

New Filipino-American Exhibit Showcases Little-Known Kodiak History

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The Baranov Museum will open a new exhibit on Friday that showcases the history of Filipino-Americans in Kodiak. Anjuli Grantham is the curator of collections for the museum and said the exhibit is the result of a summer film workshop.

"Well the Filipino Community Stories exhibit highlights the work done by a group of students who took a history and film intensive at the museum this past June," she said. "And these students received a history credit to work with the museum for two weeks to create mini documentaries on the history of Filipinos in Kodiak. So they did all the work."

Grantham said the films focus on various aspects of the Filipino experience in Kodiak.

The opening ceremony for the exhibit will take place at 5 p.m. on Friday. The Filipino American Association of Kodiak, which partnered with the museum for the event, will serve traditional Filipino food and showcase traditional dancing. Admission is free during the event and all day on Saturday in honor of Filipino-American history month.

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"Well the Filipino Community Stories exhibit highlights the work done by a group of students who took a history and film intensive at the museum this past June. And these students received a history credit to work with the museum for two weeks to create mini documentaries on the history of Filipinos in Kodiak. So they did all the work." They did research in the museum archives and at the Kodiak Daily Mirror and elsewhere, they shot B-roll and they conducted 25 interviews more or less with community members. So they did all the filming themselves and then edited their own films and created narrations and so really in every way they directed their own films."

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(Baranov Exhibit 2 :21 "The topics are really interesting

they range from kind of contemporary issues such as the J-1 visa controversy all the way to early like exploration of early 1900s Filipino history in Kodiak, Filipinos in the canneries and in politics and in the education system. So we have nine different looks at aspects of Filipino history in Kodiak.”)

She said Filipino history in Kodiak dates back more than a century, but until this project very little was known about this group of residents that make up more than 35 percent of the island’s population.

-- (Baranov Exhibit 3

: 48 “One of the reasons that this project was created was so that the museum would be able to gather more information about the history of Filipinos in Kodiak. Before this started we had very little information, few photographs and a couple of articles. But now we have this great resource of interviews and articles and many more photographs and some objects so that we’re better able to tell the history. But one thing that we quickly realized is that the Baranov Museum is not alone in not having a lot on Filipino history. Many people will be shocked to know that Filipinos are actually the second largest Asian group within the country. Often people assume that it’s Chinese, Japanese or Korean, but in fact Filipinos are the second largest. And looking historically, looking at historic literature and everything you would never guess that either because there has been very little written about the Filipino experience in America.”)

Grantham said the feedback for the exhibit has been overwhelmingly positive and many people said it’s about time the story of Filipinos in Kodiak is told. She said she hopes the exhibit will do just that, but also recognizes that this will only scratch the surface.

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“In many ways it’s just the beginning. We still are really interested in finding out more about the Filipino experience in Kodiak. Although we were able to improve our collection in many ways of photographs. We still need more, we’re really interested in collecting objects related to the Filipino experience in Kodiak. In many ways this was the kind of first push for what’s going to be a continuing effort.”)

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