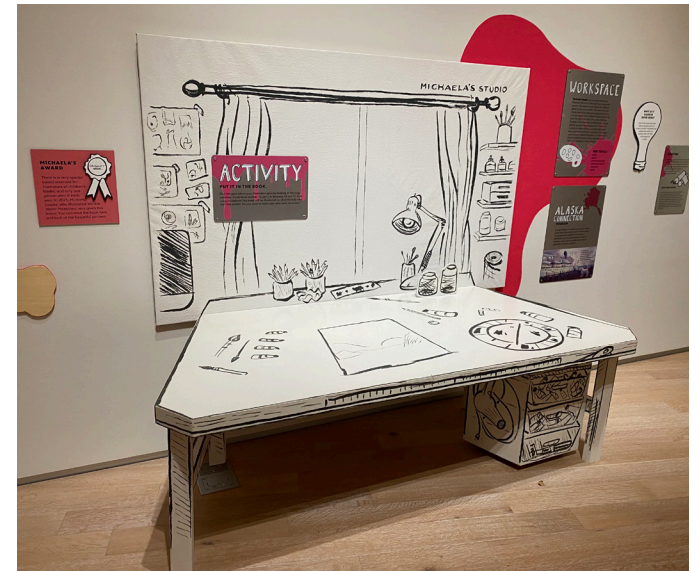
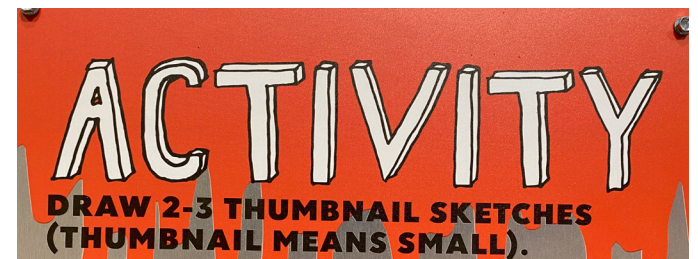


**EXHIBIT**  
**AK**  
P O R T F O L I O



In 2021, we opened an exhibit at the Alaska State Museum called **Illustrating Alaska; Artists Making Children's Books**, which featured the artwork of illustrators Jim Fowler, Evon Zerbetz, Caldecott winner Michaela Goade, and Mitch Watley. The illustrators all use different media, from linocut to watercolor and digital. An exhibit that emphasizes process in a space made for children, visitors got to see their workspaces in the artists' own style, read books, and had the opportunity to create their own illustrations for a book.

The exhibit will travel to several museums around the state, and a pop-up was made available to libraries and schools.







## CHILKAT CANNERIES



In 1882, two canneries were built in Jilkaat and Jilkoot (Chilkat and Chilkoot) country, in northern Southeast Alaska. The Chilkat Packing Co. and the Pyramid Harbor Packing Co. bought salmon from Jilkaat and Jilkoot Tlingits and brought in white fishermen from elsewhere. Jilkaat and Jilkoot Tlingits were outraged when industrial fish traps and gill nets threatened their sovereignty over their fishing grounds and the health of the salmon population. The Jilkaat turned to sabotage, cutting the nets of white fishermen and trying to break apart fish traps. The

Chilkat Packing Co. caught fire in 1892. The military sent in vessels to intimidate the Tlingit and protect white American fishing interests. Daanawak, leader of the Jilkoot, stated in 1891 that, "Before the canneries were built here, I was consulted and was glad. I was told that presents would be given to me for the privilege of building canneries in my country. I am sorry to say that the promises were not fulfilled." Raven Brand Salmon, Karen Hofstad Collection, Alaska Historical Collections.

CHAPTER 1  
THE EARLY YEARS OF  
SOUTHEAST ALASKA'S  
SALMON INDUSTRYTHE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTHEAST  
ALASKA'S SALMON INDUSTRY AT  
Klawock AND BEYOND  
BY ANJULI GRANTHAM

"I started fishing when I was twelve years old," Fred Hamilton begins from his armchair in Craig, on Prince of Wales Island. He explained that he pulled eight-foot oak oars to propel his skill while purse seining. He made \$90, which was enough money to pay his tuition at Sheldon Jackson School in Sitka and buy clothes and books.<sup>1</sup>

Fred Hamilton was born and raised on Prince of Wales Island and was ninety-six at the time of our meeting in 2017, making him the oldest living Haida man. He also happened to be the grandson of George Hamilton, the founder of one of the first two canneries operated in Alaska.<sup>2</sup> The North Pacific Trading and Packing Company was founded in 1878 in the village of Klawock, not far from the town of Craig. The Cutting Packing Co. in Sitka was founded that same year.

Fred never met his grandfather, but he remembers hearing about him. "He was a businessman. He did a lot of traveling. He built a sawmill here, along with a partner. They had a schooner here that delivered lumber!" On the wall of Fred's living room is a photo of his grandmother, Maggie. Fred relates that she was kidnapped from Victoria, BC when she was young.<sup>3</sup> Our conversation

meandered from family history to Fred's early memories of Chinese cannery hands turning sheets of tin into cans, to beach seining in the Klawock estuary, to Fred's concerns about salmon conservation.

I traveled to Prince of Wales Island to speak with elders and locals about fishing in the late nineteenth century. It was an attempt to catch slivers of stories from a time just out of reach of a person's lived memory. People like Fred become living links to ancestors who both shaped and were changed by the industrialization of Southeast Alaska's salmon system, and the sites of old canneries are physical testaments of the salmon industry's past.

Craig fisherman Kathy Peavey volunteered to take me to see the remains of the North Pacific Trading and Packing Company cannery. As we buzzed around the bay in her boat, she pointed out that nothing much remains of the original cannery, which burned around 1900. It was rebuilt across the inlet, and there we see broken dock piling, textured with mussels and barnacles. The cedar and spruce forest smelled sweetly aromatic as we tromped through. We found rusted old retorts—the large, horizontally-oriented cylinders that pressure cook cans of salmon—pipes, and ceramic shards. Gone was the on-shore hustle—including the assortment of pitch-roofed buildings, the smoke coming from the chimney, and the pier—depicted on the Klawock Brand salmon can label.<sup>4</sup>



Published with the Clausen Museum, *Tin Can Country: Southeast Alaska's Historic Salmon Canneries* is a book that shares the development of Southeast Alaska's salmon industry and how canneries serve as sites of Alaska history. A dozen contributors chart the story of Southeast Alaska as it manifests within regional salmon canneries, sharing history that ranges from the early establishment of canneries on Tlingit and Haida land, to how the industry was involved in World War I and World War II, to the story of Asian American Civil Rights.

The book features custom maps for each chapter, a cannery map on the back of the dust jacket (above), beautiful salmon can artwork, other memorabilia and historic photos. The project was edited by Anjuli Grantham, and based on the writing of Patricia Roppel and the collection of Karen Hofstad.

*Alaska Historical Society, Contributions to Alaska History Award  
PubWest, Silver Award, Historical/Biographical Book  
Alliance of American Museums, Honorable Mention, Museum Book Design*





In 2011, ExhibitAK began an exhibit development and design process with the **Baranov Museum** that lasted for two years. The exhibits at the *Baranov magazin*, Alaska's oldest Russian-built structure, were in need of updating, as well as a cohesive story that piqued the interest of visitors.

The end result of the first part of the project was a design development document with construction suggestions that was used in building the new exhibits. Hired again once funding was secured in 2018, ExhibitAK managed the contractors in the construction and installation of exhibits, held a mountmaking workshop, and led the team in a rebranding effort.

Eight years later, the organization opened its doors with a collaborative, community-driven, approachable exhibit that showcases Kodiak's history. Now known as the Kodiak History Museum, the new brand and exhibits embody the current direction of the organization.



# Underwater Forests of the Aleutians

Swooping like a sword from the Alaska mainland toward Asia, the 1200-mile-long Aleutian Islands form the longest chain of islands on the planet. Diverse kelp forests crowd around the five island groups that make up the Aleutian Chain.

The Aleutians separate the Bering Sea from the Pacific. Such a location means the Aleutians experience mild temperatures (between 30 and 52 degrees) but extreme winds. Winds as strong as 245 miles per hour have been clocked on Shemya Island, in the western Aleutians.

Billions of birds, marine mammals, fish, shellfish, and plants live in the Birthplace of the Winds. Their lives intertwine to form an **ecosystem**, or a biological community of interacting organisms. When the physical environment changes or organisms change, other parts of the natural world are affected.

These changes can be quick and explosive, like when Kasatochi volcano in the Andreanof Islands erupted in 2008 and destroyed the nesting grounds of over 100,000 birds. Today, the Alaska Volcano Observatory monitors 30 volcanoes in the Aleutians, several of which periodically erupt today. Ecosystem changes can also be more gradual, like when human activities impact the environment.

Here, learn about the kelp forest ecosystem of the Aleutians and how different creatures can affect this underwater ecosystem.

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EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN:  
Museum of the Aleutians

LABOR



## KELP CREATURES: Steller's Sea Cow

A giant, slow moving and shallow-water dwelling creature, Steller's sea cow (*Hydrodamalis gigas*), once called the kelp forests of the Aleutian Islands home. The sea cow became known to westerners after Vitus Bering's expedition to Alaska in 1741. The vessel St. Peter wrecked on the Commander Islands, where starving crew captured and killed a sea cow. They called the creature *kapustnik*, or sea-cabbage eater.

The survivors returned to Russia, beginning the fur-rush to the Aleutians. This led to many things, including the end of the sea cow. At the time that Bering's crew came into contact with Alaska, there were only an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 sea cows. Within a few decades, these creatures were extinct because they were easy food for fur traders.

But was it just overhunting that brought about the extinction of the sea cow? Studying sea cow bones from the Commander Islands shows that during colder periods, sea cow populations decreased because of cold weather and ice. The Russians arrived during the Little Ice Age, so poor climate conditions meant that sea cow populations were already low. The Commander Islands were the last outpost and final refuge of these giant creatures, and Russian fur traders hunted to extinction the few that remained.

Another theory for extinction relates to the health of kelp forests. Sea otters were eradicated from the Aleutian Islands at the same time that the few remaining sea cows were still living. Without sea otters to keep the urchin population in check, the urchins likely consumed the kelp forests. Sea cows couldn't thrive in the barrens left behind. They reproduced slowly and would have died from starvation, even if they had not been hunted to extinction.



The Steller's sea cow is now extinct, but was one of the biggest mammals to swim in the ocean: they could be 30 feet long!



## UNANGAN VOCABULARY

Sea otter : Chngatuḡ  
Sea otters : Chngatun

Sea urchin : Aguḡadaaḡ  
Sea egg : Aguḡnaḡ  
Roe of sea urchin (gonad) : Agugaadan Udmaa

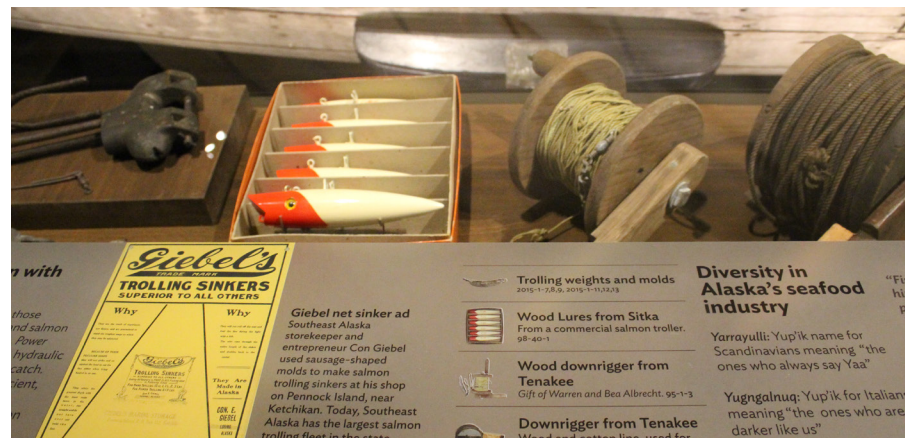
Kelp : Umyan (Eastern Aleutian dialect)  
Bull kelp : Tmagiḡ (Eastern and Athan dialect)  
Sea lettuce : liquḡ (Eastern) Ikluḡ (Athan)



Some sea otters eat so many purple sea urchins over their lifetime that their teeth become stained purple.

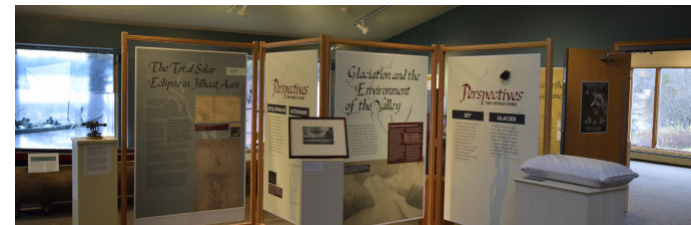
We developed a traveling pop-up exhibit for the **Museum of the Aleutians**, exploring the relationship between kelp forests, sea urchins, and sea otter populations in Unalaska. *Underwater Forests of the Aleutians* traveled to museums and science centers around the state, the exhibit fit inside a Rubbermaid tub and a gun case.





ExhibitAK has worked with the **Alaska State Museum** on several small exhibits and traveling shows, but most recently, we facilitated the development of content for the new Andrew P. Kashevaroff building that opened in May of 2016. Working closely with the curator, exhibit designers, and other museum staff, the new exhibits reflect the input of many Alaskan stakeholders and incorporate themes of Alaska's role in world history, pioneering use of unique cutting-edge technology throughout time, and cultural continuity, adaptation, and change. The exhibits include the voices of many Alaskans, and bring a much needed contemporary feel to the new museum. In addition to orchestrating a statewide solicitation for content, ExhibitAK also designed the graphic identity of the exhibits and was responsible for the creation and installation of all 2-d materials: graphics, labels, case murals and illustrations. In addition, ExhibitAK managed digital contracts, which included: an interactive visualization tool to assist docents in explaining the vast geography of Alaska, a touchscreen of WWII era films of Alaska, and an app that employs image recognition to provide more information about the animals on display.





ExhibitAK recently completed an exhibit for the **Haines Sheldon Museum** entitled *Everything from afar comes ashore*. ExhibitAK was responsible for all aspects of exhibit planning and design, including label writing, mount-making, graphic design, printing, fabrication and installation.



ExhibitAK has been working with the **Jilkaat Kwaan Heritage Center** in Klukwan since 2015, beginning with conceptual design. In about 18 months, we designed, fabricated, and installed the exhibits using the help of local contractors when necessary. Exhibits include a 40' map wall with Tlingit place names and village sites, as well as wall-mounted artwork relating to regions of the map. We worked with a company to design and build a digital interface to explore different areas of the Jilkaat region, including photographs, further historic information, and room for future additions such as oral histories. Other exhibits feature graphics demonstrating subsistence lifestyle, the history of the tradition of weaving, and a large clan house containing the renowned Whale House posts, which we did not photograph out of respect to the clan. We continue to work with Jilkaat Kwaan to develop more exhibits in two smaller clan houses, wayfinding signage, and further development of the digital kiosks.







## Unaaq Asaaquq Uunghaq

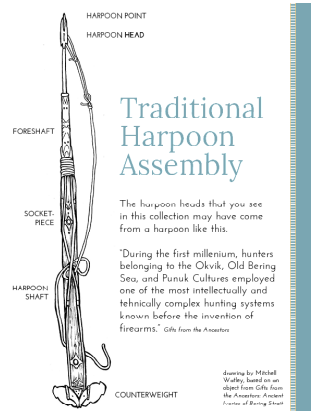
A TRAVELING EXHIBITION  
OF HARPOONS FROM  
THE BERINGIA CENTER OF  
CULTURE AND SCIENCE

a project of  
BERINGIA CENTER  
OF CULTURE AND SCIENCE

KAWERAK, INC.



In October of 2011, the **Beringia Center of Culture and Science** hired ExhibitAK to create a traveling exhibition of harpoon artifacts from their collection. In order to complete the process, ExhibitAK presented to the Cultural Advisory Committee about the museum exhibition design process and asked for their help in developing the exhibition. ExhibitAK designed and built a small exhibit that traveled to the village of Elim, Alaska, where it was set up for a one-day event in both the school and the City Hall building. The village of Elim was invited to the exhibition, and 65 residents attended. ExhibitAK was subsequently hired to create two other traveling exhibitions: one for Wales in August of 2012, and one called Fancy Clothing that was exhibited in Nome in the Spring of 2014.



**Illustration and  
Label Designs**

What is your  
favorite food  
that is hunted  
or gathered or  
caught?

**Questions Posed  
to Visitors**

### Audience Response:

In reference to toggling harpoon:  
"Oh—so that's how that works!"

"This was a good reminder for us. It helps us to remember the things we forget to think about."

"I liked the questions you asked."

"When are you coming back?"



**Sheldon Nagaruk, village Elder  
and Culture Bearer, leads a  
discussion at the exhibit**