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Alutiiq Museum & Archaeological Repository
215 Mission Road, Suite 101, Kodiak, AK 99615
Phone: 844-425-8844
Home page: <http://alutiiqmuseum.org>

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CONTACT: Amy Steffian, Chief Curator
amy@alutiiqmuseum.org

Alutiiq Museum to Plan New Exhibit Gallery

With a \$94,376 grant to Koniag, Inc. from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the Alutiiq Museum will develop a comprehensive, community-informed plan for a new set of Alutiiq heritage exhibits. The one-year *Quliyanguarwik*—Storytelling Place project, which began this month, will unite community advisors, museum staff members, and professional exhibit designers to envision the museum's future gallery. This planning is part of a larger three-year renovation, which will convert the entire first floor of the museum into a public space for cultural exploration.

"Several years ago, we ask our audience to consider the future of the museum and the directions we should take," said Alutiiq Museum Executive Director April Laktonen Counciller. "More than 500 people responded and many told us to increase our educational spaces. Our patrons want more exhibits and to see more artifacts. They want a gathering and workshop space, so they can create in the museum, and they want a larger store to showcase and access Alutiiq art. The renovation project accomplishes all these goals, and it will nearly double our gallery space."

To plan new, expanded displays, the museum will form an exhibit advisory committee. People from different sectors of the community will be invited to share ideas and review plans and designs. The museum will also host a series of public meetings to invite all interested people to participate in discussions about themes and methods of presentation. The meetings will be facilitated by Sarah Asper-Smith, the owner of ExhibitAK, a Juneau-based design firm hired to lead exhibit planning. Asper-Smith will be assisted by Alutiiq Museum Exhibit Manager Alex Painter. Counciller explained.

"Our goal is to create the exhibits our community wants to see, to tell the stories that are important to our people. In recent years, we've been asked to share recent Alutiiq history. The museum has focused on introducing people to the Alutiiq world and our ancestral culture. However, it is important to identify the forces that shaped our community—like education systems, epidemics, the formation of Native Corporations. The new exhibits will provide room for such stories, as well as space for short term displays like juried art shows and visiting shows."

The planning process will result in a draft exhibit script, a list of objects and images to be exhibited, concept designs, and a budget. "*Quliyanguarwik* lays the foundation for transforming community vision into museum displays," said Counciller. "We are most grateful to IMLS and to Koniag, Inc. for supporting this effort."

The Alutiiq Museum is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and sharing the history and culture of the Alutiiq, an Alaska Native tribal people. Representatives of Kodiak Alutiiq organizations govern the museum with funding from charitable contributions, memberships, grants, contracts, and sales.