Alutiiq Museum Staff Updates Board on Projects

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Board members of the Alutiiq Heritage Foundation met with Alutiiq Museum staff yesterday during their annual meeting to discuss various projects the museum is working on. The Foundation is the governing body for the museum and board members are representatives from various Native corporations across the island. In the newly designated Alutiiq studies room at the Kodiak College, board members listened to presentations ranging from financial figures to "in the dirt" archaeology that keeps the museum running.

Patrick Saltonstall is the curator for the museum and told the board that it was an exciting year for field work with multiple site discoveries and loads of archaeological work to be had.

-- (Alutiiq Meeting 1 :25 "This I the most archaeological work we've done in a year, I think it's safe to say. I'm going to break it up, because we've done a lot of contracts this year too for like Old Harbor Native Corp, Koniag, these are things where we get paid to like, so like Koniag they need to make sure no sites are being disturbed for their granite area....Those are the types of archaeology we've been doing this past year.")

The community archaeology site is what Saltonstall calls the Amak site, a 4,000-7,000 year old settlement in Womens Bay that hunters pursued sea mammals from. He

said there were three students and 17 community members that participated in that dig this year and all were rewarded with the discovery of a 5,600-year-old smokehouse. He said the structure could very well be the oldest discovered on the island, and said the truly unique part is that it appears to have been used for smoking seal meat, not fish.

Saltonstall was far from the only one with exciting news to share with the board. April Laktonen Counceller is now the volunteer language program manager for the museum and announced her full time position with Kodiak College facilitating the brand new Alutiiq Studies Program. She said she still volunteers for the museum regularly, both on her own time and one day a week as part of her Kodiak College service time. She said she is pleased to serve as a go between for the college and the museum.

-- (Alutiiq Meeting 2 :45 "The museum and the college have already been really good collaborators over the years....Right now we have two sections of Alutiiq 101, the face to face session has 11 students and the distance session has 13 students so I have 24 people learning Alutiiq language right now.")

In general, she said the Alutiiq Studies Program would not be possible without the resources and work that the Alutiiq Museum generously provides.

Sven Haakanson is the executive director of the museum and wrapped up the presentation to the board by saying he's proud to share the work the museum has done and hopes to continue that sharing process in the years to come.

-- (Alutiiq Meeting 3 :22 "And as you listen to my staff, with archaeology, with language, with collections, all of that is important because once we are able to combine that information, we share it

with our community. I ties all of that history to who we are as a people here on Kodiak. And for me, this is our history and our past and our present and our responsibility. And part of that responsibility is sharing information.")

All board members said they were appreciative for the information and please with all that has been accomplished. Long-time board member Ruth Dawson said her goodbyes to the board, saying that it was time for her to pass on the responsibility, but she'll still be around to help when needed. Loretta Nelson will take her place in representing the Afognak Native Corporation.

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