

Date: January 17, 2021  
To: Glenn Steckman, City Manager  
From: Amy Phillips-Chan, Museum Director  
CC: Bryant Hammond, City Clerk



RE: Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum Quarterly Report (October-December 2021)

### **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 publication features contributions from 45 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 review for publication by University of Alaska Press.

### **Museum Grants Awarded**

The Museum was awarded a **grant from Museums Alaska in the amount of \$6,800** to purchase one hundred tiny artworks from the series *Hair Portraits* by Sonya Kelliher-Combs of Anchorage and an original painting titled *In Vain He Chases Ravens* by Ryder Erickson of Unalakleet. The grant comes from the Art Acquisition Fund (AAF), one of three funds established by Museums Alaska, to benefit museums, cultural centers, and artists across the state. AAF awards are supported by the Rasmuson Foundation. Visitors can explore the new artwork in person at the museum. *Hair Portraits* will also be shown in the exhibition *Stronger Together: Bering Strait Communities Respond to the Covid-19 Pandemic* opening at the museum in 2022.



Ryder Erickson. *In Vain He Chases Ravens*. 2018. Acrylic on Canvas. 24 x 36 in. Purchased with funds from the Museums Alaska Art Acquisition Fund supported by the Rasmuson Foundation. CMMM 2021.9.1

## Illustrating Alaska: Artists Making Children's Books

The Museum hosted the traveling exhibit *Illustrating Alaska: Artists Making Children's Books* in Nome from October 11 to January 12, 2022. The exhibition explores the colorful and intriguing process of illustrating children's books. The exhibit, designed by Exhibit AK out of Juneau, highlights the process of four different Alaskan illustrators: Jim Fowler, Evon Zerbetz, Michaela Goade, and Mitchell Watley.

In conjunction with the exhibit *Illustrating Alaska*, the Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum and Kegoayah Kozga Public Library partnered to offer **two community programs**. Craft Week was held November 29-December 3 and invited visitors to stop into the museum to pick up a free craft kit to make a collage based on a book in the exhibition. Family Reading week was held December 6-10 and invited families to drop in to the museum to read a copy of a children's book in the new exhibit. Visitors had an opportunity to post photographs of their completed collages and family reading time online and receive a free children's book designed by illustrators in the exhibit.

The Museum and Library enjoyed a **school visit** from over 20 students in Ms. Katie Bourdon's second grade class on December 13. Students listened to stories, checked out the museum, and explored the exhibit *Illustrating Alaska*. Students dressed in snowsuits, boots, hats, gloves, and scarves to make the trek from Nome Elementary School to the Richard Foster Building with enthusiastic spirits undaunted by the frosty air.



Nome Elementary School second grade students enjoy reading books in the exhibit *Illustrating Alaska* during a visit to the museum and library.



Elizabeth Phan makes a walrus collage in the special exhibit gallery at the museum during a museum-library community program for *Illustrating Alaska*.

### **New Additions to the Collection**

The Museum received and accessioned 5 acquisitions of historical items and photographs from October – December 2021.

- **2021.15 Spencer:** A collection of ivory carvings, artwork, cultural heritage items, and two photographs acquired by Spencer Sealy at Gambell during 1966 and 1967 while conducting research on auklet breeding biology out of the University of British Columbia.
- **2021.16 Stewart:** A pair of children's leather gloves purchased in Nome by Hart Humber and worn by his 18-month-old daughter Shirley Humber on a steamship trip to the "Outside" in 1918.
- **2021.17 Nome Arts Council:** A polyester face mask with a St. Lawrence Island tattoo design by Vera Metcalf.
- **2021.18 Bordeaux:** A group of ivory carvings and a meat carving set with ivory handles that belonged to Eugene and Lorenza Elwood who lived in Nome from 1910-1914. Donation accompanied by an album containing family photos from their time in Nome.
- **2021.19 Broderson:** A collection of 31 photographs and postcards taken in Nome (1912-1933) from an album that originally belonged to Lyman and Sarah Mann who were the parents of Inez Mann Cochran (1870-19?). Inez was the wife of Orville Deville Cochran (1871-1948).

### **Museum Object of the Month**

The **December 2021 museum object of the month** was three dark speckled **nuggets of tin** mined on the Seward Peninsula in the gold rush town of Tin City located close to Wales. Tin City served as the only source of tin in the United States from 1903 to 1914. From the few available sources of information, we know Tin City had a post office, stamp mill, and at least one family with a sod house. Access to the area was by ship, dogsled, and as shown in one image, a dog-pulled wagon. Mining operations at Tin City came to a halt right before World War 1 but the area was re-established in the 1950s due to its close proximity to the Soviet Union. The area soon boasted a United States Air Force Base, long range radar station, and a White Alice communications site. Today, the tin nuggets at the Carrie McLain Museum remind us of the role Tin City once played on the Seward Peninsula as both a source of mineral wealth and a strategic defense location.

### **New Museum Team Member**

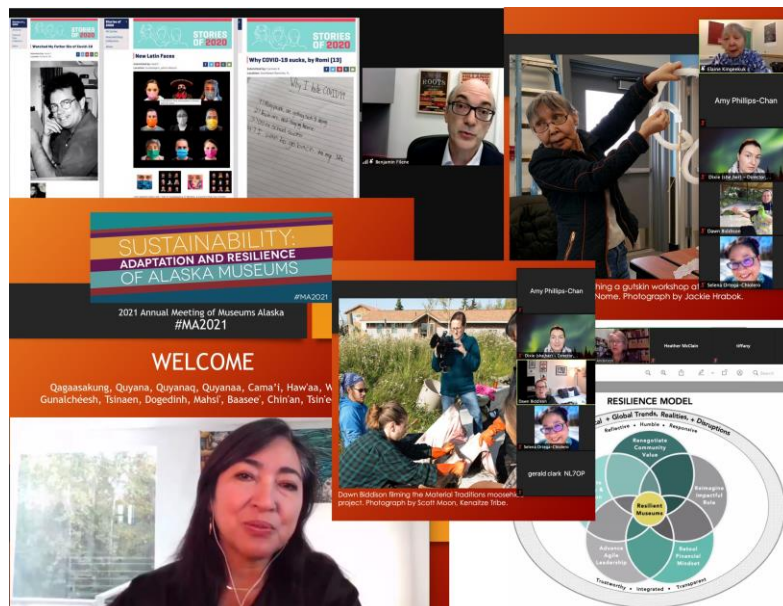
We are pleased to welcome Morgan Davis to the museum team. Morgan began working as a Museum Assistant in October and recently transitioned to the position of Education and Public Programs Coordinator. Stop in and say hello!

## Native American Art Studies Association

The **2021 Native American Art Studies Association (NAASA) conference** was held virtually November 3-4 and 10-11. Dawn Biddison (Smithsonian Arctic Studies) organized the session "Creating and Engaging Virtually: A Conversation with Alaska Native Artists and Alaskan Museum Anthropologists" that featured presentations and round table discussion with Sonya Kelliher-Combs, Melissa Shaginoff, Dawn, and myself. The conference was a great opportunity to connect with artists, scholars, and museums across the country with several popular features including a DJ'd music hour and two virtual artist studio visits.

## Museums Alaska

The **2021 Museums Alaska Annual Meeting #MA2021** was held via Whova on September 13-14 & 20-21. The theme of this year's conference was *Sustainability: Adaptation and Resilience of Alaska Museums*. The online conference brought together **267 attendees from 29 states and 13 countries**. Participants engaged in four days of interactive conversations and workshops centered on museum adaptation and resilience and linked into a broad network of professionals, services, and opportunities. Board President Amy Phillips-Chan led organization of the virtual conference with Director Dixie Clough. In November 2021, we learned that our Museums Alaska Tier 2 Grant (2022-2024) in the amount of \$1.3M was fully funded by the Rasmuson Foundation. This grant will provide critical support in a period of economic and social transformation within the museum industry. **Phillips-Chan completed her term as Board President at the end of December 2022.**



Screenshot of Day 1 of #MA2021. Artist Elaine Kingeekuk of Savoonga was honored with the 2021 Museums Alaska President's Award in Honor of Lifetime Achievement.