

Linda S. Thibodeau

Director

Division of Libraries, Archives,
& Museums

lam.alaska.gov

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Robert C. Banghart

Chief Curator

Alaska State Museums

395 Whittier St.

Juneau, Alaska 99801-1718

907.465.2901

Press Release

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: May 2, 2012

**ALASKA STATE MUSEUM ARMS ITSELF WITH “SCIENCE GUN”
Museum Awarded Tier I Rasmuson Grant for Portable X-Ray Analyzer**

JUNEAU – Imagine a handheld device that can tell you what an object is made of—including tiny objects that may be on its surface—without disturbing it in any way.

The device is called an X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrometer, affectionately referred to as the “science gun” by museum staff, who now have their own XRF courtesy of a Rasmuson Foundation Tier 1 Grant of \$25,000.

Literally the x-ray gun of science-fiction lore, the portable XRF shoots a small, controlled x-ray beam at an object. It then measures the resulting movement of electrons—the subatomic particles orbiting an atom’s nucleus—from which it can deduce the object’s chemical composition.

The XRF works especially well at identifying heavier elements with more electrons. These materials include metals, minerals, and glass. It can also identify certain pesticide residues.

“Our mission, is to identify, collect, preserve, and exhibit Alaska’s material,” said ASM Curator of Museum Services Scott Carlee, of the XRF’s analytical value. “Thanks to the Rasmuson Foundation, we will be able to provide this technology to more than 80 museums and cultural centers all over the state.”

From August to November 2011, the Alaska State Museum borrowed an XRF on a temporary basis. After frenziedly examining as many artifacts as possible, the Museum applied for a Rasmuson Grant to add one to its permanent tool chest. This fall, the Museum will begin its own XRF Alaska tour, providing accurate, affordable, non-destructive analysis to cultural centers that have not previously had access to this type of modern technology.

Winter hours at the museum run through May 12 and are 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Discounted winter admission is \$3. Summer hours begin May 13 and are 8:30 to 5:30 daily. Summer admission is \$7 with a \$1 discount for seniors. Visitors 18 and under are admitted free of charge. An annual pass that allows unlimited visits to the Alaska State Museum and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka is available for \$15. Assistance is available for visitors with special needs. Please contact Visitor Services at 465-2901 before the visit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

395 Whittier, Juneau, AK

Phone (907) 465-2901 Fax (907) 465-2976

www.museums.state.ak.us

[return to top](#)

[press releases](#) | [Alaska State Museums](#)