

Collections Plan

I. COLLECTIONS PRIORITIES

The Alutiiq Heritage Foundation (AHF) recognizes that there are innumerable objects reflecting Alutiiq heritage that could potentially be offered to the museum for long-term care. As the museum strives to meet the highest professional and ethical standards of object care, collections care is costly, and museum resources are limited, the AHF further recognizes that the museum will not be able to accept all materials offered to the organization. Space limitations are particularly concerning. All collecting must be conducted with careful consideration of the museum's storage capacity.

This document outlines the AHF's collecting priorities. These priorities are designed to help the museum's board, staff, and volunteer collections committee determine the disposition of objects offered for collections acquisition, a process that is governed by the museum's collections policy. This is not an exhaustive list of the items that the museum will accept, but rather a guide to the types of collections and objects that the museum (1) feels a strong stewardship responsibility toward, and (2) would most like to acquire to enhance the spiritual, educational, scientific, and historical value of its holdings. These priorities are listed in three levels, Level 1 – First Priority, Level 2 – Second Priority, and Level 3 – Third Priority.

LEVEL 1 – FIRST PRIORITY

A. Documentation of the Alutiiq Language from First Language Alutiiq Speakers

The Alutiiq Museum is a central repository of materials documenting the Alutiiq language. We are one of the few storehouses of rare recordings of first language Alutiiq speakers—those who learned the language as children. As there are just a handful of first language Alutiiq speakers living, and many are elderly, collecting language documentation is of the utmost importance. Time is running out to preserve the essential cultural knowledge of these speakers. As such, a top collecting priority is to obtain, preserve, and increase access to film, audio recordings, and written documentation of Alutiiq speech in its varied forms—conversation, oratory, humor, song, etc., as well as Alutiiq vocabulary both generalized and specialized.

B. Contemporary Alutiiq Artwork

The Alutiiq Museum seeks works of modern Alutiiq art – painting, carving, sculpture, jewelry, weaving, skin sewing, beading, drawing, multi-media presentation, photographs, etc. Such works exemplify Alutiiq identity in the modern world by uniting traditional techniques, forms, materials, or subjects with those of the twenty-first century. They are symbolic of Alutiiq culture in the broader realm of modern experience. They also reflect the museum's efforts to reawaken Alutiiq traditions. They provide material evidence of growing community exploration of the arts supported by the museum and fueled by the regional heritage movement. They are examples of living culture.

To encourage artistic excellence, to promote the recognition and perpetuation of Alutiiq traditions, to foster professionalism and to ensure impartiality, the Alutiiq Museum has adopted a set of guidelines for evaluating works of contemporary Native art offered to its permanent collection. Copies of these guidelines are available from the Curator of Collections and should be consulted in considering works of art proposed for the museum's collection.

C. Ethnographic Collections

Object made by Alutiiq people in the centuries surrounding the conquest of Kodiak are rare, due to cultural suppression. Moreover, the few examples are often stored in repositories far from the Alutiiq homeland. As such, artists and culture bearers must travel long distances to access critical knowledge. Although, ethnographic objects are a small part of the museum's current holdings, we recognize that they provide powerful connections to the recent past and to ancestral knowledge. The museum seeks to acquire ethnographic objects and photos of these objects to represent traditional activities, skills, and knowledge, enhance the interpretation of archaeological materials, and provide opportunities for Alutiiq heritage research.

D. Archaeological Assemblages from the Kodiak Archipelago

The Alutiiq Museum's institutional plan specifically identifies returning archaeological collections to Kodiak as a goal of its collections programming. As such, a central priority for museum collecting is to store Kodiak archaeological materials owned or managed by organizations beyond the Alutiiq community to ensure that these materials are stored in Kodiak in the care of the Alutiiq people.

LEVEL 2 – SECOND PRIORITY

The Alutiiq Museum seeks to preserve and share the cultural traditions of the Alutiiq people from all eras. This goal ties directly to the AHF's visions of celebrating heritage through living culture. To tie the museum's archaeological collections to the modern Native community and illustrate continuities in Alutiiq tradition, the museum seeks to expand its collections of photographs, and film and audio recordings. Such collections document continuities in culture and tie our archaeological and ethnographic holdings to the living Alutiiq community. In addition, the museum recognizes a stewardship responsibility for archaeological collections. This includes assemblages owned by Alutiiq organizations, agency partners, and local landowners as well as avocational collections of uncertain ownership that represent Kodiak Alutiiq history.

A. Photograph Collections

The museum's photograph collections are regularly and widely used. Internally, these collections provide critical resources for exhibits, publications, and educational programs. For the public, they represent a rare source of information on Alutiiq culture and history. In our archives, artists view photographs of ethnographic items to inspire their work; families search for images of relatives; and students conduct research on community history. Scholars, publishers, tribes, community organizations, and the media also contact the museum for images to illustrate their publications.

The museum has also become a trusted repository for Alutiiq community photographs. People and organizations wishing to preserve images increasingly donate photos to the museum for safekeeping, provide us with digital copies, or ask us to create and house digital copies.

Another of our collecting priorities is to obtain contemporary images (digital, print, and slide photos) by Alutiiq artists, images of contemporary Alutiiq life, historic photographs of Alutiiq people and communities, and images of Alutiiq objects owned by others.

B. Film and Audio Collections

Like photographs, film and audio collections document recent Alutiiq culture and history, providing an invaluable record of traditions, events, and language. These collections are particularly valuable for educational outreach and exhibits, as they provide an alternative way to teach about the Alutiiq world. They are a rich archive of sound and images that preserve and share Alutiiq stories.

C. Archaeological Collections From Partners and Community Members

As an archaeological repository the museum was established to (1) allow the Alutiiq community to govern the care of large assemblages of archaeological materials from the Kodiak area, and (2) provide a facility where research on Alutiiq heritage could continue. As such, the museum sets as priority the care of archaeological collections from our community. In particular, the museum has a responsibility to care for the archaeological collections owned by Alutiiq organizations or generated by Alutiiq Museum research. We also seek to care for collections owned by agency partners, community organizations, and avocational collectors. Following the museum's Unproveniented Artifact Agreement, we discourage avocational collecting. However, we recognize that many Kodiak families have archaeological collections whose origin is unknown. These collections contain objects made by Alutiiq ancestors and they deserve to be treated respectfully. The Alutiiq Museum can provide appropriate care.

LEVEL 3 – THIRD PRIORITY

A. Natural History Collections, Teaching Collections, Library Materials

Museum collections are an important vehicle for education and support the museum's ability to interpret and share Alutiiq history. To enhance the educational value of its collections the museum seeks to increase the variety of natural history specimens, teaching collections, and library resources available for outreach projects, exhibits, and research. Specifically, we seek to develop comparative zoological and geological collections for use in identifying materials from Kodiak's archaeological sites, to enhance the set of object replicas available for instruction, and to continue acquiring library materials that complement, enrich, and support the interpretation the museum's holdings.

To encourage thoughtful development of the museum's library, ensure relevance, and promote impartiality, the AHF has adopted a set of guidelines for evaluating library donations. A copy of these guidelines may be obtained from the museum's Curator or Collections.

II. DESIRED COLLECTIONS AND OBJECTS

The following section lists the collections desired by the museum in each major classes of materials recognized in the museum's collections policy. This is not a comprehensive list of the materials the museum will accept, but a guide to collections the museum recognizes as

potentially valuable to its holdings—permanent collection, teaching collection, and library collection. Any collection may be added to the museum’s holdings if it meets the standard of the Alutiiq Museum’s collections policy and is accepted into the museum’s care by a majority vote of the Alutiiq Heritage Foundation Board of Directors.

A. Archaeological Collections

- Crag Point Site Collection – BLM: This collection, currently stored at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, was part of the KANA/Bryn Mawr College Archaeological Project. All the other collections made by the KANA/Bryn Mawr College project are stored at the Alutiiq Museum.
- Three Saints Bay Site Collection – Ownership Koniag or USFWS: Excavated by Aron Crowell in the early 1990s, this collection is currently stored at the Smithsonian’s Arctic Studies Center offices at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center. The original excavation agreement named the Alutiiq Culture Center (the museum’s predecessor) as the preferred curation facility.
- Tanginak Spring Site Collection – Owned by the Old Harbor Native Corporation: Currently on loan from the OHNC to archaeologist Ben Fitzhugh at the University of Washington, Department of Anthropology. This is a large and very ancient collection of stone tools from Sitkalidak Island. It was excavated as part of a larger study of the Sitkalidak region. The Alutiiq Museum has records and a small number of objects from this project. We expect that the full assemblage will be offered for curation in the future.
- Ing’yuq Site Collection – Owned by the Old Harbor Native Corporation: This is a small collection of archaeological materials are from the excavation of an historic Alutiiq village on Sitkinak Island in 2021. Hollis Miller led the excavation and is currently studying the collection. Following her research, it will be curated at the Alutiiq Museum.
- Images of Archaeological Excavations – various owners: Researchers working in the Alutiiq region have taken hundreds of unique, irreplaceable photographs of archaeological projects and their finds (houses, hearths, artifacts in place, etc.) that provide significant additional documentation of archaeological collections. To enhance interpretation of its collection, the museum needs to locate, borrow, and copy these images. Importantly, these photo collections also contain images of Alutiiq communities and people.
- Miscellaneous Small Assemblages from Surveys and Contracts – Numerous organizations have completed archaeological surveys and testing programs in the Kodiak Archipelago. The Alutiiq Museum seeks to house the collections from these efforts, so that they may be better studied and interpreted in the context of the museum’s large archaeological holdings and made accessible to the Alutiiq community. This includes collections from studies of Native allotments and cultural resources management projects.

- Avocational collections from the Kodiak region – Numerous Kodiak families have artifact collections assembled over the past century. Most of these collections lack provenience information, but they contain ancestral objects with stories to tell. These objects deserve respectful care and can be integrated in the museum’s exhibits, research, and educational programs.

B. Ethnographic Collections

Contemporary artwork by Alutiiq artists from across the Alutiiq nation, such as:

- Andrew Abyo – visor, calendar, hunting gear, rattle
- Will Anderson, Jr. – mask
- Mary Babic & Peggy McDaniel – skin sewing
- Emily Jean Capjohn – beadwork
- Ralph Christiansen – paddle, drum
- Coral Chernoff – pottery
- Casey Day Rowland – jewelry, skin sewing
- Elizabeth Ellis – painting
- Sven Haakanson, Jr. – toys, models
- Doug Inga – carving
- Pat Kvasnikof – carving
- Jerry Laktonen – miniature paddles, feast bowl
- Cheryl Lacy – fish skin container
- Patrick Lind – painting
- Rebecca Lyon – multi-media piece
- Jacqueline Madsen – carvings, dolls
- Susan Malutin – boots
- Yvonne Mullan – beadwork
- June Pardue – gut skin items
- Speridon Simeonoff – throwing board, fishhook
- Dawn Wallace – jewelry
- Denise Wallace – jewelry
- Lalla Williams – gut skin windowpane, dolls

Types of contemporary objects

- Large installation for entrance of renovated museum
- Regalia, both men’s and women’s, and contemporary interpretations
- Feast bowls
- Examples of beadwork
- Examples of skin sewing – particularly boots, pants
- New Year’s dolls
- Gut skin objects – particularly clothing and containers
- Goat horn spoons

- Oil lamps
- Pottery
- Tool replicas
- Rattles, objects used in dance
- Bentwood objects – containers
- Artwork from the past 50 years
- Artwork from neighboring Alutiiq regions
- Youth artwork

C. Photographic Collections

- Kodiak region archaeological excavations related to museum collections
- Alutiiq objects in the world's museums (for the museum library)
- Copies of Alphonse Pinart's photos from the Kodiak region ca. 1872
- Family photographs showing Alutiiq life, events, heritage programs, and the Alutiiq homeland—historic and contemporary.
- Photographs documenting Kodiak Alutiiq tribes and ANCSA corporations and their work
- Historic photographs from the Alutiiq region:
 - Communities not well represented in museum photograph collections: Akhiok, Eagle Harbor, Larsen Bay, Little Afognak, Kaguyak, Port Lions, Ugashik
 - Settlements, camps, and canneries no longer inhabited
 - Images taken before 194s, especially those dating before the turn of the 20th century

D. Archival Collections

- Alutiiq language archival materials — e.g., language program materials from partner organization, place name research
- Field notes from anthropological and archaeological research in Alutiiq communities
- Personal papers of Alutiiq people
- Archives documenting the formation and operations of Alutiiq corporations
- Genealogical records for the Alutiiq nation
- Copies of U.S. census records for Alutiiq communities
- Documents related to the founding and operations of the Alutiiq Museum

E. Film and Audio Recordings

- Recordings documenting the Alutiiq language, particularly sound and video recordings of fluent, first language Alutiiq speakers
- Alutiiq oral histories, particularly of boarding school experiences
- Recordings of Alutiiq heritage programs, e.g., workshops, demonstrations, lessons, performances, and displays

F. Natural History Collections

- Geologic samples from outcrops in the Alutiiq culture area and neighboring areas

- Skeletons and skins of fish, birds, and mammals from the Alutiiq region
- Taxidermy specimens of birds, mammals, and fish from the Alutiiq region

G. Teaching and Research Assemblages

- Contemporary reproductions of traditional tools, household objects, toys, and games
- Regalia for use by patrons, e.g., headdresses that could be checked out.

H. Library Materials

- Anthropological, archaeological, linguistic, and historical publications on the Alutiiq region, particularly works that are not currently part of the museum's library collection, both paper and digital.
- The English version of Billings Expedition account
- Books on museum practice to support community education and staff development
- Reference materials on repatriation

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