fall, along with coastal products like ooligan (*Thaleichthys pacificus*) and seal oil. In the spring, the spun warp would be sent back in return. This trade relationship allowed the elite weavers of the Chilkat valley to specialize in weaving. Their renowned skill and productivity led the name "Chilkat blanket" to be associated with the textile. *Naaxéin* was the Native word used, meaning "fringe about the body." The movement of the fringe is considered essential to the purpose and meaning of the blanket; thus, the attention paid to the treatment of the fringe is an important part of the conservation treatment. Fringe is not simply a decorative embellishment. The woven design visually establishes the wearer's identity and lineage, and the purpose of the blanket is to be danced in ceremony with the fringe in motion and for the wearer to be transported spiritually and emotionally by the spirits of clan ancestors (Brown 1998; Emmons 1907, 1991; Holm 1982; Samuel 1982; Williams 2000). Tlingit oratory makes clear that the presence of a Chilkat blanket is a conduit for the spiritual participation of the blanket's ancestral owner or caretaker, who is present at a memorial *khu.éex'* to comfort the bereaved (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1990:243–259).

The vertical element of the so-called “warp fringe” comes into existence as soon as the warp is put on the loom. It is looped over a header cord that is itself lashed to a wooden crossbar pierced with holes. Chilkat warp is usually made of mountain goat wool spun with cedar bark and is relatively stiff in comparison to the other kinds of fringe on the blanket. The warp fringe extends through and beyond the woven design area. Along the bottom of the blanket, there is a top layer of softer wool fringe over the warp fringe that does not contain bark and is lighter and more flexible. Sometimes called “false fringe,” it is attached separately at the bottom of the woven area after completion of the woven design. The two kinds of fringe move differently when the blanket is danced. If they tangle, they cannot move properly. To prevent tangling and promote proper movement, the upper section of the warp

fringe in back has several widely spaced rows of twining. This twining is minimally visible when covered by the top fringe (see Fig. 4 for a diagram of this Chilkat blanket).

One of the treatment activities Anna and her daughter Alexis did was to remove small bits of broken cedar bark from the warp fringe. Approximately half a teaspoon of bark was groomed from the fringe. This intervention would be in direct opposition to traditional museum conservation ethics, which preclude conservators from removing original material whenever possible. Museums also tend to prioritize the static visuals of an object over the actions it was meant to do, and removal of tiny bits of bark did not add to the visual impact of the blanket. Watching Alexis trim the bark bits from the fringe with tiny scissors made Ellen exceedingly uncomfortable, as it was in opposition to her museum training. At the same

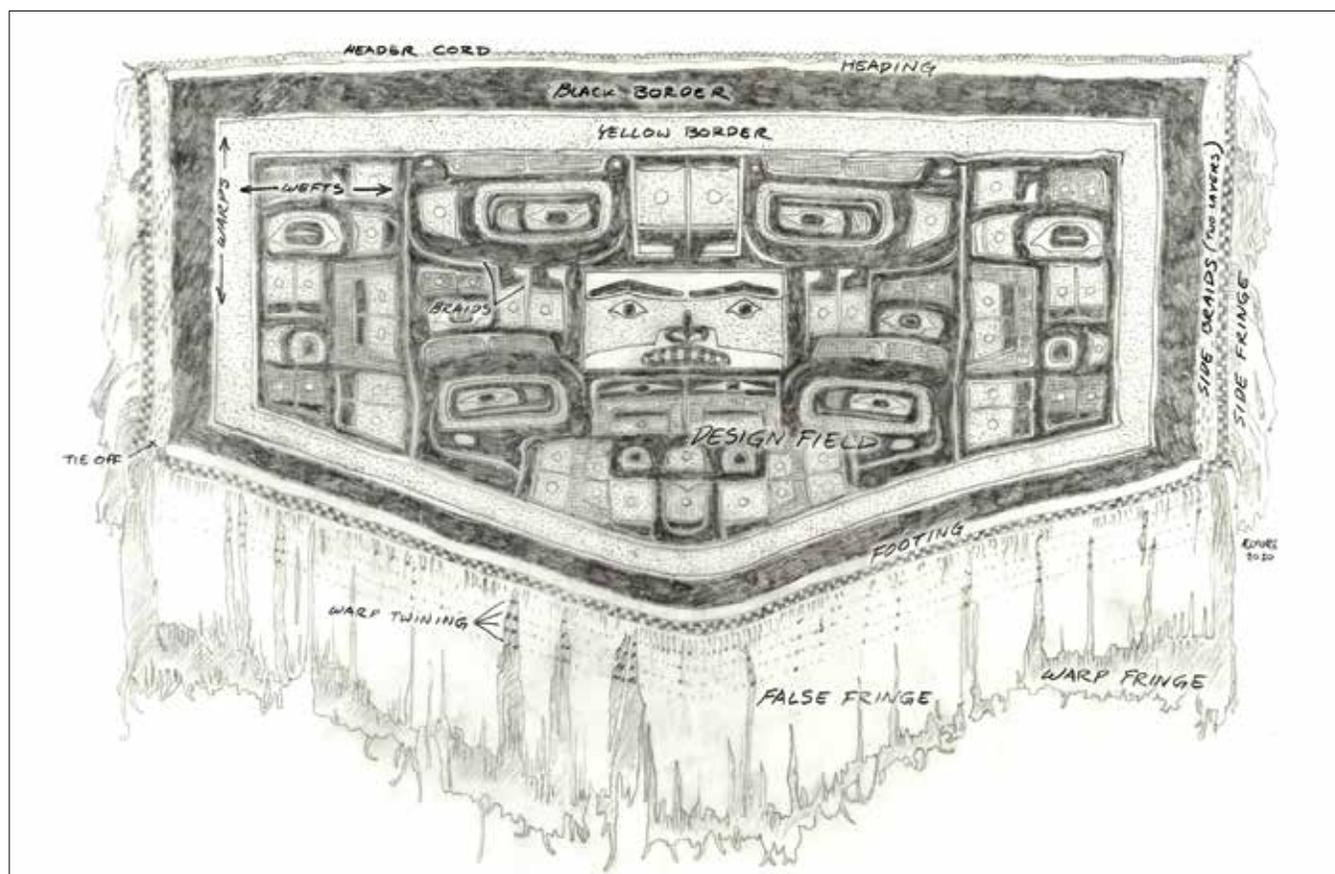


Figure 4. Warps made of spun cedar bark and wool are looped over the header cord. The white heading at the top and white footing at the bottom set off a black border and a yellow border. Twined wefts with forms outlined in braids make up the design field, here showing a central panel and two side panels. The upper part of the warp fringe (spun with bark) is held in a flat plane by warp twining, while the false fringe (spun only with wool) is attached to the footing. Side fringe is attached between two layers of side braids. The tie-offs are unusual on this robe, extending as a checkerboard pattern around three sides instead of just the lower corners. Ties to secure the garment when worn are missing from this Chilkat blanket.

time, Anna was replacing the damaged warp fringe and its twining (Fig. 5).

On this blanket, almost 70 percent of the fringe twining was lost and the remaining twining was loose, fragile, and tangled. In a standard museum conservation treatment, such damaged fringe twining would be stabilized, perhaps even held at its broken ends with tiny knotted supplementary cotton threads or hair silk, carefully hidden. Anna's treatment involved the complete removal of the broken and fragmentary twining, repair of missing warp fringes, and replacement of fringe twining. While the conservation approach would have maintained a *visual* continuity that integrated repair material with maximum original material from the past, the weaver's approach maintained a *cultural* continuity that restored the potential for cultural use in the future. Any original material removed from the blanket was carefully labeled and retained, in keeping with museum practice. Anna, too, felt this was valuable and did not perceive the fragments as trash. She carefully saved them in an ice cube tray as she



Figure 5. Alexis Ehlers (center) trims tiny pieces of broken cedar bark from the warp fringe while Anna Brown Ehlers (foreground) replaces missing warp fringe. Photo by Ellen Carrlee.

worked or taped them to the inside of her notebook. The new twining afforded robust and even tension across the weft fringe, holding both old and replacement weft fringe securely in place (Fig. 6). If the blanket is requested for ceremonial use in the future, the repairs made by Anna and her daughter will permit the fringe to move correctly.

As an object of cultural patrimony actively used in ceremony, Chilkat weavings are sometimes the subject of NAGPRA claims. One Chilkat blanket in the Alaska State Museum collection is checked out by the clan caretaker for ceremonial use at least once a year. In 1992, the blanket in this article was taken to Celebration, a biennial



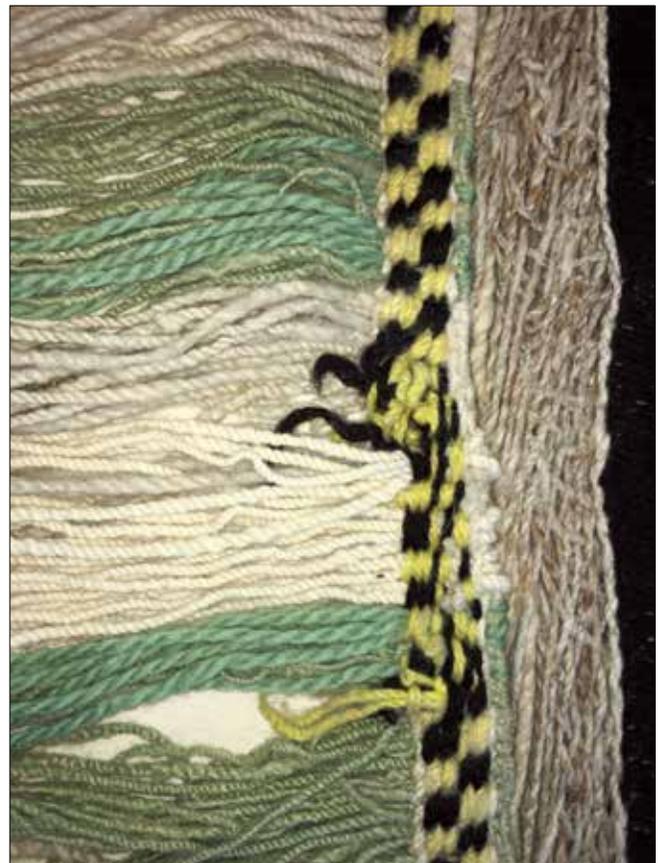
Figure 6. Paler-colored new warp fringe can be distinguished from the darker old fringe. The yellow and black widely spaced twining that secures the upper region has been restored with an even tension to allow the movements required by ceremony should the blanket be used in the future. The middle row of twining has a small curved area where it diverts from a straight line to catch the cut ends of the damaged old warps and hold them securely. If the blanket were danced in the future, the new warp fringe would loosen slightly with use and take on a diameter closer to the old fringe. Photo by Ellen Carrlee.

Northwest Coast cultural festival, with a group of approximately 30 other artifacts for review by clan leaders for potential NAGPRA repatriation (Steve Henrikson, pers. comm., 4 January 2019). Trends in current and future research (Carrlee 2018; Jones 2018) suggest it might be possible to affiliate this blanket with a clan and coordinate its reintegration into active ceremonial life. Anna's treatment extends its biography and cultural identity in that direction.

Other treatments undertaken by Anna had much in common with museum approaches. Anna spent many hours traveling to specialty yarn stores in the Seattle area in search of green and yellow commercial wool yarns that would be similar enough in color and size to integrate with the old materials but remain visually distinct for researchers to easily distinguish original from repair. On exhibition, at a distance of a few feet, her work blends with the original and is not distracting. But upon closer examination the distinction can be readily seen. In the loss compensation of the checkerboard pattern border, frayed original ends were not trimmed and the unraveling region was secured with weaving that loosely imitated the original

(Figs. 7 and 8). These loss-compensation principles guide the conservation profession as well (Alarcón et al. 2012; Heald 1997; Levinson and Nieuwenhuizen 1994; Russell 2003; Smith 1994; Sutcliffe and Jenkins 2003).

Anna did not remove original material that did not interfere with the cultural functionality of the blanket. Even an unsightly old intervention of coarse commercial cordage used on the back of the blanket to create a sleeve for wall-hanging display was left in place. Anna decided it was not necessary to remove this addition, and it remained intact as part of the object's biography from its mid-twentieth-century use by a collector or museum (Fig. 9). The blanket was attached to the replica loom using artificial sinew threaded through drilled holes at the tapered edge of the loom's top bar, catching the original header cord of the blanket with a blanket stitch loop at intervals just as the blanket would have been attached to a loom as it was made (Fig. 10). A supplementary header cord of artificial sinew was added side-by-side to the original to reduce the stress of the header cord from gravity over time, as finished blankets were not stored tied to their looms.



Figures 7 and 8. Loss to the side fringe and damage to the border is seen before repair (left) and after repair (right). These repairs stabilize without confusing new restorations with original work. Photo by Ellen Carrlee.



Figure 9. Weaver Anna Brown Eblers attaches the Chilkat blanket to a replica loom in the collections storage room of the Alaska State Museum. Visible near the top edge on the back of the blanket is the old commercial cordage element from a previous display technique. Photo by Ellen Carrlee.



Figure 10. Attachment of the blanket to the replica loom by catching the header cord with artificial sinew. Warps are doubled over the header cord, creating the loops seen along the top of a Chilkat blanket. Photo by Ellen Carrlee.

AUTHORITY

Increasingly, museum authority to “collect, preserve and interpret” (Munley and Roberts 2006:31; Skramstad and Skramstad 2012:66) is seen as enhanced by the collaboration and participation of source communities. The museum field has not developed far enough in this regard, and there are still plenty of exhibitions and projects that interpret and analyze Indigenous objects without any participation from relevant culture bearers, not to mention the important question of whether certain objects belong in a museum at all.

By contracting with Anna to make repairs on the blanket and having components of the treatment occur in sight of the public, the Alaska State Museum aimed to demonstrate its current-day authority to care for this blanket by doing so in a collaborative way involving a living Chilkat Tlingit weaver. The museum is showing that it is caring for collections according to the most up-to-date museum ethics and standards, and this includes Native collaboration. A large glass window into the conservation lab is a visual public statement that the museum takes preservation seriously. The space has large, clean layout tables, cabinets full of specialty adhesives and cleaning devices, snorkels for fume exhaust of chemical vapors, microscopes and an XRF spectrometer for analysis, and other physical manifestations of the conservation profession. Anna brought physical elements of her studio, her professional identity, and her heritage into the conservation lab to both inspire her and to establish her authority. While the museum considered sending the blanket to Anna’s studio so she could work in the comfort and convenience of her own space with her own supplies and equipment, everyone agreed that security and insurance concerns precluded that option. The work needed to take place at the museum, in what anthropologist James Clifford has called the “contact zone” (Clifford 1997:192).

The museum is implicitly a place of power imbalance. To balance the disadvantages of the museum space (both as a “contact zone” but also from limited building hours, constricted movement due to keycard access through doors, and limits on where food and beverages could be consumed), Ellen tried not to ask too many questions or give unsolicited opinions about treatment decisions. She did not ask for an explanation when Anna brought a wide variety of items to the lab that were not directly used on the blanket. Anna’s intent in bringing the materials and objects into the space was partly to make the space

more her own by including inspirational items to give her strength, made through the labor of herself and her family. But it was also to assert her authority visually through the physical evidence of her identity, relationships, and accomplishments. Anna brought two large boxes of roved wool, a large ball of roved wool, hundreds of yards of spun warp containing mountain goat wool and yellow cedar bark, examples of split cedar bark, and two large boxes of finely split cedar bark. These materials were a testament to the amount of skill, time, and effort needed to produce weaving supplies. They were also proof of Anna's expertise. Anna brought her own posters and a painting of Martha Benson. One poster was didactic, showing the elements of Chilkat weaving with samples of each material attached to the surface, and another featured Anna's photo and name from a school workshop she had done. Both of these demonstrated Anna's history of teaching and demonstrating Chilkat technique. Anna also brought several Native-made garments: a beaded leather jacket made by her paternal grandmother Mary Betts (*Kossanux'*) in 1921 for Anna's uncle Judson Brown, a button vest with a formline Raven motif made by a Tsimshian artist, a floral beaded headband made by Kathy Polk, and leather boots made of sea otter and harbor seal made by Mary Jane Valentine of Klukwan. These items demonstrated Anna's authority through her relationships: kinship connections, connections to ceremonies and events where cultural items are used, and connections to places where both seal and sea otter are privileged materials, reserved for use by Alaska Natives through the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. Anna brought in a contemporary acrylic painting by Juneau artist Arnie Weimer, taken from a historic photo of Martha Benson. Martha was the paternal aunt and teacher of Anna's teacher, Jennie Thlunaut. She was also Anna's matrilineal ancestral relative of the Whale House. In addition to the heritage connection depicted, the fact that the painter (a middle-aged white male) gave the painting to Anna as a gift indicates that Anna is recognized for her authority in many circles.

Ellen did not fully grasp the implications of all these items when they first arrived in the lab, but in keeping with the theme of visual messaging she brought out two of Anna's weavings from the museum collection and included them with the display of items visible from the lab window (Fig. 11). One of the items was a section of the blanket cut apart during Anna's father's *khu.éek'* (object number 2008-13-1). The other was an early weaving made

when Anna was an apprentice (object number II-B-1851). During the month that Anna was actively repairing the blanket, she brought in an apprentice, Darrell Harmon; her daughter Alexis; and three of her grandchildren, Serena Harrell, Kyrie Harrell, and Carter Ehlers. She had been teaching her grandchildren to process bark and wool. When her own children were young at home, she would not let them play outside until they had split a bowl of bark. Her three children helped spin the wool for Austin Brown's *koo.eex* blanket. Anna has given approximately 325 people hands-on instruction about Chilkat weaving in classrooms, heritage centers, culture camps, universities, and her own home. She has had a handful of apprentices. If the objects she brought to the lab were witnesses to her connection to her cultural past, the presence of these people in the lab is testament to her commitment to the future of her culture.

RELATIONSHIPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The treatment and display activities for this Chilkat blanket lasted approximately six months from the time supplies first arrived in the lab until the blanket went on display in the clan house exhibit. However, the supplies and objects Anna brought stayed in the lab for over two years. Practically speaking, Anna's house was undergoing renovations and Ellen was in no rush to hustle the materials away. The presence of the material in the lab kept the door open between Anna and Ellen. In those two years, Ellen's husband passed away, and Anna's daughter Alexis died. Ellen's son decorated Christmas cookies with Anna's grandchildren. Anna shared smoked ooligan fish from her backyard smokehouse. Ellen proposed to coauthor this paper with Anna. Anna has suggested future collaborative projects, including bringing her grandchildren to the museum to process mountain goat hides. The treatment project and the presence of Anna's material in the lab helped spark a new research project on Chilkat dyes. The Chilkat Dye Project is a collaborative endeavor between a working group of more than a dozen Chilkat weavers who meet monthly at the Alaska State Museum to study and lead research and the Pacific Northwest Conservation Science Consortium, an analysis group of five institutions funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. These activities demonstrate the importance of Indigenous authority in museum conservation. Objects are important because objects are important



Figure 11. Some of the items visible through the conservation lab window that helped to visually establish Anna's authority in the treatment of a Chilkat blanket in the museum collection. Photo by Ellen Carrlee.

to people. The future of ethical museum work includes making space for living people to engage meaningfully with their own material culture and share decision-making authority about the future of those objects.

ENDNOTES

1. Also called a Chilkat robe, or a Chilkat dancing robe, but Anna grew up with the term "blanket" so we use it here.
2. Anna's Chilkat name is *Saint' Teen* after Mildred Sparks, the eldest woman in the Whale House when she was born. Her Auke name is *Kotch'gun* after Bessie Visaya. Her Klukwan name is *Sa' What Ka Tlein* from her twin sister's 1994 *khu.éex'*. Her Hoonah name from 1976 is *Sus' Keen*.

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DENTALIUM EARRINGS: CONSERVATION OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY TLINGIT EARRINGS WITH ORIGINAL MATERIAL

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ABSTRACT

This report investigates the use of original material sourced from a local Indigenous community to conserve a pair of Tlingit earrings held at the Agnes Etherington Art Center in Kingston, Ontario. This article discusses the thought process and technical procedure involved in developing and carrying out a conservation treatment of earrings composed of dentalium shell, sinew, leather, glass beads, and walrus ivory. The main technical issue for the conservation of these earrings involved the creation of imitation shell that would be used as a structural fill. The conservation treatment involved the use of original shell material as various attempts to create an imitation shell with conservation grade materials proved to be unsuccessful. The decision to source material from the local Indigenous community is an attempt to consider the articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the definition of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage, and theories of decolonization into the ethical and technical practice of conservation of indigenous material.

INTRODUCTION

A pair of Tlingit earrings in the collections of the Agnes Etherington Art Center in Kingston, Ontario, were conserved by a student in the master of art conservation degree program at Queen's University. The Agnes Etherington Art Center has a long-standing history of research and collaboration with the Department of Art History and Art Conservation at Queen's University. Part of that collaboration involves the conservation treatment of artifacts by students enrolled in the master of art conservation program so that they may gather the necessary technical skills required by professional conservators.

The main conservation issue presented by these earrings was the creation of a fill material for an area of loss on one of the earrings. Other minor conservation issues included fraying of sinew as well as dust and dirt accumulation on the shells and beads due to previous display and storage conditions. As the student tasked with the conservation treatment of the Tlingit earrings and

as an Indigenous emerging conservator of *Anishinaabe* (Ojibwe) and *Néhiyaw* (Cree) descent who is learning about Western conservation theories and practices, I took it upon myself to begin discussions wherever possible with the source communities, contemporary craftspeople, and other institutions, such as the Alaska State Museum, to gather perspectives on the conservation of these earrings using original material.

As the project developed, it was clear that establishing relationships with community members across Canada and efforts to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning in the largely Westernized field of art conservation are arduous and exhaustive undertakings. Indigenous ways of knowing and learning include story sharing, community links, land links, nonlinear pathways, learning maps, and deconstruction and reconstruction of established methodologies, all of which vary among tribal nations yet are important to integrate when

dealing with Indigenous cultural heritage (Johnston et al. 2018; Wilson 2004). As the project's time frame did not allow for meaningful consultation with community members and contemporary craftspeople of Tlingit descent, we decided to use original material to respect the intangible cultural heritage aspects encompassing these earrings and as a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action (2015).

The following discusses the Tlingit earrings through a Western conservation methodological approach of documentation of object history and context, examination, and conservation treatment. Contrasting with the technical description of the conservation treatment, the discussion focuses on a holistic approach to understanding the conservation of these earrings through an Indigenous lens, which includes reasoning for the inclusion of the TRC's Calls to Action, incorporation of intangible cultural heritage aspects as defined by UNESCO, and aspects of Indigenous ways of knowing and learning weaved throughout the project.

EARRINGS

These earrings were constructed by the Tlingit people, whose name means the "people of the tides" and who have roots in coastal Alaska from 11,000 years ago (McLellan 2012). The materials include glass beads, leather, sinew, walrus ivory, wool, and dentalium shells. These dentalium shells are the exterior protection of the scaphopod mollusk

under the order of Dentaliida, a sea bottom feeder that lives in depths over 6000 meters (Barton 1994). Tlingit people highly valued dentalium shells and used them in personal adornment and decorating blankets and often traded them with the Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw groups of what is now known as Vancouver Island (Emmons 1991:173). Earrings were made for both personal and ceremonial use, with the women's earrings varying in style from the men's as described by Emmons:

originally with a strip of hide ornamented with dentalia. The modern earring was of red worsted or yarn in skeins...in the dance, these long pendants were very effective, sawing from side to side with the movement of the body...strips of tanned deerskin, wider at the bottom than at the top...the bottom was hung with twisted strands of mountain goat wool. (244)

Emmons's vivid description of Tlingit earrings is echoed in the image of the earrings in Fig. 1. The species of animal used for the leather and sinew components is unknown due to limited analytical resources at Queen's University; however, analysis could be done through peptide mass fingerprinting to determine what animal was consumed in the making of these earrings (Kirby 2017). The beads could be either Russian trade beads or of other Asian origin, namely China, which used beads to trade with Indigenous populations along the Pacific Northwest coast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as suggested by Burgess and Dussubieux (2007).



Figure 1. Tlingit earrings before treatment. Flash illumination. Photo by Paige Van Tassel. M14-001.13a,b. Agnes Etherington Art Center, Kingston, ON.

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY

Henrietta Constantine collected a pair of dentalium shell earrings on Wrangell Island between 1895 and 1908. In 1929, she sold them, along with many items of circumpolar origin, to Agnes Etherington. These materials became the basis of the collection and center that is known today as the Agnes Etherington Art Center in Kingston, Ontario. In a photograph dated 1931, the earrings (M14-001.13a,b) were displayed in the Douglas

Library on Queen's University campus, in a closed display showing the hooks intertwined as they rested beside each other. Also in the display case were other items Henrietta Constantine had collected, such as scrimshaw ivory, napkin rings, and mammoth tusks. In a Queen's University journal article dated November 29, 1929 (Fig. 2), these earrings, along with the other objects in the collection, were described as "a veritable mine of romance... it comprises a wide variety of implements, weapons and ornaments of the Eskimo" (Queens University Journal 1929:1). The journal used the term "Eskimo" as a misnomer for all Indigenous peoples originating from the circumpolar north, including the Inuit and Innu of modern-day Alaska, Canada, and Greenland and the Yupik of Alaska and northern parts of Russia. "Eskimo" was first used by explorer Samuel Hearne in his 1795 publication *A Journey to the Northern Ocean*, where he describes the people

of the north as *esquimaux*. The earrings in question are not Eskimo, however, and this illuminates the inaccurate generalizations made in the twentieth century about Indigenous peoples and cultures in Canada.

Due to the deteriorated state of the earrings, they were taken out of the Douglas Library display case in 2014 and placed within the Agnes vault under controlled humidity and temperature conditions to prevent further deterioration.

CONSERVATION TREATMENT

Table 1 outlines the conservation treatment for these earrings, along with the accompanying reason for carrying out each step. Before treatment, the earrings were analyzed using a Bruker Tracer III handheld portable X-ray fluorescence (pXRF) analyzer for any presence of pesticide



Figure 2. News clipping from Queen's Journal vol. LVI, September 29, 1929.

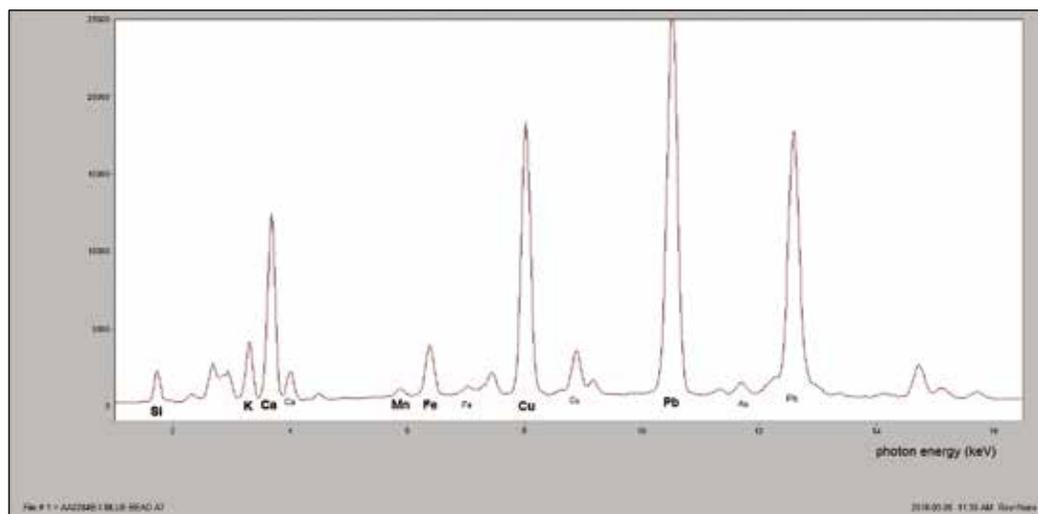


Figure 3. XRF spectrum of the earrings.

Table 1. Conservation steps involved in the treatment of earrings, M14-001.13a-b

Conservation Step	Tools Involved	Reason
1. Before-treatment photos	DSLR camera with flash photography	Evidence of condition before treatment
2. Mechanical surface cleaning	Scalpel, toothpicks, soft brushes, HEPA filtered vacuum	To reduce amount of storage dust accumulated on the surface of the earrings
3. Solvent surface cleaning	Ethanol, cotton swabs	To reduce the amount of accretions on the glass beads to bring some vibrancy and color back
4. Consolidation of the sinew	1% Klucel G in isopropanol with soft brushes	To prevent further fraying of the sinew
5. UV marking of the new dentalium shell	1% Klucel G in isopropanol with soft brushes	To allow further research to distinguish between original material and new fill material under UV-induced visible fluorescence
6. Adhere the sinew at the end of the fill	40% Paraloid B72 in acetone with a toothpick	To prevent loss of the new fill during storage and handling
7. After-treatment photos	DSLR camera with flash photography	To show the difference after treatment and the incorporation of the new fill

use, because it was a nondestructive analytical technique that was readily available to the Queen's University Art Conservation department. Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), a minimally invasive analytical technique, was used to identify the residue present on the earrings.

The pXRF analysis was done on the large glass beads, shell, and leather components. Analysis of the glass components indicated trace amounts of arsenic and lead, which suggests that they may have been treated with pesticides in the past. An alternative explanation is that these elements are part of the glass, and the arsenic and lead detected are the deterioration components of the glass. Other elemental components detected in the glass beads are copper, iron, manganese, silicon, potassium, and calcium (Fig. 3). Further quantifiable analysis could confirm this theory using microchemical testing and minimally invasive analysis, which were not available at time of treatment.

FTIR of the residue on the beads suggests that gum arabic was used either as a binder or as a glaze in the making of these glass beads (Fig. 4). It is unclear whether the material has been exuded out of the beads as a part of the deterioration process or the gum arabic glaze is deteriorating. These results reveal that the glass beads may have been a traded good with Asian countries as suggested by Burgess and Dussubieux, who state that “the bead varieties thought to be manufactured in China tend to appear frequently in the Pacific Northwest and in Alaska” (2007:58).

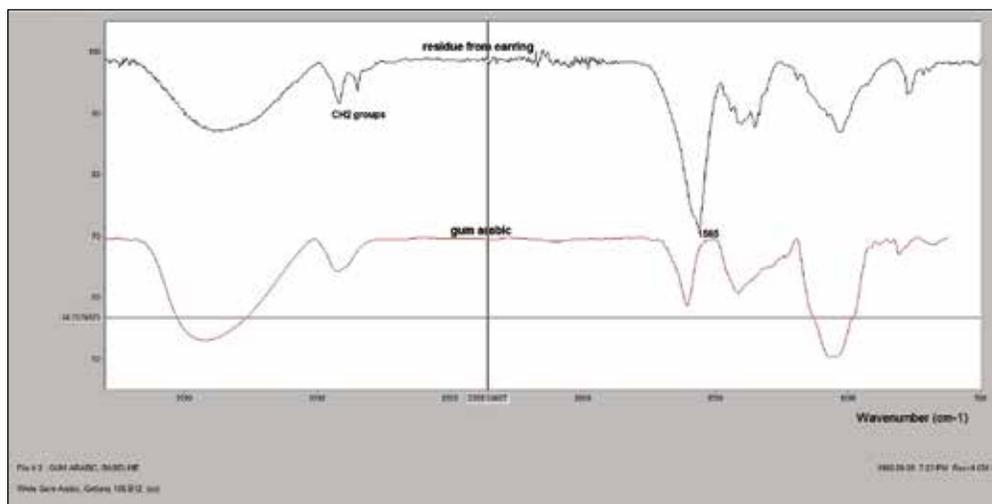


Figure 4. Infrared spectrum of glass bead residue showing similar peaks with gum arabic. The peak at 1565 cm^{-1} , with the CH_2 group absorptions near 2900 cm^{-1} and other weak absorptions, suggest the presence of carboxylic acid salt.

The decision to incorporate original material in the treatment of the earrings resulted from many consultations with the direct supervisor of the project, Amandina Anastassiades, consulting other studies done with original material (Chavarria 2005; Cruickshank et al. 2009; Foncello 2014), and the author's unsuccessful attempts at filling the loss with conservation-grade materials. Such attempts included testing the suitability of plaster fills using plasticine mold, a silicone rubber mold, and a clay model into which the plaster could then be casted. It was notably difficult to re-create the natural curve of the material along with the hollow core, which could then be fit onto the sinew for reintegration. Each casting method offered substantial problems that conflicted with the limited amount of time afforded to complete the project. Japanese tissue paper was also considered with various adhesives and varying numbers of layers; however, the texture and rigidity did not allow for flexibility, and thus it was not possible to create a slight curve to the fill. Epoxy and plaster were thought to be too heavy, risking further damage to the sinew, and therefore original material was chosen as a fill for the earrings.

To prevent confusion, a UV marker consolidant/solvent mixture was applied to the new shell to distinguish between the original and the new material. Furthermore, this new fill also provides a visual indication of restoration as its brighter white color contrasts with the original shell, which had collected dirt accretions from sourcing and use over the years (Brady et al. 2006; Storch 1997). The difference can be seen under UV-induced visible fluorescence (Fig. 5).

The consolidant chosen for UV marking was 1% Klucel G in isopropanol as it showed the most fluorescence in testing and was the best consolidant for sinew, especially in preventing further fraying. The consolidant can be seen at both ends of the new dentalium shell fills under UV without being a distraction under normal light (Fig. 6).



Figure 5. Tlingit earrings after treatment. UV-induced visible fluorescence. Photo by Paige Van Tassel. M14-001.13a-b. Agnes Etherington Art Center, Kingston, ON.



Figure 6. Tlingit earrings after treatment. Flash illumination. Photo by Paige Van Tassel. M14-001.13a-b. Agnes Etherington Art Center, Kingston, ON.

DISCUSSION

In consultation with the artifacts treatment supervisor at the time, Amandina Anastassiades, we decided that the treatment plan would be guided by the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property (CAC) and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators (CAPC) Code of Ethics article II, which states: “in the conservation of cultural property, all actions of the conservation professional must be governed by an

informed respect for the integrity of the property, including physical, conceptual, historical, and aesthetic considerations” (CAC 2000). UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage as a “practice, representation, expression, knowledge, or skill as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces that are a part of a place’s cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2003:2; UNESCO n.d.:9) Therefore, to use original material under the CAC-CAPC Code of Ethics and as a part of an intangible cultural heritage aspect of the Nuu-chah-nulth people of Vancouver Island, the conservation treatment would be to preserve the tradition of collecting and using dentalium shells in the commercial exchange taking place with a First Nations community. In addition, the self-governance agreement of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples, as well as article 11 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007), recognizes that they have legal control of the sourcing and distribution of this beautiful material. In the early days of trade and exploration, dentalium shells were of significant monetary value to the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples, who sustained themselves through the trade

and bargaining of these materials with other nations and explorers in the area (Barton 1994). In sourcing the material for conservation treatment, we decided to source from a First Nations community in Northern Ontario so that there would be a reciprocal benefit to the First Nations economy. This community in Northern Ontario assured the conservator responsible for the treatment that these shells were sourced from First Nations in the Pacific coastal areas. Due to the project time constraints and limited

budget, it was not possible to directly source the dentalium shell from the Nuu-chah-nulth or Tlingit communities.

In his thesis for Simon Fraser University, Andrew John Barton (1994) notes various source locations of dentalium shells and the cultural group associated with each location. Notably, the trading of these shells happened among nations along the Northwest Coast, such as between the Nuu-chah-nulth, Tlingit, Haida, and Kwakwaka'wakw groups. Also, a traditional Tlingit source of dentalium is the Stikine River, which is adjacent to Wrangell Island. This is just 10 kilometers from the area where Henrietta Constantine collected the earrings.

With the TRC's Calls to Action and the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous peoples (UNDRIP) being implemented in Canada and within the university, it was imperative to consult with a culture bearer/knowledge keeper who is familiar with the culture and traditions in which these earrings were manufactured and used. If care and conservation of Indigenous materials are to be taught in the program, time and care must also be given to students to effectively incorporate Indigenous methodologies into the curriculum, as stated in the TRC's Calls to Action for the "development of culturally appropriate curricula... and integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms" (TRC 2015:7). In 2017, Queen's University formed a task force of students, scholars, faculty, staff, and members of the surrounding Kingston Indigenous community to create recommendations responding to the TRC's Calls to Action. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives, under the auspices of the Office of the Provost and Vice Principal, was formed to continually implement and create new initiatives throughout the university in accordance with the TRC. The latest report released by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, in September 2019, states a recent cultivation of donor support for the conservation of Indigenous art (Queen's University 2019:7). Unfortunately, given the time constraints of the classroom, and more broadly the Queen's University master of art conservation program in general, connections to build and establish meaningful relationships with Tlingit communities were not possible, nor was a critical reflection on the effectiveness of the conservation program structure.

I contacted the Alaska State Museum to determine whether they had any information on such earrings as well as guidance for appropriateness in using original material as a fill. Throughout these discussions, it was confirmed that the earrings were Tlingit in origin, as they were taken

from Wrangell Island in the 1900s as suggested in the archives at the Agnes Etherington Art Center. Alaska State Museum conservator Ellen Carrlee stated, "If I were treating this object myself, I would be more inclined to create faux shell from a non-shell material to prevent confusion from anyone studying these in the future who did not have access to the treatment report. However, if a cultural consultant told me shell were the better option, I would follow that guidance" (pers. comm., 7 November 2019). Given the various pedagogies, both Western and Indigenous, guiding a practicing Indigenous conservator, I thought it best to use original material to reflect the intangible and tangible aspects surrounding the trade and manufacturing of these dentalium earrings.

Indigenous pedagogy and knowledge systems require knowledge sharing as a collaborative effort, where consultation and compromise are employed to consider all aspects of cultural care and significance for the objects. If these earrings are to be part of an exhibition at the Agnes Etherington Art Center, the curator will have to discuss with the Tlingit community the appropriate display of these objects, especially since the time frame to complete the conservation project could not allow these consultations to take place. In any subsequent display, explanatory text next to the object should describe the use of "new" original material so there is no chance of deceiving the audience. It is important for museum goers to know that these earrings were conserved concurrently with the intangible cultural heritage aspects of sourcing dentalium shells.

CONCLUSION

It is important to incorporate Indigenous learning and knowledge as part of a treatment course when dealing with any Indigenous object. For this reason and with respect to the TRC's Calls to Action, original dentalium shells sourced from a First Nations in Northern Ontario were chosen as the fill material for these earrings as a form of reciprocity between Queen's University and First Nations.

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RESEARCH NOTES

Anne M. Jensen, editor

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Recent Research Notes is intended to be a useful venue for making colleagues aware of ongoing or recent research in any of the four fields of anthropology and for disseminating brief notes of new C¹⁴ dates or other interesting finds, particularly those which do not seem likely to lead to other publication. The editor welcomes submissions at any time for inclusion in the next volume of the journal. We do not limit coverage to research taking place in Alaska but rather include information on research anywhere in the circumpolar Arctic and subarctic.

ARCTIC ALASKA

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS: RADIOCARBON DATING OF BIRNIRK LEVELS AT WALAKPA, NORTH SLOPE, ALASKA

Submitted by Anne M. Jensen, UIC Science, LLC,
University of Alaska Fairbanks, Bryn Mawr College
(amjuics@gmail.com)

Anthony Krus, University of South Dakota

This project has sampled well-provenienced items from the 2013–2017 excavations at Walakpa (Jensen 2019) for radiocarbon dating and isotopic studies. The new data will be used for chronological modeling to help assess tentative correlations between levels in the site's Harris matrix developed from these excavations and the stratigraphy recorded by Stanford in the late 1960s (Stanford 1976). The results of the chronological modeling will also assist in decision-making for future excavations and will contribute to the ongoing Redating Birnirk project, of which Jensen and Krus are members.

We are focusing on well-provenienced terrestrial bone samples, primarily from known Birnirk levels. Samples will undergo AMS radiocarbon dating and isotopic analysis using a subsample of bone collagen ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$, $\delta^{15}\text{N}$) at the Keck-Carbon Cycle AMS facility at UC Irvine. Dates will be calibrated in OxCal using the internationally recognized IntCal13 and Marine13 calibration curves and the marine reservoir correction for Point Barrow proposed in Krus et al. (2019). Bayesian chronological modeling will be applied with OxCal to produce realistic estimates for the Birnirk presence at Walakpa.

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THE POP-UP ALASKA MUSEUM

Submitted by Amy Phillips-Chan, PhD
Director, Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum
(achan@nomealaska.org)

The pop-up ALASKA museum launched at the 2019 Museums Alaska—Alaska Historical Society conference in Kodiak from September 25 to 28. Organized and designed by Amy Phillips-Chan, director of the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum in Nome, and Sarah Asper-Smith,

owner of ExhibitAK in Juneau, the exhibit invited museums, cultural centers, and archives from across the state to select a meaningful object from their collection and share a short story using a label template. Labels were printed and mounted onto a large map of Alaska to visualize the diversity and strength of Alaska communities and foster shared meaning-making in the interpretation and celebration of Alaska history and culture (Fig. 1).

Twenty-eight organizations participated in the exhibit and contributed interpretive labels featuring objects and stories from their unique collections. Benjamin Charles, of the Association of Village Council Presidents, Yupiit Piciryarait Museum, in Bethel, described one aspect of the exhibit that encouraged them to participate: “As the doors prepare to open full-time again, AVCP’s YP Museum strategic plan involves external organizational involvement within the museum community and partners. The oil lamp submittal is significant as we light our beacon unveiling the beginning of a brighter future” (Fig. 2). Several participants chose items from their collections that spoke to them personally, such as Monica Shah, director of col-

lections and chief conservator of the Anchorage Museum, who contributed a mixed-media artwork by Rebecca Lyon. “I chose Counting on Liberty because it exemplifies the museum commitment to engage audiences through thought-provoking artwork. Collections and exhibitions can only be places of inclusion and equity through looking at our past and changing how we discuss and present difficult issues. Alaska Native’s rights, women’s rights, and the irony of who we honor (Andrew Jackson on the \$20 bill) are all reasons I chose this artwork for the pop-up exhibition.”

The pop-up ALASKA museum includes three taglines or themes: creativity, culture, and community. The themes spoke to Amanda Lancaster, collections and facilities manager, and her team at the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, who shared an image and story about a community-made parka from their collection. “We chose the caribou skin parka because it represented community effort and cultural revitalization, all in one object. From the initial visit by Alutiiq skin-sewers to Finland in 2013 to rediscover Alutiiq materials, to the



Figure 1. Attendees at the Museums Alaska–Alaska Historical Society conference in Kodiak check out the pop-up ALASKA museum, which offered a point of discourse for conversations about collections and communities.

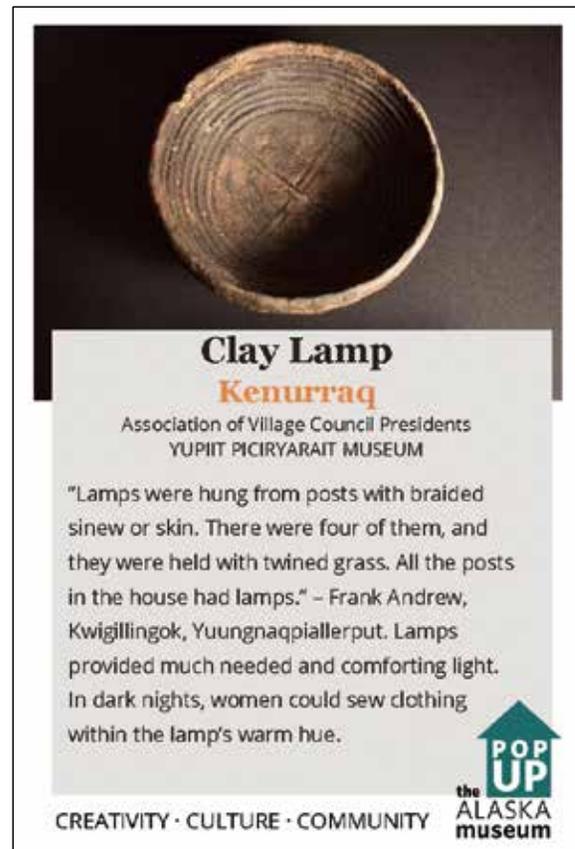


Figure 2. The Yupiit Piciryarait Museum shared an image and story about a clay lamp (kenurraq) in their collection for the opening of the pop-up exhibit.

shared work creating the replica, the parka represents cultural revitalization, the sharing of knowledge, and community effort.”

The pop-up ALASKA museum encourages critical conversations on changing modes of inquiry and community partnerships as cultural and historical organizations strive to bring multiple perspectives into the exhibitionary space. Sarah Asper-Smith reflected, “Living in this vast and diverse state, we are isolated in many ways, but we are connected by our stories and objects and unique sense of identity. This is a simple way for museums to share with each other, create awareness about what we do, and encourage people to visit their area. I think the goal for the future will be to include everyone in our map of Alaska’s museums.”

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Monty Rogers

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This section consists of abstracts of newly finished theses and dissertations on Arctic anthropological research relevant to Alaska. The goal of this section is to highlight new circumpolar research by students. In this issue, there are six dissertation and thesis abstracts addressing archaeological, cultural anthropological, and literary research topics from Indiana University, University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and University of Mississippi. Charlton examines the continental United States' view of Alaska through literary and media history. Cropley explores the involvement, understanding, participation, and goals of an archaeological culture camp through the perspectives of stakeholders and youth participants. Fuqua's thesis is a morphological analysis of the variation of Northern Archaic tradition notched stone projectile points from Alaska. Gundlach-Graham researches the influence of U.S. and Russian educational systems on the identity of Kodiak residents from 1836 to 1900. Hilman's faunal analysis focuses on the Healy Lake Village Site upper component assemblage that dates from the late nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century. In the final abstract, Johnson uses archaeological excavation and analysis to explore segregation at the Shepard Point Cannery.

Contact Monty Rogers to submit an abstract of a recently completed thesis or dissertation that deals with topics of interest to *AJA* readers.

ALASKA AND THE ARCTIC IN THE U.S. IMAGINARY

Ryan Charlton

PhD dissertation, 2019, Department of English,
University of Mississippi

ABSTRACT

Popular narratives of Alaska have long relied on the region's mythical status as the "Last Frontier," a perception that enfoldes Alaska into a continental narrative of U.S. expansion. This frontier image has foreclosed our ability to appreciate the profound instability that the 1867 Alaska Purchase brought into national discourse at a time when Americans were eager to adopt a fixed national identity. In the three decades following the purchase, Alaska would resist incorporation into the national imaginary, challenging the coherence of U.S. national identity and calling into question foundational myths of the United States as a continental and agrarian nation. Rather than bolstering

a vision of Manifest Destiny, nineteenth-century Alaska required Americans to contemplate national futures that stood in stark contrast to that which was seemingly unfolding in the West. While these Arctic visions were often troubling, they also offered Americans an opportunity to rethink their assumptions about the nation. By unmooring the United States from the continent and unsettling the seemingly fixed trajectory of U.S. expansion, the Alaska Purchase enabled Americans to imagine alternative national configurations and social structures. To recover a sense of both the uncertainties and the possibilities that the Far North came to represent, this dissertation analyzes the narrative strategies Americans used to rationalize the U.S. possession of noncontiguous Arctic territory in the postbellum era. This study explores an array of media—including fiction, newspaper editorials, political cartoons, travel narratives, souvenir postcards, and more—to theorize the impact of the Alaska Purchase on U.S. discourses of nation, region, gender, and race.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN CULTURE CAMPS: ENCOURAGING ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR PAST

Fawn Cropley

Master's thesis, 2019, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Anchorage

ABSTRACT

This research focused on the archaeology component of Susten Culture Camp on the Kenai Peninsula and what it provides to its campers. My research questions are: (1) How do different stakeholders define and understand the goals of the camp and are the goals being met? and (2) What do youth gain from participating in culture camps both in terms of archaeological and cultural knowledge and other benefits? My research and analysis revealed two domains, categories that best captured the information collected from my research results: Goals of Camp and Youth Experiences. Camp coordinators, educators, and advocates want to provide youth the opportunity to develop life skills and friendships and to learn about their culture in a safe, substance-free environment. Relationships and partnerships at all levels help in achieving these goals. Analysis also revealed that as youth are able to participate in archaeology and their culture, some feel more connected to their ancestors and are able to make connections about the past and the present. Some campers also developed new thoughts and feelings about archaeology. I observed that the connections made about the archaeological work being conducted and about local heritage depended on campers' level of involvement in the archaeological process. Attending culture camp provides youth with numerous learning opportunities outside a formal school curriculum. Culture camp is successful in meeting its goals based on its youth experiences, and having an archaeological component at camp encourages campers to participate in and learn from their past.

A STUDY OF VARIATION AMONG SIDE-NOTCHED BIFACES FROM NORTHERN ARCHAIC SITES IN ALASKA

Kaitlyn Fuqua

Master of Arts thesis, 2020, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

ABSTRACT

The Northern Archaic tradition (~6000–1000 cal BP), an Alaska archaeological tradition, is often identified based on the presence of side-notched bifaces. Variation among these bifaces, commonly referred to as projectile points, is not well understood. This study examines morphological and functional variability among a sample of 209 notched bifaces from 63 Northern Archaic sites in central and northern Alaska. The nature and extent of variability were examined on several scales, including (1) across ecological regions of Alaska, (2) throughout the mid-Holocene (6000–1000 cal BP), and (3) within a single site (Ratekin, HEA-187).

Morphological variation was examined using metric and nonmetric variables, including length, width, thickness, and raw material type. This study also employed 2-D geometric morphometric landmark-based methods, which provide a less subjective view of variation in tool morphology. The side-notched bifaces in the sample show a large degree of variation, both across sites and within the Ratekin site. There are some differences in shape among bifaces from polar and boreal regions of Alaska, which may indicate morphological regional varieties. There appears to be some variation in the degree of standardization in side-notched biface production over time; between 4000 and 2000 cal BP, there is decreased variability in the majority of metric shape variables, suggesting a greater degree of standardization.

Functional variability was assessed using two lines of evidence: breakage patterns and macroscopic usewear. Sixty percent of the side-notched bifaces in the sample exhibit some breakage, most of which were transverse/lateral breaks located on the shoulders and neck of the tool. Biface tips show evidence of use and frequent rejuvenation. Similar breakage and use patterns were found across ecological regions, throughout the mid-Holocene, and within the Ratekin site sample. This indicates that, despite the shifts in morphology identified at regional and temporal scales, side-notched bifaces served the same functional use at all scales examined.

Variation in the side-notched bases was considered from the perspective of human behavioral ecology, focusing specifically on risk management and how strategies for mitigating risk may be reflected in lithic assemblages (through invention, innovation, and standardization). Other risk management strategies employed by the Northern Archaic may include communal hunting, subsistence diversification, and high residential mobility. Within this framework, the increased standardization among side notched bifaces during 4000–2000 cal BP may be a reflection of a risk-averse behavior, supported by evidence of subsistence diversification at Northern Archaic sites around 4000 cal BP.

EMPIRE AND IDENTITY: COLONIAL EDUCATION IN KODIAK, ALASKA, 1836–1900

Abigail Gundlach-Graham

PhD dissertation, 2019, School of Education,
Indiana University

ABSTRACT

In this study, I argue that between 1836 and 1900, residents of Kodiak, Alaska, learned elements of identity under specifically colonial circumstances. Both Russian and U.S. colonial powers relied on the educative processes of Othering—creating “us versus them” mentalities—to maintain the stability and productivity of their colony. In the course of the transition from Russian to U.S. governance, identities among Kodiak residents changed in dramatic and subtle ways as a result of changes in colonial education. Conceiving of education as the teaching and learning of beliefs and information, behavior, and identity, the study examines educational processes shaping four elements Kodiak identity: race and class, sexuality and gender, religion, and national identity. Distinct educational narratives are revealed when the same circumstances are considered through different educational lenses. Importantly, the people of Kodiak—Native, European, and Euro-American—experienced these educational processes together, at times in conflict and at times as coordinating colonial forces.

FAUNAL ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORIC COMPONENT AT HEALY LAKE VILLAGE SITE, INTERIOR ALASKA

Hilary Hilmer

Master's thesis, 2019, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

ABSTRACT

The historic period in Interior Alaska was a dynamic time that led to many cultural changes for Native Alaskan communities across the state. Starting in the early 1700s, Russian and Euro-American explorers began interacting with Native Alaskan groups living on the coast, and by the end of the eighteenth century/early nineteenth century, Interior Alaskan groups were being directly affected. Due to Western influences, Native groups such as the Upper Tanana Athabascans began to rely on a cash economy, causing them to settle in year-round villages, trade with the Euro-Americans for nonlocal goods (e.g., flour, guns, buttons, glass, and nails), and work on construction projects in order to provide for their families. All of these changes appeared to cause a division between the traditional way of life and the new Euro-American way of living.

Healy Lake Village site (XBD-00020) is a multi-component site with occupations spanning the terminal Pleistocene into the Holocene. It is located approximately 100 miles southeast of present-day Fairbanks on the shores of Healy Lake in the Upper Tanana Athabaskan territory. The village was a summer fishing camp until ~AD 1910; it became a year-round village soon after the construction of a trading post at Healy Lake.

The well-preserved faunal remains excavated from the Upper Cultural level (dating to AD 1880–1946) at Healy Lake Village site provide a significant opportunity to address fundamental questions relating to subarctic hunter-gatherer subsistence economies. This research examines zooarchaeological patterns in the data through human behavioral ecology and world-systems theory to address questions of taphonomy, human procurement, and processing decisions, as well as historic period land-use strategies and trade practices. In this thesis, I explore the possibility that the residents at Healy Lake Village site were affected by Euro-American influences, specifically in regard to their subsistence economies. However, the results suggest that hunting practices were not drastically altered. The residents still relied heavily on local game as their primary source of subsistence with minor inclusions of Western goods, such as canned meat and flour.

**ARCHAEOLOGY OF TWO SEGREGATED
MESS HALLS AT SHEPARD POINT CANNERY
NEAR CORDOVA, ALASKA**

Norma Johnson

Master's thesis, 2019, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Anchorage

ABSTRACT

Starting in the state over 130 years ago, the salmon industry remains an important part of the Alaska economy today. Salmon canning began on the shores of California in 1864 and moved rapidly north. To facilitate the rapid growth of the industry, ethnic immigrant workers were hired. Shepard Point Cannery was one of many small independent salmon canneries in the Pacific Northwest that reportedly only operated with the use of Chinese workers. Historical research has reported many canneries were ethnically segregated, with separate living, dining, and eating quarters maintained to keep the peace between the different ethnic groups. Shepard Point Cannery operated from 1917 to 1945 with two segregated mess halls. The Euro-American Mess Hall (COR-00428) and Asian Workers' Mess Hall (COR-00429) of Shepard Point were examined through archival records, mapping, excavation, and artifact analysis from summer 2018 to spring 2019. Data recovery at Shepard Point resulted in 252 catalog entries of artifacts, some of which were of Asian origin. Though the ethnic segregation at Shepard Point was not apparent by the archaeological record, it did reveal that Japanese workers were also present.

REVIEW

PROUD RAVEN, PANTING WOLF: CARVING ALASKA'S NEW DEAL TOTEM PARKS

Emily L. Moore, 2018. University of Washington Press, Seattle; 288 pages, 85 black and white illustrations, 1 map, color plates, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-0295743936 (hardcover; \$39.95).

Reviewed by Thomas F. Thornton

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As soon as they were discovered by explorers and settlers, Southeast Alaska's richly carved and painted Tlingit and Haida totem poles became fascinating metaphors and lenses for interpreting "Indian culture," as well as objects of fascination, visitation, and collection in their own right. All this came at a devastating price, however, including distortion, disrespect, desecration, dispossession, and disreputable duplication. By the time of Roosevelt's New Deal, colonization and modernization of Southeast Alaska was accelerating, Natives were acculturating, tourism was developing, and traditional totem pole carving was waning. Old village sites and monumental totems were being left to decay (as was the custom) and not being replaced by new commissions. At the same time, under the Indian New Deal, Indian culture and tribes, having endured many decades of genocidal and ethnocidal federal policies, were finally being embraced, albeit from a Western community governance point of view.

Then, with the Depression of the early 1930s came the "make work" Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide employment and conservation services in the national interest, including totem pole restoration and local exhibition as a project to develop rural economies, train new artists, and incorporate Indian art more fully into the national heritage. A number of skilled Tlingit and Haida carvers took the challenge through CCC employment in various villages, including George Benson (Sitka), John Wallace (Hydaburg), Charles Brown (Ketchikan/Saxman), and Tom Ukas (Wrangell). The U.S. Forest Service, under Tongass National Forest Chief Ranger Frank Heintzleman,

managed the project on behalf of the government. In addition, University of Washington anthropologist Viola Garfield worked with the architect Linn Forest, designer of the CCC totem exhibition parks at places like Totem Bight, to produce a book on the "authentic" history of the poles and their restoration, entitled *The Wolf and Raven*. It was not the whole story, however.

It is here that *Proud Raven, Panting Wolf* author Emily Moore enters the mix as an art historian some 90 years later, looking back not simply at what the CCC project restored but the individual Tlingit artists and other stakeholders who shaped the project's course and outcomes. Her central argument is that the Tlingit and Haida were not passive participants in this program but rather shaped it substantively in concert with their broader interests in reasserting control of their heritage, identity, and territory as the Indigenous people of the Tongass. Moore argues that totem parks were, "quite literally, the sites where Tlingit and Haida nationhood could be proclaimed, where clans could continue to point to their ancestor's stories as evidence of their primacy on their land." Moreover, "Bringing these records of clan lineages and prerogatives onto the hillsides beside their present-day homes and sharing stories in the CCC carving sheds, Native communities helped expose a younger generation to the histories from which some had been cut off and ensure that their clan claims were recorded by the federal government" (p. 181). The irony of the CCC project was not lost on the Natives, as project photographer C. M. Archbold reported: "They jokingly reminded me that the missionaries moved the

Natives away from their old villages, totem poles, and customs as a first step in educating the younger people. Now the Forest Service wants to move the totem poles back to the Natives!” even claiming they had been “abandoned” (p. 28). In reclaiming their heritage, the CCC project became for Tlingits and Haidas a vehicle to promote Southeast Alaska Native sovereignty.

Moore’s deep archival research and attention to both the art and the artists within the fuller context and contested milieu of the CCC and its times makes *Proud Raven, Panting Wolf* a compelling read. A key dramatic tension in the story is lineage itself. Tlingit and Haida are governed by matrilineal inheritance, which stood at odds with the patrilineal bias in mainstream American society. Artists also had to be sensitive to their own lineages and identities in history, and thus were not always interested in producing “exact replicas” of deteriorated poles without putting their own stamp on things, so to speak. This frustrated conservators who wanted to “preserve” a certain manifestation of Native culture rather than let it evolve along new lines. Similarly, clan and tribal interests (the latter as expressed by the likes of the Indian Reorganization Act tribal governments and the Alaska Native Brotherhood) were not always aligned, nor were the perspectives of the white purveyors of “authentic” Northwest Coast Native art and the tourists and curio traders who responded op-

portunistically to the totem poles’ elevation to national heritage status. At times, it would have been interesting for the author to explore these structural tensions further in the narrative, as for example with the development of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and its eventual displacement in Sitka by the Southeast Indian Cultural Center. On the other hand, the impossibility of reconciling the complex histories represented on the totem poles within a singular authentic narrative is nicely explored through Garfield and Forest’s flawed quest to produce *The Wolf and Raven*, which took many years and left key questions unanswered and critical Indigenous voices unheard.

This book is appropriate and accessible to those with a basic understanding of modern American history and Alaska Native culture and will be suitable for Native studies courses as well as anthropology and art history programs at the advanced undergraduate or graduate level. The generous diagrams and photographs, including 19 color plates, also animate the totems, themes, and characters in the book and the legacy of the CCC totem restoration project. Moore demonstrates that in seeking to restore Indigenous totems and embrace Native art as an important component of America’s heritage, the CCC project made history itself, and thanks to the rich set of carvings and exhibitions it created, its legacy continues to inspire new generations of artists and scholars alike.

REVIEW

WATERLOGGED: EXAMPLES AND PROCEDURES FOR NORTHWEST COAST ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Kathryn Bernick, editor. Washington State University Press, Pullman, 2019; 246 pages, photos, maps, index. ISBN 978-0-087422-366-8 (paperback; \$32.95).

Reviewed by **Ryan J. Wheeler**

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Good things come in small packages, and that is certainly the case with *Waterlogged: Examples and Procedures for Northwest Coast Archaeologists*. Edited by Kathryn Bernick, *Waterlogged* brings together 10 chapters organized into three parts: Discovery and Recovery, Fresh Perspectives, and Unexpected Finds. While the title implies that this volume may be of greatest interest to those working on the Northwest Coast, editor Bernick makes clear in her introduction that many archaeologists involved with wet site and wetland archaeology will find something beneficial. That is certainly the case. The two chapters in Part I, Bernick's own "Recovering and Caring for Wet Perishable Artifacts: Strategies and Procedures," and Morley Eldridge's "Wet Sites: A Guide to Finding Them," will be of great interest to those who work with wet sites or who should be working with them. Bernick and Eldridge both argue that North American archaeologists have largely ignored and avoided wet sites, despite their tremendous value in understanding and interpreting the past. Even in a wet-site rich area like the Northwest Coast these sites and their study are relegated to a sub-discipline. Interestingly, we found the same thing in our own recent book on Florida wet site archaeology (Wheeler and Ostapkowicz 2019). Both of these chapters are highly readable and make the case for integrating wet sites into regional archaeologies, something that has been more typical of European archaeology, possibly because of wetland-focused research that naturally includes wet sites.

The difference between North American and European approaches to wet sites and wetland research is

well addressed in Genevieve Hill's chapter, "Perceptions of Wetland Ecology in Cowichan Traditional Territory, Vancouver Island," which leads off Part II: Fresh Perspectives. This and several of the other chapters are significant as they point out the central role that wetlands played and continue to play in the lives and thoughts of Native American and First Nations people. Many of the sites considered in these chapters are on the land or aboriginal homelands of First Nations, and the authors have clearly worked closely with descendant communities to produce sensitive and culture-informed archaeologies. Hill's chapter is a great example. She makes the case that archaeologists will benefit from First Nations perspectives on wetlands, understanding them "as encultured places full of meaning, places of teaching and learning, of associating with the ancestors and the rest of the world" (p. 68). Hill gives several examples, drawing on place names, language, oral tradition, traditional ecological knowledge, and insider-level ethnographic work. Similar perspectives are found in other chapters, including Stan Copp et al.'s "Blueberry Fields Forever (Not!): The Carruthers Site, Lower Fraser River, British Columbia," which looks at a site in Katzie First Nations territory, and Jerry Cohen's contribution on paleoethnobotany at the Kilgii Gwaay site, as well as several of the chapters in Part III: Unexpected Finds.

I particularly like the chapters that focus on material culture from Northwest Coast wet sites. Grant Keddie's chapter on wooden fishhooks, for example, demonstrates that wet site artifacts can provide a fascinating and rare look

into the interplay of environmental change and technology. Other chapters on specific artifacts include Duncan McLaren et al.'s on a basket cradle from British Columbia, and a second by the same authors on waterlogged materials. Among the wooden objects discussed is an atlatl board from Triquet Island dating to 7261–7177 cal BP, adding to the literature on this ubiquitous though little-studied artifact type.

Every chapter in *Waterlogged* touches on the cultural and scientific value of archaeological wet sites, and frequently there are discussions of the interplay between culture and environment. I think many readers would have appreciated more discussion of the role archaeological wet sites can play in understanding climate change. There is a long history of human occupation in the Northwest Coast and there are wet sites representing multiple time periods. Long-term environmental change is underrepresented in the book, despite the fact that wet sites preserve perishable objects, including plant remains, pollen, material culture related to resource procurement, and even have heightened preservation of animal remains in some cases. McLaren et al., in their chapter on the objects from Triquet Island, acknowledge the paleoenvironmental potential of wet sites, and note that they are returning to the site and anticipate further analysis by graduate student and co-author Alisha Gauvreau.

Waterlogged is an attractive volume with numerous line drawings and black-and-white photographs. Well reproduced, it avoids the poor quality that is becoming common with digital printing. The font is clear and readable and the price point is good for an academic press book. One quibble is that references are all lumped together at the end of the book. This is understandable, as many of the citations are shared between chapters, but it makes it more difficult to share individual chapters. Also, there is no ebook available, which means that *Waterlogged* will not be included in the digital volumes available now at many university and public libraries, limiting accessibility. *Waterlogged* includes many detailed case studies that will be of great interest to those working on the Northwest Coast, on a variety of scales from individual items of material culture, to the site level, and to wetland landscapes. Those interested in wet site archaeology in general or who are getting involved with wet sites will find the book a great asset as well.

REFERENCE

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2019 *Iconography and Wetsite Archaeology of Florida's Watery Realms*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

REVIEW

UNCOVERING SUBMERGED LANDSCAPES: TOWARDS A GIS METHOD FOR LOCATING SUBMERGED ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Kelly Rose Bale Monteleone, 2019. BAR (British Archaeological Reports) International Series 2917, Oxford; 134 pages, 11 tables, 49 figures (27 color), bibliography. ISBN 978-1-4073-1656-7 (paper; £28.00).

Reviewed by Dael A. Devenport

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"A landscape has to be experienced to be understood," p. 8

How humans migrated to the Americas is a question that has not yet been resolved. One of the two main theories is that people migrated along the coasts. This theory is still questioned due to a lack of evidence. Kelly R.B. Monteleone is adjunct assistant professor at the University of Calgary's Department of Anthropology and Archaeology. She attempts to address this deficit by using geographic information systems (GIS) to create a predictive model to look for evidence that supports this theory. Archaeological sites from the last ice age are most likely to be along the shorelines that were exposed due to a lower sea level. Now, archaeological sites from that time period are underwater, inundated as the glaciers melted and the sea level rose.

Monteleone is well qualified for a project like this, having earned her Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico while working closely with E. James Dixon. Dixon first attempted a predictive model for underwater archaeological sites in the 1970s. Monteleone has contributed several other pieces of work to the topic of underwater archaeology and predictive modeling relating to human migration onto the American continents.

For the study area of this project, she chose an area in Southeast Alaska, an ideal location due to the fact that during the last ice age there were locations that remained unglaciated and supported animal and plant life. Some archaeological sites in the area dating to the Pleistocene indicate these areas supported human life as well.

In this era of shrinking staff and budgets, archaeologists are looking for ways to be more efficient with

their time and funding. Underwater archaeology is even more expensive and time consuming than surveying on dry land, forcing underwater archaeologists to find ways to increase the efficacy of their surveys. In order to mitigate some of the costs and time involved surveying the submerged continental shelf, Monteleone identifies high probability areas where archaeological sites might be located using a GIS predictive model.

She takes us step by step through the project, starting with the theoretical background that provides the foundation for this research. Theories include landscape theory, archaeological land-use or high-potential modelling, GIS, and underwater archaeology.

Next, she gives us the geographic and geologic history of the study area, including areas that remained unglaciated during the last ice age and complications of sea-level reconstruction in the area due to its glacial history. Following this is archaeological and ethnographic information about the Northwest Coast. The author uses known archaeological sites and ethnographic information from the area to develop variables for the model to predict possible site locations from earlier periods. She uses statistical analysis to determine that there were no significant changes in how sites were selected for the past 5800 cal BP years and that people would have lived near the coast during the time period she is exploring.

Monteleone introduces us to building the model in GIS by starting with data sources and how they were processed in order to reconstruct the paleoenvironment. The author is critical of those who attempt to predict the

locations of archaeological sites without differentiating between site types or those who use modern land surface “despite knowledge of temporal variability of the environment” (p. 51). Variables included were slope; aspect; coastal sinuosity; and distance from paleo-streams, paleo-lakes, paleo-coastlines, and known archaeological sites. The technique used was weighted overlay of two-meter raster files. A table provided outlines how the variables were ranked and weighted. The final product is a map showing high-potential locations in the study area.

The last stage was testing the model through two methods, statistical analysis and field testing. Several statistical tests validated the model. The model was field tested during two field seasons using marine geophysical survey and subsurface testing. The geophysical survey utilized side-scan sonar, multibeam sonar, and sub-bottom profiling to identify anomalies on the seafloor. After identifying several anomalies, exploration with a remotely operated vehicle and a Van Veen grab sampler for subsurface testing was conducted. They did discover a shipwreck, but they did not find a Pleistocene-era archaeological site in the five areas tested.

A final verification of the model was ranking known pre-10,000 cal BP archaeological sites on the Northwest Coast according to the model. There are fifteen of these sites that have been reliably dated and have good location information. One site ranks high probability, the rest rank moderately high. This illustrates that a perfect site with all the characteristics that a person wants is rare, so humans choose “good enough” locations. Surveying areas ranked

moderately high probability and above will locate archaeological sites dating prior to 10,000 cal BP.

The author generously includes a discussion of issues encountered during the model construction, analysis, and testing. This information will be helpful for those attempting their own models. Here is where we learn what would make an underwater archaeologist’s dream come true: “a canoe with wood dating to older than 10,000 cal BP that sank with freshly butchered fauna and some tools” (p. 99). The author acknowledges that this is unlikely and would be content with a stone tool, especially one associated with something organic that could be dated.

This book is readable for anyone interested in the subject of predictive modeling, even if they are not well versed in theory or statistics. Monteleone covers the subject thoroughly enough to provide a basic foundation for someone interested in attempting their own model. For more information, readers can refer to the lengthy 16-page bibliography. The extensive reading list covers everything from theory to how-to technical references and from authors readers in the subject will be familiar with to newer contributors that are more far-flung.

Monteleone cautions the results of the predictive model are not conclusive due to the limited testing that occurred in a very large area, but they are promising. She is currently applying for more funding to continue field testing the model. I am looking forward to seeing more from this author in the future who hints that “this research has not ended...” (p. 101).