

Date: April 15, 2022
To: Glenn Steckman, City Manager
From: Amy Phillips-Chan, Museum Director
CC: Bryant Hammond, City Clerk



RE: Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum Quarterly Report (January - March 2022)

Stronger Together: Bering Strait Communities Respond to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Stronger Together is our museum-community program that was launched in 2020 and encompasses an **oral history project, artwork initiative, museum exhibit, and publication**. The *Stronger Together* publication features contributions from 50 community members, artists, and poets from across the Bering Strait region with stories and artwork that reflect and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The book prioritizes first-person narratives and offers a nuanced look into the lived experiences of community members during the pandemic. The manuscript is currently under peer review for publication by the University of Alaska Press.

Museum Grants Awarded

Institute of Museum and Library Services (\$119,267): The Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum was awarded a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in the amount of \$119,267 for the project *Connecting Cultural Collections and Communities across the Bering Strait*. The grant funds creation of an interactive eMuseum that increases access to cultural resources for indigenous stakeholders in Nome and Bering Strait communities. The adaptation of a collections management system will support multiple forms of digital media that link to the eMuseum, featuring over 2,000 objects from the collection. Culture and language specialists representing Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yupik knowledge bearers will provide information to update catalog records, resulting in a rich assemblage of content including object photographs, oral histories, and traditional knowledge. Two student interns from the University of Alaska will participate in hands-on training in collections handling and data management in addition to gaining experience working with cultural and language specialists and documenting traditional knowledge. Community and classroom presentations and information on social media will familiarize target audiences with the eMuseum and its resources.

Stage 1 (March 2022-current): Museum Director Amy Phillips-Chan serves as project manager for the grant and is currently working with photographer Michael Burnett on the photography and digitization of 2,000 objects in the collection.

2022 Iditarod at the Carrie McLain Museum

The Carrie McLain Museum experienced heavy visitation, increased sales, and active participation in public programs during the 2022 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. Museum staff received many positive comments on the exhibits and programs. Visitors seemed happy to be in Nome and pleased with their Iditarod experience.

March 11 to March 21, 2022

- **Visitor Attendance: 405** (approx. 90% of visitors were from out of town. The majority of local residents participated in museum programs. A few Nome residents came to visit the museum with out of town family members.)
- **Museum Sales: \$2015.00** (Admission fees accounted for approx. 50% of all museum sales. The top two sellers in the gift store were art prints and books.)
- **Public Programs: 14** (The museum offered public programs Mon-Fri with several offerings of public favorites including a museum tour (5), Iditarod talk with Howard Farley (5), Nome Kennel Club stories with mushers (2), Discovery Saloon presentation with Carol Gales (1), and talk and book signing with Dan Seavey (1).)

Appreciation

Special thanks go to our presenters for sharing their expertise, lived experiences, and enthusiasm for Nome during the 2022 Iditarod! Howard Farley, Carol Gales, Dan Seavey, Kirsten Bey, Stephanie Johnson, Jessica Lemaire, Conner Thomas, Diana Haecker, and Aaron Burmeister

FILM: 50th Iditarod at the Carrie McLain Museum in NOME, ALASKA

Carol Gales with Gales Communication & Design worked with Director Amy Phillips-Chan to produce a short film featuring 50th Iditarod events and activities at the museum and around town. The film has been posted to the museum's social media channels including YouTube and Facebook and will be integrated into exhibit programming in the gallery.

Check it out at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzJcYwCXTfo>



New Additions to the Collection

The Museum received and accessioned 7 acquisitions of historical items and contemporary artwork from January – March 2022.

- **2022.1 Dow:** A red felt applique jacket with walrus ivory buttons and a green tag that reads "Doyle Designed Nome."
- **2022.2 Kokborg:** A collection of twenty-six Inupiaq tools and hunting implements from the mid-1800s collected from a sandspit at Port Clarence by Paul Ellis, a Navy pilot, during the 1930s-1950s.
- **2022.3 Ayek:** Sylvester Ayek. 2022. *Arctic Tern Mobile*. Metal, walrus ivory, beads. 27 in.
- **2022.4 Reimer:** A collection of 118 black-and-white photographs from Nome and Teller taken mainly during the 1920s-1940s. One roll of Cine-Kodak Panchromatic Safety Film in Box taken by Orville Deville "O.D." Cochran in 1932. A collection of 12 handwritten notes to Sarah Bernhardt from "Ruth" and "Mr. Ferrell" a family that Sarah worked for as a cook and housekeeper in Nome during the 1930s.
- **2022.5 Olanna:** Karen Olanna. 2021. *Crabbing under the Ice*. Oil painting on canvas.
- **2022.6 Olanna:** Karen Olanna. *Crab Bait*. Block print with watercolor. 42/70. 19 x 25 in. Framed.
- **2022.7 Morton:** A collection of twenty Inupiaq tools and hunting implements from the mid-1800s collected from a sandspit at Port Clarence by Paul Bush Ellis, a Navy pilot, during the 1930s-1950s. A companion case was gifted to the museum by the donor's sister (Accession 2022.2).



Sylvester Ayek. 2022. *Arctic Tern Mobile*. Metal, walrus ivory, beads. 27 in. CMMM 2022.3.1

Artist Visits

- Filmmaker **Gabriel Derrick** visited the museum on March 17 to shoot footage in the galleries and collections for the upcoming film *Drum Song: Rhythm of Life*.
- Artist **Sonya Kelliher-Combs** visited the museum on March 26 to spend time with the collections in preparation for a new body of work.



Donations

Museum patrons Philip and Judy Shields generously **donated \$1,000** to the Carrie McLain Museum. They have given annually to the museum since 2016.

Museum Loans

- **Ancient Horse Bones** Three leg bones labeled “Pleistocene Equus Tibia” were discovered during a collections inventory at the Carrie McLain Museum. The bones did not have any related paperwork but cat. numbers written on them indicated that they were potentially an old loan from the University of Alaska Museum in Fairbanks. Director Phillips-Chan reached out to UAMN Director Pat Druckenmiller who said that indeed the bones were part of the UAMN collection and carried their old numbering system. The bones were safely returned to Fairbanks at the end of January 2022. Both museums were happy to have a successful closeout to the 30+year loan.
- **CMMM L2021.1** The Carrie McLain Museum **loaned** Ron Senungetuk. *Flying Circles*. 2015. Carved maple panel. 21 x 23 in. CMMM 2018.12.1 to the Anchorage Museum for the exhibition *Ron Senungetuk: A Retrospective* from March 2021 to February 2022.

- **UAMN 2008-03.EH** The Carrie McLain Museum returned two items in loan UAMN 2008-03 EH and renewed one item, an All Alaska Sweepstakes Trophy from 1914, for another five years.

Museum Object of the Month

JANUARY: QAYUUN and CANDLESTICK. Blacksmithing in the early years of Nome is an often overlooked yet critical part of the town's history. Nome blacksmiths were called upon to make and repair almost anything made of iron and steel. Nails, bolts, picks, shovels, chain, knives, horseshoes, hairpins, wagon tires, bearings, carriage hardware, needles, ship parts, firearms, engine parts, and more were made or repaired by blacksmiths. Smiths also created their own tools as well as tools used in other trades. Similar to today, it was cheaper to reuse material than to pay high shipping prices to bring new goods to Nome. A good example of an object made with recycled metal at the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum is an adze (qayuun) from an Inupiaq carver's toolkit that would have been used to work bone, ivory, and wood. The iron blade is constructed from a file that has had a cutting bit forge-welded onto the end. Sealskin rope is used to attach the blade to a wooden handle. Another hand-forged item in the collection is an iron candlestick with a spike on the side to be driven into a tunnel wall while mining. Candlesticks such as this would have been produced in large quantities and blacksmiths learned to make this seemingly simple object with just a few swift motions. Blacksmiths commonly used coal to heat their forges and in one photograph from Nome, 12 million pounds of coal are shown stockpiled for the winter of 1905. Although some modern blacksmiths continue to use coal, many have switched to propane or induction forges. Decline of the Nome gold rush in the late 1910s also marked an end to the era of large scale blacksmithing. Smiths adapted to changing needs within their communities, such as W.H. Pearson in Nome, who first offered blacksmithing and horseshoeing before adapting his services to machine and mechanic work. Many blacksmiths moved into this role and even today some use hammers and heat to make custom parts.



FEBRUARY: VALENTINE. Valentine's Day has a long and storied history that extends all the way back to the Roman Empire. Celebrations may have changed over the years but love has always been a theme. One Valentine card from 1945 at the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum features a bouquet of flowers surrounded by a lacy heart that is embellished with glitter and pink silk ribbon. Inside the paper card is printed, "Although St. Valentine's dates back into the ancient past, the theme the season holds is one that will forever last. It stands for memories of those who are so fine and true; and that is why it stands today for heart-warm thoughts of you." The card is signed to "Oatha and Una, From Mother and Dad." "Una" refers to Una Sitton Lucky who graduated from Nome High School in 1923. She was the only graduate that year and the first high school graduate in Nome since 1916. Una had a romantic side and enjoyed music and playing the piano in Nome. Within her personal papers, is a handwritten version of the poem "For-Get-Me-Not" by Charles Hopkins with a chorus that reads, "Promise never to forget me, Life without thee is but pain, Linger yet where first I met thee, Stay, to never roam again."



Book Review

Director Phillips-Chan was invited to write a book review for 9.2. It will appear in the next volume of *Alaska History*, the semi-annual journal of the Alaska Historical Society.

James Brooks. *9.2: Kodiak and the World's Second-Largest Earthquake*. Kodiak, AK: Kodiak Daily Mirror. 2013. 144 pp. \$39.95. Hardcover. Reviewed by Amy Phillips-Chan, PhD, Director of the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum, Nome, AK.

Ron Senungetuk: A Retrospective

The Museum is hosting the traveling exhibit ***Ron Senungetuk: A Retrospective*** in Nome from February 21 to May 27, 2022. Inupiaq artist Ronald Senungetuk (1933-2020) was a world-renowned sculptor, silversmith and woodcarver who blended ancestral Inupiaq forms with modern concepts and materials. This exhibition organized by the Anchorage Museum presents works created over his career. His works have been featured in exhibitions and public art installations throughout Alaska and the US. Senungetuk was a leading advocate for art in Alaska and helped establish the Native Art Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1965.

