



For Immediate Release

Alutiiq Museum & Archaeological Repository

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Lydia Olsen Named Alutiiq Museum Supporter of the Year

In honor of Valentine's Day, the Alutiiq Museum likes to show a little love for its supporters. We are fortunate to have many people who contribute their time, talents, and belongings to the museum. In 2020, 71 people, families, and organizations gave items to our collections—artwork, artifacts, family heirlooms, books, recordings, photographs, and film. We thank them all. To highlight the importance of these donations we are honoring one outstanding contributor with our Supporter of the Year award. This year's winner is Lydia Olsen.

Lydia Olsen is the daughter of Pete Olsen of Cordova and Nina Knagin Olsen of Afognak Village. She grew up in Kodiak and has lived on the island most of her life. Lydia has been close to the museum since it opened. Her parents were culture bearers who helped to envision a tribal museum and contributed significantly to the early heritage movement. Her father was one of the dignitaries who participated in the 1994 ground-breaking ceremony for the museum's construction.

"The museum is a means of helping us learn our culture," said Lydia. "It also informs others about our culture. The more we know about people, the more we understand them."

When the opportunity to preserve family photographs and share them with the museum arose, Lydia saw the perfect fit. She has always enjoyed taking pictures, since experimenting with her first Brownie camera decades ago. In the 1980s, Lydia's cousin Helen Simeonoff encouraged her to take photographs as part of Lydia's recovery from alcoholism. Since then, Lydia has been taking photos and caring for her family's large collection. She has become the "auntie with the camera!" Lydia recognized the importance of saving memories, but also of creating a record of recent Alutiiq history.

She said, "The more we share, the more we know. Photos tell a story and tell us about where we come from. Photos share history, culture, and lineage."

This summer, Lydia started bringing photos to the museum, dropping off boxes and albums, and eventually film. Her collection is large, with over 3,000 images (and counting!). It provides a rich picture of life on Kodiak in the later twentieth century and features weddings, holidays, family vacations, class reunions, Native gatherings, and more. Thank you, Lydia. We thank you. Your generosity will help future generations to see the past.

To learn more about contributing to the museum's collections, or to have your family photos scanned and archived at the museum, please contact Amanda Lancaster (844-425-8844, x22, amanada@alutiiqmuseum.org). Scanning is free thanks to the generous support of the Sun'aq Tribe and the US Bureau of Indian Affairs.

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.

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