



Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-246007-OMS-20
Project Category: Community Anchors and Catalysts

Alutiiq Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$49,564
Amount of cost share:	\$2,534

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/igsm-246007-oms-20>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2021 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2020 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

NARRATIVE

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Need: In 1998, the Alutiiq Museum (AMAR) held a Tribal Elders Conference. Culture bearers from across Alaska’s Alutiiq homeland gathered in Kodiak to design an exhibit combining the museum’s archaeological collections with ethnographic pieces from the Smithsonian Institution. At the time, the museum and the Alutiiq cultural heritage movement were young. The Alutiiq were one of Alaska’s least-known Native people, due an early, prolonged, and brutal period of colonialism. This was the first opportunity for the tribal community to tell their story, at their museum, in their own way. Over three days of discussions, Elders shared knowledge and advised on exhibit themes. One major question was how to address the history of conquest and the ensuing intergenerational trauma. Should the exhibit talk about disease, alcoholism, or other community problems?

At the time, Elders urged AMAR not to focus on community pain, because of the overwhelming need to reawaken cultural knowledge. They did not want Native people to be defined by disfunction and loss. They wanted their culture to be known. So much of Alutiiq history and tradition had been suppressed by racist historical narratives they advised us that the exhibit was a way to begin addressing the urgent need for cultural education. As such, the 2001 *Looking Both Ways* exhibit focused on revealing and celebrating Alutiiq traditions.

Since then, the Alutiiq Museum’s interpretive plan has followed this perspective. Exhibits, programs, and publications have all worked to return cultural knowledge to community awareness and expand the dialogue on local history to include the Alutiiq people. While this work has contributed substantially to the cultural revitalization movement and built public appreciation, it has also overlooked a gap in the documentation and understanding of Alutiiq history. There is little information on the forces that shaped Alutiiq culture in the Russian and American periods (ca. 1764 to 1980). This gap is evident in the museum’s gallery and publications which explore precontact culture and share modern cultural expression, but don’t address the 200 years of colonialism that connect the two. It is also evident in hurtful social media posts that demonstrate a poor understanding of why Alutiiq people own land, receive subsidized medical care, or continue to hunt and fish. In short, there is a gap in community memory. Many in Kodiak lack information about historical events such as the massacre at Refuge Rock, diseases that killed thousands of Native people, loss of economic and political sovereignty, enslavement, language suppression, abusive educational institutions, medical mistreatment, and land claims. This information is a difficult but essential part of Alutiiq history and it directly relevant to understanding our communities.

From 2013-2018, the Alutiiq Museum participated in a statewide arts innovation project investigating audience engagement. As part of this process we met with select audiences to discuss their needs. A luncheon with tribal leaders revealed a change in perspective, namely that people wanted to the museum to start sharing colonial history. They saw a need to convey this history to both tribal members and the broader community, to promote understanding and healing. This same sentiment surfaced in discussions at the locally hosted 2019 Museums Alaska / Alaska Historical Society Conference. Participants urged us to consider the changing needs of our audiences, particularly to discuss the events and forces in Alutiiq history that have caused intergenerational trauma. Importantly, Alutiiq scholars have been researching recent Alutiiq history and are beginning to share it. Their presentations often leave audiences shocked and confused. People ask, “Why is this rarely shared?”, or “Why isn’t this part of educational materials?”

To address both the lack of recent historical information and community desire for knowledge about this history, the Alutiiq Museum proposes the Difficult Discussions project. This project will convene a summit of twenty representatives from ten Alutiiq tribes (Attachment 5) to discuss and identify the historical themes that should be shared by the museum. To support this effort, the group will meet at the museum to review historical topics with tribal scholars (Attachments 1 & 2). These discussions will be used to update AMAR’s interpretive plan and create educational resources more relevant to today’s Alutiiq life—an exhibit script and four new pages for the museum’s popular Alutiiq Traditions book (see example page in Attachment 14).

Benefit: As Kodiak’s tribal museum, and the primary organization representing and sharing Alutiiq heritage through exhibits and publications, the Alutiiq Museum is a community anchor. We are the gathering space for cultural expression, study, and discussion. As such, we are the ideal entity to coordinate and lead the critical, difficult conversations that will help our community determine how to share its painful history. This effort will help tribal members better understand local history with the assistance of trusted indigenous scholars. It will also give the Alutiiq community agency over the content and messaging of educational resources about tribal history. It will allow tribal members tell the stories important to them. Ultimately, the resources that develop out of this project will benefit the entire Kodiak region by helping the museum provide a fuller, more truthful account of the Alutiiq experience. They will provide a foundation for addressing misunderstandings and dismantling stereotypes.

Strategic Ties: The Difficult Discussions project will address community needs while directly supporting AMAR’s strategic plan. Adopted in the fall of 2018, this plan calls for AMAR to “Update the museum’s interpretive and exhibit plans and include goals for sharing difficult topics in Alutiiq history,” and to “Update the Alutiiq Traditions book with recent history topics.” These actions steps support the goal of “planning and implementing innovative programming.” (see excerpt in Attachment 6).

IMLS Goals: This project addresses the Inspire! Grants for Small Museums program goal of *supporting partnerships aimed at assessing and addressing the needs of their communities*, by bringing tribal representatives, Native scholars, and our Native-run museum together to address an acknowledged information gap in our history. It is aligned with the category *Community Anchors & Catalysts*—as the Alutiiq Museum will perform a critical role in creating trusted spaces for community learning, debate, and dialogue, as well as conducting community-focused planning activities.

Difficult Discussions also aligns with IMLS's strategic plan, particularly the *Building Capacity* goal. This goal focuses on strengthening the ability of museums to improve the wellbeing of communities. AMAR is already a community anchor and a recognized space for dialogue. By bringing tribal representatives and tribal scholars together for discussions, the museum will build capacity to tell difficult stories. We will leverage our trusted role in the community to bring previously overlooked topics, events, and issues into the public sphere. This work is essential to promoting understanding of the forces that have shaped today’s Alutiiq community.

WORK PLAN

Activities, Schedule, and Staffing: Difficult Discussions will begin in July of 2020 under the general direction of Executive Director April Counciller, PhD. Chief curator Amy Steffian will manage the daily work of the project with Counciller’s oversight. As a first step, Steffian will distribute a press release announcing the project. Then Curatorial Specialist Dehrich Chya will contact each of the ten tribes to confirm the names of attending representatives. Tribal representatives have already expressed interest in participating with letters of support (Attachments 5a-i). Chya will also work with guest presenters, the facilitator, and a clinic psychologist to schedule their participation. With the participant list established, Educational and Public Outreach Coordinator (EPC) will organize travel and lodging for all participants traveling. Next, Steffian and Chya will create a summit agenda (draft in Attachment 7) and release form for participants. This form will allow the museum to use quotes and photos from the summit for its programs and products. By the end of October, they will also create a participant packet with relevant reference material (draft outline in Attachment 8). In early November 2020 staff will complete final logistics and the museum will host the Difficult Discussions Summit.

During the two-day event, representatives will tour the museum, introduce themselves, hear presentations from three Alutiiq Scholars, and participate in facilitated discussions. To put participants at ease, and promote honest discussion, the sessions will not be taped or filmed. However, Steffian and Chya will take detailed notes, Curator of Archaeology Patrick Saltonstall will take photographs, and members of the museum’s curatorial staff / exhibit team will listen.

Sven Haakanson, PhD, will present about Kodiak's Russian conquest and early American colonization. Then Alisha Drabek, PhD, will present about the history of Alutiiq education, particularly the role of schools in cultural and language suppression. The final presentation, by Counciller, will cover 20th century events and issues. All three are tribal members. Counciller will also introduce vocabulary participants may choose to use in their discussions. For instance, Western scholars often speak of the impacts of colonization in terms of trauma and resulting social ills. In contrast, Native communities often acknowledge painful events, but present history through a lens of resistance and community survival. Because the discussion topics may be painful or uncomfortable for some tribal representatives, Anna Stevens a tribal member and licensed clinical psychologist (PsyD) will participate. She has pledged to provide emotional support and offer connections to behavioral health services upon request (Attachment 3). All summit participants will complete pre- and post-summit evaluation form to provide feedback on the event and measure changes in understanding and perspective as a result of participation. Chya will also complete an event tracking form with an after action review.

After the summit, AMAR staff will compile notes, quotes, and photographs from the event, and analyze them for emergent themes. First, Steffian and Chya will write a museum newsletter article (see example Attachment 11) about the summit and create four draft pages for the Alutiiq Traditions book to add historical topics (see Attachment 14). Next, Steffian, Collections Manager Amanda Lancaster, and Exhibits Coordinator Alex Painter will create a draft exhibit script, writing text, selecting potential photos and objects, and suggesting presentation and design elements. Chya will then reach out to each tribe and summit presenter with these resources to gain review and community feedback. He will also share the script and the book pages with two museum committees, our Elders group and our language advisory committee, for their review. Steffian will use all the feedback to revise and finalize the book pages and exhibit script. The final book pages will be formatted by Painter, added to the museum's website, and their availability promoted through social media. Then, she will draft an update to the museum's interpretive plan. The plan draft will be shared with AMAR staff for review and comment before finalization.

At the conclusion of the project, the Lancaster will archive project materials and products by registering a permanent project collection in the museum's holdings. The archive will be described with a finding aid and photo catalog. Finally, Steffian and Counciller will complete all required grant reporting.

Resources: A primary need of this project is funding to support the travel of tribal members. There are ten tribes in Kodiak, and we plan to invite two members of each tribe to the summit. Additionally, we need travel funding to bring a tribal scholar and a facilitator to Kodiak to participate. Most of the participants must fly to reach Kodiak, as there are no roads in our region. Tribal representatives are committed to participating if we can provide airfare, hotel, food, and ground transportation (Attachments 5a-i). We would also like to provide tribal representatives a modest stipend as many will miss work to participate. Second, the museum supports its staff through a combination of grants, contracts, and donations. We request funds for project staff time and benefits. We cannot undertake the substantial work of this project without this funding. Finally, we request support to hire a professional Alaska Native facilitator from the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation program at the First Alaskans Institute (Attachment 4). In support of the project, AMAR will provide meeting facilities, an article in our newsletter (Attachment 14), and the time of our Elders Group and language committee to review draft interpretive materials. Additionally, two presenters (Attachments 1 & 2) and a clinical psychologist (Attachment 3) will donate their time to attend the summit.

Tracking: As this project is largely dependent on staff time, Steffian will set monthly work goals and track staff progress through weekly meetings and time logs. AMAR uses an electronic timesheet in Zoho Books that allows staff to charge hours to specific projects and supervisors to view project hours and expenses. Additionally, a checklist of participants outlining reservations, releases, transportation needs, and stipend checks will help staff ensure that each guest is appropriately supported. Two forms of written evaluation will help the museum track the outcomes of the summits. Every participant will complete the same survey twice,

once at the start of the summit and once at the end to track changes in knowledge and attitudes (Attachment 12). Additionally, the museum requires its staff to complete an internal event tracking form with an after-action review for every event. The after-action review records what went well, what could be improved, what was learned, and what could be done differently at a future event (Attachment 13). Following the summit, Lancaster will register the summit archive in our Collective Access database and track its contents with a catalog of photographs (Attachment 10) and a finding aid that describes the archive contents (Attachment 9).

Maturity Level: Difficult Discussions is an exploratory level project. It is a first effort to involve representatives from all of Kodiak’s tribes in dialogue, and a first attempt to explore colonial history at an all Native-led gathering. We consider it the planning phase of a longer term effort to develop new interpretive materials. Although it is a novel effort, the project builds on AMAR’s substantial experience hosting large events, creating exhibit scripts and publications, and developing archival collections. These are activities the museum has completed successfully many times. Additionally, this project will benefit from AMAR’s strong working relationships with the Alutiiq tribes and tribal professionals involved in this project.

Risks: The biggest risk to this project is the poor weather. Kodiak has a stormy climate and no roads connect our communities. Most travel is done by small plane, making weather delays a common issue. Islanders are used to being “weathered out,” and the museum is experienced at managing flight and hotel reservation to accommodate people experiencing delays. Travel insurance will support this process. If a few participants are unable to reach Kodiak, we will connect them to discussions via web or telephone conferencing. If extreme weather prevents all travel, the summit will be rescheduled for the nearest feasible date.

Another risk to this project the emotional strain of talking about trauma. Some participants may experience strong feelings of sadness, anger, or grief. To manage this possibility, Anna Stevens, a tribal member and licensed clinical psychologist, will be present at the summit. Stevens works as a mental health professional for the Kodiak Area Native Association. She is well-known in the Alutiiq community, and will be a calming and supportive presence in the discussions. She has agreed to share stress management techniques and connect participants with additional assistance as needed (Attachment 3). Similarly, we will hire a professional mediator from the First Alaskans Institute. The Institute is experienced in facilitating group discussion on topics such as racism, intergenerational trauma, and reconciliation in Alaska Native communities, and was strongly recommended by tribal leaders as a facilitator. The presence of highly qualified Indigenous professionals will help to reduce stress on summit participants and ensure that the meetings are contextualized and productive.

RESULTS

Intended Results: Difficult Discussion is designed to help the Alutiiq community identify important themes in recent tribal history that can be used to advance community education through the Alutiiq Museum. The project will result in a new interpretive plan for the museum—a document that will help the organization integrate information on colonialism into museum exhibits, publications, and other educational resources for many years. This effort is in direct response to community requests for interpretation of Kodiak’s colonial history. By updating our document to identify both available and desired resources for this interpretation we will begin the process of integrating information the community desires into our educational resources and promote community dialogue about unspoken history. Three goals will support this work (Table 1).

Data Collection: To document project activities we will collect the following data:

Table 1. Project goals and data

Goal	Measurement	Items for Reporting
1. Work with tribal representatives to identify interpretive	Number of people attending summit Number of consent forms signed Number of packets produced & distributed Number of presentations	Summit agenda Summit minutes Summit sign-in sheets Summit photographs

themes and ways to share them	Number of themes selected Hours spent in discussion	Pre / Post Evaluation sheet copies Event form with after action review
2. Develop interpretive materials	Number of book pages developed Number of reviewers of interpretive materials Staff hours spent developing materials Number of photographs included in exhibit script Number of objects included in exhibit script	Book pages Exhibit script Updated interpretive plan Notes of tribal evaluators Notes of language committee evaluators Notes of Elders group evaluators
3. Preserve project learning	Number of photos catalog Number of documents archived	Archive finding aid Archive photograph catalog

Tangible Products: This project will result in four tangible products:

(1) An update Alutiiq Museum interpretive plan: This document outlines the museum’s educational messages and how they are shared. The existing plan will be edited to include Alutiiq history themes identified during the summit and consider how they can be integrated into both existing and desired resources.

(2) Four new pages for the Alutiiq Traditions book: This popular paperback, now in its third edition, was produced by the museum to answer our visitors’ most common questions. Each page is a standalone presentation on a cultural topic with a variety of text, images, Alutiiq language vocabulary, quotes, and references (Attachment 14). The book is currently 60 pages. We will create four new pages on themes identified during the summit to add to the book. The pages will be shared on the museum’s website by the end of the project—where all of the other pages are available for free download. After the Difficult Discussions project, the museum will solicit separate funding to publish a new edition of the volume.

(3) An exhibit script: This document will include text, photos, and objects for an exhibit sized to fit the museum’s temporary gallery (ca. 1000 ft²), as well as a list of needed resources, design examples, and fabrication materials. The script will help the museum estimate development costs and apply for separate funding to create and install the displays. In essence, it will be both an exhibit outline and a planning document.

(4) An archive of project materials: Project photos and documents will be preserved in an archival collection added to the museum’s permanent collection. A finding aid and photo catalog will document its contents.

Sustainability: Project resources will be sustained in the following ways. The pages developed for the Alutiiq Traditions book will be publicly available on the museum’s website as free, downloadable PDF files. Eventually, they will be integrated in the next edition of the book, planned for publication in 2021. The exhibit script will be used to seek sponsorships and other funding to create a gallery exhibit, planned for 2023. The archive will be professionally curated in the museum’s collections. Here it will be available to the public indefinitely. Most importantly, the updated interpretive plan will sustain project learning for many years. It will provide a foundation for developing educational materials that share the important messages from the summit.

Generated Change: Difficult Discussions is expressly designed to enhance the knowledge of tribal members and the public about tribal history while changing the way our history is told. By providing Alutiiq people the chance to discuss community history with tribal researchers, in a safe supportive space, the project will allow people to learn and share. It will open a dialogue about difficult history for which Alutiiq people have been asking. This process will establish Alutiiq cultural sovereignty over the content and messaging of educational resources about our own tribal history. It will allow tribal members tell the stories which are important to them. The broader public will benefit from exposure to previously overlooked topics, events, and issues. Ultimately this project will enable the museum to provide a fuller, more truthful account of the Alutiiq experience for the Kodiak and the world by addressing knowledge gaps and dismantling stereotypes.

Difficult Discussions Project –Schedule of Completion
July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

Item	Staff	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Publish press release	CC	■											
Confirm tribal representatives attending	CS	■	■										
Confirm speakers, counselor, and facilitator	CS		■										
Make flight and hotel reservations	EPC		■										
Develop summit agenda and release form	CS, CC, EPC			■									
Develop summit packets	CS, CC			■	■								
Prepare for summit: supplies, per diem checks, set up, etc.	EPC, CS				■	■							
Host and document two-day summit	All participants					■							
Write draft pages for addition to Traditions booklet	CC, ED						■	■					
Write draft exhibit script	CC, CFM, EC						■	■					
Write and distribute newsletter article	CC, CS								■				
Review script and pages with tribal community	CS, Tribes, Volunteers, Elders, Presenters								■	■			
Edit script and pages to reflect comments, update interp. plan	CC										■	■	
Format book pages, upload to website, and promote	CC, EC											■	
Archive project materials	CFM, CA											■	■
Develop final grant report	CC												■

Key: CA = Curator of Archaeology, CC = Chief Curator, CFM = Collections & Facilities Manager, CS = Curatorial Specialist, EC = Exhibits Coordinator, ED = Executive Director, EPC = Education & Public Outreach Coordinator