



# Alutiiq Museum Bulletin

Vol 15, No. 3, Spring 2011

## Producing Petroglyphs

It is a lot more complicated to produce rock art in 2011 than it was 1,500 years ago, at least that's what Alutiiq Museum Executive Director Sven Haakanson found when he set out to try this spring.

The Alutiiq Museum is hosting a year-long exhibit on Kodiak rock art, a show inspired by Haakanson's ongoing study of the Cape Alitak petroglyphs. Petroglyphs are images pecked into stone, not to be confused with pictographs, which are rock painting. For the past decade, Haakanson has been spending a few weeks of each summer investigating the rock carvings at Cape Alitak, a wind and wave pounded landscape at Kodiak Island's southern tip.

"The Cape Alitak petroglyphs are the largest known cluster of stationary rock art in Alaska," said Haakanson. "Until recently, they had never been systematically recorded." Last summer a crew from the museum took on the maddening task of documenting the fading artwork and the ancient settlements that lie behind them. Although pecked into Kodiak's hard granite bedrock, the glyphs are fading from view. Some are covered by the tide daily, others are overgrown with algae or partially buried. A bucket of water, shifting light, and a great deal of patience helped the archaeologists see the ancestral images, and to map and photograph many for the museum's archives.

Results from the survey are being displayed at the Alutiiq Museum, where wall murals, maps, graphics, photographs, and video bring the ancient images to life. The center of the show, however, is a set of 12 replica petroglyphs, painstakingly carved by Haakanson on evenings and week-ends. "We wanted people to experience the size of the petroglyphs," said Haakanson. "They are larger than most people realize. We also wanted our visitors to be able to interact with the petroglyphs by making their own rubbings. Most people can't visit Cape Alitak, so we are bringing a flavor of the Cape and its Alutiiq artwork to Kodiak."

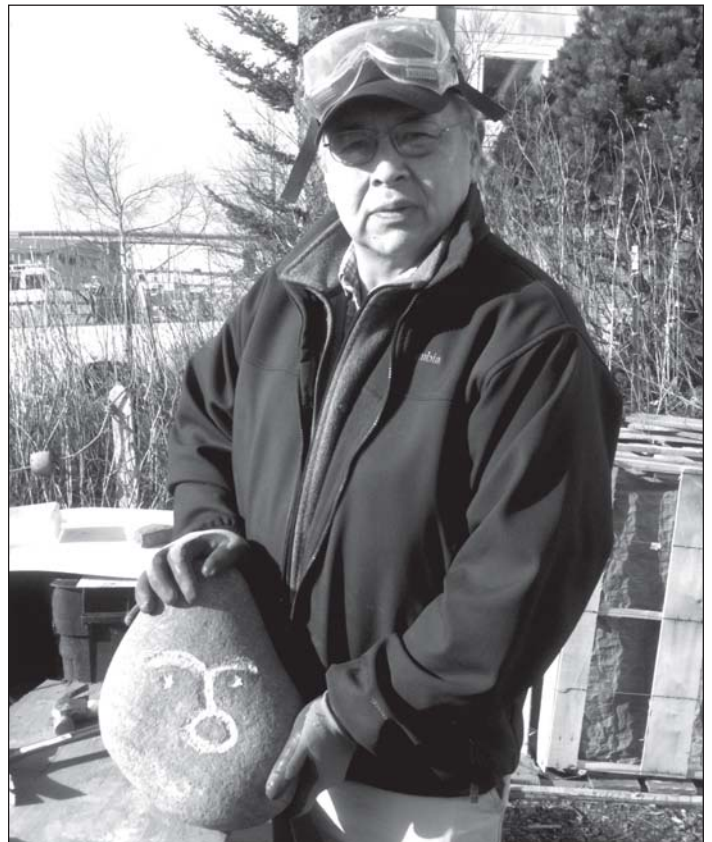
How did Haakanson manage to create those replicas? No one in the Alutiiq community remembers making petroglyphs. This art form, and even related rock sculpting techniques like lamp making, faded long ago. So, Haakanson did what all good artists do – he experimented. First, he needed rocks – sizeable boulders on which to carve designs. Haakanson gained permission from Koniag, Inc. and the Ouzinkie Native Corporation to harvest large water-worn boulders from their lands. Andy Christofferson kindly helped. Then Haakanson set to work in the back of his pick up truck.

After drawing a full-sized petroglyph on a boulder, he tried different methods of carving. Most archaeologists thought that ancient Alutiiqs made the petroglyphs by using a long, narrow beach cobble to peck the design into the surface of another rock.

Haakanson found that this didn't work very well, so he added another step. He used a hammer to drive the other rock. That worked better. Eventually he substituted a chisel for the hand held pounding rock, and a pneumatic air pounder for the hammer. Once he had the technique perfected, each carving took about two hours. Some help from Mitch Simeonoff and Haakanson's daughters, Eilidh and Bella, made the process go a little faster.

"Our ancestors made many beautiful things by carving stone - tools, decorated lamps, and even sculptures. I'm looking forward to experimenting more with rock carving, maybe even hosting a class."

The replica petroglyphs will be on display until May of 2012. *Quyanaasinaq* – Many thanks to Akhiok-Kaguyak, Inc. and the Simeonoff Family for assistance with petroglyph research, and the National Park Service Tribal Historic Preservation Program and Ocean Beauty Seafoods for sponsoring the exhibit.



*Mitch Simeonoff with a petroglyph reproduction.*

## Camai

By the time you read this note, summer will be in full swing. Don't blink or you might miss it! OK – it's not that fast, but sometimes, with our busy schedules, it feels like Alaska's short season of long days is over just as it starts. The Alutiiq Museum can help you enjoy summer. Our Community Archaeology program enters its 14th year in July. This summer, Patrick Saltonstall will lead excavations at the Amak site at the far end of Womens Bay – an ancient settlement in an unlikely place. This is a great chance to roll up your sleeves and experience the past first hand - uncover Alutiiq houses, find ancestral tools. Or if you prefer a cleaner experience, visit *The Cape Alitak Petroglyphs* – our new rock art exhibit where you can make your own petroglyph rubbings. We will also be releasing a children's novel, *Uswitusqaq's Dream*, with live readings, hosting artist demonstrations, and organizing another lecture series. Summer will be full of opportunities for exploration. Please join us.

Spring at the Museum focused on weaving. Melissa Berns, Coral Chernoff, Vickie Era, June Simeonoff Pardue, and Elisabeth Peterson, who traveled to St. Petersburg to learn about baskets a year ago, took time out of their busy schedules to give back to our community. Each weaver traveled to an Alutiiq village to teach both students and adults how to transform grass into baskets. When you spend hours gathering, curing, splitting and finally weaving a basket from natural materials you appreciate how ingenious our ancestors were with their hands and minds. There is an amazing amount of knowledge preserved in each work of art. Thanks to Russian collections and the talents of our weavers, we don't have reinvent the weave - we can combine the knowledge they hold to ensure this tradition remains strong in our community. Koniag, Inc., the Native Arts and Culture Fund, and the National Park Service supported this project. We are most grateful. Stay tuned for short Internet accessible videos all about Alutiiq weaving.

Of course there are a lot of other projects underway at the museum. If you haven't found us on Facebook or Twitter yet, check out our pages. We post frequently to connect you with the daily work of the museum. Keep in touch and keep learning. Every time you read one of our lessons, look at artifact photos, or listen to an Alutiiq word, you help to preserve our culture. By being aware, you make a difference. You keep Alutiiq traditions alive.

Thank you for your support,  
Sven (Fish) Haakanson



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The Alutiiq Museum is governed by Afognak Native Corporation, Akhiok Kaguyak Inc., KANA, Koniag Inc., Leisnoi Inc., Natives of Kodiak Inc., Old Harbor Native Corporation, and Ouzinkie Native Corporation. Each organization elects a representative to the Alutiiq Heritage Foundation, the Alutiiq Museum's board. Funding is provided by charitable contributions, membership fees, grants, contracts and sales from the museum store.

### ALUTIIQ HERITAGE FOUNDATION

#### MISSION STATEMENT:

The Alutiiq Heritage Foundation, through the Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository, preserve the traditions of the Alutiiq people and promotes greater awareness of the rich cultural legacy of the indigenous peoples of the greater Gulf of Alaska region. Our collections are held in a repository that is accessible to the public. We encourage and support research on Alutiiq culture history, and disseminate the results of this research to the public through educational outreach, exhibits, special events, publications, and scholarly presentations.

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## Language Summit

Imagine the language of your childhood – you heard your parents’ voices form its words, listened to people sing its sounds, dreamed in its vocabulary. Now imagine that your language is threatened. There are few people who understand it, fewer who can speak with you.

This is the experience of Kodiak’s first language Alutiiq speakers, 50 of whom gathered in March of 2011 at the Alutiiq Museum’s two-day language summit. Together they represented over half of the living speakers of the Kodiak Alutiiq and they shared the same goal – the preservation of their heritage language. The summit, the final event in the museum’s four-year National Science Foundation funded Alutiiq Living Words project, was designed to review the accomplishments of language documentation efforts and consider next steps.

Despite the serious intent of the gathering, the tone of the summit was joyful. The sounds of Alutiiq filled the air, as attendees enjoyed the chance to chat with other speakers, learned about language projects, and shared their ideas. Elders also enjoyed a musical performance by Irene Coyle (guitar) and Rose Skonberg (accordion), and helped the New Words Council build Alutiiq words for modern items - texting and vampire!

Perhaps the most encouraging sight, however, were the young faces – April Laktonen Counciller, Alisha Drabek, Peggy Azuyak, Lena Amason Berns, Candace Branson, Teri Schneider and Kari Sherod, who are all students of Alutiiq and helping to promote language instruction.

“There is a lot of work left to do,” said Alutiiq Museum Executive Director Sven Haakanson, “but the spirit of the summit was hopeful. We are proud of our community’s accomplishments so far and see great possibilities for sharing our ancestor’s language in the future.”

Information and photos from the summit can be found on the summit page of Alutiiq Language web portal at [www.alutiiqmuseum.org/portal/](http://www.alutiiqmuseum.org/portal/). The summit was supported by a generous grant from the National Science Foundation.



*Irene Coyle and Rose Skonberg share a song at the Alutiiq Language Summit.*

## Subsistence Seasoned – Nettles and Spam

Burners are a popular name for nettles (*Urtica* sp.), a plant with dark green, toothed leaves that grows abundantly in Kodiak meadows. Many people avoid nettles as the plant’s small hairs release a stinging chemical. However, spring vegetable collectors search out this plant as a source of tasty, nutritious food. Alutiiq Museum archaeologists, who camp for weeks in remote areas, have learned this local trick. Here is one of their favorite nettle recipes.



*A serving of nettles and spam.*

*Photo courtesy Mark Rusk.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 can Spam
- 4 cups of freshly picked, young nettles
- 2 TBPS oil
- water

This recipe is best with young nettles, those that are harvested when they are only an inch or two high. You can cook with larger nettles, but they tend to be tough. Wear gloves as you harvest, as even small nettle plants can sting. Cooking nettles, however, takes away this irritating quality and makes them safe to eat.

Cut the slab of spam into 8 equal slices and fry them in a skillet, turning to brown both sides. Remove the spam from the pan and add 2 TBSP of cooking oil to the drippings. Stir in the fresh nettles, coating them with the oil. Allow the nettles to wilt in the oil, then add a small amount of water to the pan to create steam. Steam the nettles for about 5 minutes, till they are tender. You may need to add more water during this process. When the nettles are tender, serve them with the fried slices of spam and enjoy.

## COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY 2010



Grab your gloves and pack your bug spray, it's time for Community Archaeology! Join Patrick Saltonstall, Jill Lipka, and Molly Odell to study the Amak Site at the head of Womens Bay. This prehistoric settlement contains evidence of Native settlement over 3,000 years old. Immerse yourself in the past. Who knows what you might find . . .



*A student intern testing the Amak site, 2005.*

### WHEN?

Orientation Meeting: Thursday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 7pm  
Alutiiq Museum gallery  
Excavation: July 25<sup>th</sup> – August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
Lab Work: August 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>, Alutiiq Museum Laboratory

### WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

This project is free and open to any one age 14 or older. Please call the museum to reserve a spot. Space is limited.

### WHAT DO I BRING?

Pack warm clothing, rain gear, rubber boots, a hat, gloves, bug spray, sunscreen, a bag lunch, and a water bottle. We'll provide the digging gear.

### HOW DO I GET THERE?

Participants will car pool from the museum parking lot at 8:30 am and return by 5:00 pm. Adults are encouraged to drive their own vehicles.

### WHAT WILL I DO?

Participants will assist museum archaeologists with every aspect of an archaeological excavation, from troweling and mapping to screening dirt and carrying buckets.

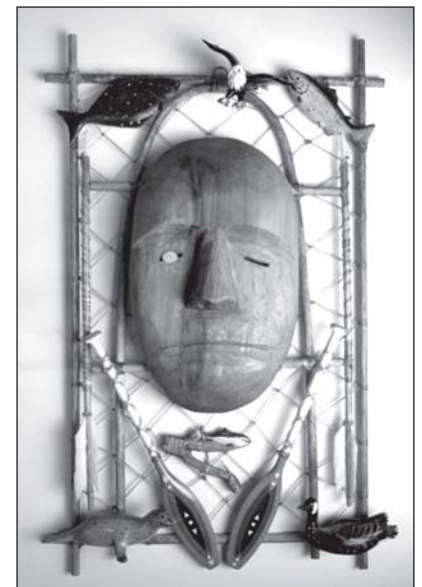
## Mask Makers Stock Store

Alutiiq carvers have been busy this winter creating beautiful pieces, including many masks. The Alutiiq Museum Store is currently carrying examples of their work, including full-sized masks by artists Jerry Laktonen, Gary Knagin, and Ron Torsen, and smaller pieces by Vickie Era and Hanna Palmer. Stop by to browse these works, or contact Museum Store Manager Jennifer Konrady – [jennifer@alutiiqmuseum.org](mailto:jennifer@alutiiqmuseum.org) – for long distance shopping help.

Ron Torsen is one of the most recent Alutiiq artists to share his work through the museum store. A retired boat captain and former fisherman and crabber, he is known for his intricately detailed model ships, which reflect his skill as a boat builder and a lifetime spent on the water. Inspired by historic Alutiiq masks in the Pinart collection, Torsen recently began exploring this ancestral art form. Some of his masks are intricate replicas of ancestral pieces. Others combine Alutiiq forms and carving techniques with personal inspiration.

According to Torsen, *Hunter*, a human face surrounded by animal carvings, “depicts what the hunter has in mind as he works to provide food for his family.” The eagle is the hunter’s guide. The webbed background represents catching fish from the water and the birds represent the land. The ivory eye represents both excellent eyesight and spiritual guidance. The paddles decorated with eyes on their mid-blades stand for spiritual sight under water.

Born in Ouzinkie, Torsen started carving at the age of 4. He and his friends would spend hours working wood they found on the beach. Ron currently lives in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, with his wife Nancy, where they operate the Fair Winds Studio. Learn more about Ron and many other gifted Alutiiq artists on the museum’s on line artist gallery at [www.alutiiqmuseum.org/artist-gallery.html](http://www.alutiiqmuseum.org/artist-gallery.html).



*Hunter, by Ron Torsen,  
bass wood, ivory, acrylic paint,  
faux sinew, 2010*

## What is this Doing Here? Obsidian in the Kodiak Archipelago

By Dr. Jeff Raisic

Curator of Archaeological Collections

University of Alaska Museum

Throughout history volcanic glass has been valued. Also known as obsidian, people sought this material for tool making, using it to fashion knives, scrapers, and points. The edges of obsidian tools are exceptionally sharp; they can be finer than a modern surgical scalpel. And it probably mattered that obsidian can be quite beautiful—glassy, and smooth, sometimes transparent, often a deep black, other times a vibrant orange or red marked with spots and whirling patterns.

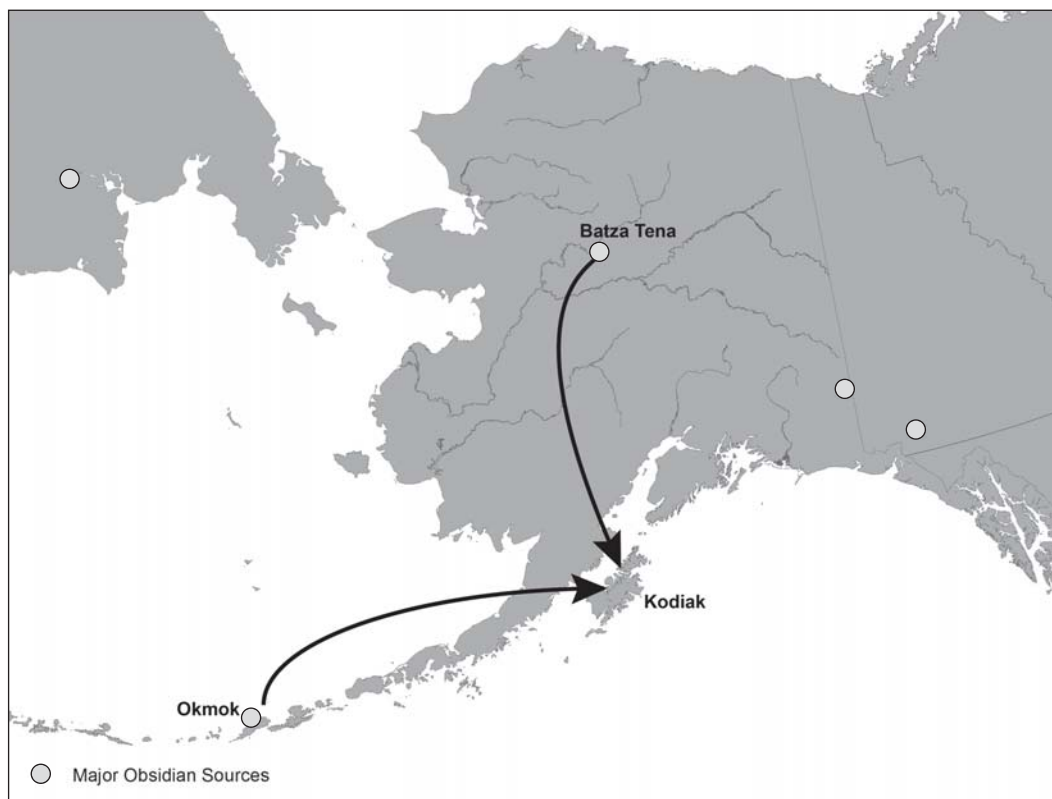
Today archaeologists prize obsidian for its ability to shed light on ancient patterns of travel and trade. This material can be sourced. Natural deposits of obsidian are rare and each deposit has a unique combination of trace chemicals – minute amounts of strange-sounding elements such as niobium, yttrium, and rubidium—which provide a fingerprint for that source. Obsidian artifacts found in archaeological sites can be examined to determine their precise fingerprints and then compared to a catalog of source fingerprints. When there is a match, archaeologists know the origin of the obsidian used to create an artifact. Often the obsidian has been carried hundreds of miles.

This spring, obsidian artifacts found in Kodiak sites were examined at the Alutiiq Museum with a portable X-ray fluorescence analyzer. The machine looks like an overgrown Star Trek phaser, but it is not science fiction. It quickly, and without any impact to the artifact, measures trace element composition.

The results of this brief study showed that almost all of the obsidian (14 of the 16 artifacts) found in Kodiak and Afognak Island sites originated from Okmok Volcano on Umnak Island in the Aleutian chain, some 675 miles distant. One Kodiak artifact is from a poorly known source in the Aleutian Islands, probably associated with Makushin

Volcano near Dutch Harbor (590 miles distant). Perhaps the most surprising find was an obsidian point from the Uyak site on the northwest coast of Kodiak Island, which matched the Batza Tena obsidian source in northwestern Alaska. Although this source is actually the closest (570 miles) of the three sources identified, the transport of this artifact would have required a long, overland route, or a much longer river, coast and land route of 1500 miles or more. What's more, this find demonstrates contact with interior, Athapaskan-speaking groups 1200 years ago. It highlights the cosmopolitan nature of Kodiak's prehistoric societies. People adeptly navigated not only oceans and rivers, but had linguistic and diplomatic skills necessary to cultivate international relationships.

*Sources of Obsidian found in Kodiak Sites.  
Map Courtesy Jeff Raisic*

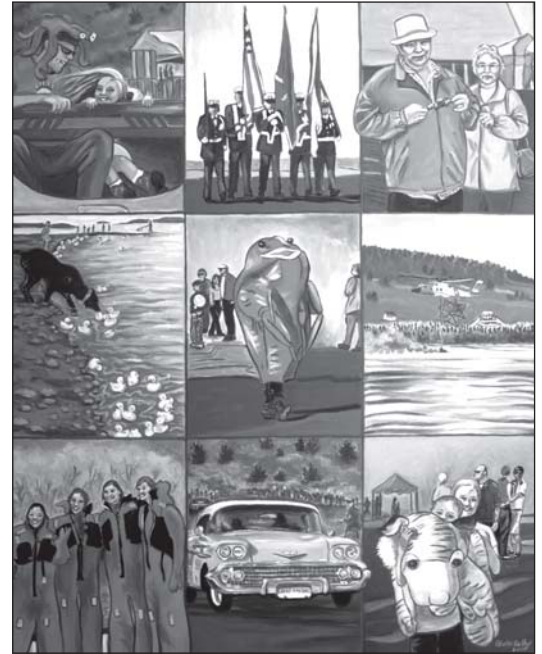


# Collections

## Best of the Fest

Crab Fest is not an Alutiiq tradition, but it is an event that Alutiiq people have participated in for decades. It is part of the contemporary Alutiiq experience. Alutiiq artist Gloria Selby captures this community festival in an oil on gesso painting recently purchased by the Alutiiq Museum with funding from the Rasmuson Foundation. Titled *Best of the Fest*, her work depicts nine scenes from the annual community event – in a quilt-like montage. The panels portray activities from the beloved spring-time gathering – from popular rides, contests, and food booths, to the parade. Here, Selby offers an innovative perspective of the cultural diversity of Kodiak, and several frames portray Kodiak Alutiiq and Native Alaskan people. The painting displays Selby's bold, colorful style. Using a pallet of blues, greens, brown, and reds, she captures the feel of both springtime in Kodiak and the vibrancy of Crab Festival.

Selby completed the 16 x 20 inch painting in October 2009 as an entry in the 2010 Kodiak Crab Festival poster contest. A well-known Kodiak and Alutiiq painter, the museum owns only two other paintings by Selby, both depicting the Afognak village school in the 1950s. *Best of the Fest* is another, distinct example of her work, broadening the museum's collection of paintings from a well respected local Alutiiq painter and capturing a community festival enjoyed by islanders of all heritages.



*Best of the Fest, Gloria Selby,  
oil on gesso, 2009*

## 2010 Rasmuson Foundation Art Acquisition Initiative Purchases

In 2010, the Rasmuson Foundation awarded the Alutiiq Museum \$14,000 to purchase contemporary Alaskan artwork for its collection. We asked artists to submit examples of their work for consideration. Fourteen artists offered the museum 36 items. Each submission received a careful review by our volunteer Collection Advisory Committee and the Alutiiq Heritage Foundation Board of Directions, who selected the following works for their ties to the museum's mission, exemplary craftsmanship, and ability to enhance our holdings.

- Sugpiaq folding war shield and club by Andrew Abyo
- Blue, white, and black headdress by Melinda Abyo
- Five dolls by Coral Chernoff
- Two baleen boat models by Tracy Opheim
- *Fisherman* doll by June Pardue
- *Sugpiaq Woman Elena Channa* and *Mt. Barometer* watercolors by Helen Simeonoff
- *Best of the Fest* oil on gesso painting by Glory Selby
- *Setnetter* encaustic painting by Antoinette Walker

Please watch for our 2011 call to artists. We will be repeating the selection process again this year. To learn more contact Registrar Marnie Leist – [marnie@alutiiqmuseum.org](mailto:marnie@alutiiqmuseum.org), 486-7004, x24.



*Baleen Seiner by Tracy Opheim*

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**CONTRIBUTION LEVELS:**

- Nillqitaaq* – Mallard ..... \$10 Individual admission (For Students & Seniors)
- Niklliq* – Red Salmon ..... \$25 Individual admission
- Kum'agyak* – Eagle ..... \$40 Admission for family members
- Isuwig* – Seal ..... \$100 Admission for family members & guests
- Taquka'aaq* – Grizzly ..... \$250 Same as *Isuwig* plus gift from Museum Store
- Arbnaq* – Sea Otter ..... \$500 Same as *Taquka'aaq* plus gift from Museum Store
- Arlluk* – Orca ..... \$5000+ Membership for employees and/or shareholders

# Connection: Member Spotlight



*The Cummiskey-Preece Family – Clockwise from upper left, Pete, Heather, Devon and Marina.*

## Museum Member Pete Cummiskey

“It’s been really rewarding to work with the archaeologists,” said Pete. “It’s been fun for me all along. I really support the museum and its mission. It’s important to study and preserve the heritage of the island’s people. It deserves attention. There is a rich and fascinating history here, and I try to support it in any way I can. Kodiak’s history is part of global history.”

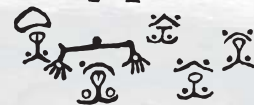
“Somehow the archaeologists talked their way into staying at my trailer,” recalls Pete Cummiskey, a Kodiak crab biologist with a generous soul. Originally from Minnesota, Pete moved to Kodiak 30 years ago with a college degree and a love outdoor adventure. A chance encounter with archaeologists Dick Jordan and Rick Knecht turned his home into the Kodiak base of operations for the KANA / Bryn Mawr College archaeological project! He’s been a supporter of Alutiiq heritage since.

“I stored a lot of gear over the years,” said Pete. “Archaeologists crashed at my place on their way to and from Karluk. I used to run back and forth to the airport to pick up students flying in to work on the digs. I met a lot of interesting people over the years – like Patrick Saltonstall. I was the first person Patrick met when he came to Kodiak!”

Over the years, Pete’s support has extended far beyond logistics to include underwater surveys. A skilled scuba diver, Pete has helped archaeologists look for Russian artifacts in Three Saints Bay and recover wooden artifacts in Karluk Lagoon, preserving rare pieces of the prehistoric past. And now Pete, his wife Heather Preece, and their children are members of the museum.

**Generosity matters. Please join the Cummiskey-Preece family in supporting the Alutiiq Museum and help the preservation continue.**

**Alutiiq Museum**  
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