Local Artists Headed to Finland

Tuesday, 27 November 2012

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/121127.finland_weaver_sewer_trip.mp3{/audio}

Maggie Wall/KMXT

A group of Kodiak skin sewers will travel to Finland in February to examine and learn about early Kodiak sewing from close examination of items in the Etholin Collection.

Kodiak residents may not know much about Adolf Etholin, but like the more familiar Alexander Baranof, Etholin was a Russian governor or “chief manager” of the Russian-America Company’s Alaska interests, which included Kodiak.

In fact, Baranof himself wrote words of praise for Etholin’s managerial skills in 1818. A Finnish born naval officer, historian and manager, Etholin rose to the rank of Chief Manager in the early 1840s.

Etholin was fond of collecting beautiful works of art and tools from Native Alaskans, including the Alutiiq Natives who were in Kodiak in the early to mid 1800s. Many of those exquisite pieces are now stored in Helsinki at the Museum of Cultures.

Local fur sewer Susan Malutin and Sven Haakanson of the Alutiiq Museum are among those making the journey to Finland.

KMXT’s Maggie Wall spoke with Haakanson about the project.

There are a limited number of slots for local skin sewers to accompany Haakanson and Malutin to study the archived materials. Friday is the deadline to submit your name and work samples to the Alutiiq Museum.

###

Transcription of Sven Haakanson’s Comments:

“We applied and received a grant so we can actually bring weavers over to Finland to look at the Etholin Collection. It’s a collection from the mid-1800s and in one of their museums, their National Museum of Culture, in the Ethnographic Collection, actually they have numerous pieces of clothing, and various skin sewn and gut sown objects.

As part of

this larger project we’ve been working on over the years, like we’ve done mask carving, we’ve done basket weaving, and now we’re doing skin sewing, as we try to bring back some of these traditional arts and this knowledge. It’s part of a larger project that we’re hoping to continue doing where we go over. We bring artisans with us, have them learn from the original pieces, and then teach our youth and the communities what they saw and then how to do the skin sewing techniques.

Because,
the wonderful thing with these collections is they have pieces that are absolutely beautiful, but also the skin sewing and the sewing techniques are what are more important. And that’s where Susie, who’s helping lead this project, Susie Malutin’s leading this project for us, and as a skin sewer and the years of work that she’s done is just going to be invaluable, but also looking at the originals as well.

It’s a beautiful collection.

(Maggie talks about getting to see the best of the best of that period.)

“Yes!
And a lot of the individuals like Adolph Etholin made collections for scientific purposes and so they made several different collections. Some of it ended up in St. Petersburg and some of it ended up in Finland.

And
so we’re having the privilege to be able to look at the collections and actually see them and study from them and, again, bring that knowledge back home.

And a lot is thanks to individuals like Susie Malutin
who are allowing us to work with them, have them share their knowledge and then we work with the skin sewers and so, yeah, I’m really looking forward to this part of the project.”