

Oliver's Departure Not the Only Change in Baranov's Future

Thursday, 25 October 2012

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/121025.baranov_museum_exhibits.mp3{/audio}

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The Baranov Museum is slated for some changes in the coming year. Katie Oliver is the executive director for the museum and joined KMXT's Talk of the Rock on Tuesday to discuss the upcoming exhibit redesign.

"Well this is a project that we've been talking about for several years, but we wanted to finish up a lot of the structural work we've been doing on the historic facility, on the museum building which is a national historic landmark," she said. So we applied for a federal grant last November to take a look at exhibit redesign and storytelling in the museum in a very thoughtful and comprehensive way. And we were awarded that grant in July of this year. So we're still in the first sort of quarter of the year long work in reimagining the exhibits.

Oliver said part of the grant allows staff to travel and research archival materials held off island. Anjuli Grantham is the curator of collections for the museum and recently returned from a trip doing just that.

-- (Baranov Redesign 2 :48 "Well I had the joy of spending four days at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Rasmuson Library. At the Rasmuson Library they have the Alaska and polar regions collection which is an incredible resource of Alaskan history materials. It's a large archive. And within that archive are two collections that I was particularly interested in seeing. One of them is the Alaska Commercial Company collection and the other one was the W.J. Erskine Company Collection. Both of these institutions, the Alaska Commercial Company and the Erskine Company, were very closely associated with the Russian American Magazine, which the museum is housed in. The Alaska Commercial Company manager of the Kodiak district actually lived in the Baranov Museum, as did the Erskine family, which is why it's known as the Erskine house often.")

Grantham said she took more than 2,000 photos of documents and information in those collections and hopes to use those in a new exhibit at the museum. Oliver said the museum sought out community input in redesigning the museum through an online survey that ended last week.

-- (Baranov Redesign 3 :41 "We asked folks what is it that you enjoy about the Baranov museum? What is it you'd like to see changed? What is your particularly favorite object or story that the museum tells? And then we asked people to sort of rate or rank various themes or content that they want to make sure we include in the exhibits. And there were varied responses and some very interesting responses. In terms of people rating themes and content, the content that received the highest marks were those that were tied I suppose to culture. People wanted to know

about Russians in Alaska, people wanted the museum to include content about Alutiiq culture, people wanted the museum to explore themes of cultural diversity and immigration.”)

Oliver said people were also in favor of more temporary exhibits. The museum created a temporary display two weeks ago that features Filipino history in Kodiak. Next up on the temporary exhibit list is a collection of items found in and around the museum. Grantham said this exhibit will be a fun way to showcase historic items that have been found through renovations and other chance discoveries on the property.

###