

# Alaska State Museums Bulletin 45

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## Alaska Fur ID 101

*By Ellen Carrlee, Conservator*

The Alaska Fur ID Project, online at <http://alaskafurid.wordpress.com>, is a free internet resource developed at the Alaska State Museum. I began the project in 2009 with graduate conservation intern Lauren Horelick; it is aimed at identifying fur that may be found on Alaskan artifacts in museum collections. If large pieces of a pelt are used, the animal is often not hard to identify. However, sometimes it is not so easy. Fur in small pieces or from various body parts can be tricky, as there can be variations in color, immature animal pelts, trimmed/plucked fur and so on. We set out to determine: can we use measurements and our microscope to figure this out? After gathering hundreds of samples and taking more than a thousand images, I think the answer is that we can get down to genus level identification fairly quickly. Now we are tinkering with whether or not we can distinguish species consistently (Which ice seal? Which marmot?)

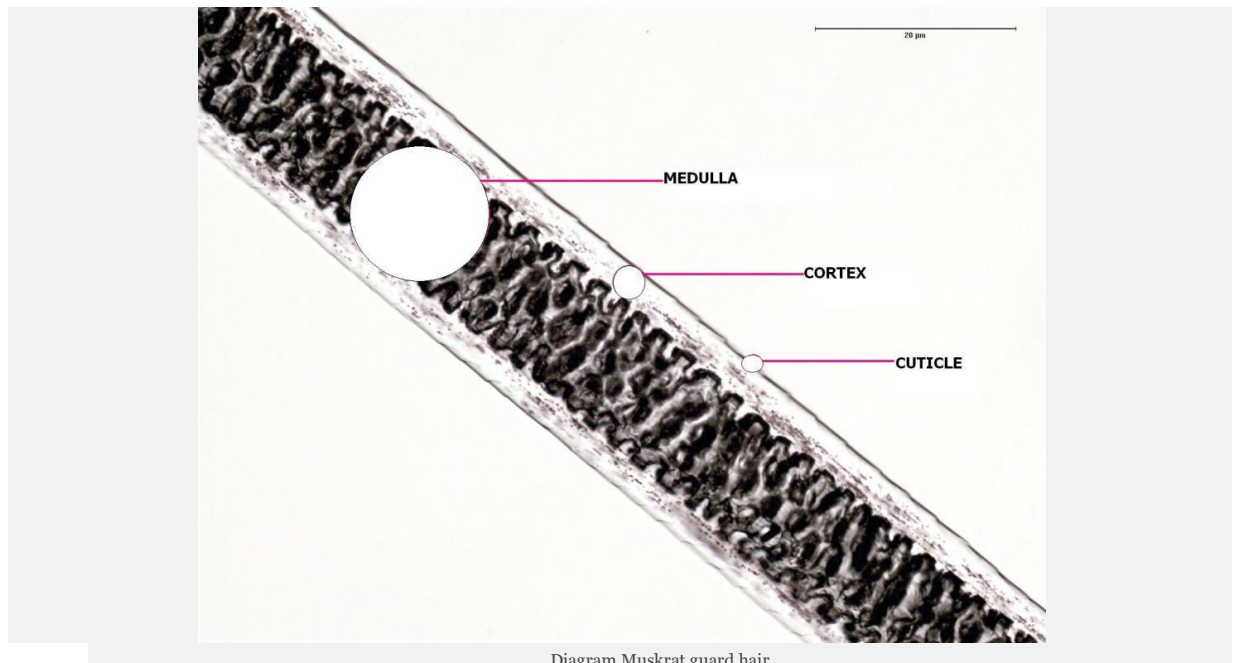


Diagram Muskrat guard hair

To use the reference website, a brief lesson on fur is helpful. Most animals have **underfur** which is soft and insulating, and **guard hair** which is longer and somewhat weather-proof. The guard hair has more info, and the underfur is less complex. Each individual hair has a scale pattern on the outside, kind of like bark on a tree. This is called the **cuticle** layer of the hair. The overlapping scales all go the same direction (except at the

tip of a porcupine quill, where they go the other way!) The scales for each animal are in a specific pattern: like fish scales, a shingled roof, flower petals, V-shapes and so on. For some animals, the scale pattern is different at the base of the hair than at the tip. The way the scales are shaped and spaced reflects light to determine whether or not the fur looks glossy. Down the center of the hair is a structure called the **medulla**. This also has a pattern, and sometimes it changes along the length. On a few animals, it is not there at all. The area in between the medulla and the scales is called the **cortex**. There are not many features for us to examine there, but the presence of more cortex is said to correspond to a stronger hair, while less cortex is thought to make the hair more brittle. All three of these areas — cuticle, medulla and cortex — are made of a hard protein substance called keratin. This is the same protein that makes up baleen, horn, hoof, and claw.

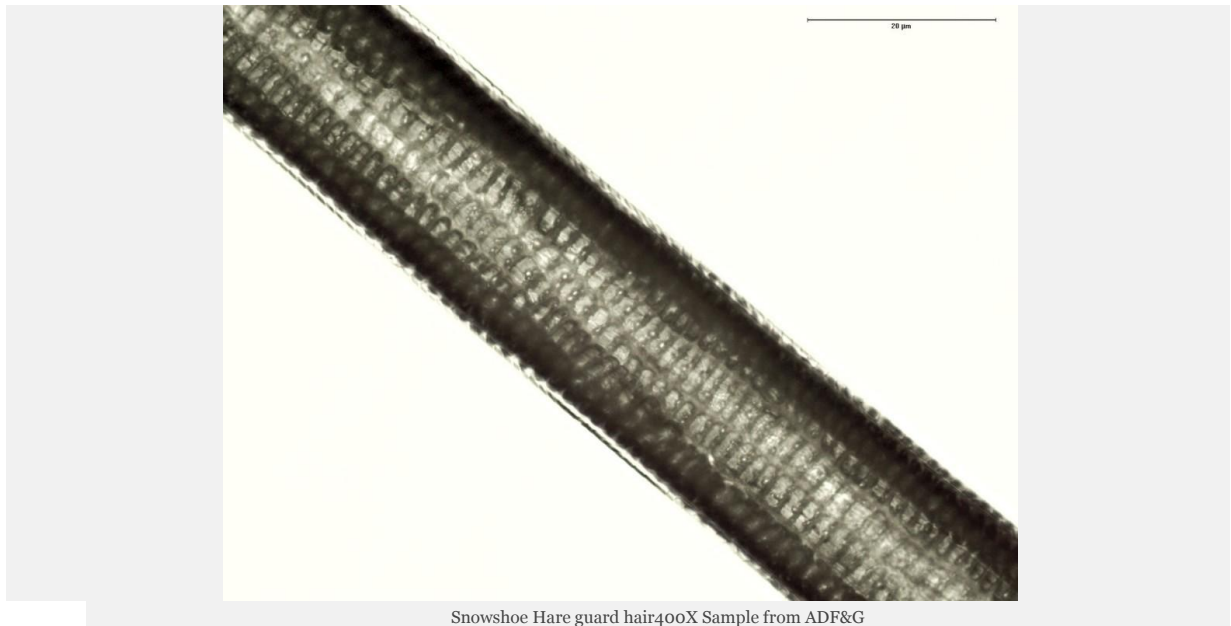
The website is set up like a blog, with each posting a different [animal](#). We followed the Alaska Department of Fish and Game listing for animals, and included anything we thought might be used to make artifacts, even a couple obscure ones like Northern Flying Squirrel or Collared Pika, just in case. You can start at the index <http://alaskafurid.wordpress.com/about/> if you want to jump right in.

Under each posting, there are three sections. The first section includes all the published data we could find or gather ourselves about the guard hair. How long can it get? How wide can each hair get? What does the medulla look like? What is the scale pattern? What color? There is a very helpful measurement called the **medullary index** to help determine how wide the medulla is compared to the whole width of the hair. Most medulla are around half the total width of the hair, but some are very skinny or very wide.



Northern Fur Seal guard hair 200X

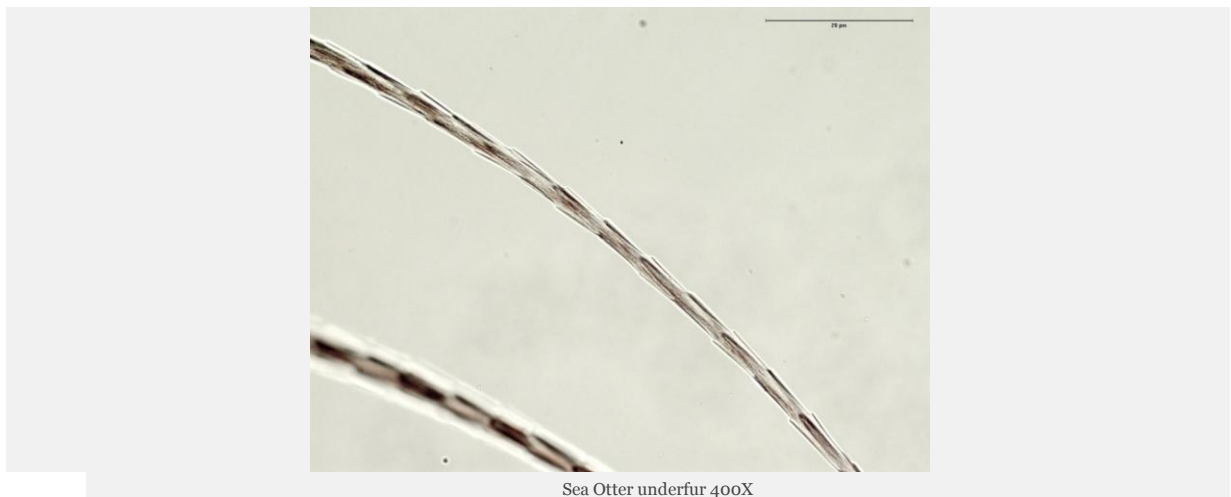
The medulla of the Northern Fur Seal has a distinctive lumpy, intestine-like pattern. A variation on this is also seen in Stellar Sea Lion, not surprising as both are in the “eared seal” family of the otaridae. But the non-eared seals (family phocidae) don’t have any medulla at all.



Snowshoe Hare guard hair 400X Sample from ADF&G

Rabbits and hares are known for their distinctive corn-cob-like medulla.

In the next section, the same kinds of data are given for the underfur. Although there's less info in the underfur structures, sometimes there's something really useful. While most underfur looks like a pile of stacked paper cups or stacked crowns with no medulla, if the underfur does *not* look like that, we take notice.



Sea Otter underfur 400X

This image shows the scales on the sea otter's underfur: very elongated and pointy. This is interesting, since some animals (beaver, fur seal, sea otter) may have the guard hairs plucked away during processing, leaving only the underfur for examination. In this case, distinctive underfur features may help a lot.



Raccoon underfur has a spiky pinecone-like look, and some of the underfur hairs show a fragmented medulla, looking a little bit like a black dotted line.



Beaver glossy clumped guard hairs

The combination of underfur and guard hair appearance can sometimes be a one-two punch. Beaver fur, for example, often shows guard hairs coming out in clumps that fan out narrowly. The guard hairs tend to be very glossy.



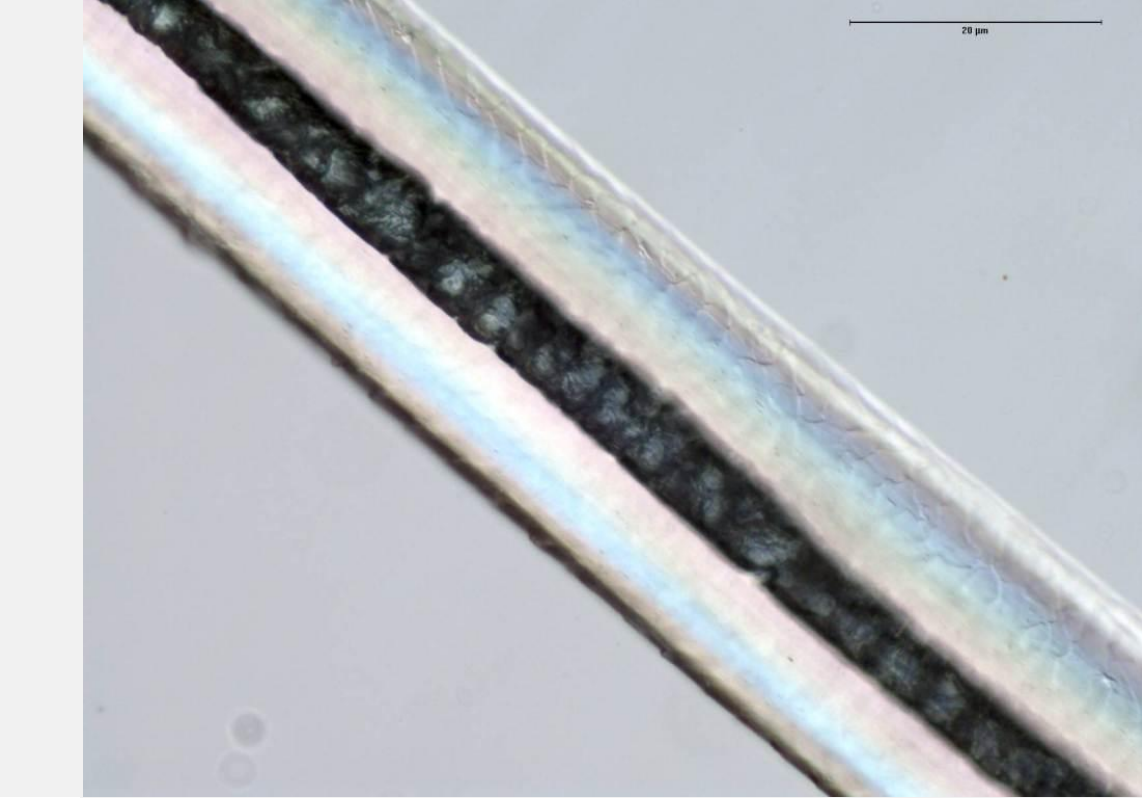
The underfur of beaver can also gather into small tufts that get curly near the tips. The combo of clumped, glossy guard hairs with curly-tipped underfur suggest beaver. However, the fur industry has done a lot to beaver fur, including processes that remove the guard hairs and straighten the underfur!

The third section includes more data on what the fur looks like to the naked eye, how big the animal might be, where it is expected to live, and my favorite part: troubleshooting! We are also adding info about which cultures use the animal, although this section is time-consuming and growing slowly. We also add alternate, obscure, or previous names that have been used for the animal.

Finally, there is an image gallery. The website includes images of each animal, the appearance of the pelt, lots of images through the microscope, and examples of artifacts made from that fur. Each animal posted has at about a dozen images. You can click on the images to see more detail, too.

But that's not all. The website has sections on how to sample fur, make slides, and make cross sections. We have a glossary, a bibliography (annotated with our own notes) and postings that talk about the overall categories of animals to make comparison easier. Most of the other resources available about identifying fur with these techniques are problematic for us. The majority do not involve the specific data needed to actually do the work, only the guidelines about the methodology. They expect you to have or make your own reference set. Before the availability of digital images and the web, having your own reference set was quite an obstacle. The other limitation was that reference-set-quality data that was out there to do the work was not specific enough for Alaska. For example, one of the best resources out there, a Czech website called [Furskinwww.furskin.cz](http://www.furskin.cz), is a guide to European furs, and only has a couple of our Alaskan animals.

Putting this information on the web seemed a great way to share a resource we wanted to use. Not only were furs used extensively by Alaska Native people on artifacts found in museums worldwide, but Alaska was also historically important in the fur trade. Alaskan furs are found in various garments, exploration supplies, performance gear and high-status items from many cultures. Here's a tasting of some of the information available:



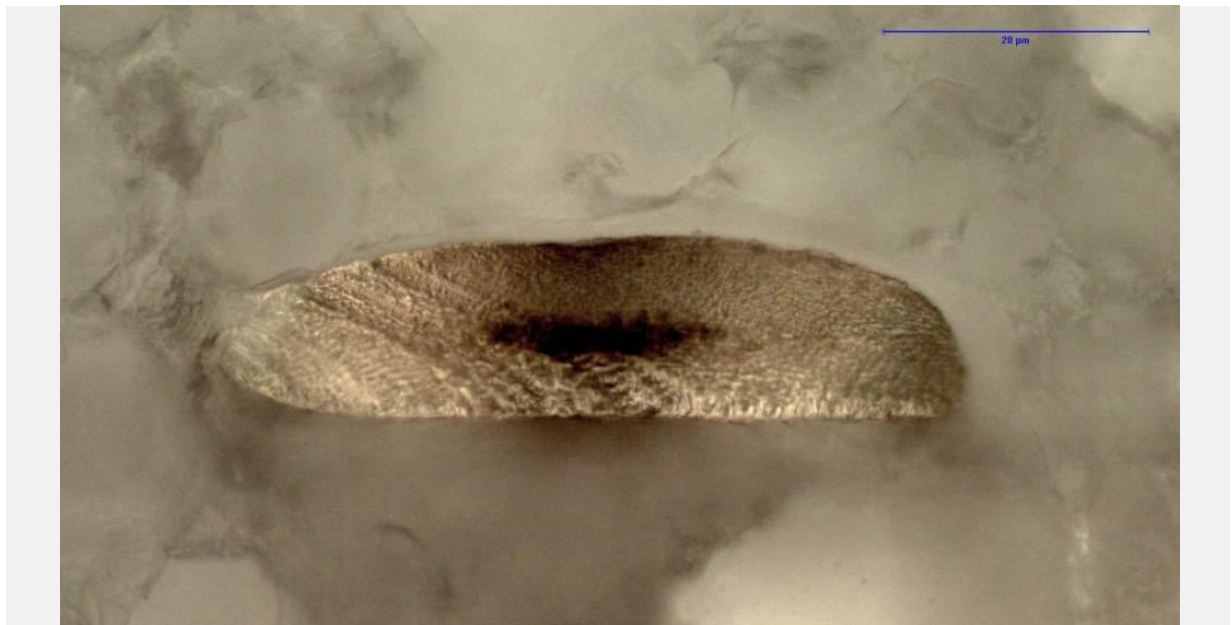
Polar Bear guard hair 400X

Polar bear fur is sometimes discussed as being “hollow” but this is not the case, as revealed by microscopy. Polar bear fur has a narrow medulla of dark cells and considerable cortex.



Elk guard hair 200X

Many hoofed animals of Alaska, however, do have a “hollow” medulla and very little cortex, making for a rather brittle hair but one with good insulating properties. This elk hair (courtesy of Sven Haakanson Jr.) shows this characteristic “bubble pack” look, which is also seen on deer, moose, caribou and Dall sheep.



Cross section of Northern Fur Seal hair

Seal guard hairs are flattened in cross section, instead of the round shape we expect to see in most other hairs. This also causes the guard hair to kink, or fold over itself ribbon-like when seen under the microscope on a slide.



Ringed seal guard hair 200X sample from AMNH

This distinctive feature of seal hair helps in its identification, particularly in identifying artifacts made of lanugo, or the woolly fetal fur of certain baby seals. It can sometimes look like polar bear fur, or sheep wool but can easily be distinguished under the microscope.



ASM II-A-6297 lanugo used by Irma Ungott

Use of lanugo is seen on this ball made by Irma Ungott of Gambell, St. Lawrence Island (ASM II-A-6297)



ASM II-B-1498 fox paw blanket

Color is one of the most salient features of fur, but can be misleading if the possibilities are not considered. Many animals change color seasonally, or have less-common colors that are still “normal.” This fox paw



blanket (ASM II-B-1498) is made of more than 300 red fox paws, displaying the stunning natural variation seen in red fox fur coloration. Most of these variations include a white tip of the tail unique among wild Alaskan canines. Tails, when present, are helpful for identification.



Muskrat

The underfur of muskrat often has a distinct lavender-grey coloration near the base.



Woodchuck banded

Woodchuck fur is banded in a distinct pattern. Banding refers to stripes of contrasting colors along the length of a single hair. The size, color, and order of the banding help distinguish between certain animals.



Albino beaver, Anchorage Airport

Animals that are lighter than usual in color, such as albino animals and very light color phases, are often seen in museum collections. The albino beaver pictured is on display at the Anchorage Airport.



Raccoon at Mascot Saloon, NPS Skagway

The light-colored raccoon is displayed on the bar of the Mascot Saloon in Skagway, part of the National Parks Service.



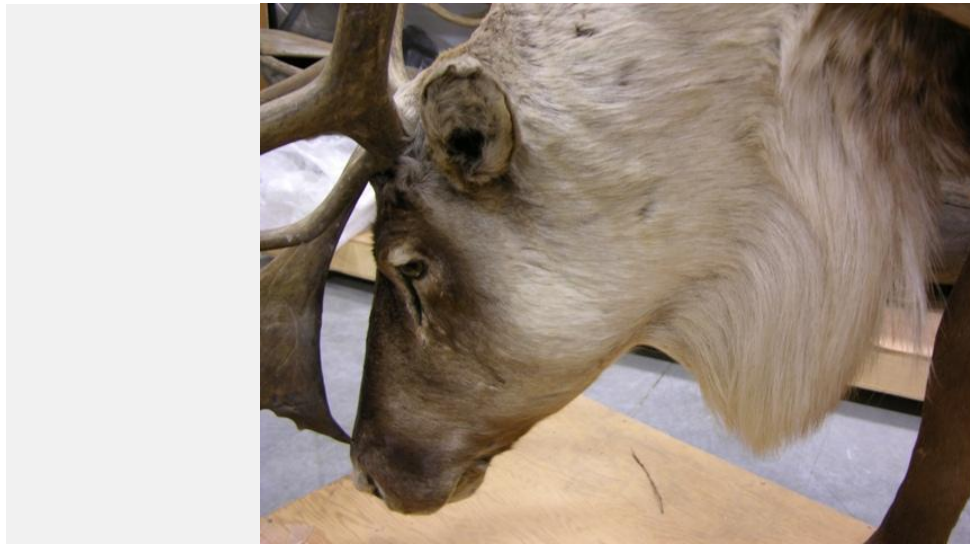
Kate Carmack robe, MacBride Museum 72.1.80

Darker-than-usual coloration is also seen. A fur cape made by Kate Carmack (Tagish First Nation, 1862-1920) in the MacBride Museum collection (72.1.80) is made of black arctic ground squirrel pelts. The animal typically presents a brown pelt with distinctive small white spots, and is used extensively throughout Alaska. In some areas, they are even known as “parky squirrels” for their use in making parkas. However, biologists believe that forest fires in certain areas between Alaska and Yukon Territory have led to “fire melanism” or this dark coloration as part of natural selection to favor survival of darker-colored animals in a blackened landscape.



ASM II-A-9210 Caribou hair embroidery

Sometimes an artifact includes individual hairs of an animal, such as the embroidery on the edge of this sealskin mat in the Alaska State Museum collection (II-A-9210). Under the microscope, the white hairs were identified as guard hairs from the caribou “bell,” or long hairs under the neck of the animal.



Caribou bell hair

Using the Alaska Fur ID project is not like using an ATM. The website won't spit out an identification for you. The different bits of data need to be pieced together to create a preponderance of the evidence. A good identification describes all the features that point to a certain animal, and also the features that show why it cannot be some other similar-looking fur. The website puts identification of Alaskan fur in the hands of anyone with a microscope able to magnify up to 200X and an internet connection. We hope it will be used to enhance our understanding of museum artifacts, and perhaps even be used by other professions such as archaeology, biology, and forensics. Comments and questions about the Alaska Fur ID Project are most welcome!

## Ask ASM

*Question:* We have a few skin drums here, and some have broken skins. I wondered if they can be repaired or how to prevent the others from splitting.

*ASM:* There are two important issues to address here. One is why the drum skins are broken in the first place. Did it happen prior to coming to the museum or after? Drums are very sensitive to changes in temperature and humidity in the storage or display environment. The two components of the drum, the wooden hoop and the stretched skin, often react at different rates to the environment which sets up a tension in the skin. Sometimes this tension is relieved by the splitting of the skin. This tension also makes skin drums very sensitive to mechanical damage from improper handling or transportation. The other important issue is, why are you repairing the drums? Is it to stabilize them or for aesthetic reasons so they can be put on display? If it is for display purposes, there are some cosmetic repairs that can make them look good again but this would need to be carried out by a conservator. If they are to remain in storage there is not much reason to repair them. They will not be played anyway because they are now part of a museum collection and their value is more for the information they contain rather than their capability of being played. It is more important to protect them from mishandling and changes in the environment than to repair them. At the state museum we protect our drums by putting cotton batting (the kind used for quilt filler) on the inside of the drum. The cotton absorbs and gives off moisture faster than the drum so it protects it from rapid changes in the environment. We have been doing this for the past 5 years and it seems to work.



Skin drum with cotton padding

There is a small posting on the drums in our collection you might find interesting...

<http://ellencarrlee.wordpress.com/2009/04/07/brief-alaskan-drum-survey/>

## Shaking the Money Tree

### AAM Museum Assessment Program

The next application deadline is December 1.

Do you want the answers to help your museum move forward? Would you like a roadmap for future success? Consider participating in the Museum Assessment Program (MAP), which assists all types of small and mid-size museums (e.g., aquariums, art, history, natural history, public gardens, science centers and zoos). While engaging in guided self study, your museum will be matched with an expert peer reviewer who will provide a customized site visit and report. In less than a year, MAP will help you develop strategies for improved operations, planning, staff and board education and fundraising.

Visit [www.aam-us.org/map](http://www.aam-us.org/map) to download the application and for more information about MAP. You can also email [map@aam-us.org](mailto:map@aam-us.org) or call 202-289-9118. MAP is administered by the American Association of Museums and supported through a cooperative agreement with the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

### NEH

Guidelines have been posted for the National Endowment for the Humanities' Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections grants. U.S. nonprofit museums, libraries, archives, and educational institutions can apply for grants to plan and implement preventive conservation projects in ways that are cost effective, energy efficient,

and environmentally sensitive and that aim to mitigate greatest risks to humanities collections rather than to meet prescriptive targets.

Apply for planning grants of up to \$40,000 (with an option of up to \$50,000) to bring together interdisciplinary teams that might reevaluate environmental parameters for collections and examine passive (non-mechanical) and low-energy alternatives to conventional energy sources and energy-intensive mechanized systems for managing collection environments. Testing, modeling, or project-specific research may help applicants better understand collection environments and formulate sustainable preservation strategies; therefore, with planning grants, you might:

- measure energy consumption;
- use blower door tests to identify air leaks in buildings;
- create mock-ups of lighting options;
- test natural ventilation methods;
- conduct thermal imaging of buildings;
- test the effect of buffered storage enclosures on moderating fluctuating environmental conditions;
- re-commission small-scale climate control systems; or
- adjust the operating protocols for climate control systems.

*Apply for implementation grants of up to \$350,000 to:*

- manage interior relative humidity and temperature by passive methods;
- install heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems;
- install storage systems and rehouse collections;
- improve security and the protection of collections from fire, flood, and other disasters; and upgrade lighting systems and controls to achieve levels suitable for collections that are energy efficient.

*Projects that seek to implement preventive conservation measures in sustainable ways are especially encouraged. Deadline: December 1, 2011. Guidelines: <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/SCHC.html> Program officers are willing to read draft proposals. See the guidelines for additional details and please contact the division for more information by emailing [preservation@neh.gov](mailto:preservation@neh.gov) or calling 202-606-8570.*

## IMLS

*Museum Grants for African American History and Culture Deadline: January 17, 2012 Grant Amount: \$5,000-\$150,000 Grant Period: Up to two years*

*Matching Requirement: 1:1*

*Program Overview: Museum Grants for African American History and Culture are intended to enhance institutional capacity and sustainability through professional training, technical assistance, internships, outside expertise, and other tools. Successful proposals will focus on one or more of the following three goals: (1) developing or strengthening knowledge, skills, and other expertise of current staff at African American museums; (2) attracting and retaining professionals with the skills needed to strengthen African American museums; and (3) attracting new staff to African American museum practice and providing them with the expertise needed to sustain them in the museum field.*

[Download FY 2011 Grant Program Guidelines \(PDF, 434 KB\)](#)

[Read more about Museum Grants for African American History and Culture on the IMLS Web site.](#)

## Congratulations to the Alutiiq Museum for their Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grant award.

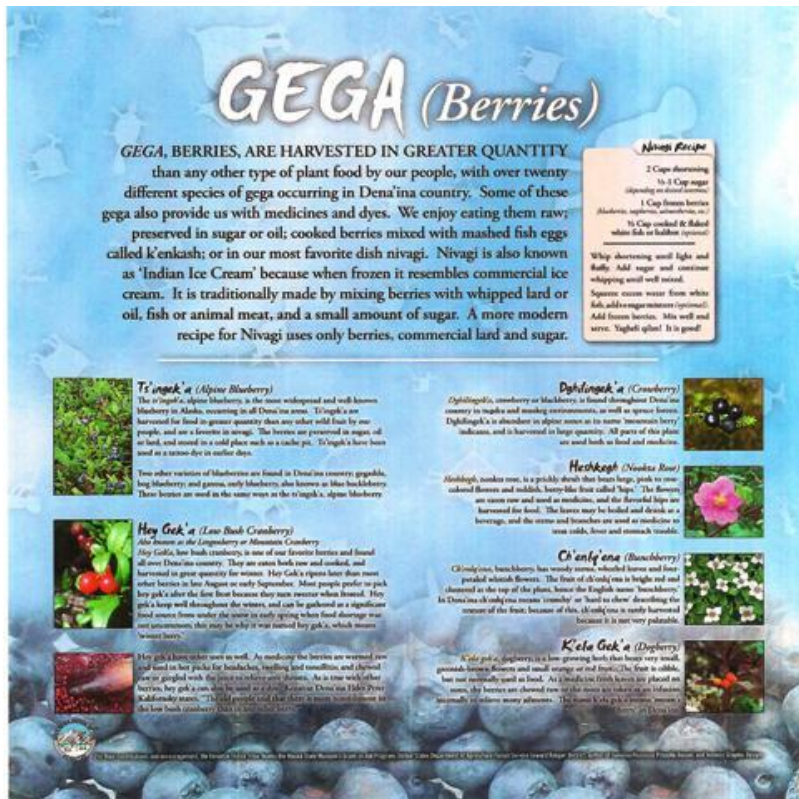
Koniag, Incorporated - Kodiak, AK  
Award Amount: \$49,662  
Grant Category: Programming

Koniag, Inc., seeks to better document the Karluk One collection, housed at the Alutiiq Museum, through the creation of a seven-chapter monograph. Excavations from this site, before the Karluk River washed it away in the mid-1990s, have produced more than 20,000 objects, 70 percent of them made of organic materials such as wood, bone, ivory, antler, and even leather. There is currently no comprehensive publication on Karluk One and no place where Alutiiqs can easily access the details of ancestral culture preserved in this world-class collection. The Kal'unek – From Karluk project will unite the people who excavated the site, cared for its objects, and have been inspired by the collection to tell the Karluk One story. This project will develop a manuscript for a lasting, multivocal publication designed to document, contextualize, and share Karluk One with a general audience.

Contact: Ms. Amy Steffian  
Deputy Director/Curator  
907-789-3365; [amy@alutiiqmuseum.org](mailto:amy@alutiiqmuseum.org)


## Spotlight on Grant in Aid

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe developed, designed, printed and installed three 2' square interpretive panels to explain the Dena'ina people's traditional use of local plants.



A brochure was published to further explain the local plant life to individuals who walk through the Tribe's interpretive site, K'Beq', located in Cooper Landing.

**Heshkegh**  
*Nootka Rose*



Both the flower blossoms and fruits, or hips, of the *heshkegh* are eaten raw and used for medicine. The leaves and stems are boiled and used as a beverage and to relieve colds, fever, moon-ach trouble, weak blood and if a woman has difficulty menstruating. The Kenai Dena'ina also make a medicine to induce vomiting from branches to cleanse a patient's system.

## Nudnelyahi Quiz

The Dena'ina used the *nudnelyahi* ('that which is growing') plants around their home for many things. Using the clues below, can you figure out and find each of these valuable plants?

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**Who am I?**

1. The Dena'ina use my wood to make sunglasses.
2. I repel mosquitoes when rubbed on your skin.
3. My stem can treat your cuts.
4. Pick me after the first frost.
5. I can be made into a tonic to cleanse your system.
6. My name means 'crunchy.'
7. I am the single most important plant to the Dena'ina.
8. Use me to spice up your meats.
9. I am most delicious in *nasugi*.
10. My inner bark makes a reddish-brown dye.
11. I'm sometimes used as a Christmas green.
12. A screen can be made from my branches to protect a baby's face from mosquitoes.

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Sources for plants and their uses is from *Tanana Planting Dena'ina Recipes* by Priscilla Russel Karl, published by the Alaska Native Language Center, 1995.


**Kenaitze Indian Tribe**  
Cultural & Educational Department  
PO Box 988 Kenai, AK 99611  
907-335-0669  
[www.kenaitze.org](http://www.kenaitze.org)



## Nudnelyahi

*that which is growing*

The Dena'ina eat the young stems and leaves of *nitdghuligi* raw or boiled with fish eggs. As a medicine, it is also a treatment for pus-filled boils or cuts by placing a piece of the raw stem on the afflicted area.



be used to supplement presentations to local schools and civic organizations throughout our ancestral lands. The Tribe is proud of the final product which was presented to visitors to K'Beq'. The response was favorable and added to the visitors' experience.

## ASM on the Road

### Curator Says "Oui" to European Visit

Steven Henriksen, Curator of Collections, recently traveled to Europe to retrieve a pair of Yup'ik masks that had been on loan from ASM and the Sheldon Jackson Museum to the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris for a temporary exhibition. The museum is the largest ethnographic museum in France—an ultra-modern building just steps away from the Eiffel Tower, on the banks of the Seine.

Most loan objects are packed in a "bombproof" manner and shipped via air freight, but when the value, significance, and/or rarity of the object is particularly high, the object fragile, or the customs process complicated, it sometimes requires that the object be hand-carried to and from the borrower's institution by a staff member. The role of the courier is to pack and unpack the objects at their destination or for customs, provide security en route, and to handle the package (or as he likes to call it, "The Football") with the upmost "TLC." The process is usually assisted by a customs broker, who in addition to facilitating customs clearance, assists with security to and from the airport. The costs of these services are covered by the borrower as part of the loan agreement.





It is not unusual for museum couriers to take extra time at their destinations, on their own nickel, prior to taking possession of the objects, to see the museums and even conduct research. In Steve's case, his flights were routed through London, so he decided to stop off there a few days early to study some of the earliest objects collected in Alaska by Captains Cook and Vancouver (and others) that are today housed at the British Museum.

Like many large institutions, much of the collection is in storage at an off-site facility—in this case, a few miles away from the museum. Prior to his visit, Steve spent a fair amount of time searching the British Museum's excellent online collections database, and submitted a prioritized list of objects he wanted to examine. With the expert assistance of John Davy, Museum Assistant, they were able to work through the greater part of his list, including Alutiiq and Tlingit spruce root hats and baskets, Tlingit armor, cedar bark clothing, and an original "Raven's Tail" robe. Steve said that it was absolutely thrilling to come face-to-face with such staggeringly beautiful 18<sup>th</sup> century objects made by Alaska Natives.



Websites of Interest:

Musée du Quai Branly: <http://www.quaibrantly.fr/en/>

British Museum Collections

Database: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx)

A day in the life of a museum courier:

<http://newarkmuseum.wordpress.com/2011/02/08/a-%E2%80%9Cday%E2%80%9D-in-the-life-of-the-glamorous-courier/>

<http://penn.museum/blog/museum/the-glamorous-job-of-a-museum-courier/>

## Scott and Ellen Carrlee do XRF training in Anchorage



Ellen Carrlee and Monica Shah put the XRF through its paces

ASM Conservator Ellen Carrlee and Curator of Museum Services Scott Carrlee attended a day of XRF training September 26, 2011 at the Anchorage Museum at the invitation of Head of Collections/ Conservator Monica Shah. They were joined Holly Cusack-McVeigh and Bill Walker from the Pratt Museum in Homer. The training was led by Dr. Bruce Kaiser, a name well-known in museums and universities for connecting institutions with handheld X-ray fluorescence [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X-ray\\_fluorescence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X-ray_fluorescence) technology provided by the company Bruker AXS <http://www.bruker-axs.com/artconservation.html>. One of these “science guns” has been traveling between the Alaska State Museum, the Anchorage Museum and the Pratt Museum, on loan from Bruker. The device shoots photons (or low-energy X-rays) at a sample, analyzing them non-destructively by measuring the movement of electrons. After a few seconds, a graph of peaks appears on the computer screen and the software helps identify which elements are present in the sample. Knowledge of physics and an understanding of how the machine works greatly enhance the interpretation of the data. Museums worldwide have been using XRF extensively in recent years to explore questions of alloy compositions of metal artifacts <http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/using-xrf-analysis-on-two-staffordshire-hoard-objects>, pesticide contamination on ethnographic and natural history collections [http://www.nmai.si.edu/subpage.cfm?subpage=collections&second=conserv&third=pest\\_id](http://www.nmai.si.edu/subpage.cfm?subpage=collections&second=conserv&third=pest_id), pigment identification <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/blogosphere/2011/01/26/analyzing-pigments-in-the-book-of-the-dead-using-xrf-spectroscopy/>, and other questions that can be investigated with elemental analysis. We'll keep you posted as we discover the potential benefits offered for Alaskan collections.

## Conference Review

The American Association of State and Local History Annual Meeting September 14-17, Richmond VA.

Scott Carrlee, Curator of Museum Services, attended this year's AASLH Annual meeting in Richmond VA. There were almost 900 attendees (including several Alaskans) at the meeting whose theme was "The Promise of Remembrance and New Beginnings." The theme and the location were fitting given the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the civil war. There were many presentations that focused on remembering this difficult time in our Nation's history. On the practical side, the IMLS ran a sort of mini-conference parallel to the main conference that was devoted to their nationwide initiative, Connecting to Connections. Many Alaskan museums have participated in Connecting to Collections in one way or another through the Conservation Bookshelf or by attending one of their regional meetings. This was an opportunity for museums and libraries across the country to share what they have been doing with their Connecting to Collections planning and implementation grants.

## Alaska Museums in the News

KTOO Interviewed Linda Thibodeau about the groundbreaking for the new State Library Archives and Museum (SLAM) building:

<http://www.ktoonews.org/2011/10/04/shoveling-for-slam/>

Museum to conserve Alutiiq Warrior Kayak in Gallery

[http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int\\_sec=2&int\\_new=51190](http://www.artdaily.org/index.asp?int_sec=2&int_new=51190)

Hundreds attend service for Athabaskan leader Hannah Solomon

<http://www.adn.com/2011/09/23/2084332/hundreds-attend-service-for-athabaskan.html>

## Professional Development/Training Opportunities

### PastPerfect Training

Online training for PastPerfect, "[Cataloging Collections with PastPerfect 5.0](#)," December 6-8, 2011, 9:30 a.m. to noon ET. Only \$69 for AASLH members. Call 800-562-6080 to register. One of the best assets an organization can have is consistent data entry of the collection. In "Cataloging Your Collection with PastPerfect 5.0," you will learn easy and effective ways to maximize the data entry process while keeping an eye on consistency. Instruction will include navigating the PastPerfect 5.0 program, basic and advanced cataloging, using the new Nomenclature 3.0 with PastPerfect, the Accession process, managing authority files and tips on researching, and keeping your data safe. Class attendees will receive a FREE copy of the "Cataloging Your Collections with PastPerfect 5.0" training CD, which complements this course.

### Small Museum Administration and Leadership

*This course proposes that museum administration and leadership matter, regardless of the size or focus of your organization. Topics include governance and administrative structure, nonprofit status, mission and vision, board and staff responsibilities, the relationship between board and staff, strategic planning, human resource management, and leadership. The course is designed for small museums and their staff, including staff members who may or may not be paid or who, in fact, may be a board member who also serves as curator or in some other capacity in the museum. Even if you work mostly with collections or programs, you will benefit from an understanding of the administrative side of the museum, and will benefit from exploring your own leadership approach. At the end of this course you will understand:*

- the governance structure of most nonprofit museums;
- the importance of museum mission, vision, change, and strategic planning;
- the major roles and responsibilities of the board and staff;
- how to create a more effective board through assessment and education;
- the administrative and management duties of museum directors;
- the key issues in human resource management;
- why leadership matters and what is the most effective leadership approach; and
- where the museum field is heading in the future.

During this course, you will have the opportunity to create a *Board Member Handbook* for board member training at your organization or prepare a reflection on what constitutes effective museum leadership.

The tuition for this class is \$210.00.

Meets AASLH StEPs Standards MVG 1,2,3,4,5; MGMT 1,2,7,8,9,10.

The tuition for this class is \$210.00.

Students can earn 3 CEUs upon completion of this course.

For registration information, see [www.smallmuseumpro.org](http://www.smallmuseumpro.org)

## Summer Intern

Brianna Wright, graduate student in Museums Studies at George Washington University, interned at the Palmer Museum of History & Art



Intern Brianna Wright and Palmer Museum Director Mel Jenski examine a fur parka

Other than the breathtaking mountains, glaciers, hikes, and window views (and the fact that I get to miss out on hot, sticky DC summers), I was excited to intern at the Palmer Museum of History and Art because one of my professional goals is to work at a small, community-based museum. What better way to learn about the operation and experience of such an institution than to become completely immersed for 10 weeks?

My big project this summer was putting together a manual of policies and procedures for the museum, with a goal of providing continuity in recordkeeping and staff practice. Discussions, revisions, and a lot of paper later, the final manual came in at over 200 pages. Part of this involved revising and reorganizing the museum's Collections Management Policy. This task was a great learning experience for a number of reasons. In addition to helping me become much more familiar with the ins and outs of collections management policies, I was able to collaborate with both staff and board members on the revision.

The bulk of the manual focuses on collections management procedures that cover acquisition, registration, loans, and de-accession. In addition to setting standards the manual includes step-by-step PastPerfect instructions whenever applicable (accession records, catalog records, loans, condition reports, etc.). In addition to writing these procedures, the process of completing the manual involved determining standards the museum will follow and generating/revising forms. I also included a section on collections care that set guidelines for the handling, storage, and exhibition of objects as well as information pages on specific material types. In addition, I helped the staff establish a monitoring program for the environment, pests, and light.

The final section of the manual is an emergency preparedness plan. It is still a work-in-progress (needing floor plans, phone trees, and an established disaster team) but contains many of the essential pieces of a formal disaster plan. I put together a plan that includes sections on prevention (a risk assessment with mitigation possibilities and disaster team role responsibilities), response (including an evacuation plan and response steps for a variety of disaster types), and salvage (directions for immediate response fire and water salvage practices, including specific material types).

My internship also included an exhibition component. Staff and the board are looking for ways to enhance and improve the permanent exhibit and introduce variety into a limited space. I prepared a list of possible exhibit topics and objects for rotating displays and developed ideas/templates for interactives that could be incorporated into the current permanent exhibit.

In addition to the manual and exhibits, I assisted staff with various daily tasks including environmental monitoring, checking light levels, object packing, selecting & purchasing storage supplies/materials, and attended various board meetings.

Overall, the experience was worthwhile and gave me a good taste of what it's like to really be part of the professional museum world. It was challenging and overwhelming at times to be "the expert," but I also know I had more responsibility and gained a lot of real-life experience I couldn't have received at many other internships. It was great to see how supportive and helpful everyone in the field was over the course of the summer. Knowing the "who" and "where" of your resources is something I discovered is essential to success at a small institution. My experience this summer let me use and improve the skills I've learned in school and in previous museums as well as made me aware of the challenge and fun that working in a very small museum can be.

## **Standard in Excellence Program (StEPs)**

AASLH is able to offer the following webinar series free of charge with funding generously provided by an IMLS 21st Century Museum Professionals grant. [Register for one, two, or all three!](#)

### **Telling a Good Story (Registration Now Open)**

November 17, 2011

Time: 2-3:15 pm Eastern

A good guided tour is a good story, told well, says guest speaker Linda Norris. Join us to learn the basics of creating a meaningful tour and creative ways tour guides can connect with visitors who arrive at your site with many different interests.

### **Creating Historic House Interpretive Plans that Connect (Registration Opens October 15)**

December 8, 2011

Time: 2-3:15 pm Eastern

Interpretive plans that connect with your visitors and their lives are the keystone for a positive visitor experience. Guest speaker Nancy Bryk will show participants how research is an integral part of the interpretive planning process.

### **Redefining Audiences (Registration Opens December 1)**

January 27, 2012

Time: 2-3:15 pm Eastern

Who are our current audiences and how can we engage new ones? Looking at the most recent U.S. Census, Susie Wilkening will discuss demographic change and the valuable ways in which history organizations can use census data.

Webinar content is supported by StEPs standards and performance indicators. **Pre-registration is necessary.**

[Click here to register online](#) or to register by phone or mail, contact Terry Jackson, Program Associate, at 615-320-3203 or by email to [jackson@aaahl.org](mailto:jackson@aaahl.org)

## **Professional Time Wasting on the Web**

*After Winning Coveted Shuttle, Museum Changes the Plan for It*[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/29/nyregion/plans-to-build-museum-opposite-intrepid-to-house-enterprise.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/29/nyregion/plans-to-build-museum-opposite-intrepid-to-house-enterprise.html?_r=2)*Afghanistan museum intrigue saves country's gold*<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/09/28/earlyshow/main20112633.shtml>*Prehistoric Cave Drawings 'Made by Children'*

<http://www.theworld.org/2011/09/rouffignac-cave-drawings-children/>

*Fascinating project at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*

<http://www.metmuseum.org/connections/>

*This database works extremely well in terms of allowing researchers to gain access to lots of information and images on their own.*

[http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/museum\\_number\\_search.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/museum_number_search.aspx)

*100,000-Year-Old Art Studio Found in South African Cave*

<http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2011/10/13/ancient-art-supplies-found-in-south-african-cave/>