

# Alaska State Museums BULLETIN

An Information Source for Alaska's Museum Community

## ASM Wraps up IMLS-funded Internship Project

By the close of August, the final summer intern had left Alaska, marking the end to a three-year program that brought 19 interns from the lower 48 to work in 21 different Alaskan institutions. The project was funded by the Institute for Museums and Library Services (IMLS) through their 21st Century Museum Professionals grant program, and it served as a professional development opportunity for both the interns and the staff at the various host institutions.

The interns, all from graduate museum studies programs, were given the opportunity to gain practical work experience to augment their theoretical knowledge while having the adventure of a lifetime in the "Last Frontier". The host institutions benefited from the specialized knowledge and skills of the interns, who brought with them the latest in museology. Many museums were able to make progress on projects that had previously fallen to the back burner. All in all, it was a perfect match between a need and an opportunity.

Following are interns, their graduate programs and where they worked in While in Alaska:

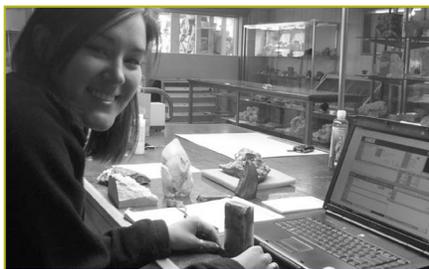
*Elizabeth Manekin, Brown University  
The Alutiiq Museum and the Baranov Museum*

*Jacqueline Fernandez, Tufts University  
The Alaska Museum of Natural History*

*Hayley Chambers, University of North Carolina, Greensboro  
The Valdez Museum*

*Sara Schuyler, Cooperstown Graduate Program  
The Eagle Historical Society and Museum*

*Ashley Kircher, San Francisco State University  
The Ilanka Cultural Center and the Cordova Historical Museum*



*Top: Abbi Huderle. Above: Nicole Dial.  
Photos by Mary Pat Wyatt  
Below: Aaron Rath. Bottom: Jennie Davy.  
Photos by Scott Carrlee.*



*Katherine Fox, Seton Hall University  
The Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center  
and the Elfin Cove Community Museum*

*Aaron Rath, State University of New York,  
Buffalo State  
Museum of the Aleutians, Dutch Harbor*

*James Moss, Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee  
Aviation Heritage Museum, Anchorage*

*Sandra Dong, Harvard University  
Valdez Museum, Valdez*

*Carolina Scarborough, New York University  
Dorothy Page Museum, Wasilla*

*Jennie Davy, Cooperstown Graduate Program,  
SUNY Oneonta  
Colony House Museum, Palmer*

*Christina Conn, Cooperstown Graduate  
Program, SUNY Oneonta  
Soldotna Historical Society and Kenai Museum*

*Sarah Smith, University of Florida Gainesville  
Seward Museum*

*Laura Nadelberg, Columbia University  
Wrangell Museum*

*Molly Conley, Univ. of Florida, Gainesville  
Valdez Museum*

*Cathy McCardwell, Univ. of Colorado, Boulder  
Sheldon Museum*

*Miranda Traudt, Syracuse University  
Hammer Museum*

*Abbi Huderle, University of Washington  
Clausen Museum*

*Nicole Dial, Univ. of Missouri, St Louis  
Pratt Museum*

Though the IMLS funding has come to a close, the program will continue on more modest terms through the ASM Grant-In-Aid program. Alaskan museums can now apply for a grant to cover the expenses of an intern (including travel and living stipend and housing) and the Curator of Museum Services will help develop the project, recruit the intern and help supervise during the project. In this way, the intern program will continue to serve Alaskan museums.

# Museum Success Stories

Duncan Cottage. Photo by  
Mique'l Askren

## Shu Sit'aa Dm Lukil Amani'its'a Malask

A New Start for the Care of Our History: Metlakatla's Duncan Cottage Museum Project.  
By Mique'l Askren

*The Museum Success Story has been a feature of the ASM Bulletin highlighting a museum that has demonstrated exceptional progress towards achieving its mission and improving operations. This issue shines the spotlight on the Duncan Cottage Museum in Metlakatla which after many years of successful operation was closed and in a state of disrepair. The rebirth of this museum has been remarkable and largely the achievement of a single individual, Mique'l Askren the Director of the Museum. It seemed appropriate to let her tell the story in her own words.*

The Duncan Cottage Museum is the former home of the lay missionary William Duncan (1831-1918). We are a small house museum in the process of recovering from over ten years of devastating mismanagement. Approximately 40% of our collection was stolen along with nearly all of our collections records. Since becoming curator in 2007, I've been in the process of project development and grant writing from my office in Vancouver. I was born and raised in Metlakatla and am currently a PhD Candidate at the University of British Columbia. As a result, most of the hands-on work at the museum occurs in the summertime.

At the 2008 Western Museums conference, I had the good fortune to meet Scott Carrlee, Curator of Museum Services at the Alaska State Museum (ASM). Soon after, I applied to have Scott perform an assessment of our museum. At that point we were closed to the public with no budget, supplies, or resources. I was hoping that his assessment would not only help to prioritize our needs, but also give us a means to argue for support. It did both! After sharing the findings of Scott's report, we received the backing of our local government, Metlakatla Indian Community (MIC). With the support of MIC along with AMS's Grant-In-Aid, the Duncan Cottage Museum had a series of "firsts" this summer.

This was the first time we've had a staff: David Nelson (Digitization Specialist), Marcella Brendible (Collections and Programs Photographer), and Whitney Harrell (Collections Assistant). Through the Grant-In-Aid program, we also had our first intern: Brooke Steinhauer, who is getting her Masters in Museum Studies in Cooperstown, New York. The name of our project — "Shu Sit'aa Dm Lukil Amani'its'a Malask" — means in Sm'algyax (Tsimshian language) "a new start for the care of our history". We first focused on the needs of the collection and generating community support. With our staff's assistance in object handling and photography, Brooke catalogued and registered 1,378 pieces — our first digital catalogue. To coincide with the cataloguing process, we built shelving units to create storage areas to re-house and store

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Growing up in Metlakatla, I toured the Duncan Cottage Museum once in elementary school. It was 1989 and my sister, Kathy, was a teaching assistant in my class. As a child, I was known to drive my family crazy with my endless questions. To this day, my sister never fails to remind me that I had so many questions for the Curator of Museum Services, Laverne Welcome, that I was literally chasing her around the museum with them! None of us would have imagined that twenty years later, I would be in Laverne's position as the Curator of the Duncan Cottage Museum. It's been three years and I still have more questions than answers about our museum. After this past summer, however, my questions no longer have to do with whether or not we have a future.



Opening a salmon can. Photo by Ellen Carlie

## Ask ASM:

Our museum recently received a donation of two unopened cans of salmon from a local cannery that is no longer in business. What is the recommendation for storing canned foodstuffs in the collection? Are they safe to store as long as they remain unopened, or should I open the cans and dispose of the salmon? The cans are about 10 years old.

We faced this very same questions a couple of years back. I asked as many experts in the field as I could, from conservators and industrial hygienists to toxicologists. The general consensus was to carefully open the cans with a side-cut can opener, which cuts through the seam without leaving a sharp edge. You should protect the label by wrapping it with Mylar or thin polyethylene sheeting. The contents should be dumped into a container and covered with household bleach. The bleach kills the bacteria (in the case of botulism it would be *clostridium botulinum*) and destroys the toxin botulin. Of course, this procedure should be done while wearing the proper personal protective equipment (goggles, gloves and a lab coat). If the can appears to be under pressure it would be prudent to wrap it in disposable toweling or a clear plastic bag to catch any spray as it is being opened. The inside of the can should be rinsed with bleach and wiped out with a paper towel. The contents may then be disposed of as regular trash. This may seem overly cautious, but you never know. There might be some worry, even for a 10-year-old can, that there is some botulism toxin.

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the objects. This is also the first time we've had a museum appropriate storage system.

My objective as the newly appointed Director is to empower our community and culture within the museum through public programs and exhibitions that support our mission statement: "To promote Metlakatla's unique status as Alaska's only Indian Reserve and to foster the vitality of Tsimshian art, culture, and language in our community, now and into the future."

Duncan is such a controversial figure in our community that most of our own people did not want to step foot in the building. To address this issue and bring attention to our new mission, we initiated a community dialogue by holding two information sessions. To generate further community involvement, we also hosted our first two public programs; a history workshop on the 1909 Alaska-Pacific-Yukon Exhibition taught by Dr. Michelle Dent of NYU and a Tsimshian plant class taught by Mary Teri Haldane. We received positive feedback from these events and have gained a strong group of advocates from them.

Lastly, in order to reach our ultimate goal, a grand re-opening on Aug. 3, we created our first Tsimshian exhibition. It was a beautiful day for our commu-

nity. We held the ceremony on the front lawn of the museum. Our dance groups, 4th Generation, the Killer Whale Dance Group, and the Git Hayetsk sang while a Tsimshian flag was raised. Our Mayor, Art Fawcett, councilman Sol Atkinson, and I gave speeches. It was the first time we've been open to the public in four years. We gave tours of the museum to over eighty visitors and received a tremendous outpouring of support for our new mission and exhibition. On Aug. 7, our community's 123rd Founder's Day Celebration, we danced Tsimshian dances inside our museum for the first time in its history. This event marked our success in turning the Duncan Cottage Museum, which was once considered the center of our cultural oppression, into a place of healing and growth that is now truly a home for our culture.

I could not end this article without a dedication to Laverne Welcome (1924-2010), our museum's curator from 1972-1997. She received training from the Alaska State Museum. Working primarily on her own, Laverne fulfilled nearly every role in the museum — curator, collections manager, housekeeper, security, historian and tour guide. She was the heart and soul of the Duncan Cottage Museum. Her care for our museum and its collection is the main reason it exists today.



Duncan Cottage before and after remodeling the exhibit space. Photos by Mique'l Askren

## Introducing Exhibits Specialist, Jackie Manning



Photo by Chris Taylor

Jackie Manning has been hired as Exhibit Specialist for ASM. The position was held by Paul Gardinier, who now is the Curator of Exhibits. Manning will work to complete graphical and installation duties for exhibits at the museum. Manning grew up in a Juneau family heavily involved in the local arts. Her parents both worked as high school art teachers, and her father was twice employed by the museum. As a child, she visited the museum with her family. Now, as Exhibit Specialist, she will have a part in creating those memories for visitors. Manning's education includes undergraduate studies at the University of Alaska Southeast with an emphasis in fine arts and French. She obtained a master's in drawing and painting from

the Academy of Art in San Francisco. Upon completing her degree, Manning moved to Denver, where she co-owned a studio gallery. Since moving back to Juneau last summer, she has filled her days by teaching drawing and painting classes at The Canvas Community Art Studio and Gallery, creating work of her own and volunteering at the museum.

"Helping with exhibits has helped me to get the feel for what it takes to put up a show and what it takes to create exhibits," Manning said. "Each show has its differences," Manning said. "I want to continue to learn about anything I can do to expand upon my skills to create exhibits that are going to best benefit the artwork."

## The Bulletin is Going Electronic

Goodbye, paper Bulletin. Since 1996, we have published 35 issues of the ASM Bulletin to bring you ASM news and helpful information. This is the last issue that will be printed and mailed as the Bulletin is changing to

an online newsletter format. The format will be slightly different with a few changes to the content, but the main difference is that we will be bringing you the eBulletin on a monthly basis. This will bring readers more

timely news and relevant deadlines. The first issue will be e-mailed via the ASM listserv in mid-January. If you are not a member of the listserv and would like to receive the eBulletin, email to [scott.carlee@alaska.gov](mailto:scott.carlee@alaska.gov).

### **THE BULLETIN**

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